

## Introduction for May 23, 2010

Paul's response to those weak in faith at Rome was quite different in tone from his response to those attempting to subvert the faith in Galatia and Colossae. In Rome, the issue was one of growing in grace and coming to fully grasp the finished work of Christ. In Galatia and Colossae, the issue was the gospel. In those cities, there were those in the church who were tampering with and attempting to alter the gospel by undermining the doctrine of justification by faith. To adjust the doctrine of justification by faith is to destroy it. It needs no adjustment, only proclamation. To add anything to the gospel, the finished work of Christ, is to ruin it and, as Paul said to the church at Galatia, to "turn to a different gospel...for some want to distort the gospel of Christ".

Paul's concern for the church at Rome (and for all the churches) was summed up wonderfully in Romans 15:5-7, "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." These verses will be our theme as we proceed in chapters 14-15 concerning the eleven imperatives that call the church to love one another.

The conjunction that begins chapter 14 is a transitional particle that bridges the commands of 13:8-14 with the imperatives of chapters 14 and 15. To put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh must carry over in our understanding of the weak in faith and how to respond to each other in the various stages of sanctification in which we find ourselves. In chapters 14 and 15, Paul laid out the church's response to those weak in faith and the form that response should take. All is undergirded by the massive doctrine of God's sovereignty and encouraged by reminding us that we will all give an account to God on the last day

What a word for Providence in this day and every day that God chooses to give us life! I therefore, by the mercies of God, entreat you to hear these great and noble truths and to submit yourselves to the Word of God on this day. It is also my privilege and responsibility to exhort you and myself to repent of any sin that the Holy Spirit will be pleased to reveal to us in this matter. The only hope for this world and our nation and our families is the gospel; and a healthy church is the only hope for survival in these days of political intrigue, turmoil, economic stress and moral failure.