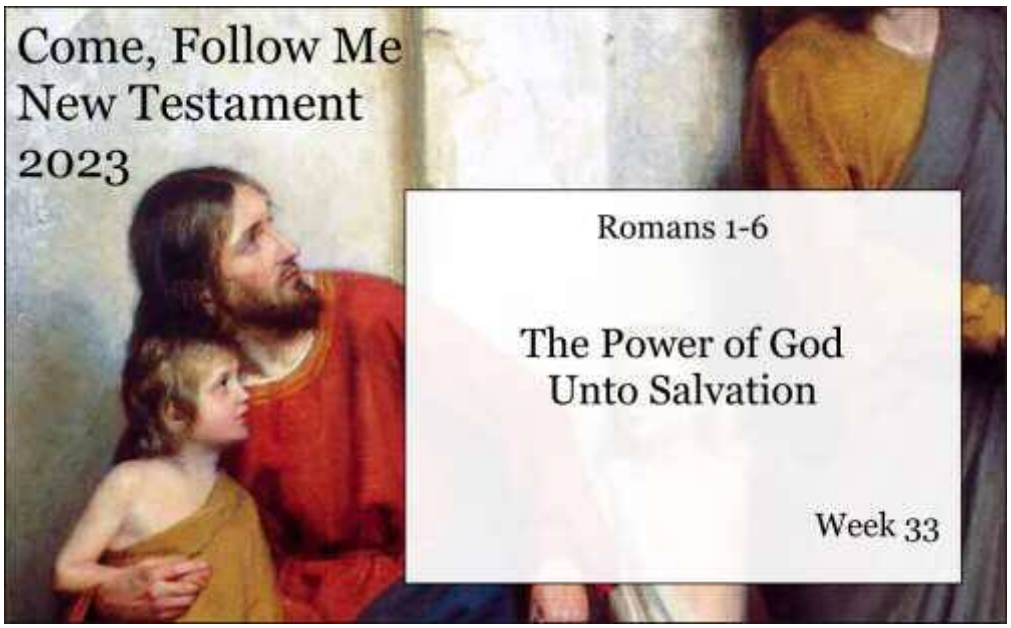

Week 33 is scheduled for study Aug. 7-13, 2023. Can you think of ways you might have shown embarrassment of the gospel of Christ? How can you change your behavior to stand up for your beliefs?

Day 1

Recording promptings will help you remember what the Spirit is teaching you. Consider also recording how you feel about these promptings.

Romans 1-6 - The just shall live by faith.

My hope is that I am the only one in the whole world who struggles untangling the language of Paul. Unfortunately, I think I am in the majority, not the minority.

The six chapters in Romans define, in some detail, the differences between living by the law (of Moses) and living by faith. The law of Moses was a law of daily performances, duties that were to be done daily to remind them of their responsibilities to God, and that their Messiah would come to bring them a new law and free them. Over the centuries they lost sight of the spiritual freedom their Messiah would bring, and they came to look upon him as a political figure who would free them from the bondage they got themselves into through their own disobedience to the prophets.

The law Jesus brought is the gospel. The gospel is not one of daily performances and sacrifices, but one of faith where the obedience to God is based on internal devotion, not external performances. One of the arguments Paul uses against the law of Moses is that salvation cannot come from the law, for the law was given as a punishment for the people's lack of faith in God. The law of Moses was given as a task master to bring them into submission to God through daily reminders of the God they served. As God had physically saved them from physical bondage, so too would the law be a physical reminder of God's place in their life.

Salvation only comes through faith in Christ, which is the basis for the gospel Jesus taught. The gospel isn't just a tweaking of the law of Moses, it is a complete replacement with standards much higher and holier. Everything in the law Moses taught was intended to make them think of their Messiah, and the gospel or teachings the Christ would bring. It's standards of behavior are more difficult than the law of Moses, and living or keeping the gospel has to be done by inner conversion, instead of the outward shows of devotion required by Moses. Here is an example found in Romans 3:20.

> 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Under the law of Moses certain things had to be done, like the offering of an animal sacrifice, to be forgiven for a sin. I would take the animal to the priest, who would sacrifice the animal on the altar to win my forgiveness. This was done to represent the day that the Messiah (Christ) would come and offer himself as a sacrifice for my sins. In the gospel forgiveness of sin comes from exercising faith in Christ by obeying the commandments. Through our obedience and faith Jesus forgives our sins. Now it is our own heart and life we put upon the altar of sacrifice through living a righteous life. This life of obedience is what justifies us before the laws of God. Why? Because through our obedience our life is brought into agreement with the laws God has given us. Because we keep the commandments Christ forgives our sins. We are no longer at the mercy of laws that would have required we be punished, for now we are in compliance with them. This is what it means to be justified.

Instead of a priest offering a payment for our sin each time we commit that sin, now Jesus has already paid an eternal price for our sins. His sacrifice has done away with the need for perpetual sacrifices and endless lives of sacrificial animals who stood in for

payment of our sins. His onetime payment is all anyone could ever ask for. Now we just need to seek his forgiveness by being humble, penitent, and living according to the requirements of the laws he has given through the gospel. Forgiveness of sin through the law of Moses was done through outward actions. In the gospel taught by Christ that same forgiveness comes through obedience and demonstrations of inner faith.

Day 2

Recording promptings will help you remember what the Spirit is teaching you. Consider also recording how you feel about these promptings.

Romans 2:17-29 - My actions should reflect and increase my conversion.

Here is a brief recap of these verses. The Jews of Paul's day considered themselves to be a privileged class. They had the covenants of God as given through the law of Circumcision that God gave to Abraham. Only the Jews had this law. It set them apart from all other nations on earth. All of the laws they had from God set them apart from the nations around them. Yet for all their special treatment from God they lived their lives like all their neighbors, instead of obeying the laws God had given them. In many cases Israel was more wicked than the nations that surrounded them. So though they had been circumcised according to the law, they lived as ones who were uncircumcised, who were ignorant of the law.

If those who were uncircumcised, who were ignorant of the covenants of God with Israel, lived holier lives than those in Israel then their uncircumcised state was as though they had been circumcised, for they were keeping the commandments, even if it was unwittingly done. Paul taught this point to demonstrate the hypocrisy of Israel. Israel's circumcised privileged status had become as though they were all uncircumcised, for they did not uphold the covenants they had made.

This is actually a great way to demonstrate the importance of conversion. Whereas a testimony is what you come to know is true, conversion is the act of bringing the way you live your life into conformity with what you know. The more converted you are the more your life conforms to the demands of the commandments you claim to believe in and know to be true. Our conversion demonstrates the truthfulness of what we claim is our testimony. Many years ago I was taught by a patriarch that all my blessings would

come only as I learn to live what I already know to be true. Knowledge by itself cannot save us, only with conversion. We must learn to bring our lives into agreement with what we know so we live lives without hypocrisy. How we live our life must agree with what we claim to know to be true.

Have you noticed that if a youth violates the commandments the punishment is not as severe as when an adult who has gone through the temple breaks those same commandments? This is because the adult has been taught what the youth has not yet learned. The adult knows better, and is therefore held accountable for that knowledge in their daily living. While the youth may be disfellowshipped for a time, the adult may be excommunicated for the same behavior. Our conversion, or how we live our daily life, must reflect our knowledge.

Day 3

Recording promptings will help you remember what the Spirit is teaching you. Consider also recording how you feel about these promptings.

Romans 3:10-31; 5 - Through Jesus Christ, I can be forgiven of my sins.

One of the greatest faults of modern Christianity is the failure to acknowledge the full picture of what it means to be converted and forgiven of our sins. Many focus just on the punishments of the wicked, because there are no righteous people according to the statement by Paul in Romans 3:10. There are others who look at his statement in Romans 5:2 that we should "rejoice in hope" through Jesus Christ and assume that once we believe there is hope in Christ all is forgiven and our work is done. These one-sided views prevent people from seeing the full picture.

Yes, we are not innately righteous people. All of us sin. But that sinful nature is precisely why we need to base our hope in Christ, for it is his grace that enables us to repent and live better lives that will please God and gain our salvation. As faith without works is dead (James 2:17), we need to remember that it is not enough just to profess belief with our lips. Profession of faith must be followed by a life filled with the works of faith. That is what pleases God and enables us to become better people. Refer back to yesterday's lesson on the importance of conversion with testimony.

Day 4

Recording promptings will help you remember what the Spirit is teaching you. Consider also recording how you feel about these promptings.

Romans 6 - Jesus Christ invites me to "walk in newness of life."

I recommend an article I wrote earlier entitled, The Covenant and Symbolism of Baptism. This subject is not complete, however, without this article, Baptisms of Water, Holy Ghost, and Fire, for a baptism isn't a complete ordinance without the bestowal of the Holy Ghost.

FHE/Personal Study

Romans 1:16-17 - How can we show that we are "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"?

Too often we play word games with ourselves when it comes to the life we lead vs. the life we profess. For example, I am not supposed to be ashamed to be a Christian. I may proclaim that I am not ashamed, but happy that I am, yet how often do I live my life as a Christian invisibly as I can. I say I am not ashamed of what I believe, but I don't do anything that would bring attention to the differences in my beliefs and those around me. After all, I wouldn't want to "stir the water" and cause any contention, hard feelings, or make someone else feel uncomfortable, would I?

My guess is that living as an invisible Christian is exactly what Paul is describing as being ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Mind you, there is a difference between making a scene about differences in beliefs and behaviors when in public, and standing up for one's beliefs when they are challenged by someone else. My father was in the military. As an officer he was required to throw parties by his superiors. We had ash trays we put out around the living room for such occasions. We learned the hard way that if we didn't put the trays out people would light up anyway, assuming there was an ash tray about somewhere. Mom got tired of vacuuming up the ashes. But they never served liquor, and the challenge for my parents was to show those invited that it was indeed possible for them to come to our home and have a good time without getting roaring

drunk. Though he was sometimes mocked for his parties, many of them acknowledged that they had never experienced that much fun before without drinking their way through the experience. They seemed grateful to learn that it could be done.

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

NT33-2023 - The Power of God Unto Salvation