

The Gospel Is Applied

Romans 12:1-21

We now enter the last section of Paul's letter. With the significant exception of a brief passage in chapter 6, the letter has been missing any admonitions about Christian behavior. That now changes. Yet admonition may be too strong a word. We should be cautious in our reading, for the words which we read here are more the pastoral concerns of an evangelist than the strict teachings of a moralist. One might even imagine this chapter and the ones following coming in response to someone saying to Paul, "O.K., you

have convinced me about the way things are, then how do I cope with the brokenness of the world and the ever present temptation to 'mess things up.' The answer begins in this chapter. We need to be careful also that we don't read into these verses a new Law. For some this has been difficult, for the verses can easily be read as Law, hearing in them rigid requirements rather than opportunities for responding to God's call to living ones life in conformity to Grace. They are not rules for living as much as they are information about living shared with a willing listener.

Notice that the chapter is divided into two parts. The first part describes life as a response to Grace within the Christian community, the second part shares the possibilities of life conformed to Grace within the larger non-Christian community. Each of these spheres of activity carries with it an aura of composure and an attitude about the effects of Grace which form the boundaries of action. These are the means to a Christian life by developing a lifestyle which is conformed to Grace...yet it is something more, for it is not merely a lifestyle but a thoroughgoing reformation

of ones life. Life within the community is focused on the need for unity, and yet within that unity there is a recognition of the diversity of gifts. The description of the body parts helps us see clearly not only the need for the acceptance of all parts of the body of Christ, but also recognize the necessity for ALL PARTS...not just the ones we represent or the ones we like. No one is more important than another, just as no part of the body is more important than another. Therefore we are called to live within the community like the interconnected parts of the body: cooperating with one another for the benefit of the whole body, and not warring with one another.

Indeed, imagining the parts of ones body at war with one another...the hand with the foot, for instance...seems absurd and rather silly. Life outside the community is focused on peace and reconciliation. The member of the body of Christ is not to withdraw from the world, nor are we to be conformed to it. This means that the Christian moves about in the world, is an active part of the community in which he or she lives, but brings to that activity another set of values than those which the community might hold. They are not bound to keep up with the latest fads, but can bring into the community a different approach to life which is redemptive. The Christian

should expect opposition, but return kindness and patience. The Christian may even be persecuted, but should not respond in hostility. The purpose of the Christian moving out into the world is to make the Grace of God operative in God's creation, therefore every conflict is an opportunity for reconciliation rather than punishment. The saying 'you will heap coals of fire upon his head' is not a punishment, but rather recalls God's intention that each of us is purified in the fire...the fire burns out the passion for rebellion. Acts of kindness to our enemies extends the opportunity for God's Grace in the world. It has been said many times before that individual Christians are the hands and feet of God in the world, we are also the visible manifestation of Grace in the manner we live. If the world is ever to be transformed and made whole again, we are the avenue for that transformation. Not in our individual successes, and not in our triumphs in conflicts with the world, will it come; but rather in our behavior as communities making concrete the transformation which comes in living in the pattern of Grace, and in the manner in which we make that Grace real in the rest of the world. The Rev. John Robinson is the Pastor of the New Hope Presbyterian Chapel located at 2nd and Jones Streets in Pembroke. Come join us for Worship at 11:00 a.m. this Sunday!



GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

Have you ever considered carefully the opening words of the Bible? "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Why doesn't it simply say that God created the universe? Why the heaven and the earth? As we go on reading we find the answer to this question, for the Bible clearly teaches that God has a two-fold purpose; one having to do with the earth and the other with heaven. The former is the subject of prophecy, while the latter is the subject of the "mystery," or secret, revealed to and through the Apostle Paul. (See Acts 3:21; and cf. Romans 16:25.) The former concerns Israel and the nations; the latter "the Body of Christ," the church of the heavenly calling. Some people are surprised to learn that there is not one promise in the whole Old Testament about going to heaven. The whole outlook is earthly there, with Messiah reigning as King (Jer. 23:5, et al). When our Lord appeared in the flesh the angels cried: "Peace on earth" (Luke 2:14). He Himself said that "the meek" should "inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). He taught His disciples to pray: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"

(Matt. 6:10). Even at Pentecost Peter declared that after "the restitution of all things" God would send Jesus back to earth and the times of refreshing would "come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19-21). Not until the raising up of Paul do we learn that now all believers in Christ are "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13), and Colossians 1:5, and many other Pauline passages, speak of "the hope which is laid up for you IN HEAVEN." Indeed, before God, believers are already given a position "in heavenly places" and are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3; 2:4-7). The prophecies regarding the Kingdom, however, will still be fulfilled and Christ will reign on earth and bring the promised "times of refreshing." God be thanked that this world will not forever be a place of war and bloodshed, sickness and death, misery and woe. Indeed, at that time, heaven and earth will be opened to each other, and thus will be fulfilled God's two-fold purpose: "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Eph. 1:10).

Robeson Historical Drama

Strike at the Wind

AUGUST 13-15 (Showtime 8:30 each night)

- ★ THURSDAY NIGHT - SCOUT NIGHT. All Scouts (Boy, Girl, Cub, Brownie) In Uniform Admitted for \$2.00 (General Admission Seating)
- ★ FRIDAY NIGHT - FAMILY NIGHT Up To 5 Family Members Admitted For \$10.00 (General Admission Seating)
- ★ SATURDAY NIGHT - LADIES NIGHT - All Ladies Admitted For \$3.00 (General Admission Seating) 11:30 - CHURCH NIGHT

TICKETS: General Admission - \$5.50 Adults / \$4.50 Senior Citizens / \$3.00 Children (under 12)
Reserved - \$7.00

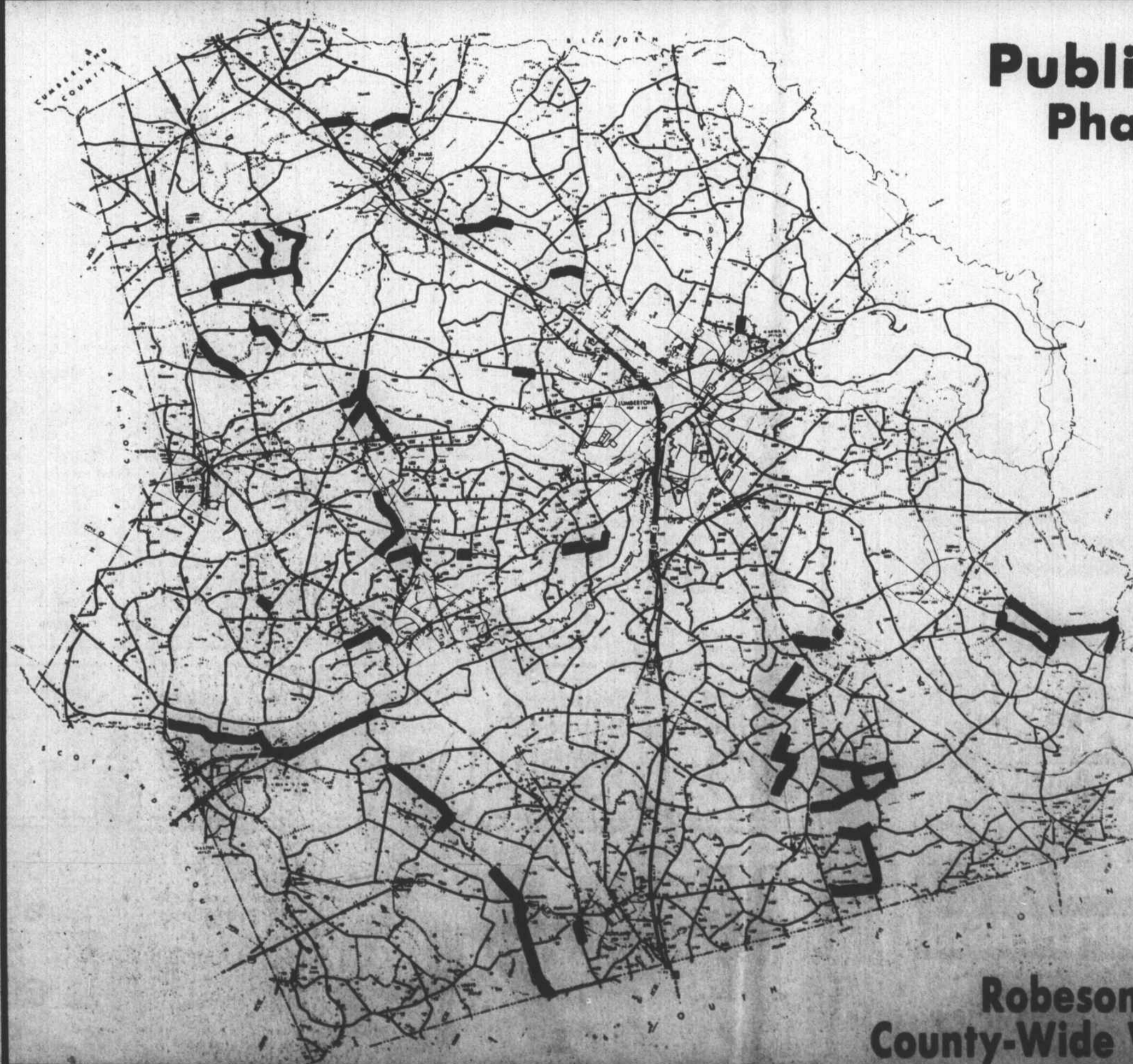


Your young child may be able to hold onto a drinking glass better if you place two tight rubber bands around the glass an inch or so apart. This makes it easier for little hands to hold.



According to some researchers, celery has negative calories. It takes more calories to eat a piece of celery than the celery has in it to begin with.

Robeson County County-Wide Water System



Public Notice Phase III-A

Residents whose property is adjacent to the proposed routes shown on the above map are eligible to sign up for the initial fee of \$25.00. The fee is payable to the Robeson County Water Department (located on Old U.S. 301 South) Adjacent to I-95. The Sign-Up Period will be August 10, 1987, to October 30, 1987.

Robeson County County-Wide Water System