

New Testament Lesson # 31
August 5-11
Romans 1-6
The Power of God unto Salvation
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Unfortunately, Paul's Epistle to the Romans has been twisted and used for false doctrine)

I. Unfortunately, Paul's Epistle to the Romans has been a cause of great misunderstanding, affecting all of Christianity.

A. Two great misconceptions stemming from this epistle are:

1. That man's Eternal future is determined **only by Grace and totally regardless of any works.**
2. That **God predestined** some to be saved, while others were predestined for damnation, in spite of their goodness or their good works.
3. **Influenced by these two misconceptions, most people completely miss Paul's powerful teachings concerning man's full destiny --- to truly be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.**

II. It was because of a great struggle during Paul's time which colored the emphasis in his teachings.

- A. **Jews had believed the Mosaic Law was the total source of their salvation.**
- B. Also, because many Jews who accepted Jesus still had difficulty giving up the Mosaic Law, and wanted Gentile Christians to adopt it, **Paul found it necessary to emphasize that the works of the Mosaic Law did not bring salvation.**
- C. The Mosaic Law had taught how Jesus would bring salvation. But now He had fulfilled that law through the merciful works of His Atoning Sacrifice.
- D. Thus Paul frequently spoke of "Dead Works" [the Mosaic Law] and that men are instead *saved through faith in Jesus Christ and His atonement.*

III. Centuries later, Christianity had become so corrupt that people were led to believe they or their ancestors could be saved through the payment of money [called indulgences]. Martin Luther, a priest, felt strongly, and correctly, that this practice was wicked. While reading "Romans," **he read these passages which spoke of "Dead Works" and being saved by faith in Christ. Influenced by the situation in his time,** he used those passages to convince others that grace alone saves men, not the "dead works" [like indulgences], being practiced by the Universal Church at that time.

- A. Unfortunately, many Christians have now twisted Paul's writings into a rejection of the importance of good works altogether --- even those good works prescribed by Jesus as a part of being a faithful Christian.
- B. A search through "Romans" shows **Paul did not excuse Saints from performing and obeying Christ's laws of righteousness.** A few of the things he said are:
 1. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who love not the truth but remain in unrighteousness" (Romans, JST 1:18)
 2. "[God] **will render to every man according to his deeds**" (Romans 2:6). [Paul lists

- in subsequent verses what the righteous and the unrighteous will receive.]
3. “For **not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of [Christ’s Law] shall be justified**” (Romans 2:13).
 4. We should remember Paul was only a disciple, **while Jesus was the Master**. Jesus’ words make clear that men will be judged according to their works, as well as their faith in Him. For example, see Matthew 7:15-29 where Jesus warns that those who say “Lord, Lord” but **doeth not His will** are like a man who has built his house upon sand and will perish. See also his Parable of the Sheep and Goats, Matthew 25:31-46, which verifies how He will judge men according to their works.
 5. The truth must be recognized **that if evil men were allowed into Heaven, it would no longer be a Heaven, but a Hell. Or else God would have to deny unrighteous men their moral agency there, which would also make it a Hell.**

IV. **However, both Jesus and Paul testify man cannot be saved or justified *only* by works.**

- A. Paul taught, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
 - B. **It is absolutely true that men can be saved from physical and spiritual death *only through the atonement [thus Grace] of Jesus the Christ.***
 - C. But Jesus has made it clear **that beyond saving us through His Grace, He will also reward us for our good works**, and that evil works can deny us full salvation from spiritual death [No unclean thing can dwell with God].
- V. Many claim that Latter-day Saints believe we are saved by our works.
- A. But as True Followers of Jesus Christ, **many works we are asked to *do are not for our own salvation, but for the salvation of others.***
 - B. Those works are: Strengthening the Saints; Missionary work; Family history and temple work.
 - C. While the Savior’s Parable of the Sheep and Goats make clear we will be rewarded for such works, **the greatest reward will be the Joy of seeing others inherit the vast blessings prepared for them by the Savior.**
 - D. In summary, both Jesus Christ and Paul taught men are justified through faith, righteous works, and **above all, the Grace [the Blood] of Jesus Christ.**
 1. Romans 4:16 “Therefore ye are justified of faith and works, through grace [the blood of Christ]...”

VI. We should also understand that Grace will always be the most essential part of every aspect of our salvation. It is part of the whole life of a true Latter-day Saint, from the beginning. For the reality is:

- A. He sent His Spirit to help us to recognize Truth and to help us act on it.
- B. He foreordained and sent Living Prophets who teach us truth and guide us to act in the right ways.
- C. He prepared Scriptures to sustain us, if we seek them, and to give us courage to act.

- D. So through these gifts, and many others, it truly is **through His Grace**, that we are sustained and led day by day.
- VII. A second great area of misunderstanding was Paul's teachings about foreordination.
- A. Paul taught the Saints they were "beloved of God, called to be saints" (Romans 1:7). Elsewhere he frequently referred to them as the "elect."
- B. Then he added: **"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren"**
1. Some were foreordained to accept Jesus, so that He would have enough people to start a Church when He came, and be worthy to be His followers. (See Romans 8:29; JST Romans 8:29-30).
 2. Because the apostate church had lost the knowledge of a pre-mortal existence, when translators of the Bible came to words which spoke of God's "foreknowledge" of people, they translated the Greek word as "predestined" rather than "foreordained." **[Some modern translations have corrected this error].**
 3. Thus the concept developed among many Christians that the Lord had predestined certain people to be saved. They were "the Elect." **Others were predestined to be damned, regardless of their works.**
- C. The difference between predestination and foreordination is that predestination denies any moral agency. It is also cruel, as it implies that God pre-determines the fate of others regardless of worthiness.
- E. Foreordination means that God calls some to achieve certain goals due to His knowledge of us in the pre-mortal existence. However, each individual retains their moral agency and may either fail or live up to that foreordination.

VIII. When Joseph Smith had his First Vision, one thing he was told was that the creeds of other churches "were an abomination in [God's] sight." (Joseph Smith --- History 18).

This seems harsh considering how many good people there are in other churches and the good other churches do. But when we consider such doctrines as:

- A. God predestined certain people to be saved and others to be damned, regardless of worthiness, and
- B. Wicked persons can dwell in Heaven because of grace; while righteous persons are cast into Hell, we realize why God would consider such doctrines developed by men as "abominations."
- C. The reality is that He is a just, loving and righteous God. He has prepared the way for all men to inherit His realm, if they are willing to accept His atonement and obey His laws of righteous living. He is extremely long-suffering, striving until the very last to save each man who will strive to seek His face. Note **the Lord did not say that people in other faiths were abominable, but that these creeds were.**
- D. **How terrible, [yes abominable], to deny the pure Love of God the Father and of His Beautiful, Self-sacrificing Son.**