

ROMANS: CHARTER OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH
"Part I: Resting In The Certainties Of The Christian Faith"
(Romans 1:1-17)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

A believer not long ago asked me, "Pastor, you **do** believe the Christian faith will ultimately **triumph** over all this world's evil, **don't you?!**" The reasons one might be tempted to think otherwise are numerous:

(1) Recently, an official from the Torrington Middle School resigned from his job because he no longer believes in the secular middle school as an institution. According to a colleague, this **secular** official became disillusioned with youth coming in from elementary schools who were good students and had high ethics only to lose that dedication to ethics and doing their homework.

Feeling he was batting his head against an essentially warped system, the distraught official resigned his job!

(2) A nationally known Bible teacher whose ministry is heard throughout our nation on television recently was divorced from his wife. Though people in his church know such a party should no longer minister the Word, the teacher feels he should stay on. As one elder in his church put it, "If this pastor stays, our Church suffers. If he steps down, our Church will suffer." Either way, it's a losing proposition!

(3) The U. S. Supreme court has recently ruled that it is unconstitutional for a student to lead the stadium in prayer before a high school football game. The ruling written by Justice John Paul Stevens could "carry enormous significance beyond high school sports -- eventually affecting graduation ceremonies, moments of silence and more" according to an article in the 6/20/00 Investor's Business Daily.

Another case before the highest court in our land refused in a 6-3 vote "to let a school district require the teaching of evolution be accompanied by a disclaimer mentioning the biblical version of creation." (Ibid.) In other words, the creation view is not allowed to be taught as science in the schools, but the Supreme Court **hypocritically** doesn't want that to be stated publicly in classrooms.

In such an era of spiritual and moral decline not only in our nation's government and people, but even among Evangelicals, CAN we afford to AFFIRM our faith as though we are on the winning side?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "When I see the spiritual and moral decay of the world and, focus on Christendom's apostasy and increasing weaknesses even among Evangelicals, I get WORRIED! How do I know our faith is really from God, and that it effectively meets man's needs TODAY?"

- I. **When Paul wrote to Rome's Christians, he addressed a MIRACLE group that had formed in that idolatrous city by GOD'S power:**
 - A. Paul intended to travel to Rome to preach the gospel, Romans 1:15.
 - B. However, he noted in Romans 15:20 that it was his practice to **avoid** evangelizing where others had previously evangelized.
 - C. Thus, no Apostle had actually evangelized Rome with the Gospel.
 - D. Yet, Paul **knew** and **named** over thirty believers there, Rom. 16:3-15.
 - E. Thus, as Dr. J. Vernon McGee notes in his Thru The Bible work, the Christian community in idolatrous Rome was a product of God's **power** by way of **God's** work in people **by extension** of the apostles:
 1. Rome held a great cultural and financial attraction for men, so it was inevitable that some new converts to Christ gravitated toward the city, Ibid., McGee, v. 4, p. 639.
 2. As Paul (and other Apostles) moved throughout the Roman Empire evangelizing, a number of their converts moved to Rome and there lived in the midst of the nation's imperial cult, Ibid.
 3. Thus, in a real sense, the Christians in Rome were a **miracle** group raised up by the unseen hand of **Christ Himself**.
- II. **It was to this collection of believers that Paul spoke of the POWER and STABILITY of the Christian faith:**
 - A. Paul expressed the Christian faith was built upon **credible Old Testament fulfilled prophecies**, Romans 1:1b-4.
 1. According to Paul, Christianity's Founder, Jesus Christ, came from the seed of David in His humanity but was declared to be the Son of God by the proof of His resurrection from the dead, 1:1b, 3-4.
 2. The way Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy works even **today** to edify our faith in the same Christian faith (as follows):
 - a. We know the full Isaiah scroll found at Qumran in 1947 is dated **150 B.C.** by secular paleontologists, Z.P.E.B., v. 3, p. 321.
 - b. That scroll, itself a copy of what was written centuries before it, predicts the following that can be fulfilled **only** by Jesus of the **Christian faith**: (a) He would die as a sin offering for the sins of the Jews **and** the **Gentiles**, Isa. 53:6; 52:15a; (b) He would make His grave with the rich (53:9a) and rise from the dead as a reward for His righteousness, Isa. 53:10b,c; (c) He would justify the many [Jews and Gentiles] who would **simply** come to **"know"** Him because of His atonement for them, Isa. 53:11; (d) later, He would make intercession for those justified Jews and Gentiles, Isaiah 53:12c in light of Hebrews 7:25.

- B. Paul noted that this Jesus had appointed him to spread His Gospel of salvation by faith in Him predicted in the Old Testament, Rom. 1:1, 5.
- C. Paul mentioned he was a slave, giving up his own plans and will to Jesus his Master, a dedication revealing the reality of his faith, 1:1a.
- D. Then, Paul expressed confidence that his trip to Rome would result in mutually edifying himself and these believers by **God's** power, 1:8ff.
- E. Indeed, Paul was sure his evangelizing in Rome would disciple men *even there* as **God's power** was displayed in its preaching, 1:13-16.
- F. That proclamation spoke of one's being pronounced righteous by God **ONLY** by one's coming to "know" Christ by faith (as Isaiah 53 said):
 1. Paul claimed the Gospel displays God's power when preached, for in it is God's righteousness revealed "from to faith to faith," 1:17.
 2. The literal term is "out of faith unto faith", UBS Grk. N.T., p. 530.
 3. It corresponds to **identical** constructions used by Paul in 2 Cor. 2:16a (KJV) of "from death unto death" and "from life unto life," picturing **Hebraistic** terms where an author intensifies an idea by **repeating** it, Philip E. Hughes, 2 Corinthians, p. 80-81, fn. 18.
 4. Thus, "from faith to faith" means "**ONLY** by *faith*," for Paul backed up this saying with, and I translate directly from the Greek Testament, "The just **by faith** shall live!" (UBS Grk. N.T., Ibid.)

Application: *If doubting the REALITY and EFFECTIVENESS of the Christian faith in the midst of ungodliness today, (1) simply recall HOW the Church has come THUS FAR as testified in Paul's word in Romans 1:1-17. (2) Then, BELIEVE in Christ to be saved (Jn. 3:16) and (3) live for Christ BY FAITH in a godless era amidst REGARDLESS of cultic error and sin as did Rome's first believers!*

Lesson: *Biblical Christianity is REAL and EFFECTIVE, for (a) it made miraculous inroads in the FACE of Rome's imperial cult in the absence of the Apostles; (b) it is based on assuredly preceding prophecies that were later FULFILLED in its Founder, Jesus; (c) its Apostles were very committed to its Founder, Jesus and (d) showed great PERSUASIVE powers in proclaiming its Gospel; (e) that Gospel of justification by faith alone in Jesus is both unique and predicted in the Old Testament itself! >*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

The current issue of the United Indian Missions magazine reports a testimony from among the Havasupai American Indians.

Living in a south branch at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, this tribe has been very hard to disciple. However, one Indian, a woman named, Ida, came to Christ with two others of her tribe and help start the Havasupai Bible Church over 40 years ago.

Never having married, Ida, now in her seventies, had been in need of a home for herself for years. Yet, it is tedious getting building materials into the canyon as there are no vehicle roadways out of there.

Nevertheless dauntless in her faith, Ida had begun **praying** for several years for a new house, looking to her Lord to provide for her needs.

Time fails to detail how the Lord arranged for a computer programmer who knew nothing about house construction to be moved to get the U. S. Marines to helicopter the building materials for Ida's new house into her canyon. The air drop came December 14 and 15.

Then, from Thursday, December 16, 1999 to Saturday night, December 18, 1999, a team of 11 **volunteers** constructed Ida's house.

As they finished up, a man from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) who was there to hook up the water and sewer lines asked if he could help with anything else. Jerry Ferguson, the computer programmer, told him about the need to lay the vinyl flooring. That need had not been addressed from the beginning of the planning stage.

"No problem," said the plumber. "I can do that as soon as I get this sewer finished up." The Lord directed the government official to be one who **happened** to know how to lay Ida's floor, **and** was **willing** to volunteer for that **long-unmet** task **beyond** his **government** duties!

Ida "thanks Jesus again and again for answering her prayer and taking care of her" reports the missionary magazine! (p. 9)

secular government's Marine Corps forces, its BIA officer and some ad hoc volunteers, the Lord answered Ida's prayer!