

STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

ROMANS

THE RADICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

JOHN T. STEVENSON

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Dedicated to
The Lord Jesus Christ
Who credited me with
The Radical Righteousness of God

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

“The chief part of the New Testament, and the perfect gospel.” (Martin Luther).

“Every Christian man should feed upon it as the daily bread of his soul.” (John Calvin).

There has been no book of the Bible which has been so instrumental in changing lives and in impacting the church as much as the epistle to the Romans. Augustine lived an immoral and a worldly life, giving himself over to pagan philosophy. One day he was sitting at his meditations and he heard some children playing in the next courtyard. One called out, “Pick up and read! Pick up and read!” He happened to have a copy of the New Testament nearby and he picked it up and read a portion of the book of Romans. It was the turning point in his life.

A thousand years later, a monk in a German monastery was going through rigorous acts of penance, self-sacrifice and self-flagellation, attempting to please what he considered to be a terrifying judge with the sword of judgment above his head. As he studies the Scriptures, he came upon verse 1:17 in Romans: “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘the righteous will live by faith.’”

Martin Luther realized then that, although God demands righteousness, He freely provides that righteousness to us as a gift in faith; a righteousness that is given to us through the righteousness of Christ, an alien righteousness, a foreign righteousness. Luther later commented, “When I understood that and when the concept of justification by faith alone burst through into my mind, suddenly it was like the doors of paradise swung open and I walked through.”

In the 18th century, a young seminarian by the name of John Wesley heard a sermon from the book of Romans and was converted. He became a great evangelist and the father of the Methodist Church.

The Greek and Roman world of Paul's day was a world filled with despair. The paganism of the day held no hope of a resurrection and the intellectuals had long since abandoned the popular polytheism for an unabashed skepticism. The two popular philosophies were Stoicism and the philosophies of Plato.

Stoicism	Feelings are to be set aside for a blind resignation to the unalterable course of things.
Plato	All religions are merely different forms of expressing the same general truths.

Satisfaction could be found in neither of these philosophical systems. It is noteworthy that the Iliad ends with funeral rites. In contrast, Romans is a book of hope.

Romans is Paul's fullest, grandest, most comprehensive statement of the gospel. Paul brings together all the Bible's greatest themes:

Sin	Law
Judgment	Works
Faith	The nature of Israel and the church
Grace	The Plan of Salvation
Justification	Election
Sanctification	The Purpose of World History
The work of the Spirit	Principles of Personal Godliness

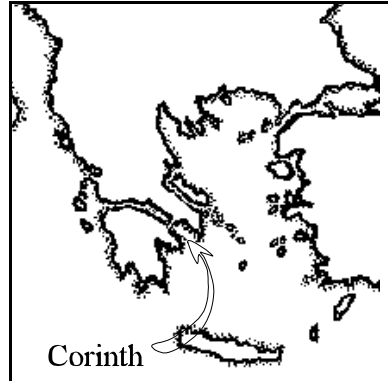
THE PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING

The book of Romans seems to have been written from Corinth, the city on the Isthmus connecting northern and southern Greece.

1. Paul commends Phoebe to the church at Rome, saying that she had been "a servant to the church which is at Cenchrea" (Romans 16:1). Cenchrea is the eastern Port of Corinth. It was to Corinth what Port Everglades is to Fort Lauderdale.

2. He says in Romans 16:23 that “Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you.” Gaius is seen in 1 Corinthians 1:14 to have been a member of the church at Corinth.

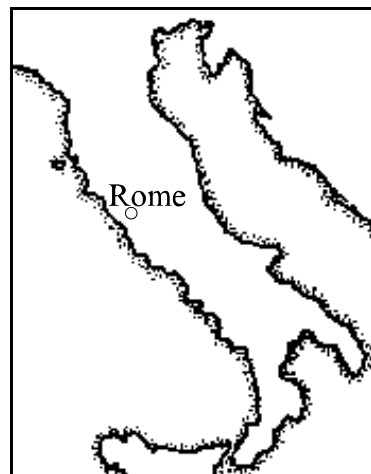
Paul was at Corinth on two different occasions. His initial trip to Corinth was on his Second Missionary Journey. He later returned to Corinth on his Third Missionary Journey.



In Romans 15:19 he says that he had already preached the gospel “from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum. In verse 23 he says that there is “no further place for me in these regions” and that he longs to come to Rome but first is contemplating a trip to Jerusalem with funds from the churches of Macedonia and Greece. We know from 2 Corinthians 9 that this gift was collected well after his first visit to Corinth. This places the composition of Romans as taking place during Paul’s second sojourn in Corinth. This took place during the early months of A.D. 57, around 25 years after Christ’s death and resurrection.

THE CHURCH IN ROME

When we read of the Pentecost experience which took place in Jerusalem, we see that there were present on that day “visitors from Rome” (Acts 2:10). It seems to have been these visitors to Jerusalem who witnessed the birth of the church at Pentecost who returned and who started the church in Rome. The church had been well established by the time Paul wrote them. Paul had never visited the church there and the absence of any reference to Peter or the other apostles suggest that the Roman church had not experienced direct apostolic ministry.



Rome was considered to be the center of the world. It had been given the

epitaph of “the Queen of Cities” and “Home of the Gods.” It was a cosmopolitan city with people from every race and nation represented. The church in Rome would have reflected this mix.

OCCASION FOR WRITING

People ordinarily think of several reasons that Paul had for writing this epistle, some that are obviously on the periphery and some that are more central to his focus.

- ♦ To commend Phoebe to the church at Rome (Romans 16:1).
- ♦ To prepare the way for Paul’s eventual coming to Rome and to explain why he is not coming at this time.
- ♦ To set forth a detailed study of justification and sanctification, and God’s dealings with the nation of Israel.

These are all aspects of Paul’s epistle, but none of them capture the main idea of his writing. Paul is writing to set forth his teaching on the righteousness of God. Everything else he says is to that end. I have entitled this book “the Radical Righteousness of God.” What is so radical about God’s righteousness? It is radical in that it impacts everything from one end of human existence to the other. It shows men to be sinners and undeserving and it also works to declare us to be righteous and it changes who we are from the inside out. It tells us how to be saved and then it tells us how to live like those who are saved.

OUTLINE AND LAYOUT OF THE EPISTLE

The epistle is divided into two major parts. The first 11 chapters form the first section. They set forth Paul’s teaching on the righteousness of God, particularly as it relates to salvation and to the people of God.

The second section (chapters 12-16) gives us the practical ramifications of the doctrines presented in the preceding section. This part tells us how we ought to live and conduct ourselves on the basis of the salvation provided on our behalf.

Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans

Prologue	DOCTRINAL				PRACTICAL	Epilogue
1:1	1:17	3:19	6:1	9:1	12:1	15:14
Forward	Man’s Sinful State	Justified: Reckoned as righteous	Sanctified: Living holy	Israel and the Church	Instructions in Living Righteously	Final Word
	Sin	Salvation	Sanctification	Sovereignty	Service	
God’s Justice	In the Law	Imputed	Obedied	In Election	Displayed in Life	
Adapted from Irving Jenson	Life By Faith				Service By Faith	
	Need of Salvation	Way of Salvation	Life of Salvation	Scope of Salvation	Service of Salvation	
	Penalty deserved	Pardon granted	Power given	Promises fulfilled	Partnership in ministry	

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EPISTLE

1. The book is the most doctrinal and the most systematic of all of Paul's writings.

There are personal notes in chapter 1 and in chapters 15-16, but virtually none in the central part of the epistle.

2. The first seven chapters are characterized by an argumentative style as seen by the repeated expression: "*What shall we say then?*"

Romans 4:1

Romans 6:1

Romans 7:7

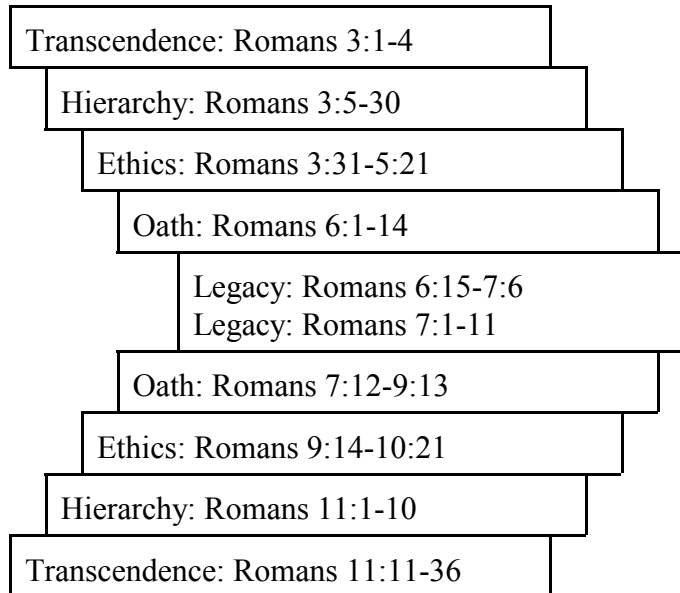
Romans 8:31

Romans 9:14

Romans 9:30

Paul anticipates objections that will be posed by his readers and then he answers them. This gives the book a "question and answer" format. Such a format is designed to have you think along with the author and to follow his train of arguments. This means the book of Romans must be taken in context if it is to be understood.

An interesting pattern is seen when we examine the “God forbid” Statements in Romans:



ROMANS IN RELATION TO OTHER NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

1. Romans and the Epistles of Paul: The following chart is adapted from the observations of Irving Jensen.

1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians	Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians	Ephesians Philippians Colossians Philemon	1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus
Prophetical	Polemical	Philosophical & Personal	Pastoral
Hope	Faith	Love	Church order
Christ & second coming	Christ & the cross	Christ & the church	Christ & the congregation
Perfecting salvation	Plan of salvation	Privileges of salvation	Purpose of salvation
Consolation	Conflict	Conquest	Consistency

Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans

Eschatological	Soteriological	Christological	Ecclesiological
Future	Past	Present	
Anticipative	Controversial	Contemplative	Administrative
Conflict		Conquest	

2. Romans and Galatians Compared.

Romans	Galatians
<i>...as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." (1:17).</i>	<i>Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith." (3:11).</i>
<i>...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight (3:20).</i>	<i>...since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. (2:16).</i>
<i>For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." (4:3).</i>	<i>Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. (3:6).</i>
<i>...our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should not longer be slaves to sin (6:6).</i>	<i>I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me... (2:20).</i>
<i>For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (8:15).</i>	<i>...that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (4:5-6).</i>
<i>...he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. (13:8).</i>	<i>For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (5:14).</i>
<i>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts (13:14).</i>	<i>For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (3:27).</i>
<i>So then each one of us shall give an account of himself to God (14:12).</i>	<i>For each one shall bear his own load (6:5).</i>

Both focus upon the truth of salvation by grace through faith and

apart from the keeping of the law as a merit for salvation.

Galatians	Romans
Tells us what the gospel is not.	Tells us what the gospel is.
Negative	Positive
What Galatians picks up controversially...	...Romans puts down systematically.
Deep emotion	Calm reflection
More personal - local	Less personal - lofty
Comes from the heart of Paul.	Comes from the head of Paul.
Tone: Intensity & tumult of a battlefield	Tone: Calmness of surveying the field after victory

Commenting upon these contrasts, John W. Lawrence says that these two epistles are to us what the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are to our nation (1971:12). Galatians is our Declaration of Independence from the law which once held us enslaved. Romans is our Constitution as citizens of heaven and there are no amendments in this constitution.

SALUTATION & PROLOGUE

Romans 1:1-7

PAUL,
a bonds slave of Christ Jesus,
called as an apostle,
set apart for the gospel of God,
which He promised beforehand
through His prophets
in the holy Scriptures,
concerning His Son
who was born of a descendant of David
according to the flesh,
who was declared the Son of God with power
by the resurrection from the dead,
according to the spirit of holiness,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
through whom we have received
grace
and
apostleship
to bring about the obedience of faith
among all the Gentiles,
for His name's sake,
among who you also are the called of Jesus
Christ;

TO all who are
beloved of God in Rome,
called as saints:

Grace to you
and
peace
from God our Father
and
the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1-7).

Before we start with the concept of an apostle, let us take a step back and say

something about the name “Paul.” When he is first introduced in the book of Acts, his name is not “Paul” but rather “Saul.” It has been customary to think that Paul changed his name from its original “Saul” to “Paul” so that he could better identify with the Gentiles (Saul is a Hebrew name, while Paul is a Latin name). However, I do not believe that this is completely the case.

In the days in which Paul lived, all Roman citizens had three names.

1. Praenomen - an individual name given at birth.
2. Nomen - a tribal name. In Rome there were about 1000 tribes which could trace their ancestry back to a common origin.
3. Cognomen. At first, the cognomen was given as a family nickname, usually referring to some outstanding feature in the individual. Here are a few examples...

Crassus (Fat)
Longus (Tall)
Rufus (red)
Felix (Happy)
Paulus (Little)

All Roman citizens possessed three names. Here are a few well-known examples...

- ♦ Gaius Julius Caesar
- ♦ Publius Cornelius Scipio
- ♦ Lucius Sergius Paulus

As you can see in the above example, *Paulus* was a cognomen. It was always used as a cognomen. As such, it was a family name. Although Paul was a Jew, he had also been born as a citizen of Roman. At some time in the past, one of his ancestors has been “adopted” into one of the families of Rome and given a Roman name. We do not know how this took place, though it is of interest to note that when a Roman citizen freed a slave, that slave acquired a measure of Roman citizenship and all of his future descendants were automatically Roman citizens. In any case, we can see that when Paul uses this name for himself, he is not making it up. He is merely using one of his names which would serve to better identify himself with the Gentiles. It is rightfully his own name.

THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE

Paul, a bonds slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God (Romans 1:1).

This greeting begins with Paul's name. This is not unusual. The acceptable way of beginning a letter was to start with your own name. Paul will not complete his greeting until verse 7. When he comes to the "gospel of God" he will go off on a tangent.

There are three parts to Paul's position.

1. A Bonds slave of Christ Jesus.

The word translated "bonds slave" is δούλος (*doulos*). It is the basic word for a slave. The "Servant of Yahweh" is a common theme in the Old Testament. It was a reference to the Messiah. It was the One who would come and who would perform the work of the Lord. Paul is quick to point out that he is not the Messiah. But he is doing the Messiah's work.

When Jesus called him on the Damascus Road, Paul recognized his place ("*Who are you, LORD?... LORD, what will you have me to do?*" - Acts 9:4-6). Paul recognizes himself as a slave of God. A slave has no will of his own. His will is subservient to the will of his master.

2. Called as an Apostle.

Our word "apostle" is a transliteration of the Greek word *apostolos*. The Hebrew counterpart of this word was the *sheliach*. A well-known Hebrew proverb states: "The authority of the sent one (*sheliach*) is equal to that of the sender." Thus authority is inherent in the term "apostle" from both its Greek and Hebrew backgrounds.

While the word "apostle" comes from the root verb "to send from" it seems to have a more specific meaning. Indeed, the Greeks of the Peloponnesian Wars used this as a military term for the admiral of their fleet who was "commissioned" with a special duty.

When used in this sense, it seems to speak of one who is sent out with special authority. The authority of which he speaks is that which is given to him directly by Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of the phrase “by the will of God.”

Paul was not an apostle because he decided to become one. He did not appoint himself to be an apostle. His own will did not make him an apostle. He is an apostle because he was called to be an apostle.

3. Set Apart for the Gospel.

The phrase “set apart” (*aphorismenos*) is the perfect passive participle of *aphorizo*, a compound word made up of *apho* and *horizo* (“to appoint”). Paul recognizes that he has a special appointment. Notice that Paul does not dwell upon the negative aspects of separation. He does not emphasize being set apart from movies or smoking or even from worldliness. Rather, he emphasizes the positive. We need to be equally balanced in our emphasis.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE

...the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake, among who you also are the called of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:2-6).

In these four verses, Paul sets forth in brief the entire message of the book of Romans. This Epistle is about the gospel. The word “gospel” is translated from the Greek word *euaggelion*. It is a compound word, meaning “good news.”

In verse 1 we read of the “gospel of God.” In verse 9 it is called “the gospel of His Son” but it is still the same gospel.

1. The Promise of the Gospel.

...the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through

His prophets in the holy Scriptures (Romans 1:2).

The “good news” of the Gospel is good, but it isn’t new. The Gospel did not start with Jesus. It started long before in the Old Testament. It started with promises given through the prophets of God and which were set forth in the Scriptures.

There are going to be many Old Testament figures mentioned in this epistle.

- ♦ Adam.
- ♦ Abraham.
- ♦ Isaac.
- ♦ Jacob.
- ♦ Esau.
- ♦ Pharaoh.
- ♦ Moses.
- ♦ Hosea.

There will be a number of Old Testament passages quoted. This is because the gospel has its roots in the Old Testament. The good news is that God has kept His promises that He gave through to the fathers through the prophets. Because He has kept His promises in the past, He will also continue to keep His promises.

2. The Person of the Gospel.

Concerning His Son who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness (Romans 1:3).

There is an interesting parallelism here. It is a parallelism which portrays two sides of the person of Jesus.

Concerning His Son	Who was born	a descendant of David	according to the flesh
	Who was declared	the Son of God	according to the spirit

The birth of Jesus was promised. When something happens which was previously promised, you know that it didn't happen by accident. God is in charge and He always keeps His promises.

The birth of Jesus was according to the flesh. It was rooted in humanity. He was Jewish. Notice that Jesus did not become the Son of God. He was declared to be the Son of God. This does not mean that God decided to make Him the Son of God. Rather, He was affirmed for who He was.

Notice what it is the evidence for the deity of Jesus. What is it that is the final evidence to show that Jesus is the Son of God? It is the resurrection. *He was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead (1:4).* The resurrection declared that Jesus is the Son of God. But what does this mean? In what sense is He the Son of God?

- ♦ A son is one who possesses the same characteristics of his father. This aspect of the sonship of Jesus focuses upon His deity.
- ♦ A son is subservient and submissive to his father. In this sense, the sonship of Jesus reflects His submission in taking on flesh.

3. The Provision of the Gospel.

...through whom we have received grace and apostleship... (Romans 1:5a).

The Lord not only provided the salvation whereby we are saved, He also provided the means by which that message of the gospel is to be spread to all men. The apostles were a love gift from God to men. They were charged with bringing the gospel to us.

4. The Purpose of the Gospel.

Verse 6 points out the specific area of presentation with which Paul had been commissioned. It is *to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.*

Paul always began by proclaiming the gospel to the Jews. He was Jewish himself and sometimes I think that he would have preferred to have been an apostle to the Jews. He had once described himself as a “Hebrew of the Hebrews.” But God gave him a special commission to preach also to the Gentiles. It was he who first made it a regular practice of preaching to the Gentiles (even though Peter was the first to win a Gentile convert in Acts 10).

The result of this preaching would be *the obedience of faith* on the part of his hearers. What is this *obedience of faith*? Is it merely obeying the command to believe? It is at least that. But I think that it is more. When a person believes, there is a resulting obedience. The gospel was not meant only to change what you think. It is also designed to change how you live.

THE RECIPIENTS OF THE EPISTLE

To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints (Romans 1:7a).

How do you identify yourself? If I would to ask you to introduce yourself and to say something about yourself, what would you say? How do you identify yourself?

- ♦ By what you do?
- ♦ By who you are?

The Lord begins by saying who you are. Only when it is established who you are that we can talk about what you are to do. This description is twofold:

1. Beloved of God.

This is a special title. There is a certain sense in which all men have been offered God’s love through the cross. But to be called the beloved of God is a special privilege. Paul wants these Roman believers that they have been granted such a privilege.

2. Called as Saints.

The word “saint” describes one who has been set apart for a special

purpose. It is taken from the same root as the words translated “holy” and “sanctify.” We are not saints because we are so good. We are saints because God is so good. But the ramifications of the fact that we have been called to be saints is that we are now called to live according to our sainthood.

Notice that this description of them is not based upon anything that these Roman believers have done. They are not special in themselves. They are special because they worship a special God who did something special on their behalf.

THE BLESSING OF THE EPISTLE

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7b).

This is Paul’s standard greeting. He wished them grace and peace. This combined greeting spans two races of people. “Grace” (*charis*) was similar to the typical greeting among the Greeks: *chairein*. “Peace” is taken the typical Hebrew greeting: *shalom*. It is perhaps significant that Paul always places these two greetings in this particular order. First comes grace. After you have received grace, then you can also receive peace. Without grace there is no peace.

Grace is the undeserved favor of God directed toward men. It excludes all human merit. It is the sum total of what God has done for you. The problem in the world today is that man is trying to find peace without the grace of God. It is only as man meets the grace of God and accepts it that he can find peace with God and then peace with himself and with others.

The source of grace and peace is twofold. It is from God the Father and it is from the Lord Jesus. And yet, these are not two separate sources. They are one. The preposition (“from”) is not repeated. It governs both the Father and Jesus.

God offers His grace and peace to you. If you are an unbeliever, then you can come to be at peace with God instead of being His enemy. You can come to Him through the way of His Son, Jesus Christ. But there is also a disclaimer here. It is that you cannot come to God apart from Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him.

PROCLAIMERS OF THE GOSPEL

Romans 1:8-17

I received a very official-looking letter a while back which was very obviously a form letter, printed out and reproduced in mass to a large audience. But in the side margin there was written a personal note.

You see, the author of the letter was a friend of mine. And so, he affixed to the form letter a short note of greeting. That is what Paul does here at the beginning of the book of Romans. Before Paul launches into the central theme of his epistle, he pauses to give a few personal notes.

Verses 1-7	Salutation and official introduction.
Verses 8-17	Personal introduction.

In this personal introduction, Paul will praise the Roman believers for their faith and he will relate his continuing prayers on their behalf. Then he will tell them of his plans and desires to eventually come to Rome and to preach the gospel in their midst. This will bring him to the opening theme of his epistle, the gospel.

Paul was a preacher, a proclaimer of a message. He will define that message in verse 16 as the Gospel. In this personal introduction of Paul's, we will see six defining characteristics of a proclaimer of the Gospel.

PROCLAIMERS OF THE GOSPEL ARE PEOPLE OF PRAISE

*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all,
because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole*

world. (Romans 1:8).

A remarkable thing was happening in the ancient world. The news of this remarkable thing was everywhere. It was the topic of conversation in every city and in every country. Something special was happening in Rome, the capital city of the Empire. There was a body of people there who were exhibiting a tremendous faith.

Paul's praise to the Lord is on account of the faith of the church at Rome. It was a faith in God and a faith that owed its existence to God. None of the apostles had as of yet visited Rome. But the gospel had come here. The faith of the believers of Rome has now being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

This was a fulfillment of the Great Commission as given in Acts 1:8. The promise had been that the witness of the apostles would go forth.

In Jerusalem.
And Judea.
And Samaria.
And to the whole world.

There was a saying in that day that "all roads lead to Rome." There was some literal truth to this statement. There were a series of roads that had been built throughout the entire empire. These roads were a means of communication. They linked Rome to the world. When something happened in Rome, the news would travel throughout the entire known world.

There is something special about Paul's praise. It is not self-centered. He is not praising God because he has such a great and awesome ministry. He is not praising the Lord because of the greatness of his own faith. He is praising because of the work of God in a church with whom he has had no personal contact.

Have you learned to do that? To praise the Lord when someone else gets the credit? To praise the Lord for the spiritual gifts of another believer, even when they might threaten to outshine your own? Have you learned to praise Him when some other Christian denomination that also proclaims the gospel is more successful at church planting and proclaiming the faith? Have you developed a kingdom mind set that has Christ's kingdom in view and not your own? Do you find yourself delighting in the successes of other and do

you find yourself praying for them?

PROCLAIMERS OF THE GOSPEL ARE PEOPLE OF PRAYER

For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, ¹⁰ always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. (Romans 1:9-10).

Prayer was a way of life for Paul. He who had called the church to “pray without ceasing” reflected a life of prayer. Notice the adjectives used to describe his prayer life.

- ♦ Unceasingly
- ♦ Always

Do you ever find yourself too busy to pray? If we really understood the power of prayer, we would realize that we are too busy not to pray. If we really understood prayer, then we would pray a lot more.

Do you remember the ministry of Jesus? In those times when His ministry was at its busiest, it was those times that Jesus would seek to be alone with His Heavenly Father. Jesus never gave His disciples tips on preaching; He never gave them an outline on how to give the gospel or strategies for church planting, but He did teach them how to pray.

Paul’s prayer was directed toward the Roman believers and specifically that he might be permitted to come and visit them and minister among them. And yet, this prayer was in submission to “*the will of God.*”

The story is told of a little boy who was standing up on a chair. His mother found him standing there and said, “Sit down, son, you might fall down.” He refused. She told him again. Again in defiance, he said that he would not. After several repeated attempts to get him to sit down, she was at the end of her rope. She told him that if he did not sit down in that highchair at once she would give him a spanking, and she meant it. As he sat down he said, “I may be sitting down on the outside, but I’m standing up on the inside.” He may

have obeyed, but he did so without a submissive spirit.

Paul had such a submissive spirit to the will of God. How about you? Are you “standing up on the inside”? Do your prayers reflect a submission to the Lord’s kingdom and His will, no matter what it does to your own status?

Paul’s prayer was that he might come to Rome. The prayer will ultimately be answered. But perhaps not in the way in which Paul anticipates. He will come to Rome, but it will be as a prisoner.

There is a lesson here. It is that God will answer your prayers, but He will not always answer them in the way you planned for them to be answered. So often, He delights in bringing the answer in a completely unexpected way.

There was an old woman who used to go out onto her back porch every morning and look out and pray. At the close of her prayer, she would call out in a loud voice, “Praise the Lord!” A grumpy old atheist lived next door and each morning he would berate her and say, “Don’t be silly; there is no Lord.”

One morning, the woman went out onto her back porch and prayed, “Lord, there is no food in the house and I don’t know what I am going to do, but I’m going to praise you anyway.” The next morning, there were three bags of groceries sitting on her back porch. She saw that and she said, “Thank you Lord for providing these groceries. Praise the Lord!”

The old atheist leaned out and said, “Ah ha! I fooled you. I was the one who put those groceries there. There is no Lord!” The woman prayed, “Praise the Lord! You brought me three bags of groceries and you made the Devil pay for them!”

That is what is going to happen in the life of Paul. He wants to come to Rome but the possibility has not yet surfaced. He is praying to come to Rome and his prayer is going to be answered. He is going to be sent to Rome at the expense of the Roman government. He will be given an all-expense paid trip to Rome via the Roman government. It will not be a luxury vacation. He will be a prisoner, but his gospel will not be imprisoned.

PROCLAIMERS OF THE GOSPEL HAVE A PURPOSE

For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. (Romans 1:11-12).

Paul's purpose in desiring to come to Rome is that he might "impart some spiritual gift" to the believers there. I understand this, not as some specific charismatic gift, but a general spiritual strengthening. The result of this spiritual gift will be that these believers will be established.

The word "established" is *sterichthenai*. It is the aorist passive infinitive of *sterizo* (from which we get our word "stasis"). It means, "to set fast, to secure as immovable." It describes that which has been anchored and set so as to be secure.

Paul was never content with merely preaching the gospel. Though he was a master evangelist, he did not merely rack up decisions. His goal in ministry was to establish the people of God in their faith.

What is it that establishes a Christian? What is it that Paul is going to do in Rome that will establish the believers there and anchor them and secure them in their faith? I believe it to be the teachings presented within this epistle. It is the doctrines of salvation.

Notice what Paul says will be the result of their establishment in these teachings. He says that he will be *encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine (Romans 1:12).*

Paul is being honest here and I will be equally honest. There are times when I am discouraged. There are times when I feel as though I am sapped of all spiritual energy, even though I am looked upon as the preacher and the Bible class leader. Times when I just want to toss in the towel. It is at times like this that I need encouragement. The place that I go to find such encouragement is with other believers.

You might say, "John, you ought to be finding your encouragement with the Lord Himself." It is like the little girl who was sent to bed and who cried out from her bedroom, "Mommy, I want someone to come in here and to be with me." Her mother replied, "It's okay honey, Jesus is with you." The little girl called back, "But I want someone with skin on."

So it is with us. There are times when we need someone “with skin on.” That is why the Lord gave us His body. You and me. Paul is no different. He goes through his own periods of discouragement. He is also going to be encouraged when he comes to Rome and meets the Christians there.

PROCLAIMERS OF THE GOSPEL HAVE A PLAN

I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. (Romans 1:13-14).

In the late 1970's, Paula and I made plans to work with a church in Miami. We had been serving as youth directors for a number of years and we had been asked to come to another church and to assist in the establishing of a Christian Coffeehouse and to teach in their Bible Institute. Accordingly, we began to make plans. But there was a delay. We spent some time in obtaining a replacement in the place we were at and in making certain that there was an orderly transition of responsibilities in the ministry. When we finally showed up at the Miami church, one member quipped, “I had been hearing for such a long time that John and Paula Stevenson were coming that I began to wonder if there really was a John and a Paula Stevenson.”

Paul is in a similar situation. He has made plans to come to Rome. Those plans have been delayed. He wants the believers at Rome to know that he is planning to eventually come to Rome. He wants them to know this because they will soon hear that he is going in the other direction. He is in Corinth. He will shortly be leaving Corinth. But instead of going westward to Rome, he will be going east. He will go to Jerusalem. There he will be arrested. He will be placed into prison at the port city of Caesarea and await trial. There he will wait. For two years. Then he will have a pre-trial hearing. Then he will wait some more. Ultimately, he will be placed upon a prison ship bound for Rome. It will be a long voyage and the ship will not make it. After many adventures on the sea, he will come to Rome. But up to this point he has been prevented. He has been prevented by the Lord. In Romans 15:22 he

will repeat the fact that he has been hindered and, in that context, will show how that it has been the Lord's program for him that he should preach the gospel in places that have not heard the gospel. (15:20).

The gospel has already been preached in Rome. Indeed, the faith of the believers in Rome is rapidly becoming a byword throughout the Empire. Paul has been prevented from coming there by his responsibilities elsewhere.

Can I tell you the end of the story? It is found in the closing verses of the book of Acts. Paul comes to Rome, albeit a prisoner. As the book of Acts closes, he is still under house arrest. He is still a political prisoner awaiting trial. And again, the years are beginning to pass by. But this time there is a difference.

And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:30-31).

Do you see it? When Paul was free, he had been hindered from coming to Rome. But once he becomes a prisoner, then he is going to be unhindered in his ability to preach the gospel to those at Rome.

The result of this unhindering will be that Paul will have opportunity to "*obtain some fruit*" among the Romans. There is a principle here. Although it is God who brings about the fruit, we are required to do our part in the preparing of the ground, in the sowing and the watering and in the reaping.

William Carey was the great missionary to India. When he first went to the elders of his church with his plans to travel to India, the chairman of the board of elders said, "Sit down, young man. When God is pleased to save the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine." That sounds holy. But it is a lie. It is true that only God can bring about the fruit. But we are permitted to enter into the fruit-bearing process. It is both good and appropriate that we plan for that process.

What plans have you made to obtain fruit for the kingdom? If you do not plan to obtain such fruit, then you will probably not follow through. Let me urge you to plan to bear fruit for the kingdom in order that you might reap in due season. That is one of the things that I like about an evangelistic

program. It pushes me to evangelize. There are times when I need to be pushed. I suspect the same is true of you, too.

PROCLAIMERS OF THE GOSPEL HAVE A PASSION

So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:15-16).

Paul was a passionate man. His passion was for the gospel. He was filled with a passion for preaching the gospel. That passion is directing his desire to come to Rome. Rome was the queen of the Empire. It was the city of pagans, the seat of the sophisticated, and the home of the all-powerful emperor; a place where a fiery preacher can be burned at the stake.

What is the message which Paul is so eager to preach? A message of a backwoods Messiah - a Savior who was arrested by a Roman governor, beaten by Roman soldiers and crucified on a Roman cross. Yet this is no cause for shame on Paul's part. He is not ashamed of the gospel. To the contrary. He takes great pride in the gospel. He takes pride in the fact that the One who was crucified, dead and buried did not stay in the ground, but arose from the dead.

We are called to be people of passion. We are to be passionate about Jesus and about the gospel and about its proclamation. What is it that excites you the most? If it is not the Lord and His gospel, then you have an idol in your life that needs to be torn down.

PROCLAIMERS OF THE GOSPEL HAVE A SOURCE OF POWER

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17).

Verses 16 and 17 could be called the thesis statement for the entire book of Romans. They will set forth the message that is to take us through the rest of the book. Paul begins by saying that he is not ashamed. This is a figure of speech called "understatement." Paul is understating what he really means. He is not merely unashamed of the Gospel. He is eminently proud of the Gospel.

The word "gospel" is translated from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (pronounced *eu-angelion*). It is a compound word, made from the joining of two Greek words.

Verses 16-17 form a transition between Paul's introduction and the main theme of his epistle. This transition is marked by four causative prepositions ("for").

- (1) Εὖ (*eu*) is the Greek word for "good."
- (2) Ἀγγελία (*aggelia*) is a "message" (from which we get our word, "angel" to describe a heavenly "messenger").

Thus, Paul is speaking of a message. It is a good message, good news. What is the good news of the gospel? It is made up of three major points.

- a. Man is condemned in his sins.
The first three chapters will focus upon this fact.
- b. God has provided a way of salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ who died and was buried and who rose again from the dead.
- c. This salvation is available to all who believe.
If you will trust in Jesus as your Lord and your Savior, repenting of your sins and turning to Him for your life, you will be saved.

This is the gospel, a good message. But this is no ordinary message. Paul describes this message as the "power of God"-- δυνάμις Θεοῦ (note the absence of the definite article).

God's power has been manifested in a variety of ways. In verse 20 we shall

read of God's power being manifested in all of creation. Scientists today postulate a "big bang," an immense explosion of power which brought about our universe. Creation is a revelation of God's awesome power. But another revelation of God's power is seen in the salvation of all who believe. The gospel reveals, not only the strength of God's power, but also the glory and the righteousness and the holiness of God's power.

Do you remember the story of Moses and the glory of God? Moses came to God with a request. It was no small request. "Show me Thy glory."

"God, I want to see Your power."

God replies, "Sorry, Moses. It isn't possible. If you were to see the fully exposed power of My majestic glory, it would fry your eyes out and burn your brain (that's the Hebrew translation)" But God doesn't leave it at that. He has an alternative solution. Moses can enter a cleft in the rock -- a cave. God will place his hand over Moses and the rock. The glory and the power and the goodness of God will go by. Then the Lord will take away His hand. Moses will witness the "after-glow" of the presence of the Lord.

The most that Moses ever saw was the "back side" of God. But you have an opportunity to see the unabashed power of God. You can see the revealing of His radical righteousness and His holiness. It is seen in the Gospel. It is seen in the cross.

My prayer of late has been that of Moses. I have been praying to see the glory and the power and the goodness of God. To receive an answer to that prayer, I need to focus upon the gospel.

Paul says that the gospel is *the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*. Notice the reference back to verse 15. Paul wanted to preach the Gospel to the believers in Rome. Don't miss this! The gospel is important to the believer. To him it is the power of God for salvation. All too often, people think that the gospel is only for the unbeliever. This is not true. The gospel is for us. Its power is manifested in salvation. But that is not all. Verse 17 says that *in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."*

Why is the Gospel the power of God? It is the power of God because it is in the Gospel that the righteousness of God is being revealed. "Is revealed" is a present passive indicative. We could translate it by saying "*the*

righteousness of God is being revealed...” What righteousness is being revealed? It is the radical righteousness of God. It is a righteousness which is consistent with God’s commands.

How does the Gospel do this? It is by demonstrating the way in which the justice of God must be met. We do not meet the justice of God on the basis of our own merits. We meet that justice *“from faith to faith.”*

- (1) *“From Faith”* looks to the point of salvation.
- (2) *“To Faith”* might be a reference to the life of faith.

Faith is the beginning of our relationship with Christ. But it does not stop there. It goes from faith to faith. Throughout this whole realm of faith, the radical righteousness of God is continually revealed. It is revealed when God judges the sinner and it is revealed when God justifies the sinner. It tells us how we have fallen short of God’s glory and it shows us how God has moved to save use when we wanted nothing to do with Him. It points out how we really are and then it changes how we really are. It does this, not by the works of the law, but through faith.

This is not a new concept. It is found in the Old Testament book of Habakkuk (2:4). Paul quotes this passage to tie the two separate threads of righteousness and faith together. The righteous one here looks to the man who has been declared by God to be righteous as a result of the imputation of Christ. This man is saved by faith. But that is not all. He shall also live by faith. You see, salvation is more than just a ticket to heaven. The believer is also one who lives by faith.

1 Corinthians 1:17-18 tells us that the Gospel and its power is viewed by the world as being foolish. This is why there is a temptation to be ashamed of the Gospel. This is important. We do not preach the gospel because it sounds so impressive to the unsaved. We preach it because it is the power of God.

WHAT MAKES GOD ANGRY?

Romans 1:18-23

God gets angry. If you don't believe that, then take a look at sweet, gentle Jesus as He comes to the Temple in Jerusalem. The whistling of a whip through the air. Tables overturned. Coins rattling on the pavement. Moneychangers scattering. In the midst of it is an angry Messiah zealous for the holiness of His Father's house. God gets angry. This is the first thing that we see in our opening passage.

"For the wrath of God is revealed..." (Romans 1:18).

The Scriptures have quite a lot to say about the wrath of God.

"The Lord shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the Lord and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven." (Deuteronomy 29:20).

*A jealous and avenging God is the Lord;
The Lord is avenging and wrathful.
The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries,
And He reserves wrath for His enemies.
The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,
And the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.
In whirlwind and storm is His way,
And clouds are the dust beneath His feet. (Nahum 1:2-3).*

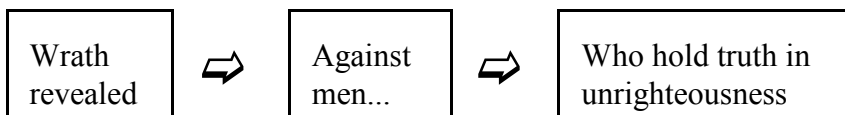
*It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
(Hebrews 10:31).*

These passages portray the wrath of God. Many people today like to describe God in terms of sweetness and light as if He accepts everyone and takes in everybody. What they neglect is the Biblical teaching of the wrath of God.

That teaching is brought to us in Romans 1. In verse 17 the righteousness of God is revealed. In verse 18 the wrath of God is revealed. In both cases, the present tense is used. It describes that which is presently being revealed.

1:17	Righteousness of God is revealed.
1:18	Wrath of God is revealed.

We are going to be talking about the radical righteousness of God and how it changes people and saves people. But first we have to talk about how it judges people. Paul does not start his epistle by saying, “Smile, God has a wonderful plan for your life.” Instead, he begins by speaking of the wrath of God.



Now let me ask you a question. How is the wrath of God revealed? Notice the tense. It is present. It is being revealed right now. Paul says that “the wrath of God is continually being revealed.” He is not speaking of a future event. He is speaking about God’s wrath in the present time.

The word “wrath,” ὀργή (*orge*), is found 12 times in Romans (out of 36 times in the entire New Testament). It is from the root ὀργαω, “to swell.”

In what ways are God’s wrath being currently revealed? It is revealed in wars and rumors of wars. It is revealed in earthquakes and floods and natural disasters. It is revealed in famines and diseases. But that is not all. It is also revealed in the hearts of men who turn away from God when their hearts are hardened and when they enter a spiraling course into the depths of sin. It is revealed when men deny the truth of God and attempt to suppress it. It is in the release of the individual over to the lusts of his heart (as seen in the three times where “God gave them over” in verse 24, 26 and 28).

The wrath of God is being revealed in the context of historical judgments (verses 24 & following). God's judgment against sin is to allow more sin to

take place.

1. Men know God.
2. Men suppress the truth (1:18).
3. There is an antithesis between the truth of God and the falsity of man. Man is completely and totally depraved.

There comes a time when the Lord pulls out all restraints and allows men to go as far as their lusts will let them. But this does not happen to the believer. The Child of God is not under God's wrath (Romans 5:9). God will never release the believer to his lusts as He does the unbeliever. The believer will always be disciplined instead. That is one of the evidences that he is a child of God. Only children are disciplined. Just as you do not discipline the neighbor's kid who lives down the street, so the Lord only disciplines His own children. By contrast, God shows His wrath to those who are not His own. What is it that brings about such wrath? What is it that really makes God angry? I want to suggest several things.

GOD GETS ANGRY WHEN MEN SUPPRESS THE TRUTH

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. (Romans 1:18-19).

Notice that it is men themselves who suppress the truth. Men are not saying, "I want to come to God, but I can't because I haven't been predestined." They are actively involved in covering up the truth. There is a principle here. Light is light in direct proportion to how much you have seen the darkness. The opposite is also true. Darkness is darkness in direct proportion to how much you have seen the light.

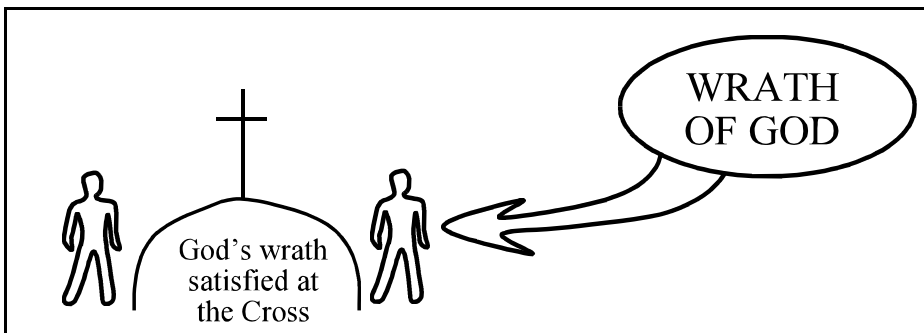
This text was not written to throw rocks at other people. It was written for us. Paul does what Amos did. He started out by preaching against the pagans. Everyone agreed. Damascus is bad and God is going to destroy her.

Gaza has sinned and will be burned with fire. Tyre will be punished for her evil. Edom will be shown no pity. With each injunction, the Israelites were saying, “Yes, Lord!” But then Amos turned to Israel and Judah. Suddenly everyone stood convicted.

Paul does the same thing here. His purpose is not to say that the world is bad but that we are good. It is to show that all are bad. All need a savior. Homosexuality will be shown for its sinfulness. But it is not the only sin listed. It is one among many and they are all bad.

Question: What is the greatest expression of the wrath of God? The answer may surprise you. It isn't in what God is doing to homosexuals and sinners. It is the cross. It was there that God's righteousness condemned Christ. God's wrath was poured out upon His own Son.

Here is the point. The love of God is not a refuge from the wrath of God... unless you go through the Cross.



God is righteous. His righteousness condemns you. But when you come to the Cross, that same righteousness of God saves you because it is credited to you. That is why we described it throughout this book as His radical righteousness; a righteousness that changes you.

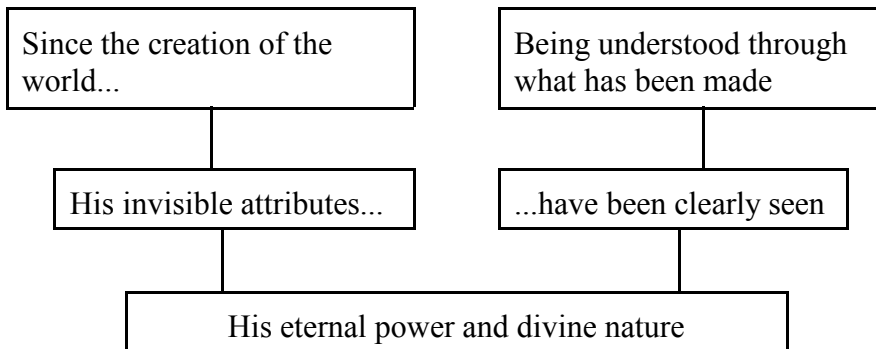
GOD GETS ANGRY WHEN HIS EVIDENT TRUTHS ARE IGNORED

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made,

so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20).

One of the most common questions I am asked as a Christian is, “What about the heathen who has never heard the gospel? How can God judge a man who has never heard about God in the first place?” After all, it does not seem very fair that God would judge a man for disobeying God if God has not even gone so far as to reveal Himself to men. It would seem that such a man could stand before God’s seat of judgment and appeal his case, saying, “It is not fair that You judge me for rejecting you since I never had an opportunity to know anything about You.”

This verse provides the answer. The man who has never heard about God already has an understanding of the existence of God. The fact of God’s existence can be understood through the existence of the visible creation.



There is a play on words here. The invisible (ἀόρατα, “unseen”) has been clearly seen (κατ’ ὁράται). How do you see the unseen? It is by the marks it leaves in the visible realm.

Do you remember the story of Robinson Crusoe? He was a sailor who was shipwrecked upon a deserted island. He spent years also, searching the horizon for a ship, but none came. Then one day, Robinson Crusoe was walking along the beach, and he saw something in the sand. It was a footprint. A human footprint. He could see the toes and the heel and he could see that it did not match his own footprints. What was his conclusion? What did he decide upon seeing this footprint? He concluded that there was someone else on the island.

What would you have thought if he had said to himself, “My goodness! Look at the way in which the wind and the waves have sculptured the sand on this beach so that it resembles a human footprint! It must have taken natural

selection billions and billions of years to have such a design come about by mere chance!” Does it sound a little silly? Of course it does! But this is exactly what men have done with regard to the revelation of God in His creation. We have in creation not a single footprint but an entire universe of footprints. The entire universe is a giant billboard which points to the fact of God’s existence.

Furthermore, Paul says that this evidence is “*clearly seen*.” It isn’t as though the evidence were not there. It isn’t even as though man’s eyes were blinded so that he could not see the evidence. He has seen the evidence and he has seen it clearly. And then, rejecting the evidence, he has chosen to ignore it and has sought to find some other “scientific” rationale for the universe. Man willfully refuses to see that which God has shown him. This involves a self-blindness.

The excuse that, “I’ve never heard” is no excuse because man innately has a knowledge that God exists. That knowledge is available to anyone who will seek. God is “*a rewarder of those who seek Him*” (Hebrews 11:6). But that is not all. Knowledge of God is not merely available, it is already a present possession. Man knows that God is. He cannot help but to know it. This knowledge renders Him without excuse.

The phrase “*without excuse*” is translated from the Greek word ἀναπολογητος (*anapologetos*). It is from the same root as the word translated “defense” in 1 Peter 3:15 (“*make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you*”). The point is that there is no defense that can be made for man’s actions. They cannot be explained away.

Many unbelievers want to dictate the terms upon which God is to present His credentials. God is regulated to One holding His evidence in His hands, waiting to be judged. But you don’t judge God! He is the judge. You are the defendant. To make matters worse, you are a defendant without a defense. You are without excuse. You can never say that God did not make Himself known to you because the very world in which you live is a silent testimony to the power and the “Godness” of God.

The universe proclaims the existence of God. It doesn’t merely indicate a faint possibility of the existence of God. It shouts out through the expanse of the creation that God is there! Verse 19 says that God has made this obvious to man (“God made it evident to them”). Because God has made

Himself obvious to man, man is without excuse.

GOD BECOMES ANGRY WHEN HE IS NOT HONORED AS GOD

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:21).

Every once in a while, I have some unbeliever say to me, “I believe in God; I believe that somewhere there is a Supreme Being.” When they say this, it usually seems to come with an expectation that I will congratulate them on their “belief.” But this verse tells us that it is not enough to be aware of God’s existence. God also demands honor and thankfulness.

Have you ever done a service for someone and had them ignore it? It might have been something as simple as opening a door for a lady or picking up a book that had been dropped or it might have been the acknowledgment of a gift. We are in the habit of thanking people for the smallest things. But God gives everything. We read in James 1:17 that “*every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.*”

However, once the knowledge of God is rejected, the result is mere “*foolish speculation.*” This speculation extends to...

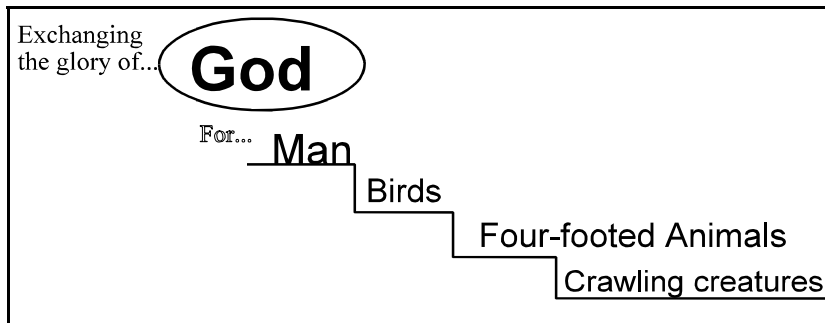
- ♦ Man’s origins
- ♦ Man’s salvation
- ♦ Man’s destiny and the end of the world
- ♦ The character of God

When man rejects the revelation which God has given of Himself, he will believe anything and everything, no matter how silly.

GOD BECOMES ANGRY WHEN HIS GLORY IS GIVEN AWAY

Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (Romans 1:22-23).

The giving away of God's glory was no accident. It was accomplished under the guise of professed wisdom. Men "professed themselves to be wise." They even called themselves "Professors." But their "wisdom" was really foolishness of the worst sort. Notice the downward spiral of man's descent.



Having departed from the worship of God, man seeks another image which to worship. The gods of paganism were fashioned after the images of created beings. The Greeks worshiped gods after a human form. The Egyptians and Babylonians worshiped gods which were represented by lower forms of life. Both of these forms were to be found in Rome. The downward spiraling of idolatry runs the gamut of creatures.

1. Man.

The Greek and Roman gods were fashioned after the likeness of men. This could be a reference to that type of worship. But it could also be a veiled reference to the emperor-worship which was only now beginning to be seen in Rome.

2. Birds.

The symbol of the Roman Empire was the eagle. Its standard was looked upon as an idolatrous symbol by the Jews. Indeed, one of the Jewish revolts had been sparked when Pontius Pilate brought the images of the Roman eagle into Jerusalem.

3. Four-footed Animals.

When the Israelites had come out of Egypt and encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, they entered into the sin of idolatry as they fashioned for themselves a golden calf.

This progression begins with God and ends with man bowing down to a snake.

4. Crawling Creatures.

The Egyptians worshiped all sorts of animals of both the higher as well as the lower orders. They held all sorts of insects and crawling creatures to be sacred symbols of their gods.

An understanding of this progression will teach us several things about the way man is.

- ♦ It explains the existence of Idolatry.

Why does idolatry exist? It exists because man realizes that God exists. When he turns away from worshiping the true God, then he feels compelled to make up a replacement and to worship that replacement. Idolatry therefore becomes a psychological necessity for one who has rejected God.

- ♦ It teaches us that man did not originate as an idolater.

He did not begin with animism and work his way up through polytheism to monotheism. The opposite is true. Man began with the knowledge of God. But the knowledge of God was so uncomfortable to man in his sin and rebellion that man turned away from God and sought a more comfortable god of his own making.

How many times have you heard someone say, "I can't believe that God would do a thing like that! My god certainly is not like that!" Such a person is beginning the same downward spiral into idolatry.

- ♦ It teaches that idolatry is not an indication of man's search for God.

It is just the opposite. Idolatry is the evidence of man's rejection of the truth. Idolatry makes God angry. I am not speak only of the kind

of idolatry that makes a statue of a man or a bird or a cow or a creepy crawly. All idolatry makes God angry. Even the sophisticated and subtle kinds.

After all, there are many things that we do that God also calls idolatry. Paul says in Colossians 3:5 that greed amounts to idolatry. Why? Because it involves putting something besides God as first place in your life.

Is God first place in your life? Does He hold the pre-eminent position in all that you do and in all that you are? If not, then you are engaged in idolatry. That makes God mad. The good news is that you need not experience the wrath and the anger of God. He has prepared a way of escape. That way is through repentance and faith in His Son. God sent His Son to be the answer to His anger.

WHEN GOD GIVES UP

Romans 1:24-32

You've heard the old saying. "If at first you don't succeed, try and try again." But there comes a time when it doesn't pay to try, try again. There comes a time when the better part of wisdom is to give up. That is what we see God doing in this chapter. There comes a time when God gives up on mankind, when He stops preventing man's sinful actions and releases him to go and to "do his own thing." Three times in Romans 1:24-32 we read that "*God gave them over.*" What does this mean? It means that instead of the Holy Spirit working to restrain men from engaging in sin and unrighteousness, God allowed men to engage in their sinful activities to the utmost.

This did not happen immediately. God is a God of patience. He is longsuffering. He strives with men and calls them to repentance. He withholds His righteous judgment for a long season. But finally there comes a time when this judgment is withheld no more.

Do you remember the cryptic words given by God in the days of Noah? The human race had turned away from the Lord. The human race, which had been created to serve and to honor the Lord, had gone its own way.

Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." (Genesis 6:3).

God's Spirit had striven with men since the time of the fall in Eden. It would continue to strive with men for a season. But there would be an end. That end would come 120 years later with a great flood.

The days of Noah have come and gone. Once again the Spirit of God strives with man. But it does not strive forever. When men continue to reject the God who has been revealed to them, then He will ultimately respond in

judgment.

In verses 18-23 we have seen man turning away from God and refusing to worship Him, thus breaking the first three commandments of the Decalogue. In the following verses, God gives man over to break the rest of the commandments (most of them are mentioned in these verses).

Romans 1:18-23	Romans 1:24-32
Man breaks first three commandments	Man breaks the rest of the commandments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Other gods♦ Dishonor of God's name♦ Idolatry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Disobedient to parents♦ Murder♦ Immoral adulterers♦ Slanderers♦ Full of envy

Oscar Wilde once said, "When the gods wished to punish us they answer our prayers." That is what happens in this passage. God answers the prayer of the unbeliever who desires God to leave him alone and allow him to go his own way. That way is a downward spiral.

I have in my library a book written in the late 1960's by J. Bronowski entitled *The Ascent of Man*. Perhaps we should give this chapter a different title: "The Descent of Man." The Jewish rabbis had a saying, "The reward of a good deed is a good deed, and the reward of an evil deed is an evil deed." Sin is the punishment for sin. Sin begets sin which begets more sin.

GIVEN OVER TO IMPURITY

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:24-25).

The first area where God is said to have given man over is in the area of the lusts of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored

among them.

There are many kinds of impurity. But the kind Paul seems to focus upon is a sexual impurity, one that results in the dishonoring of people's bodies. Sex in itself is not bad. Indeed, it was designed by God. But it was designed by God to be shared between a husband and a wife. Sexual relations outside the marriage covenant are forbidden by God.

Why are there so many marriages these days which end in divorce? Why has America become known as the land of sexual immorality? It is because we as a nation have rejected God. He has given men over to their lusts. He has allowed that their lusts become more lustful. Verse 25 states the reason that God has done this. He has allowed men to descend into sexual impurity because they first descended into religious impurity.

God gave men over
into sexual
unfaithfulness...

Because...

Men entered
into spiritual
unfaithfulness

The Old Testament regularly pictured the unfaithfulness and unbelief in God in terms of spiritual adultery. In Ezekiel 16 presents such a picture of unfaithful Israel. The Lord took these people and “*spread His skirt*” over them, entering into a covenant marriage with the nation (16:8). However, Israel did not remain faithful to the covenant. Instead, she entered into a sort of spiritual prostitution.

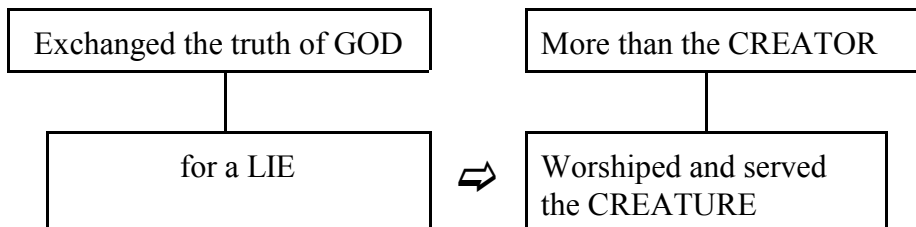
“But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing.” (Ezekiel 16:15).

Ezekiel becomes graphic in his portrayal, saying of the nation, “*You spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry*” (16:25). Does that sound shocking? It is supposed to. That is the way God views idolatry and unbelief. It is nothing less than spiritual prostitution of the worst sort. Impure. Dirty. Until you realize how dirty sin is, then you will never truly appreciate the awesome grace of God.

These two verses in Romans teach us that unfaithfulness toward God and sexual unfaithfulness are related. While it is true that when man turns away from God he is committing spiritual adultery, it is also true that when God

releases man to his sinful rebellion, he turns to an immorality of a more physical and sexual nature. That which started out as only spiritual soon is manifested in the physical and sexual realm.

Verse 25 contains a chiasm - a parallel which contrasts the lie of unbelievers with the truth that ought to have been followed.



GIVEN OVER TO HOMOSEXUALITY

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. (Romans 1:26-27).

A second consequence of idolatry is homosexuality, the abandoning not only of a proper marriage relationship, but an abandoning even of the very natural function of genders. Paul lived in a day when homosexuality was “coming out of the closet.” The Roman historian Suetonius relates in graphic detail the unnatural sexual practices of those emperors who followed Augustus. Paul’s pronouncement here is a judgment against both Roman society and even the Roman emperors of the day. This passage teaches us several things about homosexuality.

1. Homosexuality is contrary to the creative design.

This passage states that it is contrary to the natural order of things. Sexually speaking, there is a natural function of the male and there is a natural function of the female. God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. His design was for a man and a woman to be together.

2. Engaging in Homosexual practices is a sin.
 - a. The first time it is mentioned is in Genesis 19 where the Lord destroys the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their indulgence in this sin.
 - b. Homosexual acts are condemned as an abomination in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. The penalty for such an activity was death.
 - c. Homosexuality is included in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 as one of the sins the practitioners of which shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

It is not merely a sickness. God never condemned people for being sick. Neither is it an innate sexual orientation into which people are born. It is true that some have this as an area of weakness, such as another might have a weakness for alcohol or for drugs; the way one might be an impulsive liar or a kleptomaniac. But these do not excuse the sin. The issue is not sexual orientation. The issue is what one does with that sexuality.

3. Homosexuality is a judgment from God against sin.

That is taught here in this passage. When men turned away from God and refused to worship Him, God gave them over into the sins of their flesh. One of those sins into which God gave them was homosexuality.

4. Since homosexuality is a sin, it can be forgiven by God and overcome.

Paul does not list homosexuality as the worst of all possible sins. I do not wish to downplay the seriousness of this sin, but I do wish to point out that all unrighteousness is sin and that God is able to forgive all sin.

GIVEN OVER TO A DEPRAVED MIND

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God

any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:28-32).

Verse 28 contains a play on words. Men did not “see fit” (ἐδοκιμασαν) to acknowledge God, so God gave them over to an “unfit” (ἄδοκιμον) mind. Both the verb (δοκιμαζω) and its corresponding adjective have the idea of putting someone to the test for the purpose of approving. Men did not approve of God and God responded by giving them over to a disapproved way of thinking. Men rejected God and God gave them a rejected thinking.

Paul now catalogs a long list of sins dealing mostly with sins against one’s fellow man. They can be seen in three groups:

1:29	Acts of Sin		<i>Unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice</i>
1:29b	People of Sin	What They Are	<i>Gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents</i>
1:31		What They Lack	<i>Without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful</i>
1:32	Conspiracy of Sin		<i>They not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them</i>

Whereas the previous sins mentioned have been sins against God and against one’s own body, these sins are directed against one’s fellow man. There is

a principle here. How you relate to God has a direct effect upon how you relate to your brother or your sister or your wife or your husband or your parents or your children.

What Paul describes is nothing less than a breakdown of society. We are seeing such a breakdown in our society today. The portrait which Paul paints is our own. It is increasingly a society without God.

We are not getting better and better. The older we get, the more we remain the same. There is a personal principle here. As you get older, you become what you are, only more so.

If you are righteous, you become more righteous. If you are unrighteous, you become more unrighteous. When you die, the same principle applies. Maybe that makes you uncomfortable. I'm glad. Salvation involves a change of direction. It takes one who was becoming more and more unrighteous, and it changes the direction of his life so that he becomes more and more righteous.

This downward spiral can be seen in both individuals as well as in nations. America has seen such a downward spiral as the naming of God has been forbidden from our public schools. As our nation has determined not to know God, each one of these sinful activities has mushroomed upon our society. To that degree, the Lord has "given over" this nation to its lusts, its passions and its depravity.

Verse 32 points out that unregenerate man is not content to damn himself. He is also energetically involved in trying to get others to join him in perdition. He gives "heartily approval" to those who live lives of sin. These words of Paul can be stated in the positive to depict the Christian. Notice by contrast the portrait that is painted.

Therefore, God gave them over in their hearts to self-control and purity, that their bodies might be honored among them. For they kept and cherished the truth of God and worshiped and served the Creator, who is blessed forever, rather than the creature.

For this reason God gave them over to pure and wholesome lives, lived with carefree ease even in the most intimate relations so that all received in their own persons the due reward of their fidelity.

And just as they saw fit to acknowledge God in all things, God gave them over to a sound mind, to do those

things which are proper, being filled with all righteousness, goodness, generosity, kindness; full of selflessness, life, healing, openness, kindliness; they are gentle in speech, always building others up, lovers of God, respectful, humble, self-effacing, inventors of good, obedient to parents, understanding, trustworthy, loving, merciful; and as they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are possessors of life, they do the same, and give hearty approval to all who do likewise.

Paul presents the portrait of a man without God. But when God comes into a life, He paints quite a different portrait. One way leads to death, and the other leads to life. One way leads to the wrath and judgment of God, and the other leads to the approval and acceptance of God. The question is: which do you prefer? Apart from the saving power of the gospel, man descends lower and lower on the ladder of evil. Coming to Jesus gets you off the ladder.

This is the power of the gospel of which Paul was so proud. Its power is seen in its ability to take a life which has been given over into a downward spiral into the depths of sin and raise it up to the realms of absolute holiness and righteousness. It is not a matter of how strong you can be. It is a matter of the power of God and what He has accomplished through His Son and the death that He died. The bad news is very bad. As we study the next two chapters of Romans, it will get still worse. Only then will we be able to fully appreciate the incredible saving power of the Gospel of Jesus.

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Romans 2:1-16

Do you remember the story of David and Bathsheba? David had coveted another man's wife and, because he was the king, he sent for her and took her. When he was done, he sent her back home, thinking that no one would be the wiser. Then came the bad news. She was pregnant. He clumsily tried to have the affair covered up and when this did not work, he arranged the husband to have an "accident."

David thought that the entire matter was carefully hushed until one day the prophet Nathan showed up before his throne with a story. According to Nathan's story, there was in David's kingdom a poor man with a single lamb which was considered to be a part of his family. There was also a rich man who owned great flocks and herds. In order to entertain some visiting nobility, the rich man had taken the poor man's lamb and had killed it. When the poor man protested, he was also killed. As David heard the story, he was filled with a righteous indignation. He declared that justice would be found only in the death penalty. In the midst of his righteous indignation, Nathan pointed a bony finger at David and proclaimed, "You are the man!"

Paul does the same thing here in Romans. Throughout the first chapter, he has been showing how the pagan world stands condemned by the wrath of a righteous God. Men are condemned, not because they did not know God, but because they knew God and because they then determined to reject God.

1:18	1:24	32
Men rejected God and chose instead to worship idols	God rejected men, giving them over to their sin	

Up to this time, the Jews within the congregation have been nodding their heads in overt agreement and Paul beats up on the Gentiles. He said that God

gave them over in the lusts of their hearts and the Jews all said, “Amen!” He said that God gave them over to degrading passions and the Jews all said, “Amen!” He said that God gave them over to a depraved mind and the Jews all said, “Amen!” Now he says, “You are without excuse.” There is an uncomfortable silence in response. “What do you mean when you say that we are without excuse?” Paul says, “You are without excuse because you have passed judgment upon the very sins which you yourself are committing.”

There is an application here for those who are not Jewish. It is directed toward the man who sees himself as being moral and upstanding. It is the man who looks at himself as being better than the pagan. For such a man, these words echo: “You are the man.”

GOD’S JUDGMENT LEAVES MEN WITHOUT EXCUSE

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

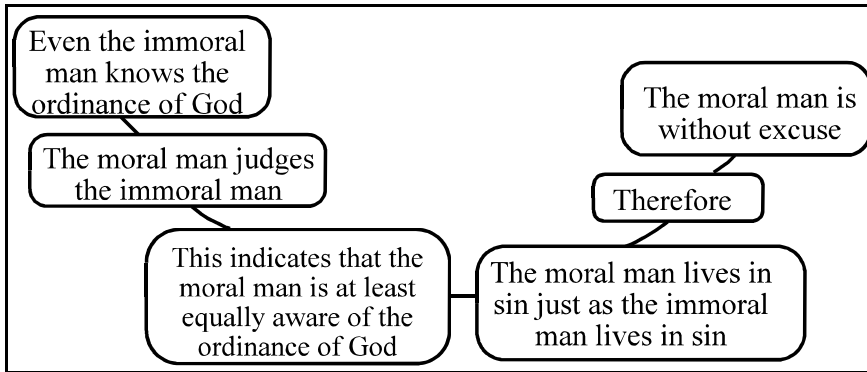
And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. (Romans 2:1-2).

By starting with the word “*therefore*,” Paul takes us back to the previous chapter where he has just delivered a blistering condemnation against the pagan world of his day. It is obvious that such people were underneath the wrath of God and that such people need the radical righteousness of God.

But what about the moral person? The person who is not so bad as the pagan? The person who is in church every Sunday and who does not bow down to heathen idols and who has not descended into homosexuality or other depravities?

This person is also condemned. He is condemned because he is also a sinner. As he points to the wrongs of the pagan and says, “I’m not that bad,” he condemns himself. How does he condemn himself? The answer is back in Romans 1:32, “*Although they know the ordinance of God...*” The fact that this person passes judgment is an indication that he knows the ordinance of

God and the standard that he ought to be keeping. He knows this standard, and yet he fails to live up to this standard.



Here is the principle. God judges judges. This is why we are warned against judging others. It is because judges get judged and they get judged first. Perhaps you remember the Jimmy Swaggart scandal of the 1990's. The significant thing was not that he sinned and fell, but that he had made it his business to judge and to condemn other Christians.

Who are the judges of whom Paul spoke? They are religious people. They are judged on the basis of their religion. The judges are judged.

God will not have to search through His law looking for a basis to condemn you. He will be able to use the judgments that you will have passed on others. When you judge others, you are reflecting a standard of morality. You will be found to be guilty of breaking your own standards. The truth is that we do not even live up to our own standards. Thus, the more you judge others, the more you pass judgment upon yourself. Listen to the words of a well-known American politician:

“This administration has proved that it is utterly incapable of cleaning out the corruption which has completely eroded it and re-establishing the confidence and faith of the people in the morality and honesty of their government employees. The investigations which have been conducted to date have only scratched the surface. For every case which is exposed, there are ten which are successfully covered up, and even then, this administration will go down in history as the “Scandal-a-day Administration.” It is typical of the moral standards of the administration that when

they are caught red-handed with payoff money in their bank accounts, the best defense they can give is that they won the money in a poker game or in a crap game or that they hit the daily double. A new class of royalty has been created in the United States and its princes of privileges and payoffs include the racketeers who get concessions on their income tax, the insiders who get favored treatment on government contracts, the influence peddlers with their key to the White House and the government employee who uses his position to feather his nest. The great tragedy, however, is not that corruption exists, but that it is defended and condoned by the president and other high administration officials. We have had corruption defended by those in high places. If they won't admit or recognize that corruption exists, how can we expect them to clean it up?"

These words were penned by Senator Richard Nixon in his attack on the Truman Administration in the early 1950's. The standard which he set in condemning another man came back to condemn him in the Watergate Proceedings of the 1970's. This is what happens here in Romans 2. The very words with which the moral man uses to condemn his pagan neighbor are used to condemn him.

Back in chapter 1, we saw that the pagan is “*without excuse*” (1:20). Now we see that the religious moralist is also “*without excuse.*” The standard which the moralist uses to condemn the ungodly has not been met by himself. He is like the man who condemns juvenile delinquents for their crimes and then who gets into his car and drives above the speed limit. He is breaking the law in the same way those whom he has condemned broke the law. He condemns the pagan for his idolatry and then proceeds to make an idol of himself, putting his own interests before those of the Lord.

Verse 2 brings this condemnation to the forefront when it says that *the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things*. The word translated “*rightly*” is *κατα ἀληθειαν* (*kata aletheian*), “*according to truth.*” This passage literally reads, “*the judgment of God is according to truth as it comes on the one practicing such things.*”

Man's judgment is not according to truth. This is why men will look at sin and conclude, “I'm okay, you're okay.” Man's judgment changes

from day to day. Only God is the true judge.

GOD'S JUDGMENT HAS NO ESCAPE

But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Romans 2:3-4).

The moralist believes that he will escape the judgment of God because he has been relatively good when compared to a master criminal or to a murderer. In doing so, he ignores both the depravity of his own sin as well as the riches of God's kindness and patience.

Paul describes God as being rich in three areas:

- ♦ Kindness
- ♦ Tolerance
- ♦ Patience

The phrase "think lightly" is καταφρονεις (*kataphroneis*) and is literally, "think down on." It describes one who looks with disdain upon the kindness of God.

Our problem isn't that God is not kind or tolerant or patient. Our problem is that we think that we deserve kindness and tolerance and patience. The result is pride. It ought to be repentance.

Why hasn't God already judged the world in all of its wickedness and evil and rebellion and sin? It is because of His kindness and His tolerance and His patience. It is because God is rich in these qualities. God is being kind and tolerant and patient so that you will have ample opportunity to repent. He says the same thing in 2 Peter 3:10.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:10).

In verse 15, Peter goes on to urge Christians to "regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you.". It is possible that Peter was writing

concerning this same passage which we are studying.

This is also a judgment against modern prosperity theology. Prosperity theology says, “I am enjoying prosperity, so therefore God must be affirming my current lifestyle.” In reality, your prosperity is merely a manifestation of the goodness and the tolerance and the patience of God. It should be driving you to repent.

GOD’S JUDGMENT IS ACCORDING TO OUR DEEDS

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who will render to each person according to his deeds: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. (Romans 2:5-8).

There is a future day of judgment coming. It is described in two ways:

- (1) It is a day of wrath.

We saw in chapter 1 that the wrath of God is currently being revealed against unrighteousness and ungodliness. But there is also a future manifestation of that wrath. It will be revealed in the revealing of the righteous judgment of God.

- (2) The revealing of the righteous judgment of God.

God’s righteous judgment was revealed at the cross. When Jesus died on the cross, the righteous wrath of an infinite and holy God was poured out upon Him. He suffered God’s wrath in our place. But there is coming a future day when that wrath shall be poured out again. It shall be poured out upon those who, instead of hearing and believing the gospel, stubbornly turned their hearts to unrepentance to reject God’s Son.

The teaching of the Scriptures is that there is a future day of judgment when God shall judge the works of men. It is a judgment of deeds. This judgment will result in distinguishing two types of people.

Doers of Good Deeds	Doers of Evil Deeds
Character: <i>By perseverance in doing good seeks for glory and honor and immortality</i>	Character: <i>Selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness</i>
Reward: <i>Eternal Life</i>	Reward: <i>Wrath and indignation</i>

There is an obvious problem here. We have always been taught that salvation is not obtained on the basis of any works which are done, but only upon the basis of the grace of God. How then does Paul say that we are saved by our deeds?

1. The Scriptures consistently teach of a final judgment which is based upon men's works.

For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds." (Matthew 16:27).

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28-29).

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from

God. (1 Corinthians 4:5).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Whenever the Scriptures talk about how a man is saved, it is always said to be through faith in Jesus Christ. However, whenever the Scriptures talk about judgment, it is always based upon the works which a man has done. These two principles might appear to be at odds, but the differences are only apparent and are understood when we realize that saving faith is always accompanied by obedience.

2. Saving faith is always accompanied by obedience.

In Romans 1:5 Paul spoke of “*the obedience of faith*.” Unbelief and disobedience are interchangeable concepts. This is seen in John 3:36 where we read that “*he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life.*”

Inner faith, if it is true faith, always leads to a resulting outward action. That is what we read in the epistle of James. He said, “Show me how a person lives and I will show you what that person believes.”

3. The quality of deeds mentioned in each of these passages implies saving faith.

The man who perseveres in doing that which is truly good is one who believes the promises of God concerning salvation. He seeks glory and honor and immortality, not of the kind that is supplied by the world, but of the kind that is given by God.

By contrast, the man who is selfishly ambitious, seeking only what he wants rather than what God desires, is disobedient to the truth. He denies the grace of God and disobeys the calling of God that leads to repentance. The reward for his actions is wrath and indignation.

4. This is a general description of those who are saved and those who are lost.

What Paul is teaching is that a man's faith will be evidenced in his life. Saving faith will always be accompanied by works. The good deeds which are manifest in your life are the evidence of your true faith in Jesus Christ.

GOD'S JUDGMENT HAS A RELATIONAL PRIORITY

There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 2:9-10).

Notice the priority of the Jew. Throughout history, God has given grace first to His chosen people, Israel. But that is not the only thing that God has given. God has also given judgment first to Israel.

Doers of Evil Deeds	Doers of Good Deeds
Reward: <i>Tribulation and distress</i>	Reward: <i>Glory and honor and peace</i>
Character: <i>Every soul of man who does evil</i>	Character: <i>Every man who does good</i>
<i>To the Jew first and also of the Greek</i>	

Here is the principle. God always deals first with His people. When God blesses, He gives that blessing first to those who are His people. When God judges, that judgment falls first to His people. This is true, not only of Israel, but also of the church.

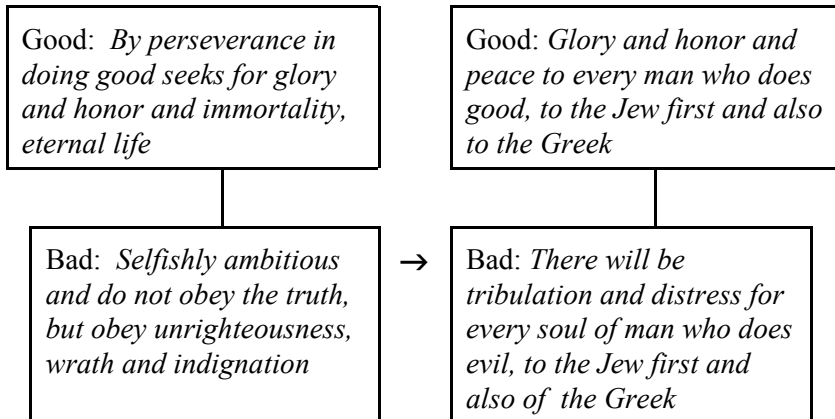
For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17).

What was true of Israel is also true of the church. We also have a relational priority. When God begins to judge, He will judge us first.

It also means that when you see judgment upon the church, it is time for the world to watch out because she is next. That is the point made by Peter in the

text we cited above. If you look at the church, whom Christ loved and for whom He gave Himself, and you see the church going through suffering, then how much worse will it be for the world?

There is a chiastic parallel here which takes us all the way back to verse 6.



The fact of a relational priority does not mean that God is showing partiality. This is seen in the next verse.

GOD'S JUDGMENT IS WITHOUT PARTIALITY

For there is no partiality with God.

For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; ¹³ for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. (Romans 2:11-13).

The word translated “partiality” is the Greek *prosopolempia* (προσωπολημφια). It is a compound word made up of the joining of two Greek words:

- a. *Prosopon* (προσωπον) is the word for “face.”
- b. *Lambano* (λαμβάνω) is the verb “to take.”

It means to “take at face value,” to judge according to outward appearance. We have a saying: “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” But we always judge books by their covers. We tend to judge people in the same way.

In our culture, we are taught to seek the favor of men who are wealthy or powerful or intelligent. We judge men by their outward condition and status. But God does not do this. He is impartial. He is not partial to Americans or whites or rich or Presbyterians. He does not consider the outward associations of man.

What He does consider are the circumstances under which men have sinned and He judges them accordingly.

The Pagan	The Religious Man
<i>All who have sinned without the Law</i>	<i>All who have sinned under the Law</i>
<i>Will also perish without the Law</i>	<i>Will be judged by the Law</i>

The man who has never read or been told of the written Law of God will die apart from that Law. We shall see in just a moment that they will be judged according to that part of the law which is written in their hearts. The man who does know of the Law of God will be judged by that Law, a judgment not on how much he has heard, but on how much he has done.

It is the doers of the Law who will be justified. You can be justified and receive eternal life on the basis of your works. There is only one problem. No one has ever done this. We will see in chapter 3 that there is none who has truly sought after God. To make matters worse, no one has ever even come close. No one has ever been justified in this way.

But that is not all. Paul goes on to say that the Jew will also be judged. This came as a startling revelation to the Jews. They believed that God was going to judge the pagans for their immorality. But they thought themselves as being above such judgment. They thought that they would be accorded a special privilege from God because they were the keepers and the guardians and the hearers of the Law. Now they are told that they are going to be judged by that very same Law. Indeed, having the Law not only means that he will be judged, but it means that he will incur a stricter judgment, for he is that much more responsible.

There is an application to us today. We could say that the man who has been given the Gospel will be judged by that Gospel and will be held accountable for an even greater measure of God's truth. We who are Christians have a great deal for which to answer. We have been given great truth and we are accountable for it.

There is a warning here. It is not the hearers of the Gospel who shall be justified, but the doers of the Gospel who shall be saved. It is not enough to be a member of a church. Or a Presbyterian. Have you obeyed the Gospel?

GOD'S JUDGMENT IS ACCORDING TO MAN'S OPPORTUNITY

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them... (Romans 2:14-15).

This passage answers the question: "What about the man who has never heard the Law of God? How will God judge such a man?"

Paul has already said that unbelievers "know the ordinance of God" (1:32). Now we read that they "do instinctively the things of the Law." The Greek word translated "instinctively" is *φύσις* (*phusis*). It is from the same root found in Romans 1:26-27 where we saw men and women changing the *natural* use of their bodies to that which is unnatural.

You can go anywhere in the world and you can find people who believe that there is such a thing as right and wrong. God has written this in their hearts. A man's own conscience bears witness of the fact that he has the Law of God written in his heart. He might close his eyes to the evidence of the world around him. He might even close his eyes to the evidence of his own heart, but it continues to bear witness of the Creator.

My friend, Sam Lamerson was speaking with a man one day who claimed to be an atheist. Sam replied, "No, you aren't an atheist." "Yes, I am." Whereupon Sam asked, "Do you ever pray when no one else is looking?" The reply came back, "Yes."

But that is not all. The truth is that, while men have the idea of right and wrong, no one even goes so far as to live up to his own ideas. All men have experienced a guilty conscience. Their own conscience has judged them as guilty before God. This will one day be affirmed.

GOD'S JUDGMENT INCLUDES THE SECRET THINGS

...on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:16).

There is coming a day when the heart of each man will be exposed. God will judge the secrets of men. That is what happened to David. He thought that he had covered up his sin with Bathsheba and that no one knew of it. But then the man of God came and revealed that which had been hidden.

There is no avoiding of the judgment of God. But you can be pre-judged by taking your sin to the cross. Confess it. Repent of it. Find that it has been removed. This is why Paul has told us about the coming judgment. He tells us the bad news so that we might embrace the good news of the Gospel.

THE DANGER OF RELIGION

Romans 2:17-29

How would you like to go flying with me? We could go down to the local airport, charter an airplane and I could take you up for a plane ride. Who is going to fly this plane? I am. You might ask me, “Are you a licensed pilot?” And I would pull out my father’s logbook and show you all of the hours that he logged in flying different types of airplanes. He was a career pilot in the Air Force, he flew thousands of hours and he flew all sorts of planes all over the world. “Did he teach you how to fly?” you ask. No, but I have read some books on flying and I have my father’s Air Force hat and some of his flying insignias. Certainly I need nothing more!

This sounds a little silly, but that is exactly the situation which Paul addresses in the book of Romans. He addresses those in the church who were relying on their ancestry to give them a proper standing before God. They had the pedigree, they traced the lineage to Abraham. They had the books, the Law and the Prophets. They had the insignia, the sign of circumcision. They were ready to fly!

Paul brings them back down to earth in this chapter. He started in chapter 1 by showing that the pagan world is under the wrath of God. Now he has moved to the religious man, the Jew who was depending upon his Jewish heritage to save him. This forms a contrast that is to be seen between these two chapters:

Romans 1:18-32	Romans 2:1-29
The Pagan	The Religious Man
The Gentile	The Jew

Understands the existence of God and so is without excuse	Has the Law of God and so is without excuse
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This is the second chapter of bad news. It isn't over yet. The worst is yet to come. Paul is giving us the bad news so that we will be ready to get the good news. His bad news cuts deeply. But it is the cut of a physician who has a scalpel in his hand. He is cutting out a deadly cancer.

As we read this passage, we could substitute "Evangelical" or "Presbyterian" for "Jew." In doing so, we shall come face to face with three dangers that we face. These are the dangers of a spiritual heritage.

THE DANGER OF HERITAGE

But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God, 18 and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, 19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth... (Romans 2:17-20).

Paul begins by addressing himself to his fellow Jews. They were Jews and they were proud of the fact. To this day, Jewish men in the synagogue thank the Lord in their daily prayers...

That they are *lo goyim* (not Gentile).
That they are *lo evedim* (not slaves)
That they are *lo isha* (not woman).

Paul points out five great privileges and five great professions of the Jew. He begins with five great privileges:

1. He has the Law of God. God had spoken true truth to Moses and to the prophets and had given His commands in the form of the Law. The Jews alone had that Law. They were known as "people of the book."

2. He had a boast in God. He was a worshiper of the only true God. He knew God in a way that none of the pagans knew God. He was able to worship God in the way which He ordained that He be worshiped.
3. He knew God's will. He had the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He had God's message in written form. The most precious communication in history had been placed into his hands and written in his language.
4. He could approve the things that are essential. He had the capacity through his knowledge of the will of God to determine between...
 Good and evil.
 Moral and immoral.
 Ethical and unethical.
5. He was instructed out of the Law. He had grown up in a Jewish family and had the knowledge of God taught to him as a young child. He had spent his childhood in the synagogue, being taught by the rabbis. He could quote the law of God. He knew all of the Bible stories for they were his stories. They were stories of his own ancestors and people.

There were also a number of professions to which the Jew was especially suited.

- ♦ A guide to the blind: Blind people need guides. But the worst possible scenario is a blind person being led by a guide who is also blind.
- ♦ A light for those in darkness: Isaiah speaks of the fact that God's covenant nation was appointed to be a "light for the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6).
- ♦ A corrector of the foolish: Real wisdom is found in knowing God. The Jews were self-professed wise men.
- ♦ A teacher of the immature: The Jews thought of Gentile believers as mere spiritual babies. They had not been raised with the Scriptures and so were considered to be spiritually retarded.
- ♦ The embodiment of knowledge and truth.

There is a direct application that can be made to Christians today.

Jews of Paul's Day	Christians Today
<i>You bear the name "Jew"</i>	You bear the name Christian.
<i>You rely upon the Law and boast in God</i>	You trust in your church and boast that you are a Christian.
<i>You know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law</i>	You know the will of God and the basics of Christian doctrine.
<i>You are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness</i>	You are able to set straight those who are in the cults and those who are unchurched.
<i>You are a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature</i>	You can counsel people and teach the young.
<i>You have in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth</i>	You have all the answers.

Let us suppose a hypothetical man. He calls himself a Christian. He trusts in the truths of the Scriptures. He delights in being close to God. He has studied the Scripture and has even gone so far as to enter a Bible College and get a string of degrees from college and seminary. With those degrees in hand, he now sets out to tell others of the Lord. He becomes a teacher of the Scriptures. A Christian counselor. A preacher of righteousness. This is the sort of man portrayed here by the apostle Paul. With such a portrait in hand, we now have some questions for such a man.

THE DANGER OF HYPOCRISY

...you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?

You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob

temples?

You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, just as it is written. (Romans 2:21-24).

Now Paul asks five questions of his Jewish readers. He does not openly assert anything. And yet, his questions expect an obvious answer.

2:21	Immorality	Do You Not Teach Yourself?
		Do You Steal?
2:22	Sensuality	Do You Commit Adultery?
	Idolatry	Do you Rob Temples?
2:23		Do You Dishonor God?

1. Do You Not Teach Yourself? (2:21).

Teaching others is easy. The hardest one to teach is always yourself. The book of James gives a warning to teachers. It is a warning that they will be held to a stricter standard (James 3:1).

2. Do You Steal? (2:21).

Not all stealing is done with a gun or with the stealth of a thief. Much is done in the cutthroat business tactics of those out to make a fast buck. The prophets regularly condemned such cases of social injustice.

3. Do You Commit Adultery? (2:22).

Divorce was at epic proportions in that day, not only among the Gentiles, but also among the Jews.

4. Do you Rob Temples? (2:22).

Since the time of the Babylonian Captivity, no Jew had been guilty of bowing down to an idol. But there was another sense in which they

were guilty of idolatry. They were guilty of making idols out of other things...

Health.
Wealth.
Prestige.

The book of Malachi talks about how men had robbed God by holding back their tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8-9).

5. Do You Dishonor God? (2:23).

There was nothing worse in the Jewish mind than blasphemy, to bring dishonor to God.

In chapter 1, we saw a downward evolution of pagan man as he moved from idolatry to sensuality to immorality. In this chapter, the order is reversed.

Romans 1:21-32	Pagan	Idolatry ⇌ Sensuality ⇌ Immorality
Romans 2:21-24	Jew	Immorality ⇌ Sensuality ⇌ Idolatry

There is a point here that I want you to see. Paul has not changed subjects between chapter 1 and chapter 2. He has only changed his audience. His topic is still the wrath of God upon a godless life.

The religious Jew knew the Law. That was not his problem. It was that he did not live the Law. Paul comes to this conclusion in verse 25:

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, just as it is written. (Romans 2:24).

Paul is quoting from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah speaks of how the Israelites were oppressed, first when they lived in Egypt, and later by the Assyrian invasion. People looked at the troubles of Israel and concluded that their God must be very small and powerless. Heathens saw the Israelites going into captivity and they said, “The God of Israel must not be much of a god. The gods of the Assyrians are greater than the God of Abraham.” The name of God was blasphemed in those events. But now there is another way in which God’s name is blasphemed. It is when people who call themselves God’s people don’t live in the way that God’s people ought to live. Once again, the heathens look at God’s people. They see those who are called God’s people

and...

- ...they are stealing.
- ...they are committing adultery.
- ...they are robbing temples.
- ...they are breaking the Law.

And the conclusion of these heathens is to blaspheme, to say, “Those folks don’t have much of a god!”

Here is the principle. If you are a Christian, then you are the representative of God on earth. You are the only Jesus that some people will ever know. When you sin and act in an ungodly way, you are directly responsible for blasphemy, for you have given opportunity for pagans to speak ill of God. It is sad but true that the worst testimony for Christianity is Christians.

I am told of a minister who was visiting a man in his community and the man said, “I will never come to your church because I have had dealings with a dishonest member of your congregation and, if that is what a Christian is, then I want no part of it.” The minister noticed a piano in the corner and asked who within the family played the instrument. He was told that the man’s daughter was taking lessons. The minister asked if he might hear her play. She came into the room and the minister leafed through the music and picked out a very involved composition written by Chopin, asking her to play it. “Oh, that is much too difficult for me,” answered the girl, but at his insistence, she attempted the piece. Of course, it was disastrous with missed notes and poor tempo.

After the girl had finished the piece and left the room, the minister turned to the father and commented, “That Chopin wasn’t much of a composer, was he?” The father understood the point immediately, that the inability of the girl was not a reflection on the worthiness of the composition. In the same way, the inability of the religious man to live according to the Law is no reflection upon the Maker of the Law.

Another story is told of a man who took a friend to hear the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon. Afterward, he asked his friend, “What did you think of Spurgeon?” His friend looked blankly for a moment before replying, “Spurgeon? I don’t know about him, I was too busy paying attention to Christ.” That is what will happen if we are living a proper Christian life. People will not see us. They will see Christ.

What is your reaction when people look at you and see Jesus? Would it bother you to be out of the limelight? Would you feel cheated if you failed to receive proper credit for your good works? If so, then you are facing the terrible danger of externalism.

THE DANGER OF EXTERNALISM

The sign of the Jew was circumcision. It was the sign of his covenant with God, placed upon his own body. There is nothing wrong with circumcision. It is a rite that was commanded by God. But it is only a sign. It is an outward sign of what was supposed to be an inward reality. If you want to feel the full force of this passage, then read it again and substitute the word “baptism” for “circumcision” as you read Romans 2:25-29.

Did you hear of the dentist who took X-rays of every patient who came in and then made a special proposition to them. He said, “For ten dollars I will fill these cavities that you have here, but, if you don’t want to pay that much, for five dollars I will retouch the X-rays.”

The ritual without the meaning behind it is like that, it is a retouched X-ray -- the cavity is still there.

For indeed BAPTISM is of value if you practice Christianity; but if you are a transgressor of the commands of Christ, your BAPTISM has become UNBAPTISM.

So if the UNBAPTIZED man keeps the commands of Christ, will not his UNBAPTISM be regarded as BAPTISM?

And he who is physically UNBAPTIZED, if he obeys Christ, will he not judge you who though having the teachings of Christ and BAPTISM are a transgressor of those teachings?

For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is BAPTISM that which is outward in the flesh.

But he is a Christian who is one inwardly; and BAPTISM is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by water; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

This brings us to the question: If baptism does not save me, then what good is it? The question in our passage does not deal with baptism, but with circumcision.

1. The Value of Circumcision: The ritual without the reality is useless.

For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. (Romans 2:25).

We could put this into a mathematical formula:

<p>Circumcision + Practicing the Law = Value But Circumcision + Transgression of the Law = Uncircumcision</p>
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Paul establishes that the test of authenticity is not what is on the outside, but what is on the inside. This brings up an obvious objection. If only the inside is important, then why worry about anything that is on the outside? Why be baptized? Of what value is circumcision? The answer is that circumcision is of value if you are a Law-keeper (the specific value will be seen in the next chapter).

The religious Jews to whom Paul speaks claimed to be Law-keepers. They made their boast in God. They said, “God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives.” They assumed that their circumcision gave them an “in” with God.

Circumcision was never supposed to equal superiority. Rather, it was to be a sign of submission. It was a sign of God putting a knife to man’s self-sufficiency. It was to teach the lesson that there is no part of a man’s life that is too private or too personal for God. It was to illustrate our need to have our sins cut away from us.

But the Jews had come to see circumcision as a sign of superiority. They began to trust in the symbol more than in the Lord. They became presumptuous in their relationship with God. Hypocrisy in Biblical Christianity is hardly ever reflected in overt sin. It is more often reflected in presumption.

We are sinners. We say that we believe this. But if you were arrested for drunk driving and your name appeared in the newspaper telling of the event, would you go to church that Sunday? Or would you stay home until you had “straightened up your own life”? The answer to that question will determine on what you are depending for your acceptance before God. It is like being in an accident and saying, “I don’t want to go to the Emergency Room, I have this blood all over

me and I just don't look presentable.”

You know the Gospel, that God sent His Son as a sacrifice for sins to die in your place, that He died and was buried and that He rose again to show that He had defeated death, and that you can find salvation only through faith in Him, trusting Him as your Lord and as your Savior. You know the gospel. But even the gospel will do absolutely nothing for you unless you have appropriated the gospel for yourself and have made it a part of your life.

2. The Judgment of Circumcision: The reality without the ritual is sufficient.

So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? (Romans 2:26-27).

Here is a Gentile. He has never been circumcised. But he is a law-keeper. Through faith in Jesus Christ, he has been credited with the radical righteousness of God and this is evidenced by the practical righteousness of God in his life. The result is that this man is as good as circumcised.

When my wife and I were first married, we exchanged wedding rings. For the first few years of our marriage, I wore a gold ring on my finger. Somewhere along the line, I lost the ring. But that did not end our marriage. It in no way detracts from our relationship. It is simply a symbol.

When I had the ring, I did not make more of it than I ought to have done. I did not take off the ring and worship it. My interest was centered, not on the ring, but on my wife who gave it to me.

On the other hand, if I had become an unloving husband, beating and abusing my wife, it would be unrealistic of me to expect that my wearing of the ring would somehow offset my sinful treatment. The presence of the ring is no substitute for the love that it is supposed to

represent. Symbols are important. Some of them, like baptism and the Lord's Supper, represent salvation. They go so far as to articulate salvation. But they do not impart salvation.

Putting your trust in a symbol is like trying to fly a plane based only upon the fact that you have a pilot's insignia or a logbook or a pilot's hat. It won't get you very far. You're in for a tough landing.

3. The Identity of the Truly Circumcised.

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. (Romans 2:28-29).

There is a small play on words in verse 29. The word "Jew" is derived from the Hebrew name "Judah" which in Hebrew means "praise." When a man is a Jew inwardly, then he has the praise from God to match the meaning of his name.

Outward Jew	Inward Jew
Outward circumcision in the flesh.	Circumcision which is of the heart.
Circumcision by the letter.	Circumcision by the Spirit.
Praise from men.	Praise from God.

This brings up a question. How can a heart be circumcised? The word "circumcision" means to "cut around." The Christian is one who has undergone a heart transplant. He is one in whom the Lord has performed a surgical operation, cutting through the spiritual calluses of his hardened heart to replace it with a heart for God.

Outward Judaism doesn't do much good. Neither is there much value in Christianity that is only skin-deep. You cannot impress God with your pedigree. Or with your rituals. Or with your own self-effort.

Let's go back to my flying illustration. I know that you wouldn't do it, but let's pretend that you actually go with me to the airport and get into a plane. You watch as I walk around to the side of the plane and begin to blow on the wings.

“What are you doing?” you ask.

“I'm trying to get enough lift to fly the plane.”

“Why don't you turn on the engine?”

“I can't do that. I'm going to fly this plane by myself.”

Such would be the words of a legalist, huffing and puffing to fly himself to heaven. Are you out of breath? Have you been working really hard at trying to please God? I have some good news. He has already done the work on your behalf. You can trust in Him and He will save. Then you will soar.

THE DEFENSE RESTS

Romans 3:1-20

The setting is that of a courtroom. For the past two chapters, Paul has been building a case against mankind. He started with the pagan Gentile, showing that because of his innate knowledge of God, he is responsible for his rejection of God and for his idolatry. Then Paul moves to the Jew, concluding that he is no better than the pagan when he knows to do right but does not. At this point, we are given five questions for the defense, five arguments which might be leveled against Paul's harsh stance.

QUESTIONS FROM THE DEFENSE

QUESTION #1: WHAT ADVANTAGE HAS THE JEW?

Of what use is it to be a member of a church? That's a rather relevant question today. I hear a lot of people, many of whom even claim to be Christians who think poorly of joining a church. After all, church membership doesn't save you. It doesn't make you more spiritual. It is what is on the inside that counts, isn't it? It is not the letter, but the spirit that is important.

Paul deals with this issue in Romans 3. He has just gone to great lengths to show that being a member of God's Original Church (the nation of Israel) did not save. This brings up an obvious question.

1. The Question: *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? (Romans 3:1).*

If being a Jew did not save and did not give one an increased standing

in the presence of God, then what good is it? We can take the same question and apply it to the church. If church membership does not save and if baptism does not save, then why should anyone belong to a church and be baptized? Or more pointedly, is there any benefit to an unbeliever in being raised in a church?

2. The Answer.

Having read what Paul said in the previous chapter on how it is the spirit which is important, we would expect him to say that being a Jew is of no advantage at all and the circumcision is without benefit. But he does not say this. To the contrary, he answers...

Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. (Romans 3:2).

While being a Jew does not save, it does carry with it a great benefit. It was to the Jews that the Scriptures were entrusted. When God spoke, He did not speak to everyone equally. He did not speak equally in every language. He gave nearly all of the Old Testament in Hebrew. Each one of the writers of the Old Testament (with the possible exception of Job) was a Jew. This was a great blessing. It meant that the Jew had ample opportunity to learn about God.

The same is true within the church. A person who grows up in the church is not necessarily saved, but such a one does have amply opportunity to hear the message of the gospel. This is because he happens to be in the one place where the gospel is the most vigorously preached. It is true that you can hear the gospel anywhere. But the one place you are likely to hear it above all others is in the church.

QUESTION #2: IS GOD UNFAITHFUL IF SOME DID NOT BELIEVE?

The next argument centers around God's faithfulness. It goes like this: God made promises to the Jews. He said that He would be their God and that they would be His people. But Paul has just shown that they are not accepted by God simply on the basis of their "Jewishness." Doesn't this make God unfaithful to His covenant promise?

1. The Question: *What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will*

not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? (Romans 3:3).

God's covenant was made with the descendants of Abraham. But being a child of Abraham was in itself no guarantee of receiving the covenant promises. Faith was also necessary. The fact that some did not believe did not mean that God was unfaithful when they did not become partakers of the covenant.

The question is phrased in such a way to expect a negative answer.

There is a principle here. It is that God has no spiritual grandchildren. You can read in the Bible about His children, but you will never see anything about His grandchildren. He doesn't have any. You are either His child or else you have no part of Him. There are no second-generation Christians.

One of the great evangelists of the 19th century was D. L. Moody. He preached the gospel in the United States and England and thousands came to know the Lord. But none of the Moody children ever came to know Jesus Christ. Their relationship with Moody was not enough. Moody's faith was not enough to bring them to salvation. The faith of your mother or father will not save you.

2. The Answer.

May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged." (Romans 3:4).

The fact that there are some of Abraham's descendants who do not believe is not an indictment against God. To the contrary, it is man who is indicted. God's nature is not impacted by our failure. Even if every one of us were found to be liars, God would still be true.

QUESTION #3: IS GOD STILL RIGHTEOUS WHEN OUR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS MAGNIFIES HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

1. The Question.

But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the

righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms). (Romans 3:5).

When God judges our sin, the fact of our sin demonstrates the righteousness of God. Here is the principle. Light is light in proportion to how much you have seen the darkness. Have you ever been in a very dark room and then someone turned on a very bright light? That bright light seems to shine all the more brightly.

God's righteousness shines all the more brightly when it is contrasted to our unrighteousness. But this brings us to a question. Does this put God into an alliance with our sin? Does this mean that God is in league with sin? Not at all! He is in control of all things, including that which is sinful. But this control does not make Him the direct author of sin. The fact that our sin shows the righteousness of God to be all the more righteous does not mean that He is in league with sin.

2. The Answer.

May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? (Romans 3:6).

The fact that God will someday judge the world is proof of the fact that He is not in league with sin. You don't judge that with which you have made an alliance.

There is an important lesson here. It is that the ends do not justify the means. The result of our sin is that God is glorified. But that does not mean that men will not be held accountable for their sins. They will be judged, not for the results of their sin, but for their rebellion in sinning in the first place. This means that the argument, "But it didn't hurt anyone," is invalid when it comes to God's judgment. Sin is still sin even if it were possible to sin without hurting someone else.

QUESTION #4: IS GOD STILL RIGHTEOUS WHEN OUR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS MAGNIFIES HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

This question is closely related to the last one. But there is a difference. The

last question had its focus upon the character of God. This question has its focus upon the judgment of man.

1. The Question: *But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? (Romans 3:7).*

The proposed argument is this: If God is ultimately glorified by our sin, then why should our sin be judged, since to condemn our sin would be to condemn that which glorifies God?

The "lie" to which Paul refers looks back to verse 4 where God is to be seen as true, even though it might make every man a liar. Paul pictures himself, for the sake of argument, as taking the role of an unbeliever who, even though he is against God, yet brings glory to God.

After all, we have just stated that God is glorified by my sin. He is glorified when He judges my sin and condemns it. When you look at man's sinfulness and then look at God's righteousness, it is seen to be infinitely righteous. The result is that there is a way in which our sin glorifies God, not because there is anything good about our sin, but because it is seen in contrast with God's radical righteousness.

2. The Answer.

And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just. (Romans 3:8).

If our sin glorifies God, then why would we just not say, "I want God to be glorified, so I am going to go out and sin a lot." Apparently, there were some who were making this charge against the Christian church. They listened to Paul's message of salvation by grace through faith and they concluded, "If God's grace is magnified by freely forgiving our sins, then let us go out and make God's grace even more magnified by sinning more!" Such a position is directly opposed to God. Paul will come back to this question in Romans 6. For now, it will suffice to say that God is righteous and He calls men to live righteously.

JUDGMENT PASSED

Have you ever had someone come to you and say, “I have some good news and I have some bad news”? I don’t know about you, but I always want to hear the bad news first so that the good news can cheer me up.

This is what Paul does here. He has some bad news. The bad news is really bad. When you hear how bad the bad news is, you will be able to appreciate how good the good news is. That is the problem with our evangelism. We are trying to tell people the good news and they don’t realize how good it is because they haven’t heard the bad news. The bad news is that we are all under sin. This sin is a very heavy-handed taskmaster. It is a power that has control over our lives. If you are not a Christian, then you are a slave. You are in spiritual chains. In this chapter, Paul catalogues the sinfulness of man.

Dr. James Kennedy was talking one day to a man who insisted that all men are basically good. Kennedy asked to see the man’s key chain. The man showed the chain full of keys. Kennedy asked, “Why do you have keys if man is good?” The reason that you have keys is because we live in a fallen world. The reason that we have law enforcement officers is because we also have law breakers.

1. The Conclusion.

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin (Romans 3:9).

The conclusion is that every person is sinful before God. Everyone is guilty. If you have the law, then you are guilty of breaking the law which you have been given. If you are without the law, you are guilty of breaking the law that God has placed in your heart and in your conscience.

Martin Luther called this paragraph the most important in the Bible.
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If you live a blatantly unrighteous life, you are guilty. If you live a relatively moral life, you are still guilty. If you are irreligious, then you are guilty. If you are religious, then you are still guilty.

2. The Testimony of the Scriptures.

...as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one;

11 there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; 12 all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one."

"Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; 15 "their feet are swift to shed blood, 16 destruction and misery are in their paths, 17 and the path of peace they have not known. 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3:10-18).

Paul strings together six Old Testament passages to compose a powerful argument for the universal depravity of all men. Most of these are taken from the Psalms.

3:10	Statement of Man's Sin	Four times we read the statement, "There is none..."
3:13	Picture of Man's Sin	Man's sinfulness is said to affect his... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Throat ♦ Tongue ♦ Mouth ♦ Feet ♦ Eyes

- a. Universal Extent of man's sinful condition.
Four times we read the phrase, "There is none..." There is none who...

- (1) Is righteous.
- (2) Understands righteousness.
- (3) Seeks for righteousness.
- (4) Practices righteousness ("does good").

This brings up a question. Should we take these negations ("none", "no", "not") in verses 10-11 to refer to...

- ♦ People's total sinfulness?
- ♦ The pervasiveness of sinful behavior in everyone?

The answer is the latter. Total depravity does not mean that

everyone is as bad as they could be. Man is not so totally sinful that he could not commit any worse sins. When we speak of total depravity, we mean that every part of man has been infected with sin.

b. The Society of man's sinful condition.

Verse 12 says that *"all have turned aside, together they have become useless."* There is a truth here. It is that we do not sin just as individuals acting alone. Rather, the sin of one person often provides just enough encouragement for others, socially connected in some way, to encourage them to sin, too. We often sin in unison. That is why the world likes to see you sin. The excuse that "everyone's doing it" is as old as the garden of Eden.

c. The Anatomy of man's sinful condition.

Verses 13-18 give us a vivid portrait of the sinner, focusing upon the various parts of his body to show how they are given over to sin.

Vs	Anatomical Part	Activity	
3:13	Throat	Sins of Speech	Open grave
	Tongue		Deception
	Lips		Poison of asps
3:14	Mouth		Full of cursing
3:15	Feet	Action Sins	Swift to shed blood
3:16	Their path		Destruction and misery
3:17			No peace
3:18	Eyes	Attitude	No fear of God

Every part of this man is seen to be in rebellion against God. He is a sinner from head to toe. In one of the Hollywood remakes of The

Three Musketeers, the young hero D'Artagnan is asked about his love for Constance in light of his passion for another woman. He replies, "I love the one with my head, but I love the other with my heart." To which his friend retorts, "You have a most conveniently discriminating anatomy." The truth is that sin affects the entire man. It affects his thinking, his reasoning, and his will.

THE LAW SPEAKS

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20).

The scene throughout this chapter has been one of a courtroom. The Judge is the Lord Himself. The accused is all of mankind. The witnesses for the defense have been frustrated.

Here is the result of the indictment. It is that the accused has no excuse. His mouth is closed. Have you ever known one of those people who, went confronted with something they have done wrong, always had an excuse? "Yes, I did that, but..." However, in this instance, there is no excuse which cannot be made. Into this silence, the Law speaks.

1. The Law's Message.

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law... (Romans 3:19a).

The Law's message is that of a measuring stick. It sets forth the measurement of the righteousness of God. It measures your life according to that perfect standard. What do you do when you find that you don't measure up?

- ♦ The worldly person pretends the measuring stick isn't there. When that doesn't work, he tries to break the measuring stick.
- ♦ The moral person tries to stand taller and straighter, but is frustrated and eventually gives up.

- ♦ The religious person makes his own stick to which he is able to measure up.

2. The Law's Recipients.

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law... (Romans 3:19a).

The Law only speaks to those who are living under the Law.¹ Does this let the Gentiles off the hook? Not at all! They also have the Law, albeit written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness of the Law that is within them.

3. The Law's Result.

...the Law... speaks... that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God (Romans 3:19b).

I meet a lot of people who want to pass judgment on God. "If there is a God, then why doesn't He put a stop to all of this pain and suffering? Why doesn't He stop all of the hypocrisy in the church?" But there is coming a day when every mouth shall be closed. When you are faced with the cold reality of the Law of God, you are left without a thing to answer on your behalf.

Notice, the purpose of the Law was not to save the righteous. It was to make sinners guilty. The Law was a hammer that smashed the self-righteousness of men.

4. The Law's Helplessness.

...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" Romans 3:20).

The Law was fully able to condemn. But when it came to justifying

¹ Paul often uses the phrase "under the Law" (ὑπὸ νόμον), but this is not one of those times. In this case, the Greek speaks of "those who are in the Law" (τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ). However, there does not seem to be a notable distinction between the two phrases except that this one describes the relationship in a more neutral manner.

someone it was helpless. The Law cannot declare that someone is righteous unless that person already is righteous. It cannot make anyone righteous. The only thing that the Law could accomplish was our condemnation, not our salvation.

5. The Law's Accompaniment.

*...for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.
(Romans 3:20b).*

The Law tells you what sin is. It points to sin and it says, "Thou shalt not!" It this, it is like a diagnosis. When you go to the doctor with a sickness, he runs a series of tests on you and then he gives you a medical diagnosis. That diagnosis tells you what is wrong with you. But it doesn't heal you. It isn't designed to do that. Imagine how silly it would be to take the doctor's written diagnosis and say, "Thank you doctor, I'll take this diagnosis home and rub it all over my body and I'll sleep with it and I'll eat with it and I'll read it every day and then I will get better." That would be ridiculous! A diagnosis is not meant to heal. It is meant to tell you what it is from which you need to be healed. The law is the same way.

The good news is that we have a Great Physician. We have a Healer who heals. We have a Savior who saves. He still makes house calls. Indeed, He happens to be knocking at the door of your heart right now. You can let Him in and be healed of what ails you.

GOD'S RADICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OUR SALVATION

Romans 3:21-31

I remember once flying through a thunderstorm. The winds and the rains buffeted the plane and the lightning flashed and the thunder roared. But then, there was a break in the clouds and the sun broke through. What a dramatic change! That is what happens in this chapter. For the past three chapters, we have heard the thundering of God's condemnation against sinful men. But now, the Son breaks through.

Romans 1:17 - 3:20	Romans 3:21-31
God has brought all of mankind into the courtroom and passed the divine verdict that all men are guilty before God.	Begins with the words "But now" to introduce how God has carried out the verdict in Christ to bring salvation to men.
A groan of despair.	A sigh of relief.
Dark picture of men in their sins.	Bright light of God's salvation.
A revelation of the wrath of God against all unrighteousness.	A presentation of the righteousness of God which is available for men.
Establishes the need for righteousness.	Provides that righteousness.

Where do you go to find the revelation of the righteousness of God? Where is God's righteousness manifested? In the Law! The Law is a standard which reveals the righteousness of God. But God's righteousness has also

been revealed in another way. It has been revealed through faith.

RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED

"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction" (Romans 3:21-22).

Notice how verse 21 begins. It begins with a conjunction of contrast. It begins with “*But*.” This is in contrast with the fact that no flesh can be declared to be righteous by the works of the Law (3:20).

No flesh can be declared
to be righteous by the
works of the Law

(But)

Apart from Law God’s
righteousness has been
manifested.

Verses 19-20 tell us what the Law could not do. It could not declare you to be righteous. Verse 21 goes on to say that you have been declared righteous, but it was not by the law's doing. You see, the law was a manifestation of the righteousness of God. If you want to know about God's standard of righteousness, then look at the law. But now, that righteousness has been revealed in a new form. It has been revealed as it comes through faith.

Here is the principle. Justification does not come through our own obedience. Perhaps it could if there were anyone who had been obedient. But Paul has just spent three chapters showing to us that no one is obedient. Justification does not come through obedience. Justification can only take place if it is on the basis of God’s radical righteousness. Even forgiveness of sins cannot save you. Only righteousness can save you.

Paul destroys false concepts of righteousness in this chapter. What is righteousness? It is the state of being right. God is righteous. Man is just the opposite. And thus, man has no righteousness which could save him. His own works cannot save him and the Law cannot save him since it is the business of the Law to condemn rather than to save.

A Middle Eastern man was eating pears in his home. He picked up a pear

and saw a worm hole in it and threw it away. He picked up another pear and saw that it also had a hole. It happened with a third and a fourth pear. Then he blew out the light and continued eating. The Law is the light to tell us where the holes are.

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested (Romans 3:21a).

The righteousness which has now come is divorced from the Law of God. But it is not contrary to that Law. Indeed, the Law and the Prophets foreshadowed and foretold of a radical righteousness that would come apart from a Law-works relationship.

Δικαιωση του Θεου ("the righteousness of God") can have one of two meanings:

- (1) Genitive of Possession: The righteousness that belongs to God.
- (2) Genitive of Source: The righteousness which comes from God.

"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me" (John 5:39).

God manifested a righteousness. Verse 22 describes to us what kind of righteousness this is. It is a righteousness which comes *"through faith in Jesus Christ."*² This is the means by which that righteousness is attained and appropriated. It is not that faith has merit. It is rather the merit of the object of our faith that brings this righteousness.

Why is this important? It is because God cannot accept an unrighteous man. You need the righteousness of God to be accepted by God. The good news is that this righteousness is offered *"to all those who believe"* (3:22). The offer of salvation is to all men. This is significant because all have sinned.

² There are some who have wished to translate this as a subjective genitive to speak of "the faith of Jesus Christ." A.T. Robertson supports rendering it as an objective genitive ("the faith in Jesus Christ") by pointing similar objective genitives in Galatians 2:16 and Colossians 2:5 that clarify by adding a preposition (εις Χριστον Ιησουν πιστευσαμεν in Galatians 2:16 and της εις Χριστον πιστεως υμων in Colossians 2:5).

RIGHTEOUSNESS REQUIRED

*"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"
(Romans 3:23).*

The previous verse shows that there is no distinction between how men are declared to be righteous. Now we see that the reason for this lack of distinction in salvation is because there is also no distinction between men in their standing in sin. This standing in sin is both past and present.

1. *"All have sinned"* points to the past.

The aorist tense is used here in the sense of the simple past. It points to all of the sins of the human race and labels all under sin.

We have all sinned. We have all gone contrary to the will of God. What is sin? The Westminster Catechism defines sin as *"any lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of God."*

2. *"All... fall short of the glory of God"* is an indication of our present status.

This time the tense is in the present. It is not merely that we have sinned in the past. We continue to sin in the present.

Notice that this is another good definition of what sin is. It is falling short of the glory of God. The picture is of an archer who shoots an arrow, aiming at the bull's eye. But the arrow falls short, missing the mark to which it was intended. Sin is like that. Sin is missing the mark of what God has demanded.

These two definitions are in parallel. They are saying the same thing.

Sin	=	Falling short of the Glory of God
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The mark is perfection. No one has been perfect. Our tendency is to look only upon relative righteousness. It is as though we decided to have an Olympic event to see who could jump across the Niagara Falls. One man might only be able to jump two feet. I would be able

to go further and I might look down my nose at the one who only jumped a short distance and think that I had done very well. And then, an Olympic athlete would come and take a running start and jump a distance of 32.7 feet. His feat was much better than mine. But the goal was to clear the falls. None of us did that.

God is perfectly righteous. God demands perfect righteousness. He is the measure of His own demand. The righteousness He demands is nothing less than His own perfect righteousness. The good news of the gospel is that He freely gives that which He demands. That is the radical nature of His righteousness, for it both condemns us and it also justifies us. It demands a holy life and then it provides that which it demands.

RIGHTEOUSNESS GIVEN

"...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith." Romans 3:24-25a).

Paul begins this section by saying that we were justified. We'll speak of what that means in a moment, but before we do, I want you to note the order in which these are presented.

- ♦ Being Justified...
- ♦ As a Gift by His Grace.
- ♦ Through the Redemption in Christ.
- ♦ Who was Displayed as a Propitiation.

Are these given in the order in which they take place? No!!!! These are the reverse order in which they take place. Paul is starting with justification and going backwards to see what brought about justification and what brought about that thing that brought about justification and what was before that.

Justification	Presupposes that we were previously...	Condemned
Grace		Without merit
Redemption		Enslaved

Propitiation		Deserving of wrath
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1. Justified.

What does it mean to be “justified”? If we were to listen to the Roman Catholic Church, we would think that it describes an “infusion of righteousness,” that God saves you and makes you righteous with an inner and intrinsic righteousness so that you are now acceptable before God. But this is not what justification is at all. To be justified means that one is “declared to be righteous.” This is seen in Luke 7:29 where Jesus is preaching and we read that...

"And when all the people and the tax-gatherers heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John" (Luke 7:29).

The phrase translated “*acknowledged God's justice*” is literally, “*they justified God.*” Now, this certainly does not mean that they infused God with righteousness. There is nothing that they could do to make God more righteous than He already is. They did not make God more righteous. They merely declared that He already was righteous. That is what God has done with us. He has declared us to be righteous.

Alfred Dryfus was a Jewish soldier in the army of France, serving on the general staff. In 1894, he was accused and arrested on the charge of selling secrets to the enemies of France. He was tried and condemned as a traitor, court-martialed and sentenced to the French penal colony on Devil's Island.

The friends of Dryfus were unsatisfied with the trial and, because of their protests, a second trial was granted in 1899. Dryfus was again found guilty. This time, the public dissatisfaction with the trial caused such an outcry that the president of France granted Dryfus a pardon. He was released from Devil's Island and permitted to come home.

However, the stigma of being a traitor still rested upon Dryfus and in 1906 a third trial was held in which Dryfus was completely vindicated. He was declared to be righteous in the eyes of the law. He was reinstated in the French military, promoted to the rank of major, and awarded the French Legion of Honor. This illustrates the difference between a pardon and justification.

Pardon	Justification
Says that you are guilty but suspends the penalty of that guilt.	Declares you to be righteous and without guilt

There is a cute and witty definition of justification that describes is as “just-as-if-I’d never sinned.” It is easy to remember, but it is not a good definition for justification. It instead describes “pardon.”

“Just as if I’d never sinned”	=	Pardon
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God has done more than merely to pardon us. Pardoning brings you to a place of neutrality. One who is pardoned is treated as though he has done nothing bad, but he is also treated as if he has done nothing good. His position is merely neutral.

God does not merely pardon. He justifies. He brings us to a place of positive righteousness. This brings up another question. How can God do this? How can He declare me to be righteous when I am not righteous? It is a gift of His grace.

2. A Gift by His Grace.

Justification is the outgrowth of grace. What is grace? Grace is the unmerited favor of God. It is a gift which you have neither earned nor deserved. It is the very quality that gives without strings attached.

Think of this! You were declared to be righteous apart from any merit of righteousness that was in you. You didn’t earn your justification. You didn’t deserve it. It is a gift.

3. Through the Redemption.

The gift of God involved a purchase. This is seen in this word “redemption.” This isn’t a word we use a lot today. But I can remember a time when Publix Grocery Stores used to give out green stamps. You would collect these stamps until you had a certain amount and then you would go to a special store and you would redeem certain items; you would purchase them with the stamps.

Who has been purchased in this passage? We have! This is the language of a slave market. Slavery was common in the ancient world. A slave had few rights. He had no hope of freedom unless someone were to purchase him and then set him free. That is what this describes. You see, there are several possible words which could have been used to describe redemption.

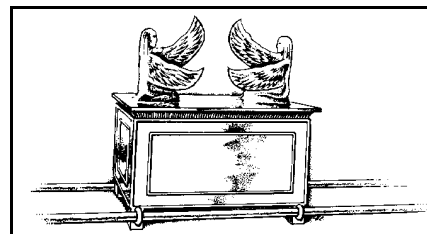
- a. Paul could have used ἀγοράζω (*agorazo*). This would describe the act of purchasing a slave in the agora, in the marketplace.
- b. He could have used ἐξ ἀγοράζω (*exagorazo*). This would have taken us one step further and described the act of purchasing the slave and taking him out of the marketplace.

Instead, Paul uses the compound word ἀπολυτρωσις (*apolutrosis*), to not only purchase the slave and take him out of the marketplace, but then to set him free from his slavery.

This is the language of liberation! It is popular to speak of liberation theology today, but this is true liberation theology! We have been set free from our enslavement to sin.

4. Displayed as a Propitiation.

This is another word that is hardly ever used today. What is a “propitiation?” It is a “satisfaction.” An “appeasement.” The offering of a sacrifice which satisfies and appeases the wrath of an angry God.



The Mercy Seat

The Greek word is ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*). It is used to describe the Mercy Seat, the top of the Ark of the Covenant. This was the seat of God. It served as

the throne of God within the Temple. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest of Israel would enter into the Holiest of Holies to come before the presence of God. He would bring with him a cup of blood from an animal freshly slain. He would sprinkle that blood upon the Mercy Seat. That blood would serve as the satisfactory sacrifice for the sins of the nation. A common prayer

among the Jews was that “God be to me a Mercy Seat.”

In the ancient world, when one thought that he had committed some offense against one of the deities, he would go and offer a sacrifice of appeasement. By doing so, he would try to assuage the anger and the wrath of that deity. Thus, propitiation refers to satisfying the wrath of one who has been offended.

Your sin has offended God. It makes you deserving of the anger and the wrath of God. That is the bad news. The good news is that Jesus was the satisfaction. He satisfied the righteous judgment of God.

I am told that on the wall of the Supreme Court Building in Washington D.C. is the motto: “When the guilty is acquitted, the judge is condemned.” If God is to be a just God, then He cannot simply forgive sin. It must be judged. Our sin was judged at the cross.

Means	Death of Christ
Place	The Cross
Result	The Remission of Sins

In the Old Testament, the sheep died for the shepherd. In the New Testament, the Shepherd died for the sheep.

Remember that we asked the question: “How can God declare you to be righteous when you are not righteous?” Here is the answer. He does it by having judged your sin in Christ. You were found guilty. Your sin was judged. You were sentenced to death and the sentence was carried out. However, it was carried out upon a substitute. Jesus bore the sentence of your penalty. As a result, Jesus was credited with your sins. You have been credited with His radical righteousness.

5. Through Faith.

What must you do to enter into this justification? Is there some measure of goodness which you must perform? Is there some meritorious level to which you must attain? No!!! It is through faith.

- a. Faith is born out of need.

It is only when you have seen your need for a Savior that you will be ready to believe in Jesus Christ as being that Lord and Savior. This is why Paul has gone to such great lengths to portray man in his hopeless condition. He wants to show the need.

- b. This faith is in Christ.

Everyone has faith. An atheist has faith that there is no God. An agnostic has faith. A skeptic has faith. Such faiths are powerless to save. It is the object of that faith which is so important. There are people who have faith in all sorts of things:

- ♦ Faith in a church or denomination
- ♦ Faith in Baptism
- ♦ Faith in church membership or church attendance
- ♦ Faith in good works
- ♦ Faith in faith

None of these is a saving faith because none of these is in a correct object. Saving faith is in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, depending upon His work upon the cross on our behalf.

RIGHTEOUSNESS RECIPROCATED

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 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. (Romans 3:25b-26).

Notice what Paul says here. The point of our salvation was not for us. It was for Him. It was to demonstrate His righteousness. Why? Because it shows that He was righteous, even though He passed over past sins.

...in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed (Romans 3:25).

In the days and years and centuries before the cross, God forgave sins. Forgiveness didn't start at the cross, it started at the garden of Eden.

This brings us to a question. How could God forgive sin in the Old Testament and still be righteous? It cannot be that He merely allowed sin to go unpunished. You wouldn't think much of a judge who had a vicious criminal brought before him and who said, "Oh, that's okay. I want to be a loving and kinder judge so that you will like me, Mr Criminal. I'm going to let you go so that you can go commit some more crimes." What would we think of such a judge? We would say that he is unrighteous!

In the same way, how shall God escape the charge that He is unrighteous if He permitted (and still permits) sinners to go unpunished? Why didn't God destroy Adam and Eve in the Garden? "Crunch"....BOOM!!!! The answer is because God had planned the cross.

The cross justifies the righteousness of God. It is at the cross that God is seen to be righteous in not judging men immediately when they sinned. An animal sacrifice could not pay for sins. God merely allowed them to serve as a spiritual IOU until the coming of Christ. From this standpoint, God did not seem to be righteous when He allowed animal sacrifices to atone for sins. But He is vindicated and seen to be righteous by the cross.

Our salvation demonstrates the radical righteousness of God. He is both righteous and the One who declares others to be righteous. He sets the standard for what righteousness is and then He meets the standard by crediting us with His own righteousness. He is "*just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*" (Romans 3:26).

RIGHTEOUSNESS'S RESULTS

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never

be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. (Romans 3:27-31).

What are the results of our being declared righteous through faith? There are several that Paul mentions:

1. Boasting is Excluded.

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. (Romans 3:27).

Works are compatible to boasting. When you have worked long and hard, you can stand back and say, “Look at what I accomplished!!!!” Faith is opposed to boasting. It is merely the open hand of a beggar. That is why we as Christians ought never to be proud. We are merely beggars telling other beggars where to find bread.

We cannot even boast that we were smart enough to choose God and to believe in Him, for the Scriptures make it quite clear that even my faith is a gift from God. There is no occasion for boasting in the plan of God. It was by God’s grace that our salvation was provided. It was by Christ’s blood that it was purchased. It is by a faith which God give to me that it is appropriated.

2. Works are also Excluded.

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Romans 3:28).

The opposite of faith is work. Paul has shown that it is impossible to be justified by works of the Law. You can’t be good enough for long enough. The Law wasn’t designed to justify anyone. The Law can only condemn.

3. Gentiles are not Excluded.

Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, for since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. Romans 3:29-30).

Under the Law, who were the chosen people of God? The Jews were! The children of Abraham! God is called, “the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.” He is never called, “the God of the Assyrians” or “the God of the Romans.”

The Jews were the recipients of the Law of God. To them were entrusted the oracles of God (3:2). If righteousness is only by the keeping of the Law, then it is only for the Jews. But salvation is for more than just the Jew. From the very beginning, it was promised that God would bless the Gentile. God is not only the God of the Jew, but He is also the God of the Gentile.

4. God is One in His Program.

...since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. (Romans 3:30).

God doesn't have one way of salvation for Jews and another for Gentiles. He doesn't have one way of salvation in the Old Testament and another way of salvation in the New Testament (We'll talk more of this in the next chapter).

5. The Law is Established.

Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. (Romans 3:31).

Justification does not do away with the Law. It doesn't nullify the Law. It does not cause one of the least of these commandments to pass away. To the contrary. It establishes the Law.

The Law demands death to the sinner. Justification through faith answers to this demand in the affirmative. The Law says, “Give me death!” Justification answers, “YES!!! The penalty of death has been paid on the cross!” God didn't merely pardon your sins. He executed you for them. But He did so in the person of Jesus Christ who took your place and died the death you deserved.

A RIGHTEOUS RECKONING

Romans 4:1-25

Is justification accomplished through faith alone? Or is justification accomplished by a mixture of faith plus works? This question has divided Christendom for centuries. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that, while Christ supplies our salvation, the underlying merit for our justification lies in ourselves, our faith, our love, our contrition. This is the ultimate irony, that Rome should not believe the foundational truth of the epistle to the Romans.

In chapter 3, Paul set forth the teaching of justification by faith and apart from works. He then proceeds to illustrate that teaching here in chapter 4.

Romans 1:1 - 3:20	Romans 3:21-31	Romans 4:1-25
Justification Needed: Man is unable to justify himself.	Justification Stated: God has justified the ungodly in Christ	Justification Illustrated in the cases of Abraham & David.
Man's failure	God's success.	

Chapter 3 closes with a question. Paul, having established the truth that we are justified through faith and apart from the works of the Law, asks: *Do we then nullify the Law through faith? (Romans 3:31a)*. The answer is quite abrupt: *...May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. (Romans 3:31b)*. This brings us to a question. How do we establish the Law through faith? The answer is given in chapter 4. It is here that we shall see the way in which God is able to declare sinners to be righteous.

TWO OLD TESTAMENT WITNESSES OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (ROMANS 4:1-8)

The Law commanded that all things be established by two or three witnesses. Accordingly, Paul gives two Old Testament witnesses to show that justification in the Old Testament was through faith. The first witness to the doctrine of justification by faith is Abraham, the father of the Jews.

1. The Witness of Abraham (4:1-5).

Abraham was the founding father of the Jews. He was revered among them. Many had come to believe that he was chosen by God because he was so faithful. 1 Maccabees 2:52 reflects this idea when it asks, “Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and was it not reckoned to him as righteousness?” If anyone could ever be said to have been justified on the basis of his good works, it would have been Abraham.

a. The question presented.

What shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? (Romans 4:1).

Abraham was the physical father of the entire Jewish race. He was the patriarch of the patriarchs. There could be no greater witness provided than Abraham.

Notice how Paul phrases the question. He does not ask, “What do we learn from studying the life of Abraham?” Instead, he asks, “What did Abraham learn about justification?” By asking the question in this manner, Paul has us step into the sandals of Abraham, view a man’s relationship with the Lord through his eyes.

b. A question of pride.

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. (Romans 4:2).

Paul offers a second class condition. It says “if” but then assumes that this is not the case. We would say, “If Abraham was justified by works, but he wasn’t...” But if he had been, then he would have something about which to boast.

Perhaps Abraham could boast before men. After all, he could boast that he left family and friends and that he followed the Lord to the land of Canaan. He could boast before men. But not before God. This is important. Abraham was justified by his works before men. James 2 declares this. Your works are an outward sign of your inward faith.

But no man has any work about which he can boast before God. Not even Abraham. Why is this? Because every work a man performs has been infected and contaminated by sin.

Which is safer to eat, a hamburger laced with cyanide, or a New York strip steak laced with the same cyanide? Neither is safe! They have both been poisoned. We have likewise been poisoned by sin.

c. Reckoned as righteousness.

For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." (Romans 4:3).

Paul appeals to the Scripture for his evidence. The passage from which he quotes is Genesis 15:6. Before the end of this chapter, Paul will have quoted this verse three times. This is one of the clearest declarations of a salvation experience in the entire Bible.

What did Abraham do to be declared righteous in the eyes of God?

- ♦ Leaving Ur of the Chaldees?
- ♦ Giving Lot the first pick of the land?
- ♦ Rescuing Lot from the eastern invaders?

These were all commendable actions. And yet, it is none of

these works which led to Abraham's justification.

Abraham simply believed God. Ἐπίστευσεν (*episteusen*) is the aorist active indicative form of πιστεῦω (*pisteuo*), “to believe.” It looks to a specific point in time when Abraham believed. Notice the result. His faith was reckoned as righteousness.

I want to suggest that this was a very special kind of faith. It is no mere belief in the existence of God.

- nor that Jesus died on a cross.
- nor that He rose from the dead.

It is not merely believing certain facts. It is a faith that rests upon and relies upon and commits itself to the one who saves. It is the type of faith that relies upon Jesus Christ to save. When this type of faith is present, that faith is reckoned as righteousness.

The word translated “reckoned” is the Greek root λογίζομαι (*logizomai*). It is found 11 times in this chapter. In verse 8 it is translated by the phrase, “taken into account.” It is an accounting term. It is the kind of term that you use when you speak of charge cards.

Imagine that you have a charge card debt. It is a tremendous debt - far more than you can ever repay. It is a debt of sin. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has paid your debt. That is not all. He has credited to your account His perfect righteousness. It is for this reason that God can declare you to be legally righteous. It is because He credits you with the very righteousness of Christ.

- d. The principle of wages.

*Now to the one who works, his wage
is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is
due. (Romans 4:4).*

Paul states an accepted economic principle. It is that work results in wages. Such wages cannot be classified as a gift. When you work for your employer and it comes time to be paid,

he doesn't refer to that payment as a gift. It is not a gift but a wage. You have worked for it. You have earned it. It is your due.

- e. The principle of grace.

But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness (Romans 4:5).

The good news is that God does not deal with the believer according to the principles of economics. For us, He uses the principle of grace.

Works	Faith
Wage reckoned as what is due.	Reckoned as righteousness.

When Paul speaks of God “who justifies the ungodly,” the striking thing about his words are that they echo from an Old Testament passage that seems to imply the exact opposite. The Septuagint translation of Exodus 23:7 uses the same Greek terms cited by Paul in this passage.³ The Exodus passage speaks against the practice of judges acquitting the guilty for a bribe and the command is given, “You shall not justify the ungodly”)When Paul speaks of God “who justifies the ungodly,” the striking thing about his words are that they echo from an Old Testament passage that seems to imply the exact opposite. The Septuagint translation of Exodus 23:7 uses the same Greek terms cited by Paul in this passage when the command is given, “You shall not justify the ungodly” (both the Hebrew text and our English translations render it differently). But Paul says here that God does justify the ungodly when the ungodly one turns to him in faith.

³ Paul speaks of God as “justifying the ungodly” (δικαιουντα τον άσεβη) while the Septuagint of Exodus 23:7 commands, “You shall not justify the ungodly” (ού δικαιωσεις τον άσεβη).

Now this brings us to a problem. How can faith be a substitute for righteousness? Is there any virtue in faith? No. Faith is merely the instrument that brings the imputation of righteousness.

You see, faith in itself cannot make you righteous. It is by faith that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is credited or reckoned to you. You are reckoned by God as having the very righteousness of Christ in the same manner by which he was judged for your sins upon the cross.

2. The Witness of David (Romans 4:6-8).

....just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered.

"Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." (Romans 4:6-8).

Now we move to the case of David. From his example, we will see the same principle. God reckons righteousness apart from works.

David's testimony is taken from the Psalms. It is a quote of Psalm 32:1-2. It is given in the form of a Beatitude. There are really three blessings indicated.

"Blessed are those..."

- ♦ Whose lawless deeds have been forgiven (4:7).

You've probably seen the bumper sticker that says, "Christians aren't perfect, they are just forgiven!" Well, it's true! We are forgiven.

- ♦ Whose sins have been covered (4:7).

The reason that our sins are forgiven is because they were covered on the cross. The idea of "covering" sin goes back to the principle of a sacrifice on the altar. When you offered a sacrifice, an innocent animal was killed and his blood was taken and sprinkled on the altar. But that was not the only place

where blood was sprinkled.

It was sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant and it was also sprinkled on the people. They would be literally covered in blood. This meant that, when God looked upon them, He did not focus upon them and their sinful condition, but rather upon the blood of the sacrifice. The blood was a sign that the penalty of death had been paid.

- ♦ Whose sin the Lord will not take into account (4:8).

Paul uses a double negative: “...*whose sin the Lord will not in any way take into account.*” When you use a double negative in English, it turns a negative into a positive. But the force of the Greek double negative is to make his statement stronger. Because of the covering of the blood, God does not take sin into account. He does not reckon us to be sinners. Instead, we are reckoned to possess the very righteousness of Christ.

The story is told of a wealthy English businessman who purchased a Rolls Royce and soon afterward took his new car to France. When in the south of France, it broke down and he phoned the Rolls Royce people in Britain. The manufacturer flew a mechanic to France and the man’s car was repaired. He expected to receive a sizable bill for this unprecedented service, but as months passed and no invoice arrived the businessman wrote the Rolls Royce Company asking for his account to be rendered. He received a written reply, “Dear sir. We are unable to supply you with a bill as we have no record of a Rolls Royce ever having a mechanical breakdown.” That is exactly what happened to David. And to Abraham. And to you. Your record of debt has been blotted out. God says concerning your sins, “I have no record of any transgression on your behalf.

CIRCUMCISION AND UNCIRCUMCISION IN THE REALM OF JUSTIFICATION (ROMANS 4:9-12)

In verses 1-8 we asked the question of whether this righteousness comes

through works. Verse 9 now asks the question of whether this righteousness comes through ritual.

Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness."

How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; ¹¹ and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. (Romans 4:9-12).

Once again, we turn to the example of Abraham. The point which Paul makes is that Abraham was declared to be righteous before he was circumcised. This means that his circumcision could have had nothing to do with his justification. His circumcision came after His justification and therefore could not have been the basis for that justification.

Notice that in verse 11 circumcision is viewed both as a sign and “*a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised.*” The fact that circumcision is described as a “sign” is significant. A sign points to something. It signifies. What does circumcision signify? It signifies faith.

A wedding ring is an example of a covenant sign. The ring does not make you married. If you lose the ring, the marriage is not nullified. It is merely a sign of the marriage covenant.

As an aside, this is why many Christians of the Reformed tradition baptize infants. It is reason that, in the same way that circumcision was a sign and a seal of the righteousness of faith under the old covenant, so also, baptism seen as the is the sign and the seal of the righteousness of faith under the new covenant. It is not that baptism is an exact replica of circumcision, but it is true that each serves as the sign of its own perspective covenant.

You might protest, “Wait a minute! If baptism is a sign of faith, then why do they baptize little children who are too young to have any faith?” The answer

is that it is for the same reason that Abraham was instructed to circumcise both his children and those living within his household. It is because the promise is "*to you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself*" (Acts 2:39).

LAW VERSUS PROMISE IN JUSTIFICATION (ROMANS 4:13-17)

Paul contrasts the promise to Abraham with the Law. Verse 14 says that, if you can get anything from the Law, then the promise which God made to Abraham was a lie.

1. Law Brings about Wrath.

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; ¹⁵ for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. (Romans 4:13-14).

On what basis did God give His promises to Abraham? Was it because Abraham had been keeping the Law? No. It was because Abraham believed the Lord. It was through faith.

Why is this? It is because only faith can bring righteousness to unrighteous people. The Law can't do that. The Law can only condemn. It can only pronounce a person guilty. Any attempt to bring the Law into salvation results in canceling out faith.

*"...faith is made void and the promise is nullified."
(Romans 4:14).*

If you try to approach God on the basis of your own ability to keep the Law, then you cannot claim the promises of God. On the other hand, if I am saved through faith and apart from the Law, then it is the Law that has been voided.

*"...but where there is no law, neither is there violation.
(Romans 4:14).*

My older brother lives in Europe. In certain areas there are no speed limits. When you drive on a highway that has no speed limits, you are not breaking the law by speeding. Here is the point. The promise was given to Abraham in a day when there was no law. The law hadn't been given yet. The law which came later is unable to void the promise that came first.

2. Promise Brings Certainty.

It is only because of the promise that you can have any assurance for your salvation.

For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham..." (Romans 4:16).

Paul says that the fact the promise is by grace makes it certain. If the promise was not by faith, then there would be no certainty. If God's promises depend upon my obedience, then I cannot be certain of anything. I could never be sure that I had been good enough for long enough. Grace brings certainty.

3. Faith leads to Family.

For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ (as it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. (Romans 4:16-17).

The scope of salvation through faith went far beyond the Jews. Because it did, there is a sense in which the family of Abraham goes far beyond mere physical offspring to encompass all who believe.

This is in contrast to the Law.

Law	Demands obedience	Given to Israel
Promise	Faith in accordance with grace	Given to all men ("many nations").

When Abraham was promised that he would be "a father of many nations," God wasn't merely speaking of Semitic peoples. Verse 16 says that He is "*the father of us all*." That means the promises of the older testament are ours to claim. God doesn't have one program for Jewish people and another for the church. He has made the two groups into one and has broken down the middle wall of partition.

THE PROMISE FULFILLED (ROMANS 4:18-22)

In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "So shall you descendants be."

And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰ yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. ²² Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness. (Romans 4:18-22).

When we read that Abraham "did not waver in unbelief," this does not mean that he never had any lapses in faith. It doesn't mean that he never struggled. A study of his life shows the contrary. Yet throughout his life he continued to hold onto the promises of God.

That faith was rewarded when Abraham and Sarah had a son. That was what the promise was all about. God said to Abraham, "I'm going to give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky and grains of sand upon the seashore." And so Abraham waited. And he waited some more. And both he and Sarah got older. And still no children. Not even one!

What was more, Abraham's name meant, "Father of many." I can imagine whenever Abraham met someone and they exchanged names, the newcomer would say, "Abraham, father of many, exactly how many children do you have?" Abraham would have to answer, "None, yet."

In verse 18 we read that *"in hope against hope he believed."* This is a bit of an oxymoron. In other words, Abraham continued to believe even when there was no hope. We can draw the following conclusions about Abraham's faith:

1. Abraham's faith was grounded upon the promises of God, not upon his own subjective faith. This was not a faith in faith. Nor was it a subjective feeling. It was a faith upon the objective promises of God. It is commonplace for people today to say, "You just have to have faith." But this is often said in a context where there is no basis for faith. Having faith when there is nothing on which to base faith is foolish. Abraham's faith was not a groundless faith. It was a faith that was grounded upon the promise of God.
2. Abraham believed in the promises in the face of evidence to the contrary. He and Sarah were far past the age of bearing children. It seemed impossible that the promise of God could indeed come to pass. There is a lesson here. We need to believe the promises of God, even when they go against earthly or human wisdom.
3. Abraham's faith was not inert, but rather was active. It produced a corresponding action in the life of Abraham. Real faith works. It produces a corresponding manner of life in the one who believes.

THE REASON FOR THE PROMISE (ROMANS 4:23-25)

Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, ²⁴ but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. (Romans 4:23-25).

The story of Abraham is not merely about Abraham. It is much more than

just a nice story about someone who lived long ago and far away. It is about you. It was written “for our sake.”

Delivered up	Because of	our transgressions
Was raised		our justification

When we read that Christ "was delivered up because of our transgressions," we understand what this means with regard to His sacrificial death on our behalf. Indeed, these words seem to be a quote from Isaiah 53:12. But in what way was Jesus "raised because of our justification"? There are two possibilities:

1. One suggestion is that this means His resurrection is the evidence that you have been justified. His resurrection forever verifies our salvation.
2. It is only because Christ has risen from the dead and living today that He present righteousness is credited to me.

You see, if the whole of my present position before God consists of being “in Christ” and, if Christ is still in the grave, then where does that leave me? I am rotting in a grave! But that is not the case. He has risen and I am reckoned to have been risen to a new life with Him. Thus, I am "justified in Christ" (Galatians 2:17).

Don’t miss this! I am declared righteous because the perfect and righteous character of Jesus has been reckoned to me. Not merely the perfect life He lived while on earth. But His infinitely and eternally perfect character. That is the righteousness that has been reckoned to me. The result? We shall see it in the next chapter.

"Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1).

THE RESONANCE OF RECONCILIATION

Romans 5:1-11

The world is at war. It has been for a long time. In the past hundred years, we've learned to number our world wars, but even prior to that time, the world has been involved in a great war. One aspect of our war is with ourselves. We fight and we argue and we strive. Someone once defined peace as that brief moment in history when everyone pauses to reload.

Why can't we learn to live together in peace? The answer is that the war in which we are embroiled transcends us. It is first a war with God. The good news of the gospel is called the Gospel of Peace. That is what the angels sang when they first announced the birth of Jesus to a group of humble shepherds: the promise of peace on earth and good will toward men. It is why Jesus came. He came to bring about peace and reconciliation between God and men.

PEACE WITH GOD

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2).

This chapter opens with the word “therefore.” This word “therefore” is there for a reason. It points to a conclusion based upon what has been said in the previous chapter. What was taught in the previous chapter? That we have been justified by faith.

In chapter 3 we were presented with the fact of our justification, that we have been declared to be righteous, not on the basis of our obedience or our ability to keep the commandments, but through faith in Jesus Christ. Chapter 4 showed us the examples of Abraham and David, that they were justified through faith and apart from works of merit.

Now, because of that justification described in the previous chapter, there is a result. The result is peace. If we now have peace, this implies that there was a time when we did not have peace. There was a time when we were at war with God. We were His enemy and He was our enemy.

Back in chapter 1, Paul said that *"the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"* (Romans 1:18). God's revelation toward the sinner is characterized by the word "wrath." But in Christ we have peace.

Romans 1:17-31	Romans 5:1-11
The wrath of God is directed against unrighteous men.	The peace with God is the result of men being declared righteous.
Men are condemned by their works.	Men are justified through their faith.

It is common to speak of one who is near death as having "made his peace with God." I would like to suggest that such a phrase is incorrect. It is impossible for a man to make peace with God. That is why Christ came. He made peace for us. In Him we have peace with God. Indeed, Christ not only made peace for us, He is our peace. This is reflected in the fact that He is our propitiation (Romans 3:24). Propitiation refers to the appeasing nature of Christ's sacrifice. It is because Jesus is our propitiation that we have peace.

Divine Point of View	Human Point of View
Propitiation	Peace with God
Jesus satisfied the holy anger of God against sin.	Jesus reunites us with God from whom we had been separated.

That is not all. In Christ we also have our standing. It is through Him that *"also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand"* (Romans 5:2).

Verse 2 is the last time we see "faith" mentioned until chapter 9.

My older brother has served over 35 years as a missionary in Germany. A number of times, people have shown up on our doorstep saying, "I am a friend of your brother." I didn't know these people. But they had an introduction. They were my brother's friends. That was enough.

When you go to the Father, you have an introduction from your elder brother. His name is Jesus. You will find a welcome waiting for you. This introduction has brought us *"into this grace in which we stand"* (Romans 5:2). Where we were once at war, now we are at peace. Where we once stood under the judgment of God, now we stand in grace.

What is "grace?" It is unmerited favor. It is the Greek word *charis*. It is closely related to the Greek word describing a gift. This is quite different from mercy. Mercy is when you are relieved from the punishment which you justly deserve.

We could illustrate it this way. A traffic policeman pulls you over when you have been doing 50 in a 30 mile per hour zone. But he merely speaks to you and doesn't give you the ticket which you deserve. That is mercy. Then the police officer says, "I want you to come to my house where I will throw you a party, adopt you into my family and give you a brand new car." That is grace.

Grace involves giving. As such, you do not pay for grace. Once you pay for a gift, it is no longer a gift. It is a purchase. And so, those who seek to work for their salvation are denying the grace of God.

In Greek usage, this described a gift that you gave or a favor that you performed for a friend. After all, you don't give gifts and you don't do favors for enemies. But the New Testament usage is quite different. In this chapter, we come to understand that God granted grace to us when we were His enemies.

Ephesians 2:8-9 say that we are saved by grace through faith, *"not as a result of works, that no one should boast."* That same word for "boasting" is used

here in verse 2 when Paul says that *"we exult in hope of the glory of God"* (Romans 5:2). As Christians, we do have a ground of boasting. But it is not in ourselves. It is in hope of the glory of God. These first two verses picture the three tenses of our salvation.

Past Tense	Having been justified
Present Tense	We have peace with God
Future Tense	We exult in hope of the glory of God

Our justification is a completed action. We can never become "more justified." You can take a man who has been a Christian for fifty years, who prays daily and who is faithful in his service to the Lord and stand him next to a boy who has just come to faith in Christ and you will find that the degree of their justification is identical. Why is this? It is because the degree of our justification corresponds to the degree of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We have been credited with His perfect righteousness. The measure of our justification accords with the measure of His righteousness.

BOASTING IN TRIBULATIONS

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:3-5).

Notice how this verse begins. *"And not only this..."* This passage sounds a little like one of those television commercials advertising a handy-dandy thing-a-majig for the low price of \$19.95. But not only do you get this handy-dandy thing-a-majig, but if you also get these five other balli-wicks as well as a matching thing-a-mabob.

Paul does the same thing here. He has already outlined a reason that we ought to boast. He said that we exult or boast in the glory to come. But that is not the only reason we exult or boast. Our rejoicing isn't limited to the future by and by. We also have rejoicing in the nasty here and now.

“We also exult in our tribulations...” Notice what the passage doesn’t say. It doesn’t say that tribulation is fun. It isn’t. It doesn’t say that we rejoice or exult or boast because of our tribulations. I don’t go around saying, “I had more tribulations this week than you did and so that makes me more spiritual than you!” No! We exult in the midst of our tribulations. It is not because tribulations are fun or exalting, but because of what God produces in us through those tribulations. It is because of the positive fruits of those tribulations. It is because those short-term tribulations brings about a long-term benefit.

1. Tribulation.

The word “tribulation” is translated from the Greek word *θλίψις* (*thlipsis*). It was used in secular Greek to describe the squeezing of olives to produce oil and the squeezing of grapes to produce wine. When pressure hits us, we get squeezed. What comes out will depend upon what was in us to begin with.

When we hear the English word “tribulation,” we might be inclined to think of this as troubles and trials that are of a religious nature. But the word is much more generic. It merely describes trouble. It underscores the basic truth that bad things happen in this world. The question is not whether bad things will happen. The question is what you are going to do about it and what those bad things will ultimately do to you. People typically deal with troubles in one of two ways:

Fight	Flight
There are those who refuse to face their troubles without a fight. They might do this out of a spirit of anger or self determination, or they might try a number of self-help methods, but it all amounts to the same thing,	Others will try to escape their troubles, either through a physical departure or by “checking out” emotionally. Sometimes this is attempted through substance abuse; other times it is through escapism.

There are those who try to deny their troubles; who feel that if they can tell themselves there are no troubles, it will eventually come to pass. Others take a more Epicurean stance: “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” Still others resign themselves to live

what Thoreau called “lives of quiet desperation.”

Christianity’s approach to handling trouble is unique. It begins with justification. Paul explains this in this chapter. He began this chapter by describing how we have been justified through faith. Because of that justification, we have peace with God.

Because we have been
declared righteous by God



We therefore have
peace with God

This situation is the exact opposite of what we ought to have expected from a reading of Romans 1-3. The point was made in those three chapters that we are at war with God.

We were declared to be
unrighteous by God



We were at war with
God

What made the difference between these two situations? It was the reckoning of Christ’s righteousness that was accounted to us. We have been credited with His complete righteousness. As a result, we have no reason to boast.

Yet Paul speaks of boasting in this passage when he says that “we exalt.” We could translate this phrase to say, “We boast.” This is not a boasting that is rooted in what we have done. It is a boasting in the verdict that was rendered to us by Christ as well as in that which Christ brings forth in us.

Paul speaks of boasting/exalting three times in this chapter.

- ♦ We boast in the hope of the glory of God (5:2).
- ♦ We boast in our tribulations, knowing what God is bringing about in our lives (5:3).
- ♦ We boast in God (5:11).

Why can a Christian look at troubles and boast? It is because those troubles are not what they once were. Our suffering today is not by chance; neither is it unending. It is designed to bring about a positive result. Our troubles are now to be seen as formational. They are like the hammer and chisel designed to shape us into the image we are

destined to be.

Tribulation brings about...

- Perseverance
- Proven character
- Hope

When I was a lot younger, I went through the Broward Fire Academy. It was sort of a “boot camp” for aspiring fire fighters. There was a lot of calisthenics and running and climbing and lifting. It was not easy. It was not meant to be. It was meant to train you to do a rugged and a difficult job and not break under pressure. The result was a person who could hold up and do the arduous work for which that profession called. That is what tribulation accomplishes in the life of the believer.

A disclaimer must be made here. Suffering does not automatically make you into a stronger Christian. Sometimes suffering makes you...

- ♦ Jealous
- ♦ Fearful
- ♦ Bitter
- ♦ Resigned

What makes the difference? It depends on whether or not that suffering is matched up with faith and repentance. It is only in such a case that the Spirit takes such suffering and works it for good.

2. Perseverance.

This is the Greek word ὑπομονή (*hupomone*). It is a compound word. It is made from the joining of two Greek words:

- *Hupo* (ὑπο) is “under.”
- *Meno* (μενω) is “to remain.”

Perseverance is the act of holding up under pressure. The only way you can develop the ability to hold up under pressure is by holding up under pressure. There isn’t any other way. There are no instant pressure pills that you can take. No shortcuts.

3. Proven Character.

The Greek term is the single word δοκιμή (*dokime*). It is alternately translated “proof”, “test”, or “ordeal.” The point is that the way you prove or test character is by submitting it to a test to see whether it holds up.

When I was in the fire service, we would conduct annual tests of every single one of our fire hoses. We did this by filling each hose with water and then pumping it up to a specified pressure. Then we waited. The test is to see if it would hold up under pressure. When it had held up, it had passed the test.

Now, I know that Christians are not merely a length of fire hose. There are places where the illustration breaks down. But the point is that character is proven under pressure.

Winston Churchill was one of the great orators of the 20th century. He had been invited to speak at Eaton and the students were filled with anticipation as to what he might say. The day came and there was a hushed expectancy as Churchill stepped up to the podium. He looked out at these students, representing the future of the nation and he said, “Never, never, never quit!” Then he sat down. It was a lesson that was to take those students throughout the rest of their lives. It is a lesson which we need to take to heart.

4. Hope.

We have a basis of hope in the face of tribulation. It is a hope based on the fact that we know the end of the story. I am one of those people who, when I am reading a novel, sometimes turns to the last page to see how the book is going to end. We have the end of the story. Jesus wins. We are going to win with Him.

And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:5).

Notice that this hope “does not disappoint.” God has never broken any of His promises and He isn’t going to start with you, especially when you consider what He has already invested in you. This hope

is not based upon your own strength of will. It is based upon...

The love of God	Poured out within our hearts
The Holy Spirit	Given to us

Notice, the love of God hasn't merely been sprinkled or dribbled into our hearts. It has been poured out. The picture is of this love pouring in and then overflowing. That is exactly what it does. It goes into us from God. Then it overflows to everyone.

DYING FOR THE UNGODLY

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8).

Do you ever find yourself questioning the love of God? Perhaps when things go bad? When you don't feel good? When you don't see your prayers answered and you wonder if they are making it past the ceiling? There is a promise here for you.

There have been instances when, in the midst of a battle, a soldier would throw himself onto a hand grenade to give his life for his friends. This a measure of great love and self-sacrifice. But what would you think of a man who threw himself on a hand grenade to save the life of an enemy? This is what Christ did for us.

Verse 6 says we were helpless. But verse 8 goes beyond that. It says that while we were sinners. It is bad enough to be helpless. How much worse to be a sinner!

Notice, it wasn't merely while we were sinners. It was while we were still sinners. It was not while we were in the midst of repentance or attending church or sitting in a Bible study or seeking the truth. It was while we were sinners in the midst of our sin that Christ died for us.

Here is a question. For whom would you die? I would not expect you to have a very long list. Even if a person were righteous, you might think twice about giving up your own life for another, though perhaps if it were a really good man, you just might trade your life for his. But Christ died for us when we were neither righteous nor good. We were sinners. We were ungodly. We were set at enmity against God. It was at such a time that Christ died for us.

Paul distinguishes between a "righteous man" and a "good man." Perhaps the difference is that the "good man" is pictured without the quality of "self-righteousness." You might die for a good man, but few would die for the self-righteous.

RECONCILED AND SAVED

*9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.
10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:9-10).*

We have already seen that God saved us while we were...

- ♦ Helpless (5:6).
- ♦ Sinners (5:8).

Now he adds that God saved us while we were enemies. It is one thing to be helpless. It is much worse to be a sinner. But the worst possible condition would be that of an enemy of God.

"If we were enemies" (and we were). This is a first class condition. It assumes the condition stated to be a true one. We were reconciled to God while we were enemies. We were fighting Him and He made peace with us through the death of His own Son.

This is spectacular. Do you see the imagery? The picture is of a war. We are seen fighting against the King. One of the casualties of that war is the King's own Son. What will be His reaction? Will He increase His efforts to destroy those who have brought about the death of His beloved Son? No! Instead, He uses that death to bring about peace.

That is not all. If the death of the Son can bring about peace (and it did), how

much more shall be brought about by the life of the Son?

While we were Enemies	Now that we are at Peace
Through the death of His Son	By His life
We were reconciled	We shall be saved

The argument that Paul proposes is from the lesser to the greater. If God did the most for us when we were His enemies, how much more will He do now that we are at peace? The answer: Much more than the most!

Great	⇒	Greater
What Jesus accomplished in His death	⇒	What a Living Savior is able to accomplish

BOASTING IN GOD

And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Romans 5:11).

We have already seen that we boast...

- In hope of the glory of God (5:2).
- In our tribulations (5:3).

But that is not all. There is an even greater cause for boasting. We also boast in God. Why? Because He is the Peacemaker. His Son is rightfully called the “Prince of Peace.” This is what Paul is speaking of when he refers to the “reconciliation.”

The story is told that after the War Between the States, Lincoln was asked what would be the status of the Southern States in the new Union. He replied, “It will be as if they had never left.” That is what God has done with us. He has made peace with us and has adopted us into His family.

INSIGHTS ON IMPUTATION

Romans 5:12-21

This passage is a transitional area between the Doctrine of Justification in chapters 3-5 and the Doctrine of Sanctification in chapters 6 and following. This is a passage of sources. It presents the source of our condemnation: Adam. It presents the source of our justification: Christ.

As we read this passage, I want to suggest that verses 13 through 17 are parenthetical. Paul sets out to present a comparison between Adam and Christ. Verse 12 contains the “AS” clause. The “even so” clause that is needed to finish the comparison is taken up again in verse 18.

THE ENTRANCE OF SIN AND DEATH

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all man, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

Paul begins with a protasis (“*just as*”). He is going to compare the way that sin entered the world through one man with the way that salvation is provided by one man. He begins by pointing out three things that happened through Adam.

Pelagius interpreted this verse as containing both the protasis and the apodosis: “Just as Adam sinned, so also everyone else sinned.”

1. Sin entered the world.

This is what happened in the Garden of Eden. Sin was not a part of original creation. It had no place in the original design. It was an aberration. The fact that sin is here today means that something took place to make the world a different place.

2. Death entered the world through that sin.

Death is not natural. Just as sin is an aberration, so also death is also an aberration. The nature of sin is the mutilation of life. Sin brings about death.

3. That death spread to all mankind (because all sinned).

“Because all sinned” is the aorist tense (ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον). It describes a point in time. It looks to the time of Adam’s sin. There is a sense in which all people sinned when Adam sinned because he was the federal head of the human race. There are four interpretations of this phrase:

In old Greek, ἐφ’ ᾧ (literally, “on that”) carried the idea of “on the condition that.” But in Koine, it can also mean “because” as in Matthew 26:50, 2 Corinthians 5:4 or Philippians 3:12.
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- (1) All have sinned in their own persons.
- (2) All are corrupt - everyone has inherited a sin nature from Adam.
- (3) All mankind was mystically and genetically in Adam and so all sinned.
- (4) All sinned in Adam in the sense that Adam is the federal head of the human race.

I want to suggest that it is this last interpretation that we are to understand. Just as Christ's righteousness has been credited to us, so Adam’s sin was first imputed to us as our federal head.

When Congress declared war on Japan in December 1941, most Americans did not have any say in the matter. This made no difference. The United States was at war and all of its citizens were now at war. The action of the federal head of the Congress meant that every citizen which that federal head represented was impacted. In the same way, Paul assumes the federal headship of Adam as a foregone conclusion. Because Adam sinned and rebelled against God, all mankind similarly entered that rebellion.

Notice that sin did not come by “*one woman*.” The woman was not the head of the human race. Man was responsible, even though it was the woman who first sinned. Why? Because man was the woman’s head.

This was not an especially new or innovative concept. What was new was that the same thing also applied to Jesus. The distinctive aspect of Paul’s teaching will be that Christ is also a federal head.

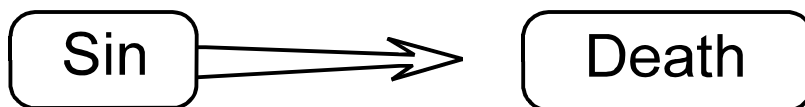
SIN PRIOR TO THE LAW

Paul started verse 12 with a protasis: “*Just as...*” We would expect this to be followed up with an apodosis: “*Even so...*” But he doesn’t do this. Instead, he stops in mid-sentence to explain what he means when he says that “*all sinned*.” He will not come back to protasis/apodosis until verse 18 (and at that time, he will repeat the protasis).

What does Paul mean when he says that “*all sinned*”? He does not mean that all sinned individually. He means that all sinned in Adam.

For until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law. (Romans 5:13).

Paul has already demonstrated that sin and death always go together (Romans 3:23). Wherever you see one, you will also see the other. Satan always tries to divide them. “You shall not surely die.” The world has always believed this lie. You cannot sin with impunity. If you sin, you will soon smell the odor of death.



Here he brings up another point. It is that sin existed without law even though, by strict definition, there is no sin without law. The syllogism goes like this:

Major Premise	Sin is imputed to the one who breaks God’s Law.
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Minor Premise	There was a time when sin was in the world but when the Law had not been given.
Conclusion	Sin was imputed some other way besides the breaking of God's Law - i.e., through the sin of Adam.

It is impossible to sin when there are no commands to sin against. It is impossible to break the speed limit when there is no speed limit. Prior to the Law, "*sin was in the world*" (imperfect tense). There was no Law until Mount Sinai.

Adam sinned and death entered. The result was that "all sinned."	Death reigned...	The Law was given to Moses at Mount Sinai.
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Sin is not imputed where there is no law (Romans 5:13c). You cannot disobey God's law unless He has given a law. Anyone living after Adam but before Moses could not break any of God's laws because God had not given any laws. On the other hand, people continued to die during the period between Adam and Moses.

Verses 13-14 prove the doctrine of imputation of sin presented in verse 12.

However, the penalty of death was not inflicted upon men because of their transgression of the Law. It is not that people did not die. They did. We read a continuing litany throughout the book of Genesis: "And he died." People died and they did not die because they were breaking the Mosaic Law. Therefore, the reason that death reigned from Adam to Moses was because of Adam's sin.

DEATH PRIOR TO THE LAW

Paul was familiar with the Jewish way of thinking that says, "If I can just keep the Law, then I will be okay." But people were suffering death, the effects of sin, during a period when there was no Law. They were getting speeding tickets in a place where there was no speed limit.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (Romans 5:14).

If sin always is accompanied by death, then how could death reign in the period from Adam to Moses if sin had not been legally imputed? It is because Adam's sin was imputed. It was credited to all men so that they are reckoned as sinners.

We often ask, "What about the man in Africa who has never heard of God's law?" Paul goes one better by asking, "What about the man who lived before the Law where no one had heard of God's law?" The answer is found in the imputation of Adam's sin. Adam's sin was imputed to all of his descendants, even though they had not sinned in the same way that Adam had sinned.

In this way, Adam was a type of Christ ("*a type of Him who was to come*" - 5:14). Adam was a type of Christ in this respect, that he served as a federal head of many. He sinned. His actions were imputed to others. Christ also served as the federal head of many. He performed a single act, dying upon the cross. His actions were imputed to others. In the eyes of the law, all who were identified with Christ were also crucified.

THE TRANSGRESSION VERSUS THE GIFT

Up to this point, we have seen the similarities between the act of Adam and that of Christ. Each served as the "federal head" of mankind, whose actions affect all men. But now there is a change.

5:12-14	5:15-17	5:18-21
Describes the Similarities between the act of Adam and that of Christ.	Emphasizes the Differences between Adam and Christ.	Summary of Christ's work as it relates to Adam.

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. (Romans 5:15).

Adam is a type of Christ, or more correctly, an "*anti-type*." He was similar to Christ in one respect. It was in that his action brought about a result on the part of many.

Adam	Christ
By the transgression of one...	By the gift of grace of one man, Jesus...
Many died.	Grace abounded to many.
The Transgression.	The Gift.

If it is certain that we all die through Adam's sin, it is even more certain that we have received the grace and the gift of God. If we had no part in the first, then we also have no part in the second. Here is the point. While it is certain that death comes, it is even more certain that we have salvation in Christ.

And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand, the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. (Romans 5:16).

One sin of one man at one time in history brought forth God's condemnation against the entire human race. That is an indication of how bad sin really is. One sin was so bad that it condemned an entire race before it was even born. It only took one sin to get you into trouble and it wasn't even yours.

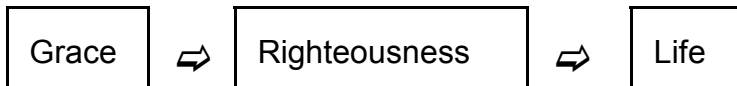
Adam	Christ
The judgment...	The free gift...
Arose from one transgression.	Arose from many transgressions.
Results in condemnation.	Results in justification.

How did the free gift arise from many transgressions? This is the gift of justification. The believer is declared to be righteous. Christ did not just die for Adam's sin. He did not merely die for original sin. He died for many.

If the one sin was enough to plunge the entire world into condemnation, then how great must be the power of the grace that is able to overcome that condemnation!

For if by the transgressions of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17).

Notice the progression within this verse. It moves from grace to righteousness to life. There is a logical flow to this movement.



This is important. Grace is the source of everything that we have. On the basis of grace, we receive the righteousness of Christ. Life only comes after we have received that righteousness.

Verse	Adam	Christ
5:15	By the transgression many died	The free gift abounds in life to many
5:16	Judgment arose from transgression resulting in condemnation	The free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification
5:17	Death reigned	We reign in life

The human race got off to a bad start in Adam. But the human race gets a new start in Christ. Birth is both the cause and the cure for man's sin.

- By being born as descendants of Adam, we found ourselves under the condemnation of sin and death.
- But by being born again in Christ, we find ourselves declared by God to be righteous as we enter a new life in Him.

ONE MAN

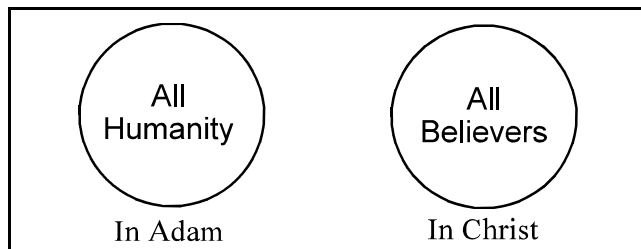
So then as through one transgression there resulted in condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted in justification of life to all men.

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19).

Through one man's disobedience the many were classified as sinners. The word *κατεσταθσαν* (*katestathesan*) carries with it the idea of placing a person in a certain category. This is the imputation of Adam's sin. It had the effect of placing all men into the category of "sinner."

All men	Condemned	In Adam
All men	Justified	In Christ

Does this mean that all men are justified? Yes. But the "all men" must be defined by the context. It is speaking of all men who are represented by Christ. Who is represented by Christ? It is those who come to Him in faith who are represented by Him. All men who are in Christ are justified just as all men who are in Adam are condemned. We could draw it like this:



Just as Adam's sin affected all those who were members of his race, so also Christ's righteousness affects all those who are members of His race through faith. Your identity is found in one of two persons. It is found either in Adam or else it is found in Christ.

You might be saying to yourself, "I don't like the idea of Adam representing me." I don't either. But I did something about it. I repudiated the representation of Adam by accepting a new representative: Christ. We can summarize these imputational truths into three points:

We have already established the basic definition of the term "impute" as referring to that which is considered or reckoned or credited.

- (1) Adam's sin was imputed to us in the Garden.
- (2) Our sins were imputed to Christ when He was upon the cross (this is the basis for the doctrine of a particular atonement).
- (3) Christ's righteousness is imputed to us when we believe. This is why justification is by faith.

This means that you do not focus upon yourself for your salvation. You focus upon what God has done. This means that God is the One who gets the glory in your salvation (note the three times in verses 1-11 where Paul speaks of boasting in God).

THE ROLE OF THE LAW IN JUSTIFICATION

And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20-21).

Why does Paul go back and speak of the Law again? This is a reference back to verse 14. He is still contrasting that which brought sin versus that which brought salvation.

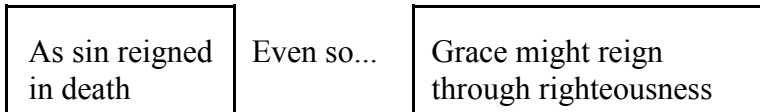
The word translated "abounded" in verse 20 is much stronger than πλεναζω, "to increase." This term is the aorist of ὑπερπερισσευω, a compound word made up of ὑπέρ (over), ἐπὶ (upon) and περισσευω (abound). The resulting compound carries the idea of "overabounding."

There was a time when the Law came in. The Law was not the main actor upon the stage. It came on the scene to perform a specific purpose. It came that "the transgression might increase." How does the Law bring increased sinfulness? There are several ways.

- By contrast. The deeds of sin are pointed out as being wrong and so are made much more wrong than if they had not been pointed out.
- By stirring up man's sinful nature. When the law forbids, there is something within us that desires to do that sin.

- By bringing out what is within man.

Why was the Law given if it would produce these results? It was to cause us to run to grace. It was so that “grace might reign through righteousness.”



Here is the point. Grace can come to man on the bridge of God’s righteousness. That righteousness has set grace upon the throne. When you are saved by grace through faith, it isn’t in spite of God’s righteousness, but because of His righteousness.

When Martin Luther began his odyssey toward understanding the doctrine of justification, he came face to face with the righteousness of God. He deemed God’s righteousness to be his enemy. It was the righteousness of God that condemned him for the helpless sinner that he was. But then, he read in the book of Romans the concept that grace reigns through righteousness. That made all of the difference in the world. Instead of God’s righteousness being the source of his condemnation, he came to realize that God’s righteousness was the source of his justification.

Sin is described in verse 21 as “having reigned.” Sin is pictured as sitting upon a throne and reigning over mankind. The sign of sin’s sovereignty is death. Christ came to dethrone sin. He replaces sin with grace. Grace now sits upon the throne. The righteousness of God will not unseat grace because it was that very righteousness that put it there!

RECKONED AS RISEN

Romans 6:1-14

When Paula and I were first married, we started a small Saturday morning Bible study with the children in the neighborhood. We played some games with them and taught them some songs and then I began to tell them about Jesus. I explained how that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and how that sin separates us from God; how God sent His only Son to die in our place so that our sins would be forgiven. I told them how God gives us heaven as a free gift through faith in Christ. At the end, I summed up, asking, “Can anyone tell me what you have to do to get to heaven?” One little girl wrinkled her brows in thought and suddenly brightened up and exclaimed, “Sin a lot!”

As we come to the sixth chapter of Romans, Paul deals with the question of continuing sin, not from the lips of a little girl, but from those who think that our liberty in Christ is a license to sin.

6:1	6:3	6:12
The Question	The Answer	The Application
Can the Christian continue in sin?	No, because... <ul style="list-style-type: none">- We died to sin.- We live to Christ	We are not to continue any longer in sin.

THE QUESTION OF CONTINUANCE OF SIN

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?

May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? (Romans 6:1-3).

Paul begins this section with four rhetorical questions. The answers to these questions are obvious. Each of these question catapults the reader further along the line of Paul's logic. These questions deal ask about the believer's practice of sin versus his relationship with Christ.

1. What shall we say then?

Notice the inclusion of the word "*then.*" It denotes a summary from the previous chapter. It connects the present four questions with the conclusions which have just been reached in the previous chapter. Do you remember what were those conclusions? That "*where sin increased, grace abounded all the more*" (5:20).

The bad news is really bad. It is that sin is not only bad, it is infinitely bad. To make matters worse, we have both our own individual acts of sin as well as the original imputed sin of Adam with which to contend. Yes, the bad news is really bad. But the good news is really good. The good news is that there is a whole lot more grace than there is sin. If it is true that sin is infinite in demerit, it is also true that God's grace is infinitely sufficient.

"Where there was a lot of sin, there was a whole lot more grace" (the John Stevenson translation).

This brings us to an obvious question. If great sin leads to greater grace, then what's wrong with sinning a lot and therefore receiving greater grace? Paul asks the same question.

2. Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?

This is the key question. If grace increases in the presence of sin, then why not sin more? The question goes like this: If the increase of sin through the coming of the Law led to an increase in the grace of God (that is, if greater sin made grace that much more gracious as per 5:20), then does it matter if we continue in sin?

We could simplify this by asking, "If we are saved in spite of our sin,

then why is it important to stop sinning?” In effect, this passage deals with the question of “easy believism” of much of modern evangelicalism. Up to this point, Paul has been somewhat dispassionate in his discussion. But this change here. His emotions come to the forefront.

“May it never be!”

“No way!”

This is the first of six times that Paul will use this phrase (6:2; 6:15; 7:7; 9:14; 11:1; 11:11). Each time Paul uses this phrase, he is dealing with what he sees to be an over-reaction to prior teaching that he has presented. That is clearly the case here. It is obvious that we are not to continue in sin that grace might abound. Such a view would be a case of taking Paul’s teaching on grace and taking it to a place where it is not meant to go.

3. How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

The argument which Paul will use against living in sin will be the fact that we are dead to sin. In what way are we dead to sin?

There have been several suggested interpretations to this teaching that we have “*died to sin.*”

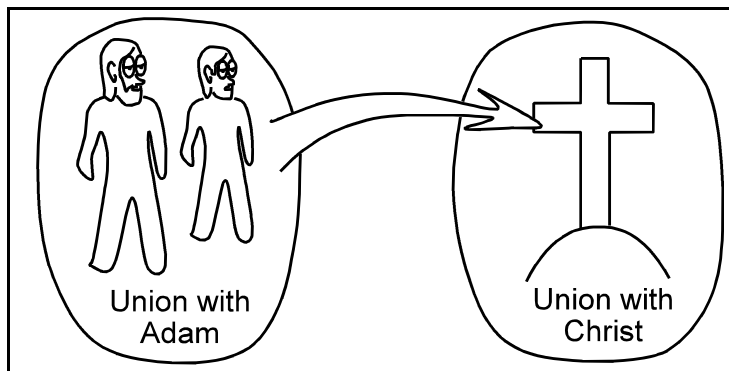
- (1) The Christian is no longer responsive to sin.
- (2) The Christian ought to die to sin.
- (3) The Christian is dying to sin day by day.
- (4) The Christian cannot continue in sin because he has renounced it.
- (5) The Christian has died to sin’s guilt.
- (6) As a result of our union with Christ, we are able to reckon ourselves as having died to sin.

In what way are we dead to sin? The answer is seen in the form of a question. We are dead to sin in the sense we have been baptized into the death of Christ.

4. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

What is the significance of baptism? When we think of baptism, it is natural to speak of water. Water is the normal medium for baptism. But water is not even mentioned in this passage. While I think that we can include the concept of water baptism in this passage, it is not the rite of water baptism that is of most significance.

The major significance in baptism is that of *identification*. When you are baptized, you are being identified with the movement or church or religion or system of beliefs held by those into whom you are being baptized. How do you identify yourself? One obvious way is to see yourself as a member of the human race, one with mankind. You are identified with mankind because you are a descendant of Adam and Eve.



Now, there is something that you ought to know about baptism. When you were baptized, the significance of that baptism is that you were being identified with Christ's death. When you were saved, you were identified with a death. This is the basis of your justification. When Jesus died, you are also reckoned to have died.

Paul says that this has some very practical applications. If I am reckoned to have died, then I am also to reckon myself as being dead to sin. Sin doesn't have any effect upon a corpse. If I have a problem with alcohol and then I die, you can put a bottle up to my nose and it will not cause me to sin. It is because I am dead. The only problem with this is that, experientially I am alive.

This is the arena of my spiritual battle. It is over what I believe. Do I believe the Scriptures and what they say about me, or do I believe in my sin nature

As I think,
so I am.

and its experiences? What is more real to you? Your sins, your emotions, your feelings, your circumstances? Or God's promises?

THE ANSWER OF UNITED DEATH

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin. (Romans 6:4-7).

When we come to trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are united with Him. This union means that we now share certain attributes. In the same way He took our sin upon Himself, He reckons to us certain characteristics of His own. Jesus died. We are reckoned to have died with Him. He was buried. We are also reckoned to have been buried. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, we are also to have a new life. Not just in the future, but now.

	Death	Life
6:4	<i>We have been buried with Him through baptism into death</i>	<i>As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life</i>
6:5	<i>We have become united with Him in the likeness of His death</i>	<i>We shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection</i>

Here is a great truth. John Stevenson was judged to be guilty of crimes against God and he was condemned and sentenced to die and he was crucified as a common criminal. He is dead! No, I am not a corpse. I'm speaking of the person that John Stevenson used to be. He was so infected with sin that the only way to be rid of that sin was to kill the sinner. That is what God did. He killed John Stevenson.

That means any life which I now have, I hold only through the power of the resurrection of Christ. Here is the point. If I believe that I live only in Christ, then I am also to believe that this new person has no business sinning because that old sinner is to be reckoned to have died. Augustine taught that there are four aspects to man's condition with respect to sin:

- (1) Before Adam fell he was able to sin. He had a will which was truly free. He could either sin or not sin. He freely chose to sin, not as a result of anything innately sinful within himself.
- (2) After Adam fell he was not able not to sin. His will was bound by sin. It became his very nature to sin. To sin was as natural to him as breathing.
- (3) Believers are able not to sin. Because we have been set free from the bondage and the power of sin, we now have a choice and an empowerment not to sin.
- (4) There is coming a day when we shall be not able to sin. When we get to Romans 8, we shall see described the eventual redemption of our body, soul and spirit.

THE PROMISE OF PRESENT LIFE

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:8-11).

Verse 8 begins with a contrast. The Greek word $\delta\epsilon$ is more properly translated "but." The contrast is one of life and death. In the previous verses, Paul's main focus is that we have died with Christ and so are considered dead.

Being dead isn't a good thing. But being dead with Christ is good because He didn't stay dead. He arose from the dead. If we are united enough with

Him to have died with Him, then we are also united enough with Him to rise with Him.

To make good news even better, we read that He “*is never to die again.*” It is one thing to rise from the dead only to eventually die again. That happened several times in the Bible. There are stories of people who came back to life. But in every case, they eventually died.

There have also been stories of people who have died upon an operating table and who came back to life. But this is not such a good thing because they eventually died again. Their “resurrection” did not have any lasting benefits. But the resurrection of Jesus did. His resurrection put an end to death. That has present results. This is seen in verse 10.

*For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all;
but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (Romans 6:10).*

It is important that we believe that Jesus died. But it is equally important that we know and understand that He lives. God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Because He is the God of the living, there are certain things that I must do in this life. What are we to do as a result of this teaching? The first thing that we must do is to believe its truth.

*“While you
are alive,
live.”
Jonathan
Edwards*

*Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive
to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11).*

Imagine that a drunken bum is on the entrance ramp to the interstate asking for a dollar so that he can buy another drink. A well-dressed lawyer walks up to him and informed him that he has just inherited a fortune. He is handed a checkbook which he is told contains a balance of \$100,000.00. What must he do? He must act on this knowledge by faith and draw money from the bank. We are to do the same. Our bank account is Jesus Christ. He is our righteousness. He is our life and source of power in this life. To partake of Him, I must consider that union of life and of death.

*We are merely
beggars telling
other beggars
where we can
find bread.*

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Romans 6:12-13).

Notice the double use of the word “present.” You are not to go on presenting your body to sin, but you are to present yourself to God. This is practical. Up to this point, Paul has not given a single command except to believe what God says about you. But now this changes. This change is introduced by the word “therefore.” Here is the principle. If you believe what God says about you, then you will live differently. Whenever you see sin, there is also unbelief. Real faith produces action. That is the message of James. It is that faith without works is dead. Real faith is accompanied by works. You can’t see faith. You can only see that which accompanies faith.

Paul has spent the last five chapters outlining God’s plan of salvation. The only thing he has called his readers to do is to believe it. But now they are called to action, not in order to be saved, but because they are saved.

I spent a lot of years working in a seaport. Something that you see a lot of in a port are sailors. When he is on duty, a sailor lives his life under orders, not usually the direct orders of the Captain, but rather at the word of the CPO, the Chief Petty Officer. The CPO says, “Mop the decks” and the sailor mops the decks. He says, “Scrape the hull” and the sailor scrapes the hull. He says, “Paint the forecastle” and out comes the paintbrush.

But finally the day comes when the sailor receives a letter from the United States Government. It informs him that his enlistment is up. He is free. He is no longer in the Navy. He no longer has to obey its orders. He is a civilian. He can go where he wants and he can do what he wants.

He changes from his uniform and he packs his bags and he goes up on deck. And there, he encounters the CPO. “Swab the deck!” orders the CPO. Our valiant civilian puts down his luggage and takes the mop and begins passing it over the deck. What would you say to him?

“What’s wrong with you?”

“You don’t have to do that any more!”

“That CPO doesn’t have any authority over you any longer.”

“Civilians don’t swab the decks.”

“You don’t have any business doing that.”

The Lord says the same thing to us when we sin. So the next time that Satan’s CPO tells you to live according to the flesh, you remember that you are no longer under his authority. Sin can no longer reign over you. You have no business bowing before Satan’s throne.

This brings us to a question. What if I do continue in sin after I am saved? What if sin does continue to reign over my life?

1. It won’t work. Sin isn’t where I live anymore. It is like an adult trying to go back and live as a child. Such a life will be unsatisfying in its childishness.
2. God will stop you. He will make your life miserable and empty. If you continue to rebel against Him, He may put an end to your life.
3. If you do return to your old ways and are able to live in sin as you previously did, this is a sign that you were not saved in the first place.

The word “*present*” is used twice in verse 13. But there is a difference between the two usages. The first time is in the present tense. The present tense indicates continuing action in the present time. “Do not go on continually presenting the members of your body to sin...”

The second time this word is used, it is in the aorist tense. This is quite different. This is punctiliar; point action. “Present yourselves to God right now in this single point in time...” This is the language of an invitation. Have you ever presented yourself as an instrument to God?

Lord,

Here I am.

An instrument.

Let me be an instrument in Your hands.

Not existing for myself, but as a tool to do Your will.

FREE FROM SIN

Romans 6:15-23

We like to think that we are in charge of our lives. There is a certain helplessness that we experience when we think things have gotten beyond our power to control. We would rather think that we are invincible. The English author, editor, and poet, W. E. Henley, in his poem, *Invictus*, sums up the desire of the human soul.

*Out of the night that covers me
Black as the pit from pole to pole
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but a horror of the shade
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me, unafraid*

*It matters not how strait the gate
How charged with punishment the scroll
I am the master of my fate
I am the captain of my soul.*

The truth that we see when we view the world through a right perspective is that we are not the captains of our souls. Prior to our coming to Christ, we were enslaved to sin. It is only in salvation that we find a freedom from sin.

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:14).

The believer has been delivered from sin. This is the basis for Christian victory. Why doesn't sin have mastery over you? It is not because of the law. It is not merely because of duty. But it is because of God's wonderful gift.

Although the word "redemption" does not appear in this chapter, this concept is at the heart of everything Paul says. We who were once enslaved by sin have been purchased by God to serve a new master.

This brings us to a question. If we are not under the law but under grace, then why not continue in sin?

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! (Romans 5:15).

The question here is very much like the one that was asked in verse 1.

6:1	6:2	6:15	6:16
Question: Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?	Answer: No, because you have died to sin and now live to Christ.	Question: Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?	Answer: No, because you have been set free from sin to serve righteousness.
Christians are free from sin		Christians are free from sinning	

EVERYONE SERVES SOMEONE

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? (Romans 6:16).

Paul presents an axiom. An axiom is a general truth which is self-evident. The question, "Do you not know?" introduces this axiom. This was a truth that Paul expected everyone to already know.

Here is the principle: Obedience results in slavery. The concept of slavery was commonly held and understood. It has been estimated that as much as 80% of the population of Rome were slaves. A slave is one who is owned by another. He is in bondage. Because of that bondage, he has no ability to exercise his free will. He might have free will, but having it and using it are two entirely two different things. A slave's will is subservient to that of his master. You are a slave. Your slavery moves in either one of two directions. Either you are a slave to sin or else you are a slave to obedience.

When you present your body to serve another...			
You are slaves to	Sin	Resulting in...	Death
	Obedience		Righteousness

Some years ago Bob Dylan came out with a song in which were lines that said, "You gotta serve somebody. You gotta serve somebody. It may be the Devil or it may be the Lord, but you gotta serve somebody." He was right. There is no "in-between" state. You are always a slave to something. You cannot not be a slave. The only question is whose slave you will be.

When you spoke of being enslaved to a Jew, it held for him a special significance. It is similar to speaking of slavery to an Afro-American. The Jews had once been an enslaved people. They had been helpless in their slavery. They had not been able to redeem themselves. It was totally the work of God on their behalf that delivered them. They had been under the reign of Pharaoh. As such, they had to obey his commands. He said, "Go," and they went. He said, "Jump," and they asked, "How high?"

Their slavery did not end until they were taken out of Egypt. Here is the principle. God doesn't redeem people and let them stay in Egypt. That was Pharaoh's initial offer.

- ♦ "You go ahead and worship God on the Sabbath, but don't be fanatical about it."
- ♦ "Go with God to worship and pray for a time, but don't let it affect your possessions. Leave them here in Egypt."
- ♦ "Go and worship God, but don't impose your religion upon your children."

In each case, Moses refused to compromise. We should, too. That is not to

say that every sort of compromise is bad, but when it comes to compromise over the issue of salvation versus slavery, there is no place for compromise.

YOU CHANGED MASTERS

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18).

There was a time when you were enslaved to sin. The phrase “*you were slaves of sin*” is in the imperfect tense. It describes continuing action in the past. There were two ways in which you formerly were a slave of sin:

1. Involuntarily a Slave to Sin.

You were born with an innate propensity to sin. You did not choose to be born this way. You were conceived in this sinful state, inheriting this natural bent to sin from your forefather, Adam (Psalm 51:5). This natural bent made it natural for you to rebel against God.

2. Voluntarily a Slave to Sin.

The actual evil acts which you have performed of your own volition combined to further enslave you to sin. Sin became a habit of life.

The good news is that you did not stay there. If you are a believer, then the time came when sin was surpassed by obedience. This obedience began internally. It stemmed “*from the heart.*” God is in the process of changing you from the inside out. That is why legalism doesn’t work. Legalism is the attempt to bring about change from the outside in. It is the attempt to achieve spirituality through the keeping of rules.

Don’t get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with having rules. Some rules are important. The issue is not whether I should or should not obey certain rules, but rather whether that obedience brings about a true conversion. Real conversion starts with God. He brings about a change of heart, a heart transplant. Such a conversion results in a changed life.

YOU ARE CALLED TO SERVE THE WAY YOU USED TO SERVE

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. (Romans 6:19-20).

Paul speaks in human terms with a very human illustration. The illustration is of a body. It is a body which is enslaved to sin. It is a slave to impurity and to lawlessness. When it commits such impurity and such lawlessness, the result is still greater impurity and greater lawlessness. You can never stand still. You are either growing more and more like Christ or else you are growing more and more sinful.

Romans 6:19	
You presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness	Present your members as slaves to righteousness
Resulting in further lawlessness	Resulting in sanctification
Past Tense	Present Tense
Indicative Mood	Imperative Mood

Paul turns from describing how you used to be to dictating how you are now to become. Just as there was in the past a continuing progression toward sinfulness, now there is to be a continuing progression toward sanctification.

What is sanctification? It is the act of being “set apart.” The words “sanctify” and “saint” and “holy” all come from the same root word. They all describe that which has been set apart for a special purpose. There are three tenses to your sanctification:

1. You were set apart by God when you came to Christ in faith.

2. You are continuing to be set apart and Christ continues to build up His character in your life.
3. You will one day be completely and totally set apart to God at His Second Coming.

It is the second tense which is in view in this passage. As you present yourself to God, you will find that He continues to work out His holiness in your life. This is different than justification.

Justification	Sanctification
A once-and-for-all event.	A continuing event.
You are declared by God to be righteous on the basis of Christ's righteousness which is credited to you.	You are being continually set apart to God's righteousness in your life as the Holy Spirit works within you.
Deliverance from the guilt of sin.	Deliverance from the power of sin.
An imputation of righteousness.	An impartation of righteousness.
Declarative.	Efficient.
Concern's God's justice.	Concerns your character.
Deals with your standing.	Deals with the state of your being.
Positional.	Experiential.
It is done for you	It is done in you

Your position and your condition cannot be compared, they can only be contrasted. Both justification and sanctification are a work of God's free grace. Both are unearned and undeserved.

On the basis of God's having justified you, Paul now calls for you to live in a righteous manner. He goes on to explain that your salvation from sin has given you the freedom and the motivation to live righteously, but it does not force you to do so. You have a choice. That is why Paul exhorts you to "*present your members as slaves to righteousness.*"

SERVING DEATH OR SERVING LIFE

Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. (Romans 6:21-22).

Paul’s question is rhetorical. The answer is obviously in the negative. Paul continues to contrast the past life in sin with the present life in Christ.

Romans 6:21-22			
You were	Slaves to sin	Resulting in ⇔	Death
	Free of righteousness		
You have now been	Freed from sin		Sanctification which leads to life
	Enslaved to God		

Notice the repetition of the word “benefit.” There is a cost-benefit study which is given to us here. There was no benefit in being a slave to sin. There is great benefit in being enslaved to God.

The Greek word translated “benefit” is καρπον (*karpon*). It is the normal word for “fruit.” Here is the principle. What you do bears fruit. If you sin, there will be a resulting fruit of sin. If you follow the Lord, there will be a resulting fruit of the Spirit.

WAGES VERSUS GRACE

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23).

Paul now summarizes the end result of the life of unbelief as opposed to the life of belief. The world system like to mix this up. It says that there is no

sin. It says that sin brings no consequences. That was the lie started by the serpent in the Garden of Eden when he said to the woman, “You shall not surely die.” The world has bought into the same lie.

The truth is that sin produces a wage. A wage is something that you earn. It is something for which you work. People work at sin. They earn and deserve the wages of that sin. In contrast to the wages of sin is the free gift of God. Because the gift of God is a free gift, you cannot earn it or deserve it.

Sin	Grace
A wage which is earned	A free gift which is given
Work for	No work can earn it
Result: Death	Result: Eternal life.
Deserved	Undeserved
Sin provides the wages	God provides the gift
Both are in the present tense	

The world system denies the consequences of sin. On the other hand, the world system teaches that eternal life comes through self-effort. Eternal life is a gift. It cannot be bought, for the price is far beyond the fortune of the richest man in the world. It cannot be earned, for we have all earned death. It can only be accepted through faith.

It is possible to be free, yet still live like you are enslaved. It is also possible to be enslaved and yet still think that you are free. Have you come to Christ in repentance, seeking His free gift through faith alone? There is an invitation here for you. A gift is offered. It must be accepted.

FREEDOM AND THE LAW

Romans 7:1-13

Throughout chapter 6, Paul has been attacking antinomianism. Antinomianism is the false teaching that says, since you are saved apart from the works of the Law, it is okay to go out and sin. But this is not the case. The believer has been set free from sin in order to live unto God. To teach this principle, Paul uses three images:

Romans 6:1-14	Romans 6:15-23	Romans 7:1-6
Image of Baptism	Image of Slavery	Image of Marriage
We are identified with Christ and so should live His life.	We are free from sin and should not live unto it any longer.	We are free from the Law to enter a new relationship with Christ.

The key word for this chapter will be the word “Law.” Paul begins by looking at the jurisdiction of the Law.

LAW’S JURISDICTION

Every aspect of a Jewish person’s life was controlled by the Law. The Law told him how to eat, how to dress, how to worship, how to farm his crops, how to live. From birth until death, there was no part of his life that the Law did not address.

1. The Axiom.

Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? (Romans 7:1).

Paul says this as an axiom. An axiom is a truth which is universally known. A self-evident proposition. A fact of life. Everyone knows that the law only judges the living.

Imagine that a police officer observes a car speeding through town. The officer turns on his lights and sirens and gives chase. He is prepared to give the driver a speeding ticket. But instead of slowing, the driver speeds up and runs through a red traffic light. Now the officer is going to add that infraction. As the driver continues to accelerate, he sideswipes another car and continues on. The police officer now adds reckless endangerment and leaving the scene of an accident to the growing list. Finally, as the driver heads out of town, he fails to negotiate a sharp curve and he crashes head-on into a tree. His care explodes into a ball of flame and he is killed instantly. What does our police officer do? Does he proceed to write up the ticket? Not at all. The offender is dead and the matter is settled.

When was the last time you saw a corpse in court? They don't give speeding tickets in cemeteries (at least, not to the residents). That simple fact illustrates this universal principle. The Law has no jurisdiction over a dead man.

2. The Analogy.

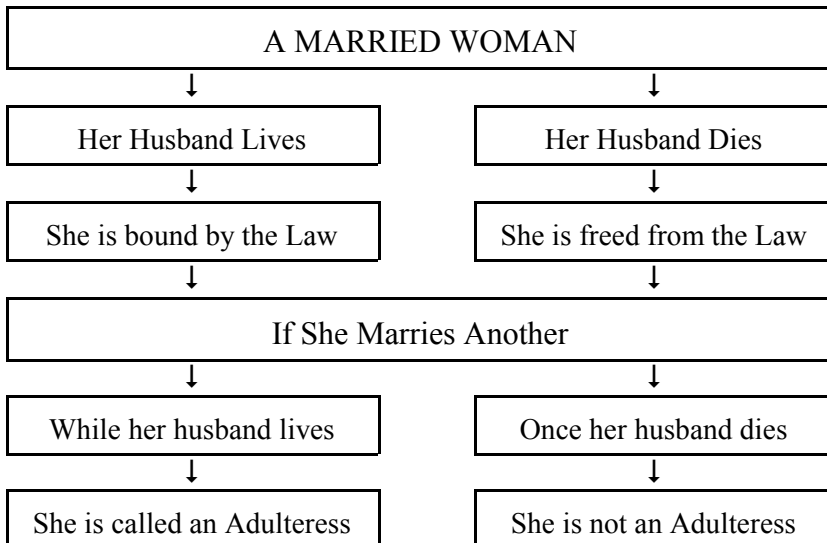
For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man. (Romans 7:2-3).

This axiom that the law has no jurisdiction over dead people is vividly illustrated in the case of marriage. When two people get married, they exchange vows and promise to remain together “until death do us part” (modern America seems to have rewritten this to say, “Until divorce do us divide”).

This was especially true of women in Paul's day. While divorce might be allowable under certain circumstances, the act of remarriage

was considered to be an act of adultery. But that changed if one of the spouses died.



Note that in the first situation, a woman whose husband is still alive and who subsequently is separated from her husband to marry another man is guilty of adultery. In the second situation, her husband dies and she marries another man, but she is free from the law. What is the difference? She was married the first time. She is now married to another man. But that is okay, because the tie that binds does not bind past the point of death.

We must point out that Paul is not setting forth his doctrine of divorce and remarriage in this passage. He is only using the binding character of marriage to make a point as regards the Law.

3. The Application.

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. (Romans 7:4).

In the same way that the death of a spouse releases the surviving party to remarry, so also our death in Christ releases us and allows us to be joined to Christ.

Paul has already described how we were joined to and identified with Christ in His death. We saw that truth back in chapter 6. Now he points out that the reason we could be joined to Christ is because we had first been released from a prior binding. We were reckoned to have died so that *“we could be joined to another.”*

This brings us to a question. To what were we originally bound? From what are we released? It was not the Law. We were bound by the Law in the same way that a wife is bound to her husband by the Law.

Wife	Bound by LAW	Husband
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If it is the Law that binds us, then to what were we bound? The answer is seen in the previous chapter. We were bound to sin and to the wages it demands (6:22-23).

US	Bound by LAW	Sin & its Wages
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We have been released from that old husband to whom we were bound. The Law has declared us to be legally dead. The Law isn't binding upon dead people. With that comes a release from the wages and the power of sin. We aren't married to sin any longer. That leaves us free to be married to another. The “other” to whom we are now married is Jesus Christ.

US	Bound by FAITH	Jesus Christ
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What is the result of this new marriage? When God first ordained marriage, he told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply.” Similarly, our union with Christ is also to be a fruitful marriage. It is that *“we might bear fruit for God.”* The very first command recorded in the Bible is that man *might “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”* (Genesis 1:28). We were created to bear fruit. God still desires us to be fruitful. Not merely in the physical sense, but to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Our new fruitfulness is designed to bear fruit to God.

BEFORE AND AFTER

For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:5-6).

When Paul says, “When we were in the flesh,” he is taking us back to that time prior to conversion. We were in the realm of the flesh (the imperfect tense denotes a continuing state in the past). Now we are in the realm of the Spirit.

There was a time when we were married to sin. It was joined to us. We were one with sin. The fruit of that union was demonstrated in sinful activity. Sin begat sin which begat more sin. We were constantly pregnant with sin. The wages of such sin was death (6:23). We are now in a new kind of relationship. It is still a fruit-bearing relationship. This time, we are bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

Verse 6 points out that, with each of these two relationships, there is a service which has been performed on our part. We served in our old relationship and we serve in our new relationship.

Our Old Relationship	Our New Relationship
We bore fruit for death (7:5).	We bear the fruit of the Spirit.
We served in the oldness of the letter (7:6).	We now serve in the newness of the Spirit (7:6).
Under the jurisdiction of the Law.	Dead to the Law.
Our sinful passions were aroused by the Law (7:5).	Now we have been released from the Law (7:6).

There is a principle here. It is that you will always bear fruit. The only question is what kind of fruit it will be. That depends on what is the source of your connection. If you are joined to sin in the realm of the old man, you will bear the fruit of death. If you are joined through faith to the new man,

you will bear the fruit of the Spirit of God.

SIN AND THE LAW

7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."

8 But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. (Romans 7:7-9).

Paul now steps in to defend the Law. This is a disclaimer. He does not want to be misunderstood as saying that the law is sinful. He approaches the subject by asking a rhetorical question. Is the Law sinful? Not at all! Paul answers, "May it never be!" The Law is not sin. Rather, the Law reveals sin.

The antinomian seems to take the position that the Law is sinful and to be avoided at all costs.
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The story is told of three men who were called into a cardiologist for consultation on their x-rays. The first man was shown his x-rays. "They look okay to me," said the man. The doctor took a textbook and showed him the picture, "Here is what a healthy heart looks like." The patient replied, "I don't have time to look at pictures in a book." The doctor explained, "If you don't see the difference between the condition of your heart versus what it ought to be, you will never understand the problem." But the man refused and left.

The second man looked at the x-rays and then at the textbook and then retorted, "How dare you say that my heart is inferior! It is the standard that is inferior!" And he left.

The third man looked at the x-rays and then at the textbook and then asked, "What must I do to regain my health?" The third man was the only patient

which the doctor could help. His use of the textbook is equivalent to the believer's use of the Law.

The Law uncovers sin and shows us how serious it is. The Law is the diagnosis which shows that little area of sin is really a cancer which shall lead to a terminal conclusion. But the Law cannot conquer sin. You cannot use an x-ray as a method of cure. It is not designed to do that. It is only a diagnostic tool.

The Law reveals sin. But that is not all. The Law also stirs up sin. How is this? Verse 8 points out that the knowledge of the Law brought with it a desire to break that Law. The Law said, "Don't covet!" I looked at the concept of coveting and reached out and grasped it. The more the Law said, "Don't covet!" the more I embraced coveting. That is what the Law does in the heart of the one who is spiritually dead. It makes my desire to participate in that which has been forbidden all the more intense. This is not due to some fault in the Law. Rather, the fault is in the sinful response within me.

It is interesting that Paul uses the example of coveting. Of all of the Laws of the Old Testament, this is the most internal. This Law strikes to the heart.

1. Coveting is a matter of the heart. It is not a matter which can be judged by outward appearance. Murder and stealing are visible sins which are immediately apparent to anyone who sees the evidence of a dead body or missing goods. Coveting is a sin of the mind and heart. We can covet, and no one may ever know it.
2. Coveting is one of the characteristic sins of the flesh. Our flesh has its appetites which often come into conflict with God's revealed will. These appetites, or desires, are often forbidden lusts (see Galatians 5:16, 19; Ephesians 2:3; 2 Peter 2:10). Sin frequently overpowers our flesh by appealing to its lusts.
3. Coveting is a root sin which is often the cause of other sins. Coveting in and of itself seems to do no harm to anyone, but it very frequently provides the motivation for stealing and even murder.
4. Coveting is a sin which best illustrates Paul's statement, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law" (verse 7). There is not a legal system on earth apart from the Law of God which has a law against coveting.

Indeed, most people do not think coveting is really wrong. In some societies, like our own, many forms of coveting would actually be commended rather than condemned.

This is why Paul uses coveting as the example of his past lawlessness. He would not have been considered a law-breaker under any other legal code. By all outward appearances, he was a law-keeper. But that changed when he came face to face with the Law of God.

In verse 9, Paul presents a “before and after” history of his own life and how it was impacted by the Law.

Before the Law Came		After the Law has Come	
Sin is dead	Coming of the Law	Sin is alive	
Paul is alive		Paul is dead	

There was a time when Paul thought that he was alive. He was living his life under Judaism. He was trying to keep the law. He was attempting to serve the Lord through the arrest and prosecution of Christians. But then he came face to face with the true implications of the Law.

When you have seen the light, then darkness is much darker. When you have seen the law, then sin is more sinful.

When Paul came to Christ, he found that the Law had condemned him to death and judged him the worst sort of lawbreaker. But that no longer mattered because Christ had kept the Law on his behalf and had died the death Paul deserved to die.

Prior to the Coming of the Law	After the Law Came
Sin was not imputed	Sin became alive
Sin was dead	I am dead
Coveting was not an issue	Coveting of every kind was produced in me

Actually, it was sin that brought death, not the Law. This becomes clear in

verse 11. The Law can only kill when sin is there. This is because the Law condemns sin.

CONCLUSION

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³ Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful. (Romans 7:12-13).

With all that Paul has said about the bondage of the Law, some might be tempted to think of the Law as a culprit, the bad thing which demands our death. It is true that the Law demands our death, but this does not make the Law bad. It is not the Law that is bad, but rather it is my sin that is bad. His reasoning is like this:

- ♦ The Law is good.
- ♦ The coming of the Law brought death.
- ♦ Only bad things bring death.
- ♦ How could the coming of a good thing bring death when only bad things bring death? Is the Law really a bad thing?

Did the Law bring about my death? The answer is that it is not really the Law which brings death. Rather it is sin which is shown to be sinful by the Law which brings death. Just as you do not blame an x-ray when it shows the presence of a cancer, so you do not blame the Law because it points out the presence of that which kills. Sin is the cancer. The Law is merely the diagnostic tool which uncovers the true killer.

In John Bunyan's classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*, he pictures a dry, dusty room into which Christian comes. There is a thick, putrefying layer of dust filling the room. The dust represents sin. Into the room comes a man with a broom. He represents the Law. As he does his work of sweeping, the dust begins to stir up huge, choking clouds. That is what the Law does to sin. It stirs it up, showing us how sinful sin really is.

There is both good news and bad news concerning the Law. The Law is both a blessing as well as a curse. There is both an ability in the Law as well as a

disability.

The Good News of the Law	The Bad News of the Law
(1) The Law contains the “oracles of God” (3:2).	(1) Knowing the Law apart from obeying its commands only makes one more guilty (1:32--2:29).
(2) The Law defines sin and righteousness (7:7) and bears witness to the righteousness of God in Christ (3:21-22).	(2) The Law cannot save man but can only condemn him (3:9-20).
(3) The Law was given to result in life (7:10; see Leviticus 18:5).	(3) The Law brings about God’s wrath (4:15).
(4) The Law is spiritual (7:14); it is holy and righteous and good (7:12).	(4) The Law came in that sin might increase (5:20).
	(5) The requirements of the Law are fulfilled by those who walk in the Spirit (8:4).
	(6) Sinful passions are aroused by the Law (7:5, 8).
	(7) Sin used the Law to kill us (7:11).

Why was the Law given in the first place? It was given...

- ♦ To reveal sin.
- ♦ To condemn the sinner.
- ♦ To constrain our conduct.
- ♦ To turn us to Christ.

It is obvious from this that sinners will have no love for the Law. Indeed, the

sinner hates the Law of God because it condemns him.

What is your attitude toward the Law of God? You will either love it or you will hate it. Your attitude toward God's Law will reflect your attitude toward the writer of that Law.

THE LAW OF SIN

Romans 7:14-25

This passage is similar to Romans 3:10-18. These verses sum up the Christian's utter inability to live righteously, in his own strength. Rather than citing the Old Testament Scriptures as he did in chapter 3, Paul refers to his own experience as we read of his final cry of despair in Romans 7:24. The darkest hour of Romans 5-7 comes just before the dawn of Romans 8.

6:1	7:4	7:7	7:13
Shall we continue in sin?	We died to the Law to be released from death	Does this mean that the Law is sin?	Did a good thing (the Law) cause me to die?
No, because we died to sin and were freed from its power.		No, it was sin that made me guilty when I broke the Law.	No, it was sin. The Law only showed me what sin is.

In the previous paragraph, Paul asked the question, "If the Law makes me sin more, then is the Law bad?" To that question, he replied, "Not at all! It is not the law that is bad, but I that am bad."

As we come to this next section, he is still dealing with the same issue. He is showing that there is a goodness and a badness at work in every one of us. He is showing that it is sin and not the law that leads to death. There are five evidences that this is the case.

The main theme of the epistle to the Romans is the righteousness of God. This theme runs through this chapter as it runs through the entire book.

We Know That it Is Sin and Not the Law That Leads to Death Because of the Contrasting Nature of the Law Versus the Flesh

*For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh....
Romans 7:14a).*

Throughout this paragraph, there will be a series of contrasts between that which is spiritual and that which is of the flesh. The reason that Paul presents this contrast is because of this verse. When he is contrasting the spiritual with the fleshly, he is also contrasting the Law with the flesh.

- ♦ Paul is speaking specifically of the Law of Moses and not just “law” in general.
- ♦ As such, the Law of Moses was given by God. God was the Author of the Law.
- ♦ The Law of Moses is Scripture, “*inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16; see also Romans 15:4).
- ♦ The Law defines and reveals sin, showing men to be sinners, under divine condemnation and in need of a righteousness not their own.
- ♦ The Law reveals the character of God to men. It also anticipates and bears witness to the righteousness of God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.
- ♦ It defines sins and determines their penalties so that those who break the Law can be punished (see 1 Timothy 1:7-11).
- ♦ Far more than being a mere set of rules, the Law is suggestive, giving those who seek God much fuel for meditation, prayer, and praise.
- ♦ The Law cannot be understood apart from divine illumination (1 Corinthians 2:6 - 3:3). No man can understand God’s revelation apart from the Spirit of God. The Law is spiritual; it therefore requires the Spirit to interpret it to unspiritual men.

- ♦ The Law is not concerned merely with externals but with man's heart and spirit.

The Law came from God on Mount Sinai. It was not a series of rules dreamed up by men. It consists of the commands of a God who is Spirit. The problem with the Law is that it is to be obeyed by men who are of flesh.

The idea of "flesh" in this chapter goes far beyond mere skin and bones. It involves the idea of our innate sinfulness which we have inherited from Adam. This flesh nature did not come from God. It came as a result of Adam's rebellion against God. The flesh is adamantly opposed to God. As such, it is in opposition to that which is of the Spirit -- the Law. The fact that our sinful flesh is opposed to the Law of God demonstrates that it is that sinful flesh and not the Law that is the cause of our problems.

This brings us to a question. Who is the person being described in this passage? There are several possibilities:

- (1) Paul describes himself in his unconverted state prior to embracing the Gospel.
- (2) Paul describes himself as an immature believer who went through a period wrestling with sin.
- (3) Paul describes his own ongoing situation and, by extension, the experience of every believer.
- (4) Paul describes his experiences when he has attempted to live the Christian life by the flesh instead of by the Spirit.

Let's look at each of these possibilities in a bit more depth:

1. The Unconverted Person.

There have been some who suggested that, even though Paul is speaking in the present tense, he is describing his own life as it existed prior to his conversion.

- a. The person described in this passage is "of flesh, sold into bondage to sin" (7:14). Paul has already taught that the believer has been redeemed through the blood of Christ and purchased from his sins to be set free (6:17-19).
- b. When we come to Romans 8:1 there will be a sharp contrast

between what was previously described and what now is (*“There is therefore now no condemnation...”*). This is seen in contrast to the condemnation that was evident before Christ came.

- c. The picture of the struggle presented in this passage seems to be in contrast to the victory that the believer is promised in his victorious position in Christ. Romans 6:22 says that we have *“been freed from sin and enslaved to God.”*

2. The Immature Believer.

Those who espouse this view have difficulty reconciling the harsh statements concerning the helplessness of this man with the obvious victory which we are promised in Christ.

3. The Experience of Every Believer.

- a. Paul’s use of the first person and the present tense. Paul does not describe this as the experience of “those bad old pagans.” Neither does he say that this is the way he used to live. He describes this as his present, on-going experience.
- b. In his other epistles, did Paul view his present, on-going position as one in which he still struggled with sin? Consider the following statements of Paul’s:

*To me, the very least of all saints,
this grace was given, to preach to the
Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ
(Ephesians 3:8).*

*It is a trustworthy statement,
deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus
came into the world to save sinners, among
whom I am foremost of all. (1 Timothy
1:15).*

Paul doesn’t say, “I used to be the foremost of sinners, but I’ve now passed beyond that.” He uses the present tense to say, “I am the foremost of all sinners.”

- c. The person in Romans 7:14-25 hates sin (7:15) and wishes to do that which is good (7:19-20) and, in his inner being, delights in God's law (7:22). He deeply regrets his sin (7:15) and thanks God for his deliverance from that sin (7:25). These qualities describe someone who has been regenerated and in whom the Spirit of God is at work.
4. The Believer who Attempts to Live the Christian Life in his Flesh.

This is actually an expansion of the previous view, but it include an important aspect. The point that Paul will make is not that we are necessarily resigned to failure in the Christian life. That would only be the case if we ended the epistle at the close of chapter 7. But Paul does not stop here. Romans 7 is followed by Romans 8. He shows us here the result of living according to the flesh, but he will then give us an alternative in the next chapter. It will be the alternative of living by the Spirit.

This underscores an important point, that the primary purpose of this passage is not to show that a struggle against sin is normative, but rather to teach us that such a struggle does not place the blame upon the Law.

We are not to become antinomian in our outlook. The word "antinomian" is a compound. When you are "anti" anything, you are against that thing. *Nomos* (νομος) is the Greek word for "law." Thus, to be antinomian is to be against the concept of Law.

Dispensationalism by its very nature tends to be antinomian. This is the teaching that the Law is bad and the Law is inferior and that we are under grace so we can safely forget all about the Law. But Paul isn't writing this passage for that purpose. His point is exactly the opposite. My struggle with sin is not a problem in the Law. My struggle with sin is a problem in me.

Spurgeon was once listening to a sermon about the armor of God. The preacher described in depth all of the pieces of the armor, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the loins of truth, the sword of the spirit, the sandals of the gospel, and then he asked, "Now, where're the devil?" Spurgeon leaned over and whispered, "He's in the armor."

We Know That it Is Sin and Not the Law That Leads to Death Because of Enslavement to the Power of Sin

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

16 But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. (Romans 7:14-17).

Notice the use of the present tense. This entire passage is in the present. The present tense in the Greek connotes a continuation of action. Paul did not have the experience only a single time. It was a continuing experience.

Have you had this kind of experience in your Christian life? You want to do right, but you end up doing wrong. There is some good news here. All of us know the old saying that misery loves company. It is usually a selfish sort of thing. If I'm going to be miserable, then I want everyone to be miserable, too. But here it is a good thing. Paul went through all of the same struggles that we go through.

Notice how he describes it. *For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate (7:15).*

Years ago, my father began to suffer the debilitating effects of a degeneration of the nerves leading to his brain. It began when he would be walking and his mind would send a signal to his foot, "Move in that direction." But the signal would get scrambled and his foot would move in a wrong direction and he would fall. As time went on, his condition worsened to the point where he could no longer walk or even provide for his basic necessities. What my father experienced in the physical realm, we all experience in the spiritual realm. As Christians, we have within us a desire to please God. But there is a degeneration at work within us and we find ourselves doing that which is contrary to this spiritual desire.

The unbeliever does what he wishes. If God's Law condemns his actions, then he rejects that Law. But Paul says that his heart agrees with the Law of God in determining what is right.

The point that Paul makes is that, when my true desire is to serve the Lord and I instead do that which is contrary to my true desire, I am thereby confirming the goodness of the Law and showing that it is not the Law that is resulting in my disobedience, but the presence of sin within me.

We Know That it Is Sin and Not the Law That Leads to Death Because of the Absence of Good in My Flesh

18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I wish, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.

20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. (Romans 7:18-20).

At first, these verses seem to be nothing more than a repetition of what was stated in verses 14-17. But there is a difference.

Romans 7:14-17	Romans 7:18-20
Emphasis on the Negative: Paul cannot stop doing the sin that he hates.	Emphasis on the positive: Paul cannot do the good that he wishes to do.
The Law is mentioned twice.	The Law is not mentioned.
Contrast between the Law and Paul's life.	Contrast between Paul's will and Paul's actions.
Conclusion is the same in each case: It is not the Law that is bad but the situation of indwelling sin.	

If I am powerless to do the good that I want to do, then how does the Christian ever manage to do ANY good? It is by means of the Spirit of God working within him. Indeed, it is *“God who is at work in you, both to will and to work”* (Philippians 2:13).

In Romans 3, Paul went to great lengths to demonstrate that there was none good, that there was none who sought after God. It is God who seeks after us. Even when we come to Christ, we still struggle with the fleshly

experience. There continues to be a contrast between our position in Christ and our condition in the flesh.

Paul's Position	Paul's Condition
Spiritual: The conditions of the Law were fulfilled in Christ.	Fleshly: Sold into bondage to sin.
Paul would like to do...	But this is not what he does.
I am not the one doing the sin...	It is the sin that indwells me.
The wishing is present...	The doing of the good is not.

The emphasis here is the contrast between Paul's experience versus His relationship and position in Christ. The fact that I even want to do good is an indicator of the goodness of the Law and its positive impact in my life.

We Know That it Is Sin and Not the Law That Leads to Death Because of the Warfare Within

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:21-23).

There is a spiritual war going on. It is an internal war. It is a war for your heart and your soul. There are times which you seem to be losing the conflict. When it seems as though you are merely a P.O.W. -- a Prisoner of War. When that quality of sin in your life has become so great that it seems to have mastered you completely.

Here is the point. The very fact that there is a war going on within you is an indication that the Law is good and that God has claimed you for one of His own. There is no war when everyone is in agreement. It is evident that sin is in your life. But if that is all that is in your life, then there will be no conflict. The fact that there is a conflict indicates that there is another principle at work within you.

We Know That it Is Sin and Not the Law That Leads to Death Because of the Victory of Christ

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. (Romans 7:24-25).

Paul comes to what would be a hopeless wall of wretchedness. Notice the way in which the question is worded. He does not ask...

- ♦ Is there a means of deliverance?
- ♦ How can I deliver myself?
- ♦ What is the manner of my deliverance?

The phrase translated "the body of this death" is evidently a Hebraism, simply referring to "this mortal body."

The question is specific and demands a specific answer. Who will set me free? He follows it up immediately with a hymn of thanksgiving. This hymn anticipates the victory which we have in Christ, a victory that will be detailed in the next chapter. The following points are by way of summary. They are proposed by Ray Steadman (1995):

1. Becoming a Christian does not solve all of our conflicts. It merely involves changing sides. Before our conversion, we were enemies of God. Our struggle was the result of our opposition to Him and His present judgment in our lives. As a result of faith in Christ, our animosity toward God ended and a new animosity, one directed toward sin, began.
2. An overwhelming sense of despair over our struggle with sin and our defeat by it is an essential step in the solution to this problem. Until we hate sin, we will not turn from it. Until we reach the end of ourselves, we will not look to God.

Just as unsaved men and women must come to the end of themselves in order to receive God's gracious provision of righteousness, by faith in Christ, Christians too must come to the end of themselves to find the solution, once again, at the cross of Calvary.

3. The problem with many Christians is not their despair, but their lack

of it. Many Christians will never turn to God for victory over sin because they do not recognize their true condition or take it seriously enough. Why is this the case? There are several reasons.

- a. We fail to agonize over sin because we have redefined our old sins, giving them new Christian labels.

Aggressive, self-assertiveness, once condemned as sin, now becomes “zeal for the Lord.” These are the same vices, the same sins, but we now sanctify them by putting Christian labels on them.

- b. We live superficial, hypocritical lives, which deny the reality of our sin, and our failure to live as God requires.
 - c. We ignore and reject God’s Law, as though it were “of flesh,” while we are the ones who are spiritual (the exact opposite of what Paul says in verse 14).
 - d. We teach Christians to “cope” with their sin. Paul never teaches Christians to cope. You need to have that agony so intense that you can’t live with it, and you can only turn to God.”
 - e. We seek to convert our socially unacceptable sins to those sins which are socially acceptable. We know that robbery and murder are unacceptable to society, and so we redirect our sinful energies in areas which serve our own self-interest. We give up those sins for which society puts men in prison and take up those sins for which society will make us president.
4. Sin is complicated, but its solution is simple. Paul has already said it – sin is beyond our comprehension. We do not understand it. We cannot understand it. But we do not have to understand it in order to solve the dilemma it poses.

The law of sin is a natural law, a bit like the law of gravity. You do not have to know anything about the law of gravity for it to bring you down. It is at work in your life whether you realize it or not. You do not have to know about the law of gravity in order to learn how to fly. Birds have been flying for years and not one of them could pass a test on the law of gravity.

Solving the dilemma of the law of sin and death is not a matter of what you know. It is a matter of who you know. It is a matter of faith in the One who overcame sin by His own death on the cross and who now calls you to come and partake of His radical righteousness.

THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:1-17

I can still remember the feelings invoked when, as a child I first watched the fantasy movie, “The Wizard of Oz.” In the story, a young girl is taken from her black and white home in Kansas and finds herself in a technicolor far country “somewhere over the rainbow.” In her quest to find her way back home, she is directed to seek the counsel of the high and wise Wizard of Oz. Surrounded by the brainless, the heartless, and the cowardly, Dorothy makes her way to where help has been promised, only to find that the only help available is that which she provides for herself.

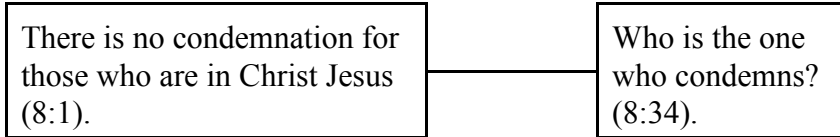
It has been pointed out that this is the way of religion. Be good enough. Pray hard enough. Be sincere enough. Give enough money. Do all of these, and perhaps you will win a reprieve. Romans contains a similar search. It is a search for righteousness. The difference is that we are helpless and completely unable to help ourselves.

Romans 7 ends with a desperate cry for deliverance: “*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*” As we open in chapter 8, we find the source of that deliverance.

GOD SET US FREE FROM SIN AND DEATH

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (Romans 8:1-2).

Paul has presented the condemnation required by the Law. It is a condemnation which the Law placed upon all who transgressed the Law. But in Christ there is no condemnation. This chapter begins and ends with the fact that there is no condemnation for the one who is in Christ.



Notice the tense. It is present. It indicates a continual action. There continues to be no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Why is this the case? Why are we not condemned? If there is a natural law that clearly states that the wages of sin is death, then why does that natural law not put me to death when I have sinned? The answer is that there is a higher law in effect.

The Law of Sin and Death	The Law of the Spirit of Life
This law was powerless to do away with sin.	This law condemned our sins in Christ by putting Him to death in our place.
This law could only kill.	This law gives life.

The universe is run by certain principles or laws. There is the law of gravity. The law of gravity says that apples fall down. They do not fall up. They can only go up if some higher force is put into effect. When you throw an apple into the air, you are not breaking the law of gravity, you are merely putting a higher law into effect, the law of kinetic energy. In the same way, the cross does not break the law of sin and death, it merely places a higher law into effect.

The law demanded that sin be condemned. We have sinned. But there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. The reason is that God condemned sin in Christ. He paid the penalty of sin and He took upon Himself the condemnation of our sin.

What is this “law of the spirit of life”? It is the gospel. It is that which provides spiritual life to men. It is that which condemned our sins, nailing them to the cross of Christ and setting us free.

GOD CONDEMNED SIN IN CHRIST

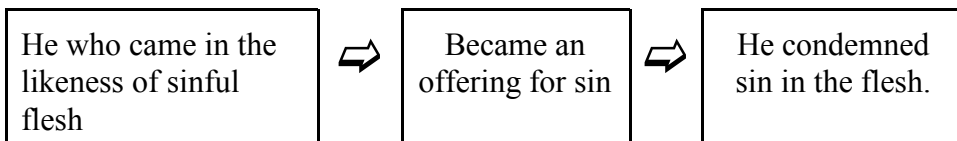
For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4).

God did what the Law could never do. The Law could set forth a requirement, but the Law could never keep that requirement on your behalf. That is not a failure on the part of the Law. The Law is not designed to do that. The weakness of the Law is not in the Law but is in our sinful nature.

The Law is like a mirror which shows me where the dirt is. It is not designed to be a cleaning tool. It is diagnostic in its purpose.

The Law tells me what to do. When I don't do what the Law tells me to do, whose fault is that? Not the Law's. It is mine. When I am pulled over by a police officer for having driven over the speed limit, I cannot blame my speedometer or his radar device if those instruments accurately measured my speed. They are doing what they are supposed to do. The fault is in the lawbreaker, not it the law.

The Law was right to find fault in me, but God took away my fault and applied it to Christ. He did this by sending His Son in the image and likeness of that sinful flesh, not that Christ was sinful, but He was in every other respect like us.



Verse 4 contains a purpose clause. It introduces why Jesus condemned sin in the flesh. It was so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.

What was the requirement of the Law? The Law required death. The Law said that the wages of sin is death. The Law demanded that the

"Christ's coming into the world had no relevance apart from sin." - John Murray.

sentence be executed. It was executed. It was executed in Christ. It was executed on behalf of those who *“do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”*

Verse 3 points out our redemption and our justification. Verse 4 points to the result of that redemption and that justification. The result is our sanctification.

We must be careful here. Paul does not say that this righteousness is fulfilled through us. That would indicate works as the basis of our salvation. He says that it is fulfilled in us. It is God who does the fulfilling. It is accomplished on the basis of the death of Christ.

For whom is this work accomplished? For all men? No. It is for those who *“do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”* What does it mean to walk according to the Spirit? This is answered in the next paragraph.

GOD IS NOT PLEASED BY THE FLESH

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-8).

Paul gives three reasons why it is impossible for those in the flesh to please God. Let us consider each of these reasons.

1. It is impossible for those in the flesh to please God because those who are *“according to the flesh”* have their minds set on the flesh. They have a one-track mind. They are like an A.M. radio which can receive only signals on this band. F.M. signals are not received and cannot be. The spiritual life is only seen and understood by those who are in the realm of the Spirit. They are only seen by faith.

Do you remember the time that Jesus first told His disciples that He

was going to be rejected by the Jews and killed? Peter took Him aside and began to lecture Him on the power of positive thinking. But Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, “*Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on god’s interests, but man’s.*” (Mark 8:33).

2. It is impossible for those in the flesh to please God because *the mind set on the flesh is death*.

Notice the tense. The mind set on the flesh not only leads to death in the future, but it is death right now. This is not mere physical death. This is true death, separation from God.

3. It is impossible for those in the flesh to please God because such a mind is *hostile toward God*. God is not pleased by that which hates Him. Pleasing God in the flesh is as impossible as trying to train a wolf to be a sheep dog. They are on opposite sides.

There is a contrast here. It is a contrast of two minds. Paul contrasts those who have their mind set on things of the flesh versus those who have their minds set on the things of the Spirit.

Mind on the Flesh	Mind on the Spirit
Death	Life
Hostile toward God	Peace with God
Neither able nor desiring to be subject to the Law of God	Obedience to God’s Law
Cannot please God	Pleases God

All of mankind fits into one of these two categories. There is no third option. Those who are of the flesh are pitted against God. They cannot obey, they are powerless to obey, and they don’t even want to obey God.

But there are some who have come to a place of peace with God. They have entered from death into life. How did they obtain this life? It was through the Spirit of God.

It is often not what we do that makes us either fleshly or spiritual, but how and why we have done it.

Here is the principle. When God seeks to truly change a person, He does it from the inside out. When Dorothy went to seek help from the Wizard, he told her to look inside of herself and utilize her own strength. God says, “You have no strength inside yourself, but that is okay. I will place my Holy Spirit within you to provide that necessary strength for living.”

GOD GIVES LIFE THROUGH THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

Romans 8 is the central chapter in the Bible about the Holy Spirit. The word “spirit” is mentioned more times in this chapter than in all of the rest of the epistle to the Romans.

1. The Implications of God’s Indwelling Spirit.

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (Romans 8:9).

The indwelling Holy Spirit is the mark of God’s ownership upon a Christian. Just as a brand upon a horse or a cow signified ownership, so the indwelling Spirit is God’s brand upon His people.

If You Do Not Have the Spirit	If You Have the Spirit
You are in the flesh	You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit
The Spirit does not indwell you.	The Spirit indwells you
You do not belong to God.	You belong to God.

This brings us to an obvious question. How can I determine whether or not I have the Spirit of God? The answer is seen in the results of that indwelling Spirit. You see, the Spirit is invisible. That is what Jesus told Nicodemus. He said that the Spirit is like the wind.

“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8).

There is a play on words since the Greek word πνευμα (*pneuma*) can mean either “spirit” or “wind.” You can’t see the wind. Even when a tornado hits, you don’t actually see the wind. You can only see the things that the wind moves. You can see the dust and the debris and the leaves and the branches bending. You can see the wind’s effects and you know that it is there without actually seeing the wind.

The Spirit is like that. You can’t see the Spirit. You can’t touch the Spirit. You can’t feel the Spirit. But you know that He is there when you see the effects which He produces in people’s lives.

2. The Immediate Result of God’s Indwelling Spirit.

If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. (Romans 8:10).

The normal Greek word for “alive” is ζαω (*zao*). But that is not the word translated “alive” in this verse. Here we see ζωη (*zoe*), normally translated “life.” It is not merely that the spirit is alive. It is that Christ brings spiritual life. This is not future life, we’ll talk about that in a moment. This is life in the now. We have a present spiritual vitality because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that the “*body is dead because of sin.*” From God’s perspective, the principle of death resides in your body. Your body is destined for the grave. You are a clock that is winding down. You can take all of the health food in the world, but you will eventually die. Even natural food will not provide permanent escape, since God has cursed the creation. Nature is under a curse (we’ll see that later in this chapter). Everything that is under the realm of nature is also cursed. But the Spirit is not under the realm of nature. It is in the Spirit that you will find life.

3. The Eventual Result of God’s Indwelling Spirit.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:11).

There is also a long-term result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is that the spiritual life will result in physical life. Those who have died will be dead no longer. We look forward to a resurrection.

Jesus	Believers
The Spirit was in Jesus	The Spirit dwells in us.
The Spirit raised Jesus from the dead.	The Spirit will give life to your mortal bodies.

Our pattern is Jesus. The Spirit was in Him and it was through the Spirit that He was raised from the dead. His same Spirit is within us and shall one day bring our mortal bodies to life.

OUR RESULTING OBLIGATION

Obligation is different than mere duty. A duty is something which you are supposed to do. But the idea of an obligation indicates that someone has already done something for you and now you are under obligation to reciprocate.

1. What It Is Not.

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:12-13).

Paul used this same term back in Romans 1:14 when he said that he was “under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.” Now he points out that we are all similarly under obligation. Our obligation is not to the flesh. The flesh hasn’t done anything for us except to put us under the condemnation of death. It is only when the deeds of the flesh are put to death through

the ministry of the Spirit that you find life.

This is something of a paradoxical statement. The way to achieve life is through death. The way in which I shall live will be by putting to death the deeds of the flesh. Jesus said something similar:

“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.” (Matthew 16:25).

This brings me to a question. How can I put to death the deeds of the flesh? It is *“by the Spirit.”* The Spirit is the means by which this is accomplished. This is the language of dependence.

My consistent temptation is to try to accomplish this process on my own. The only person who can deal effectively with me is the God who lives in me. The only person who can deal effectively with you is the God who lives in you.

2. An Obligation of Sons.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” (Romans 8:14-15).

The fact that one is led by the Spirit of God is an evidence of sonship. I don't tell the kid down the street how to live. But I do lead my own child.

What did you do to become a son or a daughter? Nothing! Your parents had to do something, but you played a passive role in the proceedings. But even though your role was passive, it resulted in an obligation on your part.

I have a daughter. She did nothing to become my daughter. She did not say, “I think that I shall choose John and Paula Stevenson to become my parents.” We took an action to make her our daughter. But that resulted in an obligation on her part. She was then obligated to act as befits a child of John and Paula Stevenson. There were

duties which were required of her as a result of being our child. These duties did not apply to the kid who lived down the street. But they did apply to our daughter.

If you are a son of God, then you have a resulting duty. It is a duty to act as befits a son of God. You are called to act as befits your position in His family.

3. The Privilege of Children.

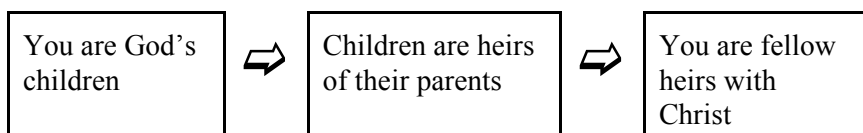
The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:16-17).

The Holy Spirit gives assurance of your salvation. Notice the preposition which Paul uses. He does not say that the Holy Spirit bears witness to your spirit as though there were some magical inner touch. Rather, He bears witness with your spirit. How does He do this?

- ♦ By drawing you to the word of God and illuminating its words to you.
- ♦ By convicting you of your sin and of your need to live righteously before your God.
- ♦ By granting you faith and repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Specifically, this witness is that we are children of God. We are able to go to God and call Him “Abba, Father.” The fact that God is your Father brings some ramifications. Notice the progression:

In verse 14 Paul said that we are “sons” (υἱοι). Now he says that we are “children” (τεκνα).



You are a “fellow heir” with Christ. The old King James Version

translates it “joint-heirs.” Paula and I have a joint checking account. It is a checking account which belongs equally to the both of us. While it may be true that I put more money into it and that she takes more money out of it, the account equally belongs to the both of us. Indeed, either one of us has the power and the authority to take every penny from that account. That is what our relationship is like with Christ and His kingdom. We can draw upon the total resources of the Kingdom and they are a lot more extensive than my bank account or yours. Every promise of God. Every blessing of the Scriptures. Every possession of the King. It is all yours to claim.

Our problem is that of the rich man who lives like a pauper. We forget about the riches that are rightfully ours and we live as though it were not so. And so, we are called to remember.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

Romans 8:18-31

Throughout the last three chapters, Paul has been developing his teaching concerning the believer's sanctification. He began in the first several chapters showing man's need for salvation and then moved to describe the salvation God has provided. This salvation was seen both in justification and in sanctification.

1:1	1:17	2:1	2:17	3:21	6:1
Introduction	Man's Sinful Condition			The Salvation God has Provided	
	Pagan	Religious	Jew	Justification	Sanctification

We have already noted the differences between justification versus sanctification. They are both workings of God on our behalf, but it is important to note that they are quite different in several respects.

Justification	Sanctification
Justification is a once and for all event.	Sanctification is an ongoing process.
Justification is something that God does on your behalf - God does it FOR you	Sanctification is a work that God does IN you
Justification declares you to be righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ which is credited to you	Sanctification begins to develop a character of righteousness in your life

Sanctification begins to develop a character of radical righteousness in your life. The development of this character takes time and effort and is

accompanied by suffering. That is the bad news. The good news is that it is worth it.

SALVATION'S WORTH

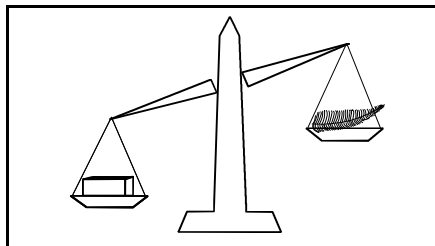
For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18).

The word “for” refers us back to verse 17 and the fact that we do suffer. Paul said that “*we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.*” When we came to Christ in faith, we were identified with Him. We became a part of what He is.

Because He is the Son of God, we are called children and sons of God. Because He is the heir of the Kingdom, we are fellow heirs with Him. Because He has eternal life, we also have eternal life. Because He suffered, we are also called to suffer with Him. Because He was glorified, we will also experience glory.

Paul tells us something worthy of consideration. The word “consider” is λογίζομαι (present participle). It is the same word which he used throughout chapter 4 to speak of our being reckoned as righteous. We said that it was an accounting term. It still is. In that chapter we saw God’s reckoning. Now we see Paul’s reckoning. Paul takes two aspects of the Christian life and he weighs them together to see which is the more valuable.

Imagine a pair of scales. On the one side, we place a feather and on the other side we place a large brick. Which is heavier? The brick has a much greater weight than the feather. Just as the weight of a feather is nothing when compared to the weight of a brick, so the weight of our present sufferings are as nothing when compared to the glory which is to be revealed.



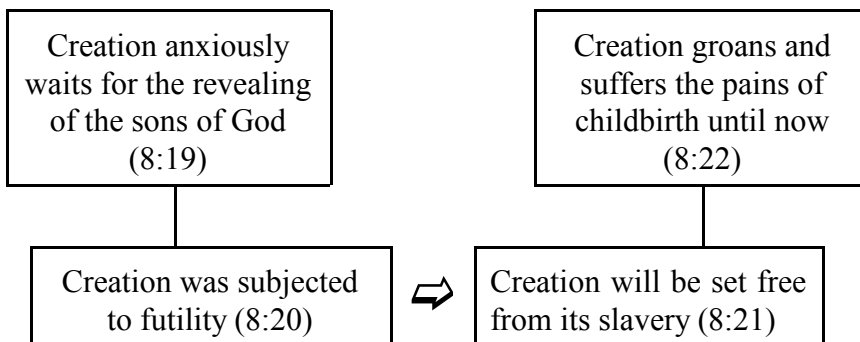
It isn't that suffering does not hurt. It isn't that bad things don't really happen. It is merely that the good is so much better so as to make the suffering and the bad things inconsequential by comparison.

SALVATION'S SUFFERING

19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (Romans 8:19-22).

This section is presented in the form of a chiasm. It is a parallel which contrasts creation as it now is with creation as it one day will be.



Man's sin affected more than just man. When man fell into sin, creation fell. God created the world and entrusted it into man's keeping. Man was the federal head of everything on planet earth. His sin impacted everything on this planet.

This is important. Creation's fall was not due to a failure in creation. The world was not created to be a bad place. It became a bad place because of a curse that was placed upon the earth on account of our sin. Creation became enslaved to futility. But with that enslavement came a promise of eventual liberation.

Creation is pictured as a mother who is about to give birth. At the moment she is in labor. That isn't a very comfortable time. There are pains. There is groaning. There is suffering. But that is okay, because something is on its way which will make it worth all of the present pain. The thing that is on its way is described as *the revealing of the sons of God*. The word "revealing" is the Greek word ἀποκαλῦψιν (*apokalupsin*). It is the same word from which we derive our word "apocalypse." It is a compound word made from the joining of two Greek words:

- a. *Apo* (ἀπο) is the preposition "from."
- b. *Kalupto* (καλύπτω) is to "hide" or "conceal."
A καλυμμά is a veil.

There is coming an unveiling. There is something hidden which will one day be revealed. Do you see what it is? It is us!

There is coming a day when the Son of God shall return. But He is not the one mentioned here. What we read in verse 19 speaks of the sons of God -- plural. Creation is poised like an expectant mother awaiting our arrival.

1. The groaning of Creation is Universal. Verse 22 says that the "*whole creation groans*."
2. The groaning of creation is the result of man's sin.

The world was entrusted into Adam's keeping so that his fall into sin also resulted in the world's fall. It was as a direct result of his sin that the ground was cursed. Adam was told in Genesis 3...

*17b Cursed is the ground **because of you**;
In toil you shall eat of it
All the days of your life.
18 Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you shall eat the plants of the field;
19 By the sweat of your face
You shall eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were take;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:17b-19).*

But that is not all. Creation also suffers from the on-going sin of Adam. Pollution is a testimony to man's sin having an adverse effect upon creation.

3. Just as the fall of Creation took place through man, so also the rebirth of Creation takes place through man. It was the One man, Jesus, who redeemed Creation. The fulness of that redemption will be seen at the "*revealing of the sons of God.*" (8:19).

SALVATION'S PROMISE

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:23).

We saw in verse 22 that creation groans. Now we see that we also groan within ourselves. Creation is going through futility. And we are, too (that is what Romans 7 was all about). The good news is that the day of redemption is coming.

The Jews had a Feast called the Feast of Firstfruits. It took place on the first day of the week following the Passover. It was a happy time, a time of promise. On this day, a sheaf of fresh grain would be taken to the Temple and the priest would hold it in the open door of the Temple and wave it back and forth before the presence of the Lord. This was done as a promise of a future harvest. The rest of the grain had not been harvested yet. It was too early in the year for that. And so, this sheaf of firstfruits was a promise of a harvest of thousands upon thousands of such sheaves to come.

It is no accident that the resurrection of Jesus took place on the very day that the Jews observed the Feast of Firstfruits. While they were waving a sheaf of grain in front of the Temple, it was being whispered throughout the city that there was an empty tomb and that the One who had been dead and buried was now risen. Jesus is our firstfruits. He is the promise that we will one day rise from the dead.

But that is not what Paul is talking about here. Paul tells us that we have in our possession right now a firstfruits principle. We have the Holy Spirit. That is the first part of what will one day come in fulness. If we only have

the firstfruits, then there is a lot more to come. We have the Spirit of Christ. One day we shall share in the entire character of Christ.

SALVATION'S HOPE

24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (Romans 8:24-25).

Paul says we have been saved in hope. What is hope? It is a confident expectation of the future. In this, it is different from faith.

Faith	Hope
Looks to what exists now and relies upon it.	Looks forward in anticipation of what is to come.
Focus on the present.	Focus on the future.
Based upon the character of the object of our faith.	Based upon our faith in the promise of that object.

Hope looks to the future to obtain something that you do not now possess. That means hope is always unseen. That isn't always true with faith. Faith can be in that which is either seen or unseen. Thomas saw and believed. We do not see and yet we believe. But hope does not see. Once it does see, then hope is not hope.

In verse 20 we saw that creation was subjected to futility. Futility is knowing that no matter how hard we try to reverse the downward process, our attempt is doomed to failure. The opposite of futility is hope.

SALVATION'S INTERCESSION

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the

Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27).

We have just spoken of that which we have not seen. Now Paul goes on to tell us of something else which we have not seen. It is the interceding ministry of the Holy Spirit on our behalf.

Do you ever come to the place where you realize that your prayers are inadequate? If you haven't come to that place, it is not that you are necessarily praying better, it is merely that you don't yet know that your prayers are inadequate. But that is okay. It is okay because the Holy Spirit is working on your behalf. Where you are unable to pray as you should, He prays on your behalf.

What are these “*groanings too deep for words*”? I don't know. Even if I did know, I couldn't tell you because they are too deep for words!

This passage is often interpreted to be the experience of the Charismatics commonly described as “tongues.” But I'm not so sure that this is the case.

1. Paul is not speaking in the context of this passage about worship or praise, but rather about suffering and groaning.
2. This passage says nothing about a heavenly prayer language, but rather describes the Spirit speaking on our behalf. He does the speaking instead of us.

We saw in verse 22 that the creation groans. In verse 23 we saw that we groan within ourselves. Now in verse 26 it is the Spirit who groans. There is a lot of groaning going on in this chapter. Is that bad? No, it is good. Groaning is good if it produces in you a hunger for righteousness. Groaning is good if it reflects a desire for the unseen things of God. Groaning is good because God's Spirit groans with you. There is no communication gap between the Father and the Spirit.

SALVATION'S PURPOSE

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28).

The reason that we can know that groaning is good is because God causes ALL things to work together for good. God is the orchestrator and controller of all that takes place in this world. There is nothing that exists outside of His control. He is completely able to cause all to work together in the manner in which He has designed.

Notice that Paul does not say that all things are good. He is not denying the presence of sin. He is not pretending that bad things do not happen. But God is able to take even bad things and use them in such a way that they turn out for the best on behalf of His people.

In verse 26 Paul says that we do not know how to pray. But here is something that we do know.

This is illustrated in the story of Joseph. Joseph's brothers were out to get him. They devised a plan to hurt him. To that end, they did some very bad things. They threw him into a pit and then they sold him into slavery and then they made up a story of his death and sold their father on it.

You know the rest of the story. The Lord elevated Joseph from a prison to become the second most powerful man in all of Egypt. Years later, Joseph stood before his brothers and said:

“And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” (Genesis 50:20).

If it had not been for Joseph, then the sons of Jacob would have starved in the famine that swept that part of the world. If Joseph had not been sold into Egypt, there would have been no children of Israel. If Joseph had not suffered, there would have been no Messiah. If he had not experience the evil of his brothers, you would still be in your sins.

All things are not good. God never said, “Give thanks for all things.” He says, “*Give thanks in all things.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). All things are not good. Tragedy is real. Jesus cried at a funeral. He screamed in agony on the cross. You will face real problems in this life. This verse does not minimize that reality.

However, there is another reality which is working in our behalf. God is working. He works in the good things and He works in the bad things and the result of His working is good. To whom does this verse apply? For

whom does God cause all things to work together for good? The answer is given in two parts:

- (1) To those who love God.
- (2) To those who are called according to His purpose.

This is not two separate groups of people. They are one and the same. Those who love God are the same who are called according to his purpose.

Do you ever wonder if you have been called according to God's divine purpose? Do you ever wonder if you are one of His chosen people? Here is an answer to that question. It can be determined by whether or not you love God.

SALVATION'S ORDER

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? (Romans 8:29-31).

The reason that we know that God works all things together for the good of His people is because He knows what He is doing and He has known about it since the beginning. God's saving you was not mere happenstance. Your salvation was preplanned by God before the foundation of the world.

Romans 8:29 was written to help explain how Romans 8:28 can be true. The word "for" at the beginning of this verse shows its connection to verse 28. In this verse Paul offers an explanation of how Romans 8:28 can be true. God can claim to be working all things together for the good of His own because He is sovereign.

1. The Extent of God's Foreknowledge.

The foreknowledge of God is more than the mere fact that God knows everything beforehand. It includes that, but it also goes far beyond that. Neither does it merely say that God foreknows about certain individuals. God's foreknowledge of His people means that He knows them in a relational sense.

When the Bible says that Adam knew his wife, it does not mean that he knew Eve's name and phone number and a few relevant facts about her. It is an expression of love. The same is true of God. He knew you and loved you before you were even born.

By the same token, Matthew 7:22-23 says that there will be many who will stand before the Lord and He shall say, "*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*" Those who God knew in this sense were *predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son*. Why? Why did God predestine you? The reason might surprise you. Paul does not say that it was because you were so good and pure and loveable. Indeed, the reason that he gives has nothing to do with you. He says that the reason God predestined you was so that Jesus *would be the firstborn among many brethren*. The Father gave the Son younger brothers so that He might have the honor of being the Older Brother. He has the birthright. The inheritance is His. The result is that He holds the position of honor.

2. Predestined.

The word "predestine" simply means to "destine beforehand." There are a lot of people who have problems with this. They feel that it destroys free will. Perhaps it does. But that is too bad. The Scriptures speak explicitly about God having predestined men. But that is not all. Predestination does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place as a part of God's plan and purpose.

3. Called.

The fact of predestination does not take place apart from the gospel. This is seen by the fact that those whom God predestined were called. This is not only an outward call, although all who were predestined were outwardly called. This is also an inward call. It is a call in which God's Spirit regenerated those whom God had chosen. The result was that they came to Christ in faith. This brings us to our next point.

4. Justified.

Justification did not take place at the cross. It took place when you believed. It came at that time of faith and when God counted your

faith as righteousness, imputing the very righteousness of Christ to you.

5. Glorified.

With the mention of glory, we come full circle. This is how Paul started this passage. In verse 18 we read that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us*.

Paul speaks of this glorification in the aorist tense as though it were a completed action. It is obvious from the context that it is not. But he sees the progression as so certain that he describes it as having already taken place. Our future glory is a part of our present hope. Paul said this back in Romans 5.

...and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:2b).

WHO IS ISRAEL?

Romans 9:1-13

When I was a lot younger, there was a television show called, “To Tell The Truth.” It was a game show which would have three guests, each claiming a single person’s identity and the object of the show was to determine who was the real “Mister X.” When all the clues had been evaluated and all of the questions asked, the announcer would then say, “Will the real Mister X please stand up?” And the true owner of that identity would stand. As we come to this chapter, we could ask a similar question, “Will the real Israel please stand up?”

The Bible teaches that God set out to bless the world through a single man. His name was Abram. It meant, “Father of high places,” because in his day people went to the nearest high place to try to get closer to their pagan gods. But his name was changed by God to reflect this promised blessing. His name was changed to Abraham, meaning “Father of a multitude.” Why was he called this? It was because of the promise that he would be the father, both physically and spiritually, of a great many people. Through him, the entire world would be blessed.

It was through Abraham that the nation of Israel came into being. It was through Abraham that the Messiah came - born as a son of David. But this brought with it a problem. The problem was that not all of the Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

PAUL’S PASSION

1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed,

separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, ⁵ whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 9:1-5).

Paul was concerned about people. It was a part of what drove him in ministry. There was something that filled his heart with sorrow and which brought him continuing grief. It was the fact that his own people, the Jews, had not come to faith in Jesus.

Paul's antithesis is Jonah who desired to see those who had rejected the Lord come to an early judgment.
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Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. God had called him to take the gospel to the *Goyim*. And he did so. But he never stopped caring for his fellow Israelites. He never stopped trying to convince them of the truth of the gospel. He never stopped wishing for their conversion, even to the point of wishing that he could take their place, that he could be damned in their place.

In verses 4-5 he lists the blessing which have been awarded to the Jewish people.

1. They are Israelites (9:4).

This was a name originally given to Jacob. It wasn't his original name. He had been given the name "Jacob" as a child. "Jacob" means "heel-grabber," someone who is out to "trip you up." Jacob had been like that. Always looking to make a deal, to trip up someone. But then he met the Lord. After an all-night wrestling match that mirrored his inner turmoil, Jacob was tripped up by the Lord. He was given a new name that night. A nickname. He was renamed Israel, meaning "Prince of God." His descendants were forever after known by this name.

2. To them belongs the adoption as sons (9:4).

The Lord describes the nation of Israel in terms of being His son. Not merely His son, but His first-born son (Exodus 4:22).

3. To them have been given the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service (9:4).

It was the Jews who were witnesses of the glory of God. It was with them that the covenant was made. The Law of Moses was entrusted into their keeping. The temple services were to be found only in their land.

4. They are the Recipients of the Promises (9:4).

All of the prophets were Jewish. The promises of God had their name stamped upon them. They were both the objects and the recipients of the promises of God.

5. The fathers are their Fathers (9:5).

We read of the patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and we might identify with them to some degree. But the Jews were able to all the more for they were their forefathers. They were family. The story of the Old Testament was their story.

6. They are of the same kin as the Son (9:6).

Jesus was Jewish. His genes were Jewish genes. He grew up in a Jewish household and His earliest lessons were in a Jewish home and in a Jewish synagogue.

A Christian should never be anti-Semitic, for it would be the same as being anti-Christ. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism has often been evident within the church.

- ♦ The Synod of Elvira in 306 prohibited Christians and Jews from intermarriage and even from eating together.
- ♦ The Trullan Synod (692) prohibited Christians from being treated by Jewish doctors.
- ♦ The Synod of Narbonne (1050) prohibited Christians from living in Jewish homes.
- ♦ The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) required Jews to wear special

clothing to distinguish them from Christians.

- ♦ The Council of Basel (1431-1443) forbade Jews to attend universities, prohibited them from acting as agents in the conclusion of contracts between Christians.
- ♦ Martin Luther called the Jews poisoners, ritual murderers, and parasites. His view was that synagogues should all be burned to the ground, that they should be expelled from Germany that no rabbi ought to be permitted to teach under pain of death.

On behalf of any Jews who are reading these words, let me apologize. These things ought never to have taken place. Paul's attitude toward the Jews was one of love and concern. He has just finished teaching how there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God (8:39). But now he wishes that he were himself separated from that love rather than that the Jewish people would be separated from it.

This brings up a question. It is a question that deals with the main theme of the book of Romans. It is the question of the righteousness of God versus the unbelief of Israel.

THE QUESTION: HAS GOD'S WORD FAILED?

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel (Romans 9:6).

In giving this statement, Paul presumes a question. It is the question which naturally arises when we look at the fact of Jewish unbelief. Here it is. If Israel is God's chosen people (and they are), and if not all of Israel have come to faith in Christ (and they haven't), and if all who are chosen by God come to Christ (and they do), then why hasn't Israel come to Christ? The answer is not that there is some failure in God's promises. The answer is to be found in the true identity of Israel. It has been popular in recent years for Jewish rabbis to discuss the question of "who is a Jew?" Paul approaches the same question in this passage. Who is Israel?

THE ANSWER

To answer the question of who is Israel, Paul uses two historical figures from the past history of Israel.

Illustration of Isaac	Illustration of Jacob
Isaac was chosen instead of his older half-brother Ishmael	Jacob was chosen instead of his older twin Esau.

1. Not All Israel Is Israel.

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; 7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "Through Isaac your descendants will be named." (Romans 9:6-7).

The fact that "not all Israel is descended from Israel" is illustrated in the fact of Abraham's two sons. Abraham had been promised that he would have a son who would become a great nation. There were several problems with this promise.

- ♦ Abraham and his wife were both well past the age where it was possible to bear children. The fires of their youth had long since gone out and there was no heat left in the furnace. The coals were stone cold dead.
- ♦ Even when they had been younger, Sarah had been barren and unable to bear children.

Abraham and Sarah put their heads together and they came up with a plan to "help God." The plan was named Hagar. Abraham lay with Hagar and had a son by her named Ishmael. But God had needed no help. He said that Ishmael would not be the son of the promise. Sarah would have a son. Sarah chuckled over this, but God got the last laugh and when it was over, Sarah's belly began to swell and she gave birth to Isaac. His name means "laughter."

The point that Paul is making is that being the son of Abraham didn't

automatically connect you with God since Abraham had two sons and only one of them was of the chosen line. Although Ishmael was just as much a son of Abraham as was Isaac, although he was the firstborn, the promise and the inheritance was not given to him. This brings us to our next point.

2. Children of the Promise are the Only Legitimate Descendants.

That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son."

And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹ for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (Romans 9:8-13).

Abraham and Sarah are not the only examples of fleshly children who were not chosen by God. There is also the example of Jacob and Esau. They were twins. They had the same father and the same mother. They were born only minutes apart. They were born into the same household and had the same upbringing. But God chose one and not the other. Specifically, God chose the younger over the older.

This was contrary to popular custom. It was normally the older brother who was accorded the birthright and the blessing and the double portion and the leadership over the family. But God chose the younger. He chose Jacob over Esau.

It wasn't that Jacob was nicer. He wasn't. Jacob was actually a con artist. That is what his name meant. "Heel grabber," one who trips you up when you aren't looking. Jacob lived up to his name. He conned his brother out of his birthright. He tricked his father into giving him the family blessing. He swindled his father-in-law out of the family fortune.

Why did God choose Jacob? It wasn't because he was better than Esau. Indeed, Paul says that Jacob was chosen before either of the twins was even born and before they ever had opportunity to do good or evil. God's choice had nothing to do with their goodness. It was made...

- ♦ *So that God's purpose according to His choice would stand.*
- ♦ *Because of Him who calls.*

Who is the real Israel? It is those whom God has chosen. It is those who have been chosen and called and who have come in faith and who have been justified and who will ultimately be glorified.

The following lessons are taught within this passage:

- (1) Being a true Israelite is not synonymous with being a physical Israelite. Relationship with God does not come on the basis of who are your parents or of what church you are a member.

There were those in Israel who supposed that mere physical descent from the patriarchs assured one of entrance into the kingdom of God. John the Baptist rejected this (Matthew 3:9-10), and so did Jesus (John 8:39).

The issue is not that of physical ancestry but rather spiritual ancestry. There is a spiritual seed going back all the way to the Garden. It is the seed of the woman which is over against the seed of the serpent. The latter leads to those who are descendants of Satan. The former are culminated in the One who is the Seed, Jesus Christ. To become a part of this spiritual seed requires a spiritual birth, a divine regeneration brought about through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

- (2) Those who are of the spiritual seed are those whom God has chosen. Receiving this election is not the results of one's works but a gift given to those whom God has sovereignly chosen.
- (3) This election is individual. Some seek to water down Paul's words and the doctrine of election by suggesting that the election spoken of here and elsewhere is the election of a nation, a group, and not individuals. This is quite contrary to Paul's teaching. In fact, the very concept of group election is the error Paul is trying to correct here.

Many Israelites thought they were assured a place in the kingdom of God based solely on their physical descent as Israelites.

Paul's examples, used to prove his point, are cases of individual election.

- ♦ Isaac was chosen over Ishmael.
- ♦ Jacob was chosen over Esau.
- ♦ Moses was chosen to worship God.
- ♦ Pharaoh was hardened.

- (4) This passage teaches double election.

Some try to take the edge off of election by saying that God's election is only of those whom He will save. The fate of the non-elect is not a matter of God's sovereign choice, they say.

This simply cannot be true. It is not logical, and more importantly, it is not biblical. For God to choose to save some when He is capable of saving all, and when He alone is capable of saving any, is to choose that the rest will perish.

Paul speaks of both sides of the coin. It was Isaac, not Ishmael (inferred). It was Jacob, not Esau. It was Moses, not Pharaoh. There are "vessels of wrath" and there are "vessels of mercy" (9:22-23). The fate of the lost, as well as that of the saved, is first and foremost a decision made by our sovereign God. Having said this, we must point out that the emphasis of Biblical teaching is upon those whom God has chosen for salvation. This should be our emphasis, too.

- (5) Divine sovereignty does not exclude or reduce human responsibility. Paul does not start the epistle to the Romans with the doctrine of election. He begins instead showing that man is willingly rebellious against God. It is true that God has not chosen certain men. But it is also true that men have not chosen God.
- (6) The sovereignty of God means God is in control.

All of God's promises are based upon one fact: God is in control. If there is one message which permeates biblical prophecy, it is this: God is sovereign. The sovereignty of God is our assurance that He

will do what He has promised. If God is not in control of everything, including man's salvation, then God is not sovereign, and His promises are not certain. The good news is that God is sovereign. He is able to keep all of His promises.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD'S ELECTION

Romans 9:14-33

Ancient paganism thought of each god as bound to his worshipers by bonds of self-interest, because he depended on their service and gifts for his welfare. Modern paganism has at the back of its mind a similar feeling that God is somehow obliged to love and help us, little though we deserve.” (J.I. Packer, Knowing God, Pg 119).

The difficulty that most people have with the doctrines of election and predestination is not the lack of Biblical passages dealing with the subject. The Old and New Testaments are replete with statements that God had chosen and elected and predestined.

The problem that most have with this doctrine is how we deal with all of the implications which this doctrine raises. Chief among these difficulties is the question of the justice of divine election. How is God to be considered as just and righteous if He arbitrarily sends some people to hell and allows others into heaven?

The theological term for this question is *theodicy*. It comes from a joining of two Greek words.

- a. *Theos* (Θεός) is the word for “God.”
- b. *Dike* (δικη) is the word for “righteous.”

The question of Theodicy is a question of the righteousness of God. This has been the central theme of the entire epistle to Romans.

1:1	3:21	6:1	9:1	12:1
God's righteous judgment of sinful men	God's method of declaring some men to be righteous	God's work of sanctification - working His righteous character	God's righteous dealings with Israel	Practical ramifications of leading a righteous life.

THE QUESTION PRESENTED

What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! (Romans 9:14).

Notice the question. Is there any injustice with God? It is the justice and the righteousness of God which is being questioned here.

This question arises from the previous verses. Is God just in choosing Isaac and not Ishmael? Is God just in choosing to love Jacob and hate Esau? Is God just in choosing Israel to be His chosen people and in not choosing another of the nations of the world? Is God just in choosing some to be saved and not choosing others?

The question of verse 14 is worded in such a way as to expect a negative answer.

A similar question will be raised in verse 19 when Paul asks the question, "If God has determined our actions, then how can He find fault in us and judge us?"

Before we look at the answer to these questions, I want you to notice something. These two objections which Paul brings up would never have arisen if we were not meant to understand that the choice of election rests with God. If Paul had been teaching that God merely looks down the corridors of time to see what men will choose and then elects them on the basis of their own decision, then there would be no basis for the question of whether God is just in choosing certain men.

The very fact that God's justice in election is questioned in this passage points to the fact that election originates and is based only in God. Paul's doctrine of election raises this objection. I would suggest that any view concerning election which does not give rise to this question is an improper view of election. If we come to a proper view of election, then this objection

concerning God's justice will always arise.

How do we answer the question? Is God unjust? Paul retorts, "May it never be! Absolutely not!" But if God is absolutely just and righteous, then why is He able to choose some and not choose others? Why isn't this unrighteous? The answer is found in the following verses.

THE SOVEREIGN MERCY OF GOD

For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." (Romans 9:15).

The answer is seen in the sovereign mercy of God. It is because God is God. He is absolutely free to act according to the attributes of His own character. Paul illustrates this principle with a quote from the Old Testament.

He takes us back to the Sinai Desert. Moses has been on Mount Sinai for forty days. While he is on the mountain, the people of Israel turn away from God to worship a golden calf. As a result, God judges the Israelites and decrees that they shall not be permitted to enter into the Promised Land. It is in this context that God proclaims the principle of His sovereign mercy.

And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." (Exodus 33:19).

Moses has been pleading for the forgiveness of the people. God responds by declaring that He is free to decide toward whom He shall be merciful. There is a principle here. It is that the doctrine of election is based upon the mercy of God. For God to choose some to salvation is for Him to show mercy toward those individuals.

God showed that kind of mercy toward Israel. Israel was not given mercy because of her faith. She was not given mercy because she was more righteous than the surrounding nations. Israel's mercy did not come from any quality that Israel possessed. It was the mercy of God.

God is not under any obligation to show mercy to anyone. Prayer does not even obligate God to show mercy. Nothing can dictate to God toward whom He must show mercy. There is no injustice in this. Neither is there any injustice in God's withholding mercy from those whom He has not chosen.

If ten people owed me money and I chose to forgive the debt of three of them, but still required the other seven to pay their debt, I would not be unjust. In the same way, there is no injustice in God being merciful to some and not being merciful to others.

You might protest that this is unfair. To do so, you would be implying that God is under some obligation to treat all men equally. This is not true. God is not obligated to treat all men equally and He does not treat all men equally.

Some men have IQ's of 130 while others are lower in intelligence. Some are born into wealthy homes while some are poor by birth. Some have very long life spans while some die very young in life. Some have great athletic ability while some are 97 pound weaklings. It has been said that if all men are created equal, then some are more equal than others.

We are not treated equally by God. God is not obligated to treat anyone equally and there is no injustice in this. Because He is the Creator, he has the prerogative to create His creatures in any way He desires.

THE BASIS OF ELECTION

The fact of election is undeniable to those who read and believe the Bible. What is then argued by people is the question of the basis of election. On what basis has God chosen some to salvation? There are some schools of thought that teach God elected some to salvation based upon what He foreknew they would determine. This would make election based upon their decision. Paul teaches something quite different.

1. The Principle Stated.

In verse 16, Paul draws a conclusion from the fact that God is sovereign in the bestowal of His mercy. The conclusion is introduced by the words "so then." The conclusion concerns the basis of God's election.

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. (Romans 9:16).

God's election is not based upon the will of man. God did not look down the corridors of time to see what man will choose and then grant mercy on the basis of what man's decision would be. Election is not based upon what man wills.

Election does NOT depend upon...	
The Man who Wills	The Man who Runs
Emphasis upon the decision of man	Emphasis upon the actions of man

Neither is election based upon what man does. It is not based upon any of his good works, his morality, his ethics, or anything else that he does. It is not even based upon man's faith. God is completely free to show mercy on whomever He chooses to show mercy.

2. The Principle Illustrated: The Case of Pharaoh.

Paul now goes on to illustrate this point in the story of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt who was judged by God at the exodus.

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." (Romans 9:17).

You remember the story. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt. He was the sovereign of the mightiest kingdom on the face of the earth. His armies had marched all the way to the Euphrates River. But the Lord says that He is the one who raised up Pharaoh. He is the one who placed Pharaoh on the throne of Egypt.

This is astounding when we realize that Pharaoh's program was the subjugation of the people of God. He resorted to infanticide to bring this about. He had Hebrew male children put to death (mandatory post-birth abortions). He was directly opposed to God. And yet, it

was God who had chosen Pharaoh and who had placed him on the throne of Egypt. God chose to raise up Pharaoh, to harden his heart, and then to bring him to ruin so that God might be glorified. Here is Paul's point. It is not Pharaoh who wills or Pharaoh who runs, but God! This brings us to a new conclusion. It is presented in verse 18.

3. A New Conclusion: Mercy & Hardening.

*So then He has mercy on whom He desires,
and He hardens whom He desires. (Romans 9:18).*

Paul's new conclusion is again introduced by the phrase "so then." It is a conclusion based upon the two previous illustrations of Israel and of Pharaoh.

a. God has mercy on whom He desires.

We have already seen this principle in the case of Israel. Paul quoted Exodus 33:19 to show that God is not obligated to show mercy to anyone. He is free to bestow His mercy on whom He desires.

b. God hardens whom He desires.

This conclusion is based upon the case of Pharaoh to which Paul has just referred. It is often argued that Pharaoh hardened his own heart and that God was not the initiator of this hardening process.

We can turn to passages in Exodus which say both that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and also that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. It is frequently maintained that God did not harden Pharaoh's heart until he had first hardened his own heart. Thus the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is not seen to be God's initial doing, but Pharaoh's.

This passage teaches just the opposite. Paul makes it very clear that Pharaoh's decision to harden his own heart ultimately came from God. The whole point that Paul is making is that God works and chooses and hardens and has mercy according to His own will. He is the instigator of His

plan. This is confirmed in the Old Testament account when the Lord revealed His plan to Moses.

And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go." (Exodus 4:21).

God told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart. For us to maintain that God was only a secondary source of this hardening process would be to attribute the actions of God to Pharaoh.

The fact that it was God who was the initiator of this hardening process is evidenced by the objection that Paul raises concerning God's righteous judgment of Pharaoh.

THE QUESTION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" (Romans 9:19).

There is a difference between the question which is asked in verse 14 and the question which is asked here. The difference is illustrated in the chart below:

Verse 14	Verse 19
<i>"What shall we say, then?"</i>	<i>"You will say to me then..."</i>
First Person ("we"): This is a question raised by Christians	Second Person ("you"): This is a question of unbelief
<i>"There is no injustice with God, is there?"</i>	<i>"Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"</i>
This question is answered from the Old Testament.	The questioner is rebuked from the Old Testament.

Here is the question which Paul raises. How can God hold men responsible for their disobedience when it is God who hardens their hearts? How can God judge Pharaoh for sinning when Pharaoh is acting according to God's divine plan? If God is responsible for hardening Pharaoh's heart, and if it is impossible for Pharaoh to resist the will of God, then how can God judge him for what he has done? Why does God still find fault with Pharaoh?

This is a very relevant question. We could ask, "If it is God who has chosen certain men to believe and to be saved, and if he has hardened other men against the gospel, then how can He direct his wrath and anger and condemnation against those who are hardened?"

The usual response of a Christian when he is presented with this objection is to back off and explain that God has merely chosen men on the basis of what He knew they would believe. By doing so, the well-meaning Christian is seeking to "take God off the hook" so that He will not be seen to be responsible for sin. However, to do so is to take God down off His throne and to treat Him as a creature instead of recognizing Him as the sovereign Creator.

Paul takes a very different approach to this question. We can describe his approach both in the negative as well as in the positive.

1. Paul does not back off of what he has taught.

He does not try to soften his teaching nor does he feel the need to clarify or defend what he has previously taught with regard to election. Don't miss this! The question is only valid if the premise is valid. The premise of the question is that God is sovereign, and that He does choose to save some but not others. If the premise was wrong, then Paul would have corrected it here and now. But he does not correct the premise. This further confirms that Paul is teaching the doctrine of individual election.

2. Paul indicts the questioner for talking back to God.

The question and the questioner are out of order. It is a question which man has no right to ask. We cannot approach God as though He were an equal or as if He had to answer to us. He is under no obligation to give us any answers at all. This is graphically illustrated to us in the book of Job.

You remember the story of Job. It begins with a glimpse into heaven when Satan comes and offers up a challenge. As a result, the Lord allows him to literally bring the roof down upon Job. For the next 37 chapters, Job goes through all sorts of torment and the only comfort that he has is the poor advice of his wife and three friends. At the end of that time, God comes to Job and says to him essentially the same thing that Paul says here in these verses. “Who are you to answer back to God?” The remarkable thing is that Job is never given any of the reasons for the sufferings that he has experienced. That does not mean that the reasons are absent, but Job is not privy to them and God is under no obligation to give them. Paul points out this same truth and then He backs it up with an Old Testament illustration.

THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?

Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? (Romans 9:20-21).

The charge was that God could not find fault with sinners if it is He who has mercy and if it He who hardens. Paul does not argue the charge. He does not try to defend God. God needs no defense. God is not on trial. It is man who is on trial. It is the height of human arrogance for a man to try to pass judgment upon the righteousness of God.

Paul does not answer the charge. Instead he repels the charge. He proclaims that the objection is out of order. He states that it is not a valid objection. He proclaims that man has no right to make a charge against God. For a man to try to judge God is for him to claim that his standard of justice is higher than God’s standard. Paul illustrates this by using a familiar Old Testament example. It is the example of a potter and his clay.

You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made should say to its maker, “He did not make me”; or what is formed

say to him who formed it, "He had no understanding"? (Isaiah 29:16).

Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker - an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, "What are you doing?" Or the thing you are making say, "He has no hands"?

Woe to him who says to a father, "What are you begetting?" Or to a woman, "To what are you giving birth?" (Isaiah 45:9-10).

But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and all of us are the work of Thy hand. (Isaiah 64:8).

Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel.

But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.

Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, ⁶ "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel." (Jeremiah 18:3-6).

The illustration is of a potter sitting at his wheel. He takes a portion of clay from his pile and he fashions a beautiful vase to be sold at the market for a vast sum. Then from that same lump of clay, he might take another portion of clay and mold a basin to be used by a farmer for feeding his pigs.

No one would ever think of charging the potter with injustice because he had not given equal treatment to both lumps of clay. No one can question the potter's right to do with the lump of clay as he will. He is the owner of the clay. He is the molder of the pot. He is free to do with it according to his wishes.

The principle is the same here. As the sovereign Creator, God can do anything with His creation that He desires. He is free to act as He chooses.

Now we admit that man is not the same as clay. Man has emotions and

feelings and he is an intelligent creature. But he is still a creature. He was created. Indeed, he was created from the stuff of the ground. We could say that he was fashioned from clay.

Thus God is free to make from that lump a Moses who will lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God is also free to make from that same lump a Pharaoh who will be used in spite of himself to glorify his Creator.

VESSELS OF MERCY AND VESSELS OF WRATH

Paul has just given us the illustration of the potter. In that illustration, he suggested that there are two kinds of pots, one for honorable use and one for dishonorable use. Now he takes that illustration one step further.

1. Vessels of Wrath.

What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? (Romans 9:22).

This verse opens with a conditional clause. It is a first class condition. It assumes the truth of the statement which it proceeds. We could translate it “since.” This is not merely a possible hypothesis, but an established fact.

From the lump of humanity there are some who have been designed as “vessels of wrath.” These vessels of wrath have been prepared for the purpose of destruction. We call this the doctrine of reprobation. Their destiny is destruction. That is not to deny their willingness in their rebellion against God. Paul has already traced the form of that rebellion in Romans 1-3. He has shown that men were willingly ignorant of God. They were willfully rebellious.

2. Vessels of Mercy.

What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured

with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. (Romans 9:22-24).

Why would God allow vessels of wrath? Verse 23 tells us the reason. This verse tells us why the sinner continually goes through this life without divine judgment being poured out on him. It tells us why God allows sin to continue in the world. It is so that God might make known the riches of His glory upon the vessels of mercy which He also created.

It is for our benefit. It is so that He might save us from the very worst and then freely give to us the very best so that, in the end, He might be glorified. Peter says it this way:

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9).

This verse says that God wishes for all to come to repentance. Notice to whom the “all” refers. It is to the same group toward whom God is patient. It refers to “you.” Peter is speaking to believers. He is speaking to those who are among the elect. He is speaking to those who have been chosen by God. This election has been manifested by the fact that these have come to faith in Jesus Christ. In effect, Peter is saying that God is being patient toward those whom He has chosen because He is not willing that any of them should perish.

Peter concludes that he wants believers to “*regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation*” (2 Peter 3:15). When we look at the patience of the Lord and realize that He is withholding His judgment of sin, we are not to think that God does not care about sin. Rather, the continuance of sin and suffering in the world is for our benefit and our salvation. If God had stopped all sin and all suffering 100 years ago, we would not have been saved. The fact that He has not done so is a sign of our salvation.

Paul says the same thing here in Romans. He says that God is enduring “*with much patience vessels of wrath*” (9:22). This is why Christ has not yet returned. He is withholding His judgment until all whom He has chosen are saved so that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. There will be no objects of mercy who will be lost. God knows those who are His even before they know Him. He has promised not to lose any. This is meant to be a promise of comfort. It is a comfort to all who know the Lord and it is a warning to all who have turned away from the Lord.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHETS

If it is true that there are none of God’s chosen people who will be lost, then how do we explain the case of Israel? After all, Israel is God’s chosen people. Yet there are many of the Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

Paul has already given a partial answer in verse 6 when he said that “*they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.*” Now he goes on to show that this was in accordance with the promises of the Old Testament.

1. The Promise of the Salvation of the Gentiles.

As He says also in Hosea, “I will call those who were not My people, ‘My people,’ and her who was not beloved, ‘Beloved.’”

“And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they shall be called sons of the living God.” (Roman 9:25-26).

Paul quotes from two separate passages in the book of Hosea (Hosea 2:23 and 1:10). His purpose is to show that God promised in the Old Testament to make those who were “not God’s people” to become “God’s people.”

Unbelieving Gentiles	Believing Gentiles
Those who were not My people	My People
Her who was not beloved	Beloved

You are not my people	Sons of the Living God
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Hosea wrote in a day of apostasy. The 10 tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel had rebelled against God. Because of their rebellion, the Lord said that He would reject them. Those who had been considered to be His people would no longer be His people. But with this message of judgment also came a message of grace. There was hope for the future. Although Israel would be taken away into captivity and scattered among the Gentile nations, God would gather from among those same Gentile nations a people for Himself. Those who were “not God’s people” would become “His people.” Though they had sinned and had become “non-Israelites,” they could repent and return and become the people of God.

2. The Promise of the Preservation of the Jews.

Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; 28 for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly.”

And just as Isaiah foretold, “Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah.” (Romans 9:27-29).

Paul now turns to Isaiah. This passage promises that there shall always be a remnant. This is a promise of hope. It is a promise that, even though not all Israel is

Israel and even though those who are not God’s people are going to become God’s people, there shall continue to be a remnant of Israel who shall be Israel.

The phrase “Lord of Sabaoth” is a transliteration of the Hebrew, meaning “Lord of Hosts.”

Apart from the grace of God, Israel would have degenerated to the moral depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you see the principle? Man without God always degenerates. It is only by God’s gracious election that some men are saved.

3. The Promise of Israel's Failure leading to Gentile Victory.

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; ³¹ but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." (Romans 9:30-33).

Paul now presents a general contrast between Jews and Gentiles as they relate to the righteousness of God.

Gentiles	Jews
Did not pursue righteousness	Pursued a law of righteousness
Attained the righteousness which is by faith	Did not arrive at that law because they did not pursue it by faith

The righteousness which the Gentiles attained is the one which Paul set forth in Romans 3. It is the righteousness that is imputed through faith in Christ.

The irony is that the Gentiles were not all that concerned with righteousness in the first place. It was the Jews whose very culture consisted of a search for righteousness. The problem is that they could never manage to attain that for which they sought.

It seems a bit unfair. The Gentiles stumble onto righteousness with no effort at all. Where did the Jews go wrong? The answer is seen in verse 32. They stumbled. The

The difference between the Gentiles who have attained righteousness and the Jews who have not is the difference between faith and works. The Jews wanted to work for their righteousness. The Gentiles were willing to accept divine charity.

cause of their stumbling was a stone.

Paul combines Isaiah 8:14 with Isaiah 28:16, both of which speak of a “stone of stumbling.” For those who trust in Jesus as the Messiah, they find Him to be their rock of salvation. But to those who reject Him, He is a stone of stumbling. What kind of a “stone” is Jesus to you? Is He the rock of your salvation, or is He a stone of offense? Is Jesus the basis of your stumbling or the source of your salvation?

In closing, let me point out several truths which are taught from this passage:

- ♦ The Word of God is not frustrated by history, but it is fulfilled in history.

We asked the question in verse 6, “Did God’s Word fail because Israel failed?” The answer is an emphatic “No!” The unbelief of Israel was not a failure but rather a fulfillment of God’s prophecies.

- ♦ Paul’s use of the Old Testament teaches us that the Old Testament is relevant for today. He takes the Old Testament Scriptures and applies them to God’s present working in the church.

There is a popular teaching to be found in many of the American churches today known as Dispensationalism. This system of doctrine teaches that the church is separate and distinct from Israel and that the Old Testament has no direct application for our day. But Paul was willing to take the Old Testament and to apply it directly to the church.

- ♦ Israel’s failure in unbelief serves as a warning to the church today. We cannot become proud or self-confident toward God’s grace. Our attitude must always be one of continuing repentance.

THE HEARING THAT LEADS TO FAITH

Romans 10:1-21

This chapter begins in a way similar to the beginning of chapter 9. Chapter 9 began with Paul expressing his concern for his fellow Jews. He said that he could have wished himself to be “*accused, separated from Christ*” for the sake of his fellow Israelites (9:3). Now in chapter 10, he begins by saying that his heart’s desire and prayer for Israel is for their salvation.

As we come to this chapter, there will be a distinct change of emphasis. The issue in chapter 9 was the sovereignty of God. The issue now is Israel’s culpable negligence in her unbelief.

Romans 9	Romans 10
Emphasis upon the sovereignty of God in electing some to be saved	Emphasis upon the responsibility of man in believing the gospel.

PAUL’S HEART AND PRAYER

Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. (Romans 10:1).

Paul ended the last chapter by pointing out that Jesus was to the Jewish unbelievers a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. But Paul was not pleased with this fact. His heart was for their salvation. I would suggest that his heart mirrors God’s heart.

This is important. We should never hold to the doctrines of election and predestination in such a way as to teach that God rejoices over the fact of unbelief. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Say to them, "As I live!" declares the Lord God, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezekiel 33:11a).

God calls all men to repent and to turn to Him (Acts 17:30). This is not nullified by the fact that He has specifically chosen some to salvation.

ISRAEL & THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:2-3).

Israel had a zeal for God. But having a zeal for God is insufficient if it is not in accordance with knowledge. The modern American folk religion teaches exactly the opposite. We hear that it is not what you believe that is important as long as you believe something and are sincere in your belief.

The Jews were sincere. But they were sincerely wrong. They were wrong in that they did not understand about God's righteousness. They thought that they could attain to God's righteousness through keeping the Law. Because of this, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God as it was revealed in Jesus Christ.

FAITH AND THE LAW

1. The End of the Law.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4).

What does it mean that Christ is the end of the law? The Greek text reads *τέλος νομου* (*telos nomou*). The article is absent for both *τέλος*, “end” and *νομος*, “law”). Thus it is not literally the end of the law, but rather, “an end of law.”

The antinomian position is that this means the Mosaic Law has been completely abolished and nullified and that the Christian never ought to refer to it except as a relic of a past age. Jesus Himself contradicted this position when He categorically stated that He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17).

It is true that we are not under the Mosaic legal system as a means to approach God. But that system was never meant to be a means to approach God, for Paul has already gone to great lengths to give the examples of Abraham and of David who approached God through faith and apart from the works of the Law.

In what way is Christ the “end of the Law”? There are two ways:

- a. As the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24), once a person has believed in Christ, the Law has accomplished its *telos* - its purpose and its goal.

The purpose of a sign is to point. When you read a sign and follow its instructions, the sign has fulfilled its mission toward you. The Law was such a sign. It pointed at us and showed our need and it pointed to Christ and showed that He is the answer to our need. Its mission was accomplished when we believed.

- b. Christ fulfilled the Law on our behalf and He is our fulfillment when we believe in Him and when His perfect righteousness is imputed to us.

The Law pronounced a curse upon all who broke the Law. But Christ became a curse for us. He bore the penalty of the broken Law on the cross. His death was a fulfillment of the Law on our behalf. His righteousness which is imputed to us is also a fulfillment of that Law.

2. The Testimony of Moses.

For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. (Romans 10:5).

Paul seems to be referring to Leviticus 18:5 where the Lord says that those who keep His statutes and His judgments will be permitted life. Here is the principle. Keeping God's Laws leads to Life. There is only one problem with that principle. The problem is that none of us has ever kept all of God's Laws. Do you see what Paul is doing? He allows for two possible means of salvation.

First means of salvation	Second means of salvation
Through keeping of the Law.	Through faith in Christ.
If a person will practice the righteousness which is based upon the law, he will live by that righteousness.	If a person will trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, he will live on the basis of the righteousness of Christ.

Two methods of salvation? Yes! But Paul has already gone to great lengths to show that no one has been able to accomplish the first method.

3. The Righteousness of Faith.

But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." (Romans 10:6-7).

Paul continues to quote from the Old Testament. The quote is from Deuteronomy 30:11-13. Moses is speaking to the children of Israel who are about to enter into the Promised Land. The reason that they are about to enter the Promised Land at this time is because their parents did not enter the Promised Land 40 years earlier. Their parents had voiced their unbelief and had died in the wilderness.

Their parents had said, “The giants are too big and we are too small and the Promised Land is too unreachable.”

Moses is now speaking to the next generation. He charges them to follow the commandments of God, saying, “Those commands are not too difficult for you to obey.”

“For this command which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

“It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’

“Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’

“But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.” (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

Notice the way in which Paul has used the Deuteronomy passage. It is not a direct quote. It is more of a paraphrase, borrowing the language of the Old Testament passage to teach a New Testament truth.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14	Romans 10:6-8
<i>“It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’</i>	<i>But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down)”</i>
<i>“Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’</i>	<i>“Or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).”</i>
<i>“The word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart”</i>	

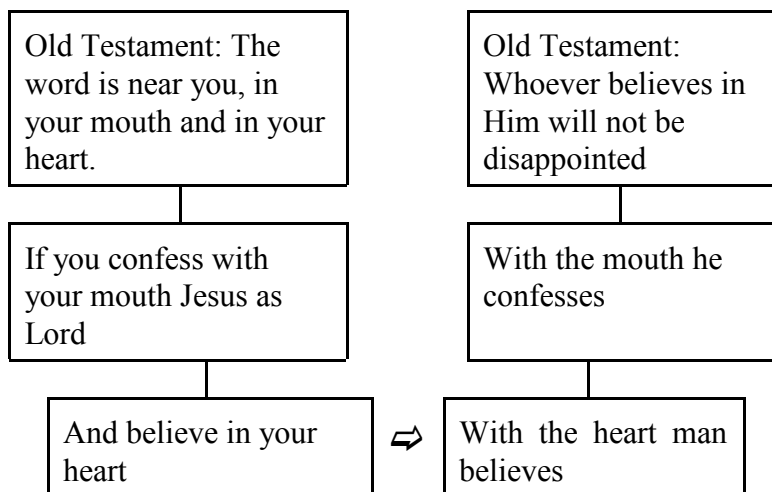
Here is the point that the Lord was making to Israel. His commands

for obedience are not unreachable. It is not like saying, “Grab hold of your ankles and pull yourself to heaven to get Jesus and bring about the incarnation!” It is not like saying, “Dig down into the grave and bring up Jesus and raise Him from the dead.” These things would be impossible for you to do. But God did the impossible so that you do not have to.

Because God did the impossible, salvation is no longer unreachable. It is not a matter of hoisting yourself up to heaven and getting Christ and bringing Him to earth. It is not a matter of going down into the grave to dig Jesus up and bring Him back to life. It is not through any works that you might try to accomplish. It is through faith.

But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” -- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:8-10).

Having pointed out what the Scriptures do not teach, Paul continues to show what they do teach. This section is presented in a chiastic formula.



Paul’s view of faith is one that affects both heart and mouth. The

heart is the seat of man's very being. It includes his emotions, his will and his intellect. The mouth is the practical outpouring of the heart. It tells what the heart is doing. Notice what is described as the two essential elements which must be believed and which must be confessed.

- Jesus is Lord.
- God raised Him from the dead.

These are the two essential elements of the gospel. They answer two questions:

Who is Jesus?
What did Jesus do?

(1) Jesus as Lord (10:9).

The proclamation that Jesus is Lord had great significance both to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles.

(a) Jewish significance.

The word here translated "Lord" is *Κυριος* (*kurios*). It is the same word which is used in the Septuagint to describe יהוה (*Yahweh*), the name of God which has been transliterated as Jehovah. The statement that Jesus is Lord would be nothing less than a claim for the deity of Christ.

(b) Gentile significance.

The world of Paul's day was a Roman world. The Roman Republic was a thing of the past. Even though the outward forms were observed, it was the Emperor who ruled the empire.

The oath of loyalty to the emperor was embodied in the statement that "Caesar is lord." Indeed, this accounted for the Roman persecution of the church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Christians refused to acclaim that anyone besides Jesus is Lord.

(2) God raised Him from the dead (10:9).

To believe that God raised Jesus from the dead is to believe that Jesus died and, not only that He died, but that He died for our sins. It is a fact of history that He died; it is a matter of faith that His death satisfied the righteousness of God on our behalf. The resurrection is God's final stamp of approval upon Jesus as the Messiah.

Notice the emphasis both on heart as well as on mouth. Paul describes confession as characteristic of the redeemed. There is no such thing as a secret Christian. A Christian is one who believes in Christ and who makes a profession of Christ to others.

FAITH - THE UNIVERSAL REQUIREMENT

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³ for "whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:11-13).

Paul quotes twice from the Old Testament in verses 11-13. His first quote is from Isaiah 28:16. He has already quoted this same passage back in Romans 9:33. Now he quotes it again.

Romans 9:33	Romans 10:11
Verse is used to contrast those who are offended (the Jews) with those who are not disappointed (Gentile believers)	Verse is used to compare Jewish believers with Gentile believers and show that there is no difference.

The point that Paul is making is that the gospel is universal. It is the same gospel both for Jews and for Greeks. There was not one gospel in the Old Testament and another gospel in the New Testament. There is not one way of salvation for Jews and another way of salvation for Gentiles. There is only one way of salvation in the same way that there is only one God.

Paul's second quote is from Joel 2:32. It is the same passage to which Peter alluded on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came and the sign of tongues was given to the church. It also stresses the universality of the gospel.

Verse 11	Verse 13
Quotes from Isaiah 28:16	Quotes from Joel 2:32
<i>"Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."</i>	<i>"Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."</i>
Emphasis on the negative - <i>"not disappointed"</i>	Emphasis on the positive - <i>"will be saved"</i>

Notice that believing in Him and calling on the name of the Lord are identical. They are two ways of describing the same action. Everyone calls upon something.

- ♦ Pagan statues.
- ♦ Church membership.
- ♦ Science.
- ♦ Their own good works.

The Jews had come to the point of calling upon their Jewish heritage and upon their keeping of their traditions and their laws. But only the Lord saves. Have you called upon Him? Have you come to Him in faith, entrusting your life into His keeping?

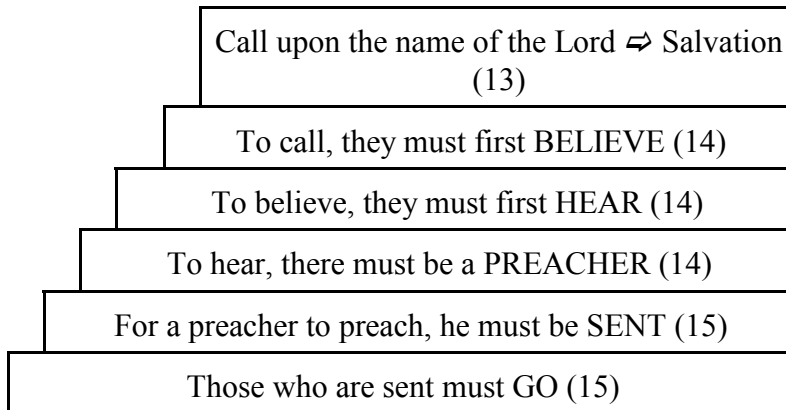
EVANGELISM - THE PATH THAT LEADS TO FAITH

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!" (Romans 10:14-15).

There is a path which leads to salvation. Paul began with the last step of that

journey in verse 13. Now he works his way back down the staircase, following the path backwards to its origins.



Each of these steps is presented in the form of a question. This is not a repetition of the Great Commission. There is no command given. Instead, we have in these steps the reason for the Great Commission.

1. Believe (14).

This is not mere faith in itself. Neither is it faith for the sake of faith. It is faith with content. It is faith in the facts of the gospel and a commitment to the person of the gospel.

2. Hear (14).

God didn't come to most of us personally. We had to hear the message of the gospel through an intermediary. We had to hear it in our own language. We had to hear it in an understandable way.

3. A Preacher (14).

This is not necessarily a professional preacher. The word translated "preacher" (κηρυσσωντος) simply describes one who proclaims a message.

Most of us are not saved apart from the ministry of a preacher. Someone probably explained to you the good news of the gospel. You heard it and you believed it and you called upon the name of the Lord.

4. Senders (15).

This is the call for missionaries. A missionary is someone who is sent. They might be sent across the street or they might be sent across the world. The point is that they are sent to proclaim the gospel to those who have not yet heard it.

One of the things that I have done in the fire department is rope rescue and rappelling. When you rappel, the first thing that you do is to make certain that you have enough rope to reach the ground. It would be both dangerous and downright embarrassing to rappel halfway down a building, only to find that there was not enough rope to continue to the ground. In the same way, there is a need for missionaries so that we do not come up too short on the proclaiming of the gospel.

Of course, there is the sense in which we are all to be missionaries. We live in a world that is other than the nation of our heavenly citizenship. As such we are strangers and aliens, missionaries sent to a foreign land.

THE UNBELIEF OF ISRAEL

1. The Fact of Israel's Unbelief.

*However, they did not all heed the good news;
for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"
So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by
the word of Christ. (Romans 10:16-17).*

Paul has just pointed out that everyone can believe. This includes Israel. But Israel did not believe. This was foretold in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53:1 opens with the question, "*Who has believed our message?*" The implication made by the fact of the question is that most have not believed the message of the gospel. Indeed, the plaintive voice of the questioner seems to imply that very few have believed.

The passage goes on to say that there was no outward reason for people to believe in him. He had no "stately form or majesty." There

was nothing about His appearance which would attract people to Him.

If there is no outward reason for anyone to believe in him, then why did anyone believe? It is because of the preaching of the gospel. It is because of the process which Paul has just described in the previous verses. It is because faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of Christ.

2. The Reason for Israel's Unbelief.

It is NOT because of a lack of telling.	<i>But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." (10:18).</i>
It is NOT because of a lack of knowing.	<i>But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you." (10:19).</i>
It is NOT because of a lack of seeking.	<i>And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me." (10:20).</i>
It IS because of disobedience.	<i>But as for Israel He says, "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." (10:21).</i>

a. Israel's Unbelief is not because of a Lack of Telling.

But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." (10:18).

When Paul arrived in Rome, still under house arrest as he had

been for several years, he requested and received an audience from the leaders of the synagogue at Rome. They indicate that they have received no written reports from Judea concerning Paul, but they have heard of Christianity. They say...

“But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere.” (Acts 28:22).

News of the gospel had preceded Paul’s coming to Rome. It had gone everywhere. It has continued to go everywhere. It is true that there are places where the gospel has not been preached for a very long time. But the reason is because rebellion and unbelief has caused the gospel to be shut out.

- b. Israel’s Unbelief is not because of a Lack of Knowing.

But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you.” (10:19).

Israel knew a lot more about God and about His promised in the Old Testament than any of the Gentiles ever knew. No Jew could ever say, “I didn’t know enough.” Why? Because the Gentiles, who knew nothing about the Law, did believe.

- c. Israel’s Unbelief is Not because of a Lack of Seeking.

And Isaiah is very bold and says, “I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” (10:20).

In the same way that the Gentiles did not know about God before they were given the gospel, it is also true that the Gentiles were not seeking for God. They weren’t even interested in God. They didn’t look for God. God came

looking for them.

- d. Israel's Unbelief is because of Rebellion.

But as for Israel He says, "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." (10:21).

Israel did not believe because Israel did not want to believe. That is true of all who do not believe. Israel could not plead ignorance. They had heard the gospel. They knew the issues. It was not lack of knowledge but lack of submission and obedience which led to Israel's downfall.

Why did so many Jews reject the gospel while many Gentiles were turning in faith to the Messiah? There are two answers given in the book of Romans. The first answer was the one we saw in chapter 9. It is because of divine election. It is because of the sovereign choice of God. The second answer is seen in this chapter. It is because of Israel's willful rebellion against God and against His gospel as revealed in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Although our focus in this chapter is upon the unbelief of Israel, the lessons taught in this passage apply to all who do not believe the gospel. Men are not lost because they have not heard enough or searched enough or known enough. Men are lost because they are rebellious against God. For this reason, they are "without excuse."

ISRAEL - REJECTED OR RETURNING?

Romans 11:1-36

Throughout this section, we have been asking some key questions about God's righteousness as it relates to the nation and people of Israel.

Romans 9	Romans 10	Romans 11
God's sovereign choice in rejecting Israel	Israel's choice in rejecting the Lord	Is this rejection permanent?

In chapter nine, Paul asked the question, "Has the Word of God failed because Israel has failed (see 9:6)?" Now he will ask, "Is there any hope for the nation Israel, or was her failure fatal and final (see 11:1, 11)?"

GOD HAS NOT REJECTED HIS PEOPLE

Paul has been speaking at length of Israel's rejection of the gospel of Jesus. This rejection is a rejection of God and His program. This rejection brings us to a question.

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? (Romans 11:1a).

Is Israel finished as a people? Are they no longer the people of God? Is God finished with ever dealing with the Jews? The answer which Paul brings is a resounding, "No!"

1. The Evidence of Paul's own Life.

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. (Romans 11:1).

For a Gentile to say the things that Paul says in Romans 9-11 would smack of anti-Semitism. But he is Jewish. An Israelite. A descendant of Abraham. This is not merely spiritual Israel. This is a reference to the physical descendants of Abraham. He is an Israelite from one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Paul stands as proof that God is still dealing with Jews.

2. The Evidence of God's Foreknowledge: *God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew (Romans 11:2a).*

If God's foreknowledge is complete and inerrant (and it is), then God knows the end of the story regarding Israel's future. If God foreknows that a person is going to be saved, then that person will be saved. Such salvation is not independent of faith in Christ. God foreknows the means as well as the end.

What is true of individuals is also true of Israel as a people. God's foreknown and forechosen people have not been permanently rejected, even if it looks as though permanent rejection has set in.

3. The Evidence of Scripture

God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life."

But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (Romans 11:2-4).

The Scripture which Paul uses is 1 Kings 19:10-18. It is the story of

Elijah. You remember his story. He had become disheartened. Jezebel said that she was going to have him put to death and he left town in a hurry and traveled all the way down to Mount Sinai where he became depressed. He was ready to give up and even prayed that he might die (if he had really wanted to die, he would have stayed in Israel where Jezebel would have been happy to accommodate him).

Elijah complained that he was the only one left who was faithful to God. The Lord reminded Elijah that he had a remnant.

Elijah's Words	God's Words
<i>"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life."</i>	<i>"I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."</i>
Man-centered in outlook	God-centered in outlook

Paul points out that the same is true today. Even though it looks as though Israel as a nation has turned away from God and has in turn been rejected by God, there are those Jews who are still believers.

Here is the principle. God always finishes what He starts. He does this, not because we are faithful, but because He is faithful.

4. The Evidence of the Present Remnant.

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. (Romans 11:5-6).

Just as there was a remnant of faithful Israelites in the days of Elijah, so Paul also sees a remnant of Jews in his day who continue to believe God. Why? What is the basis for this hope? It is not based upon the faithfulness of Israel. It is not based upon how faithful the church is. It is not based upon anything that people do. It is based

upon God and upon His grace. That is what grace is. It is the undeserved and unmerited gift of God.

ISRAEL'S PRESENT REJECTION

While the rejection of Israel is not complete and does not preclude a remnant, it is nevertheless real. Jesus made this very clear when He confronted the leaders of the nation of Israel and said to them, *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it."* (Matthew 21:43). It is evident from His words that the kingdom was to be taken from the generation of that day and to be given to someone else.

1. The Fact of Israel's Present Rejection.

What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; 8 just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day." (Romans 11:7-8).

What was it that Israel was seeking? She was seeking the righteousness of God. That is what the Law was all about. The Law was a reflection of God's perfect righteousness. The Jews sought to attain to that standard through their laws and traditions. They missed it. But some did obtain it.

Unbelieving Israel	Believing Israel
Israel did not obtain the righteousness of God	Those from among Israel who were chosen did obtain it.
The rest were hardened.	Those who were chosen believed.

There are those whom God has chosen. At the right time, He regenerates them and opens their eyes and opens their heart so that they will believe. But there are others who have determined to go their own way. The Lord hardens them and blinds them to the truth.

2. The Prophecy of Israel's Present Rejection.

And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. 10 Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever." (Romans 11:9-10).

This is a psalm of David (Psalm 69:22-23). It is an imprecatory psalm, a psalm in which David prays for the wrath of God to fall upon his enemies. It is written from David's heart as he has been attacked by his own countrymen. He calls upon the Lord to respond to this attack by punishing his enemies.

By rejecting him as their king and resisting his rule, they are resisting God. Their opposition to David is really opposition toward God. Because of this, David pleads with God to deal with these rebels as their sin deserves. They do not want grace, so let them have justice.

The point that Paul is making is that these enemies of David were Jewish enemies. The prayer that David prays and the curse which he calls down is against those fellow Israelites who have rejected God's anointed one.

3. The Reason for Israel's Present Rejection.

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. (Romans 11:11).

Paul will further explain this "jealousy" in verses 13-14.
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The rejection of Israel did not nullify the plan of God. Rather it fulfilled God's plan. The sin of Israel resulted in bringing salvation to the Gentiles. Because of the sin of Israel, God has reached out to the Gentiles. But this is not a complete shutout for the Jews. In fact, it is to the betterment of the Jews since it is designed to make them jealous and bring them back to God.

4. The Result of Israel's Rejection and Return.

Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how

much more will their fulfillment be! (Romans 11:12).

This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the Jewish rejection led to the evangelization of the world, then what great things will come about if the Jews believe?

There are glorious possibilities. Paul implies that Israel has the potential to turn to God and, if they ever do, they will turn the world upside down.

This suggests to me that both the Dispensationalist scheme with its recapitulating promises, first to Israel, then to the church, and then back to Israel, as well as what has been classified as Replacement Theology are in error. Paul's words suggest to us a third alternative:

NOT Recapitulation Theology	But a Remnant Theology	NOT Replacement Theology
Views the church merely as a parenthesis in which the plan of God for His chosen people is paused while the church age is culminated after which there is a return to the law and to dealings with national Israel	Sees the church as made up of a believing remnant of Israel into which Gentiles have been ingrafted and into which Israel can also be ingrafted should she come to believe the gospel	Views the church as replacing Israel as God's chosen people so that Israel is, both now and in the future, necessarily excluded from all of God's promises

The point is that the present and future inclusion of physical Israel to the church can only result in greater blessings to all mankind. This is the same promise that was given to Abraham: *And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:3)*. Such blessings have taken place through the coming of Jesus, the Son of Abraham, but Paul also suggests that such blessings also take place as Israel's restoration to faith takes place.

LESSONS FOR THE GENTILES

Paul has been talking about Israel's unbelief. But most of those to whom Paul is writing are not Jewish. They are Gentiles. And so, Paul takes his message to the Jews and makes it practical for the Gentiles.

1. We are Here for Them.

But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. (Romans 11:13-14).

Paul was commissioned by God to take the gospel to the Gentiles. That does not mean that he never preached to the Jews. Indeed, it was his habit to approach the Jews first in each city to which he came to preach. It was only after the Jews of a given city rejected the gospel that Paul would turn to preach to the Gentiles. Even when he did so, it was with a purpose of continuing to reach out to Israel. If he could not win Israel by preaching the gospel to Jews, then he would attempt to win Israel by preaching the gospel to Gentiles. This reference to "moving Israel to jealousy" is an Old Testament concept.

*"They have made Me jealous with what is not God;
They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with those who are not a
people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation."
(Deuteronomy 32:21).*

What God is doing in the New Testament, He first promised in the Old Testament. It is not as though God had one program in the Old Testament and then another in the New Testament. That which is taking place today was foretold long ago.

2. Repentance is a Win/Win Situation.

For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Romans 11:15).

This is a movement from the bad to the good and from the good to the better. The worst that could happen is Israel's rejection of their Messiah. That is bad. But that bad thing resulted in the world being reconciled as the world received the gospel and believed. This flow of thought is seen in the following chart:

Israel's Rejection	Results in...	The reconciliation of the world
Israel's Acceptance		Life from the dead

If the result of the very worst possible scenario resulted in reconciliation for the world, then how much better will be the outcome of the very best possible scenario? Here is the principle. We Gentiles ought to covet and to pray for and to desire the conversion of Israel because this will bring about the very best for the world.

3. We have no right to be Arrogant.

If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too. ¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. (Romans 11:16-18).

Paul uses two illustrations in verse 16. The first is of a lump of dough. The second is of a root.

If the First Piece of Dough is holy...	The rest of the lump of dough is also holy.
If the Root is Holy...	The branches are also holy
If Abraham is holy...	His descendants, the Jews, are also holy

Here is the point. If God had a special purpose for Abraham in which He promised that all the world would be blessed through him, then God also has a special purpose for the descendants of Abraham, even though they have for the present time rejected God. Paul then goes on to take the second illustration and to expand upon it.

Symbol	What it Represents
The Tree	God's People
The Root	Abraham
Some of the Branches	The unbelieving nation of Israel
Wild Olive grafted in	Believing Gentiles

Throughout most of the history of the Old Testament, the repository of faith was to be found exclusively among the Jews. When a Gentile wished to come to God, he must go to Israel. The place of worship and of sacrifice was the Temple in Jerusalem. Sacrifices must be administered by a Jewish priest. The words of God were written in Hebrew by Jewish prophets and taught in Jewish synagogues by Jewish rabbis. There were two classes of people, the Jews and the pagans. But now there has been both a breaking off and a grafting in. The Jews have now become the pagans. Those who were pagans have now been grafted into the promises of Abraham.

Paul issues a warning. The warning is to remember from whence you came. Remember your spiritual heritage. The Gentiles had no spiritual heritage of their own. This is the point Paul wants them to remember. They cannot be proud of their heritage because they have none of which to be proud.

This attitude of spiritual pride has become evident in the church. Church history shows us that Christians have often forgotten that Christianity has Jewish roots. We have at times acted as though we are the only branches which have ever graced the tree of God. It is like a flea being proud of the dog on which he rides. "Look at this dog which I have been given. Am I not a magnificent flea to have such a dog?"

4. A Warning against Conceit.

You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”

Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; ²¹ for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. (Romans 11:19-21).

Paul anticipates another objection from the mouth of the Gentile believer. “It is true that I cannot be arrogant of any spiritual heritage because I have no spiritual heritage, but I can be arrogant because God broke off His relationship with the Jews so that He might make a new relationship with me!”

Paul points out that this fact does not push us to conceit but to fear. Rather than being arrogant, we should be humble. What happened to Israel can also happen to the Gentiles if we do not continue in faith.

The breaking off of the one branch and the grafting in of the other has nothing to do with the worth of the branch. There is really no difference between an unfruitful “natural” branch and a worthless “wild” branch. It is the case of the “pot calling the kettle black.”

The issue is not the Gentile branch’s works or its worth, as compared to the other Jewish branch. The issue is faith. The Jewish branch was removed because of unbelief. The Gentile branch was grafted in because of faith. The Gentile branch is in error by comparing itself to the Jewish branch when the Gentile branch should be looking to the trunk. The trunk is God Himself.

Here is the principle. Salvation by grace gives no believer any basis for pride. Blessings bring greater responsibility, but they do not indicate superiority. Israel in the past was given great blessings. The church today has been given even greater blessings. These blessings are the result of God’s grace and not an evidence that we are better than others. Our response to these blessings is to be one of humility and thankfulness as we realize that grace is always unmerited and undeserved. Arrogance flies in the face of grace. It is a perversion of grace. Grace is given only to the undeserving, never to the

self-righteous who think they are better.

IN HOPE OF ISRAEL'S RETURN

1. The Possibility of Regrafting.

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? (Romans 11:22-24).

There is a warning here. It is a warning to continue in faith. Paul is not trying to teach that those who are saved can lose that salvation. He is saying that those who are saved should remember they are kept in the same way they are saved, by trusting in God. It is a warning against self-sufficiency.

With this warning comes a promise. This promise is given to Israel. It is given to those who will repent of their self-sufficiency and who will return to the Lord.

Gentiles	Jews
Wild olive branch	Natural olive branch
Was grafted in through faith	Was broken off because of unbelief
If you continue in faith, you will remain	If they do not continue in unbelief, they will be grafted back in

You were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree

How much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

There is a principle here. It is that God is no respecter of persons. The Jew comes to God in the same way that the Gentile comes to God. He comes through faith.

2. The Mystery of Grafting.

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery -- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation -- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶ and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. ²⁷ This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." (Romans 11:25-27).

Paul now reveals a mystery. The Greek term is a μυστήριον (*musterion*), a truth which is now being revealed for the first time. The Greeks were big on mysteries. There were an entire series of "mystery religions," each having its own hidden secrets which were only known to the initiated. Now Paul reveals a Christian mystery. It is that the unbelief of Israel is only temporary. It will continue until "*the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*"

a. The hardening of Israel is only partial.

Paul has already pointed to himself as an example of this. He is an Israelite and also a believer in Jesus Christ. The hardening which hardened Israel has not hardened him. Throughout the history of the church there have been and will continue to be Jewish believers.

b. The hardening of Israel is to continue for a season.

This is implied by the fact that Paul's statement that it will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

- c. The hardening of Israel will eventually pass away.

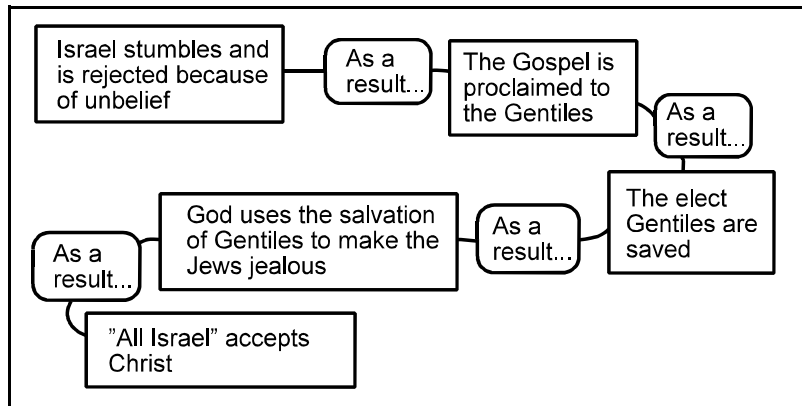
When Paul says that it will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, the implication is that after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, the hardening will pass away.

At such a time, the prophecy will be fulfilled that *all Israel will be saved*. Does this mean that each and every Jewish person shall receive Christ? Not necessarily. But it does mean that the people of Israel will no longer be characterized by a rejection of Jesus.

This can be seen to have been accomplished in one of two ways. First of all, it may be that we shall yet see a great return to Christ among the Jewish people. I personally know many Jews who have confessed Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Secondly, Paul's statement that "all Israel will be saved" is accomplished when we realize that "all Israel" refers to all of the branches that have been grafted into God's tree, whether they were natural branches or wild branches. The force of this is seen in Romans 11:26 when Paul says, "And thus all Israel will be saved." The phrase "and thus" is a translation of the Greek *καὶ οὕτως* and carries the force of "an in this manner" (a survey of Paul's use of this phrase in particular and its general use throughout the New Testament will show that this is so). Thus the fullness of the Gentiles, the grafting of Gentiles into the tree, is the very thing that allows "all Israel" to be saved.

Notice the flow of thought: The end result of this entire flow is seen in verse 27 - the Lord's covenant with Israel is fulfilled as He takes away their sin.



This brings us to a question: What is this “*Fullness of the Gentiles*” of which Paul speaks? It is from the Olivet Discourse. Jesus told His disciples that they would see Jerusalem surrounded by armies and that this would mark the advent of a great destruction that would come upon the city. Jerusalem would fall and be “*trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*” (Luke 21:24). Thus the times of the Gentiles would seem to be a reference to that period which followed the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and which continues up through the present.

Times of the Jews	Times of the Gentiles	Fulness of the Gentiles
	<i>Fall of Jerusalem</i>	<i>Return of Christ</i>

Are the “times of the Gentiles” the same thing as the “fulness of the Gentiles”? They seem to be connected. It would seem that the fulness of the Gentiles would be the culmination of the times of the Gentiles.

3. The Attitude of Regrafting.

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:28-29).

Throughout the history of the church there has been an enmity between Israel and the church. It began with a Jewish persecution of the church. But as the church grew in power, the tables were turned and most of that history is a story of the church persecuting the Jews. Somewhere along the line the church forgot to have an attitude of regrafting. Paul calls for such an attitude in this passage.

Physical Israel	
From the Standpoint of the Gospel	From the Standpoint of God's Choice
Enemies of the Church	Beloved for the sake of the Fathers

Why do the people of Israel continue to be “beloved” from the point of view of God? It is because *the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*. Those who are Israelites after the flesh have a standing of being *beloved for the sake of the fathers*. They have a family heritage that has become a blessing to the church and it is a heritage for which we ought to continually be thankful.

There is an important point to be made here. It is that there is no place within Christianity for anti-Semitism. For a Christian to engage in anti-Semitism is for him to bite himself. Our Lord and Savior took on Jewish flesh and we have entered into something that is of Jewish origins.

Rather than having an attitude of anti-Semitism, we are called to have an attitude of regrafting. We desire to see Jewish people return to the Lord and to be regrafted into a right relationship with Him. Indeed, we have a vested self-interest in seeing such a thing as Paul reminded us back in verse 12: *Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!*

4. The Unity of Regrafting.

*For just as you once were disobedient to God,
but now have been shown mercy because of their
disobedience, ³¹ so these also now have been*

disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. (Romans 11:30-32).

The enmity between the church and Israel ought not to exist because they are alike both in the fact of their disobedience as well as in their need for mercy. Notice the comparison.

Gentiles	Israel
Were once disobedient to God	Has now been disobedient
Now have been shown mercy because of Israel's disobedience.	Because of the mercy shown to Gentiles, they may now be shown mercy
All shut up in disobedience All shown mercy	

Here is the point. There was a time when all Gentiles were hopelessly lost in their sins to the point where it looked as though there were no hope for them -- at least, that was the opinion of the Jews. In Paul's day, the Jews were becoming increasingly hardened to the gospel so that it may appear to the Gentiles as though the Jews are hopelessly lost in their sins to the point where it looks as though there is no hope for them.

Are the Jews without hope? No more than the Gentiles are without hope. The truth is that all men are equally without hope apart from the power of God. And so as all have been shut up in disobedience, all will be shown mercy.

A HYMN OF PRAISE

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ Or who had known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? ³⁵ Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? (Romans 11:32-35).

Having concluded his warning, Paul closes this section of his epistle with a hymn of praise to the Lord. This hymn is set in a chiastic parallel.

O the depth of the riches
Both of the wisdom
And of the knowledge of God!
How unsearchable His judgments
And unfathomable His ways!
Or who had known the mind of the Lord?
Or who became His counselor?
Or who has first given to Him, That it might be paid back to Him again?

The attitudes against which Paul has warned in this chapter are pride and arrogance and conceit. The remedy for such attitudes is to see God in all of His wisdom and knowledge and power.

As he asks these rhetorical questions, Paul borrows phrases from two different Old Testament passages (Isaiah 40:13 and Job 41:11).

Show me a man who is proud and I'll show you a man who has lost touch with who and what God is. He may know it academically. But he has lost touch with it personally. An experiential knowledge of God will banish all pride.

These closing words of Paul form a fitting conclusion, not only to this chapter and to the questions of chapters 9-11, but to this entire first half of the book of Romans.

Do you remember what has been the overall theme and subject of the book of Romans? It has been the righteousness of God. That righteousness has been seen in all of its wisdom and in all of its depth. The result of seeing such righteousness is to recognize our own inability, not only to measure up to that righteousness, but even to fully understand it.

CONCLUSION

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36).

This is a summation of Paul's doctrine of the righteousness of God. All true righteousness is found in God. It comes from Him alone. It also comes through Him. It comes through Him when we believe in

Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is a perfect righteousness that comes through Christ. It also comes to Him. Indeed, as we shall see in the next several verses, our response to this gift of righteousness is that we offer ourselves as a sacrifice to God as an offering of worship.

God is the source (ἐξ), the agent (δι') and the goal (εἰς) of every Christian.
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A CALL TO SERVE

Romans 12:1-2

Chapter 12 marks a turning point in the epistle to the Romans. Up to this point, Paul has been teaching doctrines to be believed. Now he sets forth what are the practical applications of those doctrines. As we hear of God's righteousness in regards to justification and sanctification and election and the gospel, we might be tempted to ask, "So what? How does this relate to me when I go to work tomorrow morning?" These final chapters are the "so what" of Paul's epistle.

Chapters 1-8	Chapters 9-11	Chapters 12-16
God's righteousness seen in our salvation	God's righteousness in His dealings with Israel and the Church	God's righteousness manifested in our daily lives
Primarily Doctrinal		Primarily Practical
What we are to believe about God		How we are to live before God
Salvation	Sovereignty	Service
Life by Faith		Life of Service

There is a principle here. It is that no doctrine of the Bible is ever given apart from a corresponding application. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge only succeeds in puffing up pride. The teachings of the Bible were not given to inflate your pride, but rather to make you to live differently.

A CALL TO SACRIFICE

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Romans 12:1).

The introductory word “therefore” marks a turning point in this epistle. Paul is saying that on the basis of everything he has said up to this point, he is now giving a call to action. That call is for a sacrifice.

All Old Testament worship presumed a sacrifice. From the early pages of Genesis and throughout all of the Law and the Prophets, when men came to God, they came on the basis of a sacrifice. What we have seen throughout the book of Romans is that Jesus was that sacrifice on our behalf. And yet, a call for a sacrifice remains. It is not an animal sacrifice that is needed. It is a personal sacrifice to which we are called.

1. An Urging Call.

Paul could have merely given a command. After all, he had apostolic authority. There are places in his epistles where he does just that. There are times when he says, “I order you to act in a certain way!” But this is not one of them.

Instead, he urges. The Greek word is παρακαλῶ (*parakalo*), to “call alongside.” It is the language of beseeching. It is an appeal made to those who are “brethren.”

There is an important principle here. The Lord is concerned, not only with what you do, but also with the attitude with which you do it. He is the God who judges the heart as well as the outward actions (1 Corinthians 4:5). He is the God who not only commands, but who also urges and beckons and woos you to Himself.

2. The Basis of the Call.

The “mercies of God” looks back to verse 32 of the previous chapter. We read there that “*God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.*” This is a summary of everything that Paul has said in the book of Romans about God’s righteous workings.

The phrase “reasonable service” (λογικην λατειαν) comes from a root word from which we obtain our word “logical.” This is your logical service. It is only logical to serve God when you consider that He has given you everything.

Λογικός can also have the idea of “spiritual” is found in 1 Peter 2:2 where newborn babes in Christ are to “long for the *PURE (spiritual) milk of the word.*”

- ♦ Forgiveness
- ♦ Righteous standing
- ♦ Adoption
- ♦ Eternal life
- ♦ Heirship of the kingdom
- ♦ Promise of rewards

When Paul gives his call to do something for God, it is a call based upon everything that God has first done for us in Romans 1-11. Those chapters provide the motivation for the instructions given in chapters 12-16. Here is the principle. Grace is both the means and the motivation by which we are called to serve.

3. An Immediate Call.

The action of presentation is given in the aorist tense. You are to present something. This is a command. Commands can normally be given in one of two tenses in the Greek language.

A command in the present tense emphasizes the continuing nature of the action: “I want you to continually present yourselves.” The same command in the aorist tense emphasizes the point at which the action begins: “I want you to present yourself in a point in time.” It is the latter that is used here. The action is similar to that which is used when a person comes to the Temple with a sacrifice and then offers that sacrifice in a point in time. It points to the definite time when such a sacrifice is made.

Paul says to present our bodies. The reason we are to present our bodies is because we are indebted to God. As the previous chapter asks, “Who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?” (11:35). We are to present that which has been given to us.

Have you ever made a decision to follow Christ? To entrust yourself

to Him and to give Him your life and your soul and your very being to do with as He sees fit? It is such an invitation that Paul gives here.

4. A Sacrificial Call.

The concept of a sacrifice was imbedded both in the Old Testament as well as in the secular culture of that day. Both the Jews and the Romans made regular sacrifices.

a. This is a Living Sacrifice.

Paul's call is to give yourself as a "*living and holy sacrifice*." This is in contrast to the sacrifices which were offered under the Levitical system. They were dead sacrifices. They involved the death of the animal being sacrificed. You are to offer yourself as one who is reckoned to have died with Christ but who is now alive with Him.

...present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Romans 6:13b).

It has been said that the problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar. There is a certain truth to this. It mandates that we continue to make such a sacrifice to God on a regular basis.

b. This is a Holy Sacrifice.

The word "holy" describes that which has been set apart for a special purpose. In the Old Testament, God's people were called to be different. They were to dress differently and they were to eat differently and they were to order their lives differently. Every part of their lives was to set them apart from the rest of the world.

God has set us apart and called us to be special. He has called us to be different. We are to be set apart from sin and we are to be set apart in our service to the Lord.

- c. This is to be an Acceptable Sacrifice.

The Greek word translated “acceptable” is εὐαρεστος (*euarestos*), literally, “well-pleasing.” This is an essential ingredient of our sacrifice. It is never enough to give to God. Cain did that. Remember the story? Cain and Abel each brought sacrifices to the Lord. Abel’s sacrifice was accepted by God. But Cain’s offering was unacceptable.

There is a lesson here. Not all sacrifices are acceptable to God. He doesn’t want your church membership or your Sunday school attendance or your money or your ministry. He wants you. Anything less than a commitment of yourself is an unacceptable sacrifice.

A CALL TO TRANSFORMATION

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2).

Notice how this verse begins. It begins with an “and” (καί). This is a continuing sentence. It continues the idea begun in the previous verse. Verse divisions are a good thing. They help us to locate various passages in the Bible. But they are also artificial. They were added at a later date and we ought to see the entire passage in its context.

In verse 1 Paul calls for a presentation of your body. In verse 2 he calls for a renewing of your mind. The first explains the second. How do you present your body to God as a living and holy sacrifice? It is an act of the mind and the heart. It is a decision. This is stated both negatively and positively.

Stated Negatively	Stated Positively
<i>Do not be conformed to this world</i>	<i>Be transformed by the renewing of your mind</i>

The commitment to become a living sacrifice is a commitment to change.

Such a change is radical. It involves a change in how we think and in how we live.

1. A Warning Against Conformity.

The phrase “*do not be conformed*” (μη συσχηματιζεσθε) is a present passive imperative and contains the idea, “stop being conformed.”

What does it mean to be conformed to the world? The phrase translated, “*to this world*” (τω αἰωνι τουτω) is literally, “to this age.” This is not a reference to planet earth, but rather to the world system. Being conformed to this age refers to having the same type of thinking as this age.

The world wants to conform you to its own standards. It wants to make you a cog in its wheel. This is what peer pressure is all about. But God says, “I have made you different.” Will you dare to be different? Will the world make its mark upon you, or will you make your mark upon the world?

2. The Passivity of the Call.

Both verbs (“*be not conformed*” and “*be transformed*”) are in the passive voice. Although they are given as a command, they are both passive in nature. This tends to go against most people’s thinking. We tend to imagine ourselves as independent thinkers. We feel as though we are making our own decisions and thinking our own thoughts. But this is merely an illusion. We are always influenced. The only question is under whose influence you are.

As you feed yourself at the world’s table, you will gradually come to adopt the world’s attitudes and values. This does not happen all at once. But it does happen. As you are yielded to the leading of the Spirit and obedient to God’s commands and trusting in His Lordship and in His salvation, then you will gradually begin to be transformed.

You cannot transform yourself. It is God who does the transforming.

The use of the present tense indicates that this transforming is to be a continuing and progressive action. Spiritual maturity does not take place immediately.

Now this brings us to a question. If it is God who does the transforming, then why does Paul tell you to be transformed? It is because you are involved in the process. Your involvement is to yield to the Lord in faith. As you do, you will find that He is the fulfillment of His own command.

3. The Goal of Transformation.

The phrase translated “*be transformed*” (μεταμορφουσθε) is the present passive imperative of μεταμορφω. It is a compound word, made from the joining of two Greek words.

- ♦ Μετα (*meta*) is the word “with.”
- ♦ Α μορφη (*morphe*) is a “form.”

It describes a complete change of form. It is from this word that we have our own English term, “Metamorphosis.” This same word is used in the Gospels. One day Jesus took several of His disciples with Him up into a mountain and while they were up there, a change came over Him. His very being was changed. He began to glow with an inner radiance. Both Matthew and Mark use this term to describe what happened. He was “*transfigured*.”

That is what happens to us. We are called to a transfiguration. But in our case, there is a difference. We are not called merely to witness the transfiguration of Jesus. We are called to be transfigured ourselves.

4. The Nature of Transformation.

This transformation is accomplished *by the renewing of your mind*. It is from the inside out. It begins with how I think and it works its way out from there into what I do and how I act.

This is why legalism doesn’t work. Legalism says, “Make lots and lots of rules and that will make you better and better.” But God always works from the inside out. That is why Paul has spent the last eleven chapters teaching you what you are to think about God.

5. The Result of Transformation.

The result of this transformation is that you “*may prove what the will of God is.*” We tend to think of the “will of God” as some secret formula that God has for my life. Does He wish me to become a deacon or a missionary or an usher in the church? Does he wish me to work in this profession or to move to another career? Is that the person who I am supposed to marry or is there another that God has planned?

But that is not what Paul is speaking of here. Paul is saying that when you are transformed by God you become a living example of how to live according to the way God calls a man or a woman to live.

Notice that the emphasis here is not so much on “discovering” or “knowing” God’s will as it is in doing God’s will or demonstrating His will. Paul tells us that we will “prove” what the “will of God” is rather than “learn” what it is.

The word translated “approve” is the Greek infinitive of δοκιμαζω (*dokimazo*). Paul has already used this word twice in the book of Romans.

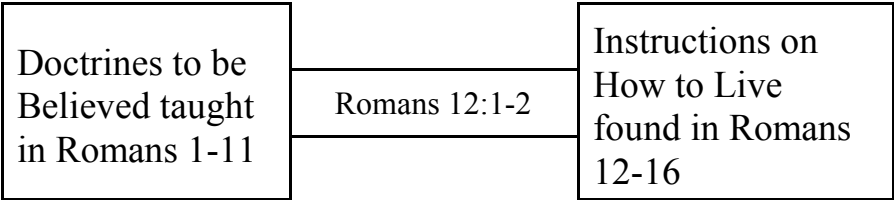
- ♦ He used it to speak of the Gentile pagans who *did not SEE FIT to acknowledge God any longer* (Romans 1:28).
- ♦ He used it of the Jewish unbelievers who *APPROVE the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law* (Romans 2:18).

Here is the principle. What you do always demonstrates what you are. The pagan demonstrates his paganism. The legalist demonstrates his legalism. The Christian demonstrates Christ. Have you trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation? Have you experienced the mercies of God? Have you offered your life to Him, as a sacrifice, for His glory and praise? You are called to do so today.

WE ARE ONE

Romans 12:3-8

In our last chapter, I suggested that Romans 12:1-2 forms a bridge between all of the doctrines which Paul has taught in the first eleven chapters of Romans over against all of the instructions for living that are found in the remaining chapters.



Within that bridge was a call to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. In the following verses, Paul goes on to show how our individual bodies are to interact as that living and holy sacrifice.

THE ATTITUDE OF UNITY

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (Romans 12:3).

In verse 2 Paul calls for a transformation by the renewing of your mind. Now in verse 3 he tells you how you ought to think about yourself.

There is a play on words as Paul warns his readers not to “over think” (ὑπερφρονεῖν) beyond what they ought to “think” (φρονεῖν).

Self-esteem is a byword of today's culture. The popular folk religion says that we need to think more highly of ourselves. We live in the "Me Generation." Comedian George Carlin used to point this out by noting the titles of our magazines:

- ♦ Life
- ♦ People
- ♦ Us
- ♦ Self

But Paul doesn't caution us about having too low of a self-esteem. He warns of having an inflated ego. He warns about thinking of yourself more highly than you ought to think. The truth is that people with low self esteem are still focused upon themselves and their low self esteem.

Who is the most important person in your church? It is a trick question. As soon as you think of a name, then it is wrong.

What is the most important part of my body? If you are going to cut off something, then I'm going to tell you that all of the members of my body are important. When one part of my body hurts, the whole body hurts.

Notice to whom it is that Paul addresses himself. He speaks *say to everyone among you*. His lessons for self-esteem are for all members of the church, everyone from the pastor to the pew-warmer.

The Command Negatively Stated	The Command Positively Stated
Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought	Think so as to have sound judgment
A conceited opinion of yourself	A realistic opinion of yourself

How does one go about obtaining such a sound judgment? How do you get a right opinion of yourself? Paul gives the answer. It is by realizing that *God has allotted to each a measure of faith*. It is by recognizing that everything you have is given to you by God, even your faith. This is contrary to most of popular American thinking. All too many Christians feel that their faith is something that they have determined. They believe because they have made an intelligent choice. But the Scriptures teach that it is God who ultimately

gives faith.

This does not negate the fact that you are commanded to hear and believe the gospel. Neither does it dispel the obvious fact of your participation in the faith process. But it does mean that your faith started and is sustained by One who is greater than you.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (Romans 12:4-5).

The human body is made up of a number of different members. There are hands and feet and arms and legs and eyes and ears and the list goes on and on. These differing members each have differing functions. The eyes and the ears are not interchangeable. When you try to do the right thing with the wrong member it just doesn't work. My ears can't see very well. My eyes are completely deaf. My feet cannot catch a ball or play a guitar or type on a computer keyboard. My hands are woefully lacking as a means of locomotion. My body only operates efficiently when each member is doing that for which it was designed. The body of Christ is like that. We get into trouble when we treat all Christians the same. When we try to manufacture disciples in a cookie-cutter type of mold, we find that it does not work that way.

The point that Paul is making is that, even though we are different, we are still one body. We are connected in an organic unity. We are members of one another. When one part of the body works properly the entire body profits. When one part of the body hurts, the entire body says, "Ouch!"

We live in an age of independence. The idea of being dependent upon anyone for anything is viewed as a negative. We talk about being delivered from "co-dependency" and I agree that, as it is defined by psychologists, such co-dependency is a bad thing. But Christianity involves inter-dependency. In the same way that a body is dependent upon the proper functioning of all of its members, so the various members of the body of Christ depend upon one another for their spiritual well-being. This is vividly illustrated in the function of spiritual gifts.

DIVERSITY IN UNITY

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8).

While in verses 4-5 we have a focus upon the fact of the “oneness” that we share despite our differences, here the focus shifts to the differences which we enjoy in the midst of our unity.

Romans 12:4-5	Romans 12:6-8
Emphasis upon our unity.	Emphasis upon our diversity.
One body made up of many members.	Differing gifts to be exercised accordingly

There are seven gifts mentioned here. More could have been mentioned, but these seven are given as representative. They do not seem to be given in any specific order.

Gift	How it is to be Used
Prophecy	<i>According to the proportion of his faith</i>
Service Teaching Exhorting	<i>In his serving In his teaching In his exhortation</i>
Giving Leading Showing Mercy	<i>With liberality With diligence With cheerfulness</i>

Note: The Greek preposition (ἐν) is the same with each of these, contrary to the rendering in the NAS.

These gifts are given without any corresponding definition. Nearly every commentary on the market goes through and carefully defines each one of these gifts. That is not a bad thing to do, but it is not the lesson being taught in the passage. Paul could easily have made his point with other gifts. The point is that we are all different and that we all have different gifts and that we are to excel in the use of each of them for the benefit of the entire body.

Some of these gifts are manifested in the realm of speaking. Others are evidenced in their service. But Paul does not hold up one over the other. He refuses to play “King of the Gifts.” They are all gifts from God and equally a part of the body of Christ.

1. The Representative Nature of this List of Gifts.

If you look at the list of gifts presented in this passage and compare it with the listing of spiritual gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12, you will find some differences. There are gifts mentioned here which are absent from that passage and there are gifts mentioned there which are not found here. Neither list is complete. That tells me something about all such listings of gifts as they are found in the Bible. None of the Biblical listings of gifts are not meant to be an exhaustive list. They are all mere samplings of the many diverse spiritual gifts.

2. The Inclusive Nature of the Gifts.

One need not look very hard to note that some of these gifts describe that which is both urged and even required of all Christians. We are all called to give. We are all commanded to show mercy. We are all told to serve one another. If these qualities are true of all Christians, then why are they singled out as distinctive gifts?

It is because the very nature of spiritual gifts is that they help the one who is gifted to excel in specific areas of Christian life and ministry. One person has a gift of giving and that person is able to act as a role model for the rest of the church through a level and a lifestyle of giving that goes far beyond the norm. Another person is able to show mercy in a remarkable way. By the use of these gifts, the entire church is taught how to pursue these qualities.

3. The Sovereign Nature of the Gifts.

These spiritual gifts are not a shopping list from which we make a choice and then seek to gain that gift. It is God who determines which gifts have been given. He gives to us not only the gift, but also the faith by which they are to be exercised.

When we belittle the gift we have been given, we quibble and question the sovereign will of God which determined the gift given to us, along with the place of ministry in which He has placed us.

4. The Gracious Nature of the Gifts.

They are gifts. You do not earn a gift. It is not something for which you work in order to obtain it. It is freely given to you by God. It comes by grace. Indeed, the words for “gift” (χάρισμα - *charisma*) and “grace” (χάρις - *charis*) are related.

This means that you ought never to become proud or arrogant over any gift that you might have. It is not a reflection of how spiritual you are. It is a reflection of the grace of God.

5. The Exhortation to Persevere in the Use of the Gifts.

Paul calls us to be diligent in utilizing the various gifts which God has given to the church. This brings us to a problem. Why would the teacher need to be exhorted to teach and the server to serve? Is this not their natural tendency? Not necessarily. Our natural tendency is to be self-centered and self-serving. But this is not how we are to use the gifts. Our service to God is to be self-sacrificing. This does not equate to success in the eyes of the world.

When our service does not appear to be successful and when our ministry is not self-serving, our tendency is to resign. Like Jonah, we wait for the flash and the fire and, when it doesn't come, we pack up our gourd and we quit. And so, Paul exhorts us to persevere, to keep on and to stick with that which God has given us to do.

The gifts are not given to us in order that we might focus upon the gifts. They are given to us so that we might focus upon the Giver of the gifts. They are given that we might focus upon Christ.

A LIFE OF LOVE

Romans 12:9-21

The entire first half of Paul's epistle to the Romans set forth God's act of love in bringing salvation to those who were lost. Chapters 12-16 sets forth our response to God's love that was demonstrated to us. Our response is one of love. We love because we have first been loved. But there is more in these verses than merely a command to love. Love is expressed in what it does; it is seen in its actions.

In the movie "Forrest Gump," the main character has a saying: "Stupid is as stupid does." The same applies to love. Love is as love does. That is true, not only in God who gave His only Son out of love for us, but also in our acts of love for one another and for the world at large.

LOVING FROM THE HEART

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil;
cling to what is good. (Romans 12:9).*

Paul begins this section with an introductory command concerning love. He will then move to the specifics of how that love is to be manifested.

12:9	12:10	12:11	12:12	12:13
Introductory command to love without hypocrisy	That love is manifested toward fellow believers by...			
	By giving preference to one another	Being fervent & diligent	Rejoicing, persevering, praying	Meeting needs & practicing hospitality

Love is to be *without hypocrisy*. That means love is true. It is not merely a mask for underlying motives. In the 1960's this country faced the issue of Situation Ethics. The question was this: Is it okay to do wrong if the outcome is loving? One popular play that dealt with this question was *The Rainmaker*. The movie depicts an aging spinster who enters into a sexual relationship with a passing con-artist. When her brother objects that such an action is morally wrong, he is admonished, "Son, you are so full of what's right that you've lost sight of what's good."

We don't talk much about Situational Ethics these days, not because it is dead and gone, but because it is so universally accepted in our culture that it does not need such a label. We have entered an age where right and wrong are defined by whether or not they are loving. And so, if a man and a woman (or even two people of the same gender) wish to enter into an adulterous relationship, it is deemed to be okay as long as they love one another. But real love is not like that. Real love is not merely situational. Real love does not embrace evil; it clings to that which is good.

LOVING THE BRETHREN

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. (Romans 12:10-13).

Having given a general call to love without hypocrisy, Paul now moves to specifics. He now will speak specifically of love among believers. This does not mean that we ought not to love unbelievers. It does mean that the love we believers have for one another is to be a special love, a brotherly love. Paul elsewhere says that *God is the Savior of all men, especially of believers* (1 Timothy 4:10). There are many such commands in the Scriptures. The Bible has quite a lot to say about how we are to treat one another. We are family and we are supposed to act like family.

There is a play on words when Paul says, "Be devoted (φιλόστοργοι) to one another in brotherly love (φιλαδελφία)." We could translate it to say, "Show family love in your brotherly love."

My mother used to teach her children that nothing is as important as family. It was important to her because she had been raised without a family of her own. She had been given away when she was a little child and she had never been adopted and had never experienced the love of a family. Family is important. Nothing that I say here should take away from that fact. But earthly family is only temporary. There is another family that is going to transcend these temporal limits. The family of God is going to be family for all eternity.

What follows the command to “be devoted to one another” is a series of Greek participles. A participle is a verb that is changed to further describe the main verb that it modifies. These participles each tell us a bit more of how we are to be devoted to one another. They describe the love that we are to show for one another.

1. Love that Lifts: *Give preference to one another in honor (12:10).*

We are to be in the business of lifting one another up. This is the language of putting someone on a pedestal. We’ve been told that we should not lift up others onto a pedestal, but Paul says that we should be doing that, not in a bad way, but to honor one another with a proper attitude of love.

Love does not demand the spotlight. Love is happy to see others honored and preferred. What is your reaction when someone gets more credit and more recognition than you? Do you feel a twinge of jealousy? That is not the reaction of love. Love sees others as more important than yourself and seeks to honor others more than yourself.

2. Love that does not Lag: *Not lagging behind in diligence (12:11).*

Diligence and lagging are opposites. One is to characterize us; the other is not. Our love is to be active. It is not to be a lazy love. What is a lazy love? It would be a love that loves in word but not in deed. It is a love that says, “I love you and one of these days I will get around to demonstrating that love.” How would you like to be loved like that? We are to be active in our love. Ours is to be a love that moves us with all diligence. Real love keeps on loving. It endures.

3. Love that is Heated: *Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (12:11).*

The term that is translated “fervent” is from the Greek root ζεω. It means “to boil.” This is describing the diligent love of the previous clause. When water boils, it is hot, but it is also moving. Our love is to be hot and moving. It moves us to the service of the Lord.

This heated love involves *serving the Lord*. The Greek text reads τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες, literally “acting as a slave toward the Lord.” How different has been the attitudes of those within the church. All too often, we come to church seeking to have our own desires and needs served. We speak of “having our needs met.” But our attitude is to be that of a love slave to the Lord. We are not there to be served, but to be a servant to one another.

4. Love that Hopes: *Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation (12:12).*

Ours is to be a hopeful love. The quality of hope points to that which is still in the future. Hope is defined as faith in the future tense. When we rejoice in hope, we are rejoicing in that which we look to be fulfilled in the future.

The problem with the future is that it is future and we are still in the present. In the present we have things like tribulation. But in the future, there is hope for that which will bring rejoicing.

Present Experience	Future Hope
We persevere in present tribulation	We rejoice in our hope for the future

5. Love that Prays: *Devoted to prayer (12:12).*

Our love for one another is to be manifested in our prayer life. How much time do we spend praying for one another? We are not only commanded to engage in such prayer, we are to be devoted to such prayer.

What do you do when someone asks you to pray for a special need? I’ve gotten into the habit of taking such a shared need and going into prayer over that need immediately. I do that, not in order to be more spiritual, but because I recognize my own lack of spirituality. I

typically pray for such a need immediately because I know that, if I wait until a future time, I run the risk of forgetting all about it.

6. Love that Gives: *Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality (12:13).*

With these last two qualities of love, we see that love put into action. Love is not really love if it does not act. The action is to be twofold. The first area is directed toward believers, the second is directed toward everyone else.

First, we are to contribute *to the needs of the saints*. This does not stop us from giving money to unbelievers, but we ought to have a special concern to meet the needs of our fellow Christians.

Contributing (κοινωνοῦντες) to the needs of the saints. Real fellowship involves meeting needs.

The early church was characterized by such giving. Acts 4:34 tells us that *there was not a needy person among them* because those who had wealth would use that wealth to meet the needs of those who had nothing. Such funds were collected and brought to the apostles for redistribution. The function was later taken over by the deacons of the church.

Secondly, we are to show hospitality. The term “hospitality” is translated from the Greek word φιλοξενία (*philoxenia*). It is a compound word, made from the joining of two separate words together.

- ♦ Φίλος (*philos*): Love
- ♦ Ξένος (*xenos*): Stranger

This points to the activity, not only of showing hospitality to family and to close friends, but to reaching out and showing that sort of hospitality to strangers.

Love is the mark of the Christian. Jesus said that *by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13:35). He never said they would know we are Christians because of our doctrinal statement or because of our Reformed faith or because we speak in tongues

or because we don't speak in tongues. Love is the sign that you are His disciple.

LOVING THE HURTERS AND THE HURTING

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. (Romans 12:14-16).

The love that we have for God is to be reflected in our love for others; even for those who set themselves up against us to hurt us. Paul takes us to this arena of love by quoting the words of Jesus: *Bless those who persecute you.* Jesus said this in His Sermon on the Mount.

1. A Heart of Blessing: *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse (12:14).*

There is an interesting play on words to be seen between verse 13 and verse 14 that fails to come through in our English translation. It revolves around the two different meanings that can be carried by the Greek word διώκω (*dioko*).

Verse 13	Verse 14
<i>...PRACTICING (διώκοντες) hospitality</i>	<i>Bless those who PERSECUTE (διώκοντας) you</i>

On the one hand, the Christian is to be pursuing people in order to do good toward them. On the other hand, he is to bless those who are pursuing him for evil intentions. We are to bless because we have been blessed. We are to avoid cursing because there is One who became a curse for us.

2. A Heart of Empathy: *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep (12:15).*

Literally, "Rejoice with rejoicing ones, weep with weeping ones."

This is a description of incarnational relationship. It is pictured in the ministry of Jesus. He is the One who left heaven to take on flesh and to live among us and to experience that which we experience. We are called to do the same thing with others. We are to share their rejoicing, even when it does not benefit us. We are to share their pain, even when it does not hurt us. Why? Because we are connected and both the benefit and the hurt really are our own.

3. A Heart of Unity: *Be of the same mind toward one another (12:16).*

When Paul speaks of “one another,” he is speaking of believers. We are to be unified, not only in what we do, but also in how we think. That does not mean that we stop thinking, but it does mean that we have that which guides our thinking. When he says that we are to *be of the same mind toward one another*, he is speaking of our outlook on the important things. We are to see ourselves and our world the way God sees and this gives us the same mind toward one another, especially in the area of how we treat one another.

4. A Heart of Humility: *Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation (12:16).*

Someone has said that humility is not thinking lowly of yourself; it is not thinking of yourself at all. I think there may be some truth to that, but it is hard not to think of yourself. The point here is that you are not to focus on self exaltation.

Most of us have a tendency to exalt self. We want to be recognized and appreciated and exalted. Just look at a child who calls out, “Daddy, look at me!” We want to be seen and we want to be known and those desires are not necessarily bad. They become bad when we begin to exalt ourselves over others and lift ourselves to a higher level of importance.

How do you avoid such a snare? Paul says to *associate with the lowly*. We are to go out of our way to make the unimportant feel important. Why? Because they are important. They are so important that the Father has numbered the hairs of their heads. Francis Schaefer wrote a book a number of years ago entitled *No Little People*. The book consisted of a number of sermons, but I believe the title was a sermon unto itself. It tells us that, to God, there are no

little people. There are no unimportant people. There are only those who are made in the image of the God of the universe.

LOVING THOSE YOU LOVE TO HATE

17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21).

It is one thing to be told to love those whom you already love. It is another thing entirely to be told to love those whom you love to hate. This describes a supernatural love. It is the sort of love that Jesus manifested when He went to the cross to die for those who hated Him.

1. The Release of Revenge: *Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men (12:17).*

An assumption is made that bad things are going to happen and that people will do you wrong. The Bible is realistic about such things. It does not teach that once you become a Christian that your life will get easier and everyone will be nice to you. What it does teach is how you are to act when things go wrong. You are called to release your desire for revenge.

Revenge has no place in the heart of a Christian. Before Paul taught this, Jesus said the same thing in His Sermon on the Mount.

38 You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. 41 And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who

asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. (Matthew 5:38-42).

If this sounds like pacifism, it is because it is, at least insofar as it concerns the taking of revenge. The principle of revenge is to strike back. The principle of Christianity is to forgive. This sort of response seems both naive and unrealistic for today's world. It sounded no less naive and unrealistic in the world of the first century. But we are called to a supernatural standard because we have been forgiven with a supernatural forgiveness.

2. A Pursuit of Peace: *If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men (12:18).*

Notice that it is not always possible to be at peace with all men because such a stance does not always depend upon you. But when it does depend upon you, then you are called to be at peace with all.

3. An Allowance of God's Justice: *Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord (12:19).*

The Greek text says, "*Leave room for the wrath.*" The translators of the NAS have added the phrase, "Of God," but it is not a part of the original. They meant well and it must be admitted that the context makes is clear as to whose wrath is being referenced.

Paul cites the Old Testament. The passage from which he quotes is Deuteronomy 32:35. It is a passage that teaches that God will one day balance the books. It means that, if He is going to balance the books, I no longer have to try to take things into my own hands.

4. A Response of Grace: *But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head (12:20).*

This is still another citation from the Old Testament. In this case, it is taken from the book of Proverbs.

*21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;*

*22 For you will heap burning coals on his head,
And the LORD will reward you. (Proverbs 25:21-22).*

The image of heaping burning coals onto the head of one's enemy has been interpreted in two different ways:

- ♦ A Symbol of Judgment.

Used this way, the image is one of making the future judgment of your enemy all the more severe. On the one hand, were you to take your own revenge upon that

same enemy, then you would not be leaving room for the judgment of God to come upon him as per verse 19. On the other hand, if you treat his hatred with kindness, then God's judgment against his unrighteous actions toward you will be all the more severe.

The same Hebrew word for "burning coals" is used in Psalm 140:10.

*May **burning coals** fall upon them;
May they be cast into the fire,
Into deep pits from which they cannot rise.*

- ♦ A Symbol of Repentance.

It has been suggested that the heaping of burning coals upon the head is the language of repentance, similar to one repenting in dust and ashes. The problem is that this particular term is not used elsewhere in the Scriptures to speak of repentance. However, Egyptologist Siegfried Morenz documents the ancient Egyptian practice of carrying a pan of burning coals upon one's head to symbolize repentance.¹ Similarly, 2 Samuel 13:19 tells of Tamar, the violated daughter of King David, placing ashes upon her head as a sign of mourning.

Which is in view here? I think it possible that they are both true and that both have application to this passage. To the unbelieving heart, these works of kindness bring a man to greater and greater condemnation before the terrible wrath of God. But in some cases,

¹ *Egyptian Religion*, Siegfried Morenz, page 254-257.

these same works of kindness bring about a burning shame that melts a rebellious heart and that leads to repentance and a new birth.

You remember the story of David and Saul. Saul had set out to murder David and he pursued him throughout the length and breadth of Canaan. There came a time when Saul stopped to refresh himself in a cave. It happened to be the cave where David was hiding. David had at his mercy this jealous king who had chased him and who had made him a fugitive. Instead of killing him, David merely cut off a piece of his robe. After Saul had left, David called out to him. He held up the cut cloth as evidence of his recent proximity and he said, "I was able to kill you but I did not." What was Saul's reaction? At least for a time, there was repentance. He acknowledged the sinfulness of his own actions and he permitted David to go in peace.

You are called to treat your enemy with kindness. There is a possibility that such kindness will bring him to repentance. If this takes place, you have lost your enemy and won a friend. On the other hand, if your enemy continues to be an enemy of God despite your kindness toward him, then his future judgment and condemnation is made all that much worse.

5. A Conquest with Good: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (12:21).*

We are in a battle between good and evil. The temptation is to use the weapons of the enemy against him. But the call of the Lord is to overcome evil with good. That is hard to do because it involves trusting in the Lord and leaving things like vengeance and judgment in His hands.

In all of this, our example and our motivation is Jesus. He is the One who overcame evil with good. He is the One who showed us love at a time when we were at enmity with Him. He is the One who has brought us into a position of peace with God and peace with one another through His own suffering and death that were wrought in our place. How do I show real love to the one I love to hate? I do it by looking to Jesus who showed real love to me.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO AUTHORITY

Romans 13:1-7

The teachings of Paul regarding governmental authority were not given in a vacuum. The world of the first century was characterized by:

- ♦ Slavery. This was not a black versus white issue, but rather a brutal fact that slavery had been an established way of life for thousands of years.
- ♦ Dictatorship. The Roman Republic had ended with Octavius Augustus in the years before the birth of Christ. Even though the outward forms were followed, everyone knew that the emperor was a dictator (that was even one of his official titles).
- ♦ Taxation without representation. The Romans believed that everyone should pay taxes except for Romans. Thus, those who were citizens of Rome were exempt from paying most taxes while the crushing tax burden was passed on to the conquered peoples of the world.
- ♦ Religious persecution. Within just a few years the Roman Emperor Nero would be coming to the throne of Rome. He would initiate an intense persecution of Christians.

This was the world of the first century. What had Jesus said to the people living under these conditions? “*Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s*” (Matthew 22:21). This sets forth a principle of submission.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBJECTION

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except God, and those which exist are established by God. (Romans 13:1).

Paul begins this section with a command. There are no qualifications, no limits, and no conditions. It applies to everyone, literally to “every soul.” All are to be in subjection.

To whom are we to be in subjection? The governing authorities. It does not say to be in subjection only to those governing authorities who are godly. That was not the case in the situation to which Paul writes.

I said a moment ago that there were no limits to this command. It is true that none are given here. But I do think that one is given elsewhere in the Scriptures. It is found in Acts 4:19-20 when Peter and John answered the command that they cease and desist from preaching Jesus and they answer, “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.*”

This is the exception to the rule. It is when God’s people are commanded to perform an act that would be in disobedience to the Lord. In this situation, they are called to disobey in that single and specific area.

Romans 12	Romans 13
Personal responsibility.	Government responsibility.
Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice (12:1-2).	Be in subjection to the governing authorities (13:1).
Never pay back evil for evil (12:17). “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord (12:19).	Government does not bear the sword for nothing; it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil (13:4).
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (12:21).	Rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil (13:3).

In the last chapter, we saw that vengeance belongs to the Lord and that we are to give up our desire for vengeance against those who do wrong against us. How are we to do this? One part of this is by being subject to the governing authorities whose duty it is to be an avenger against the evil-doer.

THE PROBLEM OF RESISTANCE TO AUTHORITY

Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves (13:2).

We have already seen that governmental authority is ordained by God. This means that resisting governmental authority constitutes rebellion against God. This was a difficult teaching to accept in Paul's day. Indeed, the Jews were noted for their past rebellions against authority. They had revolted against Nebuchadnezzar and they would soon be revolting against the Roman empire. Furthermore, their revolts were not justified by the Lord. Jeremiah had repeatedly warned the Jews not to revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, but they had not listened. Their rebellion had been against both Nebuchadnezzar as well as against the Lord.

What was true in those Old Testament times was also true in Paul's day and is also true today. The one who resists authority effectively sets himself up in opposition to the ordinance of God.

Resisting Authority	=	Resisting God
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THE PRINCIPLE OF FEAR AND AUTHORITY

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; ⁴for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the

one who practices evil (13:3-4).

The second reason we ought to obey governmental authorities is because they have the power to punish the one who disobeys. We are not called to live in fear and, when it comes to dealing with legitimate authority, one of the ways you can avoid fear is by doing what is mandated by that authority.

Generally speaking, it is true that one who is being obedient to God and to the government has nothing to fear from that government. When you are driving on the highway and you see a police car behind you, there is no fear if you know that you are driving within the speed limit and that your car and license and insurance are all according to the laws of the land. When you are living obediently to authority, there is no reason to fear that authority.

No Fear of Authority	Fear of Authority
Do what is good	If you do what is evil
You will have praise from the same	Be afraid
Authority is a minister of God to you for good	Authority is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil

In verse 4, Paul says that government is given as a “minister.” The Greek word used here is *διακονος* (*diakonos*). It is the same word that is normally translated as “deacon.” Deacons are given in a church to serve and government is given to people for the same reason.

Notice that there are two attitudes one can normally have toward government. The first is to have an attitude of security. This is the kind of attitude of which Paul speaks when he asks, “*Do you want to have no fear of authority?*” Government is given so that people will not have to fear for their own well-being.

The other attitude one can have regarding government is that of fearfulness. You can legitimately fear government and authority if you are living in disobedience to that government and authority. For example, when you exceed the speed limit, you should legitimately fear being pulled over and

being forced to pay a traffic citation.

Those who disobey authority are supposed to be fearful because *it does not bear the sword for nothing*. Authority is given by God and the sword which it wields is also authorized by God.

The reference to the sword brings up the question of war. Is there ever a time when war is the right thing? Theologians have wrestled with this question and have come up with a number of ideas that educate us as to when a country should or should not go to war. This is a significant question for us today who live in a democratic republic because we have a say and a voice in the running of our country and in whether our country is involved in the pursuit of war.

1. A Just Cause: This would involve defending either your own country or coming to the defense of someone else who was being attacked. Thus there must be a wrong that is suffered in order for a war to take place.
2. A Right Intention: The desire for peace should be the ultimate goal of war. Furthermore, the peace that is established after the war ought to be better than the peace that would have prevailed had the war not been fought.
3. A Reasonable Chance of Success: It is considered to be wrong to go to war when the result will be certain catastrophe. Jesus alluded to this in Luke 14:31-32 when he described a king preparing to meet another king in battle sits down and asks whether he is strong enough to win the battle.
4. The End is Proportional to the Means used to Achieve it: You don't use a bazooka to swat a fly. You don't use nuclear devices when a more conventional means will accomplish the same result.
5. A Last Resort: War should only be used when all other means have been exhausted. We are to pursue peace with all men (Romans 14:19; Hebrews 12:14).
6. A Legitimate Authority: I don't have the option to decide to go to war with another person or a race or nation. I am not a legitimate

authority. That authority has been given to leaders of nations.

7. A Distinction Between Combatants Versus Non-combatants. Effort is to be taken to avoid killing civilians. Their death is justified only if they are unavoidable victims rather than deliberate targets.

THE PLACE OF CONSCIENCE AND AUTHORITY

Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing (13:5-6).

The third reason we ought to be obedient and submissive to governing authorities is for the sake of personal peace of conscience. Perhaps you've heard of the story of the letter that was received by the IRS. It read, "Dear sirs, I've been unable to sleep lately because I cheated on the last three years of my income tax. Enclosed you will find a check for \$500. If I still cannot sleep, I will send the rest of the money."

One of the reasons you are to pay your taxes is that you understand they are ordained of God and therefore you can keep a clear conscience and not have to worry about having brought offense to both God and man.

THE PATTERN OF PROPRIETY IN AUTHORITY

Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor (13:7).

We are to pay our debts. One of the debts that we incur by living in a country is tax debt. In the same way, if a certain honor is due to someone, then we are to show it. When we go

The Greek phrase translated "custom to whom custom" is τῷ τὸ τέλος τὸ τέλος. This points to the tax that would be taken at the *end* of a toll road.

into a courtroom where it is customary to address the judge as, “Your honor,” we are to use that appropriate address. We are to show respect when a person’s position calls for that sort of respect.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:8 that we are not to seek to be called by such titles as “rabbi” or “teacher” or “leader.” We are not to put on airs. It does not really matter how many degrees one holds. These are of no account in the kingdom. Jesus said that we are not to insist upon titles of honor. But He never said that we cannot use such titles of others.²

This brings up the question. What about when government is evil? This is no obscure hypothesis. There was much about the Roman government in the days of Paul that was characterized by evil and anti-Christian. Yet Paul gives these instructions in his own day. We can summarize the Bible’s teaching to this question.

- ♦ Obey the laws that do not specifically contradict God’s law.
- ♦ Speak out against injustice.
- ♦ Do righteousness; do what we can to influence that government for righteousness.

Do you remember the actions of the apostles when they were specifically commanded to do that which was contrary to the command of God? There are several such instances to be found in the Scriptures, but one is particularly striking.

18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:18-20).

The apostles were specifically forbidden to speak or to teach in the name of Jesus. This was a command they could not obey. They had been commanded by God to preach the gospel. For them to obey the governing authorities in

² Jesus gave one interesting exception when He said, “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven” (Matthew 23:9).

this matter would be to disobey the express command of God. They could do nothing but disobey. A similar example to this is seen in the case of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego who refused to bow down and worship a Babylonian idol (Daniel 3).

I am authorized in the Bible to disobey the government only when it orders me to do something that is contrary to the commands of God and then I am only authorized to disobey in that one area. Furthermore, I am to be ready to suffer the consequences of that authorized disobedience.

In closing, we must admit that this sort of submission to governing authorities is no easy task. How then are we to accomplish it? It is by looking to the One who divested Himself of all heavenly prerogatives to take the role of a submissive servant and who humbled Himself, learning the obedience of the cross. Jesus is both our motivation as well as our pattern for submission. Because He submitted Himself, He calls us to do the same that we might be made like Him in all things.

A DEBT OF LOVE

Romans 13:8-14

Debt. It is a word that usually brings with it certain accompanying negative connotations. The American dream is to reach the point where you are debt-free. And yet, there are some debts from which you can never be free. Someone who gave you help when you most needed it. Someone who sacrificed of themselves on your behalf. Someone who put themselves in the place of danger and hurt so that you might be spared. Debts like that can never be repaid.

We have that kind of debt. It is a debt that cost God the life of His only begotten Son. It is a debt of love. C.S. Lewis wrote, “Love is as hard as nails. Love is nails... driven through hands and feet.”

The ideas of debt and obligation come together in this chapter. Verses 1-7 described the civil obligations the Christian is to meet toward the governing authorities. Paul proceeds now to speak of another obligation. This is an obligation to love one another.

Romans 13:1-7	Romans 13:8-10	Romans 13:11-14
Fulfill your obligations...		
To governing authorities	To love one another	To live as Jesus
Law	Love	Lord

We have already seen in verses 1-7 the obligation that we have toward those who are in authority over us. It is an obligation of submission because submitting to governing authorities is a part of our submission to the Lord. Now we are brought to see what is at the center of that obligation. It is an obligation to love as we have been loved.

LOVE IS A LEGAL FULFILLMENT

8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:8-10).

1. The Debt of Love: *Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another (13:8).*

We are not to be debtors. Paul says that we are to *owe nothing to anyone*. We are to pay our debts. Some have taken this to mean that a Christian should not take a mortgage or a car loan, but that is reading too much into the text. To the contrary, the verb is given in the Greek present tense, indicating that this state of indebtedness is not to be a regular or ongoing lifestyle. On the other hand, the Proverbs warn against a common problem in indebtedness:

*The rich rules over the poor,
And the borrower becomes the lender's slave. (Proverbs 22:7).*

As Christians, we are not to be constantly in debt, but instead we are to repay the debts we owe. As we saw in the previous verses that we are to repay our obligations to authority, so also we are to repay all other debts.

There is one exception to this rule. We will never be able to complete

our obligation to love one another. We will always be debtors with regard to our love. Why is this? It is because we have been loved with an infinite love and we will never be able to repay that kind of love.

2. Love and the Law: *For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law (13:8).*

The law is about love. It could be summed up with the commands to love the Lord your God with all your mind and all your soul and all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

37 And He said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:35-40).

Jesus answered this question by quoting two Old Testament passages. The first of these is Deuteronomy 6:5. It was customary to have this verse written on a phylactery and bound to the wrist or to the forehead. This lawyer merely pulls up his shirt sleeve and reads the answer.

- ♦ Love God: *Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).*

"Love the Lord your God." He is not just any God. He is the Lord. He is Yahweh. Notice the extent of this love. It is all-consuming. It is a fanatical love.

- ♦ Love Man: *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love*

your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18).

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” This is a quote from Leviticus 19:18. It is found in a passage that forbids oppressing the poor. It commands, not only the loving of the Jew, but the loving of the stranger and the foreigner as well (Leviticus 19:34). The Jews in the days of Jesus had perverted this passage to say, “You shall love your neighbors and hate your enemies” (Matthew 5:43). But the Scriptures did not contain these words. God’s commandment has always been one of love.

The fact that Jesus pointed us to the Law tells us something about Christianity. It is not something new or recent. It is something that is very old and which is rooted in the Old Testament. As Christians living in this age, we do not ignore the Old Testament or relegate it to some past and unrelated dispensation. God is the same in every age and salvation is also the same in every age.

Jesus called this the greatest command. It summarized all the other commands of the law. It is striking that your greatest calling is to be relational. You will never be judged for how many programs you planned or how many sermons you preached or how many fliers you printed up. You will be judged for how much you loved.

If there is no greater commandment than this, then it is also true that there is no greater sin than to fail to do this. We are called to love and a failure to love is a failure to keep God’s law.

3. Love and Law’s Negation: *For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet" (13:9).*

Notice that this description of love is stated primarily in the negative. There are a lot of positive things you could say about love. Just read through 1 Corinthians 13 and you will see an entire list of positive things said about love. But this is a list of things that love does not do.

Why is this list so negative? It is because the law was primarily stated in the negative. It told you what not to do. That is the very

nature of law. Its primary focus is upon prohibitions.

Love acts a certain way. We have already seen a number of positive reflections of love in Romans 12. But it is also true that love refrains from acting in a certain way. There are certain actions that love avoids.

- ♦ Love does not commit adultery.
- ♦ Love does not murder.
- ♦ Love does not steal.
- ♦ Love does not covet.

Thus, there is a positive aspect to each of these laws because they can all be summarized in the simple statement to love your neighbor as yourself. At the same time, we should not avoid giving voice to the negative. We live in a society and a culture that doesn't care to talk about negatives. But the Bible does and perhaps there are times when we should, too. If we are showing real love, then there are certain things we should not be doing.

4. Love and the Summation of the Law: *And if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (13:9).*

This is not an exclusively New Testament teaching. Before Jesus ever said these words, they were given in the Old Testament. Leviticus 19:18 gives the command from God that you are to "love your neighbor as yourself."

How do you do it? How do you love the person for whom you really don't care? I want to suggest that you start by seeing how much you have been loved. Then you ask yourself, "If I really loved that person, what would I do?" And then you go and do that thing.

LOVE HAS A PRESENT PRIORITY

And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is

nearer to us than when we believed. (Romans 13:11).

When Paul starts off in this verse by saying, “And this do,” he is referring back to the command from the previous verse to “love your neighbor as yourself.” This means he has not changed his topic. He is still speaking of the importance of love. He is pointing out that love has a present priority.

1. The Priority of Wakefulness: *And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep (13:11).*

Paul says that we know the time. To what time does this refer? It means that we understand that we are in the last days. We understand that we have entered into that period of which the Old Testament prophets spoke. We have entered the time when the Spirit of God has been poured out on all flesh.

Since I have been retired from my 29-year career with the fire department, I no longer have to get up with the alarm clock to go into work. But my wife does. That means the way we approach alarm clocks is fundamentally different.

I am one of those people who hear the alarm clock and within two seconds my feet are on the ground and I am moving. It comes from years of hearing an alarm in the fire station and going into immediate action. It is a conditioned response that I would find difficult to change.

Paula’s response is notably different. For her, the alarm clock is a device to tell her that getting up is somewhere in her not-so-immediate future. She has developed some considerable expertise on the use of the snooze button. It is the button you can push that temporarily cuts off the alarm, but only to reset it and have it ring again several minutes later.

There comes a time when I come over and tell her, “Honey, it is *already the hour for you to awaken from sleep.*” Paul isn’t speaking of physical sleep. He is speaking of spiritual sleep. He indicates that our problem is that we have a spiritual snooze button and we’ve gotten into the habit of using it.

What are the characteristics of such spiritual sleep? How can we know if we ourselves are in the midst of such a slumber? I will suggest several qualities:

- ♦ “Going with the Flow” versus purposeful living. Remember the parable of the master who gave talents to his servants? The one who was rebuked was the one who took the talent and did nothing with it. He refused to see that he had been given that talent for a purpose and that he was meant to do something with it.
- ♦ An awareness of the spiritual dynamics taking place behind the scenes of normal, everyday living. The spiritual life is not something that only takes place on Sunday morning or when you come to church. It is also involved when you go to work and when you take out the garbage. It is involved in all of life.
- ♦ An understanding of the reality spiritual warfare and the regular utilization of deliberate tactics as a part of this conflict. Paul is going to speak in verse 12 of how we are to put on the armor of light. When you put on armor, it is not a fashion statement. Rather, you put on armor because you are going into battle. There is a spiritual conflict taking place and you are a participant.

2. The Priority of Proximity: *For now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed (13:11).*

Every day brings us one day closer to eternity. It could be that Christ is going to come in our lifetimes. Or it could be that we will see the day of our death. But in either case, we are one day closer to what Paul calls, “Salvation.”

This reference to salvation is significant, given what Paul has had to say about this subject in the book of Romans. Throughout most of the epistle, Paul has described salvation in terms of what Christ has already accomplished upon the cross.

- ♦ The gospel is the power of God to salvation (Romans 1:16).

- ♦ When a person believes the gospel and confesses it with his mouth, the result is salvation (Romans 10:10).

But now we see that there is a future tense to our salvation. It is true that we have been saved through faith and that we are being sanctified through that continuing faith, but the final aspect of our salvation is something that is still future. It is future, but it is closer than it used to be. We are one year closer. One week closer. One day closer.

There is a certain wakefulness that we ought to have in light of that truth. Of what does that wakefulness comprise? Paul explains in the next two verses.

LOVE HAS A WAITING EXPECTATION

¹² The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. (Romans 13:12-13).

Our time on earth is limited. It is going to end one of these days. Either you will die or else Christ will return. In the meantime, you are called to be awake. This is a reference to spiritual wakefulness. Are you sleepy or awake? A sleepy attitude ignores that which is taking place. A wakeful attitude is aware of all the spiritual realities around you.

Night	Day
Spiritually asleep.	Spiritually awake.
A picture of those without Christ.	A picture of those with Christ.
Where we used to live.	That for which we are called to live.
Lay aside the deeds of the dark.	Put on the armor of light.

Sexual promiscuity, sensuality, strife, and jealousy	Let us behave properly.
The flesh and its lusts.	Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. S. Lewis used to describe life in our everyday realm as living in the “shadow lands.” We see things dimly, but there is coming a day when the lights will be turned on fully. We are called to live in the light of that fuller revelation and we are called to live that way today. Such a life involves putting on what Paul calls *the armor of light*. That makes it sound as though Paul is only speaking of that which you wear for defense. I suppose the reason the translators rendered this word as “armor” is because it is that which you “put on.” But the word itself, ὅπλον (*hoplon*), is more general. It refers to any sort of weapon. It is frequently used in the Septuagint to describe a shield.

A hoplite was an armored soldier, a heavy infantryman.

It was used by Paul in Romans 6:13 when he warned his readers not to *go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God*. In Ephesians 6:11 Paul speaks of putting on the “full armor” of God. While in that passage the elements of equipment are described in detail, here it is only mentioned in passing. It is armor / equipment of light.

Paula and I visited Puerto Rico in the spring of 2007. While we were there, I had the opportunity to visit a bio-luminescent lagoon located on the northeastern tip of the island. To get to the lagoon, you must paddle by kayak across a bay and through a narrow, twisting channel, taking you through thick mangroves, all under the darkness of night. The lagoon itself is filled with millions of microscopic organisms that give off light when the water is disturbed. Put your hand into the water and they look like tiny lightning bugs. Splash the water with your paddle and the entire area lights up with a soft glow.

Reflecting on this creative wonder, several things came to mind. First of all, I am told that these tiny organisms derive their light from the sun. They collect the light during the day and then give it off during the night. If the previous several days have been cloudy, then they will have little or no light to give off. We are much the same way. We derive our light from the Son

and from being in His presence. He is the source of our equipment of light. Shut us off from His presence, and soon we will have little or no light to share with others.

Another thought that comes to mind is that it is often in our adversity that we shine the brightest. Allow us to remain undisturbed and our light begins to fade, but churn us up and we shine brightly. May the Lord continue to churn your spirit to shine for Him.

LOVE HAS AN ADORNING ACCOMPANIMENT

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Romans 13:14).

We are instructed to “put on Jesus.” What does that mean? It means we are to come and look at the cross and believe its message and to appropriate it through faith and to so hold to that faith that it becomes to us like a set of clothing. Paul speaks on several occasions of “putting on Christ.”

22 ...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Notice that the “new self” has a new likeness. It is the likeness of God. Mankind was created after the image and likeness of God. Then the fall took place and that image was corrupted. Salvation involves a redemption of that image and likeness. It involves restoring people to the proper image, the very image for which they were originally created.

9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him (Colossians 3:9-10).

Notice the difference between the two passages in Ephesians versus Colossians. Both are written by the same author, but in Ephesians, Paul commands the new self to be “put on” while in Colossians he says that believers have already put on the new self. Both are true.

We are to put on the very thing that we have already put on. We are to believe the very gospel we have already believed. We are to renew our minds as a living sacrifice in the same way that we underwent such renewal to come to Christ in the first place.

This is a wonderful lesson about the gospel. It is the lesson that you never outgrow the gospel. You never leave the gospel to go on to “deeper things.” The gospel is the deeper thing.

What does it mean to “put on Christ”? It means to believe the gospel and to enter into all He has prepared for you. Then it means, by faith, to let your position in Christ filter down to your daily experiences.

LOVE'S ACCEPTANCE

Romans 14:1-12

The television show “Friends” was very popular in its day, despite the fact that nothing serious ever happened in the show. It contained no earth-shattering scenarios. Instead, it seems to have been an exercise in trivia. What led to the popularity of this long-running television show? One writer suggests that it is because it describes a place where you can be yourself and where you will be accepted and will be called “friend.”

We hunger for such a place. We hunger for that sort of acceptance; for those who will know us and who will accept us as we are. That is what the church is supposed to be all about. Unfortunately, it often is not the case. This dichotomy between the ideal versus the reality is not a new phenomenon. Paul’s words to the Romans suggest that it was an issue in his day as it is today.

A CALL TO ACCEPTANCE

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. (Romans 14:1).

There is a paradox of psychology that says people rarely change until they find that they have been accepted for what they are. Paul has already shown in the early chapters of his epistle to the Romans that we have been accepted by God the way we are. It is on the basis of God’s acceptance of us that we are called to offer our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to be changed into something new and glorious.

Religion says, “Change and then I will accept you.” The gospel says, “You have been accepted by God; now change as a result of that acceptance.” Because we have been freely accepted by God, we are now to show that same acceptance to others. This includes an acceptance of *the one who is weak in faith*.

The New English Translation is accurate when it translates this as *weak in **the** faith*. It may be that Paul is not speaking of the strength of their faith, but rather to their holding of the entire system of teaching of Christianity. Jude 1:3 speaks in a similar fashion when he talks about how we are to *contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*.

If this is how we are to understand this passage, then it is speaking, not of the one who is shallow in his convictions, but to the one who is relatively unlearned with regard to the Christian faith. It is one who has come to faith in Jesus, but who is unaware of all the ramifications of that system of belief.

We are called to accept such a one and not to be continually putting down his opinions. That does not mean we cannot teach him and encourage him and even correct him, but that it is to be done in a spirit of gentleness and acceptance.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTANCE

Paul is going to deal with two real-life situations the church at Rome was facing. The first was the problem of eating. The second was the problem of the observance of certain holy days. Both of these likely stemmed from Jewish Christians who felt the pull of their former life in Judaism and who were not entirely aware of the freedom we have in Christ.

At the heart of the matter was not an issue of Jews versus Gentiles, but acceptance versus non-acceptance of believers in Christ. Therefore Paul is not going to focus upon the question of what you should eat or what day you should or should not observe. Instead,

Several different translations have been offered for this last phrase:
NET: *Do not have disputes over differing opinions.*
NRS: *Not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.*
NLT: *Don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.*

his focus will be upon the acceptance of believers.

1. The Example of Eating: *One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:2-4).*

Paul presents a contrast in these verses. It is a contrast between two people. They are evidently being presented as the servants of God. This suggests that they are both Christians. However, one is described in verse 2 as “he who is weak.” This seems to set him in contrast with the other person.

Stronger Brother	Weaker Brother
Has faith that he may eat all things	Eats vegetables only
He is not to look at the weaker brother with contempt	He is not to judge the one who eats

You don’t get to judge the servant of another. You are only allowed to judge your own servant and, in the spiritual realm, you don’t have any servants because you are the servant. You rise and fall in the eyes of your Master, not in the eyes of the other servants. That does not mean you never listen to what other servants have to say. But it does mean that the final judgment is up to your Master. It means that you are not to be in the business of passing judgment upon others.

The term translated “servant” is from the Greek οἰκέτην and refers to a “house servant.”

Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount, “*Do not judge lest you be judged*” (Matthew 7:1). Given as it is in the present tense, we could

translate that to say, “Stop judging, lest you be judged.” Yet the context lets us know that this does not mean we are not allowed to pass judgment upon wrong doctrine or even upon sinful practices. Instead it tells us:

- ♦ We should first make sure that we have done a thorough self-assessment to make certain there are not blind spots to sin in our own lives. Jesus described the importance of taking the two-by-four out of your own eye before you go looking to take the speck from someone else’s.
- ♦ We shall be judged in the way we have judged others: *For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. (Matthew 7:2).*
- ♦ We are not to cast what is holy to dogs. That in itself indicates an act of discernment on our part as we discern what is holy and who are not (Matthew 7:6).

We are directed time and time again to be discerning upon the sinful actions that we see, yet we should do so remembering that we ourselves are sinners in need of repentance and forgiveness. That means our judgments are to be gracious, even as we have been shown grace by the Judge of all the earth.

It also means that we should be aware of the limitations of our own judgments. We should realize that we do not necessarily have all the relevant facts of any given matter and that there might be both facts and circumstances of which we are unaware.

2. The Example of Observance: *One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. (Romans 14:5).*

This second example involves the regarding (literally, the judging, κρίνει) of one day above another. The issue involves the observance of various holy days. Paul does not specifically state that it is about the Sabbath or about the feast days or days of fasting. He references the idea in general and that is how we are to take it.

One man regards one
day above another



Another man regards
every day alike

Once again, there are two different individuals involved. Once again, they have a difference of opinion and a different standard of judging. One man thinks it important to observe special days. Another sees no difference between one day as opposed to any other. Who is right? Who is wrong? We are not told. The reason we are not told is because it is not important. The important thing is that we serve the Lord as we do observe the day or else that we serve the Lord as we do not observe the day.

PRINCIPLES OF ACCEPTANCE

Paul now gives three principles that show how and why we are to accept other believers, even though we do not necessarily agree with their religious practices. It must be pointed out that the differences described here are not in the area of major teachings within the church. It is not a matter of those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God versus those who reject the faith. Instead, the issue is over relatively minor issues.

This is an important distinction. This passage cannot be used to justify the acceptance of wrong doctrine. The issue here is over the interpretation of religious rituals, not over the truth of the gospel.

Neither is this speaking of our freedom to engage in sinful activities. Paul is not considering whether someone does or does not commit adultery or whether someone does or does not bear false witness against his neighbor. Rather it speaks of areas of Christian liberty.

1. The Principle of Submission: *He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:6).*

Paul describes a situation in which someone has a heart of service and obedience toward the Lord. It is in such a mind set that such a person

either observes certain days or does not observe those days. His observance is for the glory of God and His non-observance is with a heart of thanksgiving to God. It does not really matter whether he is observing or whether he is not observing, his heart is right before the Lord.

If someone is not involved in sin and his heart is right in giving thanks to God, then you have no business judging him.

2. The Principle of Lordship: *For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. (Romans 14:7-9).*

When we jump to judge another, we give the wrong impression that we are the final authority and that our judgment matters. It doesn't. We have a Lord and Master who does matter and who is Lord of all. When we bring judgment against another, we are ignoring the fact that Christ died for others and that it isn't just about us and our own opinions.

You've heard the story of the group that was involved in a bus accident and were all killed and found themselves entering heaven at the same time. An angel met them at the gates, ushered them in, and began to give them the guided tour. What wonders they beheld! They ooohed and they aaahed and they were truly amazed. But as they came to one long corridor, the angel stopped and instructed them to take off their shoes and to be silent as they traversed its length. Behind closed doors they could hear laughter and merriment. When they reached the end, the angel told them they could once again don their shoes. "What was that?" they asked. "Was it a special holy place?"

"No," replied the angel, "That was the Baptists and they think they are the only ones up here." Heaven isn't just about me and it isn't just about you because we aren't going to be the only ones up there. The sooner we realize that, the sooner we will learn not to be in the business of judging others.

3. The Principle of Judgment: *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." ¹² So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10-12).*

When we judge others, we try to fill a position that we are not qualified to fill. God is our judge and, in the final analysis, He is the only One who is qualified to pass ultimate judgment. One reason He is qualified and you are not is because He knows all the circumstances. There is coming a day when He will judge with true judgment.

Paul makes mention of that day when he says *we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God* (14:10). The phrase "judgment seat" is the Greek βῆμα, *Bema*. The bema was the raised platform upon which the judges and magistrates would preside. To this day, the platform upon which the prime minister of Greece presides is known as the *bema*.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The judgment seat of God in Romans 14 is the same as the judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5. They are speaking of the same judgment. It is a judgment before which we must all one day give account.

OFFENSES & STUMBLING

Romans 14:13-23

As we come to the latter part of Romans 14, it is a continuation of the previous section. They both deal with how we are to get along with other believers with whom we differ.

Romans 14:1-12	Romans 14:13-23
Do not judge one another	Do not cause another to stumble

In the previous section, we saw the command of Paul to stop judging one another. The strong were not supposed to judge the weak and the weak were not supposed to judge the strong.

Now the issue changes. Paul instructs us how we are not to cause another to stumble. This will be explained as we are called to limit our liberty so as not to lead those who are weaker into doing that which they feel is wrong.

THE PROBLEM OF STUMBLING

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this -- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. (Romans 14:13).

The translators have changed the wording so as to help clarify the meaning of the text and they have done a good job, but in doing so, there is a slight nuance that is missed. It is in the double use of the Greek word κρινω. This word is used twice in this verse as Paul says: *Therefore let us not JUDGE*

one another anymore, but rather DETERMINE this.

Don't judge this	Judge this
One another	Not to cause another to stumble

The point is that there are some judgments we are required to make. But the focus of our judgment is not to be upon others. It is to be on ourselves and on our own actions. Jesus said the same thing when He spoke about removing the two-by-four from your own eye before you go trying to take out the splinter from someone else's eye.

I am to judge my actions with a carefully discerning eye to see whether they cause another believer to stumble. That means my actions are no longer just between me and God. There are others that must also be considered.

STUMBLING AND THE NATURE OF UNCLEANNESS

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. 15 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. (Romans 14:14-15).

The issue that Paul raises now is the issue of the very nature of what makes a thing either clean or unclean. God created everything at creation and He was able to look at all of it at the end of the creation and say that it was all very good.

1. The Truth of Intrinsic Uncleaness: *I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself (Romans 14:14).*

Things are not intrinsically unclean. That isn't a denial of physical dirtiness and it doesn't mean that children no longer have to wash their hands for basic sanitation. What it means is that God created all things and that He did a very good job of it. Things are not intrinsically bad. It is only what we do with them and the meaning

we assign to them that is bad.

A marijuana leaf by itself is not sinful. A cocoa plant is not an evil thing. The metal alloys that are used in a gun or a knife are not in themselves bad. It is how these things are used that leads to sin.

Sexuality is not a bad thing. God made us as sexual beings. But the way we utilize our sexuality can be bad if we do not use it in the way in which it was designed by our Creator.

Paul is not saying here that everything is allowed. Rather he is saying that things in and of themselves are not unclean. It is what you do with those things that involves either a way of sin or a way of righteousness.

Neither is Paul denying the inherent sinfulness of some actions. There are some actions that are clearly forbidden in the Scriptures. But that is not the subject with which he is dealing here. Instead, he is speaking of our use of Christian liberty and the problem that some people have with guilt even when no wrongdoing is involved.

2. The Problem of Perceived Uncleaness: *But to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (Romans 14:14).*

The problem with which Paul deals is not an intrinsic uncleaness, but a perceived uncleaness. It is the problem of the weak believer who does not realize that all things are clean and who looks at something that, in reality, is harmless, but who sees other Christians partaking of it and who partakes himself, even though he still thinks it to be morally wrong.

When you partake of that which you believe to be wrong, that partaking has become an act of sin, not necessarily because the action itself was wrong, but because your attitude was a sinful attitude in that you wanted to partake more than you desired the righteousness of God.

3. The Real Issue: *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. (Romans 14:15).*

Food doesn't matter a lot in the big scheme of things. I am not saying that you are supposed to be on a starvation diet, but eating meat or eating vegetables or eating kosher or eating ham sandwiches is not all that important. It is, as we like to say, "small potatoes." There are more important things about which to worry. One of those more important things is that you walk in love and that you build up people instead of destroying them.

STUMBLING AND THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:16-17).

Liberty is a good thing. We have been set free from ceremonial observances and animal sacrifices and the eating of certain foods as a way to bring us to God. We have been set free and these things are no longer to bind us. But to use that liberty in a way that brings the change of blasphemy is not a good thing.

The kingdom of God does not have a lot to do with issues of ceremonial cleanliness or what you eat and what you drink. These are minor issues that take our attention away from that which is important. If the exercise of my liberty is in danger of becoming a big issue, then I am to limit my liberty so that people can focus upon that which really is a big issue.

The phrase translated "spoken of as evil" is translated from the single Greek term βλασφημείσθω and speaks of being "blasphemed."

I consider myself to be a fairly good driver. I worked for a lot of years with the fire department and for more than a few of those years I drove an emergency vehicle equipped with lights and sirens. I was never in an accident while going at a high rate of speed. I have to admit that I was in a couple of accidents while driving very, very slowly.

Nevertheless, my wife sometimes takes issue with my driving, especially when it is in a scenic area that calls for attention. I suppose that it is for good

reason that she wants me to keep my eyes upon the road. Paul calls for the same thing, not regarding a physical highway, but the highway of the kingdom. He wants your attention to be on the kingdom and not on these side issues of eating and drinking, even though they might be good and acceptable.

Notice what is important in the big scheme of things. The kingdom is about *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*. Do those three qualities characterize your life? If they do not, then it is likely that you are also missing your connection to the Holy Spirit because they DO characterize the Holy Spirit. When you are filled with the Spirit, the fruit of that spiritual union will be made manifest.

DOING GOD'S WORK GOD'S WAY

The following verses give a list of principles that we are to follow as we serve the Lord. We are called to be His faithful workers and a part of that faithfulness involves doing that work as He commands.

1. Work for God is Approved: *For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men (Romans 14:18).*

The “way” that is being described refers back to the previous verses where Paul called Christians to walk in love toward others. Loving others means that you take care not to allow them to stumble.

2. God's Work is Unifying: *So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another (Romans 14:19).*

This is not the only time in the Bible that we are told to pursue peace. It is a regular and a reoccurring theme, going all the way back to Psalm 34:14. Peter cites that Psalm and quotes it word for word in 1 Peter 3:11. Likewise, the writer to the Hebrews says that we are to *pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord* (Hebrews 12:14).

In modern Hebrew, instead of saying, “How are you?” it is customary to say, “*Ma Shlomkah*” (How is your peace?). And if everything is going well, then a normal reply would be, “*Shlomi tov*,” meaning, “My peace is good.” That is the nice thing about the peace of Christ.

When we have Him, we can truly answer, “My peace is good.”

Two things that do not normally go together in our minds are the qualities of righteousness and peace. But when we come to Christ, we find that *"righteousness and peace have kissed each other"* (Psalm 85:10). As a result, we are to extend that same righteousness and peace in our dealings with others.

3. God's Work is not Destructive: *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. 21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles (Romans 14:20-21).*

Just because there is no longer an issue in ceremonial cleanliness or in things being intrinsically good or evil does not mean that anything goes. There continue to be activities and practices that can be hurtful and divisive to the body of Christ, even though they are themselves permissible.

It is all a question of priorities. What is more important, the spiritual well-being of people, or one's food and beverage menu? The answer is obvious and our priorities should be obvious, too.

You remember the story of Esau. His was the story of one who placed more importance upon food than upon the things of the Lord. Genesis 25 tells the story of how he met up with Jacob as he came in from the fields. Jacob was there with a hot pot of stew. We don't know what was in it, but it was red because Esau said in Genesis 25:30, “Let me have some of that red stuff.” It became a byword for Esau's descendants because the term “red” is *edom* and his descendants eventually became known as Edomites.

The point of the story is that Edom was more concerned with feeding his physical hunger than in satisfying his spiritual hunger. He was more concerned with physical food than with the promises of God and the birthright that had been passed down from Abraham and Isaac. The point of the story is one of priorities. It is a story that calls us to check our priorities and to see if they put first things first.

4. God's Work results in a Clear Conscience: *The faith which you have,*

have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves (Romans 14:22).

Paul calls for you to hold your convictions and to live according to them. That does not mean you cannot have your convictions trained by the Scriptures, but it does mean that you should hold to them and walk by them, even as you are undergoing such a training process.

Paul's words also suggest that, as you have your own conviction before God regarding the various aspects of your liberty in Christ, you are not necessarily to try to force that outlook on others. They are to be your own conviction before God, not your own conviction before someone else. Paul explains the outworking of this principle in his epistle to the Corinthians.

27 If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience' sake. 28 But if anyone should say to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; 29 I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? (1 Corinthians 10:27-29).

Here the issue was in the eating of meat that had been offered to idols. The case here is a bit different as it involves the interaction between believers and non-believers. Paul's instructions can be summarized as follows: "Don't ask; don't tell." Since there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the food, Christians were to feel free to eat. However, if the issue was brought up, then they were to refuse to eat it, not because it was intrinsically wrong, but because it might offend the conscience of others.

5. God's Work operates from right Inner Motives: *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).*

This verse sets up a contrast. The one who doubts is contrasted with the one who does not condemn himself in the previous verse. The focus is not so much upon what he is doing on the outside, but what

is going on within. This is pictured in the following chart:

Romans 14:22	Romans 14:23
He who does not condemn himself	He who doubts
He is happy	He is condemned if he eats
He is acting in faith	He is acting out of accord with his faith

The person in this verse is one who has been tempted to follow the example of the stronger brother's liberty with regard to his actions, yet without the same liberty of conscience. He sees his stronger brother doing something and he thinks it to be wrong but, because his stronger brother is doing it, he does it, too. The action that he is taking is not in itself sinful, but because his conscience tells him it is sinful and because he does it in spite of his conscience, it becomes a sinful act.

There are several important lessons that we can take from this.

- ♦ It is possible to train the conscience. The Bible makes mention of those who, in their hypocrisy and lies, have been *seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron* (1 Timothy 4:2). Conversely, Hebrews 9:14 tells us how the blood of Christ is able to cleanse one's conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The conscience is able to be redeemed and sanctified and educated. Once you have allowed the law to filter into your heart, your conscience bear witness, and alternately either accusing or else defending you (Romans 2:15).

- ♦ Motives matter. What you do matters, but it also matters why you do it. It is possible to do all the right things and still be in the wrong because you are doing those right things for the wrong reasons. God is concerned with motives. When you come to the Bible, you come to that which is self-described as

being *able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12).

- ♦ Some issues are bigger than our theological boxes. Theologically speaking, there was nothing wrong in eating meat, no matter what its pedigree. But there was a bigger issue at stake. The issue was how it would affect those who were not theologically astute.

Paul calls, not merely for doctrinal correctness, but for an attitude of love that will put the needs of others before our own. I said that some issues are bigger than our theological boxes, but what this really means is that our theology has to be a lot bigger than we thought because God is a lot bigger than we thought and he is concerned with how people feel and not just what they do.

A LIFE OF SERVICE

Romans 15:1-13

The book of Romans presents the freedom that we have in Christ. It is a freedom from sin and a freedom from ceremonial obligation. It is also a freedom to serve. That is what Tim Keller calls the “upside down” aspect of the kingdom. We don’t usually equate freedom with service. We tend to think just the opposite. We tend to think that, if you are free, then you do not have to serve. We tend to think that, if you are free, that means others are there to serve you.

There is a point to that. The reason you are free is because there is One who performed the greatest possible deed of service in your behalf. The holy Son of God left heaven’s splendor to come and serve you. Now He calls you to go and to do the same to others. Being united to Christ is a call to come and to serve.

SERVICE TO OTHERS

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. (Romans 15:1-2).

These two verses give a summation of everything Paul has been describing in the previous chapter. In that chapter, he called for the strong to stop judging the weak and for the weak to stop judging the strong. He also called for the strong to be ready to limit their liberty for the weak so as not to offend or to be the cause of stumbling for a weak believer.

Now the strong believer is called to do even more. Rather than being called merely to refrain from causing the weak believer to stumble, the strong believer is called to actually bear up and support and edify and build up the weak believer. I worked for many years in the fire-rescue service. It was my job to respond to emergency scenes and to help people who were in need. I didn't get there and say, "You folks need to be stronger so that I can stay back at the station and play checkers." No, my whole reason for being in that profession was to bear the weaknesses of those who were in need.

The Christian is called to grow and to be strong, not just so that he can look in a mirror and admire his spiritual muscles, but so that he can be of help and of service to those who are not strong. We are to be in the construction business. It is the business of building up other believers.

The problem is that we live in the age of personal gratification. Paul says that we are not to just please ourselves and this stands in contrast to a world system that says, "Please yourself!"

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST'S SERVICE

3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me." 4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:3-4).

Notice the flow of thought as it continues from verse 1. It is seen in the repetition of the word "please."

Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3
We are not to be only pleasing ourselves	We are to please our neighbor for his good	Even Christ did not please Himself

Our example is Jesus. His entire earthly ministry was about serving others. He was not born to enjoy pleasures. He could have continued to enjoy all the pleasure of heaven by staying there and by not coming to earth. But He

determined to serve others rather than His own pleasures. Instead of a life of relaxation and self-gratification, Christ chose to take the reproaches of the world upon Himself. He did that for us. He did that to be of service to us.

Paul cites an Old Testament passage that was Messianic in its scope. If you look back to the Old Testament, you will find that this same concept of the Messiah coming to serve others and to please them instead of pleasing Himself is an Old Testament concept. The quote is taken from Psalm 69:9.

*For zeal for Thy house has consumed me,
And the reproaches of those who reproach Thee have fallen
on me. (Psalm 69:9).*

John 2:17 tells us that after Jesus cleansed the temple of the moneychangers and those buying and selling, the disciples recalled this passage as being a picture of the zeal that was demonstrated in Jesus. From that same Psalm, Paul focuses upon the second stanza and notes that it is also a picture of Jesus.

There are those who look at such Psalms and sayings in the Old Testament and do not see Jesus there. Some scholars are quick to point out that Psalm 69 is a Psalm of David and that the experiences described therein are David's experiences. I agree. But there is more to the Psalm than only the experiences of David. It also foreshadows and looks forward to the greater Son of David. It looks forward to Jesus and that tells me something about the Old Testament. It tells me that *whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction*. The Old Testament is not a closed book to us and it is not a useless book to us. It exists for our instruction and we ought to read it for our instruction because it tells us about Jesus and it teaches us to hope for what will take place in the future.

The central message of the gospel is summed up in the statement that *the reproaches of those who reproach Thee have fallen on me*. The gospel tells us how the anger of man against God was brought to a head and placed upon Christ and that this was accomplished as the ultimate work of service on our behalf because it was that very reproach that God used to atone for our sins.

Man's Action	God's Action
Put Jesus on the cross as a sign of their hatred of God	Took the action of Jesus on the cross to become the salvation of men

An act of hate

An act of love

Paul has already noted that it was while we were enemies of God that Christ died to save us. Now he shows that the very thing that was meant as an act of hatred against God was used by God for our salvation.

A PRAYER FOR UNITY

5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; 6 that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6).

Verses 5 and 6 are given in the form of a prayer. This is Paul's prayer for the Romans. At the end of this chapter, he will ask the Romans to pray for him (15:30-31), but for the time being, he prays for them. Paul's prayer is directed to *the God who gives perseverance and encouragement*.

Someone wrote a book a few years ago about the *Prayer of Jabez* and it became a best seller because its focus was on what you can get from God. By contrast, this prayer has as its focus what you are to do for others.

There is a reason that God is described in such a way. He is described this way because we, His followers and worshipers, are also to be in the business of giving perseverance and encouragement.

Paul prays that the Lord might make his readers at Rome to be of the same mind with one another. He told them to be of the same mind toward one another in Romans 12:16 and now he prays to the Lord that this might take place within them.

This unity of mind is to be *according to Christ Jesus*. The reason we can be of the same mind is that we have the mind of Christ and we are to think as Christ thinks. That is an important distinction. Too often, we see Christians who are busy browbeating other Christians to get them to think their way. But if we take on the mind of Christ, we will all start thinking together without having to engage in such activity. If we think His thoughts, we will act as He acted.

What is the mind of Christ? How do we hold to the same mind according to Christ? We determine to take the attitude and actions of a servant, even as Christ took the role of a servant. We seek to build up the kingdom of God rather than building up our own private petty kingdoms. We do all of this as we seek to bring glory and honor to the Lord rather than seeking our own glory and honor.

CHRIST'S SERVICE TO THE GENTILES

7 Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God 8 For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, 9 and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles, And I will sing to Thy name." 10 And again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, And let all the peoples praise Him." 12 And again Isaiah says, "There shall come the root of Jesse, And He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, In Him shall the Gentiles hope." (Romans 15:7-12).

This section begins with a command. It is a command to *accept one another*. Do you see what has happened? Paul prayed in verses 5-6 that God would grant the Roman believers to be of the same mind and now, on the basis of that prayer, he commands them that they accept one another. He prays that the Lord would accomplish something in their lives and then he calls them to cooperate with the work of the Lord in that regard.

This flow of thought is captured in the following chart:

Romans 15:5-6	Romans 15:7
May God grant that you be of the same mind	Accept one another, acting as though you were of the same mind

Part of this need for mutual acceptance came from the diverse backgrounds of those within the church. It was made up of men and women, slaves and free, poor and rich. Yet the greatest social barrier was not any of these. The

greatest social barrier was the one that existed between Jew and Gentile. It is for this reason that Paul goes to considerable lengths at this point to explain how the coming of the Gentiles into the church was always a part of God's plan and program. He introduces this idea in verses 8-9:

The serving ministry of Jesus was to...	
The Jews	The Gentiles
He became a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth by confirming the promises given to the fathers...	Those promises given to the fathers told of how the Gentiles would come to glorify God.

The fact that the Gentiles would come to glorify God and become part of the church was promised, at least in part, in the Old Testament. That means the action of Jesus in bringing Gentiles into the church was a service that God was doing on behalf of the Jews because it was a part of keeping that Old Testament promise to the Jews. Paul quotes four different Old Testament passages in rapid succession to show how the Old Testament promised that the Gentiles would become part of God's chosen people.

Psalm 18:49	<i>Therefore I will give thanks to Thee among the nations, O LORD, And I will sing praises to Thy name.</i>
Deuteronomy 32:43	<i>Rejoice, O nations, with His people!</i>
Psalm 117:1	<i>Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples!</i>
Isaiah 11:10	<i>Then it will come about in that day That the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.</i>

The point Paul makes by quoting these four passages is that a part of the Old Testament promise to the fathers for the coming Messianic kingdom was to

be that this kingdom would involve the Gentiles coming to praise and worship the Lord.

A HOPEFUL BENEDICTION

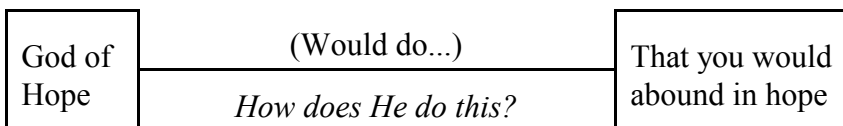
Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13).

The previous verse ended with a reference to hope. It spoke of the root of Jesse, a reference to Jesus, and how *in Him shall the Gentiles hope*. Paul picks up that same thread as he gives a benediction from *the God of hope*. That is a wonderful title for God.

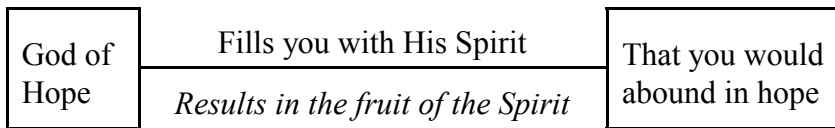
Hope is a part of our Christian faith. Indeed, hope has been defined as faith in the future tense. We have faith in what Christ has accomplished in the past, we have faith in God's work in the present, and we look in hope to that which He will bring about in the future.

As oxygen is to the body, so is hope to the soul. Hope is like a trapeze artist who hopes the hands will be there to catch him. There is a confident assurance as he lets go his secure perch and flies through the air, but there is also a momentary gap as he hurtles through the air and just prior to the connection of the hands of safety and security. It is in that time of hurtling that you find hope. -- TJ Campo

Paul gives a benediction here. It is given in the form of a prayer. He has already prayed for the believers at Rome, but now we see the close of that prayer. He prays that the God of hope would give that which would allow the Roman believers to abound in hope.



What does the God of hope do that results in you abounding in hope? He fills you *with all joy and peace in believing*. That is merely a shorthand way of saying that He fills you with His Holy Spirit so that this same Spirit bears the fruit of the Spirit in your life.



Do you want to be filled with hope in this hopeless world? You don't get hope by trying to be hopeful. You get it by being filled with the Spirit and you get it as a byproduct of the Holy Spirit working in and through you as you serve others.

TO ROME WITH LOVE

Romans 15:14-33

There is a curious pattern to be found when one compares the beginning and the ending of the Epistle to the Romans. The pattern is chiastic in nature, forming an extensive series of parallels between the opening verses and the closing verses of the epistle.

The Gospel was predicted in the Old Testament – 1:1-6	
Obedience to the faith must be preached to all nations – 1:5	
Grace to you – 1:7	
The faith of the Roman Christians is known worldwide – 1:8	
Travel Plans: from Jerusalem to Rome – 1:8-13	
Paul desires to be comforted by the Roman Christians – 1:11-12	
Paul's desired trip to Rome was hindered – 1:13	
The Gospel must be preached to all nations – 1:13-15	
The Gospel must be preached to all nations – 15:14-29 & 16:26	
Paul's desired trip to Rome was hindered. – 15:22	
Paul desires to be comforted by the Roman Christians – 15:24	
Travel Plans: from Jerusalem to Rome – 15:22	
The faith of the Roman Christians is known worldwide – 16:19	
Grace to you – 16:20	
Obedience to the faith must be preached to all nations – 16:26	
The Gospel was predicted in the Old Testament – 16:25-27	

Paul is coming to the close of his epistle and he is echoing sentiments that were set forth in the opening verses. He has come full circle to speak of these points. He has laid out for all to see what is the gospel that he has preached and which yet must be preached to all the nations.

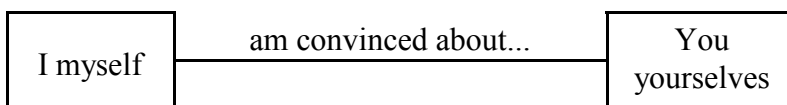
AN ABIDING REASON FOR MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

Paul was a missionary. He saw his ministry in terms of the mission of carrying out the Great Commission to make disciples of all the nations. The last four chapters of Romans are practical, but this section is also intensely personal. Paul is giving his own reasons for his involvement in the mission of the church.

1. We Do Mission Because it Makes a Difference: *And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another. (Romans 15:14).*

In verses 8-12, Paul cited four different Old Testament prophecies that told how the Gentiles would come to know God. He closed that section with a benediction and now, as he begins to bring his epistle to a close, he moves to make these teachings more personal by showing how the prophecies of the Gentiles coming to know God have been fulfilled in the largely Gentile church at Rome.

There is an interesting turn of the phrase that suggests Paul is seeking to personalize his words. He emphasizes both his own convictions as well as the Romans as the object of those convictions.



There are three aspects in which Paul wishes to express his feelings about the Roman believers.

- ♦ They are full of goodness.
- ♦ They are filled with all knowledge.

- ♦ They are able to admonish one another.

These are interesting qualities, to be sure, in the light of how Paul opened his epistle in the first three chapters where he described men as bereft of goodness and rejecting the knowledge of God and in need of the admonition of the law of God. Paul is not denying any of these points, but these have been overcome by the gospel that has come to Rome. That is the difference grace makes.

Paul's words have been meant as a reminder. It is not that they knew nothing of grace prior to receiving this epistle. As we shall see in the next chapter, there was already a thriving church in Rome. They had already heard the gospel and they had already believed the gospel. What Paul has done in the epistle to the Romans is to further explain and detail and remind them of that into which they had entered when they came in faith to Christ Jesus. We need such reminders because it is the weakness of men to forget.

2. We Do Mission Because we have Tasted the Grace of God: *But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God (Romans 15:15).*

We have a message of grace. That is what the epistle to the Romans has been about. It has laid out that wonderful gift of God's grace, showing how utterly undeserving we were, yet in what a glorious manner God has moved to save us.

Paul does not write to the Romans because he is so great and powerful. He writes because he has received grace. Steve Brown likes to say how we are beggars telling other beggars where we found bread. That is the motivation of grace. We have received that which we did not deserve and we are therefore eager to share this good news with others.

3. We Do Mission Because we have a New Priesthood: *But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:15-16).*

Paul's charge is described as grace that was given from God *to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles*. Though it has been his habit to preach first to the Jew and then to the Gentile, the pattern of his ministry has been unique in that he has seen a great result of fruit among the Gentiles.

Paul's role as a minister is further described as one who "ministers as a priest." This is translated from the single word ἱεουργοῦντα, the present accusative participle of ἱεουργεῖν. This is a compound word made up of the joining of two Greek words:

- ♦ ἱερος (*hieros*) – A temple
- ♦ ἐργον (*ergon*) – Work

This describes one who does "temple work." It is a designation for a priest. Paul is not a literal priest, but he does do "temple work," he does the work of a priest. A priest is one who mediates between God and men. A priest is one who represents the people to God. A priest is one who gives up offerings to God on behalf of the people. There is a sense in which Paul has entered into such a ministry. His offering is himself. He has long since offered his own body as a living sacrifice, acceptable to God as his work of service (Romans 12:1-2). That offering has as its goal to bring men to the Lord.

Revelation 1:6 says that Christ *has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father*. 1 Peter 2:5 tells us that we all have this same sort of spiritual priesthood. Peter says that *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. (1 Peter 2:5). We are both a temple as well as a priest and, as such, we offer up spiritual sacrifices.

Notice what it is that Paul describes as a part of those spiritual sacrifices. He speaks of *my offering of the Gentiles*. Those whom he has led to Christ are themselves an offering by Paul to the Lord.

When you gave an offering to the Lord, it had to be a holy offering. You were not allowed to offer an offering that was blemished. It had to be pure and undefiled. In the same way, the Gentiles that Paul offers to the Lord constitute an offering that is *acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit* (15:16).

Theologians sometimes argue about what is more important, evangelism or worship. What we see here is that evangelism is worship. Evangelism constitutes a heavenly offering of worship to the Lord as we give to Him those who we have led to Christ. We give to Christ that which is pure and holy, saints by calling.

4. We Do Mission Because of what Christ has Accomplished and is Accomplishing: *Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. 18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed (Romans 15:17-18).*

Evangelism isn't telling what we have done for God. It is telling what God has done for us and in us and through us. Our role in our salvation is passive.

God had only one Son,
and he was a missionary.

We are the recipients of God's grace. For us to boast in our salvation would be like a knife and fork to boast about a filet mignon. We are merely the instruments in which the grace of God has operated.

Paul looks at his work in the gospel ministry in the same light. We think of Paul as the great evangelist, traveling throughout the Roman world and starting churches. He thought in terms of how Christ had done a great work through him, resulting in many coming to know God.

Christ accomplished

→

Through Paul

→

Gentiles obedient

Seeing mission as the ongoing work of Christ is a wonderful motivation. It means that, just as I trusted in Christ for my salvation, I can also trust in Him for my service of ministry. The One who died in my place is still at work as He spreads the gospel throughout the world. He who rose from the dead is still in the business of bringing new life to men.

5. We Do Mission Because there is Power in the Gospel: *For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I*

have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (Romans 15:18-19).

The Bible tells of many signs and wonders that served as indicators of many great events. But the greatest of all was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The cross was a cosmic event and the ripples from that event are still moving out across history today.

Christianity is not about spiritual philosophy or men's ideas. It is about something that happened in space and in time. It is about how God acted to raise a man from the dead and how He has made it clear He is going to do it again.

But notice that the power of the gospel is also seen in the way it impacts the lives of people. Paul says that his preaching results in *obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed* (15:18). The gospel changes lives and that is a part of its power.

6. We Do Mission Because there are Places where Christ has not been Named: *And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; 21 but as it is written, "They who had no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand." (Romans 15:20-21).*

Paul had a desire to take the gospel to people who had never heard the gospel. He had a desire to build a ministry from the ground up. He saw that as a fulfillment of the Old Testament promise.

Paul cites a prophecy from Isaiah 52:15. It is a prophecy that leads us into the wonderful chapter in Isaiah 53 that tells of the Suffering Servant of the Lord. Isaiah says:

*Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand. (Isaiah 52:15).*

Paul's aspiration in life was to fulfill the words of this prophecy. He had stood before people of various nations. He had stood before proconsuls of Rome and, before he was done, he would stand before

the Roman emperor (Acts 27:24).

AN ANTICIPATED TRIP TO ROME

Paul's heart for mission is now seen in his plans, both past, present, and future, for him to come finally to Rome. He relates those past plans, a present detour, and the future anticipation when he will finally come to Rome to preach the gospel.

1. Paul's Past Desire to come to Rome: *For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain-- for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while-- 25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. (Romans 15:22-25).*

Paul opened up his epistle in chapter 1 by telling how he had wanted in the past to come to Rome, but had been hindered. He makes no mention either there or here as to what it was that hindered him, but we can surmise from the book of Acts that it was the call of other ministry commitments that kept him away.

This particular ministry commitment would involve going to Jerusalem and *serving the saints*. The Greek word used here for this "service" is from the root διακονέω. It is the root from which we get out modern term "deacon." Paul saw his own ministry, not only in terms of teaching and establishing churches, but also as practical efforts to meet the physical needs of believers to the point where meeting such a need could take him far out of his way.

That tells me something about ministry. It tells me that ministry is often messy. It often includes detours to places that take me far from where I had planned to go. On the other hand, there is often great reward for these divine detours. It would be as a result of this detour that Paul would write all of the prison epistles.

2. Paul's Present Detour to Jerusalem: *But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For*

if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. (Romans 15:25-27).

Throughout this section, we have been given a glimpse into Paul's heart for people. It was seen in his desire to come and to visit the Roman believers and it is also seen here in his plans to bring a contribution for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem.

This tells me something about Paul's concern. It was practical. He did not merely say, "Let's pray for the hungry." He said, "I'm going to do something about their plight and you can help me." He collected an offering from the churches at Macedonia and Achaia (northern and southern Greece) and he took the very long voyage to Jerusalem to transport these needed funds.

Paul was concerned about spreading the gospel, but he was also concerned with feeding the poor. He did not see any dichotomy between a practical concern over spiritual needs versus a practical concern over physical needs. Indeed, he saw how one gave itself to the other.

Gentile Believers in Greece	Jewish Believers in Jerusalem
They had material possessions	They had a spiritual heritage
They had benefitted from the spiritual heritage of the Jews in Jerusalem	They were to benefit from the material wealth of the believers in Greece

We are to be in the business of meeting the needs of others; especially the needs of other believers. If their needs are physical, then we are to seek to meet those physical needs. If their needs are spiritual, then we are to seek to meet those spiritual needs.

3. Paul's Future Plans to come to Rome: *Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. 29 And I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ (Romans 15:28-29).*

Paul has plans to eventually travel westward upon a final missionary journey that would take him through Rome and ultimately to Spain. He would arrive in Rome, but not the way he had planned. He would instead be arrested and detained and imprisoned. He would ultimately be transported to Rome, not as a missionary, but as a Roman prisoner to stand before Caesar.

And yet, Paul is confident that when he comes to Rome, that he *will come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ*. That confidence was not misplaced. Though Paul will be imprisoned, the word of God will not be imprisoned.

4. Paul's Plea for Prayer upon his Travels: *Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, ³¹ that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; ³² so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. ³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen (Romans 15:30-33).*

Paul asks the believers at Rome to pray for him. Notice how strongly this is worded. He asks them to strive in their prayers. What kind of striving is this? It is a spiritual strife. Prayer is vital to spiritual warfare.

The answer to this prayer is going to be seen in the latter part of the book of Acts. It is seen in Paul's preservation in his arrest in Jerusalem. It is seen in his survival of the attempts against his life. It is seen in his endurance of his imprisonment in Caesarea. It is seen in his safely coming through the storm and shipwreck on the Mediterranean. It culminates in his arrival in Rome in Acts 28.

Prayer works. You may not be able to become a missionary to a foreign country, but you can pray for missionaries who are in foreign countries and, by so doing, you can have a part in their ministry.

FINAL FAREWELLS

Romans 16:1-27

The last chapter of Romans seems at first glance to be anticlimactic. Paul has taken us on a long journey through the study of the righteousness of God as it related to man's sinfulness and God's gracious provision of salvation. Along that journey, we paused to examine the great doctrines of justification, sanctification, and election. Then we were shown how that worked out practically and personally in the Christian life, culminating in Paul's passion to spread the news of the gospel to the whole world.

This chapter consists largely of his personal greetings and farewells. It seems so different from that which has preceded that some have suggested it to be a separate letter that was appended to our copy of the epistle. Yet it appears in all of our copies of the epistle and I would suggest that it is an important and necessary part of that epistle.

For all of the grandeur and majesty of God, it must be remembered that we worship a God who is personal and who took on flesh to interact with us on a personal level. We have not come to know Him and to love Him until it has become personal.

COMMENDATION OF PHOEBE

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; ² that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well. (Romans 16:1-2).

This is the first and only reference in the New Testament to Phoebe. Paul

describes her as a sister in the same way he speaks of the believers as brethren. She is a sister in the faith. Her name is a pagan name. It is the feminine version of Phoibos, one of the names given to the pagan deity Apollo.

1. Phoebe's Commendation: *I commend to you our sister Phoebe (16:1).*

The commendation of a Christian traveler seems to have been a regular practice within the church. It was a way of giving validation to a Christian who was of good reputation.

My older brother, David Stevenson, has served as a missionary pastor in Germany for many years. There have been times when I had a friend who was going to Munich and I would give him David's phone number and then I would call or write David and tell him of the coming of my friend. That would guarantee a warm reception on David's part. Paul does something similar here.

As Christians, we are a part of the family of God and we are called to act like family. Paul takes this opportunity to vouch for Phoebe as being a member of that family and his injunction is that she be treated as such.

The fact that Phoebe was being commended to the church in Rome by this epistle suggests to us that Phoebe was carrying this epistle on her journey to Rome and that she was to deliver it to the church there. Rome did not have to sort of public postal system to which we are accustomed. Personal letters were carried by hand. The postal system, such as existed in that day, was only for official correspondence of the empire.

2. Phoebe's Designation: *Phoebe, who is a servant of the church (16:1).*

Paul describes her as a *servant of the church*. The term used here for "servant" is taken from the same word that we normally translate "deacon." There has been some debate among scholars as to whether we are to understand that Phoebe was a deaconess in the technical sense of holding an office in the church.

The problem is that the term is regularly used in a non-technical

sense. Even here in the epistle to the Romans, we have already seen Paul use this term of the secular magistrate who unknowingly serves as “a minister of God” (Romans 13:4). The term is also used of Christ who “as become a servant to the circumcision.” Thus to arbitrarily assume that Phoebe held an officially elected position within the church based solely upon the use of the term in the verse is reading far too much into the text.

3. Phoebe’s Congregation: *Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea (16:1).*

Cenchrea was the name of one of the seaports near Corinth. The city of Corinth lay just south of a narrow Isthmus that separated the Aegean Sea on the east from the Corinthian Gulf which led westward to the Ionian Sea. Today this Isthmus is intersected by a narrow canal that allows ships to pass without making the long detour around the southern part of Greece. The canal was not there in Paul’s day and so ships would often stop and the seaport on the one side and unload their cargos which would be transported overland to the corresponding seaport on the other side to be loaded aboard a different ship for the rest of their journey.

Cenchrea was the eastern seaport. It was from here that Paul had departed from Corinth when he was departing from Greece during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18). It is only now that we learn that a church had been planted in this small seaport town.

4. Phoebe’s Remuneration: *That you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you (16:2).*

As Phoebe had been a minister to the church at Cenchrea, so now the church at Rome is to be a minister to her traveling needs. This reception is to be *in a manner worthy of the saints*. It is not merely that she is to be received as though she were a saint, but that their reception is to be the sort of reception that would be given by saints. She is a believer and they are believers and they are to give the sort of reception that is appropriate for a believing family.

5. Phoebe’s Ministration: *For she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well (16:2).*

The believers at Rome are to help Phoebe because she herself has been a helper of others, including but not limited to the apostle Paul. This tells me something about ministry. It tells me that involvement in ministry is not limited to ministerial “superstars.” Paul accomplished a lot in his ministry, but those accomplishments were not his alone. They were also the accomplishments of those who helped behind the scenes. They were the accomplishments of people like Phoebe.

Most of us are not gifted in such a manner that we can be another apostle Paul. But we can play the part of Phoebe by supporting a missionary in his ministry, either through prayer or financial support or even by encouragement and rendering assistance and hospitality.

MISCELLANEOUS GREETINGS

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5 also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epāenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. 6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10 Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. 11 Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. 12 Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. 15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. (Romans 16:3-16).

Paul passes on a great number of greetings in this section. These greetings

are directed toward Christians in Rome with whom Paul was already acquainted. Though he had not been to Rome himself, he had many friends who were in Rome.

1. Prisca and Aquila: *Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles (16:3-4).*

Paul uses the abbreviated form of Prisca, but this is the same Priscilla and Aquila of whom we read in the book of Acts. They had met Paul in Corinth where they worked in the tent-making trade and they had become disciples of Christ and co-workers in ministry with Paul. When Paul left Corinth, they traveled with him to Ephesus and were involved in ministry there. After Paul left Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila were instrumental in training up Apollos, a young preacher who became a Christian leader within the church.

Paul says that they *risked their own necks* for Paul's sake. We do not know what was involved in this risk, but we do know that they had initially come to Corinth as a result of an imperial edict banning all Jews from Rome. They had been with Paul in Ephesus when there was a civil uprising against Christianity. Now they are back in Rome, the very place from which they had originally been banished.

The decree of Claudius banning all Jews from Rome would have lapsed with his death in A.D. 54.
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Their testimony tells us something about Christianity. It tells us that Christianity is not meant to be safe. There are risks to being a Christian. You are not meant to live your life within a "comfort zone." God calls us to leave our comfort zone and to enter His service zone. Sometimes that puts us a risk.

2. Epaphroditus: *Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia (16:5).*

Epaphroditus has the distinction of having been the first Christian convert from Asia. When Paul speaks of Asia, he is likely speaking of the Roman province of Asia located in western Turkey.

We are not told that Epaphroditus became a believer during the first missionary journey of Paul, but since Paul was the first recorded missionary to Asia, it seems possible and even likely that Paul had introduced Epaphroditus to the gospel.

3. Andronicus and Junias: *Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me (16:7).*

The interesting thing about Andronicus and Junias is that the latter seems to be a feminine name and the two are said to be *outstanding among the apostles*. This does not necessarily mean that these two were apostles, but only that they had a high reputation among the apostles. The New English Translation captures this idea when it renders this phrase: “They are well known to the apostles.”

Paul adds that these two *were in Christ before me*. Their conversion to the Christian faith took place prior to Paul’s conversion. They had been believers for a very long time and they had come to have a good reputation within the leadership of the church.

4. Ampliatus: *Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord (16:8).*

Boice points out that Ampliatus was a common slave name and that in the Christian catacombs of the early church, “there is an elaborate tomb with the single word *Ampliatus* on it” (1995:1923). Roman freedmen always had both their first and last names on their tombs, so the fact that this tomb only has a single name suggests that it was the tomb of a slave. On the other hand, the fact that the tomb is ornate tells us that the person buried here was considered to be of some importance to the church.

The inclusion of this name tells us something about the early church. It reminds us that the church was made up of people from all different social strata. That is especially significant because social class was everything in ancient Rome. The power of the gospel was that it transcended all sorts of social class distinctions.

5. The Various House Churches.

There are a number of different house churches mentioned in this

passage. These were churches that met in different homes.

- ♦ Paul spoke of the church that was in the house of Prisca and Aquila (16:3).
- ♦ Paul will speak in verse 22 of Gaius who is host to both Paul and to the whole church in Corinth.
- ♦ Paul speaks in verse 14 of Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas *and the brethren with them*. This suggests a separate group and perhaps still another local church within the area of Rome.
- ♦ In the same way, verse 15 speaks of Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, *and all the saints who are with them*, indicating still another local church.

This does not mean that the local church is required to meet in private homes, but only that they was a regular practice among many of the churches. It was not until the church grew and was established for a number of years that local churches eventually gained the funds to obtain meeting places that were set aside for this specific purpose.

A WARNING AGAINST DISSENSIONS

17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. 19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil. 20 And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (Romans 16:17-20).

Up to this point, chapter 16 has been full of commendations and greetings. But now there is a change. Now we are given a warning. This warning seems out of place until we look at the layout of the entire chapter. This

warning occupies a central position in the chapter. It is pivotal. This is seen in the following chart:

16:1-2	16:3-16	16:17-20	16:21-24	16:25-27
Phoebe commended	Miscellaneous greetings	Warnings against dissensions	Greetings & Grace	Closing benediction

The point will be seen that the fellowship implied by these commendations and greetings is fragile. It can be upset and destroyed by those who cause dissension.

1. The Danger of Dissent and Hindrances: *Keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned (16:17).*

Dissension is dangerous. It can act like a poison to bring disharmony and death into a church. Yet dissent is not described here as some faceless force. Dissent is brought about by people who are guilty of causing dissent. Paul's instructions are that we are to be on the alert for such people.

Paul describes such people as slaves. They are dissenting and they are causing hindrances because they are enslaved to something. There is a lesson here. You are always a slave of something. Paul has already spoke of how there was a time when we were slaves of sin (Romans 6:20).

Paul says in verse 18 that *such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites*. This sounds very much like what Paul says in Philippians 3:18-19 where he speaks of those who are *enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things*.

There is nothing wrong with having an appetite, either for food or for other sorts of pleasures. The problem is when you become enslaved to your appetites. The problem is when you make a god of your appetites. It is at such a time that your appetites lead you to idolatry.

2. A Call for Wisdom and Innocence: *I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil (16:19).*

Wisdom and innocence are normally thought to be opposites. But there is a sense in which they are to be seen as partners.

Be Wise...	In the good
Be Innocent...	In the evil

It is entirely possible for one to be both wise as well as innocent. Jesus said that believers ought to be street smart. He said that we should be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16).

3. An Assured Victory: *And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet (16:20).*

God is described as both the “God of hope” in Romans 15:13 and the “God of peace” here in Romans 16:20. This is a striking designation, especially since Paul began the letter by revealing the “God of wrath.” Paul has come full

We are reminded in Romans 5:10 that *if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

circle. One of the big themes in Romans is the fact that we have been at war with God and that He has become our peace.

This verse points out that just because God is a God of peace does not mean that a battle does not still rage. Satan is still the enemy. But the good news is that Jesus wins! If we are on His side, then we win, too. Of course, the bruising of Satan goes all the way back to a promise that was given in Genesis 3:15 where God promised that there would be a history of spiritual conflict.

Paul says that Satan will be crushed and that he will be crushed soon. When will this take place? I want to suggest that there is a sense in which this takes place every time a person comes to Christ. But it a complete sense, it will be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ. At such a time, Satan will be crushed. This sense of what has been called the “now and not yet” is why Paul can say this will take place

soon.

Notice that the crushing of Satan will be under our feet. In the ancient world, when an enemy was defeated, the custom was for the victor to place his foot on the neck of the defeated enemy. That is represented in Joshua 10:24 where *Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came near and put their feet on their necks.* There is going to come a time when God will do it again, not merely with a pagan king, but with the master of all paganism, Satan himself.

GREETINGS AND GRACE

21 Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. 22 I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. 23 Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother. 24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (Romans 16:21-24).

Throughout the earlier part of this chapter, Paul was giving his greetings to individuals and to groups who were in Rome. Now he sends the greetings of those who are with him in Corinth. The interesting thing about these names is that they span the full spectrum of the social order.

On one side was Gaius who was wealthy enough to be host to the entire church at Corinth. Along with him was Erastus, the city treasurer. These two men reflected the higher end of social strata in Corinth.

At the other end of the spectrum were Tertius and Quartus. These two names literally mean “third” and “fourth.” They were typical slave names. They were names given to men who had no names of their own and who were simply assigned a number. Tertius would be the number three slave and Quartus would be the number four slave. Yet they are mentioned here alongside the leaders and nobility of the city.

CLOSING BENEDICTION

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 16:25-27).

Paul has given several benedictions throughout this epistle. This is the last of his benedictions. It is both a benediction and a summarization of the message of the entire epistle. Paul refers to that message in several ways:

- ♦ My gospel.
- ♦ The preaching of Jesus Christ.
- ♦ The mystery which is now manifested.

The gospel was a mystery in the Old Testament, not because it was completely hidden, but because it was not fully revealed or realized. But that gospel is no longer a mystery and Paul says that it *has been made known to all the nations*. The reason that the gospel has been made known to all the nations is because of *the commandment of the eternal God*. This is a reference to the great commission, the call to go and make disciples of the nations. We have been commanded to make this message known.

This entire epistle is dedicated *to Him who is able to establish you*. The extent of this establishing has been seen throughout the course of the epistle. It has been an epistle about the righteousness of God and specifically how we are to be established by that righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you been established by Him?

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