

Romans 14:13-21

PREVIOUS

NEXT

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans — 3:21-5:21	Romans — 6:1-8:39	Romans — 9:1-11:36	Romans — 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	God's Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

RELATED RESOURCES

Romans 14:13-15

Romans 14:16-23

[Romans 14:13-21:](#)

Our Responsibilities Under Grace - Part 15

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to visit the palace where Romania's former President Coucescu and his wife ruled very cruelly in Romania for twenty some odd years. I had the opportunity to go into the former office of Mrs. Coucescu. While she was in power she had made the decree that all the Bibles in Romania were to be confiscated and turned into toilet paper. In that office we took 18 Bibles, translated into Romanian, and presented them to 18 members of Parliament of the Romanian government. I had the opportunity to take the Word and to share with those men that this is the only thing that can transform their lives, that this is where the answers to nations and people of this world is found. What a precious, precious opportunity, and what a precious Book we have.

We are still in Romans 14. We started back in chapter 12 looking at the practical part of the book of Romans. The first eleven chapters covers God's grace. Then chapters 12-16 talk about our responsibility under God's grace. So many people preach God's grace as if God does everything and we have no responsibility. That is not right. Our responsibility is found in Romans 12:1-2, which says to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable unto Him. This is our loving offering back to Him, daily, moment by moment. Then verse 2 says to let this Book renew our minds and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Those two verses tell us how we are to relate to God. Then from 12:3 all the way through chapter 16 is how we relate to one another. I can't repeat it enough that the spiritual well that all these chapters flow out of is Romans 12:1-2. When we are in love with Christ, living in that intimacy of relationship with Him, His Holy Spirit produces in us a love that Romans 12:9 says is without

hypocrisy. Now this love is something the world will pick up. The Christians will know it immediately, and the lost world is looking for this kind of love. When this love is in us, it causes us to have a divine sensitivity to people around us.

There are several things I want you to see in our text. First of all, I want us to look at the necessity of walking according to love. Paul brings this out so clearly beginning in verse 14. He starts off by showing his own personal conviction. He says, "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself." Now what is he talking about? The context has been food, what you eat and what you don't eat. He knows that no food is unclean in itself. There is nothing wrong there.

The word for "know" is *eido*. It means a knowledge that is intuitive because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in Paul's life. He didn't have to go to a class to learn this, although he was taught by the Holy Spirit for three years in the desert. He understood something. In his heart the Holy Spirit had taught him something: that no food is unclean in itself.

Then he says, "I know and am convinced." The word "convinced" is the word *pietho*. I am glad that word came up here, because I want to show you the root of faith. When you say you have faith, it comes right out of this. You see, *pistis* is the word for faith. *Pisteuo*, which is the word for believe, is the next word that comes out of that. The root word for all of it is the word *pietho*, which we are looking at here. I don't have faith just because I think I understand something. But when I am fully convinced, totally convinced to the place that I am willing to move out on it, that is what faith really is.

You can't have faith without obedience. I don't tell you about my faith. I show you my faith by how I live. If I live a certain way that means I am fully convinced of something, and it has caused me to live that particular way. So Paul uses that word, "I am fully convinced." Paul understood something, and it motivated his life.

The key is in the next phrase. "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself." That little phrase "in the Lord Jesus" is the key. Now, "in the Lord Jesus" is only found once right here in Romans. But "in Christ Jesus," which is the same thing just turned around, is found 13 times in Romans. I want us to look back and see that everything that Paul has in his standing with God the Father is resident in Christ Jesus. He knows this. It is not what he eats or doesn't eat, or in what he does or doesn't do. It is what Christ did, what Christ is doing, and what Christ will do. Everything is based in Christ. He is fully convinced of this.

Go back with me to Romans 3:24. He uses the phrase "in Christ Jesus" there to show us something. He is convinced of this. Paul knew that only in Christ would he find his redemption. Nothing he could ever do could ever suffice for what God ordered. It was only in what Christ did. Verse 24 says, "being justified [Justified means to be acquitted of a guilty verdict, and of course, we are all guilty because we were in Adam] as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Paul knew that the message of grace meant that he only could find his salvation in Christ Jesus. Faith alone in Christ alone. There was no other way. It was not in what he did and not in what he didn't do, but in what Christ had done.

In Romans 6:11, Paul knew something else. It says, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Paul knew that the only way he could be changed was to have this new life. This new life was in Christ Jesus; it wasn't in himself. That is why he always leaned on and drew from the spiritual well of Christ. He knew that he could put no confidence in his flesh. The new life that God had given him had freed him from the penalty of sin and the power of sin and one day would free him from the presence of sin.

Paul was convinced in Romans 6:23 that salvation was only in Christ Jesus. He says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." That life, that salvation, is only in Christ and it is a free gift of God's grace. It wasn't based on what he did or on what he didn't do.

It is in Christ that now I never have to fear any condemnation. Paul knew this in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." You see, the person who doesn't understand grace feels like if he eats certain things, that will somehow condemn him, somehow affect his standing with God. But Paul knew that there couldn't be any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

In Romans 8:2, Paul knew that the Spirit of God being in him is the key to his being free from the law of sin and death. Verse 2 reads, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." That is why when he ate food or didn't eat food. It had nothing to do with him and God in Christ Jesus.

In Romans 8:39, Paul knew that nothing could separate him from the love of God. Even when he sinned, even when he messed up, nothing could separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Verse 39 says, "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other

created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 12:5 shows us that Paul knew that only in Christ could he find unity with other brethren. In other words, what unifies the body of Christ is His life in them. It is in Christ Himself. It is not in what they do or don't do, not in whether they eat certain foods or don't eat certain foods. It is in Christ alone. Verse 5 says, "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." We are members of each other. So there is the unity. Paul realized it was Christ who formed the basis of the unity, not what they did or didn't do.

In Romans 15:17, Paul knew that only in Christ do we have a reason to praise. He says, "Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God." Now here is man that is wrapped up in a person, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. His salvation, his life, his freedom from the penalty of death, his freedom from the power of sin, all these things are resident in a person. That is the message of grace. In Christ there is no condemnation, in Christ we have unity one with another. We think that we have got to look the same way, wear the same clothes and do the same things. Paul says, "No, no, it is in Christ." That is the message of grace.

He said, "I know this and I am totally convinced." As a matter of fact, the phrase "in Jesus" is found two times in Romans. In Romans 3:22 it says, "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction." Paul knew that the only righteousness he could ever have was going to be found in Christ Jesus. In Romans 1:17 it says that righteousness comes by faith. He is fully convinced and totally trusts Christ and obeys Him. Out of this comes a righteous life. This is righteousness. It is not what he did for God. It is what God would do through him. That is the message of grace. It is not me, it is Christ. That is why he says, "We preach not ourselves but we preach Christ Jesus."

Then in Romans 3:26 Paul knew that only in Christ would he find his justification, not in a set of rules. He says, "for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Now he is fully convinced of this, and his words from Romans show this that he is fully convinced that grace means that it is all in Christ Jesus. It is not in me, it is not in what I do or don't do. But he gives an allowance for others to not understand that. Now this is the beauty of how God works in a mature believer's heart. You may understand grace, but somebody else may not understand that grace. You will be given out of the grace you understand and are living under the ability to be divinely sensitive to those people.

Back in Romans 14:14, he says, "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." Now that is amazing to me. Logizomai is the word for "think" which we saw back in Romans 6:11. There he says, "even so consider these things." That word "consider" is logizomai. It means to sit down and put all these things together, think them through, draw a line and come to a conclusion. Paul said that there are going to be brethren in the body of Christ who are going to come to the conclusion very sincerely. They are going to look at the scriptures, and they are not going to see what you see. They are not going to understand what you understand and they are going to come to the conclusion that they can't eat certain foods. He says, "Therefore, to that person, if he thinks it is unclean and he has sincerely checked it out, it is unclean."

But here is his point in verse 15: he shows you that there are going to be two different ways of seeing it. Verse 15 reads, "For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died." Wow, there is his point. What he is saying is, if you are living out of Romans 12:1-2, then the way you treat people is directly the effect of that. It's not how much you understand about grace. You can write books on it and still not live under it. What you understand is one thing; living under grace is another thing. And when you live under grace, he says in chapter 6, you are no longer under law, you are under grace. And when you live under grace, the key to that is a divine love that is without hypocrisy and everybody in your path somehow becomes a beneficiary of that. When you run into a weaker brother, you don't hurt that weaker brother just because you understand what that weaker brother does not understand.

He says, "For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love." Then he says, "Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died." The word for "destroy" is apollumi. Now ollumi is the word for destroy, but apo is an intensive. When the two are put together it forms an interesting word which means to wholly destroy, to devastate.

"Now wait a minute, if this person is in Christ who is weak in the faith, how can you destroy him? Do you mean destroy him in his eternal life?" No. What is the context? Back in verse 12 he says we will all be judged according to the deeds done in our body. The context has been that one day we are going to stand accountable before a Holy God. What I think he is talking about here is that when I am using my understanding of grace to demean and scorn and discourage a weaker brother, what I am actually doing is destroying his opportunity one day when he stands before Christ to receive all the rewards that he could possibly receive. You see, I

am tearing down; I am not building up. He says, "Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died."

Oh, folks, woe be it when we think that what we understand makes us spiritual. What makes us spiritual is when we are living under that which we have understood, allowing the Holy Spirit of God to absolutely capture our lives and to control our lives and it is all out of a loving relationship and a grateful attitude towards God Himself. Then we don't go around destroying others, particularly in their opportunity one day when they stand before God to receive all the rewards they can possibly receive. We draw the conclusion then that if we are walking according to love we are doing exactly the opposite, we are building them up. When we are not walking according to love, then we are tearing them down. All the more reason to live according to Romans 12:1-2.

When we were on our trip, we went over to Moldova in Russia. It is the part of Romania that Russia took over after World War II. It is the most incredible place I have ever been. Legalism, weaker brother, Romans 14—it is camped out in Moldova. For instance, when we got to Moldova, our guide said, "Wayne, have you got a tie?" I said, "You know I don't like to wear a tie in these kind of meetings." I said, "I don't think I really want to wear a shirt and tie." He said, "Son, you don't understand. These people look at you as a keynote speaker, and they are going to look for you to have a coat and tie on." I was thinking to myself, "Legalistic!" I forgot all about Romans 14.

I went up to my room, and I was just arguing with the Lord saying, "God, why do I have to do this? I have to speak in 45 minutes. Why can't I just..." and it was like the Lord was saying, "Hey, Wayne, Romans 14!" Oh, it hit me right between the eyes. I am not to scorn and demean a weaker brother. I asked the Lord to forgive me. It even changed the whole attitude of putting that shirt and tie on. I got to thinking, "You know, I don't want to walk in here and, just because I understand grace, force my convictions down their throat. I want to go in the love that the Holy Spirit produces when you are living under His grace." It is not when you understand it as much as when you are living up under it. God just gives you a heart that people cannot explain. You cannot give it to somebody, and somebody can't give it to you. It comes out of that divine relationship of God inwardly and it just gives you such a sensitivity to the people.

The first few times we spoke, it was just like they were expressionless. I guess a part of their culture is not to show emotion. But the next to last message we saw it turn the corner. Our message has never been about anything but the sufficiency of Christ and the power His Word has in your life. That is all we have ever preached over there. They started seeing it and just started waking up to it. Before we left it was just wonderful to see what God had done with the leadership of Moldova. Moldova is one of the fastest growing areas for evangelism in the world. However, it is also the most persecuted area. The government has looked upon Christians as if they are just dirt.

So to build these people up in the faith and to build them up in their relationship with Christ and His Word became such a precious task once we realized we don't take our understanding of grace and cram it down their throats. We don't walk into a weaker brother and demean him or scorn him or make fun of the fact that he thinks one way when you think another way. God the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do that, folks, He will not allow us to do it. So the necessity is we don't want to destroy somebody else's opportunity to receive all the rewards that God will give them. He knows their hearts, we don't. As they are walking with Him, we don't want to destroy that. So therefore, we walk according to love.

The second thing I want you to see about walking according to love is the characteristics of walking according to love. Now we have seen some of these in previous chapters, but he nails them here. Look at verses 16-18: "Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men." How does he nail them? First of all he says, "Therefore, do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil." What is the "good thing"? The "good thing" is to understand grace, to understand that you don't have to worry about what you eat or not eat as far as your relationship with God. That is a good thing to understand.

Paul says, "Don't let what is a good thing for you be spoken of as evil by somebody else." The word "spoken of as evil" is blasphemo, which means for somebody to look at you and tear your whole reputation down. Here you are, a person who understands what is right. Don't let somebody kill your witness by the fact that you misuse that freedom. If you do, you have become a stumbling block for a weaker brother.

Verse 17 goes on, "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." You see, when we present our bodies to Christ, renewing our minds in His Word, then we will have a deep conviction that flows out of understanding His grace. We will not allow those convictions to offend a weaker brother. We are going to have a divine sensitivity.

Now the Jews misunderstood. They thought that when Jesus came He was going to set up a political kingdom. They didn't have an

understanding of the fact that He was going to die on a cross, resurrect, ascend and be glorified. But He was going to send His Spirit back to set up a spiritual kingdom within the hearts of all men. Now the spiritual kingdom of God, where He rules and reigns, is marked by several characteristics. That is what Paul brings out. He said it is marked by righteousness, by peace and by joy found in the Holy Spirit.

Let's back up. What is righteousness? The word "righteousness" is one of the key words in Romans. It is a relationship word. The righteousness of God was seen when He sent His Son to die on the cross. That is how He wants to relate to man. He loves man. It is a pure love. Romans 1:17 says now we have righteousness. It says righteousness comes by faith. Faith is the key. This righteousness is from faith to faith, for the righteous man lives by his faith. As I am trusting God, living Romans 12:1-2, out of that is going to flow righteous living, a righteous conduct. How I treat others will be known as what God is doing through me, not what I am doing for God.

Peace is the second thing that marks the kingdom of God being manifested in a person's heart. Not only is it a quality of life, but it is a motivation of life for others. There is something in me that just wants to be at peace with my brother. Romans 12 says there will be times when I can't be at peace with my brother. But the motivation in my heart is always to be at peace. It doesn't matter if it is a brother in Christ or a person in the secular world. I just want to be at peace with all men. There is something in my heart that desires that.

Then the other word is joy. It is the inner exhilaration that shows itself in the countenance of one's life. You can't get away from it. Any time you see the joy produced by the Holy Spirit, it is always something that just shows in the countenance of somebody. When you have that in your countenance, people really can't turn you away. They may not agree with you, they may hate what you are saying, but there is something about you that they are drawn to. It is like a magnet. Lost people, hostile people, every kind of person is drawn toward people who have the inner characteristic of joy that just shows in their countenance. That is the Holy Spirit of God, the kingdom of God, alive in someone's heart.

All of these are found, as he says, only in the Holy Spirit. Outside of the Holy Spirit's control there is no righteousness, there is no peace, and there is no joy. It only comes out of this relationship that we have with Christ with His Holy Spirit producing it.

Now when these qualities are the makeup of our life, look at what he says in verse 18: "For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men." The word "acceptable" means "well-pleasing." The opposite of it means to be oppressive and hard to bear. It is what I just finished saying. When you are serving God out of a loving heart and God the Holy Spirit is manifesting His characteristics of righteousness and His characteristics of peace and His characteristics of joy, then what is going to happen is, you are going to be well-pleasing to God, first of all. God is going to be pleased with that. But God is not the key right here; it is with all men. All men are going to be well pleased with you. "I don't understand that because they may hate what I am saying. They may hate my message." That is true. But there is something about you that is not hard to bear. There is something about you that is not oppressive. It is not in what you are saying. It is the way you are going about saying it. You are not coming down on anybody. You are just moved and motivated by the Holy Spirit of God, and it is not oppressive to people who are around you.

That is what God does in our heart, folks. But when we don't understand that, we take the bull by the horns. We think because of our understanding we can rule and reign. We forget the kingdom of God that has been set up in our hearts. Relationships are shattered and devastated, and we are not well-pleasing to God or man. That is what he is saying. When you live in such a way that you love God and God is moving in your heart and the Holy Spirit is in control of your life, then you are going to have a demeanor that is marked by the very characteristics of God Himself. Men will find you non-oppressive and not hard to bear. They may find your message oppressive and hard to bear, but not you. There is something about you that they see that God is doing in you.

Well, we cannot cheat our brother out of the rewards he may get one day. Don't demean him. Don't put him down. Instruct him, pray for him, encourage him, but don't put him down. Then the characteristics of all that is righteousness and peace and joy when the kingdom of God is being set up in our hearts and the Holy Spirit is ruling and reigning.

Then thirdly, there is the motivation of walking according to love. Look at verse 19. All of these sort of dovetail together: "So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another." The word "pursue" is dioko. It is also translated "persecute." That really gives you the picture of the word. It is the picture of an old dog on the trail of something, like a raccoon or something. But the dog is chasing after the animal. That dog has one point in his mind. It is not barking and it is not running, it is catching that animal. That is what he wants, to catch it to where he possesses it. So you get the word dioko, which means to pursue after something until it is in your grasp and now you have it.

Paul says, "pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another." We are to pursue peace with God and the things which make for peace with man. You are at peace with God when you are living in Romans 12:1-2, and that causes the Spirit to make you want to be at peace with all men. Remember Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." There are going to be times when it is not possible.

We are to pursue that which lends itself to the building up of one another. The word translated "building up of one another" is the key word, oikodome. It means to construct a house. We found it in 2 Corinthians 5 when we talked about the fact that there is a body being constructed in heaven right now. The way I am living right now is causing a garment to be constructed in heaven. I am going to enjoy when I see Christ to the degree that I am enjoying Him right now. A lot of people don't understand that. There is a building or garment under construction that is going to clothe my spirit one day when I go to see Him. That garment is under construction directly related to how I am living right now. That is the same word he uses here. Pursue the things for the building up of another.

Do you see the truth? In other words, if I am building a garment in heaven by the way I am living right now, then I do everything I can do in my relationships to encourage, to instruct and to help out my brother, to make sure that when he gets there that his garment is everything it ought to be, so that we can both celebrate when we stand before Christ one day for the rewards He wants to give to His children. Everything I do must have that in mind. I don't want to squelch him. I don't want to do anything that would destroy his opportunity to receive what God has for him one day. So what I pursue is that which builds up, not that which tears down.

Paul goes on in verse 20, and here is the key: "Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense." The word "tear down" is kataluo. Oh, what a word. When the tragic thing happened in Oklahoma City, something happened and in an instant the whole thing was torn down. That is not the word here. Kataluo means to loosen something to where it becomes unstable and caves in. In other words, when I have a weaker brother beside me, God is working in his life. Who am I to jump in and play God in his life? I can instruct, I can encourage, I can pray for him, but not make fun of him, not demean. Draw him to my side. Because you see, it is God who is doing the work. If I begin to loosen the things that are holding him up, if I begin to erode his convictions and tear apart things, then all that God has been trying to build up is torn down. He says don't do that. Pursue the things which make for peace. Don't tear down the work of God in somebody else's life.

He says, "All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense." Before he said if you think it is wrong to eat you had better not eat. Here he says if you know it is right to eat, but you eat and then use it for evil, then that is going to be an evil act as far as God is concerned. You see, the whole point is not to flaunt our liberty in Christ when it causes a brother who is weaker to stumble.

The next verse, I think, was not just written for their day. I think it was as much written for our day, probably more so. Verse 21 says, "It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles." Everywhere I go I get this question: "Well, Brother, we are under grace, aren't we? Then can you show me in God's Word where it says you can't drink wine?" No, I really can't. Paul told Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach. But I can find where it says don't drink wine if it in any way causes your weaker brother to stumble. "Do you mean to tell me just because I understand grace it doesn't give me a license to flaunt it?" That is exactly what Paul is saying. Paul said in another place, "All things are lawful for me but not all things are profitable or expedient." In other words, there are some things the Holy Spirit of God says, "Yes, you are free but you can't use your freedom here because you are going to cause a brother to stumble. Now step back and be sensitive to that weaker brother that is around you." That is when the Holy Spirit comes on the road.

Listen, it is not in what you think or understand, it is in how you are living. You do not have this sensitivity unless the Holy Spirit of God has gripped your heart and you understand you are a product of His grace and you don't deserve a thing you have. Therefore you become less arrogant, and you become less proud. You begin to trust God more and you become sensitive to the weaker ones that are around you.

Now, when you start living the right way of life, you are going to be a stumbling block. That is a good kind of stumbling block, but this kind of stumbling block is the bad kind. This is when you have understood grace and you are cramming it down the throat of somebody who doesn't understand it.

Here is what I am trying to say: when we live Romans 12:1-2 there is just going to be something about me and you that the world is going to notice, folks. They may not understand it. They may hate everything we are saying, but there is something inside of us that they sense has got to be from God. It is not oppressive, hard to bear and it doesn't flaunt. There is no pride in it. It is a just a

graciousness, it is a love that God the Holy Spirit produces in the human heart.

Go over to 2 Corinthians 2:14: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ." Now, he uses a cultural thinking there that you have to understand. What he was talking about was back in the Roman culture particularly, when they would go to battle, they would send their armies out. And if the army had a victory, they would send a runner back to the village or town, and the runner would take some fragrant, sweet incense and go from house to house and shake that sweet incense all over town. The people would begin to smell that aroma and would say, "Oh, a victory has been won." They would begin to line the streets and wait for the conquering heroes to come home. It may be a long wait.

Finally, they would look down the road and see a cloud of dust. They would see the commander in chief in his chariot out in front. As he comes down the streets they would see people chained to his chariot behind him. Everybody realizes that this man has conquered these people and he takes them through, leading them in his triumph over them.

The Apostle Paul takes something out of the secular mind and puts it over here in our spiritual vocabulary. He says the whole key is for the world to be able to look at you and realize you have been chained to the chariot of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have been conquered. Everybody looks and sees that. Look at what he says in the next part of verse 14 down through verse 16: "and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?"

I wanted to bring us back to what Paul is saying here. He is saying that if I am conquered by Christ and the world knows it, then I am always going to be led in the conquering that He brings, the triumph that He gives. There is going to be a fragrance to my life wherever I go. It is going to be the sweet aroma of the presence of God. Now to some people it is life to life, but some people it is death to death. If that fragrance offends them, so be it. That is the way it is going to be. But woe is the man who offends them himself. God is going to so tenderize my heart that whether they are hostile, whether they are friendly, whether they are governmental or whether they are social, whether they are inside the church or whether they are outside the church, God is going to so deal with them that they are going to see me as non-oppressive and not hard to bear. They are going to sense the fragrance of Christ that is in my life and in your life.

Relationships are the whole thing, folks. It is not how much you understand, it is whether you are living in light of what you understand. That is the key. That is what makes you spiritual.