

Romans...Forever!

The Book of Romans is an apologetic, a formal literary defense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It contains incredible logic, and presents an airtight argument to prove that salvation is possible only through faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul proves that justification is a provision of God's grace, totally apart from man's works.

The theme of the Book:

“Romans proves how sinners can be justified before a righteous God.”

The theme verse of the Book:

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].

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Expanded Outline

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4. Paul was converted to Christ. The actual event of his conversion is found in Acts 9:1-19, but for our purposes we will study his testimony found in Acts 22. **14**
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 - 3. Diversity. **199**
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 - (2) Serving. **201**
 - (3) Teaching.
 - (4) Exhortation.
 - (5) Giving.
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I. Salutation - Romans 1:1-17

A salutation is normally a formal greeting at the start of a letter. However, here the Apostle Paul goes directly to the theme verses that state his purpose in writing the letter: to defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Without **sin** there is no need for a Gospel because gospel means “good news.” But, without the “bad news” of **sin**, we will never appreciate the “good news” of **salvation**. The words: sin, transgression, debt, trespass, and iniquity, occur in every book of the Bible except Esther, yet even in Esther, sin is clearly demonstrated. It follows that, if God brings up sin in all 66 books of the Bible; it must be on His mind.¹

This salutation begins with the first word in the Book, the word “Paul.” He is more familiar to us as the Apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). To appreciate this great book of apologetics, which is a logical defense of the Christian faith, we will spend this first lesson in a review of who Paul was. Where did he come from and why did Jesus pick him to become the apostle to the Gentiles?

A. Here is an abbreviated background on Paul:

1. In spite of Paul’s past history, God chose him to write the Letter to the Romans.

► *Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God [Romans 1:1].*

Paul is the Greek word *paulos*, which means “little one.” His previous name was “Saul” (see Acts 9:1), which is the Greek form of *saulos*. Saul, being of the tribe of Benjamin, Philippians 3:5, was probably named after the first king of Israel, King Saul, who was also of the tribe

¹ We need to bear in mind that the letter to the Romans was written to defend the Christian faith, to prove that sinners can be made righteous before a Holy God, and to show that sinners can be justified even under the scrutiny of the Righteousness of God Himself.

of Benjamin (1 Samuel 9:21). *Saulos* in Hebrew means to demand. As an unbeliever, Saul was very demanding, and was living up to the meaning of his name. Demanding people are usually people filled with pride, because they think their way is the only right way and should be followed. They expect their demands to always be met. But, in the first century, when a person came to faith in Christ, they changed, because God changes people from the inside out. So, Christians were often renamed, such as when Jesus renamed Simon to Peter. “Simon” is a variation of *Simeon*, one of the tribes of Israel, whose name means to hear intelligently and obey (hence, a follower). “Peter” means *rock*, which denotes firmness and strength (hence, a leader). Once Saul was demanding and proud, but after salvation, he became *Paul*, “the little one,” hence, humble and submissive (see 1 Corinthians 15:9).

2. Paul was a very educated, intelligent, and religious man.

But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time [Acts 5:34].

Gamaliel, whose name means “reward of God,” was named after Gamaliel of Numbers 1:10, who was the head of the tribe of Manasseh. Gamaliel, who taught Paul, was the grandson of Hillel, a highly noted Pharisee and celebrated doctor of the law. Hillel was so influential that he became the leader of a sect of the Jews. Gamaliel was only one of seven men given the title of *Rabban*, which denoted only Jewish doctors who were both eminent in the Law and of revered character.

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today [Acts 22:3].

Jew denotes Paul’s national identity. Although he was born in Tarsus of Celicia, he was a Jew by birth. The word “Jew” is an abbreviation of *Judea*, the geographical region of Southern Palestine, which included Jerusalem. Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, because Tarsus of Cilicia was considered a full-fledged Roman city. It was not a province like Ephesus. **This city** was the city of Jerusalem, the key city of all human history . . . *Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself*

(1 Kings 11:13). Gamaliel was a Pharisee, so naturally, Saul became a Pharisee. Paul was not ashamed of his heritage. In His providence, God chooses our parents and our upbringing. We should not be ashamed of our heritage, for it was ordained of God. God can use any person of any background for His glory. **Being zealous for God** can drive some people to do terrible things to others, all in the Name of God.

3. Before Paul was saved, he was a religious zealot, hating and persecuting the Church of Jesus Christ.

Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Some devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison [Acts 8:1-3].

Hearty agreement shows the passion Saul (Paul) had against those who followed Jesus Christ. Saul watched over the robes of the murderers (Acts 7:58), while they stoned Stephen, the first martyr of the Church. Saul, like many other Jews, thought of Christians as a new Jewish cult, who incorrectly exalted a Jewish prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, to the status of deity. However, the Old Testament Scriptures clearly predicted that God would come into human flesh (Isaiah 9:6). If Jesus is not God incarnate, then who else in human history has demonstrated sinlessness and the purity of God Himself? If they reject Jesus as the Son of God, then they must look for another Messiah who is God in a human body.

Him is Stephen, who in Acts Chapter 7 had just proclaimed the deity of Jesus in 7:52 and 7:55-56 and 7:59. **They were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles:** the apostles did not scatter because God had sent an angel to release Peter from prison (Acts 5:12-42).

Paul was **entering house after house** because Christians often met in homes. The religious Jews knew who the Christians were and went after them. Roman law allowed people to continue their old religions,

but not to create new ones. Rome allowed the religious people to enforce their religious laws, short of capital punishment, which they reserved for themselves. That is why Jesus had to be handed over to Pilate for crucifixion. The death of Stephen in Acts 7 was simply the result of mob violence, contrary to Romans laws. Hence, **Saul would put them in prison**, but he really wanted to kill them. **Dragging off men and women** shows just how zealous he was, to include putting women in prison for being Christians. What Saul was doing to Christians was being taken very personally by Jesus (see Acts 9:5).

4. Paul was converted to Christ (Acts 22:4-16). The actual event of the conversion of Paul is found in Acts 9:1-19. We will examine his testimony found in Acts 22.

I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons [Acts 22:4].

This Way was a title given to the movement of Christianity, taken from the statement of Jesus in John 14:6, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me* (see Acts 9:2). **To the death** was not allowed by the Romans for violation of local religious practices, so often the Jews simply starved the Christians to death in prison.

[A]s also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished. But it happened as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me [Acts 22:5-6].

A very bright light was brighter than the noon-day sun!

[A]nd I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” [Acts 22:7].

Me shows that Jesus took Saul’s persecutions of believers in verse 4 very personally.

And I answered, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said to me, “I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.” And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me [Acts 22:8-9].

Did not understand the voice was providential. Acts 9:7 says they heard the voice, but God kept them from understanding it. God was speaking only to Saul.

And I said, “What shall I do, Lord?” And the Lord said to me, “Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.” But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there came to me, and standing near said to me, “Brother Saul, receive your sight!” And at that very time I looked up at him [Acts 22:10-13].

From the reply of Saul, **What shall I do, Lord?** shows that between verse 8, where Jesus identified Himself, and Saul’s question in verse 10, Saul was saved. The light was a common Old Testament manifestation of God. So, when Jesus appeared to Saul in a blinding light, Saul knew it had to be God. This interpretation helps us to understand that Saul was saved *without* water baptism. Some misinterpret verse 16, the statement of Ananias, as baptismal regeneration (see also pages 16-17).

You will be told gave Saul several days to consider the call of God on his life. Just as the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary (Luke 1:38) to announce God’s choice of her to bring the Christ-child into the world, she could have said no. But, she said, . . . *may it be done to me according to your word*. God does not force us to work for Him. We are free moral agents, and are free to refuse God’s call. Our behavior is still subject to his discipline (Hebrews 12:3-11) but our service to Him is optional.

And he said, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance

from His mouth” [Acts 22:14].

The righteous One is the Lord Jesus Christ. Stephen also called Jesus “the righteous One” in Acts 7:52, a reference to the Messiah. Jesus personally **appointed** his apostles. It seems that each apostle had to have seen the resurrected Christ to be chosen by Him. Compare Galatians 1:19 which indicates that James, the half-brother of Jesus and pastor of the church at Jerusalem, *saw* Jesus after his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). In Paul’s case, then, he *saw* Christ in the blinding light. “Apostle” comes from the Greek *apostolos* which means “a sent one;” one sent with a special message with the power and authority of the sender. According to Ephesians 4:11, “apostle” is a spiritual gift which the Holy Spirit gave to those Jesus chose (see 1 Corinthians 12:11). After Jesus chose His apostles, the Holy Spirit no longer bestowed this gift. Also, Revelation 21:14 strongly suggests that Jesus appointed **ONLY** twelve apostles.

For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now why do you delay? **Get up** and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling upon His name [Acts 22:15-16].

Verse 16 has been erroneously used to teach baptismal regeneration. The verbs **get up**, and **be baptized** go together. The verb “be baptized” is an Aorist Middle Imperative. Aorist Tense denotes a completed action. The Middle Voice denotes something that we do to ourselves for our own benefit. The Imperative Mood denotes a command. Therefore, Ananias is commanding Saul to “be baptized.” This fits with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 where the Present Participle “baptizing” takes its Mood from the main verb “make disciples” which is in the Imperative Mood. So, baptism is a command to believers to publicly show that they have identified themselves with Jesus Christ. The word “arise” (*get up*, New American Standard Version) is an Aorist Participle of Attendant Circumstance. Participles are verbal adjectives that do not have a Mood; they take their Mood from the verb with which they are in attendance. Then, the word “and” separates “get up and be baptized” from “wash away your sins, calling on his name.” Obviously, the last participle and verb go together like the first two. **Wash away** is the verb and is another Aorist Middle Imperative, just like “be baptized” earlier in the verse. So, the two

commands are “be baptized” and “wash away.” **Calling upon** is another Aorist Participle of Attendant Circumstance that modifies the second command “wash away.”

Follow carefully: the Aorist Tense denotes a completed action, so in English it is usually translated or could be translated with the word *have*: “I have gone,” or, “I have done the dishes,” that is, describing a completed action. So, let us follow the rule and translate the verse: *Having arisen* (which is a Futuristic Aorist since Saul hasn’t gotten up yet) and “be baptized”. . . . “and”. . . . “wash away your sins, having called upon His name.” This literal translation gives the idea that Saul has *already called upon the name of Jesus*, which already resulted in the *washing away of his sins* (see 1 Corinthians 6:11). Then, the “wash away” is metaphorical, a figure of what has happened to Saul (see also Romans 10:8-10). At the moment of his faith, then, Saul became a Christian and joined “the Way,” which he had been persecuting. From this it must be noted that Saul’s baptism was subsequent to his salvation, not the instrument of it. He became a Christian brother to those he had been casting into prison. His water baptism will publicly identify him with Jesus and “the Way.”

5. As a highly educated man, a Christian, and an apostle, Paul still placed no confidence in his human abilities, but only in Christ (see Philippians 3:3-7).

(F)or we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh [Philippians 3:3].

Worship in the Spirit of God can be compared to John 4:24, where Jesus said, *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth*. **Confidence** is from *peitho*, which means to confide in, to rely upon, to place hope in. **The flesh** is *sarks*, which here refers to human strength, human ingenuity, human ability. The “false circumcision,” see verse 2, were the Judaizers who were teaching people to trust in their religious acts to earn salvation. Paul wrote the whole book of Galatians to refute their teaching.

(A)lthough I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more

[Philippians 3:4].

The flesh, for Paul was impressive from a human standpoint, see verses 5-6.

(C)ircumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee [Philippians 3:5].

- Paul had *family-religious-conformity*: **circumcised the eighth day**. Conformity to the Law was very important to the Jews. (Today's equivalent is roughly, "I was dedicated as a child in church," or "I was christened as an infant in the church, therefore, I am a Christian." The English word, "christen" literally means "to make a Christian.") However, no one can "make" another person into a Christian; each person must in faith, believe in Christ of his or her own volition.

- He had national pride: **of the nation of Israel**. Even born in a Gentile city of Tarsus, the Jews kept their separate, national identity. The "nation of Israel" is God's chosen people, chosen and created especially by God to receive special promises, to receive the Word of God, and to bring forth the Messiah. (Today's equivalent is roughly, "I am an American, and America is a Christian nation, so therefore, I am a Christian.")

- He had his family name: **of the tribe of Benjamin**. The tribe of Benjamin produced some fierce warriors; among them the first king in Israel, King Saul, and owned the land upon which Jerusalem was built. (Today's equivalent is roughly, "My family has been around a very long time, and is very well known and well respected, a family of great influence, therefore, I am a Christian." Or, "My parents were Christians, therefore, I am a Christian." Or, "My brother is a preacher, therefore, I am a Christian.")

- Paul had his ethnic pride, **a Hebrew of the Hebrews**. The word "Hebrew" comes from the Hebrew name *Eber* in Genesis 11:16; Eber was the forefather of Abraham. Hence, it was Abraham who was first called a "Hebrew." The Hebrews were a God-created ethnic group. (Today's equivalent is roughly, "I am of Scottish stock, and can trace my lineage all the way back to the king of Scotland. My ancestors

came over from the old country to become a part of settling this new land called America. Therefore, I am a Christian.”)

- He had personal-religious-conformity: **a Pharisee**. Paul not only had family-religious-conformity, he had personal-religious-conformity. He sat under Gamaliel, who was a famous Pharisee, and became a famous Pharisee himself. The Pharisees were the strictest religious cult in all Judaism. (Today’s equivalent is roughly, “I am in church every time the doors are opened. I am really involved in my church, and have served on every committee. Therefore, I am a Christian.”)

[A]s to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless [Philippians 3:6].

- He had *religious enthusiasm*: **as to zeal, a persecutor of the church**. It was one thing to be a devoted religious Jew, but even greater to be a persecutor of any religious movement that ran contrary to Jewish beliefs. Paul was a leader in this regard. (Today’s equivalent is roughly, “Every other church and denomination is wrong except the one I am in. I understand all doctrine and have all the correct forms of worship. Everyone else is wrong, but I’m right. Therefore, I am a Christian.”)

- He had legalistic perfectionism: **as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless**. Every devoted Jew paid attention to all the laws of the Old Testament, seeking to follow them to the letter. As to his observance of the Law, Paul was blameless - externally, he had kept them all. (Today’s equivalent is roughly, “I have this list of do’s and don’ts which I have made up from the New Testament and the Old Testament. My list is the correct list and everyone else’s list is incorrect. I keep this list to the letter, and therefore, I am a Christian.” Or, “I am a Christian and have this list of do’s and don’ts, and because I keep them faithfully, I am spiritual; I am close to God, but no other Christians are close to God unless they have my list and are keeping it as close as I am.”)

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ [Philippians 3:7].

Whatever things were gain to me are all the things Paul listed in

verses 5 and 6. **Those things** were things of the flesh, or human achievements. If anyone could have worked their way to heaven by human effort, Paul would have made it. **Those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ:** Paul put no confidence in human merit or strength. He put all of his confidence only in Christ.

B. The Good News is that God turns sinners into saints (Romans 1:1-7).

Here we discover that God has always had a master plan to turn sinners into saints.

1. God turned the chief sinner, Paul, into a saint, and made him a preacher of the Gospel.

► *Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God [Romans 1:1].*

Paul is *paulos*, which means “little one.” It denotes humility and submissiveness. **Saul** is *saulos* from a Hebrew verb that means, “to demand.” It denotes someone who is proud and demanding. When Jesus turned the sinner “Saul” into a saint, He changed his name to “Paul.” Saul was named after King Saul, the first king of Israel, who was very proud and demanding. They were both of the tribe of Benjamin, which was a very proud and independent tribe of Israel. **Bond-servant** is *doulos*, which referred to a willing slave. Paul has changed from being proud and demanding and independent to being a willing, submissive, humble servant. (Jesus has a way of changing people.) **Of Christ Jesus** is what we call a Genitive of Possession, meaning that Christ Jesus owns this “bond-servant.”

Called is from *kaleo*, which means “to call.” The New Testament usage is formal: to be called, or invited to a function or privilege. Paul’s privilege was to become an **apostle**. “Apostle” is one of the spiritual gifts (see Ephesians 4:11). At the moment of Paul’s salvation, the Holy Spirit gifted him to be an apostle. The Greek *apostolos* means “a sent one,” one sent with a special message and with special authority from someone else. In this case, the Sender is “Christ Jesus.” Every believer has at least one spiritual gift that constitutes their “calling” to minister in the Body of Christ.

Set apart is from *aphorizo*, from which the New Testament derives the word *Pharisee*, a “set apart one.” It is a Perfect Passive Participle; the Perfect Tense denotes a past action with present on-going results; the Passive Voice denotes that Paul received the action of the verb; a Participle is a verbal adjective of Attendant Circumstance, attending the main verb “promised beforehand” in verse 2. We are called to separate ourselves from the world (2 Corinthians 6:17), but are not to think of ourselves as better people than unbelievers. We must keep some kind of contact with unbelievers so we can witness to them. The Pharisees had a “holier than thou” type of separation and thought they were better than everyone else. **Gospel** is *euangelion*, which gives our English word “evangelize;” it means “Good News.” **Of God** is a Genitive of Source. But remember: we will not really consider news “good” until we have heard the bad news; that we are all sinners, deserving the righteous judgment of God.

2. If a sinner is to become a saint, he or she must accept the Good News of God (see John 3:16).

► *(W)hich He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born as 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 [Romans 1:2-4].*

He is “God,” who has **promised beforehand** to send His own Son into the world. Moses, called a prophet in Deuteronomy 34:10, predicted in Genesis 3:15 that God would send a Redeemer. This prophecy was written by Moses in 1445 B.C. **Prophets** is *prophetes*, which means a forth-teller, a spokesman (who spoke for God). God gave the Good News by His prophets who wrote it into Holy Scripture. **Scripture** does not have the definite article “the” in the Greek text. Therefore, the emphasis is not upon “the,” but upon “holy.” *Hagios* means “separated” (unto God for holy purposes). It is the same root word translated “holiness” in verse 4, and “saints” in verse 7.

Scriptures is from *grapho*, which gives our English word “graphics.” God wrote a Book; He calls it a Holy Book, and that is why we capitalize “Scriptures.” Man simply recognizes the writing of God’s

prophets as inspired, which means “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We use the “Canon” of Scripture, which means a measuring rod. Part of this standard is:

- Was it written by a recognized man of God?
- Did it agree with all other Holy Scripture?
- Was it accepted as true by the believers at that time who then preserved it?
- Does it show God as Holy, and man as a sinner, and that the only way of salvation was by God’s grace through man’s faith?

God’s Son would come through the line of King David. **Concerning His Son** shows that the topic of the Old Testament prophets was the Son of God (see John 5:39). Jesus is the central theme of the entire Bible. The Old Testament looked forward to His First Coming; the New Testament records His First Coming, His return to heaven, and looks forward to His Second Coming. **Who was born of a descendant of David** fulfills many Old Testament prophecies that the Messiah would be born into the family of King David. That is why He had to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). **According to the flesh** stresses His humanity and his ancestry here on earth. This descendancy entitles Jesus to be the next and final king of Israel, through whom God will fulfill all His covenant promises to Abraham.

Jesus was not only the son of David, but also the Son of God, proven by the fact that He rose from the dead. **Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead** shows that Jesus is more than simply a descendant of King David; He is the Son of God. Even David, as a prophet of God, predicted in Psalm 16:10 – *for You will not abandon my soul to Sheol*. David was predicting the resurrection of Christ. The primary argument that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel is that He rose from the dead. It is the central truth to all Christianity (see Romans 10:9-10, also 1 Corinthians 15:12-17). **Resurrection** is *anastasis*, which means “to stand up again on your feet.” Jesus, literally, physically, rose from the dead. The “dead” is actually plural, “dead ones.”

Of all who have died, Jesus is the only One who has raised Himself from the dead. *I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again* (see John 10:18).

The New International Version capitalizes **Spirit**, because it probably refers to the Holy Spirit. **Lord** refers to the Deity of Jesus Christ, and His absolute authority over God's plan and purposes (see Matthew 18:18-20).

C. Whether a Jewish sinner or a Gentile sinner, when one trusts in Jesus, he becomes a saint (Romans 1:5-7).

► *(T)hrough whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His Name's sake, among whom you are also 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 1:5-7].*

Whom refers to "Jesus Christ our Lord." It is only through Him that **we have received grace**. "Grace" is God's unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. So, we must admit that we are sinners and deserve God's wrath, not His mercy. **We** refers primarily in this context to the Jews, because Paul includes **apostleship**. The majority of the Apostles were Jews, who were first to be entrusted with the Gospel to take it around the world. Here is the purpose: **to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles**. God always intended for His Apostles to take the Gospel around the world to all the nations. **For His name's sake** means to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ who will return someday and take over the world for God.

You also refers to the Gentiles of verse 5. The key word here is "also." Not only has God called and gifted Jews to minister in the Body of Christ, but also has called and gifted Gentiles. We, too, are **the called of Jesus Christ**. "Called" is from *kaleo*, as in verse 1.

To all who are beloved of God in Rome is an excellent reference to a local church, the one in Rome. Local churches are a part of the universal Church, the Body of Christ. **Beloved** is the Greek word

agapatoi, which God uses of Christ Himself in Ephesians 1:6. **Saints** is *hagioi*, which might be translated “set apart ones,” or “holy ones.” **Grace to you and peace** shows that even believers still need the grace of God and the peace of God every day. We must admit that we are still sinners, transformed by God into saints, and need His grace and peace every day so we can live like it. **The Lord Jesus Christ** is placed on an equal status with **God our Father** by the little word **and**. Jesus Christ is as much God, as God the Father. **Peace** is that supernatural peace that can come only from God (see Romans 5:1).

D. Paul wanted to take the power of the Gospel to sinners in Rome (Romans 1:8-17).

Usually, most people do not go somewhere or move somewhere to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to teach God’s Word, see souls saved, and build up Christians in their walk with Christ. But that is exactly why the Apostle Paul wanted to go to Rome.

Rome was the capital city of the Roman Empire as Washington, D.C. is the capital city of the United States of America. When we think of visiting Washington, D.C., we usually think of visiting the White House, or the Congress, or the Smithsonian Institute. However, the apostle’s purpose of visiting Rome was to target the city for evangelism and discipleship. From there he could influence the entire Roman Empire.

1. Paul prayed for the Romans (Romans 1:8-15).

►*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. He was thankful for the faith of others. Their **faith was being proclaimed throughout the whole world**, probably for two reasons: first, because they had a strong local assembly enduring the persecution and were supporting of each other, and, secondly, because they lived in the capital city of the Roman Empire. “The whole world” was the known world, the civilized world that was the Roman Empire.

Through Jesus Christ shows that Jesus is our mediator, between us

and God the Father (1 Timothy 2:5); Jesus is our High Priest (Hebrews 2:17). We should not judge others, and we should be thankful for the faith of others. Every local church differs from the others in some way, either in the form of worship, their approach to the study of the Scriptures, and so forth. Once we determine that a local assembly preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we must recognize that the believers there are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we must not judge them. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are not the enemy; Satan is.

► *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, 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].*

b. Paul was constantly interceding for others - **make mention of you** means in his **prayers** to God (see verse 10). **The will of God** would include arrest in Jerusalem, imprisonment and trial in Caesarea, and shipwreck in the Mediterranean: incidents that tested him until he finally got to Rome more than two years later.

► *For I long to see you that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established [Romans 1:11].*

Paul wanted to minister to others. **Impart some spiritual gift to you** means that he wanted to exercise his spiritual gift of Apostle toward them. **That you may be established** means for them to be built up in the Christian faith (Ephesians 4:11-12). **Spiritual gift** is *pneumatikos charis*. *Pneumatikos* gives our word “pneumatic,” which means “air,” but the Greek word means “Spirit” - a gift from the Holy Spirit. We will all give an account someday of how we used our spiritual gifts for God. *Charis* means “grace” or “gift.” Salvation is a gift of God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

► *[T]hat 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 1:12].*

That is (v. 12) introduces Paul’s further explanation of “be

established”- **that I may be encouraged together with you.** “Encouraged with” is *sumparakaleo*, which means “to call alongside with,” but *parakaleo* also means to come alongside and strengthen. **The other’s** is from *allos*, which means “another of the same kind.” When Jesus is the object of our faith, then we have faith of the same kind.

► *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 [Romans 1:13].*

Brethren (v. 13) is characteristically a New Testament term that refers to believers in Christ, because God makes us His children, which makes us brothers and sisters. **Have been prevented thus far** was sometimes caused by Satan (see 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20). **Some fruit** probably refers to Gentiles whom Paul would lead to Christ, as he had done in many Gentile cities.

► *I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish [Romans 1:14].*

I am under obligation (verse 14) because Jesus had assigned Paul to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (see Acts 9:15). **Barbarians** was the word the Greeks used for everyone but themselves. The Greeks were always clean-shaven; “barbarians” were bearded men. The word also implied uneducated and unsophisticated, indicated by the word **foolish**; while **wise** would refer to the Greeks.

► *So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome [Romans 1:15].*

Preach the Gospel (verse 15) is all one Greek word, *euangelizomai*, which gives our word “evangelize.” It means to proclaim good news, therefore, it is translated “preach the Gospel.”

2. Paul had Power for the Romans (Romans 1:16-17).

Not only did Paul have prayer for the Romans, but he also had 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].*

a. The Gospel is God's power to save people (Romans 1:16).

For introduces verse 16 and ties it back to verse 15 and Paul's eagerness to preach the Gospel in Rome. It is clear, then, that he had never been there. Eventually he would be martyred there. **Gospel** is *euangelion*, found in verses 1 and 15. The Gospel is a verbal message that has the power to give a person eternal life. Certainly, it is God who imparts that life, but He waits to use His power to save until a person exercises faith in His gospel message (see Romans 10:13).

Since God's message is "Good News," we may safely conclude at least two things:

- That God is able to save "to the uttermost," Hebrews 7:25, sinners who believe His message; and,
- That man has not committed a sin that is sinful enough that God cannot forgive.

Therefore, the only reason people go to Hell is because they reject God's message - His Gospel. Jesus called that *blasphemy against the Spirit* in Matthew 12:31. The Greek word *blasphemia* means to rail against, to speak evil of. Therefore, when a person blasphemes the Holy Spirit, he or she is rejecting the message of the Spirit: the Gospel.

Power is *dunamis*, which gives the English word "dynamite;" however, here it is supernatural power, God's power to regenerate a dead spirit. See John 3:3, where "again" is the translation of the Greek word *anōthen*, which also means "from above." So regeneration (see Titus 3:5), is a supernatural act of God in response to a person's faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. God resurrects the dead spirit of a person who trusts in Jesus, resulting in their eternal salvation. **Of God** is a Genitive of Source; God is the source of this power. **Salvation** is *sozo*, which is sometimes translated "deliverance." So, we might ask,

“salvation or deliverance” - from what? The answer is - from our sins. God saves us now from the penalty of our sin, and we escape His judgment. God will deliver us daily from the **power** of sin, as we walk with Him in obedience each day. And, someday in heaven, God will deliver us from the very **presence** of our sins, because He will finally rid us of our sin nature, our propensity to sin against Him.

Everyone means exactly that: any person, regardless of race or ethnic background, whether “Jew” or “Greek” (which means Gentiles; anyone who is not a Jew is a Gentile). Fortunately, *God is not one to show partiality* (Acts 10:34), so He will save anyone who trusts in Jesus. **Who believes** gives the only human condition for salvation - “faith” (see also Acts 16:31). In the Bible “faith” always requires an object, and the correct object for our faith is Jesus Christ. The English verb “believe” and the noun “faith” both come from the same Greek word *pisteuo*. **The Jew first** does not mean that they are better than Gentiles, or that God loves them more. It simply means that “the Jew,” starting with Abraham in Genesis 12, has always been God’s chosen nation through whom He would bring the Bible, the Messiah, and the Gospel. The Jews, therefore, since Genesis 12, have had the first chance to respond to the Gospel. Isaiah 42:6 says that the Jews were *to be a light unto the Gentiles*. Abraham looked forward to the cross for salvation (Genesis 15:7); we look back.

b. The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God (Romans 1:17).

Righteousness is from *dikaïosuna*, which is the same root for the word translated “justified” in Romans 5:1. **Of God** here is a Subjective Genitive, which means that God is the subject of the righteousness. It is God’s righteousness that is **revealed** when He saves a sinner. God imputes His own righteousness to a believer at the moment of **faith** (see 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Acts 17:30-31). In this way, God’s absolute righteousness, His holiness, is never compromised when He brings a sinner into His family. Furthermore, “justification” is that legal act of God when He “declares” a sinner righteous before Him - we are acquitted in heaven, in God’s courtroom, and our defense attorney is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Man contributes nothing to his own salvation, he only accepts by faith what Jesus has done. **As it is written** introduces a quote from Habakkuk 2:4, which is the theme of the entire Bible, ***But the righteous will live by his faith***. Another very

acceptable translation is, “But the justified man shall make himself alive by faith.”

Shall live is Future Indicative Middle. The Middle Voice indicates something that a person does to himself for his own benefit. So, we could translate “shall make himself alive.” A man does not save himself, but for his own benefit, he or she trusts in Jesus Christ, and “makes himself alive” (spiritually) because God regenerates him or her in response to their faith. The Indicative Mood denotes something that is - an event that happens. So, the verse could be translated “shall live,” as it is in the New American Standard Version. This translation, then, stresses more of the idea that a Christian walks by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). But, both are true. We are “made alive by faith” at the moment of our salvation, and “we live by faith” each day as we wait for the return of Christ.

Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ powerful? It is! It has the power to save, the power to keep saved, and the power to live out the Christian life.

II. Sin: The condemnation of all men under sin (Romans 1:18-3:20).

Following his salutation, Paul begins his epistle on a very unpopular subject: the subject of **sin**. People do not like the word or the subject. We do not want to talk about **sin**, because it somehow attacks our self-image, our ego, our pride, or it enhances our fear of judgment or whatever else makes it threatening to us.

When Paul decided to write to a local church where he had never been, the first thing he talked about was **sin**. Furthermore, he was speaking mostly to Christians, believers in Christ, people who were born-again. Yet, he talked a lot about **sin**. **Sin** is the place to start because our **sin** is at the root of all our problems. **Sin** separates us from God. God is holy and He will never compromise His holiness. Therefore, if we are going to talk about God, we must talk about **sin**, because our **sin** has separated us from God who deeply loves us.

A. The condemnation of the Gentile: willful ignorance of God from Gentiles outside the Law (Romans 1:18-23).

Will God ever do anything about the sinfulness of men? Does it seem

as if the sin of men will never be judged by God? The wickedness of men and women just gets worse and worse, and it seems that God is not doing anything about it. However, the Bible says that He *is* doing something. Those who reject Christ do not believe God will judge mankind, neither do they expect God to judge them. But God is already judging the sins of men; those who reject His free gift of salvation through His Son will suffer eternity in hell.

1. God has given all men internal truth (including Gentiles who had not originally received God's Law – as the Jews had), which they “suppress in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18-20).

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

Wrath is *orga*, which is God's displeasure and judgment upon man's sin. **Is revealed** shows that God is not ignoring man's sin. God is simply merciful and patient to delay His wrath upon sinful man (see 2 Peter 3:8-9). **Is revealed** is what we call Present Linear, something that is still happening. **All** guarantees that *God is not a respecter of persons* (see Romans 2:11), and that He will fairly judge all men. The thought here is, “Do we want God's justice, or His mercy?”

Unrighteousness is *adikian*, the negative of *dikaiousuna*, found in verse 17. *Dikaiousuna* is the absolute righteousness of God, which we all need as a gift from God to get into heaven. **Suppress** is *katecho*, which means to hold down, to hold fast. It is a Present Active Participle, which could be translated “who are suppressing.” **The truth** is the Gospel of Christ (see vv. 16-17).

Known is from *ginosko*, which means to know first-hand, to know by personal experience, to know by seeing first-hand from personal observation and examination. It includes the idea to acknowledge, resolve, conclude. In this context it is to conclude that there is no God to whom man is accountable. The atheist says there is no God. The agnostic says there is no way to determine if there is a God or not; and if He does exist, there is no way to know Him.

However, the Bible says that God does exist, and that He is knowable. **Within them** means that this is intrinsic knowledge, or internal knowledge, placed there by God Himself because God made it evident to them. **Made it evident** is *phaneroo*, which means to make clear, to manifest, to bring into the light.

Part of being created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26-27) is this intrinsic knowledge that God does exist. It also gives us our conscience, our sense of right and wrong, and our ability to reason.

2. God has given all men external truth (even Gentiles who did not have God's Law as the Jews did), which they also reject, making them without excuse.

► *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].*

Creation is *ktisis*, which means to frame, to reduce from a state of disorder (see Genesis 1:2ff). **Invisible attributes** means literally "invisible things" which are further described as **His eternal power and divine nature**. Since we are finite and cannot comprehend things that are eternal and divine, God must reveal them to us and we must accept them by faith (see Hebrews 11:6). The Greek word *te* appears right before the word translated "His" but is untranslated. It could be translated "both." These two "things" or "attributes" are clearly seen and understood by man, but man usually chooses to suppress this truth and refuse to seek to worship and serve God. The creature refuses to pay homage to his Creator. Thus, man is **without excuse**. This phrase is one Greek word *anapologeo*, which means "without legal defense." The entire book of Romans is an "apologetic" (from *apologeo*), which is a legal defense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Having rejected God's revelation, man turns to his own speculation and takes himself even further from 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. Professing to be wise, they became fools*

[Romans 1:21-22].

Honor is *doksazo*, from which we derive “doxology;” it means to form an opinion. It is often translated “glorify.” **Did not . . . give thanks** reveals an ungrateful heart. **Futile** is “worthless.” **Foolish** is *asunetos*, but not the same word *moros*, translated “fools” in verse 22. *Sunetos* means “discernment,” so *asunetos* with the negating prefix “a” means “without discernment.”

Was darkened is a Passive Voice, so the subject receives the action of the verb. The doer of the action is God, so we call this “Judicial Darkness.” **Their foolish heart was darkened** is a kind of living judgment from God, because of the hardness of their hearts. **They became fools** as did Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:1-7. They believed the lie of Satan that going against God would make them wise. Sin, however, does not make us wiser - it only makes us fools. *Moros* gives our English word “moron,” someone who is dull, foolish, heedless. So, the person who rejects the revelation from God and relies upon his own spiritual insight is a spiritual “moron.” It also includes the idea of being morally deficient. See the Hebrew *nabal* in Psalm 14:1, translated “fool;” *the fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.”*

► *(A)nd 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 1:23].*

Exchanged shows that man senses his own fallen state and seeks to worship someone or something. That is why different religions are found around the world. We need to take God’s Gospel to them. God has created man to worship God. So, when man refuses to worship God, he winds up worshipping something or someone else. Man worships **an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures**. Americans worship “the form of corruptible man” by worshipping rock stars, movie stars, sports stars, the human body, and so forth. Asians often worship birds and animals and insects. A Chinese astrology chart suggests that people’s lives are controlled by birds and animals and insects.

Paul’s conclusion then, is that *man is without excuse!* God has every

right to judge us. Man is sinful and has violated the Holy Character of God. Man has sinned and come short of God's glory. It may seem like God is doing nothing about man's sin, however, God is revealing His plan, and is warning man about what He will do.

B. The consequences of the condemnation of the Gentile is Divine abandonment (Romans 1:24-32).

People have insisted on moving away from God, rejecting the Revelation He has given to us, and God is keeping His promises of Chapter 1. He is giving man over to his sin, and the consequences of that sin. Our sin and its consequences have become God's form of judgment upon us. No one is getting away with sin, even though it might appear so at first. Romans 1:24-32 explains that all Gentiles have *sinned and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). In Romans 2:17 and following Paul will show how the Jew (who had the Law of God) is also under God's judgment and condemnation for sin. This passage has a universal application to all Gentiles and their countries throughout all generations who have suppressed the innate knowledge of God, rejected God's general revelation, and have plunged themselves willingly into spiritual ignorance.

1. As Gentiles reject God's general Revelation, He gives them over to sexual immorality, to their own lusts (Romans 1:24-25).

► *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 worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen [Romans 1:24-25].*

Therefore is the result of verses 18-23, the rejection of God's Revelation by the Gentiles. **Gave them over** is an Aorist Tense, completed action, from *paradidomi*, meaning to give over, to hand over. This is the key phrase of this passage, which occurs three times; in verses 24, 26, and 28. Thus, God uses the sin of the people as a form of judgment. God simply gives them over to their own sin and its consequences. **Lusts** is *epithumia*, which means strong desire. Context must decide if the desire is good or evil. This context is evil. **Hearts** is *kardia*, the seat of the emotions; from which comes our

English word, “cardiac.” **Impurity** refers to sexual impurity. **Dishonored** is the same word translated “degrading” in verse 26. If man is his own god (see verse 23), then he can do whatever he pleases and fulfill his desires without fear of judgment.

The truth of God is the Gospel of Jesus Christ from verses 16-17, which includes the truth of man’s sin. The **lie** is the lie of Satan that we can exist independently of God without spiritual death or physical death (see Genesis 3:4-5). When a man or woman accepts this lie, they **worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator**. Sometimes this takes the form of religion where a person acts as if they are worthy to enter heaven without trusting Christ as Savior. **Worshiped** is *sebazomai*, which means to stand in awe, to revere, to worship, to adore. The negative form *asebeian* is translated “ungodliness” (see verse 18).

2. One of the forms of judgment is for God to give over to sexual perversion, including homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27).

► *For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 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 their own persons the due penalty of their error [Romans 1:26-27].*

Passions is *pathos*, which the Greeks used to refer to the ungoverned aspect of evil desires. **Natural function** is the marriage of men and women to have a God-ordained physical relationship, to the bearing of children and filling the earth. Hebrews 13:4 says that the marriage bed is “undefiled,” therefore, all sexual relationship between men and women outside the marriage bed is defiled, including adultery and homosexuality. Homosexuality is defiled because the Bible restricts marriage to the male and female. Sexual relations between female and female, or male and male God calls “indecent.” However, **unnatural** can also include the perverted use of women, such as wife-swapping (of which the Jews were guilty, see Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Multiple divorces could be a version of this “unnatural act,” legalized by man through his divorce decrees and laws.

Notice that verse 27 refers to homosexuality as “unnatural” and “indecent” Therefore, people are *not* “born homosexual,” as some proclaim. The natural, God-ordained physical relationship between people is a man with a woman in marriage. *Anything else is a distortion of God’s will* ².

Desire is *oreksis*, which means to reach out, to draw in something to make it your own. Penalty can also be translated “reward,” as it is in Galatians 6:7.

3. Another form of judgment is for God to give people over to a “depraved” mind, which produces an improper lifestyle (Romans 1:28-32).

► *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, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 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].*

Did not see fit is from *dokimazo*, which means to test so as to approve. It is the same root word translated “depraved” in this same verse, however, the word translated “depraved” has the negating prefix, *adokimazo*. We could translate this verse this way, “And just as they did not see fit to test God (in a biblical way to see that His word was reliable, so as to approve of Him), they did not acknowledge Him any longer; so God gave them over to that kind of mind, a depraved mind, a

² Compare 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. This does not mean that God hates homosexuals. God loves the sinner, but hates the sin. We are not to hate homosexuals, but pray for them, and witness to them. We are not to reject them as people because of these distorted “desires.” All of us are sinners, and our sin is not “better sin” than the sin of homosexuality.

mind that refuses to test God's promises (so they can get to know Him)." God gave them over to go ahead with those **things which are not proper**. This kind of mind has been called a "rationally disqualified mind, a mind that cannot form right judgments." **Acknowledge** is from *epiginosko*, an intensified form of *ginosko* translated "known" (see verse 19). The intensified form appears again in verse 32, translated "know."

Unrighteousness is the negative form of the word "righteousness," see verse 17. **Greed** is *pleoneksia*, which means an insatiable desire to have more, even at the expense of harming others. **Deceit** is *dolos*, which is a word the Greek used for a worm on a hook - to fool the fish. **Gossips** literally means "whisperers."

Haters of God is one word in the Greek text, *theostuges*, which can be translated, "impious." **Insolent** includes cruelty and pride. **Arrogant** means pride and self-sufficiency. **Boastful** includes the idea for gain; so this kind of boasting is for some kind of personal gain.

Untrustworthy applies especially toward covenants, an example of which is the marriage covenant, which has been continuously and alarmingly disrespected. **Unloving** was used by the Greeks to refer to husbands who abandoned their families, mothers who abused their children, and children who disobeyed their parents.

Ordinance is *dikaioma*, the same root from which is derived *diakaiaosuna* translated "righteousness" in verse 17. *Dikaioma* is a righteous standard, or ordinance. **Practice** is a key word, because even believers still sin, albeit divine discipline promises corrective chastening from God upon His children (see Hebrews Chapter 12). "Practice" denotes a life-style that is further elaborated by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 where he says that such people who *practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*. **Death** is first physical, but will someday be followed by the Second Death, the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:14). A final observation is that these people **give hearty approval to those (others) who practice them**.

Verses 18-32 of Chapter One, then, contain God's scathing indictment of the depravity of man describing man's state, by nature, without Christ. For more than 2,000 years, in Paul's words, God has **given** men

over to the lust of their hearts, unto shameful passions, and, finally, to a reprobate mind. Without saving faith in the shed blood of Christ on the cross, man stands before God condemned. John 3:36b (King James Version) says, *he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*³

C. The Condemnation of the Moralist: Even “good, moral people” without Christ have actually rejected Him and are substituting their own moral goodness for the price Jesus paid with His own blood (Romans 2:1-16).

In Chapter 2, Paul turns to the moralist.

³ There is a group of people who have a dangerous mentality, but they do not necessarily fit the description of the Gentiles described in Romans 1:24-32. They have not engaged in sexual sin, yet they have substituted a moral life and a religious life for faith in Christ. They have rejected the Revelation from God, just like the unbelievers of Romans 1:18-23, who professed to be wise but became as fools (v. 22), and exchanged the glory of God for their own glory. They are, in fact, worshippers of themselves, their own goodness and their own good deeds, (thinking with a depraved mind) assuming that God will accept them because they are “good people” or “religious people.” They have compared themselves to the sexually immoral and said, “I am not as bad as they are, and I am not under judgment from God. God will accept me as I am. My sins are not bad enough to get me to hell. I just need to be a good citizen, stay out of trouble, not become like the bad people of the world and God will receive me into heaven.” But these people are under the condemnation of God as well. They have been deceived by Satan and unless they accept Christ’s work on the cross for payment of their sin and sinful nature, they will die in that sin and face eternal judgment from God.

At the same time those who have put their faith in Christ are admonished to remember that the old sin nature, described so vividly by Paul in this chapter, continues even in the redeemed. Evidence that Christianity itself is losing its consciousness of sin is increasing. Today, God is rapidly becoming a convenience and His Word irrelevant. Church services are often reduced to entertainment: the Bible is not taught, the Gospel not preached, and sin is never mentioned. Believers today must be ever mindful that Satan is a roaring lion; the awful fact of our inherent depraved nature must be ever before us, lest we fall out of fellowship with God.

As a general introduction to the apostle's argument, we can define three groups of unbelievers, all of whom have violated the standard of God's divine truth:

■ The first group is Gentiles, described in Romans 1:18-32 who have rejected God's revelation and are worshiping anything but God. So, God gives them over to their sexual immorality, their homosexuality, and the depravity of their minds.

■ There is a second group described here in Romans 2:1-16, whom we call "moralists." These have also rejected God's Revelation, yet are judging others who have become immoral. This group of people is often the fine, upstanding members of our communities. They are very good and moral; they are members of local churches and sometimes leaders in the community and in the churches. They would never consider committing the outward, sexual sins described in Chapter 1, but are in reality committing other forms of serious sins. They are just as much in line for God's condemnation as the sexual deviates described in Chapter 1, but they do not think so. They are so busy judging others for their sin, they will neither admit to nor become responsible for their own. These are the people that Paul addresses in the first part of Chapter 2. They are facing judgment from God if they refuse to repent from that which is keeping them from trusting Christ as Savior. Paul shows in this passage that they are deserving of God's judgment because they have rejected God: His truth, His impartiality, and His Son.

■ The third group of people (see "D," below, Romans 2:17-29), the Jews, who because they are "God's chosen people," think they are going to heaven because they are Jews. But, no one goes to heaven from national origin; individuals go to heaven because they trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sin. Jews often do not admit their sinfulness, which brings them under the condemnation of God. Their sin of national pride keeps them from repentance.

Now Paul warns the moralists that they have violated three different standards of God.

1. They have violated the standard of God's divine truth (Romans 2:1-16).

► *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. 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 2:1-4].*

Therefore ties this passage back to Romans 1:16-23, as does the “therefore” of verse 24. Romans 1:24-32 deals with the Christ-rejector who has an immoral life-style; while 2:1-6 deals with the Christ-rejector who has a moral life-style. **You** applies to more of the Gentiles, because Paul addresses the “Jews” in 2:17. **You have no excuse** should be compared back to 1:20; this is a further description of the Gentiles’ response to *General Revelation*. (The Jews, see verse 17, have had *Special Revelation*, “the Law.”)

You condemn is an intensified form of *krino*; this is *katakrino*, which means, to separate down, or condemn. **You practice** is *prasso*, which denotes a practice, a habit, a life style. Paul uses the same word in 1:32 and 2:3. Compare Galatians 5:19-21 for the same word translated “practice.” *Notice carefully* that many of the words Paul uses in Galatians are the same words in Romans 1:28-32. Therefore, these “moralists” are practicing the same things that the immoral people are practicing, but they must be doing it secretly. They **judge** others, but are guilty of the **same things**. These “judges” are not consistent - they are not including themselves in their judgment.

You is further defined by Paul as **when you who pass judgment**. This group may not be the sexually immoral people described in 1:24-32, but they are just as guilty before God because they are sinners in their own way. “When you pass judgment” is a Present Active Participle that describes something that they do - all the time. They keep judging others without judging themselves. The root verb is *krino*, which

means “to separate.” Notice Matthew 7:1 where Jesus warned, *Do not judge so that you will not be judged*. The context of Matthew 7 is the Sermon on the Mount, and what it takes to get into God’s Kingdom. The New Testament teaches discernment and making judgments for many things concerning the Church and Christian behavior. That is *not* what Jesus was talking about or what Paul is talking about here. Jesus and Paul are talking about the same thing: judging others unworthy of eternal life while failing to judge oneself. The key verse of the Sermon on the Mount is Matthew 5:20:

For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven [Matthew 5:20].

The scribes and Pharisees had an external form of righteousness, an external morality they thought would get them into heaven, and were famous for judging others who did not adopt their form of external righteousness. Judgment of anyone must be left up to God.

The **judgment of God**, repeated in verse 3, is “from God;” it is a Genitive of Source. God has every right to judge men, because He is and has the highest moral standard. **Rightly** is a key word to our passage. It is the Greek word *alatheia*, which is usually translated “truth” (see John 14:6). Context led the translators to use “rightly” because God is right or correct in his judgment of man. However, the “truth” is God’s absolute truth; His divine will, His divine Word. It is the standard for all true judgment. Our court system does not need to be based on existentialism (the philosophy that stresses the active role of the will rather than reason - or, “I will do what I want to do”), but upon the Word of God.

Think lightly is *kataphroneo*, which literally means to “think down” (fits with “separate down”). It can be translated “think lightly” or “despise or disregard.” **Kindness** is *chrestotes*, which means benevolence in action, kindness that is suitable to the need, or fitting for a particular need. Compare **patience** with Romans 3:25 (His *forbearance*) and 2 Peter 3:9:

The Lord is not slow about His promises, 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].

God's patience must not be misinterpreted for indifference. **Not knowing** is one Greek word *aginosko*, meaning not to know first hand, to not know by experience. Compare *ginosko* in 1:19: people "know God by experience" - "to know by seeing" (for yourself) as they see Him in Creation, but having rejected that revelation (Romans 1:21), they fail to perceive **knowing the kindness of God** that would lead them **to repentance**. Compare the second stanza of the hymn, Amazing Grace.

"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved,
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed."

Repentance is *metanoeo*, which means to change the mind: we must change our minds about our sinful condition, realize the danger of staying in that condition without forgiveness and our need for a Savior, consider the tremendous price Jesus paid when He died on the cross and rose again, and know that God's forgiveness will come to us when we trust in what Jesus did for us.

2. They have violated the standard of God's impartiality (Romans 2:5-11).

► *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, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS [Romans 2:5-6].*

But is a Conjunction of Contrast, in contrast to the required repentance of verse 4. **Stubbornness** is from *sklaros*, which gives our English word "sclerosis," meaning hard, dry, harsh, severe, or stern. **Heart** is *kardia*, which gives our word "cardiac." The *kardia* was the seat of the emotions. So, the one who rejects Christ refuses to change his mind about Him or allow his heart to be softened toward God. Romans 1:18 described a *present* kind of judgment from God - the consequences of sin - but here we are warned that with an **unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of**

the righteous judgment of God. This judgment is yet future. “Righteous judgment” is all one Greek word, *dikaiokrino*. *Dikaiaosuna* is God’s absolute righteousness, and *krino* is His separation, based on His own righteousness. This “day of wrath” is a general reference to God’s judgment, much like John 5:28-29. But a careful study of God’s Word reveals at least eleven separate judgments by God over a period of time:

- Our sins: Judgment of believer’s sin in the Cross of Christ: John 12:31-32.
- Satan: cast out of heaven: Luke 10:18, Isaiah 14:12, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude vv. 6-7.
- Judgment of believer’s works, the *Bema seat*: Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10-11, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.
- Judgment of the antichrist and the false prophet to the Lake of Fire: Revelation 19:20.
- Judgment of Israel, the living Jews at the millennium: Ezekiel 10:37-38.
- Judgment of the living nations (Gentiles) at the Second Advent: Matthews 25:31-46.
- Judgment of the works of the Old Testament Saints: Daniel 12:13.
- Judgment of Satan, consignment to the Lake of Fire: Revelation 20:10.
- Judgment of the wicked dead, the *Great White Throne*: Revelation 20:11-15, Acts 17:31, Romans 2:16.
- Judgment of (works of) millennial saints, saints made eternal kings and priests: Daniel 7:18, 27: (implied by) 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 and Daniel 12:13, and Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 2:26-27, 3:21, 20:4-6, 22:4-5.

- Judgment of the holy angels: 1 Corinthians 6:3.

[T]o those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation [Romans 2:7-8].

To those who by perseverance describes the righteous deeds of people who have a new heart - they have trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Verse 8 describes the unrighteous deeds of people who do not have a new heart - they have rejected Jesus.⁴ **Do not obey** is a Present Linear, which could be translated “keep on disobeying.” **The truth** is the same word *alatheia* in verse 2 translated “rightly.” It is the “truth” of the Word of God.

There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God [Romans 2:9-11].

Compare verses 9 and 10 and notes on 1:16-17. **The Jew first** was not preference, but privilege, because God used the Jews to write the Bible. **Greek** in both verses is *hellanos*, another reference to the Gentiles - everyone who is not a Jew. **Good** in verse 10 has the definite article “the.” The “good” is trusting Christ as Savior; it does not refer to works in this context (examine carefully John 5:28-29 and 6:26-29).

Verse 11 is the key verse of verses 5-11: **For there is no partiality with God**; He will condemn people who sin secretly because He is the true judge and we are all sinners. “Partiality” comes from the Greek word that means “to pay regard to external appearance.” See also 1 Samuel 16:7, *For man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*

3. They have violated the standard of Jesus Christ.

⁴ Individuals, and their deeds, reveal the condition of the heart. See Matthew 25:31-46 and the entire book of 1st John; especially 1 John 4:8.

► *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; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when the 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, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus [Romans 2:12-16].*

So, **all who have sinned without the Law** (called Greeks or Gentiles) have no excuse: verse 14 says they **are a law unto themselves**. Also, **all who have sinned under the Law** (namely, the Jew) **will be judged by the Law**.

Not the hearers of the Law who are just before God (namely, the Jews), **but the doers of the Law will be justified**. Since none of the Jews can perfectly keep the Law of God, they will all be condemned under the Law. “Hearers” came about in the synagogues of the Jews, a regular meeting place that came into being after the Temple was destroyed in the Babylonian Captivity. Some churches today serve the same purpose: they are places where people come to hear the Word of God, and then fail to keep it. The word translated “just” is *dikaioi*, which means “one who has been rendered right, declared righteous.” The verb translated “will be justified” is *dikaioo*, the verb form of the same word translated “just.” It is also the root for the word “righteous.” Notice that sinners must be declared righteous by God when they trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin. This is called “justification before God.” There is no way we can earn righteousness, or earn our forgiveness.

Verse 14 shows that Gentiles have no excuse for not having God’s Law, for even without His Law they make a law for themselves and then promptly violate that law. So, we are without excuse.

Their hearts (verse 15), and **their conscience** serve the same purpose of the Law of God. Gentiles without God’s Law know the moral standards of His Law, but still break it. Their own **thoughts**

alternatively accuse or else defend them.

God (verse 16) **will judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ**, because all God has to do is recall the thoughts and secrets of men's hearts on judgment day. So, in reality, no one is getting away with anything.

D. The Condemnation of the Jew: Even the Jew is under God's condemnation, because even though the Jew had the Law of God, he did not use it to bring himself to Christ (Romans 2:17-29).

Here the topic is still **sin**. **Sin** is not a very popular subject, because we discover that we are all guilty of it. We have all sinned - *all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God* (Romans 3:23). In Chapters 1 and 2, Paul is defining the "all." In Chapter 1 verses 18-32 he talked about the grossly immoral people of the world, the fornicators and the immoral, whom God has given over to their own immorality. For the moralists (see Chapter 2:1-16), the self-appointed judges who compare themselves with other people, and think they will go to heaven someday because they are better than the people described in Chapter 1, God gives them over to their spiritual blindness.

Here in Chapter 2, verses 17-29, Paul talks about the Jews. The Jews are a very privileged people. They are part of a very special nation, especially created by God. Through the Jews God wrote the Bible, brought the Messiah, the Savior of the world, and through Him, a Jew, God will rule the world for all eternity. But, even with all their advantages, Paul shows that even the Jews are under the condemnation of God. They had God's Law, they had His Word, but they failed to obey it. They had the special revelation from God called the Bible, but they have never kept God's Law. They, too, have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

1. Although the Jew had advantages over the Gentile, he misinterpreted those advantages as something that made him superior to Gentiles (Romans 2:17-21a).

But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God, and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that

you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?
[Romans 2:17-21a].

If is a Class I Conditional Sentence in the Greek text, which means a statement of fact. It can be translated “since.” **You** is singular in the Greek text, and throughout this passage, Paul uses the singular “you.” *Each* individual Jew (and Gentile) is guilty before God and is responsible for personal sins. **Rely upon** is in the Present Tense, as is every other verb in verses 17-21a, with the exception of **are confident** in verse 19, which is a Perfect Tense. The Present Tense denotes a present action; hence, Paul is driving home the point that the Jews were still doing these things in his day. The Perfect Tense denotes past action with present, on-going results. It is the same connotation; the Jews were presently benefiting from these advantages.

The verbs contained in verses 17-21a, then, define these advantages:

a. The Jew relied upon the Law.

Used in conjunction with “the prophets,” The Law sometimes meant the entire Old Testament - see Matthew 5:17 . . . *do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets* . . . Sometimes, as here, “the Law” (used alone) was also used to denote the entire Old Testament - see Matthew 5:18 . . . *not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law* . . . The Old Testament is the inspired Word of God. The Jew “relied upon the Law” to make him different from every other nation upon the earth.

b. The Jew boasted in God.

Boast is from *kauchaomai*, a Present Indicative Middle. The Middle Voice denotes something that a person does to himself, and to his own benefit. Hence, **you boast in God** (as if no one else can get to God, except you).

c. The Jew knew God’s will.

Know is from *ginosko*, to know first-hand, to know by seeing, to know by experience. **His will** is *thelo*, to will from the heart. The Jew bragged that he knew the heart, the will of God (but, he would not do the will of God).

d. The Jew approved the things that are essential.

Approve is from *dokimazo*, meaning to test so as to approve, or to examine so as to approve. **The things that are essential** is from *diaphero*, which literally means to carry through. The Greeks used this word to refer to things that were worth persevering for; the verb means to differ, to excel, to be superior. Hence, the Jew knew what was important in life, and what was not. Historically, however, the Jew was always adversely affected and led astray by the things of the Gentiles that were *not* “essential.” The things of the Word of God are spiritually superior to the things of Gentiles: money, social standing, idolatry, and so forth. These things never excel the things of God.

e. The Jew was instructed out of the Law.

Being instructed is a Passive Voice, meaning they received the action of the verb. They were **instructed** in their synagogues on a weekly basis **out of the Law**. There was also strict religious training within each Jewish household concerning the festivals, the sacrifices, and the history of Israel.

Are confident is the only Perfect Tense that Paul uses in this passage. It comes from the Greek verb *peitho*, which means to persuade, to be persuaded, to put ones trust in. The Jew was placing his confidence, his trust NOT in God, but in his superior position as being part of the Nation Israel.

f. The Jew was confident in five things.

(1) He was a guide to the blind. **The blind** are the Gentiles, who are spiritually blind. Gentiles are also blind because they do not have the Word of God.

(2) He was a light to those who are in darkness. Compare “light,” to Matthew 5:13-16. **Those who are in darkness** are also Gentiles,

without the light of God's Word (see Psalm 119:105).

(3) He was a corrector of the foolish. **Corrector** is *paideuo*, a trainer of children. He was a professional tutor who corrected, trained, and disciplined the child using "one-on-one" instruction. **Foolish** is *aphron*, which literally means "without a mind;" it is usually translated foolish, ignorant, or unthinking.

(4) He was a teacher of the immature. **Teacher** is *didaskalos*, that gives our word "didactic," a type of literature, one that teaches, is instructive. **Immature** is *napios*, a nursing infant (in spiritual things).

(5) The Jew had in the Law the **embodiment of knowledge and of the truth**.

Embodiment is from *morphosis*, which means the form, the outline, the framework. The Bible contains everything necessary for life and godliness. **Knowledge** has the definite article "the" in the Greek text; it is from *ginosko*, verse 18, and **truth** is from *alatheia*, meaning absolute truth, the truth of God Himself (John 14:6).

g. The Jew taught others.

Who teach is *didaskalos*, verse 20. **Another** is *heteros*, which means another of a different kind. The unregenerate Jew has always seen himself as something different from a Gentile, someone superior, someone who already had a relationship with God without repentance or faith.

2. Although the Jew had God's Law, he disobeyed it.

a. He committed every form of sin.

► *You who preach that one should 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? [Romans 2: 21b-22].*

These questions anticipate positive answers. All sin is, ultimately, against God. **Steal** is a sin against others as well. **Commit adultery** is

a sin against oneself, one's own body (see 1 Corinthians 6:18). **Idolatry** is sin particularly against God. **Rob temples** meant they stole the idols from Gentile temples, only to sell them to their own people.

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 2:24-25].

b. He dishonored the name of God.

Blasphemed is from *blasphiami*, which means to speak irreverently (of God). See Isaiah 52:5.

3. Although the Jew practiced the physical sign of circumcision, he never came to God for a new heart.

► *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. So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? [Romans 2:25-26].*

Circumcision was the physical sign of the covenant between God and Abraham, Genesis 17. Abraham was circumcised over 13 years after he trusted in God for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, circumcision does not save the Jew any more than baptism or taking the Lord's Supper saves someone in the church. **If** (occurs 3 times) is a Class III Conditional Sentence, which denotes "... maybe you will and maybe you won't." **Practice** is the same word Paul used in 1:32 and 2:1. Hence, the Jew must "practice constantly" the Law; the trouble is, the Jew has not. Hence, he is a **transgressor of the Law**. **Your circumcision has become uncircumcision** is the effect of the Jew transgressing God's Law. His circumcision is a sign that he is in covenant relationship with God, but it does him no good if he breaks the Law of God. It is like a wedding ring a married man is wearing. If he commits adultery (even with the ring on his finger), it is as if he is not married. The ring is a sign that he is married. If he commits infidelity, the ring has become meaningless.

► *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? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 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 2:27-29].

Keeps is from *phulasso*, which means to keep, to take into custody, to guard, to obey. True spiritual **circumcision** is an act of God, an act of cleansing in a man's heart, when he trusts in Jesus Christ. The Jews were not **circumcised in heart** (see Deuteronomy 10:16, Jeremiah 9:27 and Ezekiel 44:9). **Of the heart**, see Isaiah 29:13 and Hebrews 4:12. **By** is the word *en*, which is usually translated "in," and "the" does not appear in the Greek text. With a lower case "s," this would read *in spirit* and would not refer to the *Holy Spirit*. Hence, the new birth is that of man's dead spirit (see God's regeneration, Titus 3:5).

E. The Jew had many advantages, but he must still believe in Jesus to be saved, just like the Gentiles (Romans 3:1-20).

All of the religions of the world except Christianity have a view of God that is too low, and a view of man that is too high. In their low view of God, they do not believe that God is absolutely righteous and has a right to judge man on the standard of His righteousness, as His Word says. They feel that God is low enough that man can attain to God's level. In their high view of man, they want man to set his own standard of righteousness that he can live up to. In all the religions of the world except Christianity, there is really no need for God.

The Jews themselves argued that they have been dealt with unfairly. They argued that just because God formed them as a nation from one man, Abraham, and gave them the Law, that He should not hold them accountable for keeping the Law. They thought that God should not have the right to hold them accountable for their sinfulness, because He is the One who set the standard. They claimed that He was unfair in His judgment of them because He set the standard too high. But, God set the standard based upon His own absolute righteousness. Since the Jews could not keep such a high standard, they argued that God was unfair for judging them. (That is also why many of the Jews kept only

part of the Law - the parts they chose - and used their partial obedience for self-justification. Gentiles do this consistently in their religions. They only obey the laws of their choosing - usually the easiest parts - so as to justify themselves.) Paul answers their argument in this passage by saying that God has every right to judge Jews and Gentiles because He has set the standard and has kept this standard. God has demonstrated His right to judge both Jews and Gentiles.

The Jews tried to escape God's judgment with three questions, which Paul answers in this section where he summarizes his argument that the Jews also are under God's condemnation for sin:

- What is the advantage, then, of being a Jew under God's Old Covenant if that Covenant cannot save a Jew? Paul's answer is that God used the Jew to provide special revelation, the Bible. The Law was never designed to save anyone; it was only designed to reveal God's holiness, man's sinfulness, and then bring man to Christ (Galatians 3:24). (See also Romans 1:18-23 to learn what man does with general Revelation, God's creation. He usually just ignores it.)
- Is God just using my sin to make Himself look good? Has God set a standard that He knew we could not keep, so He could call us sinners, and glorify Himself? Paul's answer is no, God does not have to do that. God in his holiness automatically glorifies Himself; He does not need man's sinfulness to bring Him glory. God has set the standard and has always lived up to that standard; therefore, He reveals Himself qualified to judge Jews and Gentiles.
- Isn't the Gospel of God's grace just an excuse to allow men and women, boys and girls to sin more and more? Aren't we preaching a God that if we are saved by God's grace through our faith in Jesus Christ, then the more we sin, the more God's grace is evident? If salvation is simply through God's forgiveness, then the more evil we do, the more God is glorified? If we are to receive more of God's grace, then should we not sin more and more? Again, Paul says "may it never be!" because God's grace leads us to live more like His own righteousness. He gives us His own righteousness through belief in His Son so we can be in

His presence in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:21), therefore, our salvation is indeed secure. He also gives us His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20) to help us to become more and more like Him (see Galatians 5:22-23).

1. What is the advantage of being a Jew?

► *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? [Romans 3:1].*

What advantage was exactly the question the Jews were asking. If they were under condemnation, 2:17-29, just like the Gentiles, 1:18-2:16, then why have a Jewish nation at all? The “advantage” which the Jew has is that he is biologically a descendant of Abraham and in a good position to hear about the grace of God from the Law (see Numbers 9:1-11). However, he must become spiritually like Abraham through the new birth (John 8:39-47, see also Romans 4:12-13; 9:6-8).

Circumcision was the God-given sign of the Old Covenant, also called the Old Testament, which God made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) - from God to Abraham and his spiritual descendants - to give them an eternal kingdom here on the earth. God will eventually do this for all born-again Jews, but not for all the Jews. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:3, *Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* “One” here refers to *all* men, Jews or Gentiles, *all* women and children. Each person must place his faith and trust in Jesus Christ to be saved from sin (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). God spiritually qualifies each believer to become a citizen of His coming, eternal kingdom. The Law, such as the Ten Commandments, was not to be obeyed to gain salvation, but to gain blessings while they were in the land. If they had faith as did Abraham, then they had God to help them obey.

► *Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God [Romans 3:2].*

Great is a superlative of *tolus*, which could be translated “greatest.” Paul then lists only one **in every respect**. **First of all** was the first thing God gave to Israel that He had not given to the rest of the Gentile world, namely, **the oracles of God**. Oracles is from *logos*, which means “the spoken word,” which became “the Word of God” - the

Bible (see 2 Peter 1:21). **Entrusted** is the Greek word *pisteuo*, which is usually translated “believe.” This is an Aorist Tense denoting completed action, in a Passive Voice, meaning they received the action of the verb. In addition to “believe,” it can also be translated “entrust” or “trust” or “commit.” So, God entrusted or committed His spoken and then written Word into their hands.

Such special revelation from God is one of the “greatest benefits.” Unfortunately, while God gave the Jews His Law, they have proven that they cannot keep it. God promised them that when they obeyed, He would keep them in the land and bless them. However, He also promised that when they disobeyed, He would drive them out of the land and curse them. Indeed, God removed them out of the land into Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, then allowed them to return; then permitted them to be scattered again by the Romans when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. These first two were limited scatterings; there is only one prophesied *worldwide* scattering of the Jews and only one regathering from all around the world; some think this regathering began in 1918 when the Balfour Declaration by the British Parliament allowed the Jews to begin to return to Israel. The next event on God’s prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the Church. Then, at His Second Advent, Jesus will rule over Israel and make certain that they obey God’s Word. This leadership will allow Israel to remain in the land forever.

2. What good is the Law if it cannot save?

► *What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? [Romans 3:3].*

This question in the Greek text begins with a *ma*, which expects a negative answer. “Does their **unbelief . . . not nullify the faithfulness of God?**” Of course not. The disobedience of the Jew resulted in being driven out of the land (Deuteronomy 29:25-29), but God’s Word also predicted that God would bring the Jews back into the land (Deuteronomy 30:1-4). Today the Jew is back in the land, albeit in unbelief - he is not born again, he is not spiritually saved. Nevertheless God’s Word also promises that Jesus will come again and permanently re-establish the Jew in the land and rule as “The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). The Jew is back in the land, but he will have no peace

until Jesus comes. Compare Romans 1:16-17 where the only condition for salvation is to “believe,” to have faith in Jesus Christ - for the Jew and also for the Greek.

► *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].

May it never be! is *ma genoito*, the strongest negative possible in Greek. It is the same in verse 6. **True** is *alatheia*, which refers to “absolute truth,” which is one of the attributes of God; we call it veracity. It is part of His Holy Character (see John 14:6). **Every** is all men and women, both Jews and Gentiles, for the word “man” is *anthropos*, the Greek word for “mankind.” It is singular, and refers to each and every man and woman in every age. **Every man be found a liar** is true because each person fails to keep his or her word, while God always keeps His. Then, Paul quotes from Psalm 51:4, where King David was confessing his sin with Bathsheba. David had lied to cover up his sin, but he knew that God never lied.

Be justified is from *dikaiosisuna*, which is the same word translated “righteousness.” The verb here can be translated “be found righteous in Thy words.” God’s words are always right and true and just, and He always keeps His word. **Prevail** is the Greek word *nike*, meaning “victory.” **When you are judged** happens every day with God. People judge God unfairly as they rebel against God’s right to judge them or anyone else. God’s Word had put David under the penalty of death; David had been judged, but his repentance kept God from taking his life prematurely.

► *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].

Demonstrates is from *sunhistami*, which literally means “to stand with,” hence, to commend, to stand beside, to place in a striking point of view, to stand in contrast to. Our own lack of righteousness (the Gentile making and breaking his own laws, 2:12-16, and the Jew

receiving and breaking God's Law, 2:21-24) stands in stark contrast to God's **righteousness**. God wrote His own Law, but has never broken it. Jesus proved that He is God in the flesh in that He never committed a sin; and according to 1 John 3:4, "sin in lawlessness" or the breaking of God's Law.

The second question in this verse expects the negative answer: No, God . . . **is not unrighteous**; He has every right to judge Jews and Gentiles. This parenthetical sentence (**I am speaking in human terms**) simply means that he is presenting this as a human argument, from a human perspective, not a divine perspective.

► *May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? [Romans 3:6].*

In verse 6, Paul repeats his **May it never be!** and then concludes, **For otherwise how will God judge the world?** The standard of God's judgment is God Himself; He has perfectly kept His own Word and has the right to judge, even though all men are sinners.

► *But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner? [Romans 3:7].*

Notice that verse 7 says **the truth of God abounded to His glory** - not "my lie has abounded to His glory." Paul and the rest of us are liars, because we have not kept our word. But, God has kept His Word, and it abounds to His glory. **Glory** is *doksa* (English word "doxology"), which comes from *dokeo*, which means to think, or to illuminate. Paul's "lie" did not abound to God's glory; if it did, then there might be an argument against Paul **still being judged as a sinner**. But, God's own truth abounds to His glory, and qualifies Him to judge all men who are liars.

3. Does God's grace give us license to sin? (Romans 3:8).

► *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].*

Slanderously is from *blasphiami*, which gives our English word

“blaspheme.” It means to slander, to say things that are not true, to revile, to criticize. **Some claim** were Jews; **Let us do evil that good may come** is another way of saying, “Let us sin, that God’s grace may abound.” The accusers were saying in effect, “If God saves us by grace, and not by works, then the more we sin, the more grace we get from God!” They were saying that Paul was preaching *license*, that after we are saved, we can go out and sin more and more because all it does is bring more of God’s grace. This might seem logical, but such a conclusion is totally out of context with the New Testament. We are secure in our salvation because it is of *God’s grace*, not *our works*. But, now as God’s children, if we sin willingly, we come under God’s discipline. If we harbor unconfessed sin in our lives, we quench and grieve the Holy Spirit, we are out of fellowship with God, and God’s fruit is not produced in our lives. People who hear the Gospel of God’s Grace and think we are preaching *license*, are under their own condemnation.

Paul concludes: **Their condemnation is just**. “Just” is the Greek word *endika* which is made up of two Greek words *en* meaning “in,” and *dika*, which means right, just, or fair. It comes from the root word meaning “righteousness,” *dikaiousuna*, in verse 5. Paul is saying that God will condemn them for such an erroneous conclusion, because they are rejecting His grace for their own good deeds. The Apostles of Jesus Christ were blasphemed (especially by the Jews) for preaching a salvation of God’s grace through faith. The world of unbelievers has always had a problem with God’s grace, that is why they have by and large rejected it and substituted systems of religion which they use to try to justify themselves. Sadly, their systems will never be accepted by God in place of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

God Himself is the highest standard of righteousness. His Law that He gave to the Jews reveals His holiness. God did not set a holy standard (which men would break) just to glorify Himself. Such would be an egotistical act of selfishness. God is incapable of sinning. But, to reveal Himself to the Jews and ultimately to the whole world of Gentiles, He gave the Law to Israel. Because God sovereignly brought Israel into existence (see Romans Chapter 9), and gave them His Law, He has every right to hold them accountable to keep that Law. Just because God established the standard and they broke it, they cannot complain that God has no right to judge them. The Law reveals the

holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man. It shows our desperate need of forgiveness through the death of Christ upon the cross and His resurrection. Our faith in Him alone is what brings God's salvation.

F. All - Gentiles and Jews alike - are under sin: Paul's closing argument (Romans 3:9).

Here we have Paul's "closing argument" in this section of Romans on the Doctrine of Sin. In a court of law the prosecuting attorney gives his "closing argument," that part of the trial when he sums up everything he has been trying to prove throughout the trial. He is trying to convince the jury that his argument is correct. In this case, however, the jury is also the accused. The first 17 verses of Chapter 1 contain Paul's salutation, his greeting to the Church at Rome, and the theme of this letter in verses 16-17: "The Book of Romans reveals how sinners can be justified before a righteous God." Then from 1:18 on, he carefully presented the facts that all of us are under sin. He first condemned the Gentile (those who are very sinful, and those who are moralistic), and then he condemned the Jew.

Here Paul proves that all of us, both Jew and Gentile, are guilty before God. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory and holiness. The "closing argument" is in three parts.

1. His "opening statement:" we are all under sin (Romans 3:9).

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

What then? introduces Paul's opening statement of his closing argument. The opening statement, like the first sentence of a book, is the most important sentence. **We** refers again to the Jews whom he has been addressing since Romans 2:17. (Notice that Paul includes himself in the "we," because he was a Jew. The **they** refers to the Gentiles whom he dealt with in 1:18-2:16.) **Better** is the Greek word *proecheo*, which literally means, "to hold forth." In the Middle Voice, as here, it can mean "better, preferred, or have advantage over." Paul provides the answer, **not at all**. The Jew has given up his advantage over the Gentiles, because both are sinners. God used the Jew to write the Bible

and to bring the Messiah, Jesus Christ, but the Jew is still a sinner and needs personal salvation.

Already charged is one word in the Greek text, and is a legal term, the term used to formally charge a person with a crime. Now, here's the charge: **that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin**. "Greeks" is another word for "Gentiles." For the first time in three chapters on the doctrine of sin, Paul finally uses the word "sin" (he did use the word "sinners" back in verse 7, but here he finally uses the word *sin*). The Greek word is *hamartia*, which means to fall short, to come short, to miss the mark. When translated "sin," it refers to coming short of God's absolute righteousness, His perfect righteousness. Man has a form of righteousness, but it is relative when compared to God's holiness. Therefore, all men and women, boys and girls, have sinned; we have all failed to live up to God's holiness.⁵

2. His "supporting evidence:" the Word of God (Romans 3:10-18).

a. God's Word says we have violated God's absolute righteousness.

► as it is written, "*THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE*" [Romans 3:10].

Is written is a Perfect Passive from *gegrapho*. The Perfect Tense denotes past action with present, on-going results. Therefore, what God "has written," He will bring to pass. **Righteous** is *dikaïosuna*, which means a perfect righteousness. Man looks at the righteousness of the Bible and demeans it, and it comes out relative to God's own righteousness. Or, man will possess an external righteousness, without having an internal righteousness. **None righteous** in theological terms means that we are all totally depraved. Total depravity does not say that man is incapable of good deeds, but that he is incapable of justifying himself before the Holy God. Paul is quoting from Psalm 14:1-3, *The*

⁵ All religions of the world except Christianity have a low view of God and a high view of man. They do not recognize how holy God is, or how sinful man is. Their system of religion supposedly will enable them to work their way back up to God's level. Some religious systems will include God in the work, but they always include man. Some religious systems do not even need God. All of their works are done by man, with God playing no part at all. True salvation is by God's grace without any help from man (Ephesians 2:8-9).

fool has said in his heart, there is no God. When man refuses to acknowledge the absolute righteousness of God, he sometimes becomes an atheist and simply denies the existence of God. **Not even one** is repeated at the end of verse 12, and there are six descriptions of man's fallen nature in these three verses. Six is the biblical number of man in rebellion against God.

► *THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS. THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE THAT DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE [Romans 3:11-12].*

There are three basic parts of a man's soul: his heart, his mind and his will. In these two verses, Paul shows that man is fallen in all three. **None who understands** shows that man is fallen in his mind. **None who seeks for God** shows man is fallen in his heart. **All have turned aside** shows man is fallen in his will.

Seeks is from *ekzateo*, which means to seek out. So, if "none seeks for God," then how did we Christians find God? Because He was seeking us. No one can "boast" (Ephesians 2:9) about finding God in salvation, because none of us were looking. God was looking for us.

Turned aside is *ekklino*, which means to turn away. This is an act of the will, so we are *deliberately* turning aside. **Together** refers to all the Jews and all the Gentiles. **Useless** is the Greek word *achreomai*, which is an Ingressive Aorist. It started in a point in time and continued. It is the translation of a Hebrew verb used of milk that turns sour, to go bad. **Good** is *chrestotes*, the same word translated "kindness" in Galatians 5:22-23, used of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Man cannot produce what the Spirit of God can produce. It includes the utility of goodness, a good act that accompanies goodness. It means benevolence, kindness.

b. The Word says our lives prove it (Romans 3:13-18).

(1) With our speech (Romans 3:13-14).

► *THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING, THE POISON OF ASPS IN UNDER THEIR LIPS; WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS [Romans*

3:13-14].

Is an open grave is a Perfect Passive Participle from *anoigo*, which means to open. It could be translated “has become like an open grave” (out of which comes only spiritual deadness). Note that verses 13-18 will show that sin in whatever we think, say, or do displeases a Holy God. This first one refers to our speech; what we say.

(2) With our actions (Romans 3:15-17).

► *THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN [Romans 3:15-17].*

This is what we do.

(3) With our thoughts (Romans 3:18).

► *THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES [Rom. 3:18].*

This is what we think.

3. Paul’s conclusion: we know that we are guilty (Romans 3:19-20).

► *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; 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].*

Here is the apostle Paul’s closing argument, like the last appeal of a lawyer who is summing up his case. He anticipates the verdict will come back “guilty as charged.” Each person must agree with the Word of God that *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). Everyone is guilty before God: Jew and Gentile alike. Men and women have a form of righteousness called “relative righteousness,” but all have fallen short of God’s “absolute righteousness,” His holiness. The blood of Jesus Christ is the God-provided payment for sin. Those who receive Christ by faith will be cleansed; they will be acquitted as if they were never guilty. This great salvation Paul covers

beginning with Romans 3:21.

III. Salvation: Being Justified by God (Romans 3:21-5:21).

A. Do not try to justify yourself, let God do it (Romans 3:21-31).

You and I would not try to make electricity, if all we had to do was to flip the switch on the wall. Neither are we going to go out and try to run 70 miles per hour, since we have a car that can do it for us. We are not about to try and swim the Atlantic Ocean, when all we have to do is buy a ticket on an airline. We will not waste our time paying installments on a bill that has already been paid.

But this is exactly what some do when it comes to salvation. The Holy Spirit has come and done His job of convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Unfortunately, seeking to justify themselves, most people join or create some kind of religion. Instead of flipping the switch, they try to make electricity. Instead of getting into a modern automobile in which they can travel 70 miles per hour, they try to run that fast. They put on their bathing suits and would rather try to swim the Atlantic, drowning in the process, than buy a ticket on an airplane that will easily take them to Europe. To justify themselves, people would rather pay installments on a debt that has already been paid.

Everyone has been convicted by the Holy Spirit, but instead of admitting their sin, and accepting the shed blood of Jesus Christ, some would rather try to work off their sin. They want to justify themselves, and if they can accomplish that, they will get the glory instead of God. Saving oneself, or justifying oneself before a Holy God is like trying to make electricity, or running 70 miles per hour, or swimming the Atlantic Ocean, or trying to pay installments on a bill that has already been paid. The deepest motive for self-justification comes from *pride*. Usually, man wants to justify himself instead of accepting his own total depravity and his inability to justify himself. Some rebel at the thought of someone else having to do it for them; we often reject the thought of Jesus Christ doing something for us that we could not do for ourselves. To reject God's plan of salvation is to reject the Person of Jesus Christ, and for that there is no forgiveness. Rejection of Christ is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31), who came to reveal the Lord Jesus

Christ. Our only hope for eternal salvation is by faith alone in Jesus alone.

In the previous passages, Paul has presented man's dilemma with an "air-tight" case. His legal, closing argument in Romans 3:9-20 proved that all Jews and Gentiles are guilty of sin before the Holy God. If the Book of Romans stopped here, Paul would leave us hopelessly facing inevitable condemnation from God and eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire. But, the inspired text of Romans does not stop there. In the passage now before us, Paul will show the simple solution that God has provided to reconcile us back to Himself. God is willing to justify, to save any person, Jew or Gentile, who will trust in the Person and work of His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. What man cannot do for himself, God is willing to do, because He loves us so much.

There are three reasons we must let God justify us:

1. God is the only One who can justify anyone (Romans 3:21-25a).

► *But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets [Romans 3:21].*

But now ties this passage back to 1:18-3:20, which was Paul's legal argument that both Jews and Gentiles are guilty sinners before God. **Apart from the Law** means that righteousness can come to the believer without keeping the Law. Verse 20 says that *through the Law comes the knowledge of sin*; so, the purpose of the Law was not to provide a way of salvation for sinners, but to reveal the holiness of God and the sinfulness of men. **Righteousness** is *dikaïosuna*, the same root from which comes the word "justified" in verse 24. So, to be "justified" means "to be declared righteous." This *dikaïosuna* is "of God," so it must be absolute righteousness, Divine perfection, holiness.

Has been manifested is a Perfect Tense from *phanaroo*, which means to bring into the light, to manifest. The Perfect Tense denotes past action with present, on-going results. God "manifested" His own righteousness at the cross of Christ. His holiness is so perfect, that it took the shed blood of His own Son to pay for our sins. If you want to see how righteous God is, then simply look at the cross. **Being**

witnessed is from *martureo*, which gives our English word “martyr.” **The Law and the Prophets** is a dual reference to the entire Old Testament. There is no contradiction between the message of the Law, and the message of the Prophets.

► *[E]ven the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe, for there is no distinction [Romans 3:22].*

Faith is the Greek word *pistis*, which comes from the same root *pisteuo* translated **who believe** in this same verse. Another English word for faith is “trust.” So, faith or trust is the only condition for salvation. But, “faith” in the Bible always has an object, and faith is only as good as its object. **In Jesus Christ** is the correct object of faith throughout the Bible, verse 26. (Compare John 8:56 where Jesus says, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad.* Abraham looked forward to the sacrifice of Christ and trusted in the coming Messiah to pay the price for his sins. Old Testament people were saved by grace through faith, just as we are.)

For there is no distinction means distinction between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, boys and girls - as verse 23 says.

► *(F)or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [Romans 3:23].*

Sinned is the verb form *hamartano*, from the noun *hamartia* (see Romans 3:9). The verb means to miss the mark, to fall short. The verb translated “fall short” is *hustereo*. We are all created in the image of God, but we have failed to live up to His righteousness, the holiness of God. **Glory** is *doksa*, which is from *dokeo*, meaning to think, or to illuminate. Theologically, it refers to the “unveiled glory,” or the “outshining glory” of God. **Of God** is a Possessive Genitive, denoting ownership; only God “owns” this kind of glory.

► *[B]eing justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus [Romans 3:24].*

Being justified is a Present Passive Participle from *dikaioo*. This is a legal act, not a process. It is a moment in time when God declares a

sinner righteous.⁶

Gift means exactly that. It is a gift from God, without the sinner doing anything to earn his or her justification (see Ephesians 2:8-9). **Grace** is *charis*, which means God's unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. **Redemption** is *apolutroo*, meaning to release by paying a ransom. The ransom is found in the next verse - **His blood**. Salvation is free to the sinner, but it cost the blood of the Son of God to pay for our sins. Nevertheless, to us it is a free gift.

► *[W]hom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith [Romans 3:25a].*

Propitiation is *hilastarion*, which means judicial satisfaction. God the Father is judicially satisfied with the payment of the shed blood of His own Son. He will never be satisfied with any other payment.

2. God justifies any sinner who trusts in Jesus (Romans 3:25b-26).

► *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, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus [Romans 3:25b, 26].*

To demonstrate is from *endeiksis*, meaning a pointing out; a manifestation, a public declaration. **Forbearance** can also be translated "patience." **Passed over** is *paresis*, which is a letting pass; a passing over. The word "atonement" does not appear in the New Testament, because it means "a covering." "Atonement" was a temporary covering of the sins of the people of the Old Testament, until Jesus could come and die on the cross for all our sin. This can be

⁶ Warren Wiersbe says in his commentary on Romans, "Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross," see Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* by Victor Books (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2003). See especially Romans 1:16-17. (Compare Luke 15:10 where Jesus says that the angels in heaven rejoice when a sinner repents. They rejoice because God has declared a sinner forgiven and righteous.)

described as a “passing over.” God patiently waited, and temporarily covered the sins of all people of the Old Testament until Jesus could pay for **all** sin. God was working out in human history His divine plan; so, He “passed over” the sins of the people before the cross. But, through their faith, God could save them, and through the Law, God would save people until Jesus came.

The demonstration of His righteousness is the cross of Jesus Christ (see Rom. 1:16-17). **He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith** shows that only God can justify, or declare someone righteous enough to get into heaven. We cannot earn our way, or declare ourselves that righteous.

3. Salvation, then, comes from faith alone in Jesus alone (Romans 3: 27-31).

► *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 the works of the Law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. [Romans 3:27-30].*

Law of faith could be translated “a rule of faith.” This is God’s rule, not ours. He has locked all mankind into His plan of salvation by grace through faith.

God can be the God **of Jews** and **of Gentiles**, because salvation comes *not* from keeping the Law, which was given to the Jews. But, salvation or justification is by faith in Jesus Christ. Justification is not by circumcision, therefore, God can justify the **circumcised** and the **uncircumcised**. God is not restricted by the Law, or customs, or traditions, or nationalities. He can save anybody.

► *Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law [Romans 3:31].*

Faith, then, does not **nullify the Law**. **We establish the Law** because we come to God by faith in Jesus Christ. By coming to God by faith in

Christ, we agree with the Law that it has revealed the holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man. If we try to come to God through some religion, we are saying that the Law is wrong, that we are NOT condemned before the Holy God and that we can work our way back to righteousness, and we can work our way into heaven. Such is the nature of all religion apart from Christianity. All religions must be examined in the light of Holy Scripture. True Christianity and salvation comes only through faith in Christ for justification. Anything else is a false religion. If any religious system includes human works to earn salvation, it is not true, biblical Christianity, even though it may call itself "Christian."

In summary, man must stop trying to justify himself before a Holy God, and come to faith in Jesus Christ, who has paid the price for all our unrighteousness, trusting that Jesus' payment on the cross is all-sufficient to atone for our sin. As a result of our faith in Christ, God declares us righteous enough to get into heaven. We need not try to work out in installments what has already been paid for. We must put our faith in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of all the things we have thought or said or done that have violated the Holy Character of God.

B. Follow the examples of Abraham and David. Justification must come from God through our faith in Christ (Romans 4:1).

Most of us have one or more credit cards with which we can easily accumulate all kinds of unpaid bills. Amassing a large consumer debt is very common in our culture. We make numerous small purchases that quickly mount to a very large debt. This is the way our sin has done before God. As children, we disobey our parents, and sin against God. In school we push another child to the ground on the playground, and sin against God. We disobey or ignore our teachers, and sin against God. As we grow older, the offenses become more serious with petty theft, gossiping, or lying. We learn to lust, hate, or hold resentments. If we ever saw a bill with "balance due" at the bottom, like a monthly credit card balance, we would gasp at the debt we had amassed against God. The Holy Spirit is here and has done His job. He has revealed our sin to us and how we have offended the Holy God. The word "convict" in John 16:8 comes from *elegcho*, which means, "to make clear." The Holy Spirit "makes clear" or "reproves" or

“rebukes” or “lays bare” the quantity and quality of our sin, and it takes our breath away. To this realization people usually respond in one of four ways:

- They can deny they have ever sinned at all. They can ignore the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, and think that by their denial they can escape the judgment of God. They pretend that God’s judgment really won’t happen.
- They can believe this horrible debt they have piled up against God, but then begin to compare their own sin to the sin of others. It is easy enough to find someone whose sin is worse than ours, and engage in the process of self-justification by comparing ourselves to others. They try to explain away the debt.
- They can believe this horrible debt they have piled up against God, but then begin to try and work it off. People get very “religious” as they try to appease the wrath of God. They join churches, purchase Bibles, pray, and generally try “to clean up their act.” They try desperately to have more good deeds than bad, to tip the scales, hoping their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. They hope that for every good deed, one or more bad deed gets erased “in their big credit card debt in the sky.”
- Or, they can do like Abraham and David. They can believe the Bible (Abraham had special Revelation from God, and David had the Law, Judges and Ruth) that we have this horrible debt piled up against God and that there is no way it can be paid it off. Even if our good deeds could out-weigh our bad deeds, there are not enough days left, or time left to produce enough good deeds. All the while we are trying to do good deeds, we still are producing bad deeds, deeds of wickedness that make the debt greater and greater. The Bible makes no promises of us working off the debt we owe to God’s holiness. There is no way for **us** to pay the bill. Someone has got to pay it for us. Christ did this, on the cross.

Abraham and David both believed that the promised coming Messiah would pay the bill. Jesus Christ paid it all. Genesis 15:6 refers to “descendants,” but is better translated “seed” as in the King James Version. Galatians 3:16 interprets this “seed” as singular, referring to

Jesus Christ. David wrote several messianic Psalms, such as Psalm 22, which describes in vivid detail the One who would come and die for his (David's) sin. All that God asks of us is to trust that Jesus paid a debt He did not owe, for us - who had a debt we could not pay.

Paul's argument of Romans 3:21-31 is that justification is an act of God in response to any sinner's faith in Jesus Christ. But, to prove his point, Paul uses 4:1-12 to bring up two examples from the Old Testament; two examples of men who were saved by grace through faith, justified, declared right by God in His sight, made righteous enough to get into heaven. These two men were Abraham and David, two of the most well-known, well-respected men from the Old Testament. Abraham lived *before* the Law was given to Moses; David lived *after* the Law was given. (Remember that when Paul wrote to the Romans, the writing of the New Testament was barely getting started.)

1. Abraham was justified by God through faith alone (Rom. 4:1-3).

► *What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS" [Romans 4:1-3].*

What then ties this passage back to what Paul was saying in 3:21-31, summed up in verses 22-24, *all those who believe . . . being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*. Paul gives us his first Old Testament example: Abraham (Abram). Think about Abram for a moment (see Genesis 11:26), who became what we call "the fountainhead" of the nation of Israel. God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans to a place where he would show him, a place later called "The Promised Land." Out of Abram, God created a special nation which He called "My people," in Exodus 3:7ff. God kept his promise and made from Abram a great nation. Compare Genesis 15:6 when Abram . . . **believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness**. That is the verse Paul quotes in Romans 4:3. But, look at what has happened to Abram before this:

- When his name was "Abram," God called him out of Ur of the

Chaldeans, but did not tell him where he was going! Abram went anyway. Abram failed the first test by taking his family with him, against the specific instructions of the LORD.

- Abram failed the second test, after a drought forced him and his wife down to Egypt. He feared the Pharaoh of Egypt more than God, so he lied to the Pharaoh, saying that Sarai (Sarah) was his sister, not his wife. God delivered Abram and Sarai out of that predicament.

- Abram failed his third test by continuing to live with his nephew, Lot. So, God blessed them so much, they had to separate; the land would not sustain them together. Lot chose the fertile valley near Sodom and Gomorrah, and eventually wound up living in those cities.

- Abram passed the next test when Lot and his family were kidnapped by the combined forces of four kings. Abram was first a city-dweller in Ur of the Chaldeans, and later a nomad in the desert, but had never been a soldier. God turned Abram and his household into soldiers and they rescued Lot and his family. Abram acknowledged that God owned everything by paying a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek, the high priest in Jerusalem. Melchizedek was a type of Jesus Christ. Abram was acknowledging that without God's help, he could have never pulled it off.

- **Abram** means *exalted father* and through Abram God promised a whole nation, through whom would come the Savior of the world, even the Savior of Abram. But, he was childless, because his wife, Sarai, was barren. Without a miracle, all the promises of God were worthless and hopeless to Abram.

Abram was at the end of his rope. Everything that he did in obedience to God was flawed. Abram had failed God almost at every turn, and his future in the Promised Land looked absolutely hopeless. It was at that point that God appeared to him in a vision (see Genesis 15:1-6), and promised him that *the LORD* would give him eternal life. Abram had nothing to rely on in himself; all he could do was trust the word of God. He had all kinds of examples of miracles that God had worked to get him to this point. But, if Abram was to receive the gift of eternal life, he had to receive it by faith, not by works. All his works had fallen short of God's glory. The only way Abram could be saved for all

eternity was to believe God's promise.

Genesis 15:5-6 was God's offer of salvation to Abram, if only Abram would trust in Him. Abram did trust God for salvation, and God "reckoned it to him as righteousness." God justified Abram in response to a result of his faith. "Reckoned" is the Hebrew word *chashab*, which in its root form means "to weave." It included the mental processes in weaving an intricate pattern, and hence, came to be used for thinking, regarding, valuing, or computing. Therefore, in response to Abram's faith, God simply "regarded," or valued, his faith as righteousness. Abram did nothing to earn a right standing before God; he simply believed God's promise that in his own lineage, One would come to earth to become his substitute for sin.

"Descendants" in Genesis 15:5 is *zera*, a masculine singular noun which can be translated "seed" (King James Version), or child, or posterity. The New American Translators chose to translate this as a collective noun, hence, "descendants," based on the context of the word "count," which means to enumerate, to recount, to celebrate, to tell out the message. The "message" of the stars in the original signs of the Zodiac tells of the coming of the Messiah who would die for the sins of the world. Abram knew this, as God promised him, *so shall your seed be*. Also, Galatians 3:16, written under the inspired pen of the Apostle Paul, said it is singular, "seed," and refers to Jesus Christ. In other words, God narrowed it down for Abram, that He would bring forth through him, a descendant who would fulfill all that God promised, One who would pay for all Abram's failures. All Abram's sin would be atoned for by One who would come through his own loins. Being without a descendant, without an heir, the only way Abram could be saved was by faith in what God said. He believed, and God considered that to be righteousness - the quality of righteousness that gave Abram eternal life. The payment by Christ still had to be made on the cross, but God could go ahead and save him now by grace through his faith.

Later in Genesis 22, Abram passed the test of faith by offering Isaac as a burnt sacrifice to God. Hebrews 11:17-19 explains that Abram knew that it was through Isaac the promised "seed" would come. Therefore, God would have to raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill His promises to Abram. If God would send His own Son (as taught by the message of the stars), then it was a reasonable request that God would ask Abram

to offer up Isaac in sacrifice. Abram was willing to do that, and passed this supreme test of faith. **Abraham** (Abram) means *father of nations*, which required even more faith. Through Isaac, Abraham became the father of the nation Israel. But, through Ishmael, Abraham became the father of many nations. Then, through his later wife, Keturah (Genesis 25), Abraham became the father of more nations.

Forefather is the only time this word occurs in the Greek New Testament. It refers to physical ancestry, as further explained by **according to the flesh**. This is in contrast with verse 11 and Abraham's spiritual ancestry. All believers in Christ are spiritual descendants of Abraham.

Was justified is an Aorist Tense, which denotes a completed action, from the verb *dikaioo*, meaning "to declare righteous." This is a legal term that speaks of a spiritual standing, and spiritual status before God (Romans 8:1). This is the same righteousness that Christ has, an Absolute Righteousness that will allow the believer into heaven. (Abraham went on later to lie to Abimelech, king of Gerar, in Genesis 20, just as he lied to Pharaoh in Genesis 12 before he was saved. So, *positional* righteousness is not the same as *practical* righteousness.) As far as **works** were concerned, Abraham had plenty, and **has something to boast about** - before men. **But not before God** because God will not justify anyone on the basis of works or deeds (see Romans 3:20).

Romans 4:3 is a quote of Genesis 15:6. **Reckoned** is the Greek word *logizomai*, an accounting term which means to count, to calculate, to think upon, to lay down as a matter of account, to credit to an account. God "credits" the righteousness of Christ to our account of indebtedness and balances the account. He puts us back into perfect standing with Himself, as if we had never sinned. This is what we call a first-class miracle. It is the same in verses 4 and 5.

2. David was justified by God through faith alone (Romans 4:4-8).

► *Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits 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 4:4-8].

Verse 4 simply explains the logic of a workman and his wages. *Misthos* is the Greek word for **wages**, and it means that which is earned. If we work, then we earn what we receive; we receive wages, or payment for what we have done. If it is wages, then it cannot be a “favor.” **Favor** is *charis*, which means God’s unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. If we “work” for salvation, then, we are not seeking God’s favor, we are seeking His approval. If we work for our salvation, we are seeking to justify ourselves before the Holy God. We reject His justification and are seeking to substitute our own. It is not “reckoned” - the Greek *logizomai* - but is received “as what is due,” from the Hebrew *ergozomai*, from which English derives the word “energy.” Then, there is no gift involved, as taught by Ephesians 2:8-9, instead, salvation would become something that people earn. This is impossible.

Faith and works do not mix, for it says, **the one who does not work, but believes in Him. Ungodly** is *asebomai*. The word *sebomai* means, godly, sacred, pious. *Asebomai* has the negating prefix and so refers to all that is ungodly, irreverent, impious, wicked (New International Version). Our problem is that we do not want to admit that we are wicked.

In verse 6 Paul brings up his second Old Testament example, **David. Blessing** is *makarios*, which means a supernatural blessing. This is not something which man can conjure up, or force God to send down. *Makarios* is that blessing from God in response to man’s faith **apart from works**.

Verses 7 and 8 are a quote from the first two verses of Psalm 32, the context of which is David’s confession of his sin with Bathsheba. David did not try to work off his sin, but simply confessed it, claiming God’s mercy and grace on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ. **Lawless deeds** is the Biblical definition for “sin” (1 John 3:4). **Have been forgiven** is another Aorist Tense denoting completed action; this time from *aphiami*, which means to send away, usually translated “forgive.”

Have been covered is another Aorist Tense, this one from *epikalupto*, which means to cover over, to veil over with a pardon. **Will not take into account** is a Subjunctive Aorist from the same verb *logizomai*. The Subjunctive Mood is the mood of contingency. The Aorist Tense denotes a completed action. Hence, what Paul is saying is that there is no possible contingency for the Lord to “take into account” our “sin” because they **have been forgiven**; they **have been covered** with a pardon. A pardon of a criminal does not indicate the crime was not committed, just that it is now forgiven.

Thus, Paul has proven from these two Old Testament examples that justification is by faith alone in Christ alone. We are justified, or saved, by God’s grace through our faith in Christ. Our personal deeds have nothing to do with the saving grace of God.

C. God justifies us through our faith, plus *nothing* (Romans 4:9-25).

Most of the world is caught up in some kind of religion that includes human works of some kind, along with faith for salvation. But God justifies people only on the basis of **faith alone** in Jesus Christ, plus *nothing*. Religion is so very popular because it appeals to the sin nature, it satisfies man’s desire to contribute to his own salvation. He feels better about his salvation if he has made some contribution toward it. Man wants to share in the glory of his own eternal life; he wants to be exalted for raising himself to a higher spiritual level - the same level as God Himself. Many of the Jews of the ancient world, the first century in Rome, thought that their circumcision and their law-keeping were a part of their salvation. But, as Paul argues in this passage, such was not the case. Paul goes back to his illustration of Abraham to show that Abraham was justified before God through faith plus *nothing*, he was saved by God before he was circumcised and before the Law was ever given, so his salvation did not include law-keeping. Abraham was born 720 years before God began giving the Law to Israel through Moses. Abraham was born in 2165 B.C. and God started giving the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai in 1445 B.C.

Today’s equivalents of trying to contribute to or earn ones salvation might include water baptism, communion, church membership, regular church attendance, good behavior, praying toward Mecca five times a day, saying multiple prayers, burning incense, showing reverence

toward ancestors, wise living, helping the poor, being kind to the discouraged, and so on. All these religious acts may find merit among men and women, but they do not find merit before the Holy God of the Bible for salvation.

Scripture says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23). We have all violated the Holy Character of God, and have come under His condemnation. But, because He loves us, He has provided Someone to suffer God's wrath in our place. God has provided His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place. God was so satisfied with that payment, that He raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 4:25), and took Him back into heaven (Colossians 3:1). God spent nearly 1500 years writing the Holy Scriptures, which reveal Himself and His plan. His plan was to provide the payment for our sins: our lying, our lust, our selfishness, our greed, our hatred, our cheating, our stealing, and our immorality. Immediately after Adam sinned and plunged the entire human race into rebellion against God about 6,000 years ago, God began verbally revealing His plan. Then, He began about 3,500 years ago to write down His plan in the Holy Scriptures through His Spirit-inspired prophets and servants. God is in the business of revealing Himself. It is man who does not want to hear about it.

Paul uses the next passage, Romans 4:9-25, to drive home his point that justification (also called salvation) **is by faith alone**, apart from any human effort. He goes back to his illustration of Abraham to prove his point:

1. Abraham was not justified by faith plus circumcision (Romans 4:9-12).

► *Is this blessing then on the circumcised or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised [Romans 4:9, 10].*

This is a demonstrative adjective that refers back to verse 8: the "blessing" of a *man whose sin the LORD will not take into account*. **Blessing** is *makarios*, which means "supernatural blessing;" it is a

blessing which only God can provide. **Then** ties this passage back to verses 1-8, but it also is the word which anticipates a positive answer to Paul's question. His question includes . . . **on the uncircumcised also**, which gets the attention of all his Jewish readers. The Jews used to take pride in their circumcision and in their law-keeping. Paul will destroy both sources of pride in this passage. **Faith** is *pistis*, which always requires an object, and the correct Object for faith in the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. **Was credited** is an Aorist Passive verb from *logizomai*, which means to credit to an account. Paul uses this verb nine times in this chapter, so it must be an important concept in Paul's theology. In other words, God saw Abraham's faith in the coming Lord Jesus Christ (see John 8:56), and "reckoned it" or "considered it" or "credited it" to Abraham as righteousness. God responded to Abraham's faith in Someone who would pay for his own wrongdoing and credited Abraham with His own **righteousness**, *dikaïosuna* - the Absolute Righteousness that it takes to get into heaven. It is the same word in verse 13.

One reading this letter to the Church in Rome would likely put a long pause after the question, **While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?** The Jewish audience got very quiet as they began to realize that over 13 years had passed from Genesis 15:6 when Abraham was saved, until Genesis 17:26 when Abraham was circumcised. Paul can then safely say, "Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised." Therefore, Abraham's circumcision had *nothing to do* with receiving his salvation, his justification.

► *[A]nd he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith he had while circumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, 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 4:11-12].*

Sign is *semeion*, which means a sign, a mark, an attestation, a convincing token, a proof, a pledge (see Colossians 2:9-12, which explains that water baptism - an outward sign or witness of the baptism of the Holy Spirit - is the New Testament sign of a believer in Christ). **Seal** is also similar to the seal of the Holy Spirit for a New Testament

believer; see Ephesians 4:30. **The father of all who believe** should be compared to John 8:44 and Galatians 3:26-29. **Righteousness might be credited to them** shows that other people can be saved **without being circumcised**.

Verse 12 elaborates on verse 11 as Paul explains that Abraham is the **father of circumcision** (believing Jews) and **those also who follow in the steps of the faith while uncircumcised** (believing Gentiles). So, Abraham is the spiritual father of all those who have believed since.⁷

2. Abraham was not justified by faith plus law-keeping (Romans 4:13-17).

► *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 [Romans 4:13].*

In this verse **promise** is in stark contrast to **the Law**. “The Law” was another source of Jewish pride, as many of the Jews used Law-keeping to try and justify themselves before men and before God. (Paul himself did, see Philippians 3:6.) The “promise” to Abraham is found in Genesis 12:1-3 in what is called an *Unconditional Covenant*. God made a promise to Abraham, not based upon anything that Abraham would be or do, but only upon who God is and what He would do. This unconditional “promise” to Abraham eventually developed into what we find in Holy Scripture as the *Land Covenant*, Deuteronomy 29-30; the *Seed Covenant*, 2 Samuel 7:16; and the *New Covenant*, Jeremiah 31:31-34. The Land is the land of Israel, described in Scripture. The Seed is the promised Messiah who would come through the lineage of

⁷ Note that Adam, Eve, Abel, Seth, and Noah were all saved by grace through faith before Abraham. Why do we not call Adam or Seth or Noah our “spiritual father?” Because it was through Abraham that God began to form the Jews and distinguish between “the circumcision” and “uncircumcision.” It was at this point God began His special Revelation of writing the Bible through the nation Israel. It is at that point in human history, in the person of Abraham, that God begins to call Abraham “the spiritual father of both Jews and Gentiles.” Adam, Eve, Abel, Seth and Noah were all justified by faith alone, but for Paul’s argument, he goes back only to Abraham. “Father” denotes source, headship, leadership, an example of faith, etc. for all to follow.

King David. The New Covenant is the promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the heart of every believer. The Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12:1-3, includes the idea of eternal life. This predicts an eternal, earthly kingdom where Abraham would live forever with God. Hebrews 11:10 says that he **would be heir of the world**, which will begin with the Second Advent – the millennial Kingdom - of Christ. The word **not** actually appears first in the Greek text, in a position of emphasis. Paul is stressing the fact that **not through the Law** will Abraham be heir of the world . . . **but through the righteousness of faith**. If Abraham (or any of the rest of us) became heirs of the world through law-keeping, then *none* of us would be saved, because we have all broken God's Law.

► *For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation [Romans 4:14-15].*

Made void is *keno*, which means to empty, to remove all contents, to make void. **Nullified** is *katergetai*, which means to make invalid, to nullify. This verse clearly teaches that faith and law-keeping *do not mix* when it comes to justification.

In verse 15 Paul now needs to explain the reason for the Law, if it is not for earning salvation. **The Law brings about wrath**, God's wrath, because it is a revelation of His holiness and our sinfulness. "Brings about" can be translated "keeps on bringing," because we keep on breaking God's Law. The Law was necessary for us to identify **violation** of His law. This word is *parabaino*, which means to deliberately violate a known law. The word "transgressions" (see Romans 4:25) is *paraptoma*, meaning "a false step," an unintentional violation, a mistake, an error which we did not intend to make but we did anyway and are responsible for.

► *For this reason it is by faith, in order that it might be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed 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, (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence 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].

For this reason - that Law-keeping and faith don't mix - **it** (that is, justification or salvation) **is by faith**. "Faith" must **be in accordance with grace**. The only thing that God will mix His grace with is faith. Faith is a non-meritorious act, because "grace" is His favor upon those who deserve exactly the opposite. **Those who are of the Law** are saved under the Law by faith in Jesus Christ, and become part of **those who are of the faith of Abraham**. Thus, he becomes **the father of us all**. Salvation has *always* been by God's grace through man's faith in Christ, not by works, Ephesians 2:8-9 (see also 1 Kings 17:7-24 where the widow at Zarephath had to believe first, if she was to experience the grace of God. God revealed His Word through His prophet, Elijah, but the widow had to respond by faith). God has revealed His Gospel to the world today, but each one of us must respond by faith, without circumcision, without law-keeping. God will save us by His grace through our faith **alone**.

God's promise in Genesis 17:5 - **a father of many nations have I made you** - can easily be fulfilled by a God **who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist** (see Hebrews 11:3). Abraham's and Sarah's bodies were sexually dead in their ability to have a son whom God would use to fulfill all His promises to Abraham. God deliberately waited until it took a miracle to fulfill His promises to Abraham - until Abraham and Sarah could no longer have children; then, He brought their bodies back to life and used them to bring Isaac into the world, and through Isaac He is still working to fulfill all His promises. Compare John 11 where Jesus deliberately waited four days before He raised His friend, Lazarus, from the dead.

3. Abraham was justified by faith alone (Romans 4:18-25). Abraham was justified by resurrection power, not by human effort.

Here is the third point under this section, "God justifies us through our faith plus nothing." In the first point we saw that "Abraham was not justified by faith plus circumcision," because he was justified/saved by the Lord at age 86 (see Genesis 15), but was not circumcised until he was 99 years old (see Genesis 17). So, Abraham was saved for 13 years before he was ever circumcised. In the second point we saw that

Abraham was not justified by faith plus law-keeping, because he was born 720 years before God gave the Law to Moses; and was born-again 634 years before the Law was given. So, there is no way that God justified Abraham on the basis of faith plus circumcision, or faith plus law-keeping. Abraham was justified *by faith alone*. But what was the power that justified Abraham? Was it his faith? When we have faith in Jesus Christ, is that the power that saves us? No. Faith is simply the channel through which the power comes. The power is the resurrection power of God, which Paul explains here in verses 18-25. The same power of God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead when He died for our sins is the power which God uses to raise us from spiritual death in justification to spiritual life.

a. Abraham believed that God had the power to fulfill His promises (Romans 4:18).

► *In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE"[Romans 4:18].*

He believed comes before his justification. Compare verse 14, which says, *whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist* (see Genesis 22). Later, that faith of Abraham would be severely tested in Genesis 22 where God asked Him to sacrifice the son of the promise, Isaac. Remember that the verb translated "believed" is from *pisteuo*, which always takes an object, and the object in the Bible is always God, particularly Jesus Christ. So, this verse, too, gives only one condition for the person coming to God for salvation - faith. The same verb (*pisteuo*) is translated "commit" in John 2:24. The Old Testament believers did not know the earthly name of the Messiah, but they knew that God would come in the flesh to sacrifice Himself for their sins (see Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6) Also, the whole promise of God to Abraham in Genesis 15 was a promise to bring through Abraham a seed who would die for his sins. A better translation for this collective noun is descendant, singular. Galatians 3:16 identifies that "seed," or descendant, as "Christ."

So that he might begins to describe God's plan for Abraham's life: not only to be saved and through his seed bring forth the Messiah, but the passage in Genesis 15 also promises that Abraham will become the

father of many nations. This was God's plan for his life. See Jeremiah 29:11, *For I know the plans I have for you declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future* (New International Version). "Abram" means exalted father, which was his name when God called him. God changed his name to "Abraham," Genesis 17:5, which means "father of many nations." So, what God had said, He had to fulfill. Abram must have been ridiculed in that Middle-Eastern culture where children were considered a mark of greatness. Here is a man whose name means "exalted father," but he did not have any children, much less sons to carry on his name. After Ishmael and Isaac, Abraham went on to have six more sons who became heads of nations. Compare Romans 1:16 . . . *for it is the power of God unto salvation.*

b. The resurrection of Abraham's body and Sarah's body are examples of how God resurrects our dead spirits when we trust in Jesus (Romans 4:19-22).

► *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 [Romans 4:19].*

Without becoming weak in faith is more sanctification in Abraham's life, as was verse 18. He was saved at age 86 in Genesis 15. Then, eleven years later, at age 97, Sarah offered him her handmaid, Hagar. They had gone eleven years without God fulfilling His promise for a son, so they decided they needed to help God out by following a worldly tradition of using a servant to bear children. (It happened to Jacob later, see Genesis 29-30.) When Abraham was 99 years old, God established the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant – circumcision (Genesis 17). God revealed that Ishmael was not the son of the promise, but the son of the flesh. God would restore Sarah's body and Abraham's body and bring forth the promised son, Isaac, whose name means "laughter" (Genesis 17:21), because Sarah laughed (verse 17) when God gave the new information. But, Abraham **contemplated**, *katanoeo*, which means to consider carefully, **his own body, now as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb.** Abraham admitted that his body was as good as dead. It would take a miracle from God to bring forth another

son, and this one from his wife Sarah: that is exactly what God did.⁸

► *[Y]et, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness [Romans 4:20-22].*

Abraham stopped looking at the circumstances and started looking at the Promise of God. **He did not waver** is a Perfect Passive, which denotes a past action with present, on-going results. “He stopped his wavering in unbelief” would be a good translation. **Grew strong** is from the verb *endunameo*, which means “was empowered.” **Giving glory to God** shows the ultimate result of salvation for each person who believes; it is ultimately to give glory to God.

Being fully assured is *plerophoretheis*, which means to be fully assured, to be fully convinced, showing that faith rests in a person (the Person of God, not in a religion or a set of laws or in human deeds). **He was able also to perform** shows again that God and His power and His promises are the only object for our faith, and our salvation.

Therefore gives a conclusion to Paul’s argument for this section: then, he quotes Genesis 15:6 where God justified Abraham. **Credited** is the Greek word *logizomai*, which gives our English word “logistics” or “logical.” It means to set down, to impute, to credit to account. **To him** is Abraham, here a type of every believer, Jew or Gentile, who puts their trust in Jesus Christ and the fact that He died on the cross and rose again to pay the penalty for their sin. **Righteousness** is the goal of salvation (see 1:16-17), *dikaïosuna*, which is absolute righteousness, God’s own righteousness, which he gives each believer at the moment of faith. Now, the believer is prepared for heaven. Abraham made

⁸ We must see ourselves as spiritually dead, before we will come to God for regeneration. As Abraham and Sarah’s bodies were incapable of producing life, so we cannot cause ourselves to be “born again” - God must do that with His resurrection power. If people never admit their need for Jesus Christ, they are not admitting that they are spiritually dead and in need of spiritual resurrection. Therefore, they will never come to faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross to be justified by God.

many mistakes and committed much sin after salvation, but he never lost his salvation.

c. Abraham's faith was recorded for our benefit so that we could see that he was justified by faith plus nothing (Romans 4:23-25).

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

Not for his sake only is Good News for us, because the same salvation offered to Abraham has been offered to every generation after him, including us. **Credited** is the same word *logizomai*. **Those who believe in Him** shows again that the object of our faith is a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. There are over 60 references in Romans to believing or not believing in Christ. **Who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead** is an essential part of the Gospel. If a person cannot believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, how can they believe that His payment on the cross was sufficient to pay for their sins? See especially verse 25.⁹

Delivered over was Christ on the cross. Notice that **because of** occurs twice, once for "our transgressions," and once for "our justification." Both are essential. **Transgressions** is *pamptoma*, which includes small offences such as lying, lust, greed, or selfishness that may be rather undetectable by others, but are clearly seen by God. **Justification** is *dikaïosuna*, the same root as the word translated "righteousness" in Romans 1:17.

D. There are seven long-lasting blessings from God's justification (Romans 5:1-11).

1. Peace with God (Romans 5:1).

⁹ There is a Gospel tract which says, "If you and I are introduced and you forget all about me, you have lost nothing. But, if you and Jesus are introduced and you forget all about Him, you lose everything."

► *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ [Romans 5:1].*

Having been justified is an Aorist Passive Participle. The Aorist Tense denotes a completed action. So, all - denominations, churches, and others - who teach that salvation is a *process* must explain this verbal adjective and all the other verbs in Romans and the rest of the Bible that proclaim that when a person trusts in Jesus Christ they are declared saved by God. It is a finished work of God, completed at the moment of their faith. The Passive Voice denotes the action was done to them; not that they did the action themselves. A Participle is a verbal adjective; it modifies a verb. What is the verb? The main verb is translated “we have peace.” There would be no peace without “having been justified.” The participle is *dikeioo*, meaning “to be declared righteous,” which is what happens the moment we trust in Jesus Christ.

By faith is called a Genitive of Means, and is Impersonal. In other words, “faith” is the means or channel through which God justifies people with his power. They believe, so He justifies (see Romans 1:16-17). Impersonal shows that it does not matter how sinful the person had been, or what color they are, or what their religious background is. God saves whoever believes in His Son, without regard to all the rest. **We** is a plural personal pronoun. All personal pronouns in the Bible get their identification from the immediately preceding noun. Who is “we?” In the context of Romans 4:24 we discover it is *those who believe in Him*.

We have is a Present Tense verb, *echomen*, so **peace** is that which believers now have **with God**. “Peace” is the cessation of conflict, but most people do not realize they are in conflict with God because of sin. That is what **sin** was all about in Romans 1:18-3:20. **Through our Lord Jesus Christ** is a Genitive of Agency, and is *personal* - Jesus Christ is the *personal* Agent through whom God justifies believers; the “we” in the verse represents the *impersonal* - any and all who come to Christ in faith.

2. Access to God (Romans 5:2a).

► *[T]hrough whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand . . . [Romans 5:2a].*

Through whom refers to Christ in verse 1. **We have obtained** is another use of the verb *echomen*, but here it is a Perfect Tense, which denotes past action, with present, on-going results. An expanded translation would say, “we have obtained and still possess.” Compare the other Perfect Tense verb in this verse translated “we stand” from *histami*, which expanded could read, “in which we stand and are still standing.” This word **introduction** is used outside the New Testament for an introduction to a king. It denotes access to a king through efforts of someone else. In other words, we have met God the King through the efforts of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

Grace is *charis*, God’s unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. Through the general and then the special Revelation of God, we learn of the Gospel and His love for us. When we respond by faith, and seek His grace for salvation, He gladly gives it (see Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13).

3. Glorious Hope (Romans 5:2b).

►... and we exult in hope of the glory of God [Romans 5:2b].

We exult is *kauchaomai*, which means to glory, to boast, to rejoice, to have joy and exultation. If we have such great exultation in Christ, we should act like it! **Hope** is *elpis* in Greek and does not refer to the uncertain hope as used in English contexts. (See Titus 2:13 and other passages such as Hebrews 11:1 to understand that our hope as Christians is based upon the promises of God in the Bible for certain events and places that God must fulfill.)

Glory is *doksa*, which comes from the root *dokeo*, meaning to think. “Glory” is the correct thinking about all the attributes of God; His glory is sometimes defined as “the sum of all His perfections.”

¹⁰ Compare the story of the man who needed to meet Abraham Lincoln, but was turned away by all the President’s secretaries. Discouraged, he sat outside the White House on a bench when a young boy came along and asked him why he looked so despondent. After the man explained his problem, the young boy took the man by the hand, led him past all the secretaries and right in to see the President. The young boy was the son of President Lincoln.

4. Christian Character (Romans 5:3-4).

► *And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope [Romans 5:3-4].*

Exult in our tribulations is characteristic only of Christianity, because we see our tribulations in light of our salvation (where we have come from), and our ultimate sanctification (where we will be in heaven). Where other people of other religions “exult in their tribulations,” it is a form of masochism, a form of self-punishment for their own glory, or a form of gaining self-righteousness.

Some do not trust in the sufferings of Christ as the payments for their sins, but see their own sufferings as a payment for their sins. Such a conclusion is unbiblical. **Knowing** is from the Greek verb *oida*, which means to know intuitively, to know instinctively, to sense that something is true. It is another Perfect Participle, which denotes past action, with present, on-going results. Then, Paul describes the results: **tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope.** “Perseverance” is *hupomone*, which means to remain under the lordship of Christ, even when life’s circumstances are not in our favor. We trust that He knows what He is doing, and one thing He is doing is building perseverance into us. The only way to develop this endurance is to be in circumstances which create in us endurance, such as a long-distance runner who practices for his race by running long distances to build his endurance.¹¹

“Proven character” is *dokima*, which means character that has been tested and approved. Tire manufacturers do not build tires and begin to sell them to the public without first testing them. “Hope” is as in verse 2, *elpis*, meaning something concrete. Our hope is in God and the dependable character of God, and the love of God.

¹¹ Bruce Jenner, the Olympian athlete from America who won the decathlon, was asked by a reporter, “What was the hardest part of your training?” Bruce replied, “Getting up at 5:30 A.M. every morning when the alarm went off and running five miles before breakfast.”

5. God's love within us - Romans 5:5-8.

► *[A]nd 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. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [Romans 5:5-6].*

Does not disappoint means “put to shame.” We would be ashamed if God could not fulfill His promises, but He can and does. Why? Because God is motivated by **the love of God**. “Love” is “agape,” unconditional love; love that sees a need and reaches out to meet that need. It is the love which reaches out without giving one thought to what will be received in return. Compare Ephesians 5:25, and Luke 10:25-37. **Has been poured out** is another Perfect Passive, past action (on the cross of Christ), with present, on-going results (John 3:16). “Poured out” is the Greek verb that can be translated “poured out abundantly.”

Within our hearts is another great difference between Christianity and the other religions of the world. Trusting in Jesus Christ brings a new heart: in the Old Testament it is called “a new heart,” or “a cleansed heart” (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:24-27; and Jeremiah 31:31-34); in the New Testament it is called *being born again* (see John 3:3), and *the Spirit in our hearts* (see 2 Corinthians 3:22). In Romans 5:1, the Agent is Jesus Christ. **Who was given** is an Aorist Tense, which denotes a completed action. **Through the Holy Spirit** is another Genitive of Agency, whereas the Agent is the Holy Spirit (Passive Participle, *who was given*). Aorist Tense is completed action, Passive means it receives the action of the verb “give;” so, the Holy Spirit “was given” as a gift to us; (see John 16:7-11). For **hope does not disappoint**: compare Romans 15:13 (see also 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

In verse 6, **still helpless** means weakness, inability to save ourselves. **At the right time** needs to be compared to *when the fullness of time came*, Galatians 4:4-5. **Christ** is the Greek word *Christos*, which we do not translate, but transliterate into an English title. If translated, it would mean “Anointed One,” or “Chosen One.” Jesus was always “The Chosen One,” even before the foundation of the world, but He was officially “chosen” at His baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove (see Matthew 3:16-17). He was chosen

then because He had lived 33 years on the earth as a sinless man, which qualified Him to be *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29). **Ungodly** is *asebomai*, which is *sebomai* with a negating prefix. *Sebomai* means godly, pure, clean.

► *For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us [Romans 5:7-8].*

In the human realm, such as in the novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, a man gives himself for a “good” man. But, in the spiritual realm, where God is the holy standard, *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). **But God demonstrates** is *sunhistami*, which means to stand with, or to stand forth, or to set forth. This is an Aorist Active Infinitive of Purpose. God purposed to show **His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**. While we were going our own way, rebelling against the revealed will of God, doing our own thing, and living separate from God, Jesus was going to the cross to pay the penalty for our sin and at the same time demonstrating or holding forth God’s unconditional love (see Romans 8:35-39). **Sinners** is from *hamartia*, which means those who fall short of the mark, those who miss the mark (which is the holiness of God Himself).

6. Salvation from future wrath (Romans 5:9-10).

► *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 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].*

Having now been justified is an Aorist Passive Participle. The completed action denoted by the Aorist Tense means that when we believed, God “justified” us. He declared us righteous, which is what *dikaioo* means. The noun *dikaiosisuna* is usually translated “righteousness.” **By His blood** is a Dative of Agency. So, the agent of salvation is the blood of Jesus Christ. His blood not only brings us justification, but also **we shall be saved from the wrath of God**

through Him. “Shall be saved” is a Future Tense, because “the wrath of God” has not yet arrived. This certainly includes all future judgment from God (Romans 8:1). It is also a reference to the Rapture of the Church and the beginning of the Tribulation which is called “the wrath of God” in Revelation 14:10 (see also 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9).¹²

Wrath is *orga*, from the verb that means to provoke to anger, to take vengeance, to punish. Since God is a just God, while He is kind and merciful and patient, He must also exercise His wrath and punish all those who reject Christ. **Saved** is from *sozo*, meaning to deliver, to rescue.

We were reconciled is another Aorist Passive verb. “To reconcile” is *katalasso*, which means to exchange for another; it includes the idea of change. Something has to change to bring two things into reconciliation. For example, to reconcile my bank account, I must subtract the service charge from my check register. But, I must also subtract my outstanding checks from the bank balance. Once the changes are made, the accounts are reconciled. Similarly, God and I are reconciled when I repent from anything that is keeping me from trusting Jesus for forgiveness. Then, God changes my account in heaven and credits me with the righteousness of Christ Himself, and we are reconciled. **The death of His Son (and) His life** is the death and resurrection of Christ; both are part of our salvation. God does not see one without the other.

7. Reconciliation with God (Romans 5:11).

► *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 also exult in God because we cannot exult in ourselves. It is God who has made our salvation possible; it is God who was loving us and giving His Son for us while we were still sinners; it is God who was providing the way to be reconciled to Him. We had nothing to do with earning salvation: we simply receive the benefits of everything God has

¹² Here the meaning is that believers will not endure God’s wrath during the seven years of tribulation, having been raptured.

done. So, our rejoicing is in God, not in ourselves.

E. Jesus has taken care of Original Sin, making all men savable (Romans 5:12-21).

1. All people are subject to physical death because of Original Sin (Romans 5:12-14).

► *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned – for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law [Romans 5:12-13].*

Therefore introduces Paul's conclusion to this section (Romans 3:21-5:21), which we call *Salvation*. We have covered the 7 benefits or blessings of salvation in Romans 5:1-11. But, before leaving his defense of Christianity, Paul wants to explain the great contrast between what theologians call the First Adam (the one from Genesis 1-5, the first man, who disobeyed God), and the Second Adam (Jesus Christ from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who perfectly obeyed God).

One or **one man** is found 12 times in this passage, all references to Adam. **Sin** is *hamartia*, which means to fall short, to come short, to miss the mark, to deliberately commit an act against the Holy Character of God. In the Greek text, "sin" has the definite article "the." Sometimes "the" should not be translated at all, which emphasizes the nature of sin, but the presence of the definite article stresses the character of the noun. So, "the sin" (literally) stresses the character of Adam's deliberate rebellion against God. Through that deliberate act of rebellion, **sin entered into the world**. Since Romans 6:23 explains: *the wages of sin is death*, here we find - **and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned**. So, through our father Adam, we all sinned; theologians call this Original Sin. There are two views to explain Original Sin:

- The Federal Headship View, also called the Representative View, says that Adam was the federal head of the human race, much like the president is the federal head of the human government of the United States. In a real way, Adam represents us all. (Infants go to heaven,

then, because when Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2:2, John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, et al, He died for that Original Sin. Since infants or young children die before reaching an age of accountability, God will not hold them responsible for rejecting Christ, which is the only reason anyone goes to Hell.¹³ Therefore, for God to be a just God, He takes all children to heaven when they die.)

- The Natural Headship View, also called the Seminal View, recognizes that the entire human race was seminally and physically in Adam, the first man. As a result, God considered all people as participating in the act of sin that Adam committed in receiving the penalty he received (see Genesis 2:17). Of the two views, the second is easier to defend because of Hebrews 7:9-10 where Levi was seen as tithing because he was “in the loins of this father Abraham when Abraham tithed.”

2. Here two principles need to be established (which Paul does in verses 13 and 14).

► *[F]or until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law [Romans 5:13].*

a. Sin is not imputed when there is no law.

The Law was not given until God gave it to Moses in Exodus 20, about 1445 B.C. Conservative scholars estimate that Adam lived about 4500 to 6000 years before Christ. The figure is about 4500 years by calculating the years of the generations in Genesis. If there are gaps between the generations, then the figure could be as high as 6000. So, from Adam to Moses was about 3000 years while men kept dying (see Genesis 5). “But sin is not imputed when there is no law,” so why were these people dying? There is no command from God recorded except the one He gave Adam in Genesis 2:17; therefore, all men must be guilty of the Original Sin, otherwise they would not have died,

¹³ A person’s eternal destiny is self-determined. Although sin is imputed to us through Adam, it is not this fact that condemns one to hell, rather it is ones rejection of God’s salvation that He has provided through his Son and His death on the cross. For a detailed analysis of this precept see Waterhouse, Steven, *Not By Bread Alone* (Amarillo TX: Westcliff Press, 3rd Ed., 2007) FN 5 pp. 65-67.

because where there is no law, sin is not imputed. The word “imputed” is a very rare Greek word, occurring only twice in the Greek New Testament. It is the word *ellogeo*, which is a compound word from two words: “en,” meaning in or into (the “n” assimilates into an “l” when brought into compound with another word which starts with an “l”, as *logeo*). *Logeo* means to say or speak: hence, to speak into. God dealt with our sins by “speaking them into” the body of Jesus when He hung on the cross (see 1 Peter 2:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:21).

► *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].*

b. Death reigned from Adam until Moses when God gave the Law.

Sin is not imputed where there is no law, but **death reigned**, people kept dying without breaking specifically a command or law from God. “Death reigned” occurs repeatedly in this passage. God had driven Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, so no one would eat of the tree of life and live forever in a fallen state (see Genesis 3:22). The one act of disobedience was all it took to bring universal death into the human race. **Adam** (the First Adam) was a **type of Him who was to come**, the Second Adam, even Jesus Christ.

3. Adam’s one sin causes all men to die, but through the grace of Jesus Christ, all can be made alive (Romans 5:15-17).

► *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].*

Free gift is one Greek word *charisma*, from which we derive our English word “charisma,” but means something totally different. The Greek word is correctly translated here “free gift,” and comes from *charis*, which is grace, God’s unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. God’s grace is all that God is free to do for us based on the work of Christ. This grace is the inexhaustible goodness of God, doing for us what we do not deserve, what we cannot earn, and what we cannot repay.

Transgression is *paraptoma*, which means a trespass, a transgression, a false step. This is a sin which we do as easy as falling off a log; it is an offense against God which we really did not mean to do, but we just did: like lusting, lying, exaggerating, or disrespecting parents. **Many died** is a euphemism, which means that they all died. So, “many” in the last part of the verse also means “all;” all people can benefit from the grace of the **one Man, Jesus Christ**. He is available to all people (see also Matthew 26:28).

► *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].*

Gift is *dorean*, which means a free gift, something given that has not been earned. Salvation cannot be earned. See Ephesians 2:8-9. **The one who sinned** was the first man, Adam. **Judgment** is from *krima* from the verb *krino* which means to decide, to divide, to separate (based on a difference of some kind). So, in the Judgment of the Gentiles, for example (see Matthew 25:32 and following), *Jesus will separate them from one another; the sheep on His right enter the millennial Kingdom and eternal life. The goats on His left are cast into the Lake of Fire.* What is the basis for the separation? It is their behavior - not their behavior that is the basis of their salvation (their deliverance) in the first place; rather it is their behavior that reveals their relationship to Christ. The sheep behave like sheep because they have a relationship with Christ. The absence of that behavior in the goats reveals they have no relationship to Him.

Condemnation is *katakrima*. It is the same word *krima* with the intensifying prefix *kata*. If *krima* is judgment; then, *katakrima* is the judgment carried out. **Many transgressions** includes all the transgressions of the human race, not just Adam’s sin. When Jesus died on the cross, He died for all sin, including Original Sin.

► *For if by the transgression 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].*

Those who receive the abundance of grace is Passive. The believer simply receives the gift of God's grace through his faith in Christ. And with that abundance of grace comes **the gift of righteousness**, which we have seen before in Romans. God gives us the righteousness it takes to join Him in heaven. It, too, is a gift of God's grace. **Righteousness** is that same Greek word *dikaïosuna*, translated "justification" in other places (see verse 18). **Will reign in life** looks back to Romans 4:25 and the resurrection of Christ, and is also futuristic, looking forward to the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23). With a resurrected body, we will **reign through the One, Jesus Christ** in His eternal kingdom.

4. There is a great contrast between the act of disobedience of Adam, as compared to the act of righteousness of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:18-19).

► *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even though through one act of righteousness there resulted 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].*

Condemnation is the same word *katakrima* in verse 16. It came in Genesis 3:6, when God pronounced the curse upon Adam. **There resulted justification of life to all men** does not teach the heresy of Universalism, that all men and women are automatically saved and on their way to heaven. Such heresy ignores all the other clear teachings of Holy Scripture that Christ-rejecters will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (see Matthew 25:41). See the condition of faith as described in Romans 4:23-25.

Justification is *dikaïosuna*, the same root that gives the word "righteousness." **The many** (believers in Christ) **will be made righteous** is "Ultimate Salvation." We were declared righteous at the moment of salvation: "Positional Salvation," or *justification*. We experience righteousness in the Christian life: "Progressive Salvation," or *sanctification*. At either physical death or the Rapture, believers will be made completely righteous; "Ultimate Salvation," or *glorification*. See chart one, "Salvation and the Christian Life," page 94.

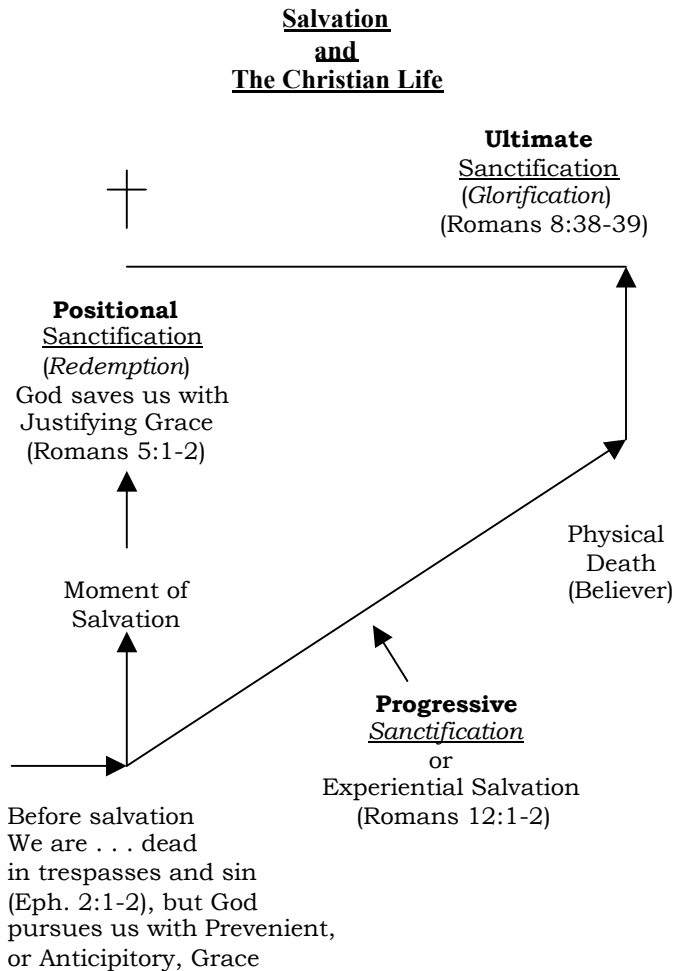


Chart One

Salvation and sanctification are almost interchangeable, because we cannot have one without the other. Salvation (the forgiveness of sins) is the beginning of sanctification (the Christian life). Progressive sanctification is represented by an upward slanting line, because the Christian life is an uphill struggle (1 Peter 2:2, Galatians 5:16).

5. God's grace is greater than all our sin (Romans 5:20-21).

► *The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord [Romans 5:20-21].*

The Law was given for two basic reasons:

- To reveal the holiness of God, because He has never once broken any of His laws; and,
- To reveal our sinfulness, because we repeatedly break His laws.

The Law is designed to bring us to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ, to see how unworthy we are, how much God loves us unconditionally, how much He has done for us, and to help us make the decision to trust in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ (See Galatians 3:24). **Would increase** means that **the transgression** has increased beyond Original Sin to prove that we are all sinners.

Sin reigned in death because *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). But, **grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life**. So, God's plan ultimately works. His grace is all sufficient. His redemption is complete. We do not have to bring our good deeds or our relative righteousness into God's plan. It will not help, and God does not need it. His free gift of righteousness will make sure that we will **reign . . . to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**. What a marvelous, complete plan of redemption God has provided!

IV. Sanctification: Living out the Christian Life (Romans Chapters 6-8).

A. Since we are secure in Christ, do we have a license to sin? *No!* (Romans 6:1-14).

1. God's divine view of Sanctification is our identification with Christ; it is the basis for our Sanctification, and must become our view

(Romans 6:1-11).

a. Through our identification with the death of Christ, we do not have the freedom to keep sinning (Romans 6:1-3).

► *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may 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].*

A possible paraphrase of these verses 1 and 2 might be: “Does being under God’s grace give us the license and freedom to sin even more? Are we supposed to sin more so as to make God’s grace expand to cover the additional sins? Absolutely not!” **What shall we say then?** ties back to the last two verses of Chapter 5. It says there that God’s grace abounds to cover our every sin. The wrong conclusion, then, is that more sin in the life of the believer will somehow glorify God, because it causes Him to give more grace! Some of the Roman Christians had actually fallen into that erroneous kind of thinking. Paul has used 5 chapters to defend salvation by grace through faith, and now immediately addresses the issue of the Christian life - sanctification - that we are *not free* to sin more. In fact, we are called to sin *less* than before.

Sin is *hamartia*, which refers to a deliberate sin; the Christian knows something to be contrary to the Word of God, but deliberately does it anyway. It can be a sin of commission, (deliberately committing a violation of a known command of God, such as lying), or a sin of omission (deliberately refusing to do something when led by the Holy Spirit, such as witnessing to someone). Compare Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission, especially verse 20. Remember that as Christians, we now are in *relationship* with the living God. If we have a relationship with someone, we do not want to do anything that would offend or injure them. Similarly, because of our new relationship with God through Christ, we do not want to offend our heavenly Father.

How shall we who died to sin still live in it? is a question which expects a negative answer: “No, we can’t!” These two verses, then, begin to describe the Christian life, sanctification, a life under God’s

continuing grace. What a blessed position! What an advantage! Praise God! We don't have to sin anymore!

Died to sin is the great teaching of the Doctrine of Sanctification, to be set aside for holy purposes. As death is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body, even so, "died to sin" denotes sanctification, or the believer separating from a life of sin. If the death of Christ separates us from the penalty of sin, then we have been separated from the penalty of our sin, once and for all time. And, in a sense, we can also be separated from the power of our sin nature, if we submit ourselves to the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This is the verse that some theologians use to teach that at the moment of salvation, a Christian's old sin nature dies. That is not exactly what the verse says. It says "we who died to sin." What does that mean? In Chapter 7:15-25, Paul will talk about the intense struggle that goes on between the old sin nature and the new nature. Chapter 7 clearly teaches that each believer still has the old sin nature. So, it cannot mean that our old sin nature dies at the moment of our salvation.

However, those who teach the death of the old sin nature at the moment of salvation say that in Chapter 7, Paul has gone back to talking about Paul's struggle with sin before his salvation experience. Such an interpretation does violence to the outline and flow of the Book of Romans. The divisions of this book are remarkable: Salutation, Sin, Salvation, and now Sanctification. If the book of Romans is an apologetic in defense of the Christian faith, then Paul would be departing from the flow of his own argument, if in Chapter 7 he is reverting back to talking again about salvation. Furthermore, there are many other passages by Paul and other New Testament authors which clearly teach the same struggle inside the body of every believer, such as; Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 5:18, James 1:13-16, James 4:1-2, and 1 Peter 2:11.

We must be very careful in teaching and applying our dedication to living the Christian life. To overemphasize it leads to legalism, to underemphasize it leads to license. Jesus said in effect in John 17:15 that we are "in the world, but not of the world." We cannot get out of this world, but we can keep the world from squeezing us into its mold (see Romans 12:1-2). Martin Luther said, "You cannot stop the birds

from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.” **Still live in it** looks back to our lives as unbelievers. As unbelievers, we constantly lived in sin. Everything we thought or said or did was from selfish motives and was sinful. If we did any righteous act, it was probably to try to justify ourselves before God, which is another act of sin, rejecting the blood payment of Jesus Christ and substituting our own goodness.

Paul’s question, “What shall we say then?” expects a negative answer, and Paul gives it in the strongest possible language, “May it never be!”

Do you not know is the Greek verb *agnosis*, which means without first-hand knowledge, ignorance. It may be acceptable to be ignorant, which means to be uninformed, to be without certain knowledge. But, God wants us to be constantly searching the Holy Scriptures to better inform ourselves: Like *newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation* (1 Peter 2:2). Many Christians today seem to be willfully ignorant of the Scriptures, which becomes a sin of omission. Here is what Paul wants us to know: **that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death.** This “baptism” does not have one drop of water in it! *Baptizo*, the Greek verb, means to immerse, to identify with by placing into. It comes from the root *bapto*, which was a dyer’s term. The dyer would immerse a cloth into the dye until the cloth took on the characteristics of the dye: to identify with by placing into. But, for the believer, the Holy Spirit identifies the believer with Christ by placing him or her into Christ spiritually at the moment of their salvation. This is just one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit. Some theologians call this the Doctrine of Co-crucifixion. So, as God looks at us, He sees the penalty paid by Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross, He sees the death that satisfies His own righteousness. This is called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, this is *real* Baptism, and it takes place at the moment of our salvation.

Water baptism, then, is *ritual* baptism, and takes place *after* salvation, and is a picture or *representation* of what happened at the moment of salvation. In water baptism, the immersion pictures the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The Bible does not teach a “Second Blessing,” or a time after salvation when the Holy Spirit “baptizes us” again. Some groups call this

spiritual experience “the baptism of the Holy Spirit,” and usually expect it to be accompanied by “spiritual gifts,” such as speaking in tongues. Tongues was simply another of the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:10), was not given to every believer (1 Corinthians 12:10, 14-18), and was expected to cease on its own (1 Corinthians 13:8).¹⁴

His death, the death of Christ, has separated us from the penalty of sin, and through God’s help on a daily basis can separate us from the power of sin. We are now free to live the Christian life, and to stop sinning; not to go on to more sinning so as to bring more of God’s grace to bear.

b. Through our identification with the resurrection of Christ, we are free to walk in a new, spiritual life (Romans 6:4-7).

► *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life [Romans 6:4].*

Therefore introduces a conclusion from Paul’s argument in verses 1-3. The goal is described in the last phrase of this verse: **so we too might walk in newness of life**. **So** is the translation of what is called a “*hina* of purpose.” *Hina* is the Greek word that we usually translate with three English words: “in order that.” So, backing up to the first of this verse, Paul says, **Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death** describes what happened to us at the moment of our salvation; we were “baptized by the Holy Spirit.” We probably did not feel a thing. If a person has emotions at the moment of salvation, they are usually feelings of relief of guilt, and forgiveness of sins.¹⁵

¹⁴ See Thomas R. Edgar, *The Cessation of Sign Gifts* (Bibliotheca Sacra, October-December 1988) pp. 371-388.

¹⁵ If this verse is interpreted to mean ritual baptism, we will arrive at an incorrect doctrine that water baptism is required for salvation. Several passages clearly teach that water baptism is simply an ordinance for believers, an order given by Jesus (Matthew 18:19) that we obey and practice, but it is not *for* salvation, it is *because of* salvation (see passages such as Luke 23:42-43 where Jesus promised eternal life to the thief on the cross who had no chance to be baptized in water; Acts 10:44-48 where Cornelius and his family were saved and received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized in water;

As Christ was raised from the dead is also part of what “the Father” sees when He looks at us believers. He not only sees our death with Christ (co-crucifixion), but He also sees our resurrection with Christ (co-resurrection). Christ was raised from the dead **through the glory of the Father**.

Glory is *doksa*, which is usually translated “glory.” It comes from the root *dokeo*, which means to think; the New Testament usage implies to “think favorably.” Hence, when we “think favorably” of God, we glorify Him. Also, if we behave so that other people think favorably of God, that, too, glorifies Him. “The Glory of God” is often related to a glorious light (Exodus 24:16-17); He has *the light of Your countenance* (Psalm 89:15). “Glory” can also be thought of as the sum of all God’s attributes.

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection [Romans 6:5].

If introduces what we call a Class I Conditional Sentence, which is a statement of fact. This type of Greek sentence can be introduced with the word “since.” **For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death.** In other words, since we have forgiveness of sins because He has paid the penalty with His death, then **certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.** Since we are identified with the death of Christ, we shall also be identified with the resurrection of Christ, and since He was resurrected from the dead, so shall we also be resurrected from the dead. As He has received a resurrection body that will last for eternity, so we shall also receive a resurrection body which will last for eternity. From forgiveness comes victory. Verse 8 begins with the same kind of “if” that can translate “since.”

► *[K]nowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in*

and Acts 16:30-34, where the Philippian jailer and his family were saved before they were baptized in water). The perfect participle translated “have believed” (Acts 16:34) denotes a past action, with present ongoing results. “Believe” or “have faith in the Lord Jesus” (verse 31) is the only condition for their salvation, and did not include water baptism.

order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin [Romans 6:6].

Knowing comes from the same root word *ginosko* - to know first hand, to know by seeing, to know by experience - that is translated “know” in verse 3. Here is what we need to know: having experienced salvation, a change of heart, repentance, the forgiveness of sins and a new relationship with God - **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.** As unbelievers we were slaves to sin. Whenever the devil or one of his demons came along and tempted us to sin, we fell right into it. We always made the wrong choice. Whenever *the world, the flesh, or the devil* (1 John 2:13-16), tempted us, we succumbed to sin. But, now we have a new choice: “we should no longer be slaves to sin.” **Slaves** is *doulos*, which denotes a willing slave. We were willing to fall into sin, because that’s all we knew. See verse 16: we can now present our bodies to God and live righteously, making better choices.

► *[F]or he who has died is freed from sin [Romans 6:7].*

This verse concludes this part of Paul’s argument: **for he who has died is freed from sin.** Just as a sinner’s body dies and he is no longer enticed to sin, so the believer has died with Christ, and is free to be insensitive to sin.

c. Through our spiritual response to our identification with all that Christ has accomplished, we do not have to sin anymore (Romans 6:8-11).

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death is no longer 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].

Now “since” we have died with Christ is a better translation. **We believe that we shall also live with Him,** is the great hope of every Christian. The verb translated “we believe” is the Greek word *pisteuo*. In noun form, *pistis*, it is usually translated “faith.”

Knowing is from the Greek verb *oida*, which means to know intuitively, to know instinctively. This kind of knowledge is impossible for the unbeliever. What do we know? **That Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.** Jesus came to this earth as a man to subject Himself to death, Philippians 2:8. But, now having conquered death through His resurrection, He is no longer subject to physical death. Paul, in Romans 6:14, will make the same kind of application for everyone concerning sin.

He died to sin once for all teaches an Unlimited Atonement, as does 1 John 2:2. Reformed theology teaches *Limited Atonement*, which holds that when Jesus died on the cross, He died only for the sins of the “elect.” Therefore, the “non-elect” cannot be saved, because Jesus did not die for their sins. But verse 10 says otherwise, that **He died . . . once for all**. Christ died for *all, everyone, anyone, whoever, each one, sinners, the world*, Many Scriptures testify to this fact:

Psalm 145:9 . . . The Lord is good to **all**, and His mercies are over all His works . . .

Isaiah 45:22 . . . Turn to me and be saved, **all** the ends of the earth . . .

Isaiah 53:6 . . . All of us like sheep have gone astray . . . But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us **all** to fall on Him.

Isaiah 55:1 . . . Ho! **Everyone** who thirsts, come to the waters . . .

Matthew 10:32 . . . **Everyone** who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven . . .

Matthew 11:28 . . . Come unto Me, **all** who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . .

Mark 8:34 . . . if **anyone** wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me . . .

Mark 9:37 . . . **whoever** receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me . . .

Mark 16:15 . . . And He said to them, “Go into **all** the world and teach the gospel to **all** creation.”

Luke 2:10 . . . And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for **all the people**.”

Luke 6:47 . . . **Everyone** who comes to Me and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon a rock . . .

John 3:16 . . . For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life . . .

John 3:17 . . . For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that **the world** might be saved through Him.

John 4:13, 14 . . . Jesus answered and said unto her, “**Everyone** who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst . . .”

John 5:24 . . . Truly, truly I say to you, **he who hears** my word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 6:51 . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if **any man** eat of this bread . . .

John 7:37 . . . if **anyone** is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink . . .

John 10:9 . . . I am the door; if **anyone** enters . . .

John 11:26 . . . and **everyone** who lives and believes in Me will never die . . .

John 12:46 . . . I have come as Light into the world, so that **everyone** who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. If **anyone** hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

Acts 2:21 . . . and it shall be, that **everyone** who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved . . .

Acts 10:42-43 . . . And He ordered us to preach to the people and solemnly to testify that this is the One who had been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear

witness that through His Name **everyone** who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.

Acts 22:15 . . . For you will be a witness for him to **all** men of what you have seen and heard.

Romans 1:16 . . . For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to **everyone** who believes . . .

Romans 5:6 . . . For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the **ungodly**.

Romans 10:4 . . . For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to **everyone** who believes.

Romans 10:11 . . . For the Scripture says, “**whoever** believes in Him will not be disappointed (cf. Isa. 28:16).

Romans 10:13 . . . for **whoever** will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (cf. Joel 2:32).

1 Corinthians 3:5b . . . And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to **each one**.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 . . . For the love of Christ controls us; having concluded this, that one died for **all** . . .

Colossians 1:28 . . . that we may present **every** man complete in Christ.

1 Timothy 1:15 . . . that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners** . . .

1 Timothy 2:4 . . . who desires **all** men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:6 . . . who gave Himself a ransom for **all** . . .

Titus 2:11 . . . For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to **all** men.

Hebrews 2:9 . . . But we do see Him . . . made for a little while lower than the angels . . . crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for **everyone**.

2 Peter 3:9 . . . 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.

1 John 4:2b . . . **every** spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God . . .

1 John 4:7b . . . **everyone** who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:14 . . . We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the **world**.

1 John 4:15 . . . **Whoever** confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and he in God.

1 John 5:1 . . . **Whoever** believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him . . .

Revelation 22:17 . . . the Spirit and the bride say “come.” And let the **one who hears** say, “come.” And let the **one who is thirsty** come; let the **one who wishes** take the water of life without cost.

There should be no misunderstanding that God would have “all” to come to saving faith in His Son, *if they will*.

The life He lives, He lives to God is the perfect model that we are called to follow. God calls us to *follow His steps* (1 Peter 2:21). If we, as Christians, do follow in Christ’s steps, we will live a life to God, not to ourselves.

Romans 6:11 contains the only Imperative Mood verb in this entire passage, the Mood of Command: **even so consider**. It is a choice that each believer must make; to consider, reckon, calculate, to add up. The verb *logizomai* gives our word “logistics,” or “logical.” It is logical that since we are identified with the death and resurrection of Christ that **we should consider ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus**. We should no longer seek to serve sin, but seek to serve God. In doing so, we will be living a life unto God, as Jesus is living His life unto God.

2. Our physical response to the Divine view should be yieldedness to God (Romans 6:12-14).

► *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts [Romans 6:12].*

Therefore is the connecting word between verses 1-11 and these final three verses of this section. “Therefore,” in light of what Paul has just explained in verses 1-11, that we are safe and secure, *we have been justified by faith* (Romans 5:1), we are not to take advantage of our new position in Christ and sin more so that the grace of God may abound more (Romans 6:1-2). Instead we are to: **not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts**. “Do not let reign” is a Present Imperative verb, with a singular form. The Present Tense is a Present Durative, which denotes a continuous action, an on-going action. It might be translated “do not let sin continuously reign.” Or, “do not let sin go on reigning.” The Imperative Mood is the mood of command, so this is one of those commands given in Holy Scripture that require a decision on the part of the believer. He must choose what he wants to happen in his life; to allow sin to reign in his mortal body or to decide against it. The Holy Spirit wants the believer to submit to Him, and the sin nature wants the believer to submit to it. “Reign” denotes submission. Either one or the other will reign; it is the believer’s choice.

Sin is *hamartia*, also in Romans 3:23. It is *hamartia* that means a deliberate sin; we know that something is wrong, but we do it anyway. Romans 3:23 says that *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*. We have all deliberately done things we know that violate the glory, or holiness of the nature of God. But notice: in the Greek text the word “sin” has the definite article “the,” which is untranslatable into English. If we translated it, the sentence would read “Therefore do not let the sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.” Then, everyone would be wondering *which* sin is trying to reign, because we translate the definite articles from Greek into English as “the.” In English the definite article is to emphasize a particular thing, such as the ball, or the stick. But, in Greek the definite article can be used, as here, to stress *the nature* of something. So, “sin” is “the sin,” which stresses the nature of sin, or *the sin nature*: the propensity of all humans to deliberately rebel against the revealed will of God.

Theologically, any being created in the image of God with a free will (such as man), but without the purity of God Himself, will without

exception use his free will to do exactly the opposite of what God commands him to do. Hence, *There is none righteous, no not one* (Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:10). In our sinful, fallen state, we as men and women cannot do righteousness as God does. Hence, *All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment* (Isaiah 64:6). We are incapable of absolute righteousness, or holiness, so our righteousness is always a relative righteousness.

In your mortal body is where the sin nature abides. That is why the sin nature goes to the grave when the body dies. God will not resurrect the sin nature when He gives a new, resurrected body to the believer. Finally, the believer will be delivered from the very *presence* of sin. **Mortal** is *thnatos*, which means mortal, from the verb *thnasko*, which means to die, to be dead. Thus, the sin nature is described by Paul in Romans 8:6-8 as “the flesh.” The sin nature is inseparable to the “mortal body.” That is why at salvation the old sin nature does not die (see Romans 6:2), but stays with the mortal body until the body dies, or until the believer receives a new, resurrected body (whichever comes first).

Another concept suggested here is our own mortality. Whenever a person gets in touch with their own impending death, they do one of two things: either they begin to search for answers beyond this life and discover God or some religion which soothes their fears to prepare them for their own death, or they slip into total denial of their own mortality and emotionally suppress their fear. With denial the results are a life devoid of any kind of religion. They might become very moralistic people or totally heathenistic, or somewhere in between. But, they do not know God, nor do they want to know Him. It is probable that they usually make that decision early in life, and then live out their lives accordingly. Statistics indicate that 85% of all people who accept Christ as Savior do so before the age of 14.

You should obey is from *hupakouo*. The prefix *hupo* means under; hence, to willingly place oneself under something or someone. *Akouo* is that common word in the Greek New Testament that means to hear and respond; it gives our English word “acoustics.” So, to obey someone or something is the result of hearing and placing oneself under the authority of that message. The sin nature is constantly sending messages to the brain encouraging one to do whatever comes to mind,

good or evil, ignoring what God has said about it. This is why most people do not want to hear what the Bible says about anything. It might interfere with what they want to do. Having done the opposite of what the Bible says, they might feel guilty, and they are trying desperately to avoid that guilt. Their conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:2), and they begin exhibiting strange behavior. Though they claim to be believers, their behavior is unbiblical.

Lusts is from *epithumia*, which basically means strong emotions, and the context must decide whether it is a reference to good emotions or evil emotions. See Luke 22:15 where Jesus says, *I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*. **Earnestly desired** is *epithumia*; here it implies a very good emotion. The same strong emotion between a husband and wife is pure in God's eyes. However, here in Romans 6:12 and in James 1:14-15, the same word *epithumia* leads to *hamartia*, deliberate sin against God - even for a Christian.

[A]nd 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 6:13].

Do not go on presenting is another Present Imperative. It is also another Present Durative and is correctly translated "do not go on presenting." A Christian can "go on presenting" his or her body to "the sin" (*the sin nature*, because the definite article appears again in the Greek text), or they can "present" their bodies to God. Here, "present" is Aorist Tense, a completed action. Herein lies the struggle within the heart and mind of every believer. We can either listen to the voice of the sin nature and rebel against God, or we can listen to the Word of God and obey Him. It is a daily struggle and a daily decision. Paul is going to develop this in greater detail in Chapter 7, but only mentions it here.

Presenting or **present** are the same Greek word *parahistami*: it has the intensifying prefix *para* and the verb *histami*, which means to put, or place, or to stand. The prefix gives the idea of "before." So, "do not go on presenting the members of the body before the sin nature (with the idea of offering your body to the sin nature, to follow its lusts)."

Instead, present the members of the body before God (with the idea of offering your body to Him, to follow His will). The second **present** is that Aorist Tense, the Tense of Completed Action.

Members of your body is *melos*, a member, a limb, any part of the body. Think of the different parts of the body which we might present before the sin nature: hands, feet, eyes, minds, private parts. Compare Romans 5:8 where the word “demonstrates” is *sunhistami*, where *sun* means with and *histami* means to present or place or stand. Hence, “to stand with.” The King James Version translates “commendeth.” So, God “places with” His love the death of His own Son, while we were still sinners.

Instruments is *opla*, which was the word for “weapons.” It is the same word translated “instruments.” So, the sin nature wants to use the members of our body as “weapons” for unrighteousness, and God wants to use the members of our body as “weapons” for righteousness.

As those alive from the dead means we were “spiritually dead” because of verses 5 and 6. Because we were co-crucified and co-resurrected with Christ, we now have the blessed opportunity of presenting the members of our body to God, to be used by Him as instruments of righteousness. Notice that we cannot accomplish this kind of behavior without God’s help. It is not of our nature to do righteousness. God must do it through us. Hence, we submit ourselves to the indwelling Holy Spirit, and He produces righteous deeds in our lives. Then, Christ gets all the glory.

Unrighteousness and **righteousness** come from the same root *dikaiosuna*. The first one simply adds the negating prefix “a.” The noun is usually translated “righteousness,” but the verb *dikaioo* is usually translated “justify,” as in 5:1, *Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. So, having been justified by God, He declares us righteous enough to get into heaven. One is the verb, and the other is the resulting noun.

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace [Romans 6:14].

Verse 14 is the conclusion of Paul’s argument so far under

sanctification: **For sin shall not be master over you.** The introductory word is “For,” which could be translated “because.” “Sin” here is *hamartia*, but does not have the definite article, so it refers to particular acts of sin, or the act of sinning. The act of sinning is not mandatory for the Christian, because we were co-crucified with Christ. We are now spiritually dead to sin and the allure and urgings of the sin nature. “Sin shall not be master over you” should be compared to verse 9 where Paul said, *death is no longer master over Him*, that is, Christ. So, the sin nature is no longer master over the Christian.

You are not under law, which we continue to break, which brings forth death, which is the penalty for breaking God’s Law. But, we are “under grace,” God’s unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. God’s grace is all that God is free to do for us because of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.¹⁶

B. The new principle in sanctification for the believer is enslavement to righteousness. Since we are secure in Christ, shall we sin more so God can give more grace, so God can be more glorified? No! (Romans 6:15-23).

1. Enslavement to righteousness brings God’s favor (Romans 6:15).

► *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! [Romans 6:15].*

Shall we sin is the verb form *hamartazo*, from the noun *harmartia* which means a deliberate sin. It can be expanded to read, “Shall we deliberately sin because we are not under law” (see also verse 14). This passage, Romans 6:15-23, is God’s solution to Romans 5:12-21; where we discovered that Jesus has made all men redeemable. Before salvation, according to that passage, we were all “in Adam,” and in Adam sin was master over us, we were slaves to our sin nature and *the wages of sin is death*, Romans 6:23. We were constantly separated from

¹⁶ Larry Moyer, the President of “Evantell,” has said, “We can either live our lives between Egypt and the Promised Land, wandering aimlessly in the desert; between Good Friday and Easter Sunday Morning, spiritually dead as Christians, insensitive to the leading and filling of the Holy Spirit. Or, we can live our lives as a *Thank You Letter* back to God.”

God and had no way of knowing Him or fellowshiping with Him. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:55-58 where we discover: *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Are we to continue to sin that grace might increase?* The Mood is Subjunctive, the mood of contingency: we can continue to sin or choose not to; the choice is ours. His answer in Romans 6:2 is also *May it never be!* Now that God has “justified us” (Romans 5:1) through our faith in Jesus Christ, the believer is not to continue to sin that God’s grace will abound to cover those sins.

Likewise, here in Romans 6:15, Paul asks and answers a similar question. **Shall we sin** is another Subjunctive Mood, but here Paul changes to the Aorist Tense, the tense of completed action. The Subjunctive Mood is that mood of contingency, the mood of choice - maybe we will and maybe we won’t. The change to Aorist Tense is significant, because here Paul is not describing a lifestyle of sin (which the believer must reject); here, he is describing particular, isolated, independent acts of sin (which are very common among believers). We would not dream of having a lifestyle of sin, but somehow think it is acceptable to entertain isolated, regular acts of sin as Christians.

Grace is *charis*, God’s unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. God’s grace is all that He is free to do for us because of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. But, Paul’s injunction is *May it never be!* It would sound strange if we literally translated that double-negative from Greek, which would be: “May it not never be!” In English we would think that these two negatives would make a positive, but not in the Greek. The Greeks used double negatives for emphasis. In Romans 6:1-2 it was a question of a sinful lifestyle because of a secure salvation. In Romans 6:15 it is a question of isolated acts of sin because of a low view of sanctification, the holiness of the Christian life. Compare 1 Peter 1:15-16 where God says, *Be ye holy, for I am holy* (King James Version). God is talking to Christians concerning their lifestyle.

2. Enslavement to righteousness produces freedom (Romans 6:16-20).

► *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].

Know is the Greek word *oida*, which means to know instinctively, to know intuitively, to possess a self-evident truth. **Present** is the same word *parahistami* found in Romans 12:1, the opening appeal of Paul for application in Chapters 12-16. It means to stand beside, to stand alongside, to present. **Slaves** is *doulos*, which is a willing servant.

You are slaves of the one whom you obey: compare what Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will be devoted to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

If one obeys sin, it results in “death.” But, what is Paul talking about? He cannot mean the loss of salvation because of Romans 5:1 and 8:1. So, how does “death” affect a believer? Physical death is not cessation of existence, because we have an eternal soul; it is simply the separation of the soul from the body (see also Luke 16:19-31). So, “death” for a believer is separation from fellowship with God. Deliberate sin in the life of the believer invokes spiritual separation from God because the Bible says in Habakkuk 1:13, *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity* (King James Version).

Obedience (unto God and His Word) **results in righteousness**, or righteous deeds. “Righteousness” is the noun form *dikaïosuna*, and the verb form is *dikaïoo*, translated “justify” in Romans 5:1. So, righteous deeds, or righteousness is a result of being justified. And, as we were *justified by faith*, Romans 5:1, we must also be sanctified by faith (see 2 Corinthians 5:7). As Christians we do not begin doing righteous deeds because we have been saved. We still have the sin nature, as it says in verse 12. So, we must walk with Jesus, we must yield to His Spirit, verse 13, and let God’s righteousness flow through us. We cannot produce it on our own.¹⁷

¹⁷ We might wonder what Paul is getting at here. Is he advocating that there is no middle ground? That at any given moment, the believer is either obeying sin, resulting in death; or, he or she is obeying God, resulting in righteousness?

► *But thanks be to God that though you were slaves to sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed [Romans 6:17].*

Though you were slaves of sin, as unbelievers, (*doulos*, a willing slave), **you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed**. So, unbelievers (though unknown to them) are willing servants or slaves to sin. All they can do is sin. Even their acts of righteousness are outside a relationship with God because they come from an unregenerate life, so their righteous deeds amount to sin. This is a difficult theological pill to swallow.

Became obedient is *hupakouo*, *hupo* meaning under, and *akouo*, meaning to listen and respond, to obey. In a Christian decision and action, the believer becomes **obedient from the heart**, the *kardia*, that gives our word “cardiac,” the seat of emotions, the heart of the believer which is now a new heart (see Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26-27). So, when the Gospel message has moved from the head to the heart, a person is born again. Now, as an act of love toward God, they “became obedient from the heart.” “To that form of teaching” shows that Christian behavior is directly related to doctrine or teachings from the Bible. The Christian does not automatically know how to behave, or what to do. Jesus said in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:20, *Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*. What things? The things that Jesus commanded that are recorded in the Holy Scripture.

► *[A]nd having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness [Romans 6:18].*

Having been freed is an Aorist Passive Participle. Aorist Tense denotes a completed action. Passive Voice denotes the subject received the action of the verb. The participle is a Verbal Adjective of Attendant Circumstance, which means their freedom was given to them by God in attendance with their salvation. However, now as Christians, they must

Is it one or the other, or can there be some middle ground? Fellowship with God is like fellowship with ones wife or husband. It is not black or white all the time. It changes with various degrees of intimacy and fellowship; sometimes it is very close and sometimes far away, with different levels in between.

decide daily to obey the will of God as revealed in His Word and by His indwelling Spirit, because they are still free moral agents.

► *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 [Romans 6:19].*

This sounds like a strange verse because Paul says, **I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh**. What Paul is saying in verse 18 is you became slaves of righteousness, but in verse 19 he says, **so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification**. Verse 18 is God's perspective, and verse 19 is the Christian's perspective. God sees us in the best possible light: willing servants to righteousness. Realistically, however, Paul is "speaking in human terms because of the weakness of their flesh . . . now present your members as slaves to righteousness." The human element should be an automatic response, but unfortunately, on the part of immature Christians, it is not automatic.

Members is the same Greek word *melos* in verse 13; which refers to the actual body parts: hands, arms, legs, tongue, and so forth. As we "present" those members to God, He will use them for righteous deeds that will glorify Him and eventually result in eternal rewards for us. **Sanctification** is *hagiasmos*, from the verb that means to set apart for holy purposes. It is a description of the Christian life, so justification is not in view here, rather sanctification, the believer learning how to walk with God.

► *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness [Romans 6:20].*

Here is another bold statement of theology. In other words, as unbelievers, the Romans were **slaves of sin**, and **were free in regard to righteousness**. They were incapable as unbelievers to do God's will, and were incapable of righteous deeds which would glorify Him. So, it seems that what Paul is saying is that there is no middle ground. As unbelievers cannot live their lives to God's glory, neither can a Christian who is walking according to the flesh, rather than the Holy

Spirit (see Galatians 5:16).

3. Enslavement to righteousness produces fruit (Romans 6:21-23).

► *Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death [Romans 6:21].*

Benefit is the common Greek word *karpōs*, which is usually translated “fruit” (Galatians 5:22-23). It is the same in verse 22. It makes more sense to translate “fruit,” so it would read “Therefore what fruit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed?” The expected answer is “no fruit,” no spiritual fruit. This gives a clearer idea that God is working through the believer to produce fruit - spiritual fruit - and that to his reward. **Shame** is what we get from sin (see Genesis 3:10). So, the “fruit of sin” is shame that brings glory to no one.

► *But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life [Romans 6:22].*

This verse causes controversy among Christians when it is interpreted that deeds in the “sanctification” phase of salvation are necessary for maintaining eternal life. But it is obvious that Paul did not mean that when compared to Romans 5:1 and 8:1; what he said to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31, and what Jesus said in John 3:16. Paul simply means that the normal result of conversion is sanctified living, including good works, which are a part of Christian living (see Ephesians 2:10). However, because of carnality, other doctrines come into play, such as Divine discipline (Hebrews 12:6-8), and carnal Christians, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. (For severe Divine discipline see 1 Corinthians 11:30, 1 John 5:17 and James 5:19-20, which involves the Doctrine of the Sin unto Death, and applies to believers.)

► *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord [Romans 6:23].*

This verse is usually quoted in the *Roman Road to Salvation* as used in witnessing. The verse can, of course, be applied that way. But, the

context can also make it apply to Christians. **The wages of sin is death**, or spiritual separation of a believer from God - *not the loss of salvation* - but the loss of fellowship, fruit, and rewards. **But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord** ties back to verse 22, which makes sanctification and salvation inseparable. If we are saved, then we should have “fruit” or good deeds, deeds of righteousness, or something to show that we are saved. James 2:14 says . . . *what use is it . . . if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?* See also verse 18, which says . . . *show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.* James 2:20 also says . . . *faith without works is useless.*¹⁸

C. The new status in sanctification is freedom through the Holy Spirit, as opposed to enslavement to the Law. Enslavement to the Law is legalism (Romans 7:1-25).

Legalism is either thinking that we can be saved through law-keeping or, after we have trusted in Christ alone for salvation, we think we can be sanctified through law-keeping. Sanctification, or the living out of the Christian life, must be done by the power of God’s Spirit (see Romans 7:6). The indwelling Holy Spirit can and will help us to live lives pleasing to God. So, salvation is by grace through faith, and sanctification is by grace through faith.

1. Paul now uses a different metaphor, marriage, to illustrate our co-crucifixion with Christ. Our death with Christ has set us free from the Law, as the death of a husband sets his wife free from the Law; so, is the Christian back under the Law? No. (Romans 7:1-6).

► *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*

¹⁸ It may appear that James’ apparent endorsement of justification by works might be contradictory to Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith alone. However, such is not the case. Paul contemplates man *before* conversion, says that by grace he is saved, and then ascribes to works that result from that faith. On the other hand, James views man *after* salvation, his faith subsequently producing spiritual works. There is no justification before God based on works, and if this faith is genuine, works should be evident. A differentiation of genuine works versus a mere assent to certain doctrine is the key to unraveling this seeming contradiction. The works must be works of faith.

long as he lives? [Romans 7:1].

Do you not know is from *ginosko*, which means to know by first-hand knowledge, to know by experience, to know by seeing for yourself. We find the same word later in this verse, also in verse 7. **Brethren** is the word that Paul uses over and over in his letters to remind us of our unique relationship with each other because of our unique relationship with Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we become children of God (John 1:12), and thus, brothers and sisters to each other in the family of God. **Those who know the Law** are especially the Jews, living in Rome. Proselyte Gentiles also had the Law, and they also knew the Law (compare the Bereans, Acts 17:11). **The law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives** is true. But, when a person dies, he is no longer subject to the Law.

► *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 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].*

The married woman is a good example of someone under the Law, who is subject to the laws of marriage until her husband dies. Then, at his death, she is released from the dictates of the Law. She is no adulteress if she marries again, because death has separated her from those laws of marriage.

► *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].*

So, too, our co-crucifixion with Christ has set us free from Law-keeping. We died with Christ, and so we died to the bondage of the Law. **Through the body of Christ** is not a reference to the Body of Christ (capital B), which is the Church, rather a reference to the literal body of Christ as He hung on the cross; 1 Peter 2:24 says, *He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.* Our sins

bind us to Christ and His death, and release us from the Law.

Someone has said, “Jesus, as our new husband, always has His arms reaching out, saying ‘Let’s start again.’ ” Jesus promised in Hebrews 13:5, *I will never leave you, nor forsake you* (King James Version). While we might fail Him over and over like a disloyal husband to a wife, He has the arms of forgiveness and healing outstretched, waiting to receive us again and start over again, right where we left off.

That you might be joined to another is *eis*, which means to or toward. So, we **were made to die to the Law . . . that or so that**, introducing the *purpose* of the death. The second **that** is a *hina* of Purpose; “that we might be joined to another” (Christ), so the long-range purpose of being joined to Christ is **fruit**. Here is the same word found back in Romans 6:21-22 translated “benefit.”

Legalism, on the other hand, says, “I’m going to be spiritual and be sanctified by keeping laws.” So, the believer goes through the Bible and picks and chooses which laws he or she wants to keep. The laws are chosen arbitrarily, and the consistency of keeping those laws is also arbitrary. It gets more confusing when the believer then tries to impose those laws on other Christians. Since the Law can only produce death, the Christian spiritually dies and no fruit is born; no love. So, a Christian can be dead spiritually and kill other Christians around them that they infect with this terrible virus called *legalism*. It kills Christians, churches, and whole communities. This does not mean the Christian loses his salvation; it is fellowship with God that is interrupted.

► *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 [Romans 7:5].*

Flesh is *sarks*, which Paul used back in Romans 6:19, which he will develop much further in Romans 7:15 and following. See especially 7:18, where he clearly identifies this word as a reference to the old sin nature. He then expands the idea to **the sinful passions. Which were aroused by the Law** shows that wherever there is a law, there is the inclination of humans to break that law.

Members is the same word from Chapter 6, *melos*, which literally means the parts of our bodies: the hands, feet, arms, legs, eyes. The members of our bodies can produce spiritual fruit from God that glorifies Him (because it comes from Him), or it can produce fleshly fruit from our sin nature which glorifies man (because it comes from man). **Glorify** means to reveal, to cause to think.

► *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 7:6].*

Here is the ultimate purpose for death to the Law: **so that we serve in newness of the Spirit** (the Holy Spirit, that is why it is capitalized in the New American Standard Version) and **not in oldness of the letter**. So, sanctification must come from the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, not from the person who is trying to keep laws, either God's laws or man's laws.¹⁹

2. What, then, is the purpose of the Law for a Christian?

The Law is good because we can use it to lead others to Christ through conviction of sin by the Spirit, and it still reminds us of our own sin and our need for personal righteousness, which we receive in Christ (Romans 7:7-12).

► *What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET" [Romans 7:7].*

The apostle Paul was diligent in keeping external laws, but covetousness is an internal sin. He admits in verse 8 that he was guilty of covetousness. **Know** is that same word *ginosko* in verse one. **Coveting** is from *epithumia*, which means strong desire, and context must decide if the strong desire is good or bad. "Coveting" is usually

¹⁹ Then, as we walk in the power of God's Spirit we will keep His Law. Also, the stress is upon our *relationship* with God through Christ, not upon His Laws.

used as a bad thing. However, see Luke 22:15 where Jesus says, *I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*. It is the same word *epithumia*, used in a very good sense.

You shall not covet is a quote of the 10th commandment, Deuteronomy 5:21.

► *But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind, for apart from the Law sin is dead [Romans 7:8].*

Sin is *hamartia*, which means a deliberate sin, a sin of choice, a sin of rebellion, a sin of our will against God's will. **Produced** is *katergozomai*, which means to produce, to bring out. The sin and the sinful acts of man are already there. God's Law simply brings them out into the open.

► *I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died [Romans 7:9].*

Sin became alive, and I died means that Paul realized through the Law of God that he was a sinner, that he was spiritually dead, that he was spiritually separated from God. The 10th commandment is the one that got Paul, because he was "a Pharisee of the Pharisees" (see Philippians 3:5-6, *as to the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless*). So, when it came to external righteousness, Paul had it. But "covetousness" is internal - a sin of which we are all guilty. In fact, internal covetousness leads to the breaking of the other commandments, such as stealing or adultery.

► *[A]nd this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me [Romans 7:10].*

This commandment, which was to result in life needs to be compared to Matthew 19:16-22 where Jesus actually told the rich young ruler that he could earn eternal life if he perfectly kept God's commandments. Jesus deliberately left out number ten. He quoted him the commandments, knowing that the man was guilty of covetousness. Then, Jesus asked him to sell all that he had and come and follow Him, trying to get the man to face his sin of covetousness. However, the

man could not admit his covetousness, and went away very sad, because he was very rich. His god was money, not Jesus, and he could not let go of it to follow Christ.

To result in death for me is really Paul's admission that he is worthy of death because he has sinned. We all need to come to that same conclusion about ourselves.

► *[F]or sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me [Romans 7:11].*

Deceived is from *eksapatao*, the same word which Paul uses in 1 Timothy 2:14 talking about how Eve was "deceived." The word means to delude thoroughly, to seduce into error. Paul is not saying that the Law tricked him into sin, but is saying that he was already a sinner and the Law revealed it to him. This is what we call "conviction of sin," but it is complete when the sinner admits his or her sin.

► *So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good [Romans 7:12].*

Holy is *hagiazō*, set apart, holy, pure, undefiled. **Righteous** is *dikaíosuna* (see Romans 4:22). **Good** is *agathos*, which means upright, useful, intrinsic goodness, (good from the inside out).

3. So, is the Law a bad thing? No. It continuously reveals man's propensity to sin (Romans 7:13-14).

► *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 7:13].*

Here is Paul's conclusion. **Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me?** The answer is no, because *sin* is the cause of our death (Romans 6:23), not God's Law. **Rather it was sin** or "the sin;" seen in Romans 6:12, where it was explained that we cannot translate the definite article; it stresses the nature of a thing. Therefore, this refers to the sin nature, our propensity to rebel against the revealed

will of God.

► *For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage of sin [Romans 7:14].*

Know is *oida*, which means to know instinctively, to possess a self-evident truth. **The Law is spiritual** because it reveals the holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man. **Sold** is a Perfect Tense, past action with present, on-going results - “. . . having been sold.” **To sin** is *upo hamartia*; *upo* meaning under, stressing under the influence, or power of something.

4. What is this struggle going on inside of every Christian?

It is the struggle between the new nature from the Holy Spirit, and the old sin nature that still wants to rebel against God (Romans 7:15-25).

This struggle is confusing, because if we try to sanctify ourselves by doing whatever our sin nature dictates, we abuse our freedom in Christ and move into license, or licentiousness. Also, the Law cannot sanctify, nor can Law-keeping sanctify. If we try to sanctify ourselves by keeping the Law, we will fail because we have already shown that we cannot keep God's Law. Furthermore, sanctification by Law-keeping always moves into legalism. We are sanctified by grace through faith.

a. Confusion - The believer can be confused by his own actions (Romans 7:15-17).

We must learn that believers have two natures:²⁰

²⁰ An old grandfather, whose grandson came to him with anger at a schoolmate who had done him an injustice said, “Let me tell you a story. I, too, at times have felt a great hate for those who have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and hoping your enemy will die. I have struggled with these feelings many times.” He continued, “It is as if there are two wolves inside me; one is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way. But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights

- (1) The old sin nature that constantly wants to rebel against God, and,
- (2) The new nature that constantly wants to obey God. This New Nature comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit, as He is sharing His nature with us.

► *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 [Romans 7:15].*

That which I am doing is a Present Indicative Active from the verb *katergozomai*, which means to do, to work out, to effect, to produce, to practice: *ergazomai* means to do or work, and *kata* is an intensifying prefix to intensify the idea of doing something or working out something. Paul does not understand what he is doing. Then, he says: **For I am not practicing what I would like to do**, namely, righteousness. **Practicing** is from *prossō*, a close synonym to *katergozomai*. *Prossō* means to do, to execute, to perform, to practice, to act. When it refers to an evil act, it can be translated “to commit.” Then, **I am doing** is from a third verb *poieō*, which means to do, to make, to form, to construct, to create. **The very thing I hate** is unrighteousness! So, Paul, as a dedicated Christian finds himself doing unrighteous deeds - the very thing he hates - and all the while he wants to be living a life filled with righteous deeds. This is the conflict.

► *But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good [Romans 7:16].*

There is a positive note in all this confusion: when Paul does **the very thing that** he does **not want to do**, his actions agree with the Law, confessing that **it is good**. In a way, our evil deeds against God prove that God’s Law (especially the Ten Commandments) is a good thing,

everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit.”

The boy looked intently into his grandfather’s eyes and asked, “Which one wins, grandfather?” The grandfather solemnly said, “The one I feed.”

because our sin proves God's Word to be correct. The word here translated **good** is *kalos*, which means, good, beautiful, noble, excellent. Something that reveals our own wickedness seems at first to be something bad, but if, at the same time it reveals God's own goodness, it cannot be something bad.

► *So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me [Romans 7:17].*

Paul concludes here: **So now, no longer am I** (my new mind, my new nature, my desire to please God) **the one doing it** (the sinful acts) **but sin** (with the definite article, that is, the sin nature) **which indwells me**. The word translated "indwells" is *enoikeo*, which is translated "who indwells" in Romans 8:11. So, Paul uses the same word, in the same context, for the indwelling sin nature, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Believers have *both*, and in that situation there will always be conflict.

b. Control - The believer should be aware that he can be controlled by his sin nature (Romans 7:18-20).

► *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not [Romans 7:18].*

I know is from *oida*, which means to know instinctively, to possess a self-evident truth. Paul knows instinctively that inside of him dwells **nothing good**. (King James Version, "no good thing.") This first "good" in verse 18 does not appear in the Greek text, but is understood. It is the same word *kalos* found in verse 16. The word appears at the end of this verse. Therefore, there is nothing good or beautiful or noble or excellent within us to justify us before a Holy God. We have sinned and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23).

Flesh is *sarks*. Paul uses this word three different ways in the Book of Romans:

- In Romans 1:3 it refers to simple, physical descent, translated "flesh."

- In 2:28 it refers to our physical existence, our physical body. These first two uses of the word *sarks* have nothing to do with sin, or the blame of sin. However:
- In 7:18 it refers to the propensity of man to rebel against God; it is the personality of man controlled by sin and directed to selfish pursuits rather than service to God; the sin nature can manifest itself in “overt behavior pattern sins,” such as lying, stealing, or murder. Or, there can be “covert behavior pattern sins,” such as coveting (see Romans 7:7), lusting, or simply refusing to follow a directive of God, like refusing to love one other (see John 13:34).

Wishing is from *thelo*, which means to will or to wish from the heart. The other common word for “wish” or “will” is *boulomai*, which means to will or to wish from the mind. So, Paul from his heart wants to do good, but cannot because of his sin nature (compare also 1 John 1:7-9). The cure for the sin of a believer in Christ is confession. We confess all the sins we are aware of, and God forgives the rest that we are not aware of.

► *For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want [Romans 7:19].*

Practice is *prasso*, found also in verse 15. Compare also Galatians 5:16-26, which gives the spiritual victory of a life of obedience to every believer: by yielding ourselves to the Indwelling Holy Spirit. The word translated “practice” in Galatians 5:21 is the same word *prasso*. Note that the overt behavior pattern sins of the unbelievers are described in Galatians 5:19-21. Galatians 5:21 goes on to say that *those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom*. Christians are sometimes guilty of those same kinds of sins, but because of Divine discipline (Hebrews 12:6), the Lord does not allow His children to continue in *overt* behavior-pattern sins.

► *But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me [Romans 7:20].*

Paul concludes this controversy over control: **I am no longer the one doing it, but sin**, or the sin nature (with the definite article), **which dwells in me**. If we yield to this indwelling sin nature, it will

take control of us. The Christian can behave like an unbeliever, as if he or she did not have the Spirit of God dwelling within him.

c. Inconsistency - The believer should learn that even if he has two natures, he is still sanctified; and he can still live a Christian life by consistently yielding himself or herself to the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 7:21-25).

► *I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good [Romans 7:21].*

Principle is the Greek word *nomos*, which could be translated “law” as it is back in verses 5-9, 12, 14, and 16, where it is always capitalized. But here the translators decided to use the word “principle” with a lower case “p.” This is probably a good translation because Paul is describing a new law, or principle, perhaps not exactly stated in the Old Testament, but is a good, theological conclusion: **that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.**

► *For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man [Romans 7:22].*

Paul **joyfully concurs with the law of God in the inner man** (see Romans 1:18-23). We instinctively know that “the law of God in the inner man,” our activated conscience, condemns us that we have done wrong against God.

► *[B]ut 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 7:23].*

But, Paul sees **a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind** (what he knows instinctively to be true). This **law of sin** is the sin nature **which is in my members** . . . (that is, the physical members of his body) and makes him **a prisoner**. “Sin,” as in other verses, *does have* the untranslated definite article, which stresses the nature of a thing: so, this refers to the sin nature in all of us. In other words, we are captivated by our own sin nature and wind up doing the things we know are wrong against God. In and of ourselves, we do not have the power to have victory over this sin

nature. We must be set free by the power of Christ Himself, which is the point of the next two concluding verses.

► *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? [Romans 7:24].*

Here Paul begins with an exclamation followed by a question, as he did in verse 13: **Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?** “Body of this death” is the same phrase from the first century, found outside the New Testament, which described a form of capital punishment. When a man murdered another man, and was found guilty, the executioners tied the dead man face to face, arm to arm, leg to leg to his murderer. Within a couple of days, the rotting corpse put out toxic, methane gas which was inhaled by the murderer which brought about death. Paul sees the old sin nature inside us like a rotting corpse that will kill us spiritually if we are not delivered by some outside power. Remember that to kill means to separate. When a Christian sins, he separates himself from his *fellowship* with God, not his *relationship*. We *do not* lose our salvation when we sin, but our *fellowship* with Him is affected. That power to deliver us is described in the last verse.

► *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 7:25].*

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Through the power of the indwelling Jesus Christ and the power of His Spirit, we can have victory over the sin nature. With his **mind**, his regenerate mind, Paul was serving God. With his **flesh**, his old sin nature, he was serving the law, or principle of sin. By turning daily to Jesus Christ for help, Paul, like you and I, can live a life of obedience to the Word of God; we can live a life that pleases God. This life is lived in the Spirit, not in legalism and the letter of the Law.

D. Liberty - the power of sanctification, liberty in Christ (Romans 8:1-39).

1. We are free to live the sanctified life, the Christian life, in the power of God’s Spirit (Romans 8:1-11).

a. We no longer have to follow the flesh, but can follow the Holy Spirit.

► *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus [Romans 8:1].*

This verse is one of the most powerful and clearest statements in all of Holy Scripture of the security of our salvation: **there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. We are right in the middle of Paul's section on sanctification (Chapters 6-8), the living out of the Christian life, and Paul makes this statement about the security of our salvation. Why? Because such biblical teaching brings freedom; it sets us free to pursue a life with God without fear of ever losing our relationship with Him. We may lose our *fellowship* with God as Father, but never our *relationship* with Him as Redeemer.

Therefore ties this chapter back to the immediate context of Romans 7:24-25 where Paul declared that *through Jesus Christ our Lord* we can be delivered from the daily onslaught of the sin nature. **Condemnation** is the Greek word *katakrima*, found 24 times in the Greek New Testament; each time it is translated "condemnation" or "condemn" in the verb form. It is a compound of the root word *krino*, which means to separate, to judge, to decide. *Kata* is an intensifying prefix. Hence, it means to judge thoroughly, to condemn. Compare John 3:36, John 5:24-25, and Romans 1:16-18, especially verse 18. In contrast, compare Romans 6:1-4.

In Christ Jesus is positional truth, which means that God mysteriously places believers *into* Christ Himself, and in that position they are secure. When God looks upon believers, it is as if He is looking at Christ Himself. The same exact phrase occurs again in verse two.²¹

► *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death [Romans 8:2].*

²¹ In the King James Version only, this verse adds "who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." When the King James Version was translated in 1611, the scholars had only four complete copies of the Greek New Testament. Today, we have over 10,000. The oldest and best Greek manuscripts do not contain that last part of verse one, which appears in the King James Version. In all the manuscripts it does appear at the end of verse 4.

For is an explanatory *gar*, so Paul begins here to explain how we are going to have victory over the sin nature. **The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** is in contradistinction to the killing capacity of the sin nature (Romans 3:23 and 6:23). Death for the believer is *not* a spiritual separation, *not* a loss of salvation, but a loss of *fellowship* with God. But, “the law of the Spirit” (the Holy Spirit) is a law of life and liberty. For “life,” compare Titus 3:5. Our new life is eternal life.

Notice that in Scripture, the Holy Spirit really does not have a name: the text says, “the Spirit,” as a title with a capital “S.” The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ (John 16:14), so when the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible (see 2 Peter 1:21), He deliberately did not give Himself a name, only titles.

Has set you free is *liberty* (see 2 Corinthians 3:17). This verb is an Aorist Tense, which denotes a completed action. Once we have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, God the Holy Spirit instantly moves in and sets us free **from the law of sin and of death**. However, Christians are still sinners, and by choice we can listen to our sin nature and choose to sin, Jesus said in John 8:34, *Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin*. So, we can forfeit our liberty and enslave ourselves once more to sin. “Sin” and “death” go together (see Romans 3:23 and 6:23).

► *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 [Romans 8:3].*

Flesh is *sarks*, but here with the definite article, it does not refer to the sin nature, but to our bodies. However, it is through our bodies that the sin nature manifests itself. So, **God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh**. Jesus had a human body, but without a sin nature, which is why the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ is so important; Jesus had an earthly mother, but a heavenly Father. If He had an earthly father like the rest of us, He would have had a sin nature, and would have fallen into sin, just as we have. Notice God calls here “the flesh” “sinful flesh.” All flesh has committed sin, except that of Jesus Christ.

Why was it so important for Jesus to have a sinless body? So that he could become “an offering for sin.” Jesus used His body (1 Peter 2:24), to receive our sins, to die spiritually for our sins, and to die physically for our sins. He suffered and died, using His own body as a sacrifice. Here is His accomplishment: **He condemned sin in the flesh**. So, when we are “in Christ Jesus,” our sin has been judged, it has been condemned, and it has been disposed of.

► *[S]o 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 8:4].*

This verse begins with the purpose for all that Christ accomplished **so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us**. By ourselves, all we could do was to break God’s Law over and over again. But, in Christ we fulfill God’s Law. What was the spiritual requirement of the Law? Holiness. The Law had to be kept perfectly, and the worshipper had to be holy in every respect. No one had ever done this except Jesus Himself.

But, salvation is not supposed to be limited to a one-time experience which seals our eternal destiny. Salvation is to become a daily experience. This *does not mean* that we can lose our salvation and must be saved all over again. What it *does mean* is that God calls us to **not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit**. The term “walk” is *peripateo*, which literally means to walk around. It was the Greek word for lifestyle.

b. We win or lose daily our mind’s spiritual battle (Romans 8:5-8).

► *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 [Romans 8:5].*

For begins another explanation. For **those who are according to the flesh** really describes unbelievers, people who have refused to trust in Christ as Savior (compare Romans 1:18 and following). They **set their minds on the things of the flesh**. “Set their minds” is what we call a Present Durative, it is something that is constantly being done. An unbeliever can do nothing else. Even though an unbeliever may be

very religious, or even a very moral person, it is part of his or her system of self-justification, and is therefore a focus upon “the flesh.” The sin nature is very selfish and self-centered. It is usually not productive to challenge a person directly who is very religious or very moral. In seeking to justify themselves, they are not likely to admit their sinfulness or that they are deserving of God’s condemnation. Prayer and patience will help. Jesus, with His holy lifestyle, was very threatening to the religious leaders of His day, so much so that they had Him crucified to get rid of Him.

Set their minds is from the verb *phronousin*, which refers to “a mind set,” “an attitude,” “an aspiration.” The Holy Spirit is always trying to change the minds of unbelievers, so they will trust in Christ. That is what “repentance” means - to change the mind. **Those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit** are believers in Christ. By their choice they can **set their minds on the things of the Spirit** - eternal things, spiritual things, godly things, things that glorify Jesus.

► *For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace [Romans 8:6].*

The mind set on the flesh is death: for the unbeliever it is continuous, spiritual death, resulting in no relationship with God. For the believer, if we “set our minds on the flesh,” our fellowship with God is interrupted. We separate ourselves from the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and we are on our own spiritually. We do not lose our relationship with God, just our fellowship, which is nonetheless a great loss. What we lose is **life and peace**, because **the mind set on the Spirit** is “life and peace.” We do not lose eternal life. Scripture does not teach that. Jesus said in John 17:3: *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.* **Know** is the Greek word *ginosko*, which means to know by experience, to know by seeing, to know first hand. But when Christians “set their minds on the things of the flesh,” instead of the Spirit, they cease to experience the presence of God in their lives.

► *[B]ecause 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, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God*

[Romans 8:7-8].

The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God - constantly for the unbeliever and sometimes for the believer. **The flesh . . . does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so** (see 1 Corinthians 3:3, where “mere men” is a reference to unbelievers). So, Christians who “set their mind on the flesh” behave like unbelievers. And in verse 8, **those who are in the flesh cannot please God**. For the unbeliever, that is never. When the believer’s mind is set upon the flesh, the sin nature, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, he cannot please God. Unfortunately, many believers spend much time “in the flesh.”

c. We have the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11).

► *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].*

If is the Greek word *eiper*, which is a statement of fact; it could be translated “since.” **Dwells in you** is exactly what Jesus predicted in John 14:17, that the Holy Spirit would “be in you.” This is a partial fulfillment of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Here is the standard for New Testament believers: **But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him**. The standard is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

► *If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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 8:10-11].*

The body is dead means that our human bodies are subject to death, **because of sin**. An added blessing of the indwelling Holy Spirit (verse 11) is that He will someday resurrect our dead bodies to the glory of Jesus Christ.

2. We are obligated to live the sanctified life, the Christian life

(Romans 8:12-17).

a. Our obligation is to the Holy Spirit, not to the flesh (Romans 8:12-15).

► *So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh [Romans 8:12].*

So then is a conclusion of what Paul has explained in verses 1-11, that Christians are no longer to follow the flesh, the old sin nature, the fallen nature within us that desires to live independently of God. Romans 8:1-4 said that we now have a choice - we no longer are obligated to follow the flesh, but can follow the Holy Spirit. But, now Paul says **so then**, in conclusion to his present argument, **we are under obligation . . . to live** - in the power of God's Spirit. **Brethren** describes that familial relationship we now have in Christ Jesus - we are "brothers and sisters in Christ;" we are in the family of God, and we are to live accordingly.

"Under obligation" is a Predicate Adjective, describing the subject "we." It comes from the Greek verb *opheilo*, which means to incur a debt, to incur a bond, to become obligated, to have taken on a new responsibility. So, Christians, without realizing it, have taken on in their salvation an obligation **not to the flesh** (Greek *sarks*, the old sin nature, the old man, the man of sin). We no longer have any obligation to our sin nature that wants to rebel against God. **To live according to the flesh** - "to live" is the verb *zao*, which means to live, to be possessed of vitality, to exercise the functions of life.

► *[F]or 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 8:13].*

If is a Class I Conditional Sentence in the Greek text, and can be translated "since," or "when." "When you (brethren, Christians) are exercising the functions of life according to the sin nature, you are about to die," is a good translation. **You must die** in the New American Standard Version is rendered "you will die" in the King James Version and the New International Version. The verb *mello* means to be about to do something. Therefore, the translation "about to die" is probably best. **Death** is separation of the eternal soul and spirit from the body.

So, what death is Paul talking about here? It must be the death, or spiritual separation of the Christian from his or her *fellowship* with the heavenly Father. Such fellowship is restored by application of 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, He (God our Father) is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

But if by the Spirit is another Class I Conditional Sentence, and can be translated “But when by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Notice that “Spirit” is capitalized, which means Paul is talking about the indwelling Holy Spirit. “By the Spirit” is called a Dative of Agency; the Holy Spirit is the Agent through whom something is accomplished (see also in verse 14). **The deeds of the body** are the acts of sin of the sin nature, because our sin natures use our physical bodies to carry out the acts of sin. Our physical bodies are not sinful in and of themselves, but are the vehicles of our sin nature to carry out its desires, so Paul says that we “put to death the deeds of the body” - not the body itself - but the *deeds* of the body. **You will live**, “you will carry out the acts of the Holy Spirit,” which means to live out the Christian life, to experience the Christian walk, to enjoy God and our salvation, to live in such a way that it reveals what God is like. “Life” in Holy Scripture is described as “eternal life,” when we know God and walk with God (see John 17:3).

► *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God [Romans 8:14].*

For is called an explanatory *gar*. For **all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God** does not mean that people are only Christians when they are acting like Christians. If that were true, most of us would never really be Christians. The understanding of this verse hinges upon the word “sons.” There are five words in Greek translated “child:”

(1) *brephos*, which refers to a nursing infant. *Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger* (Luke 2:12, King James Version).

(2) *napios*, which means “not speaking,” or “simple-minded.” It is a child who may be weaned, but not yet under formal training,

perhaps from birth to 2 years (see 1 Corinthians 13:11).

(3) *paidion*, which usually refers to a child under training, from a toddler up to about age 12 (see 2 Tim 3:15).

(4) *teknon*, which refers to an older child who is taking on some of the responsibilities of an adult, a teenager learning how to be an adult. This form stresses relationship with the parents (see Luke 1:7).

(5) *huios*, which refers to a fully grown child, usually translated “son,” a fully responsible adult child. Their behavior reveals their character (compare John 1:12 and Romans 8:14).

When we act as responsible Christians, willingly walking in the power of God’s Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the flesh, we are acting like the “sons of God,” which we are by position. This verse has more to do with behavior than relationship. All Christians are children of God through faith in Christ, but not all act like it. Those that do, God calls “sons of God.”

► *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 8:15].*

For is another explanatory *gar*. It explains what goes before. **For you have not received a spirit of slavery** (notice the small “s”) **leading to fear again**. “Fear” is the fear of sin and death, see verse 1. Jesus said in John 8:34, . . . *everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin*. The word **slave** is *doulos*, which means a willing servant. “You have not received” is an Aorist Tense, which denotes a completed action, from *lambano*. Hence, we **have received a spirit of adoption as sons**. Notice the translators have used another lower case “s”. It is debatable whether to capitalize this “Spirit,” as does the King James Version and the New International Version. It should probably be a capital “S” because of verses 13 and 14.

“Adoption as sons” is *huiiothesias*, which means “the placing of adult sons.” **Abba! Father!** is the same Aramaic word which Jesus used in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Mark 14:36). It is a very personal term

for Father. “Daddy” might be our equivalent.

b. The Holy Spirit is testifying to us to live the sanctified life (Romans 8:16-17).

► *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him [Romans 8:16-17].*

Heirs is *klaronomos*, which is made up of two words: *klaros*, which means a die, a lot, a portion, an allotment (Proverbs 22:6 says that God controls the lot) and *nomos*, “name.” Hence, one named by lot, an heir. **If** is *eiper* (see verse 9) and is better translated “since.” **We suffer with Him** when we live a good Christian life in the power of God’s Spirit. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (see 2 Timothy 3:12). **Glorified** comes from *doksa*, which gives our English word “doxology.” **With Him** occurs at the Second Advent of Christ.

3. Whatever we sacrifice for sanctified living cannot be compared with what we will gain in glory (Romans 8:18-30).

a. God’s creation longs for the sons of God to be revealed (Romans 8:18-19).

► *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. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God [Romans 8:18-19].*

The subordinate conjunction **for** ties Paul’s conclusions back to what he was saying in the previous passage; especially verses 16-17, that the Holy Spirit “testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.” The Holy Spirit Himself is calling every believer to a life of sanctification. **I consider** is from *logizomai*, which gives our English word “logistics,” or the word “logical.” This letter to the Romans is an apologetic, an organized, logical argument in defense of the Christian faith.

Sufferings is from *pathama*, from which we get “pathetic;” it comes from the verb *pascho*, giving us the word “Paschal,” which refers to the

suffering of Christ. “The Paschal Lamb” is the lamb slaughtered at Passover; the lamb “suffers death” in our place. *Pascho* means to suffer, to endure affliction; it includes the emotion or the passion of suffering. That is why the suffering of Christ is sometimes referred to as the Passion of Christ (compare 1 Peter 1:11 where Peter uses the same Greek word).

Of this present time shows our suffering now to be temporary. Whatever sufferings or sacrifices we experience in this life are simply temporal.²² Paul is comparing this to **the glory that is to be revealed to us** (compare Jude 24-25, *Now unto Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen*). **Glory** is *doksa*, which gives our word “doxology;” it can refer to the sum of all of God’s attributes. **His glory** is the outshining of all His attributes combined.

Anxious longing is *apokaradokia*, which means to watch with the head stretched out, strained expectation. This phrase **waits eagerly** is found seven times in the New Testament as a reference to the Rapture of the Church.

b. God’s creation longs to be set free from the corruption of sin (Romans 8:20-22).

► *For the creation was subject to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 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. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now [Romans 8:20-22].*

Futility is from *mataiotas*, which means vanity, folly - futility. It is used of false religions which are “futile” in getting favor from God (see Ephesians 4:17). **Him who subjected it** refers back to Genesis 3:17-19, “the Curse” that God put upon the ground because of the sin of

²² For an essay on why God allows suffering, see Steven Waterhouse *Life’s Tough Questions* (Amarillo TX: Westcliff Press, 2005) pp. 1-17

Adam. Notice that God did not curse man or woman, but the ground from which he came. When Jesus returns, He will lift the Curse, and the ground will produce so much that the nation Israel will be able to feed the whole world. **Hope** is *elpis*, which means “the confident expectation of a reality.” “Hope” in the Bible is not some nebulous wish or longing; it is a *reality* of something that God has promised. So, while it cannot yet be seen, it is true. That is why the Bible calls the Rapture of the Church, “the Blessed Hope” (Titus 2:13, cf. verse 24).

Corruption is from *phthora* (it is difficult to pronounce this, because English does not have a “phth” together in any of its words). It means, corruption, decay, ruin, mortality. Scientists call this “entropy,” which means, change, a turning. It is the third law of thermodynamics; a mathematical factor which is a measure of the unavailable energy in a thermodynamic system. As matter changes from one form of energy into another, a small amount of energy is lost. It is the reality of decay.

Set free into the freedom of the glory of the children of God will take place at the Second Coming of Christ. Here is another argument for a Pre-Tribulational Rapture. When believers return with Christ after the Tribulation, they will have “glorified bodies,” “spiritual bodies” (1 Corinthians 15:53). When Christ returns to lift the Curse, we will be with Him in our glorified state.

In verse 22, we **know** is from *oida*, to know by intuition, to know instinctively. Paul says that we know automatically in our hearts that **the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now**. This is a figure of speech, where Paul is trying to explain how God’s whole creation is groaning like a woman in labor, trying to give birth. The creation wants the “sons of God” (verse 19) to come forth, to be revealed, because when that happens, Jesus will be back to lift the Curse.

c. The sons of God long for the redemption of our physical bodies (Romans 8:23-25).

► *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].

Having the first fruits of the Spirit shows that the indwelling Holy Spirit in the lives of believers in this Church Age is a partial fulfillment of the New Covenant that God promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (compare John 14:17). Jesus predicted that the Holy Spirit would indwell the Apostles. Thus Christians in the Body of Christ have “the first fruits of the Spirit.” In the Kingdom Age, all believers will receive the Holy Spirit in a complete fulfillment of the New Covenant. “Of the Spirit” is what is called an Appositional Genitive, which means that He, the Holy Spirit, is the firstfruits.

We ourselves groan, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. We as believers in this age, the age of Grace, groan for our “public adoption.” We received a private adoption the moment we were saved, but we have yet a public adoption when Jesus reveals to the whole world our redemption, *apolutrosis*, which means to dismiss by paying a ransom price (see Ephesians 4:30). Our redemption, our salvation, includes our physical bodies in which we had sinned. Jesus has redeemed our souls and our bodies with His precious blood.

► *For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it [Romans 8:24-25].*

We have been saved is an Aorist Tense, completed action, from *sozo*, which means to save, to rescue, to preserve safe and unharmed. These verses should be compared to Hebrews 11:1: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* We need faith and hope as long as we wait for the return of the Lord. When we see Him face to face, and are with Him, we will no longer need faith and hope (see 1 Corinthians 13:13). **Perseverance** is *hupomeno*, which means to remain under, even during adverse circumstances.

d. While we wait and groan, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us (Romans 8:26-27).

► *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 [Romans 8:26].

Help literally means to take a share, or shares. **Weakness** is from *asthenia*, which is usually translated “weakness” in the New Testament, but context must decide what the weakness is. Evidently, in this case, the weakness is our ignorance - **for we do not know how to pray as we should**. “Know” is the same word *oida* in verse 22. We know instinctively that the whole creation groans and suffers, but we do not know instinctively how to pray. Prayer is something that must be learned, but even then we need help. So, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, **Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words**. “Too deep for words” means beyond human understanding. There is a lot we can learn from the Bible, from other Christians, and from the Christian experience, but we cannot know everything. Therefore, the Holy Spirit helps us to pray “according to the will of God.”²³

► *[A]nd 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 8:27].*

Saints is *hagioi*, which means, sanctified ones, those set apart for holy purposes. Believers in Christ are “saints” by their position in Christ, not by their behavior. Notice that **the will of** is italicized in the text of the New American Standard Version, which means the translators have added these three words, which do not appear in the Greek text. Literally, it reads “according to God.”

e. God has predestined His children to match the image of Jesus (Romans 8:28-30).

► *And we know that God causes all things to work together for*

²³ Note: Just because the Holy Spirit is constantly interceding for us does not mean that we do not have to pray anymore. We need to keep praying, as the Bible tells us to “Pray without ceasing” in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, especially for the difficult things.

good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. [Romans 8:28].

Here is one of the great verses in the Bible concerning the children of God. Whatever happens to us in our sanctification, whatever suffering we might go through, this verse promises us that God will make sure to make it count for good. **We know** is another occurrence of *oida*. **Work together** is *sunergo*; *sun* means “with” and *ergo* gives our word “energy.” “Work together” is a good translation. Notice that **God causes** it all to work together for good. God has it all under control. **Love** is *agapao*, to love unconditionally, to accept God as He is. Paul further describes believers as **those who are called according to His purpose**.²⁴

“Called” here can be translated “called out.” God “calls” everyone (but many refuse to *answer* the call). After the Lord saves us, we become distinctly His. We become the *called out* ones, “the elect,” meaning we are *set aside to position and service* in God’s kingdom. God has a plan for each of His redeemed, “called out ones.”

His purpose is called a Dative of Advantage.

► *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; and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also*

²⁴ . . . (here) we have Paul’s most theological reference to calling: First we note Paul’s emphasis upon believers as “**those who love Him**,” which comes first in the emphatic position in the Greek sentence (as retained in the New Berkeley Version). Then in apposition to this we are designated as “**those called in agreement with His purpose**” . . . there are three usages of *protheses* in reference to God’s plan of salvation: “plan, purpose, resolve, will, . . . design.” Paul stressed the purpose of the calling to be that we should “share the likeness of His Son.” In other passages he expanded that purpose to include: called to freedom (Galatians 5:13), to hope (Ephesians 1:18, 4:4), to peace in one body (Colossians 3:15), not to impurity but in sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:7), to suffering (1 Peter 2:21), and to be a blessing (1 Peter 3:9). Thus God has many purposes in commissioning us and calling us saints. (See C. Gordon Olsen, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism* (Cedar Knolls NJ: Global Gospel Ministries Inc., 2002) p. 233.

justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified
[Romans 8:29-30].

Conformed is *summorpho*, which means “to change with.” *Morpho* gives our English word “metamorphosis.” This word means to change from the inside out. **Image** is *eikonas*, giving us the word “icon,” which can be metaphorical or literal. In this case it is both: we are to be conformed not only to the spiritual image of our Savior, but also physically when we receive a resurrected body as He has. **Brethren** describes the familial relationship believers have with Jesus Christ - He is our “elder brother,” and we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. **Justified** is our word *dikaioisuna*, also found in Romans 3:24.

Note: We should not assume that verses 29-30 constitute an order of salvation; e.g., “foreknowledge - predestination - calling - justification - glorification.” Here we must keep before us the proper perspective of these terms: God’s *foreknowledge*²⁵ refers to the election of individuals only in the sense that He foreknows who will accept or reject His Son. *Predestination*²⁶ concerns only our destiny as Christians - we are

²⁵ *Did foreknow*. Five times in the New Testament. In all cases, it means *foreknow*. It does not mean *foreordain*. It signifies prescience, not *pre-election*” (M.R. Vincent, *Word studies in the New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 95) . . . “The Bible teaches that God does foreknow man’s choices. Foreknowledge is related to election (1 Peter 1:2), but this refers to the election of individuals only in the sense that God foreknew who would receive or reject His provision for sin. But even God’s foreknowledge leaves men free and responsible in his choice. An omniscient God knew beforehand who would accept or reject His salvation. But His foreknowledge does not make Him responsible for man’s choice” [H.H. Hobbs, *What Baptists Believe*, pp. 25-26, 107. See Samuel Fisk, *Election and Predestination* (Bicester, England 1977) pp. 73, 81].

²⁶ Turn to your Bible and read for yourself in the only two chapters in which this word “predestinate” or “predestinated” is found. The first is Romans 8:29-30. The other chapter is Ephesians 1:5, 11. You will note that there is no reference in these four verses to either heaven or hell, but to Christlikeness eventually. Nowhere are we told in Scripture that God predestinated one man to be saved and another to be lost. Men are saved or lost eternally because of their attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Predestination means that some day all the redeemed shall become just like the Lord Jesus! [H. A. Ironside, *Full Assurance*, pp. 93-94. See Samuel Fisk, *Election and Predestination* (Bicester, England 1977) pp. 35-36].

predestined to become heirs.²⁷ *Calling* is the universal drawing by God of all sinners to accept His forgiveness through faith in the death of His Son for payment for sin. *Justification* is God's act of remitting the sins of guilty man by His grace through man's faith in Christ alone. *Glorification* is God's preappointment of us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

4. Paul's Great Benediction in Chapters 6-8 on sanctification: nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:31-39).

Here is surely the longest, and probably the greatest benediction in all of Holy Scripture. Benedictions are usually given at the end of a book, but Paul is using this benediction here, because he is finishing up this section on Sanctification. His conclusion is that, whether we Christians cooperate with God in the sanctification process or not, God has preordained that believers will be conformed to Christ with a resurrected body that will endure for eternity. There is nothing which can separate us from God's love. None of the other religions of the world can make these guarantees.

a. Look at the sacrifice of Christ, and compare the sacrifices we make in our own sanctification.

► *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? [Romans 8:31, 32].*

These things refers back to the *sufferings of this present time* that Paul began to discuss in verse 18. Such *sufferings . . . are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us*. The passage goes

²⁷ God predestines three things: (1) the conformation of believers to the image of Christ, Romans 8:29; (2) the adoption of believers into God's family, Ephesians 1:5; and (3) the inheritance of believers of part of God's Kingdom, Ephesians 1:11. All three of these things predestinated by God in Scripture have to do with believers, but it does **not** say that God predestinates people to salvation or condemnation - that is the individual's choice. (See also Acts 4:28 and 1 Corinthians 2:7.)

on to discuss in verses 18-30 that the whole of God's creation groans for the revealing of the *sons of God*, verse 19. Paul says that Christians *groan within ourselves*, verse 23, *waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body*. The Holy Spirit also groans, *too deep for words* in verse 26, interceding for us through our affliction and our waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus.

So, **what then shall we say to these things?** God allows suffering in the lives of His dedicated children. God uses these things, verse 29, to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ Himself. Here is what Paul says: **If God is for us, who is against us?** "If" is in a Class 1 Conditional Sentence that could be translated "since:" "Since God is for us, who is against us?" The expected answer is "Effectively, no one!" Notice that the little verb "is" is in italics, showing that the translators had to supply the verb. The King James Version says, "Who can be against us?"

Verse 32 is one of the great verses in all of Scripture. If we look at the supreme sacrifice that God made in not sparing His one and only Son, delivering Him up to the cross to die in our place, then compare what else God might do for you. Everything! **How will He not also with Him freely give us all things?** If God the Father asked God the Son to die on the cross for our sins, and we trust in Christ as God asks us to, how will God not "with him," freely give us all things? The key phrase is "with Him." The intensive particle *ge* appears in the Greek text right after the first word "He." We cannot translate this particle, but it intensifies everything that appears in the sentence in which it appears. The verb **delivered over** is *paradidomi*, made up of the prefix *para*, which can mean "across" or "over," as it does here, and *didomi*, which means to give. Hence, *paradidomi* means, to hand over, to deliver up, to give across. So, God the Father "handed over" His own Son into the hands of evil men, that they might torture Him and kill Him, and so that He would take the punishment for our sin and die in our place.

Freely is from *charizomai*, from *charis*, which is God's grace; God's unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. So, whatever God gives us, it is through the Person and Work of Christ, not through anything that we accomplish or deserve. **All things** includes everything we need in this life, in spite of the sufferings we might go through as Christians. "All things"

will also include life with God for all eternity.

b. Look at the Intercession of Christ, who secures our Justification (Romans 8:33-34).

► *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the One who justifies [Romans 8:33].*

Who (in the whole universe, including the Devil himself) **will bring a charge against God's elect?** The expected answer is "No one!" The Devil does bring charges against the believers (see Revelation 12:10); and his title "devil" is *diabolos*, which means accuser, slanderer, traitor. But, what Paul is saying is "Who can bring an *effective* charge against God's elect?" Remember this word "elect" from *eklektos*, which means "chosen one." Also, 1 Peter 1:1-2 states that when believers are saved, they become "elect" according to the foreknowledge of God. God knows in advance who will respond with their own volition and believe the Gospel. The verb means "to call out." God is "calling men" all the time, and when they believe, He "justifies them." **God is the one who justifies.** Here again is *dikaioo*, also in Romans 3:24, which says, *being justified by His grace*. God declares us to be righteous when He gives us the righteousness of Christ the moment we believe in Christ. Note carefully that God does not simply look the other way concerning our sin: Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross, therefore God the Father is free to justify us.

[W]ho is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us [Romans 8:34].

Condemns is *katakrino*: *krino*, which means to divide, to separate, to judge. *Kata* is an intensifying prefix. Since Jesus said, *The Father . . . committed all judgment unto the Son*, Jesus is the only One who has the authority to condemn anyone, and He will never condemn one who has trusted in Him. **Rather who was raised** needs to be compared to Romans 4:25, where it says, *He was raised for our justification*. **Also** compares this ministry of intercession back to the ministry of intercession by the Holy Spirit in verse 26.

c. Look at the overwhelming conquest we have through Christ (Romans 8:35-37).

► *Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [Romans 8:35].*

Now Paul lists seven negative things he can think of that might make us think that we have been separated from the “love of Christ.” **Separate** is the active verb *chorizo* (compared to the passive *chorizomai* in verse 32). *Chorizo* means to divide asunder, to sever, to disunite, to disassociate. **Love** is “agape” love; unconditional love; love that sees a need and reaches out to meet that need without thinking what might be received in return. **Of Christ** is a Subjective Genitive; Jesus is the Subject of the “love;” He is the one doing the loving.

► *Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED”[Romans 8:36].*

The apostle quotes Psalm 44:22, to show us from the Old Testament that God predicted that His children would be persecuted. The world does not understand or accept “the sons of God” (see verse 19). People will put Christians to death, thinking they are doing God a favor (see 2 Corinthians 4:8-18; also Luke 12:11-12, and Acts 7:58 and 16:20-24).

► *But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him that loved us [Romans 8:37].*

Overwhelmingly conquer is one Greek word *hupernikao*; *huper* is the prefix that means “over and above” or overwhelmingly. The verb *nikao* gives our word “nike,” which means victory, or conquest.

d. Look at everything in Creation and see if you can find something that can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

► *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ*

Jesus our Lord [Romans 8:38,39].

Paul uses the verb *pepeismai*, translated **I am convinced**. This verb is a Perfect Indicative Passive from the root *peitho*, which means to be convinced, to be persuaded, to appease, to render tranquil, to quiet. The Perfect Tense denotes some action in past time that has present, on-going results. The Passive Voice means that the subject has received the action of the verb. So, something has convinced Paul at some time in the past that **nothing can separate him from the love of God**, and he is now appeased, rendered tranquil, quieted about it.

Here Paul lists 10 couplets - groups of two things that describe extremes in our universe - things that cannot separate us from the love of God.

(1) The first couplet is **death, nor life**. 1 Corinthians 15:26 calls death "our last enemy." Death is so unnatural, and yet it is the irreversible effect of sin. Man cannot stop it - he can postpone it sometimes, but never stop it. It looks so overwhelming; it is such an unstoppable power; it carries a mystique about it that makes us wonder if death can separate us from the love of God. It cannot! And that is why Paul lists it first. It may seem strange, but "life" has a way of separating us from the love of God. People are so busy living life that they leave God out of their lives. Even Christians get so caught up with life that it seems that God has no place in their lives; life itself has separated them from the love of God.

(2) The second couplet is **angels, nor principalities**. The word *angelos* is transliterated into the English word "angel," but translated it means "messenger" or "one sent." The verb *angello* means to tell or announce. So, the messenger always has a message. The word translated "principalities" is *archai*, which means headship, authority, principality. In Ephesians 6:10-12, Paul uses this same word first in describing demons. This word is used in the Greek New Testament by Paul to refer to earthly authorities, such as, Titus 3:1. But the contrast here is between "holy angels and fallen angels." Neither can separate us from the love of God.

(3) The third couplet is **nor things present, nor things to come**. "Things present" seem overwhelming sometimes, like illness or

relationship problems, financial problems, or child problems. “Things to come” can be frightening, especially if we read the Book of The Revelation. Things are going to get very bad for those who are unbelievers before Jesus comes. Jesus predicts a day worse than any other time in history (see Matthew 24:21-22). If we worry about the future, we cannot enjoy the love of God today.

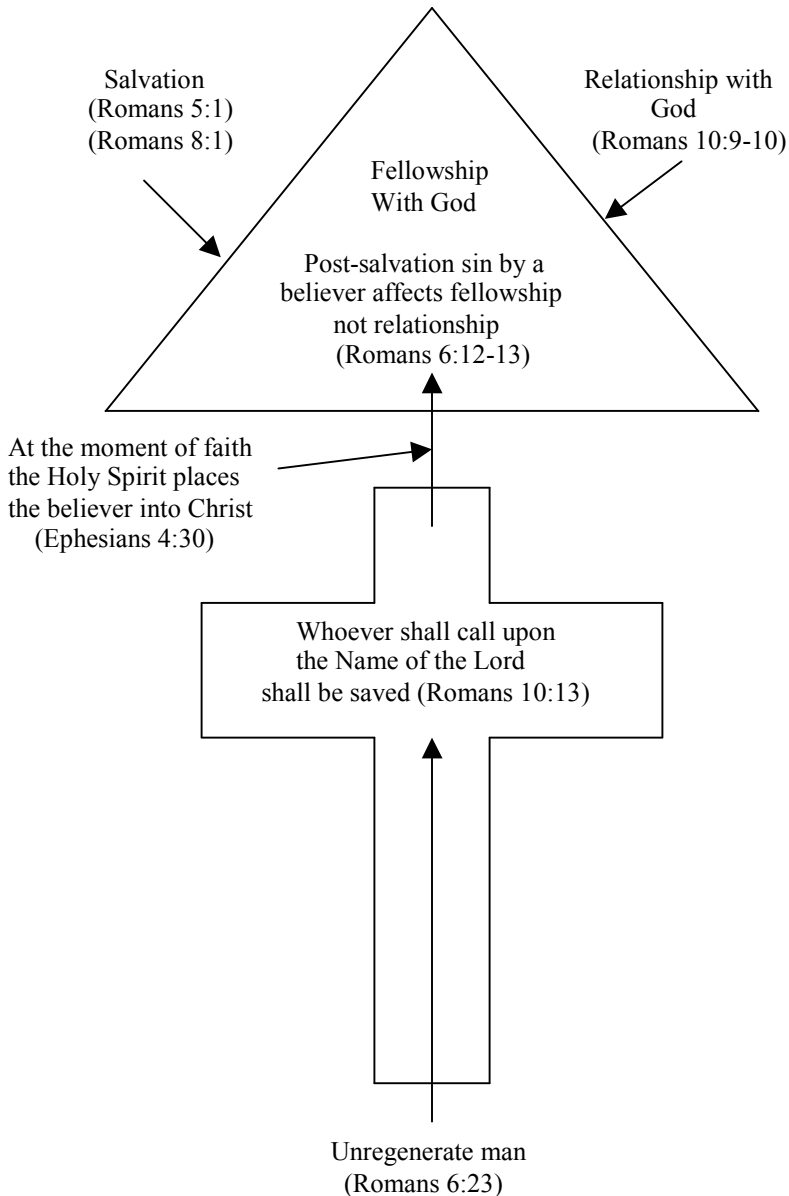
(4) The fourth couplet is **powers, nor any other created thing**. If Paul uses “principalities” to refer to fallen angels, then he is using *dunamis* or “powers” to refer to human authorities, and contrasts those with “any other created thing.” No human has any power on earth except it be granted him by God (John 19:10-11). But, sometimes human government or authority with all that power tends to separate us from the love of God. “Any other created thing” is Paul’s sweeping reference to the rest of the universe. That is why he listed it last.

(5) The fifth couplet is **height, nor depth**. This would reach from the highest heaven, the third heaven, to the furthest extremity of the universe opposite of where God has placed his throne. Or, perhaps Paul is thinking of Sheol, the place of the dead in the heart of the earth.²⁸ Notice that **the love of God . . . is in Christ Jesus our Lord**. The love of God is not in a religion; it is not in a particular church; it is not in a list of do’s and don’ts. The love of God is in a Person, the Person of Christ Jesus, and He alone is Lord. If we have Him, we have the love of God, and nothing can take it from us. See chart two, page 149.

²⁸ The Bible differentiates several places of punishment. *Hell* is a general term that refers to the place where there is total, permanent separation from the grace of God. *Abyss* is a Greek term often translated “pit” or “bottomless pit.” The *abyss* is the temporary place of imprisonment for some fallen angels. Satan will spend 1,000 years in the *abyss*; after a short release he will be cast in the *Lake of Fire* (*Gehenna, hell*), the place of eternal punishment for both Satan and the fallen angels, as well as eventually all the unsaved following final judgment at the Great White Throne. *Tartaros* was the Greek term used to designate the place where the most wicked spirits were sent to be temporarily punished. *Sheol* (Hebrew) or *Hades* (Greek, two compartments, “paradise” and “torments”) is the temporary destination of unsaved souls (humans only) immediately after death, to remain there until their condemnation at the Great White Throne and transfer to the *Lake of Fire*.

Chart 2

Security of the Believer



V. Sovereignty - Romans Chapters 9-11. Is God through with the nation Israel? No.

A. Paul explains Israel's Past History: they were blessed by God's choices (Romans 9:1-29).

1. Paul is filled with sorrow that so few Jews are being saved (Romans 9:1-5).

► *I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit [Romans 9:1].*

Paul has already taught about the indwelling Holy Spirit in Chapter 8, so now he calls upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit through his own "conscience" that he is **telling the truth** and is **not lying**, his **conscience** testifying **with him in the Holy Spirit**. **Conscience** is the compound Greek word *suneidasis*: *sun* means with, and *eidoo* means to see. So, the conscience is that immaterial part of man by which we "see with" God what is right and wrong. In Genesis 3:7 we see where the conscience of Adam and Eve was activated because they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Genesis 2:17. Paul's "conscience" is clear. The English word "conscience" is also a compound word: "con" meaning with, and "science" meaning knowledge, thus - with knowledge" of what is right and wrong. Unfortunately, 1 Timothy 4:2 warns that some people have their conscience seared with a hot iron; so their conscience is like scar tissue.

► *[T]hat I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh [Romans 9:2, 3].*

Great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart shows Paul's fervent love for the Jews. The Greek word translated "grief" is *oduna*, which means "pain of body or mind." **I could wish** is from *euchomai*, meaning to offer a prayer, to wish, to desire. **Accursed** is from *anatithami*, which means to put or place through - usually used in a bad sense; to curse, to devote something to God (for condemnation). Then, Paul defines what he means by "accursed;" *anatithami*, separated **from Christ**.

Brethren is a technical term in the New Testament, but context must decide if it is a reference to “spiritual brothers/Christian brothers” (which could include both Jews and Gentiles), or “blood brothers/Jewish brothers,” or some other tribe or nationality. Again Paul explains his own term, **my kinsmen according to the flesh**, (here he is talking about his blood-brothers, his fellow Jews).

► *[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, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen [Romans 9:4,5].*

Verse 4 begins with a further explanation for “my brethren” **who are Israelites**. Now, Paul lists seven advantages or blessings from God:

a. **The adoption as sons**, that is, God took Abraham from the Gentiles and made him a Jew (see Genesis 12:1-3). “Jew” is a slang term, a shortened form of “Judean.” The term “Hebrew” comes from Abraham’s predecessor, Eber, mentioned in Genesis 10:24 (compare also Genesis 11:14, Numbers 24:24, and 1 Chronicles 1:18 and 25). (This should not be confused with our “adoption as sons” in Romans 8:23, which refers to Christians.)

b. **The glory** is a reference to “the Shekinah Glory,” the manifestation of the glory of God, first in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple. “Shekinah,” not found in Holy Scripture, is Hebrew for “shining,” and refers to the brilliant ball of light that shone over the Ark of the Covenant (see Exodus 40:34-38).

c. **The covenants** were the five covenants that God made with Israel:

(1) The *Abrahamic* Covenant, Genesis 12:1-3, in which God committed Himself to make of Abraham a great nation.

(2) The *Mosaic* Covenant, also known as “The Law,” the Books of Exodus through Deuteronomy: the Moral Code in Exodus, the Ceremonial Code in Leviticus, the Civil Code in Numbers, and the second or repetition of all three codes in Deuteronomy.

(3) The *Land Covenant*, also known as The Palestinian Covenant, Deuteronomy Chapters 29-30, wherein God promises the land of Israel eternally to His people Israel.

(4) The *Seed Covenant*, also known as the Davidic Covenant, 2 Samuel 7:16, when God promised an eternal throne to King David and his descendants.

(5) The *New Covenant*, Jeremiah 31:31-34, when God promised the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of every one of His children.

d. **The giving of the Law**, which was the first five books of the Old Testament, given through Moses, Exodus 24:12. God's Law revealed the Holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man. The Ten Commandments shows that God is Holy (He never has broken the Ten Commandments), that man is sinful (he constantly breaks the Ten Commandments), and that man is in desperate need of a Savior (Jesus Christ).

e. **The temple service**, which was the Levitical priesthood system, which allowed the Israelites (and all Gentiles) to dwell with the living God (Exodus 25:8), and be able to approach Him.

f. **The promises, whose are the fathers**, which are God's unconditional promises to the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (see Genesis 17:21, Exodus 2:24, Leviticus 26:42 and 2 Kings 13:23).

g. **The Christ**, who is Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Law, proved Himself to be qualified to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins (see Isaiah 53:6).

2. God is still sovereign because His choice of Israel was based on election, not on natural generation or works of merit (Romans 9:6-13).

a. God chose Isaac over Ishmael and Abraham's other sons (Romans 9:6-9).

► *But it is not as though the Word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but*

“THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED” [Romans 9:6,7].

The Word of God includes the covenants and the Law, which God gave Israel to trust. So, the **Word of God** does not fail because someone refuses to believe it (compare Isaiah 55:11). As Paul was writing this, the Kingdom promised to Israel has been postponed, *temporarily*. It looks as if God’s word and His promises have failed, but such is not the case. **For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.** This is Paul’s explanation for what he said in the first sentence, it is a “play on words.” “Israel” in this last sentence means “believers in Christ.” What he means is this: that not all the blood-related descendants of Abraham are going to get into God’s promised eternal Kingdom (see John 8:31-47, especially verse 44; *You are of your father, the Devil*). So, those Jews who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ, **are not all Israel** (see also Romans 2:29).

Neither are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants because Abraham had several wives and many sons and grandsons (Genesis 25:1-18). Paul quotes Genesis 21:12 to remind us that **through Isaac your descendants will be named**. Just because Abraham had other wives and concubines and sons, they were not automatically part of the nation Israel. In the same way, not every Jew is automatically a part of the eternal kingdom promised to Israel.

► *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” [Romans 9:8,9].*

The promise of a Savior (Genesis 15:5-6 and Galatians 3:16), and faith in that Savior is how anyone gets into the eternal Kingdom of God. Here was God’s promise: **At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.** Therefore, Isaac became *the seed of the promise*. It was through him the descendants of Abraham became the descendants of Israel and the nation of Israel. So, it was God’s sovereign choice of Isaac that formed the nation Israel. Just as not all of Abraham’s physical descendants became a part of the nation Israel, so not all of the descendants of Israel will become a part of the eternal nation of Israel. That nation is entered by faith in Christ, not by physical

descendancy.

b. God chose Jacob over Esau (Romans 9:10-13).

► *And not only this, but here was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 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, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."* [Romans 9:10-12].

Here is Paul's second argument for the sovereignty of God in forming the nation Israel: **the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."** Notice that "twins" is supplied in verse 10 by the translators, because the word is missing in the Greek text (it is the same in verse 11). However, the context allows this to make good sense in English. "The older will serve the younger" was a terrific breach of tradition. Middle-Eastern tradition demanded that the oldest son be the heir, and all other siblings would serve him. But, God demanded otherwise. Theologically speaking, and going back to our study of Romans 8 and God's foreknowledge, God chose Jacob over Esau because He knew that Esau would eventually "despise, reject or consider as nothing his own birthright." Esau would sell his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:27-34). God sovereignly chose Jacob before any son could do anything right or wrong. Who is really in charge of Israel's destiny? God.

► *Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED"* [Romans 9:13].²⁹

²⁹ "Esau I hated is what is called a Hebraism, a Hebrew figure of speech. It is a description of choosing. It does **not** mean that God literally hated Esau; it means simply that He chose Jacob and rejected Esau. Does this prove that God unconditionally elected Jacob unto salvation and passed Esau by? Not at all - these two were treated as the representatives of their respective posterities." (Keyser, Leander S. *Election and Conversion*. Burlington IA: Lutheran Literary Board, 1914).

When you and I accept Christ as Savior, we “love Jesus” and embrace Him for salvation, and “hate all other saviors;” by accepting Christ by faith, we reject all other so-called saviors.³⁰

3. God is free to act in His own sovereign right, to save believers and reject unbelievers. (God sets the standard of righteousness, not man.) Romans 9:14-18.

a. Man in general (Romans 9:14-16).

► *What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy [Romans 9:14-16].*

There is no injustice with God, is there? expects a negative answer in the Greek text. So, Paul answers his own question with *Ma genoito, May it never be!* This is a double negative answer in Greek, impossible to translate literally into English. It is the strongest negative answer in Greek. God is not unjust for choosing Jacob over Esau: nor is God unjust for postponing the promised Kingdom to Israel, nor is God unjust for choosing any other believer over a Christ-rejector.

I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion means that God does not obligate Himself to have mercy and compassion upon Christ-rejecters (which Esau was). **The man who wills** refers to man’s intellect, his mind, his heart and his will. **The man who runs** refers to man’s deeds. But, salvation and a relationship with God does not depend on those things, but upon “God who has mercy” - on believers.

b. Pharaoh in particular (Romans 9:17-18).

► *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”*

³⁰ Compare the marital vows when we choose our wives and “forsake all others.”

[Romans 9:17].

Now Paul uses a Biblical example of the sovereignty of God: over Pharaoh of Egypt, as he quotes from Exodus 9:16, *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.* Read the context to learn that Pharaoh hardened his own heart toward God six times, before God began to harden his heart even more.³¹ (Six is the number in Holy Scripture that represents man in rebellion against God; see Revelation 13:17-18.)

The Book of Genesis ends with the death of Jacob in Egypt, and Joseph taking his father's body back to the Promised Land for burial. Then, Joseph and his brothers return to Egypt, and that is where the Book ends. Exodus begins with a new Pharaoh *who did not know Joseph*. God simply waited for another generation of the king of Egypt to arise who would refuse to let His people go from Egypt. God does not force anyone to be evil or force anyone to refuse to believe (see James 1:13-15). God used 400 years in Egypt to build His people into a huge nation of 2 million slaves, non-warriors. Pharaoh's refusal to let them go required God to do all the fighting for His people to get them out of Egypt. Through the Ten Plagues on Egypt, God did **demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.**

Compare what Rahab said in Joshua 2:8-11 to see that the whole earth had heard of the God of Israel. His name was proclaimed throughout the whole earth.

► *So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires [Romans 9:18].*

³¹ The words "raised you up" do not mean that God raised Pharaoh up from birth for this purpose: they refer to his elevation to the highest throne on earth ... God did not override Pharaoh's will. The hardening was a reciprocal process ... the whole contest between God and Pharaoh must be interpreted by what God said to Moses before the contest even started: "The king of Egypt "will not." The will was already set. The heart was already hard. (Baxter, J. Sidlow, *Explore the Book, Vol. VI, Acts to Revelation*. London: Marshall. Morgan and Scott, 1955).

So then introduces Paul's conclusion to this section: He **has mercy on whom He desires** (namely, believers in Christ), and **He hardens whom He desires** (namely, Christ rejecters, unbelievers). God is not bound by anything that man comes up with to justify himself before a Holy God: such as, some man-made religion, man's good deeds, man's social standing, man's wealth or power. Man cannot blackmail God into accepting some other standard of getting into heaven besides the holiness of God Himself, and man's faith in Jesus, the God-provided Savior of sins.

Mercy is the Greek word *eleos*, which is the extension of God's grace; it refers to the benefit of God's compassion; His kindness and blessings. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve - punishment. God shows mercy upon the repentant. He is not required to bless us or have mercy upon us if we refuse to repent. His mercy extends to unbelievers when they come to faith in Christ, and He saves them. His mercy extends to believers when they repent of known sins, and He forgives them. There is never a time in human history when man does not need God's mercy. The cross of Christ makes it possible for God to extend His mercy to us.

4. Paul defends God's sovereign right to choose (Romans 9:19-29).

a. Who are we to argue with God? (Romans 9:19-21).

► *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" 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 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 9:19-21].*

Why does He still find fault? And, **For who resists His will?** These are two common questions of someone who does not understand the sovereignty of God. The text of Holy Scripture is not saying that God arbitrarily *has mercy on whom He desires* and arbitrarily *hardens whom He desires*. To understand this passage and any other passage on the sovereignty of God, we must take into account God's omniscience, His foreknowledge, and His sovereign choice (see 1 Peter 1:1-2).

O man is one of God's creations; His highest creation, created in the very image of God Himself (Genesis 1:26-27), with an eternal soul. But, man is still a created being, subject to his Creator. **The thing molded** is used of Adam and Eve in 1 Timothy 2:13. The verb is *plasso*, which means to mold, to form, to fashion. Even as God's highest form of creation, "the molded," does not have the right to question, **Why did you make me like this?** See Revelation 4:11, which says, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.* "The thing molded" could include anything made out of wood, or metal, or clay.

In verse 21 Paul uses a very familiar illustration of "the thing molded," a piece of pottery, which was very common in the first century: the potter and his clay. **Clay** is the word *palos*, found only here and in John 9 where Jesus formed the clay to put on the blind man's eyes. The word means moist earth, mud. This teaching by Paul caught on so that almost anyone has heard of man being made from clay. In the Genesis account, it uses the word for "dust."

The word **right** is *eksousia*, which means official right, or official authority. The potter has the official right over the clay, to make from it whatever he desires: **a vessel for honorable use, and another for common use.** The clay has no right to protest, and tell the potter what to do; the potter can do whatever he wants. Everyone knows that and accepts that, but when it comes to God and His creation, man (the clay) often complains to God (the Potter) about what He creates.³²

³² "Man, on God's own showing, is not a lump of senseless clay. He is a sentient, reasoning being, endowed by God with the power of self-determination. God Himself cannot and does not treat him as a lump of clay; and to assert such a relationship between God and man made in God's image, is to assert what is contrary to common sense and to God's own declarations and assumptions in Scripture ... By Old Testament passages the idea of God dealing with men as lifeless clay, shaping them to eternal life or death according to his arbitrary will, is contradicted. The illustration points away from God's causing unbelief, to God's bearing with man's voluntary and persistent disobedience, and to His making of him the best that can be made consistently with divine justice and holiness. So, far from accentuating rigid narrowness of purpose, arbitrary and inexorable destination of individuals to honor or dishonor, the illustration opens a vast range and free play of divine

Honorable is from *tima*, which means honor, price, value, high regard, dignity. **Common** is the same word with the negating prefix “a;” hence, *atima*. So, “common” refers to that which does not have honor, price, value, high regard or dignity. In everyone’s home there was fancy pottery, used for special occasions; and common pottery, used for everyday things. If a common piece was dropped and broken, they hardly cared; they just picked up another one the next time they went to market. But, if they dropped and broke a fancy piece, everyone grieved over it for it was beautiful and precious.

b. God has His own purposes for how He acts (Romans 9:22-24).

► *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? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles [Romans 9:22-24].*

Willing is from *thelo*, which means to will from the heart. So, God’s desire, or His heart’s desire is **to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known**. What would we not know about God if He did not create those He knew would reject His salvation? We would not know His wrath, His power, and His sovereignty. God wants us to know Him thoroughly, and He is a just God, a God of justice, and so we must know His wrath and power, or we never know Him completely. He is a God of love and kindness and mercy, but He is also a God of wrath and power.

purpose to turn evil to good ... God does not make men in order to destroy them. God ordains no man to eternal death ... the fact that men do become vessels unto dishonor merely proves the power which God has lodged in the human will of modifying, and in a sense defeating, His sovereign purpose of love. He “will have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of truth;” yet Christ comes to His own, and His own receive Him not, and He weeps as He exclaims, “Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life” (M. R. Vincent. *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. III, pp. 144, 147-148). See Samuel Fisk, *Election and Predestination* (Bicester, England 1977) pp. 131-132.

Demonstrate is from *endeiknumai*, which means to display, to manifest, to give outward proof of. **Wrath** is *orga* (see Matthew 3:7; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 6:16-17). **Power** is *dunamis*, which gives our English word “dynamite,” and can mean “sovereign power,” as it does here.

Prepared is in the Middle Voice, which means something that is done to yourself, such as “bathing.” When we bathe, we usually do it to ourselves, and that is the sense of the Middle Voice. Hence, it should be translated “prepared themselves.” This clears up the verse, and the errant notion that man does not make his own choices. Christ-rejecters “prepared themselves for destruction.” Destruction is *apoleia*, which is translated “perish” in John 3:16.

In order that introduces the purpose of God preparing both **honorable and common vessels**. **He might make known** is from *ginosko*, which means to know by seeing, to know first-hand, to know by experience. God wants to show to everyone first-hand **the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy**. All believers in Christ will receive God’s mercy because they repented and believed. These vessels (having become believers) “He prepared beforehand for glory.”³³ Compare Romans 8:28-30 where Paul had previously described God’s work in predestination: God has predestined *believers* to become conformed to the image of His own Son, Jesus Christ. Whether they become believers is up to them, because they are free moral agents. And, according to His foreknowledge, God predestines those believers to become like His own Son. He has “prepared *them* (italics author’s) for glory.” **Glory** is from *doksa*, which is the sum of God’s attributes; it

33 The potter and the clay was a common illustration in the Old Testament (Isaiah 29:16, 45:9, 64:8; Jeremiah 18:1-6). Never is it a reference to anyone’s salvation. Israel is said to be the clay (Isaiah 64:8; Jeremiah 18:6). The clay is formed, not created. There was no clay before the foundation of the world, and neither is anyone said to be fitted or prepared before the foundation of the world. And although the “vessels of mercy” are said to be “afore prepared to glory” by God, no agent is given in the case of “those fitted for destruction.” Vessels are made empty, and bring honor or dishonor (2 Timothy 2:20) according to what is put in them. God doesn’t make anyone honorable or dishonorable. See Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism*, (Pensacola, Vance Publications rev. ed. 2007) p. 238.

also is used in Scripture for the manifestation of the presence of God (see Exodus 33:19). Moses said, “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” “The glory of God” is seen in heaven (Revelation 15:8), and in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10-11).

Even us means “us believers,” the vessels upon whom God plans to pour out **the riches of His glory**. **Whom He also called** is *kaleo*, which means to call, to summon, to invite. So, God invites everyone to salvation, but not all will accept the invitation. Compare also, *ekkaleo*, a Participle of Attendant Circumstance in 1 Peter 1:1-2, and *ekselestsato*, an Aorist Indicative Middle, in Ephesians 1:4. Both of these are intensified forms of *kaleo*. All appear in the Aorist Tense or with an Aorist Tense, which denotes completed action. So, God “chose,” completed action; now He will save those who come to Him; those whom, in His foreknowledge, He knew would receive the Gospel.

Not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles fits with the theme of this Book (see Romans 1:16-17), and shows that God will save all who will believe in Him, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. God promises to show mercy on both Jews and Gentiles; “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). **Jews** is a derivation of the name “Judah,” that is, the Kingdom of Judah; from the southern two tribes after the nation split (see 2 Kings 16:6). **Gentiles** is *ethnos*, or “nations;” that is, all the other “nations” besides Israel.

c. God’s offer of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles is revealed in His prophecies (Romans 9:25-29).

(1) From Hosea (Romans 9:25-26).

► *As He says also in Hosea, “I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED’ ” [Romans 9:25].*

Here Paul quotes from Hosea 2:23 which says, “*I will call those who were not my people, ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved, ‘beloved.’*” In the New American Standard Version, when the text is all capital letters, it is a direct quote from the Old Testament.

Under divine inspiration, (see 2 Timothy 3:16), the Apostle Paul

interprets and applies for us this verse from Hosea, which heretofore had probably never been understood by the Jewish people. God is forming the Bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9), believers from the Jews and Gentiles, having equal status with Christ. Compare Romans 1:7 and Ephesians 1:6 where the Bible uses the same word, “beloved” for believers and for Christ Himself. It is the same word translated here “beloved;” a Perfect Passive Participle. The Perfect Tense denotes past action with present, on-going results; the Passive Voice means the subject receives the action of the verb; a Participle is a Verbal Adjective describing the person, “the beloved.”

► *“AND IT SHALL BE IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD” [Romans 9:26].*

Here Paul quotes from Hosea 1:10; *“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.”* This verse clearly refers to the people of Israel, so, like the Gentiles, they need God’s salvation just like the Gentiles. To be **sons of the living God**, they need to be adopted into God’s family, just like the Gentiles (Romans 8:23).

(2) From Isaiah – Romans 9:27-29.

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; 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].

Here Paul quotes from Isaiah 10:22, **it is the remnant that will be saved**, which means, “the believing remnant” (see Romans 9:6-7 and 11:26-27). God must *take away their sins*, verse 27, before an Israelite is saved. So, only a believing remnant or “born-again Jews” will be admitted into God’s eternal kingdom. **For the Lord will execute his word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly** is from Isaiah 10:23, which probably has its application during the Great Tribulation.

In verse 29 Paul quotes from Isaiah 1:9, which refers to the Babylonian Captivity, but like most prophetic Scripture, it has a double-application. God did, in fact, spare a believing remnant of Israel from the Babylonian Captivity: two million went into captivity, and only 50,000 returned - those who had a heart for the Promised Land. As God kept them from being annihilated then (see the Book of Esther), God will preserve a believing remnant during the Great Tribulation. Thus, (see Romans 11:26), “all Israel will be saved.”

B. Paul explains Israel’s Present History: as a nation, God has temporarily set them aside, but individual Jews can be saved by grace through personal faith (Romans 9:30-10:21).

Since Chapter 9 deals with the present history of Israel, even though the nation has been set aside for a while, any individual Jew can be saved by trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. Paul himself is a prime example.

1. Jews, like Gentiles, are saved by faith, not works (Romans 9:30-33).

► *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith [Romans 9:30].*

What shall we say then? This is the fifth time Paul uses this question in his defense of the Gospel (see Romans 4:1; 6:1; 8:31; 9:14). **Gentiles** is *ethnos*, which gives our word “ethnic.” It is sometimes translated “nations” (see Matthew 25:32). To the Jews, it was often a derogatory term (Matthew 6:32). **Who did not pursue righteousness** because they were pagan; they worshipped idols; they lived a life of sin and wanton pleasure; they had no concept of eternal life or a Holy God. *Dikaiousuna* is translated “righteousness,” and means God’s righteousness, absolute righteousness, the kind of righteousness given to those who believe. **Attained** is from *katalambano*, which means to seize, to attain, to lay hold of. **By faith** is *ek pistis*; the particle *ek* literally means “out of” or “from.” *Pistis* means “faith,” and always requires an object in Greek; in the Bible the Object is always Jesus Christ (compare Acts 4:12; Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

► *[B]ut Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive*

at that law [Romans 9:31].

Israel is the nation Israel, named after the man Jacob, whose name God changed to “Israel” (Genesis 32:28), which means “he struggles or persists with God.” **Pursuing** is a Present Durative that can be translated “kept on pursuing.” **A law of righteousness** requires perfect obedience to the law, whatever it is. Only Jesus was able to fulfill God’s Law in this way, Hebrews 4:15.

► *Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone [Romans 9:32].*

Because they did not pursue it by faith, is also *ek pistis*, verse 30. They pursued perfect obedience to God’s Law **by works**, *ergon*, human effort, human merit. Therefore, their object of faith is themselves. They are trusting in their own worthiness to gain enough righteousness that would get them into heaven. Thus, **they stumbled over the stumbling stone**. The next verse explains that the Stumbling Stone is none other than Jesus Christ.

► *[J]ust 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 9:33].*

Now Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:16 to prove his point. So, **He who believes in Him** shows that the stone of stumbling is a Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. **Rock of offense** is *skandalon*, which gives our English word “scandal.” A scandal is embarrassing; hence, whoever refuses to believe in Christ, but believes in themselves will be embarrassed and ashamed at their poor choice. But, **He who believes in Him will not be disappointed** because Jesus Christ will give them eternal life and entrance into heaven.

Compare John 3:16 where the Apostle John puts in the only requirement on our part to receive salvation - faith in Christ. Compare also 1 Peter 2:4-8 where the Apostle Peter quotes the same passage from Isaiah about Jesus, but includes the truth that Jesus is “the Corner Stone” upon which God’s kingdom is built. So, Jesus will either be an embarrassment for those who reject Him, or the foundation stone for

eternal life to all those who believe in Him.

2. Paul gives four reasons for God setting Israel aside (Romans 10:1-13).

a. The Jews did not feel a need for salvation (Romans 10:1).

► *Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation [Romans 10:1].*

Brethren can refer to spiritual brothers, that is fellow Christians, as it does here; or, the same word *adelphos* can refer to Paul's blood brothers, his fellow Jews, as it does in Romans 9:3. Context must decide. **My heart's desire** shows how the burden for lost people must come from our hearts. As the Bible says in Proverbs 4:23, *Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life*. When our heart is burdened for lost people, it will motivate us to witness to them. **My prayer to God for them is for their salvation** is part of the biblical basis for praying for lost people. This type of prayer is not mentioned many times in Holy Scripture, but here is one of those times. In this case, "them" refers to the Jews who are not saved. **Salvation** is *soteria* from the verb *sozo*, which means to save, to deliver, to rescue. The name "Jesus" means "Savior."

b. The Jews were zealous for God, but not in keeping with His Word.

► *For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge [Romans 10:2].*

Testify, or "bear witness" is from *marturo*, which gives our word "martyr." A martyr is someone who holds to their story, their testimony, even unto death. Ten of eleven apostles were martyred for preaching the Gospel and the resurrection of Christ. People will not die for a lie; so these apostles truly believed in the bodily resurrection of Christ, or they would not have died for it. **Zeal** is from the verb *zeloo*, which means to have a strong affection towards, to be ardently devoted to, to desire earnestly. The object of their "zeal" was God, **but not in accordance with knowledge**. The word "knowledge" is not the usual word *ginosko*, but an intensified form *epiginosko*, which can be translated "full knowledge." It is the full knowledge of God in

accordance with what He has said in His Word. We cannot have a zeal for God based upon tradition or custom or history, without including the Bible. Everything else must be examined in light of what His Word says. Otherwise their “zeal” produces no relationship with God.

c. The Jews were proud and self-righteous (Romans 10:3).

► *For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God [Romans 10:3].*

Not knowing is *aginosko*, which gives our word “ignorant.” **God’s righteousness** is an absolute righteousness, holiness, a sinless perfectionism. *All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment* (see Isaiah 64:6). So, when our righteous deeds are compared to God’s absolute righteousness, our righteousness is always *relative*. We are capable of some very wonderful deeds, but they can never measure up to the Holy Character of God. **And seeking to establish their own** is where they made their mistake. This is what we call “self-righteousness” or “relative righteousness.” Compare where Jesus said in Matthew 9:13, *For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners*. Jesus knows what the Bible says in Psalm 14:1-3, *There is no one that does good*. What Jesus is saying is that He did not come to call “the self-righteous,” because they will not be interested in or see a need for repentance.

They did not subject themselves is *hupatasso*, which means to arrange yourself under. The Jews, seeking to justify themselves, would not “arrange themselves under” the Word of God that says we need to be born again, we need a new heart, and we need to be saved by Someone outside of ourselves, by Jesus Christ.

d. The Jews misunderstood their own Law (Romans 10:4-13).

(1) They failed to see that Christ fulfills the law (Romans 10:4).

► *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes [Romans 10:4].*

Christ is *Christos* which means Anointed One, or Chosen One (see

Matthew 3:17, “beloved Son”). God chose Jesus to die for the sins of the world, because He had lived a sinless life, and was qualified to become the Perfect Sacrifice. **End** is from *telios*, which means mature, complete, the end, the fulfillment. Jesus fulfilled the Law of God because He kept it perfectly. See Romans 8:1, which verifies the truth that when we are “in Christ,” God looks at us and sees His own Son, who perfectly fulfilled the Law.

God’s **righteousness is to everyone who believes**, because He gives it as a gift to all those who trust in His Son (see 1 Corinthians 5:21 and 2 Corinthians 5:17).

(2) The Jews failed to see that justification by Law-keeping requires a person to perfectly keep the whole Law (Romans 10:5).

► *For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness [Romans 10:5].*

Compare James 2:10, *For whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.* Compare also Luke 10:25-28 where Jesus told the lawyer that he could inherit eternal life by “doing” the Law. However, Jesus also knew that the lawyer could not accomplish that - but He wanted him to admit it.

(3) They wanted more special revelation, but failed to see that they had plenty of special revelation (Romans 10:6-7).

► *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].*

Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? is a quote from Deuteronomy 30:12 where Moses warns the Israelites not to seek more special revelation, because they already had plenty of revelation. Moses had written the first five books of the Bible. Such a request is just an excuse for not believing what God has already revealed. Compare what Jesus said in Matthew 12:38-40 and 16:1-4 when the

Jews asked “for a sign.” They did not really want more revelation; watching Jesus gave them sufficient proof that He was the Messiah. They just wanted more revelation to discredit Him (see also Luke 16:10-31). The five brothers of the rich man *had Moses and the prophets*, and if they would not believe the Word of God, neither would they believe even if someone came back from the dead.

Then, Paul makes a New Testament application: **that is, to bring Christ down** is a reference to the Incarnation of Christ. If the Jews in Moses’ day would not receive the Word of God, then why did they want to see the Incarnation of God?

The abyss is the Greek word *abussos*, which appears nine times in the Greek New Testament. In addition to the Hebrew *sheol* and the Greek *hades*, “the abyss” is another reference to the place of the dead, as when King Saul used the witch of Endor to call Samuel up from the place of the dead (see 1 Samuel 28:3-25). The Israelites in Moses’ day might ask for more special revelation from “the abyss.” (See footnote 28, page 148.)

Then Paul makes the application **that is, to bring Christ up from the dead**. The Jews might want to personally see the resurrected Christ. With the exception of His two half-brothers, James and Jude, everyone to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection had already believed in Him.

(4) They had already been given a specific message from God to believe, but had not believed (Romans 10:8-10).

► *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, 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; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation [Romans 10:8-10].*

The word is not *logos*, a common reference to Holy Scripture, but *rama*, which means “a specific word.” This specific **word is in your mouth and in your heart**; in other words, the Jews had already

received this special, written revelation from God in the books of Moses, and is not in some far away place.

Then, Paul calls this word **the word of faith**, using the same Greek word *rama*. **Faith** is *pistis*, which always requires an object, and the Object of faith is Jesus Christ, exactly the Person whom Paul is proclaiming. The word translated “preaching” is *karusso*, which means to herald, to proclaim. It referred to a message sent by one with authority, usually a king, and his message was the “herald.” So, Paul is coming with a message of authority from the King, Jesus Christ. His desired response is in verse 9.

In verse 9, **that** introduces a purpose clause; here is why Paul is preaching . . . **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.** “Confess” is *homologeō*, which means to say the same as, to agree with. The same word is found in 1 John 1:9. “Confession” is the outward display of inward faith. Confession was also a legal term which means to settle with binding force; as a “confession to a crime.”

Lord is *kurios*, which usually refers to deity, as it does here. So, we must recognize and accept the Deity of Jesus Christ; He is the eternal Son of God. Only God could accomplish what Jesus did on the cross. **Believe in your heart** is important, because many believe in their heads, but never act upon it. “Believe in your heart” is what results in the “confession,” because *the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart* (Matthew 12:34). On “shall be saved,” see notes on Romans 10:1, page 165, on the word “salvation.”

Raised from the dead is part of the salvation package, because of Romans 4:25. If Jesus has not been raised from the dead, then how can He save or deliver anyone else from the grave?

With the heart man believes shows that the whole soul of man is involved in the salvation experience. *Kardia*, translated “heart,” is “the seat of the emotions,” so man is not saved by intellectual faith alone. His heart is also involved. The soul has the heart, mind, and will, and all three are involved. Man believes with his heart what his mind understands, and then an act of the will takes place - a decision is made

for Christ based on faith in what God has said about His Son. “Believing and confessing” are not two parts of salvation; rather they are different aspects of the same experience. Man must believe and confess, even if he only confesses to God in the quietness of his heart. **Confession with the mouth** is a prayer of confession, agreeing with God that we are sinners in need of a Savior, and that Jesus is that God-provided Savior.

(5) They had the Savior to believe in, but would not (Romans 10:11-13).

► *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 upon Him; for “WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED” [Romans 10:11-13].*

Scripture is *grapha*, which gives our English word “graphics.” It means the writings, or the Sacred Writings, the writings of Holy Scripture (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Then, Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16, but only the last part. The first part says, *Therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed.”* Here God has mentioned “a costly cornerstone,” which Paul then identifies as a man: **Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.** A pronoun (“Him” in this case) gets its identity from the nearest preceding noun. Refer back to verse 9 to discover Paul is talking about “Jesus.” Thus, the Israelites knew from their own Bible that they were to be looking for a man (see also Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6). Compare also what Andrew said in John 1:40-41, that he had found *the Messiah (which translated means Christ)*.

In verse 12 **distinction** is from *diastello*, which means to separate, to distinguish, to issue a decision, to declare a difference. Hence, **there is no distinction between Jew and Greek** (see the theme verses in Romans 1:16-17). **For the same Lord is Lord of all for all who call upon Him**, whether they be a Jew or a Greek (another word for Gentile), will find the riches of salvation. But, they must “call upon Him.” **Whoever will call upon** is a Present Middle Participle from

epikaleo, an intensified form of *kaleo*; *kaleo* means to call, and *epi* means upon. So, *epikaleo* has an object. The Middle Voice means that it is something we do to ourselves for our own benefit. Hence, when we call, Jesus saves us.

Now Paul quotes another verse in verse 13, this time from Joel 2:32. Notice that “whoever” is what might be called the “savee” and “the LORD” is the “Saver.” We do the calling and Jesus does the saving. We do not save ourselves; Jesus saves us when we call. **Call upon** is *epikaleo*, requiring an object. **The name** refers to reputation and character. Our eternal salvation is dependent upon one thing - the Holy Character of God and His reputation. If He does not keep His promises, and if He goes back on His Word, then no one can really be saved. **Will be saved** is another Aorist Tense which denotes a completed action. So, whenever a person calls upon Jesus by faith to save them, He saves them completely. The act of deliverance is complete - they are now saved. The only thing left is to live out the Christian life. Verses like Philippians 2:12, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, and James 2:20, *Faith without works is dead* (note that James is talking to believers, see footnote 18, page 116) do not contradict Romans 10:13, but are describing the outworking of the Christian life. Those verses speak of Christian deeds that are in keeping with our great salvation.

3. Was God unjust in setting Israel aside for a while? No (Romans 10:14-21).

a. Because God spoke to them through His Old Testament prophets (Romans 10:14-15).

► *How then will they call upon Him on 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].*

Him is a personal pronoun that takes its identity from verse 9, “Jesus.” In verse 13, the Apostle Paul quoted from Joel 2:32, *Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved*. The Hebrew verse in the Old

Testament uses “LORD” in all capitals. This is the name “Yahweh” which refers to God as “the eternally, self-existent One, the covenant-keeping God.” Their object of faith was the coming Jesus Christ, because Jesus says in John 8:56, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

Also, in Genesis 15:5-6, God promised Abraham a “Seed,” which Galatians 3:16 interprets to be Jesus Christ Himself. Then, in Genesis 15:6, it says, *Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.* In Genesis 13:18, *Abram . . . built an altar unto the LORD*, so Abraham knew about blood sacrifices; he knew about the shed blood of an innocent substitute. In Genesis 22:8 Abraham said to his son, Isaac, *God will provide for Himself the lamb.* Abraham knew even when he was about to sacrifice Isaac in obedience to God’s command back in Genesis 22:2, that it was the LORD who would ultimately provide the perfect sacrifice for Abraham’s sin. See also Hebrews 11:17-19, where the Bible says that Abraham knew that God would have to raise Isaac from the dead after Abraham sacrificed him, because it was through Isaac that the promised Seed, Jesus Christ, would eventually come.

So, just as Abraham looked forward to the coming sacrifice of the Son of God, we look back to the sacrifice of the Son of God, who died on the cross for our sins. The argument before us is “Why has God set the nation Israel aside for a time?” The answer is, “Because God revealed His Son to them through the prophets.” The Jews had many prophecies concerning their coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. All those prophecies to be fulfilled in His First Coming were *exactly* fulfilled. They have no excuse for missing their own Messiah.

Notice that **believed** is the verb *pisteuo*, which means to commit oneself, to trust in, to rely upon, to have faith in. The noun *pistis* appears in verse 17 translated “faith.” So, the only condition for the Jews, and for Abraham, and for us today is “faith,” “trust” in the proper object, or Person who can deliver us from the penalty of sins - namely, Jesus Christ. **Heard** is the Greek word *akouo*, which gives our English word “acoustics.” So, like acoustics, which refers to the quality of hearing, *akouo*, means to listen and respond.

Preacher is the Greek word *karusos*, which means a “herald;” a herald

was someone who came from the king, or other important dignitary with an official message. It was a message that was to be heard and obeyed; the herald spoke as if it were the king himself speaking. Today, the equivalent is those who preach the Gospel, who are missionaries, both foreign and domestic.

In verse 15, **Preach** is the verb *karuso*. **Sent** means they have been sent by God; it includes all the Old Testament prophets. Notice the logical progression of Paul's argument: for someone to call upon the Lord in faith they must hear; for someone to hear, they must have a preacher or proclaimer; for someone to preach, they must be sent. And God has provided all these things: as Isaiah predicted, *how beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things*. **Bring good news** is the verb *euangelizo*, which gives our English word "evangelize." So, to evangelize means to preach the Good News or glad tidings of Jesus Christ. Notice that God calls us to go and preach the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20), to proclaim the "good news." But we cannot control the outcome. Like the Jews, the people to whom God sends us may not believe.

b. Because God knew that not all Israel would accept the Lord Jesus (Romans 10:16-17).

► *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].*

However introduces the bad news of the generation of the Jews to whom Jesus appeared: **they did not all heed the good news**. "Good news" is the noun form *euangelion*. This was predicted by God in Isaiah 53:1, *LORD, who has believed our message?* The answer is, "Not many." The verb **heed** is an intensified form of *akouo*, which in verse 14 is translated "heard." Here, it is *hupakouo*, which is usually translated "heed," and usually used in a positive sense of someone who "heeds" good or bad news. It might be a warning that while your car is stalled on the railroad tracks, there's a train coming! If we "heed" the warning, we will either push the car off the tracks, or if that is impossible, we will at least get out of the car and out of the way.

Interestingly, the context of Isaiah 53 is the prediction of the Jews

being released from the Babylonian captivity. One would think after 70 years of bondage in Babylon that the Jews would be open to hearing God's teaching through His prophets. However, after the captivity, God sent only Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi to the Jews, who still refused to listen to God. Consequently, God stopped sending His prophets, and the Jews entered into what we call "the 400 silent years" in which no more prophets came to Israel. They did not hear God's voice again until John the Baptist came *crying the in wilderness* (Matthew 3:1-3 and following).

Faith is *pistis* from the verb *pisteuo*, to believe; the only requirement for salvation. **Hearing** is from *akouo*, to hear and respond. **Word** is *rama*, not the more common word *logos*. *Rama* means a specific word: it is the word or message **of Christ**. Note that the King James Version translates this as "of God" because the Greek manuscripts upon which the King James Version is based differ from the text from which the New American Standard Version was translated.

c. Because God never promises blessings to a rebellious people (Romans 10:18-21).

► *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 ENDS OF THE WORLD." 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." 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." But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG HAVE I STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE"[Romans 10:18-21].*

God predicted a general revelation, which includes the people of Israel. Paul is begging the question as he asks, **But I say, surely they have never heard, have they?** This question is introduced with a negative particle, which expects a negative answer. He is "playing the devil's advocate;" arguing against his own treatise. Then, he answers his own question: **Indeed they have; their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.** Here he is quoting

Psalm 19:4, (written by King David) from the Hebrew Old Testament, that God has provided general revelation to the whole world, including the Jews (compare Psalm 14:1-4 and Romans 1:18-20). Every human being is responsible to respond in a positive way to God's general revelation: we call this Positive Volition (see Psalm 19:7-10 for God's prediction of special revelation, the written Word of God). Who is the written Word of God all about? The Living Word of God, Jesus Christ (see John 1:14).

Next, Paul begs the question again by asking, **But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they?** In other words, from the beginning of Israel's history, they did not have special revelation from God concerning their rejection of Christ, did they? Again, he expects a negative answer. Then, he answers his own question: At the **first** (meaning at the first of Israel's history, in 1405 B.C., at the top of the Dead Sea where Moses wrote the Book of Deuteronomy - just before Israel entered the Promised Land; see Deuteronomy 32:21) **Moses says, "I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you."** "Jealous" is *parazaloo*, an intensified form of *zaloo*, which is usually translated "zeal."

"Nation" here, and in Matthew 21:43, refers to the Church of Jesus Christ, a Body of believers who would take the place of Israel - for a time - in being responsible for taking the Gospel around the world. This "nation," or the Church, primarily made up of Gentiles (Acts 2 and following), would be **without understanding**. The Greek word is *asunetos*; the prefix "a" is negating; and the word *sunetos* means understanding, intelligence, discernment, wisdom. The Church, made up of mostly Gentiles, would not have copies of the Old Testament, and hence, would be "without understanding." The Book of Acts reveals that wherever the Gospel spread throughout the known world, the Jews were jealous of all the converts.

If the quote from Deuteronomy was not enough, Paul now quotes again from Isaiah, 65:1, *I was found by those who sought Me not, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me* (King James Version). **Those who did not seek me and those who did not ask for Me** are the Gentiles. So, God predicted through David, Moses, and Isaiah (in a general way) that the Jews by and large would not believe in God; the

majority of the Jews would not be saved; they would not trust in God for the forgiveness of their sins. But in a specific way, in a specific application, it was the generation of Jews when Jesus came that did not accept Him as their Messiah, so God would not give the promised Kingdom to that generation.

In verse 21 Paul concludes this part of his argument by quoting from Isaiah 65:2, specifically applied “for Israel:” **All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.** “The people” are the Jews who eventually rejected their own Messiah. No wonder that God postponed the Kingdom Age, promising the Second Coming of Christ, when Jesus would establish the promised Kingdom to a future generation of Jews. Eschatologically, one of the primary purposes of the Tribulation - called *the time of Jacob’s distress* in Jeremiah 30:7 - is to give the majority of the nation of Israel the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ.

C. Paul explains Israel’s Future History: God will restore the nation Israel and use them for His glory (Romans 11:1-36).

1. The extent of God rejecting Israel is only partial (Romans 11:1-1).
- a. Paul, himself, is an example of how God is saving a remnant.

► *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].*

God is still saving Jews, because He has saved the Apostle Paul. If God had totally rejected His people, the Jews, then why has He saved Saul (Paul) of Tarsus? Paul’s argument that God has not totally given up on the Jews is that He is still saving Jews - namely, Paul himself. God has rejected the Jews in an act of Divine discipline (Matthew 24:1-2), because He does not obligate Himself to bless a generation of Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah. That entire generation of Jews was conquered and scattered by the Romans, because God would not give the promised Kingdom to a generation that rejected their Messiah. So, **God has not rejected His people** means that He has not rejected them forever. The question “God has not rejected His people, has He?” begins with the negative particle *ma*, which means this question

expects a negative answer. Then, Paul gives the answer: *Ma genoito*, translated, “May it never be!” It is a double negative in Greek and cannot be translated into English. Literally it says, “May it not never be!” It is the strongest negative possible in Greek.

For begins Paul’s explanation. **For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.** God made Unconditional Covenants with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-4 and 17:1-8); with Jacob (Genesis 28:10-22); and with David (2 Samuel 7:12-17). God has given His Word, His Promise that He will make of these men a great and **eternal** nation. God cannot go back on His promises. Paul is an **Israelite**, a born-again Jew; and the Jews will someday receive that promised eternal Kingdom on the earth, in the land of Israel. Just because Paul being “a descendant of Abraham” does not guarantee him a place in that Kingdom. Each Jew must be born-again, (John 3:3, just like Gentiles) to get into God’s promised Kingdom. **The tribe of Benjamin** was famous for three things: (1) for being the fiercest fighters (2) from their tribe came the first king over all 12 tribes, Saul. (The only other kings that served over all 12 tribes were David and Solomon, of the tribe of Judah.) (3) the capital city of Jerusalem sat on their property (right on the border with the tribe of Judah).

b. In Elijah’s day, God sovereignly saved 7,000 (Romans 11:2-4).

► *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].*

Here Paul continues his argument with an example out of Israel’s history, when Elijah was a prophet to the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah after the nation had split. **Whom He foreknew** refers back to Romans 8:29-30 (see pp. 140-143). The foreknowledge of God includes His foreknowledge of everyone who will trust in Christ as their Savior (1 Peter 1:1-2). Once they have been redeemed, all believers are predestined by God to become conformed to the image

of His own Son, Jesus Christ. God has foreknown all the Jews who will be saved in every generation, including the future generation when Jesus returns. God will send Jesus back to give the Kingdom to those of that future generation that have received Christ as Savior, and fulfill all His promises to Abraham, Jacob, and David.

Now Paul turns to the generation of Elijah to prove his point, in the rest of verse 2 and verses 3-4. **Elijah** pleaded **with God against Israel**, because he had gone to the top of Mt. Carmel to challenge the prophets of Baal. There, Elijah won the battle against the prophets of idols in the Kingdom of Israel. Even after that great victory, however, spiritual revival did not break out in Israel. Elijah was so discouraged.

Verse 3 is part of the prayer that Elijah prayed after his ministry did not bring revival in Israel: **Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.** In other words, if Jezebel's henchmen find Elijah and kill him then he thinks that all hope is lost of God fulfilling His promises to Abraham, Jacob and David. There will be no more believers in Israel; Satan will have won; Satan will have defeated God because there are no more believers in Israel.

In verse 4 God answers Elijah's prayer, and gives him a broader perspective, the viewpoint of a sovereign God. He says to him, **I have kept for Myself even seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.** Under the leadership of the wicked King Ahab and his queen Jezebel, it was dangerous for a believer in God to openly worship God and reject Baal worship. Those 7,000 would have been killed if King Ahab knew about their allegiance to the God of the Bible. God had kept those believers for Himself, but he had kept them privately. We do not know all the Jewish believers there are in every generation. There will be a great host of Jewish believers during the Tribulation, just before Jesus comes back to give them the Kingdom. But, the Antichrist will kill them if they do not worship him, therefore, as in Elijah's day, the Jewish believers in the Tribulation will have to go "underground." As Jesus warns the Jews in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:15-18: *Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee into the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop*

must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. The Jews who believe in Christ will have to run for their lives, for those who refuse to take the mark of the beast, and worship him as god will be executed.

c. Presently, God is saving, by His grace, a remnant in each generation (Romans 11:5-10).

► *In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice [Romans 11:5].*

In the same way then is Paul's application to his own generation: **there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.** Just as God preserved for Himself a "believing remnant" in Elijah's day, so He saved 3,000 Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). God has not rejected the Jews forever; this rejection is only temporary. **Remnant** is *leimma*, meaning a small residue; it comes from the verb *leipo*, which means to be left; deserted; to be destitute. Remember that God does not work in accordance with numbers. He directed Gideon to reduce the size of his army from 22,000 down to 300 (Judges 7:3), before he faced the Midianites. God receives glory by working with small numbers. All He needs is a small remnant to fulfill His promises.

Gracious comes from *charis*, which means grace, God's unsought and unmerited favor towards those who deserve exactly the opposite. If anybody ever deserved God's wrath instead of His favor, it would be the Israelites. They have been stubborn and rebellious over their whole history, still God loves them. God's sovereign choice is of those who trust in His Son: He refuses to accept unbelievers.

► *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace [Romans 11:6].*

Verse six is one of the great verses of Scripture that settles for all time the attempt of man to mix God's grace and man's works to attain salvation. Paul says, **But if it is by grace** (God's unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite) **it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no**

longer grace. John 3:16, Acts 16:3, Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, and many other verses say that salvation is on the basis of God's grace, not man's works. If we try to mix the two, then "grace is no longer grace." If man's works, his human merit, is allowed to be included in salvation, then salvation is by works, not by grace. Salvation must be either by God's grace or man's works; it must be one or the other; it cannot be a combination of the two. According to John 3:16 and other verses, God extends his grace to those who believe in His Son; John 1:12: *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name.* So, believing-trusting-receiving is the only condition that God requires for Him to extend His saving power, His forgiveness, His cleansing power, His regenerating power.

► *What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; 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." And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER" [Romans 11:7-10].*

Verse 7 describes how most Israelites sought self-justification by works. **What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained.** Israel was seeking for salvation and deliverance and the eternal Kingdom, but they were seeking it through organized religion, through a system of works, through self-righteousness and self-justification. They refused to admit their sinfulness; they refused to believe that it would take the death of the Son of God on the cross to pay for their iniquities. They never thought they were that sinful. (See Luke 18:9-14 to see the teaching of Jesus on this subject.) The Pharisee was seeking to justify himself, but found no justification. The publican sought mercy from God and found it and was justified.

Those who were chosen obtained it because they obtained it by faith; they obtained it because they admitted their sinfulness; they admitted that they were deserving of Divine punishment, and came to God in repentance and faith. They found salvation. **The rest were hardened,** because they were unbelievers; they were Christ-rejecters. They sought

to justify themselves and rejected the payment of the blood of Christ. So, God hardened them against the Gospel, for they rejected it.

In verse 8 Paul quotes from Moses, Deuteronomy 29:4, to prove his point: **God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day** because they had rejected the grace and provisions of God. Whenever we reject God's revelation, we are blinded to more revelation. Whenever we accept His truth by faith, He gives us more revelation and the eyes of faith to see it. To a Christ-rejecting unbeliever, the sunrise this morning was just another sunrise; a Christian views the sunrise and sees a miracle.

In verses 9-10 Paul quotes from David, Psalm 69:22-23, **Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever.** This Psalm is what we call a "Messianic Psalm," a psalm about the Messiah. David was a type of Jesus Christ; and while he wrote the psalm about his own enemies, Jews who were seeking to kill him, he also was writing about Christ and His enemies. Those who reject Christ (even Jews) will have their eyes darkened and their backs bent forever. The Jews in the first century who sought to justify themselves and missed their own Messiah will receive only judgment from God. Likewise, any other person, Jew or Gentile, in that or any other generation who seeks to justify themselves and chooses to reject Jesus Christ, will not receive grace from God; they will receive only judgment.

2. The purpose of God's temporary rejection of Israel is to save Gentiles (Romans 11:11-24).

a. It will make the Jews jealous and bring them to salvation (Romans 11:11-14).

► *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].*

They refers to the Jews (see verse 7). **Fall** is the Greek word *pipto*, which means to fall in utter ruin, to fall without remedy. Paul then answers his own question, **May it never be!** Here is the last time he

uses *ma genoito*, that strong double-negative in Greek. God is *not* rejecting Israel forever. **But**, a conjunction of contrast, **by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles**. God has a brilliant way of turning our sin into blessing, as He has done with the “transgression” of the Jews who have rejected their own Messiah.

Transgression is *paraptoma*, a false step; it is the same in verse 12. **Salvation** is *soteria*, which can be translated salvation, deliverance, rescue. God always intended and even commanded the Jews to be a *light unto the Gentiles* (Isaiah 42:6, King James Version), but they usually failed to obey that command. Now, in spite of the Jewish failure, God, through His Church, has taken the Gospel to the Gentiles. **To make them jealous** is exactly what happened in Acts, the only history book in the New Testament (see Acts 13:45; 17:5; and 22:21-22). Unfortunately, while it did work to make the Jews jealous, only a few of them became believers.

► *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].*

Riches for the world are spiritual riches, not material riches. The popular “prosperity theology” being preached on television and in some churches is not biblical. **The world** is the “world of Gentiles,” the *ethnos*, the Nations. The “Nations” or “Gentiles” were always intended by God to be lifted up through the nation Israel (see Isaiah 11:10 and 60:3). That will happen when Jesus returns at His Second Advent. For now, however, the nations are blessed because of the Gospel, not because of Israel. Thus, Israel and the Church are *separate* entities through which God works, and the *Church has not replaced the nation Israel* as many denominations teach. God is not finished with Israel yet. See footnote 37, page 191.

Failure is *ettema*, which can be translated “loss.” Israel has “lost” their spiritual blessings, their “riches,” but God will bless them yet spiritually during the Tribulation and the Millennium. **Fulfillment** is *plaroma*, which means to fill to the full, to fill to overflowing (see Malachi 3:10-12).

► *But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as*

I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them [Romans 11:13-14].

Here Paul narrows his audience - **to you who are Gentiles** - the Gentiles who were in the church in Rome. The church in Rome was made up primarily of born-again Gentiles. The reason he addresses just the Gentiles in Rome is given in verse 14. **Apostle** – *Apostolos* - means a sent one; it was one sent by Another, with a message of authority, and the message itself carried the authority of the Sender. The Apostles were replaced by those whom we call the early Church fathers, who were replaced by the local pastors. **Magnify** is *doksa*, which gives our word “doxology.” **Ministry** is *diakonia*, which gives our word “deacon” and is the word for servant. If we remember that our “ministries” are as servants, then we do not have to worry about being personally glorified in our ministries. Notice that Paul says, “I magnify my ministry” (not himself).

In verse 14 we have Paul’s explanation for wanting to move the Jews to jealousy - **that he might save some of them**. “Save” is *sozo*, the same root from which comes *soteria*, in verse 11, translated “salvation.”

b. When the whole nation of Israel turns to Christ, they will bring the whole world (Romans 11:15-16).

► *For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too [Romans 11:15-16].*

Rejection can be translated “cast away,” but this rejection of Israel by God will not last forever. **Reconciliation** is *katallasso*, meaning to reconcile, to restore. Compare 2 Corinthians 5:18, which says, *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation . . . and Verse 19 . . . To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself* (King James Version). God “has restored” the world unto Himself, but now through faith in Christ, each person can receive the benefits of that reconciliation through personal faith in Jesus. If they reject God’s offer, they will face His judgment (see John 3:36).

Life from the dead is physical resurrection. There are two resurrections in Holy Scripture:

- The *First* Resurrection, which comes in three phases: (a) Christ, the first-fruits, 1 Corinthians 15:20, (b) The Rapture of the Church, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and (c) The resurrection of the Old Testament saints, Daniel 12:11-13.
- The *Second* Resurrection comes in one phase, at the end of the Millennium, to raise *unbelievers* and bring them before the Great White Throne, Revelation 20:11-15.

In verse 16 Paul gives two scriptural examples of those who benefit from God's reconciliation (1) Numbers 15:17-21 - *the first of your dough*, and (2) Leviticus 23:9-14 - *a sheaf of the firstfruits*. Just as the High Priest waved "the first piece of dough" before God in the wave offering in the Feast of Firstfruits, so all those who trust in Jesus will be saved, because He is the "Firstfruits." The High Priest was dedicating the whole harvest to God, but he was symbolizing those who are privileged to be a part of the First Resurrection. The "sheaf of the firstfruits" refers back to Jesus, who is the "firstfruits" of the First Resurrection. So, all those who are saved by grace through faith are the **branches** made holy.

c. If the Jews can be broken off to graft in the Gentiles, then the Gentiles can be broken off to graft back in Israel (Romans 11:17-24).

► *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, 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 11:17-18].*

Some of the branches were the Jews who rejected Jesus Christ. **You, being a wild olive, were grafted in** refers to the Gentiles who accepted Jesus Christ by faith. **The wild olives** are the Gentiles, and **the olive tree** is the nation Israel. See also *the cultivated olive tree* in verse 24,

which also refers to the nation Israel.³⁴

Do not be arrogant (verse 18) and **Do not be conceited** (verse 20), are solemn warnings that we as Gentiles are not to become proud about what has happened to the Jews. The fact that God has brought the Gospel to the Church and has set Israel aside for a while does not make the Gentile better than the Jew. **The root** (Jesus Christ, who is a Jew) **supports you** (Gentiles), not the other way around (compare John 4:22, *Salvation is of the Jews*).

► *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; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either. 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 [Romans 11:19-22].*

The Gentiles may say, **Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in**; this would be a conceited statement, inferring that God is finished with the Jews. That is not true. **They were broken off for their unbelief** in Christ, **but you stand by your faith**. But, do not get conceited about that. **If** is a Class I Conditional Sentence, and can be translated “since.” **Since God did not spare the natural branches**, (Jews) **He will not spare you either** (Gentiles). **Severity** can be translated abruptness; it comes from the verb that means to cut off. **Those who fell** are the unbelieving Jews; and “those who experience God’s kindness” are the believing Gentiles. “**If**” is a Class III

³⁴ God keeps preserving Israel as a nation, but still, individual Jews must be saved by grace through faith, just like the Gentiles. Paul describes God’s sovereign plan by describing it like an orchard. Usually, we take a native olive tree that does well in a particular climate, but has small fruit, and we graft in a cultivated olive branch that will produce larger, better fruit. But here, Paul reverses what we normally do and calls the nation Israel “the cultivated olive tree” or the one native to the soil. In this new case, God grafts in “the wild olive,” the Gentiles, so they can be saved through the same Gospel God offered to the Jews. Compare again Romans 1:16-17. Paul has never lost sight of the theme verse.

Conditional Sentence, which means “maybe you will and maybe you won’t.” If the Gentiles begin to reject Christ, God will “**cut them off**” and graft back in the Jews.

► *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 11:23, 24].*

God is able to graft them in again, which is exactly what God sovereignly plans to do (see verse 26) - because they will trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior. The **wild olive tree** is the Gentiles, and the **cultivated olive tree** is the Jews.

3. The duration of Israel’s rejection is only temporary (Romans 11:25-32).

a. God’s hardening of Israel is only partial (Romans 11:25).

► *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 [Romans 11:25].*

Brethren is that New Testament technical term for believers in Christ (see Acts 1:15-16; 2:29, 37; 16:2, 40; 17:6, 10). It is *adelphos*, which means brother, near kinsman or relative, one of the same nation or nature, one of equal rank and dignity. Another common technical term for believers in the Book of Acts is “disciples” (see Acts 6:1, 2, 7; 9:1, 19, 26, 38). It is *mathates*, meaning learner, disciple. It is from the verb *mathatuo*, which means to be a disciple, to follow as a disciple, to make a disciple of, to train, to instruct. The disciple became an imitator of his mentor. A synonym is “Christian” found only in Acts 11:26; 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16. Another common technical term for believers in the Book of Acts is “saints” (see Acts 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10). The Greek word is *hagioi*, which means holy ones, separated ones, ones separated for holy purposes, pure ones, or righteous ones. It refers to our position in Christ (Romans 8:1), not necessarily a reference to

actual behavior. The final term is “believers,” Acts 5:14.

Mystery is from *mustarion*, which means “that which is concealed,” especially in the Old Testament, and which cannot be figured out or determined unless God reveals it. The word appears 27 times in the New Testament, and is used for some 13 different “mysteries” or new revelations God gives in the New Testament. (See Unger’s Bible Dictionary for an explanation of eleven of the “more important mysteries” in the New Testament.³⁵)

A partial hardening means a temporary hardening of Israel, as a nation, **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in**. Jesus also talked about this in Luke 21:24.

b. One whole future generation of Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26-27).

► *[A]nd so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE ALL UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS [Romans 11:26-27].*

Here are the verses we have been looking for: **Thus all Israel will be saved**. “Saved” is *sozo*, which means to save, to rescue, to deliver, to preserve safe and unharmed, to restore. The nation will be spared, because the majority of the Jews during the Tribulation will receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is not a “blank check guarantee” that each and every Jew will trust in Christ. It will be the majority of the Jews, which will qualify that generation to receive God’s promised Kingdom. This national conversion of Israel is predicted in the Old Testament, which Paul quotes here: **Just as it is written, “the deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob”** (Isaiah 59:20-21). Then he quotes from Isaiah 27:9: **“and this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”**

Covenant is *diathaka*, from *diatithami*, which literally means to put or place through. It is the Greek verb meaning to arrange, to arrange according to one’s own mind, to settle the terms of a covenant, to ratify.

³⁵ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. 7th printing (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute) p. 769.

God will ratify, or bring to pass all the covenants of deliverance He has made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. This “take away their sins” can only mean spiritual salvation, spiritual conversion. They will trust in Jesus and be saved; they will be restored to a spiritual relationship with God. “Take away sins” is the only thing God can do with our sins; we cannot work them off; we cannot “make it up to God” for all the wrong we have done to Him. He simply removes our sins from us (see Psalm 103:12).

c. God’s covenants to Israel are irrevocable (Romans 11:28-29).

► *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; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [Romans 11:28-29].*

Gospel is *euangelion*, “Good News.” **Enemies for your sake** refers to what Paul was talking about in verses 17-21 where the Gentiles were “grafted in” because the Jews had become “enemies of God.” **But from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.** “Beloved” is *agapatoi*, one loved unconditionally. This same word is used of Jesus in Ephesians 1:6. “The fathers” are the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, who received all those promises from God. It is by God’s grace that He will save Israel, not because they deserve it. God loved Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and David *unconditionally*, and gave them *unconditional covenants*. All the conditions of those covenant promises were to be fulfilled by God, not the Patriarchs. Keeping those covenants is not dependent upon their behavior, but only upon God’s love and faithfulness to His Word.

The gifts are the gifts of God’s grace. It is *charismata*, which gives our English word “charismatic,” and usually refers to the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. In this context, it refers to the grace-gifts Paul listed in Romans 9:4-5:

- The adoption as sons
- The glory
- The covenants
- The giving of the Law
- The temple service

- The promises
- The Christ

The calling of God is God's sovereign call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant that God would make of him a new nation which would be given certain lands, and be used to bless the entire world. Compare also Acts 7:2-5. These "gifts" and "calling" are irrevocable.

Calling is the Greek word *kaleo*, which means to call, to call to, to summon. So, while God "called" Abraham (Genesis 12:3), that calling did not save him; Abraham still had to believe in the LORD for the forgiveness of his sins (see Genesis 15:6).

d. God has "shut up" both Jews and Gentiles under disobedience that He might be merciful to all (Romans 11:30-32).

► *For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy [Romans 11:30-31].*

You means the Gentiles; see verse 13. The Gentiles **once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy** (see Titus 3:5, *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us; by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit*). God showing His mercy *directly* to the Gentiles, without going through the nation Israel, is **because of their disobedience**. They betrayed their own Savior into the hands of the Romans (Gentiles) for execution, and lost (temporarily) their right to bring the Gospel to the world.

Because of the mercy shown to you means that God has been saving Gentiles through His mercy. Now "they" refers back to the Jews, and **they may now be shown mercy**. God saves Gentiles through His mercy, and He saves Jews through His mercy. So, no one, Gentile or Jew, is being saved by works or even by calling.

► *For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show*

mercy to all [Romans 11:32].³⁶

For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. Verse 32 is the great summary statement of Chapters 9-11. The sovereignty of God has called and preserved the nation Israel. He is working His plan through Israel, and temporarily through the Church. God is holy, and both Jews and Gentiles are sinners, and none of us can atone for our own sins, none of us can “work off” or “make up for our sins” against a Holy God. He has “shut up all of us into disobedience” (since we are all sinners anyway), “that He might show mercy to all.” If there is a dominating attribute of God, it is His love. He loves everyone and wants to give His love to everyone, 2 Peter 3:9. But, He will not apply His love and mercy without the repentance of man. Each human being must admit his or her sinfulness and their need for God’s forgiveness. When we admit that, and trust in the payment Jesus made for all of us on the cross, then God gladly saves us.

4. Paul rejoices at the depth of the knowledge and sovereignty of God (Romans 11:33-36).

► *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! FOR WHO HAS 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? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen [Romans 11:33-36].*

Here is one of the great benedictions in the entire Bible; Paul is rejoicing at the end of this codicil, or literary interruption, of Chapters

³⁶ The apostle’s purpose here is to teach the Jews that they may not presume upon being God’s people on the ground of His foreknowledge, unless they obey His call to them in Christ; and that all are God’s people who imitate the faith of Abraham, and accept the gospel of Christ . . . the main drift of Paul is to eradicate such a notion from the mind of the Jew, who imagined God’s favors were confined to themselves, and to show the universality of God’s love in Christ. See Wordsworth, Christopher. *The New Testament in the Original Greek, with Notes and Introductions*. (London, Oxford, and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1877).

9-11 where he asked and answered the questions, “What about the Jews? Is God through with the nation Israel?”

The answer is an overwhelming *no!* God’s will is never thwarted by the sin of man, even the sin of His chosen people, the Jews. Even though they rejected their own Messiah, God had an alternate plan in mind, the Church, which would take Israel’s place for a while, be entrusted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and take it around the world for thousands of years until He decides to give it back to the Jews. This is all part of God’s sovereign plan, even though it was not revealed in the Old Testament. After the religious leaders of Israel officially rejected Jesus as their Messiah (Matthew 12), Jesus began to reveal “the Church” in Matthew 16. Jesus spent the rest of His public ministry preparing the disciples for his departure, the forming of His Church, and the setting aside of the nation Israel. Even right up to His ascension in Acts 1, the disciples were still asking Him about the “restoration of Israel” (Acts 1:6). God had a sovereign plan in mind to go on saving Jews and Gentiles, which Paul has explained all through Chapters 9-11, with the special explanation that God is *not through with the nation Israel*, and that all His covenant promises to Israel are still in force (See also Romans 11:1).³⁷

³⁷ It is amazing that anyone could read the Bible and not believe that it promises a future earthly Kingdom centered in the nation of Israel. Scriptural evidence is more than conclusive. God has changed administrations from Law to the Church, and He will one day change from a church administration to that of a political kingdom with Christ sitting on the Davidic throne in Jerusalem . . . God promised that the land of Palestine would belong to Abraham’s seed eternally. The word eternal occurs both in the original promise and in reaffirmations of it in coming centuries. **This promise of a land to Abraham’s seed must be kept.** Israel **will** have a Kingdom . . . God promised David that his seed would have a right to rule and would eventually rule over Israel **forever**. Yet, David’s children have not ruled over Israel since the exile. (King Herod was neither of David’s line nor even truly Jewish.) The promise of an eternal throne for David’s son must be fulfilled in the ultimate Son of David, Jesus Christ. **He must someday come to enjoy a literal rule over the Davidic Kingdom**, a rule that will be both 1,000 years according to Rev. 20:4-6 (hence called the Millennium) but also eternal in the sense that the Millennium will merge with the Eternal State. The original promise to David was stated to be eternally binding. Just as with the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant is reaffirmed throughout Scripture as being irrevocable and eternal in nature. In the future, the church dispensation will end and the

The contemplation of all this causes Paul to break into praising God in these final verses of chapter 11: **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!** God could foresee all that would happen in Israel, and work around it through the Church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles. What a great plan! **How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways.** Unsearchable means that we cannot find the boundaries of **His judgments**. We can search far and wide, but we will never come to the edge of “His judgments” - they have no boundaries. **Unfathomable** has to do with depth; so, we can never reach the bottom of “His ways.” So, Paul is talking about the width and depth of God’s wisdom, knowledge, His judgments and ways.

In verses 34-35 Paul quotes two Old Testament passages, Isaiah 40:13, and Job 41:11.

God is the *First* Cause, **from Him**; God is the *Effective* Cause, **through Him**; and God is the *Final* Cause, **to Him** (see also Acts 17:28). And so, from this reality should come **glory to God forever**.

VI. Service (Romans Chapters 12-16). The application of the Christian life is service to God and others.

A. The starting point for service is to give oneself to God (Romans 12:1-2).

1. Give Him your body (Romans 12:1).

Kingdom will begin . . . The Old Testament prophets also spoke of a New Covenant that would be made with Israel. The New Covenant is based upon Christ’s blood (Matthew 26:28). It is in force with the Church but will eventually also be ratified with the nation of Israel (see also Hebrews 8:7-13). This New Covenant is unconditional. It cannot be broken, and thus, guarantees a future for Israel. This means a Kingdom dispensation will follow a Church dispensation . . . The Old Testament promises that Israel will be the center of a worldwide and enduring Kingdom. Unless we are to believe that either God is a liar or is too weak to keep His promises, we must maintain that there is coming a future Kingdom for Israel. (See also Jeremiah 31:3.) See Waterhouse, Steven, *Not by Bread Alone*, 3rd ed. (Amarillo TX: Westcliff Press, 2007), pp. 311-316.

► *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].*

I urge is translated “I beseech” in the King James Version. It is the verb *parakaleo*, which has the prefix *para*, meaning alongside, and the verb *kaleo*, which means to call. Hence, “to call alongside.” As a noun, *paraclete* is used of Jesus Himself (see 1 John 2:1), and of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). As a noun, it is translated comforter, or advocate. It has the idea of one called alongside who puts his arm around, comforts, and gives one guidance and direction. So, it is like the Apostle Paul coming alongside us, putting his arm around us and saying, **I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.** Paul could have used another verb and commanded us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, but he did not. In fact, he does not even use the Imperative Mood, which is the mood of command. Instead he uses the Indicative Mood, the mood of something that happens, so there is a decision to be made. It is up to us to respond to Paul’s urgings.

The personal pronoun “you” can be left out of the Greek text, being understood by the verb, as in English. When it is left out, it is called an ellipsis. But, for clarity and emphasis, Paul put it in, and it is in the plural, as is the word “brethren.” This exhortation is for all Christians, whatever the level of spiritual maturity; we are urged to give God our physical bodies.

Brethren is the Greek title *adelphos*, as in the English Philadelphia, “the city of brotherly love,” where *phileo* is the Greek word for love. This is the first term in the New Testament that describes the nature and relationship of believers in Christ. Most of these terms are found in the Book of Acts. *Adelphos* is a brother, near kinsman or relative; one of the same nation or nature; one of equal rank and dignity; an associate, a member of the Christian community.

“Brethren” is one of five terms that may be considered to be used of interchangeably of God’s children. The *second* term is “disciples,” found in Acts 1:15 and many other places. It is the most common term in the New Testament for Christians, found 27 times in Acts, and only in Acts. This term is not used anywhere else in the New Testament.

The *mathates*, or “disciple” basically means a learner; but it was much more than that. The disciple or “follower” would sometimes move in with and live with his teacher. They would spend every day together (as Jesus did with His disciples), until the disciple spoke and acted like his teacher.

The *third* term is “Christians,” found in Acts 11:26. The singular, “Christian” is found only in Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16. These are the only three uses of the word “Christian” in the New Testament. Unfortunately, in 21st century America, this is the most corrupted of all the terms. “Christian” in our culture can mean almost anything, far removed from the true, biblical meaning of the word. “Christian” means “Christ-like;” it referred to someone who acted like Jesus Christ, so it is very similar to the term “disciple.”

The *fourth* term is “believers,” found in reference to Christians only in Acts 5:14 and 1 Timothy 4:12. The singular noun form is *pistis*, which is translated “faith” and appears some 251 times in the New Testament; see Ephesians 2:8-9. *Pisteuo*, the verb, is translated “believe” and appears some 117 times in the New Testament. This verb always requires an object, and the correct object is always Jesus Christ. It also answers the question, For what? For what does the believer believe? The correct answer is “For the forgiveness of sins.” In the Old Testament, the object of faith is the LORD, who will provide the person, the Messiah, who would come and die for our sins.

The *fifth* term is “saints,” found in Acts 9:31; it occurs 61 times in the New Testament. *Hagioi*, translated “saints” usually stresses to an English-speaking person the behavior of a Christian. However, the stress of *hagioi* is not behavior, but position. It means holy ones, or set-apart ones. Christians have been miraculously “set apart” by God to spend eternity with Him, through their faith in Jesus Christ. “Saints” is the most popular term in the Old Testament for believers.

By the mercies of God refers back to all the mercies Paul was talking about in Chapters 1-11. “Mercy” is the Genitive of Source, from *oikteiro*, which means to exercise grace toward; the noun means mercy, compassion, kindness, with a desire to relieve sorrow and want. Mercy is the extension and application of God’s grace (see 2 Corinthians 1:3). God’s mercy can be seen apart from the cross of Christ, such as His

mercy upon Sodom and Gomorrah if Abraham had prayed for smaller numbers. But, God's mercy is seen *mostly* in the cross of Christ.

To present is an Infinitive of Purpose, the purpose that fulfills the main verb, "I urge." "To present" is from the verb *parhistami*, which means to stand beside. The prefix, *para*, means alongside, and *histami* means to put or place, to present, to place beside, to have in readiness. It was the verb used in the first century in an Oriental wedding when a bride was "presented" to her husband. When the father of the groom took the hand of the bride and placed or "presented" her hand to his son, the marriage was complete. So, she became available to him as his wife. God asks us "to present" our bodies to Him, as a bride was "presented" to her husband.

Nowhere in the Bible does God require blood sacrifices, or any kind of death sacrifice of people. It is always of animals. The only blood sacrifice was Jesus Himself (Hebrews 10:10). But here, God asks us to sacrifice **our bodies, living and holy**. There are at least five other "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Peter 2:5), mentioned in the New Testament for Christians:

- Faith, Philippians 2:17
- Money, Philippians 4:18
- Praise of our lips, Hebrews 13:15
- Doing good, Hebrews 13:16
- Sharing what we have with others, Hebrews 13:16

Living means that we stay alive, so God can use our lives to glorify Himself. **Holy** is *hagios*, which means separated, set apart set apart for holy purposes. **Acceptable to God** is because we have been washed by the blood of the Lamb; we have been purified so that God can accept the sacrifice of our bodies.

In the concluding phrase, the Apostle Paul says that this sacrifice is a "spiritual service of worship." **Spiritual** is *logizomai* that gives our word "logical" or "logistics." It is "logical" that Christians should offer their bodies as a living sacrifice to God. He has saved our souls and our bodies, so it is reasonable and logical for us to become living sacrifices. **Service of worship** is *laturo*, which gives our word "liturgy" and refers to order of service. The New International Version

renders this “your spiritual act of worship.” It basically means “to serve.”

2. Give Him your mind (Romans 12:2a).

► *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . . [Romans 12:2a].*

Giving God our minds requires a negative and a positive. Negatively, **do not be conformed to this world**. Now Paul switches to the Imperative Mood, the mood of command. If we have decided to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, then God commands us to “not be conformed to this world.” The verb has the idea of “being squeezed into a mold;” (see the Phillips translation). **World** is the *kosmos*, the satanic world system that is totally opposed to God and the things of God (see 1 John 2:15-17 and 5:19). **Be transformed** is *metamorphoo*, which gives our word “metamorphosis.” **Renewing** is from *anakainao*. The prefix *ana* means “back again,” and the main verb *kainao* means to invigorate, to renew, to renovate, to remodel. The best way one can “remodel our minds” is to look into the Bible, the written word of God, and let the Holy Spirit teach us the ways of God. **Mind** is *nous*, the intellectual seat of the soul, the mind, the reasoning powers of the mind.

3. Give Him your will (Romans 12:2b).

► *. . . so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [Romans 12:2b].*

You may prove is from *dokimazo*, which usually means to test so as to approve; to test something to show its worth. When we renew our minds, we begin to make choices that are within God’s will. **Will** is *thelo*, which means to will from the heart. So, what we have learned in our minds has filtered down to our hearts and is influencing our decisions, our acts of the will, and it “proves to be the will of God.” Such will is “good and acceptable and perfect.” **Good** is *agathos*, to be intrinsically good - good according to God’s standards (see Matthew 19:17). **Acceptable** is also acceptable according to God’s standards. It can be translated “well-pleasing.” **Perfect** is *teleios*, which can be translated perfect, complete, mature, of higher excellence.

B. Service is possible by exercising ones spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ (Romans 12:3-8).

There are many criteria in the New Testament for the exercise of spiritual gifts. Here, Paul gives us four:

1. Humility.

► *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].*

Grace is *charis*, which means God's unsought and unmerited favor toward those who deserve exactly the opposite. Think about the Apostle Paul for a moment, who was called by Jesus Christ (see Acts 9:3 and following) to become God's *Apostle to the Gentiles* (Romans 11:13; 2 Timothy 1:11). In Acts 7:58 and 8:1, Saul (whose name was later changed to Paul) consented to the stoning death of Stephen, the first martyr of the Church. In Acts 9:1-2, Paul had letters from the high priest in Jerusalem, and was going to Damascus to find and imprison Christians, both men and women. God's saving Paul and appointing him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles was from the pure grace of God. Paul had done *nothing* to earn or merit becoming an apostle.

Given is an Aorist Passive Participle from *didomi*, which means to give, to bestow, present. God freely gave Paul the spiritual gift of apostle (Ephesians 4:11). Compare the gift of salvation in Ephesians 2:8-9. *Gift* in Ephesians 2:8 is *didomi*. Paul then gives a good biblical definition of humility: **every man among you ought not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think**. Remember that the verb "humble" simply means to bring low or to lower. It is something we do to ourselves. If we do it to someone else, it usually becomes "humiliation." Compare 1 Peter 5:6 which says, *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time*, and Philippians 2:3, *In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves* (King James Version). So, humility is taught in several different places in the New Testament, even by different writers.

Think so as to have sound judgment includes the idea of an accurate humility. What is meant by this is, do not think lower of yourself than you ought to think. This leads to a low self-esteem, and Jesus taught us to *Love your neighbor as yourself* (Matthew 19:19). We are not to humiliate ourselves or allow others to humiliate us; we are not to allow others to “look down” or “talk down” to us, rather insist that others respect us.

Sound judgment is *sophron*, a combination of *sos*, which means wise or sound; and *phren* from *phreneo*, to think; hence, to think wisely, to exercise wise thinking. **God has allotted to each a measure of faith.** This phrase is important because faith is needed to exercise our spiritual gifts. At first, we are not good at using our gifts, and must trust God the Holy Spirit to help us. Since we need help, we need to humble ourselves before God, and ask Him to help us. If we are afraid of failure, we must step out by faith, trusting God will help us. Compare Hebrews 12:1-2; *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith* (King James Version). Note the depths which Jesus humbled Himself (see Philippians 2:7-8); but He trusted His Father to love Him through His humility and eventually restore Him to glory.

2. Unity (Romans 12:4-5).

► *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 next criteria for using our spiritual gifts in *service* to God is unity. As we have humbled ourselves (see verse 3), we need unity and strength and support from the other members of the Body of Christ. Paul says, **we have many members in one body**. There are many believers, but we are still *one* body. Jesus called the New Testament believers the *ekklesia*, the called-out ones, the Church, in Matthew 16:18. But, it is Paul that teaches and develops the idea of the Body of Christ, first mentioned here in his writings. As the human body is one, every part is important and every part is dependent upon every other part. Paul’s next observation, even in the same sentence, says, **and all the members do not have the same function**. Unity is possible, and even desired, in the Body of Christ even if all the members have a

different function. Each member must respect the other members, with the goal being unity. We must trust the Holy Spirit that He knows what He is doing when He gives gifts to each new member of the Body of Christ.

We, who are many, are one body in Christ, but we never lose our individuality. The eye needs the ear, and the hand needs the foot (1 Corinthians 12:12-18). Where would the eye be if there were not hearing, and how could the hand reach what it wanted if the foot did not take it there?

3. Diversity

► *Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly . . . [Romans 12:6a].*

Diversity was already alluded to back in verses 4 and 5; however, Paul clearly states here, **we have gifts that differ**. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says that the Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes His spiritual gifts as He sees fit. It is by an act of God that each of us has the different gifts that we have. There is no room for criticism of one member of the Body to another as to who was given which gift. Just as the parts of a human body have different functions, so do the various members of the Body of Christ. If we take that diversity lightly, or treat some parts as more important than others, we are not recognizing or accepting the sovereign will of God.

Gift is *charismata*, which gives our word “charismatic;” in secular circles this refers to someone with a sparkling personality; in religious circles it usually refers to a type of church that uses what are commonly called the “sign gifts” from 1 Corinthians 14. The word *charismata* begins with the Greek word for “grace,” *charis*. However, it is correctly translated “gifts” or “spiritual gifts.”

We differ **according to grace given to us**. Once again, Paul brings up the grace of God. It is God’s grace and mercy that places each one of us in the Body of Christ exactly where He wants us to be. If we are jealous of other members, of their gifts, and are unhappy with our own gifts, we are not accepting God’s will. Notice that **let each exercise**

them accordingly is all in italics. In the Greek text, these words do not appear. This is called an ellipsis, a word or phrase that is understood. The translators of the New American Standard Version always put the understood words in italics. This last phrase means that since we received our spiritual gifts by the grace of God, then we must exercise them by the grace of God. We never are to use our gifts apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit.

4. Harmony

a. Spiritual gifts are given by God's grace (Romans 12:6b-8).

►. . . *if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his service; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads; with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness [Romans 12:6b-8].*

In this final section, Paul gives us the criteria of harmony. Harmony is needed for the human body to function properly and get things done. So it is with the Body of Christ. Paul will list seven spiritual gifts, suggesting that every gift is important, but that not every Christian will receive every gift, and that harmony is very important for the gifts to operate properly. For example, the first two gifts listed are prophecy and service. The Body of Christ could come together over and over and just “prophesy;” but, sooner or later, there is a need for “service.” There is a place for teaching, listed next; but sooner or later, there will be a need for comforting. Whenever some gifts are emphasized over the other gifts, then the Body of Christ will begin to suffer (compare 1 Corinthians 8:1).

b. Paul lists seven of the spiritual gifts as examples (Romans 12:7-8).

(1) **Prophecy** - The Greek word is *prophatas*, which basically means a “forth-teller.” In the context of the Old and New Testaments, which use the English word “prophet,” it was a spokesman for God. It has been given to both men and women (Acts 2:17-18 and 21:9). The prophet received a message from God, and stood with his back toward God and delivered the message to the people. The priest received a message from the people (a prayer), and turned his back to the people and

delivered the message to God. Jesus in Matthew 7:15-16 warned of “false prophets,” and said one could tell a false prophet from his “fruits;” that is, the spiritual fruit in his personal life. **According to the proportion of his faith** means that we will exercise our spiritual gifts better and better when we grow in our faith. 2 Peter 3:18a says, *But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. So, we trust in Christ as our Savior, but there is much to learn, and we can grow in God’s grace. So it is with each of our spiritual gifts.

(2) **Serving - Service** is *diakonia*, which gives our English word “deacon.” Deacons are servants in the local church, not bullies or controllers or dictators. Pastors are “overseers,” 1 Timothy 3:1 and following, but are also not to be bullies or controllers or dictators (compare “elders” in 1 Peter 5:1-3). In Acts 6:1-7 some very spiritual men were selected to serve the widows in the local church. The word “deacon” is not used in this passage, but they were probably the first deacons.

(3) **Teaching** is from *didasko*, and had to do with teaching God’s Word. Teaching and interpreting the Bible is not a universal ability in the Body of Christ, otherwise, the Holy Spirit would not have given this gift. But, all Christians are exhorted to *Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby* (1 Peter 2:2, King James Version; see also Joshua 1:18, and Psalm 119:9, 11).

(4) **Exhortation** - is *parakaleo*, to call alongside, the same word translated “urge” in 12:1. It can also be translated “encourage.” There’s a lot of discouraging things that happen to Christians, so the Body of Christ is equipped to come alongside those people and encourage them.

(5) **Giving** - is from *didomi*, to freely give. All Christians are taught to give (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), but some are especially gifted to give. While they are taught to give “with liberality” here, Jesus teaches in Matthew 6:3 not to let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. So, giving is a very private matter between the giver and God. Some spiritual gifts are exercised in extreme privacy, to as to avoid pride and personal exaltation.

(6) **Leading** - is *proistami*, to set over, to appoint with authority, to preside, to govern. It can also be translated “administration.” These Christians are especially gifted in getting things organized and accomplished in the local church. Some church government is needed, but there is no set pattern in the New Testament for church government. The government for a small church will be very different than for a large church; hence, the need for flexibility.

(7) **Showing mercy** - “Showing mercy” means exactly that, to be kind and gentle with people who are hurting. Showing mercy is often needed for people under stress, so it must be done “with cheerfulness.” **Cheerfulness** is *hilarotes*, which gives our word “hilarious.” The same word is used for Christian giving in 2 Corinthians 9:7.

C. Service is toward those both inside and outside the Church (Romans 12:9-12).

1. Service is to come from a sincere love (Romans 12:9).

► *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good [Romans 12:9].*

Love is the Greek word *agape*, which is unconditional love; it is the same kind of love that is characteristic of God Himself, 1 John 4:8, *The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* *Agape* love sees a need and reaches out to meet that need without thinking of what might be received in return. The primary emotion that accompanies *agape* love is compassion.

Romans 12:9-21 is a list of the characteristics of service. In typical Greek and even Hebrew writing style, the first thing listed is the most important thing, and the other things listed are often a further description. Whatever else we find in this passage is an outgrowth of *agape* love. **Without hypocrisy** is one word in the Greek text, *anhupokrites*. *An* is the negating prefix, and *hupokrites* gives our English word “hypocrite.” It was the Greek word for the mask that an actor held up in front of his face during a Greek play while he was playing a certain character in the play. Actors often used different masks to play different parts. The word eventually came to refer to the actor himself and was actually a term of respect. Then the word came

to refer to a person who was pretending to be someone he was not - like an actor, perhaps pretending to be an honest person while in fact they were dishonest. The New International Version renders this word “sincere;” our love in service to others, either inside or outside the Church, needs to be sincere. Otherwise, it brings no glory to God.

2. Loving Service is inside the Body of Christ (Romans 9b-13).

Abhor is the Greek word *apostugeo*, which means to abhor, to hate, to detest, to shrink back from. This is a very strong word. **Evil** is *ponaros*, meaning bad, unsound, evil, wrong, impious. The opposite is **cling to what is good**. “Cling” comes from *kollao*, which means to glue or weld together. The Middle Voice, as is used here, means to adhere to, to attach to, to unite. **Good** is *agathos*, meaning that which has intrinsic goodness, internal goodness; the goodness of God Himself (Matthew 19:16-17).³⁸

► *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor [Romans 12:10].*

Be devoted is from *philostorgos*; *philos* meaning brother, and *storgos* meaning natural affection. Just as we are to have a natural affection for our brothers and sisters in our families, so are we to have a “natural affection” for our brothers and sisters in Christ, in our Christian family. **One another** is *allalous*, which means another of the same kind; as opposed to *heteros*, meaning another of a different kind. **Brotherly love** is *philadelphia*, which gives the city’s name. *Phileo* means to love as a brother or sister. *Adelphos* is the Greek word for brother. **Give preference** is another way of saying “consider others better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3). **Honor** is *tima*, which can be translated respect, as it says in Romans 13:7, *honor those to whom honor is due*.

► *[N]ot lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord [Romans 12:11].*

³⁸ When we are discipling someone, as we teach them to turn from evil we must teach them to turn to that which is good. If we do not occupy our minds with that which is good, then we are bound to return to that which is evil. See also John 15:5, where Jesus says, *Without me you can do nothing*. So, we must let Jesus show us what is good.

Not lagging behind shows the importance of timing. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, *There is an appointed time for everything*. For example, when someone dies, we need to reach out to the family right then, not six months later. **Diligence** is *spoudas*, which can also be translated zeal. If we lag behind in “diligence,” we fail to seize the opportunity to show honor, unconditional love to, and appreciation for them.

Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord go together. **Fervent** comes from *zalos*, which gives our word “zeal” and means to “burn.” It is translated “be zealous” in Revelation 3:19. It is an Imperative in Revelation 3:19, the Mood of Command. **In spirit** is a small “s”, which refers to the human spirit, that immaterial part of man that has fellowship with the living God. The translators of the New American Standard Version chose the small “s” to indicate the human spirit. If they had used a capital “S”, it would mean the Holy Spirit, a Dative of Agency, whereby the Holy Spirit provides the power to be “fervent.” **Serving** is from *douloo*, to serve willingly. The object of our service, then, is “the Lord Jesus.” The context demands that we serve Jesus willingly, see *fervent in spirit* and *serving*, verses 9-11.

► *Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer [Romans 12:12].*

When we are obeying the Lord (verses 9-11), and we are willingly serving Him (not reluctantly), then joy will fill our hearts. **Rejoice** is from *chara*, which gives our English names Karen, or Kara, and refers to a deep-seated joy, which is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and is not dependent upon the circumstances of life. Christians can always “rejoice in hope,” in spite of the “tribulation” mentioned next, because Titus 2:13 calls the Rapture *the blessed hope*. We always have the hope that the Rapture could occur at any moment and that all the trials and tribulations, all the sufferings and persecutions will be instantly behind us, never to happen again. Compare also 1 Thessalonians 4:13 that says Christians can grieve over the death of their loved ones, but we don’t grieve *like the rest, who have no hope*. “The rest of men” are the non-Christians who have no hope or basis for rejoicing in the tribulations of life.

Persevering is from *hupomeno*; the prefix *hupo* means under, and *meno* means to remain, hence “to remain under.” It usually carries the

idea to endure under adverse circumstances. **Tribulation** is *thlipsis*, which means trials or tribulations or problems, often used of the tribulation brought on just for being believers. As Jesus said in John 16:33, *In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world* (King James Version). **Devoted to prayer** is a key characteristic of living out a life of service. We cannot consistently serve our fellow Christians or unbelievers and keep the right attitude unless we are “devoted to prayer.” *Proseucho* means to talk to Deity - prayer is simply talking to God - about everything. He may not answer our prayers as we want Him to, but prayer keeps us in an attitude of humility and submission to His great will and power and plan. Prayer teaches us to depend upon God for the solutions to every situation.

► *[C]ontributing to the needs of saints, practicing hospitality [Romans 12:13].*

Contributing to the needs of the saints is a very tangible, physical way of practicing service. “Contributing” is *koinonia*, found 20 times in the New Testament, where in 2 Corinthians 9:13 it clearly involves the sharing of money. “Needs” is *chreiais*, a need, not a want. James 2:16 indicates that needs would at least include food and clothing. Christians must be careful to identify what the “needs” of fellow Christians are, because in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 the Apostle Paul had to command, *If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either*. Unfortunately, some Christians will take advantage of the love and sharing from other believers, refusing to carry their share of the load. However, when a fellow Christian truly does need food and clothing, especially because of persecution, we need to be ready to “contribute to the needs of the saints.”

Saints is *hagioi*, which means separated ones, holy ones, sanctified ones. Unfortunately while all believers are entitled to be called saints, not all Christians live up to that standing before God. Each situation must stand on its own merit in deciding who needs help (see Acts 6:1 and 1 Timothy 5:3-16).

Practicing hospitality is *philoksenian*, which means showing hospitality to strangers. This exhortation would apply to unbelievers as well as believers. In the ancient world, they did not have motels in

every town like we do now; nevertheless, Christians can still take people in and perhaps have an opportunity to share the Gospel.

3. Loving service is outside the Body of Christ (Romans 12:14-15).

► *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep [Romans 12:14-15].*

While these verses can be applied inside the Body of Christ, the word **persecute** usually comes from outside the Body of Christ. This verse applies mostly to our behavior toward unbelievers. **Bless** is *eulogeo*, which gives our word “eulogy;” it means to say something good. It is like pronouncing God’s blessings upon a person who is persecuting you. **Curse not** is important, because when someone persecutes us, our first reaction is to call down God’s curses upon them, not blessings. That is what will set us apart from the world. Consider Jesus when He prayed for those who were crucifying Him (Luke 23:34), and also Stephen who prayed for those who were stoning him to death (Acts 7:60). Such blessings instead of cursings melt away any resentment or feelings of anger, hatred or revenge. Compare verses 17-21.

Verse 15 can apply to our own attitudes and actions toward fellow believers, as well as unbelievers: **Rejoice with those who rejoice; and weep with those who weep.** *Chairo*, **rejoice**, is from *chara*. **Joy** is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). **Weep** is *klaio*, the Greek word for weeping aloud, used twice of Jesus in the New Testament (Luke 19:41 and John 11:35). In Hebrews 5:7 the word *krazo* is used, which means to “cry out,” as Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

4. Our mental attitude directly affects our loving service (Romans 12:16-21).

a. Our mental attitude toward our fellow believers (Romans 12:16).

► *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 12:16].*

This verse seems to stand alone in Paul's description of service, and must refer to our attitude toward fellow believers. God would never ask us to **be of the same mind** with unbelievers. In fact, in verses 1 and 2 Paul exhorts us *to renew our minds* to prove the will of God to the world. So, **one another** must refer only to fellow Christians. In fact, the word "another" in Greek is *allos*, which means another of the same kind as opposed to *heteros*, another of a different kind. Unity is taught throughout the Bible for members of the Body of Christ: Jesus taught it in Matthew 18:15-20; Paul taught it in Romans 12:3-8; Paul taught it to the Ephesians in 4:1-16; Peter talked about it in 1 Peter 5:1-10. There is strength in unity, and Satan knows that. That is why he is always on the prowl to divide Christians and local churches.

Haughty in mind is pride, which will inhibit us from **associating with the lowly**. There will always be Christians of every socio-economic level being brought together in the Body of Christ, in local churches. Therefore, we must learn to ignore those worldly differences and treat each other equally in the local assembly.

Do not be wise in your own estimation because we do not know all the things that God is doing through us individually, and collectively. Job was a righteous man, living a righteous life. All four of Job's "friends" came to comfort him, but all four misinterpreted what was happening to him. They accused him of being guilty of "secret sins," suggested that he was under Divine discipline, and urged him to confess and repent. None of them had enough information to come to an accurate conclusion.

b. Our mental attitude toward evil (Romans 12:17-21).

► *Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men [Romans 12:17].*

Never is a long time, but twice in three verses Paul says "Never." **Never pay back evil for evil to anyone**; and in verse 19, **Never take your own revenge**. Both these verbs, "pay back" and "take revenge" are Participles which take their mood from the main verb **do not be wise** in verse 16, which has the Imperative Mood, the mood of command. **Evil** is *kakia*, the most common word for "evil" in the New Testament. It means unclean, impure; it stands for anything that is the

opposite of what God is and what He stands for. It appears in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:13 where it could be translated "the evil one." **What is right in the sight of all men** shows that even among unbelievers, there are certain moral standards that we are to respect.

► *If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men [Romans 12:18].*

If possible introduces a contingency clause, realizing that in some cases it will become impossible **to be at peace with all men**. **So far as it depends on you** means that Christians are to do what they can to live in peace with all men. However, the behavior and attitudes of other men are not under our control, so if others refuse to be at peace, we cannot control that situation.

► *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 [Romans 12:19].*

Revenge is the Greek word *ekdikeo*, which means to execute right and justice; to punish, to make right, to avenge a person. Paul says, **Leave room for the wrath of God**. If we take matters into our own hands, God will take His hands off.

Wrath is the same word found in Revelation 6:16 describing the Seal Judgments of the Great Tribulation. Then Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 32:35 where God promises **vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord**. If we believe this promise, then it leaves no room for us to hold a grudge or to harbor resentments toward people. We will be hurt when people do evil things to us, but God commands us to let Him take the revenge, and He promises that He will.

► *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 [Romans 12:20].*

Here is another quote from the Old Testament, this time from Proverbs 25:21: Heap **burning coals on his head**. This is a difficult verse to interpret. It was likely a Middle-Eastern custom from Egypt used to make a person feel guilty. In a display of remorse a guilty person

would actually carry around a pan of hot coals balanced upon his head. True unconditional love sees a need, such as food and water, and reaches out to meet that need without thinking whether the person is a friend or an enemy. If we truly have unconditional love, then our love does not look at the person's social standing, or their clothing, or the color of their skin. Unconditional love looks only at the need.

► *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good [Romans 12:21].*

We can be **overcome by evil** by harboring resentments, by holding grudges, by hating the person who has persecuted us. We can be eaten up by “planning our revenge” and other negative attitudes. The way to **overcome evil with good** is to *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven* (Matthew 5:44-45, King James Version, from the Sermon on the Mount).

D. Service extends to our obedience to the governing authorities. (Romans 13:1-7).

Four reasons why we should obey governing authorities:

1. For the sake of fear of punishment (Romans 13:1-4).

► *Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God [Romans 13:1].*

Be in subjection is a Present Imperative, Middle Voice. The Imperative mood denotes a command, so we are all commanded “to be in subjection to the governing authorities.” The Present tense is a Present Durative, which denotes a continuous action, “Keep on being in subjection.” The Middle Voice indicates something that we do to ourselves and for our own benefit. It is advantageous to us to obey governing authorities . . . **For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.**

It is important here that we consider some exceptions to this principle

of obedience:

- ◆ Whenever the laws of the state contradict the laws of God, and,
- ◆ Whenever the laws of the state violate the conscience of the believer (especially the “weaker brother” in Romans 14).

Here the believer must take his or her stand *against* the laws of the state, being ready to receive whatever punishment the state demands. In many Roman cities (including Rome), when the people came into the gates of the city, there was a statue of Caesar with a fire burning at its feet. Each person was to take a pinch of incense and throw it into the fire and proclaim, “Caesar is god.” They required this in Palestine at the city of Tiberius on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee; so Jesus and all other Jews never entered that city.

“Be in subjection” is a key verb to the whole passage, the longest passage in the Bible about obedience to the governing authorities. It is the verb *hupotasso*, which means to arrange under, to put yourself under, to submit to authorities such as parents, teachers, judges, board members, pastors, husbands. This passage does not name tyrants who have in the past been obsessed with power and who *do not* represent God in their governing. Eventually God brings them all down. Daniel 2:21 says, *He removes kings, and establishes kings*. We need **governing authorities** because we are sinful people. If sinners are not held accountable, society falls into ruin. Compare the Book of Judges where *every man did what was right in his own eyes* (see Judges 17:6). Compare also what Jesus said to Pilate in John 19:11, *You would have no authority over Me unless it had been given you from above*. Even Jesus submitted Himself to the governing authorities, although He was innocent and deserved no punishment.

► *Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves [Romans 13:2].*

Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God, because God has established all authority. We certainly have alternatives with lawyers, courts, and appeals, but ultimately to have an orderly society, we must submit to the governing authorities. **Resists** is

the Greek word *antihistami*, to stand against, or to take a stand against. **Ordinance** is the word “ordered” or “commanded.” See Genesis 9:5-7 where, following the Great Flood, God established human government with the power to take human life. That order has not yet been rescinded. **Condemnation** is *krima*, which comes from the verb *krino*, meaning to discern, to divide, to judge, to separate.

► *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 [Romans 13:3].*

Rulers is *archon*, which means a ruler, a chief, a prince, a magistrate; one invested with power and dignity. **Fear** is *phobos*, which gives our word “phobia.” We are not afraid when we behave properly, but when we do **evil** we become afraid because of the possible coming punishment. That is why criminals run from the law.

Do you want? is from *thelo*, which means to will or want from the heart; down deep in our hearts we all want to have **no fear of authority**. The same applies to God: we no longer have to fear God after we have trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Compare Romans 5:1, *Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. **Do what is good** comes from *agathos*, which refers to intrinsic goodness, goodness that comes from the inside out. This is not a counterfeit goodness, but a sincere goodness. The fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, (good) goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*. When we do “good” we will have praise from the governing authorities, not punishment.

► *[F]or 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 on the one who practices evil [Romans 13:4].*

Minister is the Greek word *diakonos*, which gives our word “deacon,” a servant in the local church. So, the governing authorities are **servants of God to you for good**. **But if** is a Class III Conditional Sentence which denotes “maybe you will and maybe you won’t.” The choice is up to us, because we are still free moral agents. If we make

bad choices, there will always be consequences. **Sword** is *machairas*, the 18-inch double-edged sword with which the Romans conquered the entire civilized world. “The sword” was not used for whipping; it was used to chop off heads. Paul is talking about capital punishment! **Avenger** is *ekdikos*, from the same noun translated “vengeance” back in Romans 12:19. It means to execute what is right and just. **Wrath** is *orga*; Jesus took the “wrath” of God, verse 5, for us on the cross, so that when we believe in Him, we escape the wrath of God.

2. For the sake of conscience (Romans 13:5-7).

► *Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 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 [Romans 13:5-7].*

Here again is *hupotasso*, translated **in subjection; not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake**. “Conscience” is *sunadasis*, meaning “to know with,” which is exactly what the English word means. “Con” is the prefix meaning “with,” and “science” means knowledge. But, what knowledge? The difference between right and wrong. When Adam and Eve sinned against God and ate of the forbidden fruit, their conscience was violated and they felt ashamed. Feeling ashamed is not a good feeling. When we do wrong and it violates our conscience, we do not feel good about it. That “bad feeling” is a gift from God to help us from doing wrong again.

Governing authorities usually work full time; therefore we must **pay taxes** to support them. **For rulers are servants of God**: here, the word for “servants” is *leitourgia*, which gives our word “liturgy.” It denotes a certain order of events. The rulers **devote themselves to this very thing** - “serving God” - going through the strict legal procedures to see that justice is served. Most rulers who are unbelievers have no perception that what they are doing is a service to God. Although no one likes to pay taxes, the price of freedom is high. Nevertheless, the price of chaos is even higher. It is better to pay taxes and have an orderly society.

In verse 7 Paul broadens our obligations: **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.** Death and taxes are said to be certain, but there are also customs; the Greek word is *telos*, which means an end, a consummation, a closing act. It came to refer to what is paid for public needs - a toll, a tax, and custom - as when one goes through customs at the border of a nation.

Fear is the same word *phobos* found in verse 3, but it can be translated “respect,” which would be the better translation here. **Honor** is *tima*, meaning a price, an estimate of worth; values; careful regard, honor or a state of honor, dignity. The conscience of a Christian will be violated if he or she fails to pay taxes, fails to pay a custom, or fails to show respect to those who deserve it and honor those to whom honor is due. We are to consider that all these are acts of service to our fellow man.

3. For the sake of love (Romans 13:8-10).

a. Loving your neighbor fulfills the Law (Romans 13:8).

► *Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law [Romans 13:8].*

Owe nothing to anyone does not prohibit the borrowing of money (see Matthew 25:7 and Luke 19:23). What the Bible does prohibit is the excessive charging of high interest rates, especially to our Christian brothers (see Exodus 22:25-27 and Nehemiah 5:1-11). In fact, “owe nothing to anyone” can be translated “Do not keep on owing,” implying that a debt is not being properly paid off.

Love one another is presented here as an obligation; we owe it to each other to “love one another.” “Love” is a Present Infinitive from *agapao*, which means, to “love unconditionally.” The infinitive gets its mood from the main verb “owe nothing” which is Imperative, the mood of command. The Present Infinitive denotes a continuous action, “keep on loving unconditionally.” It is humanly impossible to obey this command without God’s help. Unconditional love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and only God loves this way consistently. Without the Holy Spirit’s help, we cannot obey this command. **He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law** is a

powerful statement. Jesus is the only man who ever perfectly fulfilled the Law, because He perfectly “loved his neighbor.” So, if Jesus lives in our heart in the Person of the Holy Spirit, then, like Jesus, we can effectively and consistently love our neighbor. That is the only way we can keep God’s laws.

b. Loving your neighbor fulfills the social laws of the Old Testament (Romans 13:9).

► *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 [Romans 13:9].*

Paul now quotes four of the Ten Commandments, four of the last five that would directly affect our neighbors:

#7: **You shall not commit adultery.**

#6: **You shall not murder.**

#8: **You shall not steal.**

#10: **You shall not covet.**

The first three commands have to do with taking something from our neighbor that rightfully belongs to him: his wife, his life, and his possessions. The last one has to do with lusting after all those things which will lead us to taking them. Now Paul touches on the rest of God’s laws by saying, **If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** In several of the debates between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders, this question came up: *Which are the greatest commandments?* - because there are hundreds of laws in the Old Testament.

Basically, The Law of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, has three sets of Law: moral, ceremonial, and civil. The moral Law is contained in, but not restricted to, the Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus. The ceremonial Law is contained in, but not restricted to, the Book of Leviticus, which has the laws concerning the Levitical Priesthood, and the sacrifices and ceremonial laws. The civil Law is contained in, but not restricted to, the Book of Numbers, which has the

laws concerning how the Israelites were to behave as a nation. There are possibly some 863 laws in the Old Testament, most of which people have not read. If we “love our neighbor as ourselves,” we will automatically be keeping those laws.

c. Loving your neighbor does him no wrong (Romans 13:10)

► *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. [Romans 13:10].*

Love does no wrong to a neighbor is a powerful statement, and a good summary statement. God’s laws themselves are designed to keep us from doing wrong to our neighbor; so, if we will just love him, then we will do him no wrong. Unconditional love, then, is the goal of God’s Law; it is there to restrain us, but it is not there to punish us. What a peaceful world we would have if we all would obey God’s laws.

4. For the sake of Jesus (Romans 13:11-14).

Paul has saved “the best for last” in his apologetic for us to “be in subjection to the governing authorities.” Our voluntary subjection will reflect the attitude and actions of the Lord Jesus Himself. We will have “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh” (see verse 14).

a. Wake up! (Romans 13:11).

► *Do this, knowing the time, that is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed [Romans 13:11].*

Knowing is from *oida*, which means to know instinctively. When Christians read the Bible and look at what is happening in the world, we can know that we are in the “last days” (see Acts 2:17, 2 Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:1-2, 2 Peter 3:3-4). The Bible clearly teaches that the Church Age, the age or dispensation in which we are now living, is the last age or time period before the Tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ. **Awaken from sleep** should be compared to 1 Thessalonians 5:3-6, where believers who are watching for the return of Christ are

compared with unbelievers who are not. If any believer is “snoozing” concerning the return of Christ, he or she needs to “awaken from sleep” and watch for His coming. See also 1 John 3:2-3, which explains that Christians who are watching for the Rapture *purify* themselves because they do not want the Savior to appear while they are doing something they know is wrong.

Salvation is nearer to us than when we believed because with every passing day, we are one day closer to the return of Christ. See Matthew 24:36 where Jesus refers to that *day and hour* when He will be sent back by the Father. There is a day and hour already set when Jesus will return. God knows it, but we do not. We have to be watching - because it could be today.

b. Cleanup (Romans 13:12).

► *The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light [Romans 13:12].*

The night is almost gone and the day is near. For six dispensations man has ruled on the earth, and God equates that to “night,” but He has predicted *The Day of the Lord* (Acts 2:20, 2 Peter 3:10, 1 Corinthians 4:4-5, and 1 Thessalonians 5:5 and many other passages), when Christ will dispel the darkness.³⁹

Let us lay aside and let us put on are both Aorist Subjunctive Middle verbs. The Aorist Tense denotes a completed action, a decision and action that we take. The Subjective Mood is the mood of contingency -

³⁹ Although the number of dispensations may vary from writer to writer, the listing of seven dispensations is probably the most accepted: *innocence* (Garden of Eden), *conscience* (Adam to Noah), *human government* (Noah to Abraham), *promise* (Abraham to Moses), *law* (Moses to Christ), *grace* or the *Church age* (from Christ’s first to second coming), and the *Kingdom age* or Millennium. In each of these periods salvation is by faith, that is, new light was shed on the relationship between God and man, but no new way of entering into that relationship was ever instituted. See Clouse, Hosack and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999) page 59.

maybe we will do this and maybe we won't; it requires a decision of each believer. The Middle Voice means that the doer of the action does it to himself, for his own benefit. Therefore, it is in our best interests if we lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on **the armor of light**. It's how we *clean up*. It is up to us. God will help us when we make this decision.

The deeds of darkness are all the things that we used to do "of the flesh," the *sarks*, the old sin nature, in regard to its lusts (see verse 1). We instinctively know what they are, just like we instinctively know that the time for the return of Christ is near. For "the armor of light," compare *the whole armor of God* in Ephesians 6:11-18: (1) the truth of all of God's promises, (2) deeds of righteousness, (3) a readiness to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, (4) faith in God that He is still in control, (5) the assurance of salvation, (6) skill in using the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and (7) prayer.

c. Grow up! (Romans 13:13-14).

► *Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts [Romans 13:13-14].*

Let us behave properly as in the day, not as we did in the darkness as unbelievers. **Behave** is *peripateo*. *Peri* is the prefix meaning "around," and *pateo* means "to walk;" hence, "to walk around." It was the Greek word for "lifestyle." Christians are not going to live perfect, sinless lives. However, our lifestyle should be an attempt to "behave properly." The word "properly" is *euschemonos*, meaning a good appearance, decently, that which is pleasing to look upon.

Now Paul lists six things which are evidences of "walking in spiritual darkness," bad habits that Christians need to rid themselves of: (1) **carousing**, *komos*, which means merry-making. In the New Testament it is used in a negative sense of "lavish feasting" (to include drunkenness and immorality), (2) **drunkenness**, (3) **sexual promiscuity**, (4) **sensuality**, (5) **strife**, and (6) **jealousy**. Notice that the "whole armor of God" has seven parts, the number in Holy

Scripture for completion or perfection. Then Paul lists six things that Christians are to avoid. Six is the number in Holy Scripture for the number of man in rebellion against God.

Put on is *enduo*, another Aorist Imperative Middle. *Enduo* is used nine times in the Gospels for putting on clothing. Paul uses this verb as imagery for “putting on” spiritual things - like “the Lord Jesus Christ” - as a coat would fit the body. **Make no provision** can be translated “make no thoughts.” For “flesh,” see notes on verse 12, page 216. **Lusts** is *epithumia*, strong emotions, feelings.

E. Service extends to our Christian brethren who are weak in their faith (Romans 14:1-13).

Stop judging your brother who is weaker in his faith.

God saves people from sin and adopts them into His family. In this new God-given family relationship (just as in an earthly family relationship), in order to achieve harmony and to glorify the Head of the Family, namely, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will lead each family member to accept each other with unconditional love. When we love each other unconditionally, the family of God will live in harmony and will glorify Jesus Christ. It is contrary to our sin nature to love in this way. Our nature is to look to our own needs instead of to the needs of others. Therefore, we must be submissive to the Holy Spirit if we are to become successful in achieving unity in the Body of Christ.

This doctrine does not apply to unbelievers. Non-Christians will have no leading from God concerning unconditional love for the family of God. Non-Christians might be very sacrificial, but without Jesus Christ as their Savior and without the indwelling Holy Spirit, none of their sacrifices will ever glorify God. Notice that the primary application of this doctrine is for believers in their Christian family relationships. Notice also that whatever is important to God is what Satan attacks. The three institutions God has created are (1) the family, (2) the nation of Israel, and (3) the Church. Those three are targeted by Satan for destruction. God constantly seeks to keep them together, and Satan constantly seeks to tear them apart. We can all work to keep the local church together by following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions [Romans 14:1].

Accept is *proslambano*, which is a Present Imperative Middle. The Present Tense denotes something that is taking place. The Imperative Mood is the mood of command. The Middle Voice denotes something done by the subject, but for his own benefit (same verb is in verse 3). It means to receive kindly and hospitably; to admit into ones society and friendship. *Proslambano* is the same verb used in verse 3, where the text states, *God has accepted all believers*. **Weak in faith** actually occurs first in the Greek text, the place of emphasis. **The one who is weak** is a Participle, from *astheneo*, which simply means without strength; context and usage then must decide the area of weakness. In the New Testament it is used of physical weakness (Matthew 25:39), doubting (1 Corinthians 8:7), and emotional oppression (1 Cor. 4:10). It is translated *sick* in James 5:14. Remember that 2 Corinthians 5:7 says that *we walk by faith, not by sight*.

Faith is *pistis*, which always has an object, and in the New Testament, the correct object of faith is the Lord Jesus Christ (compare Hebrews 12:2). People can have what we call “saving faith,” through which God sees and saves them. Since we also must live the Christian life by faith, our faith in God can and must grow stronger and deeper. Since Christ is the object of our faith, then the more we learn about Him by reading the Bible, the more our faith will grow (see Luke 24:27). **Passing judgment** is *krino* and occurs six times in this passage. It means to separate, to discern, to judge, to divide.

Opinions is *dialogismos*, which gives our English word “dialogue;” the word includes thoughts and motives. An “opinion” is something that we can disagree upon and yet agree to be in disagreement. It is all right to have different opinions on “gray area matters” - things we can disagree on without dividing us. However, things Christians *must* agree on are: (1) the inerrancy of Holy Scripture, (2) the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, (3) the deity of Jesus Christ, (4) the Blood Atonement (Jesus Christ dying on the cross, shedding His blood to pay for the sins of mankind), and (5) the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

► *One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only [Romans 14:2].*

Paul here gives us an example: **one person may eat all things** and one who **eats vegetables only**. The one who “eats all things” may have been a Gentile believer in the church at Rome, and the one who “eats vegetables only” may have been a Jewish believer who was strictly following some of the teachings of the Old Testament (see Matthew 5:17). The city of Rome was filled with idols and idol temples, so the Christian Jews may have been afraid that all the meat in the market place had been offered to idols.

► *The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him [Romans 14:3].*

Regard with contempt often comes from Christians who are looking at the outward, physical things, instead of looking at the heart, as God does (see 1 Samuel 16:7). It is the verb *eksoutheneito*, which means to despise, to look down upon (which requires elevating yourself so you can look down). The same verb appears again in verse 10.

► *Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand [Romans 14:4].*

Servant is *oikaten*, which means a household servant; here it is not *doulos*, which Paul often uses meaning a willing servant. By way of application **master** would be the Lord Jesus Christ. **The Lord (Jesus) is able to make him stand**. We must be careful about judging or condemning or regarding with contempt someone whom the Lord has established (compare John 21:21-22).

► *One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 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 14:5-6].*

Paul now gives another example of “gray area matters:” days set aside to worship and serve the Lord. **One day** may refer to the Sabbath or to any of the Old Testament festivals which were precious to the Jews,

even after they became Christians. **Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind** does not refer to basic doctrines of the Christian faith which are clearly taught in Holy Scripture, but applies to areas that are touched by the strength of a believer's faith. **For the Lord** is talking about motives, and it is usually impossible for one Christian to discern the motives of another Christian, because we cannot see into their hearts - only God can do that. Notice that *both give thanks to God*; even though one appreciates the T-bone steak, and another is thankful for the carrots, neither is to judge the other in the process.

► *For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 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. 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].*

Us and **we** in these verses are believers in Jesus Christ. See 1 Corinthians 10:25-27, 1 Timothy 4:3-5 and also verse 10. **The dead** are Christians who have died, and **the living** are Christians who are still physically alive.

► *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD" [Romans 14:10-11].*

The judgment seat is *bema*, which means a raised place (compare 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10). It was the place where a citizen had his rights defended and where rewards were given out. The *bema* seat of God is *for Christians only*, and deals *only with rewards*. It has *nothing to do with salvation*. Verse 11 is a quote from Isaiah 45:23 (see also Phil 2:10).

► *So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. 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 14:12-13].*

Account is *logos*, which means a word, or an answer. **Let us not judge** is Subjunctive Mood, the mood of contingency and the mood of exhortation. **Any more** shows that they were already judging each other. **Obstacle** is *proskomma*, something a person trips over (and falls into sin). The same word is translated “offense.” **Stumbling block** is *skandalon*, which is a trap, snare, or any cunning device (which causes another to sin).

F. Service extends to helping fellow Christians grow in their faith (Romans 14:14-23). God wants us to seek to build each other up.

► *I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything is unclean, to him it is unclean. 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].*

Unclean is *koinos*, which means “common” or ceremonially unclean; this term was very significant to the Jews. **Food** is the example in verse 15. See also Acts 10:1-9 where God declared all food to be clean for New Testament believers, but Jewish believers still “weak” in their faith would keep observing the Old Testament dietary laws. **Hurt** is *lupeitai*, which can also be translated grieved, to cause trouble or affliction, to vex (confuse). **Love** is *agapao*, to love unconditionally, to accept, to see a need and reach out to meet that need. **Destroy** is *apollumi*, which in other contexts means the Lake of Fire; e.g., John 3:16, where it is translated “perish.” This is a very strong word; however, it never means the Lake of Fire for believers. It means to lose, to ruin, to stray. **For whom Christ died** shows how valuable that person is to God.

► *Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another [Romans 14:16-19].*

Good is *agathos*, which means an intrinsic goodness (because it is so assigned to the believer). **Be spoken of as evil** is one word *blasphiami*,

which gives our word “blaspheme.” In verse 17 the true focus for members of the family of God is **righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**. **In this way** refers back to giving up our liberty. **Serves** is now *douleuo*, which means to serve willingly. Thus, we can “serve Christ” by giving up something, by being sensitive to the feelings of other Christians, and by being sensitive to their level of spiritual maturity, the strength or weakness of their faith.

Building up is *oikodomeo*; when used in a literal sense it means to build a house; in a figurative sense (which Paul uses many times in his letters) it means to build up Christians in their faith (see Eph 4:7-16). The same word is translated “edification” in Romans 15:2.

► *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. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles [Romans 14:20-21].*

The work of God is Christians being built up in their faith. **It is good not to** certainly describes giving up something for God for the sake of other weaker brothers and sisters in Christ.

► *The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 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 14:22-23].*

Your own conviction before God is normal and expected; see verse five. But, we must be careful in the practice of our convictions before fellow believers. **Condemn** is *krino*, translated “judge,” here and also in verse 13.

Whatever is not from faith is sin describes how we make the weaker brother “stumble.” In Paul’s culture it included eating “meat offered to idols.” In our present culture this may include things such as the use of alcohol, attendance at certain worldly functions, suggestive clothing, music, dancing, and so forth. Paul had the spiritual maturity and freedom to, for example, “eat meat offered to idols.” The weaker brother might decide that now it is of no consequence for him to do

likewise. He does, but then feels guilty for having done it; his conscience has been violated, and Paul says that for him it **is sin**. Thus the believer with all the liberty has caused his brother to fall into sin. We are not responsible for our brother's behavior. He has his own sins to confess before God to get back into fellowship - but we also have sinned in that we caused him to stumble - we have violated the "spirit" of verses 13-15.

G. Service extends to following a role model: follow Christ and become a role model (Romans 15:1-13).

1. As a good role model, strive for unity (Romans 15:1-7).

a. By what we say (Romans 15:1-2).

► *Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves [Romans 15:1].*

We refers to Christians. This continues the idea Paul began to present in Romans 12:1-2 as part of *service*. The manifestation of our service is **to bear the weaknesses of those without strength**. Remember how patient Jesus was with His disciples. They were very weak in their faith, but He never gave up on them and kept working with them to build them up in their faith. **Ought** is from *opheiloo*, which means to owe someone, to be a debtor, to be obligated. It is the same Greek word Jesus used in the Lord's Prayer that is translated "debts" in Matthew 6:12. We ask God to, *Forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors*. We are obligated "to bear the weaknesses of those without strength." "The weaknesses" is *astheneia*, which can refer to a physical weakness, a spiritual weakness, a mental weakness, or an emotional weakness. Context must decide what the writer is talking about. In this context, Paul is probably speaking of a spiritual weakness: a Christian who is new in the faith, weak in his or her faith, or someone who is not spiritually mature. **And not just please ourselves** shows that the more spiritual Christians ought to give up their selfishness and think about the needs of other Christians. This is a plea for discipleship.

► *Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification [Romans 15:2].*

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good is God's will for Christians. Compare John 4:34; 5:30; and 8:29. Jesus was always doing His Father's will. **Edification** or building another Christian up in his faith is the goal. *Oikodomeo* is the word for building a house. Recall the three-part test for all the things we say: (1) Is it true? (2) Is it necessary? (3) Is it beneficial to all concerned? If we ask those three questions about everything we are about to say, it would probably eliminate much of what we say.

b. By the way we sacrifice (Romans 15:3).

► *For even Christ did not please Himself: but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME" [Romans 15:3].*

For is *gar*, which we call an "explanatory *gar*;" it introduces a sentence or clause which will explain or illustrate what the writer just said. Christ is the supreme example of someone who considered the needs of others over His own comfort in heaven. He would have done no wrong to have stayed in heaven, but He saw our need for a substitutionary sacrifice and was willing to come to this earth and become that sacrifice. Then to prove that his point is biblical, Paul quotes Psalm 69:9, which says, **the reproaches of those who reproached you fell upon me**. "Reproaches" are *insults*; our sins are insults to the Character of God. Each time we sin, we insult or violate the Holy Character of God. However, He paid for all those reproaches by allowing His own Son, Jesus Christ, to be killed for us.

c. By growing together spiritually (Romans 15:4-6).

► *For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scripture we might have hope [Romans 15:4].*

Whatever was written in earlier times refers to the Old Testament. The writings of the Old Testament **were for our instruction**. Everything written in the New Testament is based upon the Old Testament. A believer cannot fully understand the New Testament if they have not read the Old Testament. **Perseverance** is *hupomona*: the prefix *hupo* means, under, and *meno* is the verb "to remain;" hence, to

remain under adverse circumstances - to remain steadfast in the face of adversity. **Encouragement** is *parakaleo*, which means one called alongside; a helper. Paul uses the same words in verse 5. The word **Scriptures** is capitalized because it refers to the Holy Scriptures, literally “the writings” from which Christians get their hope; they are the “Holy Scriptures,” the Holy writings of God Himself (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17). See also Acts 6:1-4 to see the importance of the Word of God and Prayer. Note here that **hope** in the Bible is a *reality* not yet realized.

► *Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ [Romans 15:5-6].*

To be of the same mind is the same thing Paul wrote in Romans 12:16. It is the unity of believers on the centrality of Jesus Christ, who He is and what He has done. We must have harmony and unity on central doctrinal issues, such as the Inspiration of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, the Deity of Christ, the blood atonement, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead. However, we can still hold to different opinions on “gray area matters.” See Page 223.

To **glorify God** is our goal as Christians. **The God and Father** has only one definite article, so the second noun “Father” further describes “God.” “God” emphasizes the authority of God the Father over Jesus Christ, something They arranged before They created the world. **Father** denotes the intimacy between God the Father and God the Son. **One voice** is the outward evidence of our unity.

d. By accepting one another (Romans 15:7).

► *Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God [Romans 15:7].*

The acceptance of believers of each other will also “glorify God.” The standard is **just as Christ also accepted us**.

2. As a good role model, strive to imitate Jesus Christ, our perfect role

model (Romans 15:8-13).

a. Christ was a servant to the Jews (Romans 15:8).

► *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 [Romans 15:8].*

For introduces what Paul will use to solidify our call to become role models and to seek to establish unity among the brethren. Paul will bring up Christ Himself as the greatest role model. Christ is the One who has come to unify the entire world under His leadership, to worship God together. **Servant** is from *diakonia*, which gives our word “deacon,” usually translated “servant.” It is from the verb that means to provide someone with the bare necessities of life; it can be used of someone waiting tables, providing food for the people sitting at the table; someone doing a menial task, such as Jesus’ washing the disciples’ feet the night before He was crucified.

The circumcision is a New Testament phrase which refers to the Jews. Paul has already used Chapters 9-11 to discuss the past, present, and future of the Jews. It is fundamental to understand that God is not finished with the Jews (see footnote 37, page 191). This verse alone refutes the doctrine of *Amillennialism* (Millennium with the negating prefix “A”), which teaches that there is *no* Millennium. Amillennialism does not take Revelation 20:1-9 literally; it insists that there is *no* Golden Age and *no* Kingdom Age - the Church simply rules and reigns in the world, ushering in righteousness, and someday Jesus will return to take over what the Church has accomplished. God, according to this doctrine, is finished with the nation Israel. Perhaps a good question to ask an Amillennialist is, “Then why is Israel still around, if God is through with them?” Amillennialism uses an inconsistent hermeneutic, or method of interpretation. It employs a “literal” hermeneutic for Revelation Chapters 1-3 and 21-22, but an “allegorical” hermeneutic for Revelation Chapters 4-20. Sometimes Chapters 4-20 are referred to by amillennialists as “apocalyptic language,” and should not be taken literally. This verse, however, clearly says that Christ will “confirm the promises given to the fathers.” Which fathers? **The fathers** (of the circumcision), namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God began to build the nation of Israel with Abraham

(see Genesis 12:1-3). Amillennialism holds that the promises God made to Israel have been transferred to the Church, the Body of Christ. However, there are no verses of Holy Scripture that specifically support this theology.

b. Christ was a servant to the Gentiles (Romans 15:9-12).

► *[A]nd for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING YOUR NAME." Again he says, "REJOICE O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE. And again, PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM. 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 15:9-12].*

And ties this passage together and continues the thought of Christ being a servant. **Gentiles** is *ethnos*, which can also be translated "nations," and always refers to all the nations of the world apart from Israel. Notice that "Gentiles" appears 6 times in 4 verses. Evidently, this is a very important point to Paul, and should be to all of us.⁴⁰

Glorify is the same word used in verse 6. Not only are the members of the Body of Christ supposed "to glorify God" (verse 6), but eventually, all the nations of the world. **For His mercy** is *eleos*, which means mercy, compassion, pity; further, it means benefit which results from compassion, kindness, blessings. "Mercy" comes from God's grace, and can never be earned by human deeds. Paul quotes from Psalm 18:46-50, a Messianic Psalm. A Messianic Psalm is one that talks about the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Here is the quote from verse 49: **Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD,**

⁴⁰ The Apostle Paul is about to quote three Old Testament passages, all of which see Israel and the Gentiles as separate. Revelation 19:15, which describes the Second Coming of Christ, says that when Jesus returns He will "rule the nations with a rod of iron." But in Matthew 19:28, Jesus promised that when He returns, the twelve apostles will rule and reign with Him, "judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It is obvious that God's eternal plan includes *both* Jew and Gentile.

and I will sing praises to your name. Jesus Himself will “give praise to God among the Gentiles;” He **will sing** to God’s **name**. This is the verse that says that Jesus Himself will sing when He returns.

In verse 10 Paul quotes from the Law (see Deuteronomy 32:43), **Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people**. This verse clearly predicts the difference between the Jews and the Gentiles, even though the Gentiles are called to join in with the Jews in rejoicing. This verse teaches us at least three things about God’s plan for planet earth:

(1) The Jews are God’s chosen people, chosen to be used of God to reveal Himself to the whole world. This choice notwithstanding, each Jew must be born again; no Jew has spiritual salvation by virtue of having been born into the Jewish nation.

(2) God wants a spiritual relationship with both Jews and Gentiles. Thus, since the God of the Bible is the God of the Jews and the Gentiles, we can join together spiritually to worship God, but it must be done through Jesus Christ. (The same should hold true today in the Church, the Body of Christ, but can seldom be experienced. The dividing point is usually the interpretation of the Gospel.)

(3) Under the Old Covenant, the Gentiles had to come to God through the Levitical Priesthood system. Since Christ came, the Gentiles have been spiritually “grafted in” (Romans 11:17), and have just as much direct contact with God as the Jews. The Gentiles, after the ascension of Christ and His sending the Holy Spirit, have direct access to God, and they *do not* have to go through Israel’s temple (which was destroyed in AD 70). Acts Chapter 15 clarifies how the Church (both Jew and Gentile) recognized God’s working under the New Covenant.

In verse 11 Paul goes back to the Old Testament to quote Psalm 117:1: **Praise the LORD all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him**. Notice that “LORD” is in all capital letters, which denotes that it is the translation of the Hebrew name “Yahweh,” which means eternally Self-Existent One. It was the name that set apart the God of the Jews from all the other false gods of the idol-worshipping Gentiles.

In verse 12 Paul quotes from Isaiah 11:10, a passage which describes the Second Coming of Christ: **There shall come the root of Jesse,**

and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope. A related passage of Scripture would be Acts 4:12, *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved* (King James Version). The only hope of salvation for the Gentiles is in the same Savior of the Jews, namely, Jesus Christ.

c. Benediction: Paul prays for their joy and peace (Romans 15:13).

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit [Romans 13:15].

Hope is *elpis*, which in the Bible is an unseen reality. **Joy and peace** are part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). **The Holy Spirit** is the third Person of the Godhead; He is omnipotent, all-powerful, Who **by His power** can give us **joy and peace in believing**. All other religions of the world cannot give “peace and joy in believing,” because they never know if they have done enough to be saved.

H. Paul’s closing remarks on service (Romans 15:14 – 16:27).

1. Paul plans to go on serving (Romans 15:14-33).

a. To certain groups of Gentiles (Romans 15:14-16).

► *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].*

And connects this passage to verses 1-13 where Paul called us to follow the role model of Christ Himself, Who became a servant to the Jews and to the Gentiles. **You, my brethren** refers to a particular group of Gentiles, namely, those in the city of Rome. Notice two things about Paul’s statement:

(1) He is targeting a particular group of people, which takes planning. When we seek to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we do well to

target a particular group of people, then, we will begin to pray and plan our strategy as to how to reach those people.

(2) He considers them “my brethren” (from *adelphos* we have “Philadelphia,” the city of brotherly love; from *phileo*, the verb meaning to love, and *adelphos*, the noun meaning brother). How are the Apostle Paul and the Roman Gentiles “brothers?” They are brothers spiritually because when God saves us, He brings us into His family and we become spiritual brothers and sisters.

The Roman Gentile Christians are **full of** two things, **goodness** and **knowledge**.

“Full of” is the normal verb in Greek *mestoo*, which simply means to be filled up, used here as a Predicate Adjective with goodness, part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). “Goodness” is *agathos*, which refers to “intrinsic goodness,” a genuine goodness that comes from the inside of a person. **Filled with all knowledge**, however, is *plaroo*, which means to be filled to overflowing, to be filled to the brim. The verb form here is *pepleromenoi*, a Perfect Passive Participle, which could be translated “having been filled.” The Perfect Tense denotes a past action with present, on-going results - the Roman believers were first filled with the knowledge of the Word of God, then, they were “filled with goodness.” This fits our definition about spiritual maturity: that when believers can ward off the attacks of the Devil using the Word of God, they are spiritually mature. Once we are “full of goodness, filled with all knowledge,” we will be in position to **admonish one another**. This last phrase comes from *noutheteo*, which gives our word nouthetic, which refers to Biblical, nouthetic counseling. It comes from *nous* which means the mind, and *tithami*, which means to put or place, hence, to put into the mind.

► *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. To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit [Romans 15:15-16].*

To remind you again shows that repetition is the mother of learning; it

is good to be repetitious in our teaching. **Grace** is *charis*, which means the unsought and unmerited favor of God upon those who deserve exactly the opposite. **From God** is what is called a Genitive of Source; God is the source of the grace that was given to Paul.

Minister is the Greek word *leitourgia*, which gives our English word “liturgy.” The liturgy in a church is the order of service. Unfortunately, the liturgy often becomes “a sacred cow” that needs to be slaughtered on the altar of spontaneity. There is no New Testament guidance for any order of service for any local assembly. Christ Jesus is the Supreme Authority of the Church, the Body of Christ, and should be for every local assembly. Each must determine the will of Christ Jesus by looking into the Scriptures, then following them.

Gentiles is *ethnos*, which gives our word “ethnic,” and refers to the nations outside the nation of Israel. **Ministering as a priest** is all one word in the Greek text; it’s the word *hierougeo*, which means to minister as a priest, to make sacrifices. However, the Apostle Paul could never literally offer a blood sacrifice because he was of the tribe of Benjamin and was never a Levite priest. The sacrifice he has in mind is **the Gentiles** themselves. Paul offers them to God as a priest because they have received **the gospel of God**, which includes the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.

Gospel is *euangelion*, which means good news, from the verb that means to announce good news. God singled Paul out to become the Apostle to the Gentiles, to announce to them the Good News of Jesus Christ - that He not only died on the cross for the sins of the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well. As they accept Christ, the Jewish Messiah, they become an offering of sweet aroma to God. God receives them in salvation, just as He does the Jews (see Romans 1:16-17).

Sanctified is from *hagiazō*, which means to set apart for holy purposes. God the Holy Spirit has set apart the Gentiles for holy purposes, just as God had set apart the Jews for holy purposes. **By the Holy Spirit** is a Dative of Means or Instrument; God the Holy Spirit is the Means or Instrument through which Paul has done this. We must never think that we can do the work of God without the help of the Holy Spirit.

b. In the power of God’s Spirit (Romans 15:17-19).

► *Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. 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, 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 15:17-19].*

Therefore ties this paragraph to the previous context. **Boasting** for the Apostle Paul or for any Christian is excluded except when we “boast in the Lord.” If the Holy Spirit is providing all the power, then whatever good that may come from our ministries comes from God, not from us. We can boast about results, or fruit, but God must get all the glory.

In verse 18 there is no hint of pride in the Apostle Paul because he says, **I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me.** The operative word is “through.” God primarily chooses to work *through* people. Years ago, Dr. Phil Hook at Dallas Theological Seminary said, “It is little things through little people that God gets done most of what He gets done.”

Paul’s work resulted in **the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.** This is what is called “fruit of the ministry.” People’s lives change. The way they talk, what they talk about, and their behavior all change for the better.

Signs and wonders were the signature of Christ’s Apostles (see Acts 2:22, 2:43, 5:12, and 14:3) and authenticated the Gospel of God being preached by the Apostles. By this time as Paul is writing his letter to the Romans, the Church has reached **from Jerusalem . . . as far as Illyricum**, which was on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea.

c. Where no apostle had gone before (Romans 15:20-21)].

► *And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man’s foundation; 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].*

Not where Christ was already named is a broad description of Paul's target goal - where *not* to go preach the Gospel - where Christ was already named. It is assumed that Paul was referring to the preaching of the Apostles, because he said he planned to go to Rome, but the local church was already there. Someone has taken the Gospel to Rome, so Paul must be talking about going where an Apostle had not yet been. According to Ephesians 2:19-20, *God's household having being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone*. Because Paul writes to the Ephesians putting the word "apostles" ahead of the word "prophets," he is not talking about Old Testament "prophets" but New Testament "prophets" such as himself, Peter, John, and the other apostles who had the spiritual gift of prophecy.⁴¹

Then Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:15 to support his plans: **but as it is written, they who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand**. This verse from Isaiah is talking about the Jews being a light unto the Gentiles, and Paul is a partial fulfillment of that prophecy. It can apply to all the apostles, but Paul especially applied it to himself.

d. In spite of the opposition – Romans 15:22-25.

► *For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 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 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 – but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints [Romans 15:22-25].*

I have often been prevented from coming to you shows that his plans had often been spoiled - probably by Satan. We can learn from this to make plans to reach a certain target area with the Gospel, but Satan will

⁴¹ If any teaching today cannot be traced back to and supported by the writings of the apostles in the New Testament, it is probably false teaching. Paul's personal goal was "*that I might not build upon another man's foundation,*" this is not a selfish statement - he just wanted to plant local churches where no apostle had been before.

oppose us. The Devil will do all he can to keep us from reaching people with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

I have had for many years a longing to come to you shows that we can have a burden for someone for years, and pray about it for years before we finally reach a certain goal. Paul had a burden for lost people, and it was a burden upon his heart to reach them with the Gospel.

Whenever I go to Spain was Paul's longer-ranged goal. He wanted to go to the western edge of the Roman Empire, Spain, and preach the Gospel there, but he wanted to see the believers in Rome **in passing**. **To be helped on my way there by you** means to be helped financially. It is not wrong to ask God's people to financially support missionaries and pastors who are doing the work of the ministry. For these to take the Gospel around the world, they must have our financial support. **When I have first enjoyed your company for a while** shows the relationship and fellowship between fellow believers in Christ. Christians have a spiritual bond and a spiritual relationship that the world of unbelievers cannot see or understand. The word **when** is *ean*, which can be translated "if." Paul was recognizing the contingency that he may become hindered again. In serving the Lord and spreading the Gospel, we are to expect opposition.

But now introduces Paul's priorities. As much as he wanted to visit the church at Rome and go on from there to Spain, his priorities would take him back to Jerusalem. In Corinth he was finishing up the collection from the saints who were providing an offering for the believers suffering in Jerusalem. **Serving** is *diakoneo*, which means to perform a menial task. Even apostles were called sometimes to be "errand boys," as here, delivering the offering to the Christians in Jerusalem.

e. As an assistant to fellow believers (Romans 15:26-28).

► *For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 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. 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 [Romans 15:26-28].

Macedonia and Achaia made up what used to be Greece. It included the local churches at Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth. They **have been pleased to make a contribution** fits Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 that says that *God loves a cheerful giver*. If we cannot be pleased in making a donation, then we should not give one. God doesn't need our money, and He is not glorified by a contribution made grudgingly. **The poor** were the poor Christians in Jerusalem who had lost their jobs because of their faith in Jesus Christ. The persecution of Christians was still going on in A.D. 58, the date of this letter to the Romans, a persecution that Paul helped to start in about A.D. 36 (see Acts 8:1, 9:1-2). Thus, this persecution from the Jews had lasted about 22 years.

f. With the power of prayer (Romans 15:29-33).

► *I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. 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, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen [Romans 15:29-33].*

I know is from *oida*, to know intuitively, to know instinctively. This is the "still small voice" from within Paul, through all his experience with walking with Christ in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. **When I come to you** shows Paul's confidence in God providing the way for him to make it to Rome. (Little does Paul realize that his trip to Rome will be paid for by the Roman government, because he will be going there "under arrest;" it will be the authorities of Rome providing his transportation to the capital city.) **Fullness** is *plaroma*, which means filled to the brim, filled to overflowing. **Blessing** is *eulogeo*, which gives our English word "eulogy," meaning to say something nice about someone (usually at their funeral). Paul is talking about all the verbal blessings Christ will pronounce from His throne in heaven,

blessing Paul's visit to the church at Rome.

I urge you is from *parakaleo*, which means to call alongside; to encourage, to urge. It is the same word in Romans 12:1-2 translated "beseech" in the King James Version. **Brethren** is *adelphos*, which means brothers; we are "spiritual brothers and sisters in the Lord" because we have been brought into God's family. Christ Himself is our "elder brother," *the firstborn among many brethren* (Romans 8:28-30).

By our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit are both Genitive of Source. This tells us two things: (1) that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the same in power and majesty, and (2) that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the *source* of our power to **strive together . . . in your prayers to God**. We do not have the power in ourselves to pray as we should (see Romans 8:26-27). **To strive together** is one Greek word *sunagonizo*, our English word "agonize." Prayer sometimes is "agonizing," as when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In verse 31 **that** denotes the purpose for the agonizing prayer - **that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea**. Paul anticipated trouble when he arrived in Jerusalem with the donation from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, and **that** introduces a secondary purpose for the prayer - **that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints**. "Service" is *diakonia*, which gives our word "deacon," a servant in the local church. *Diakonia* refers to a menial task, a small thing, a menial servant doing household chores like sweeping the floor and taking out the trash.

Saint is *hagioi*, a title given to believers both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. It means "holy ones" or "separated ones." The term "Christian" (one of the most widely used, and most widely abused words today in America) is found only three times in the New Testament, whereas "saints" is found dozens of times in the Bible. The title "saints" describes the believer's positional standing before God bestowed upon him the moment he trusts in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It also defines the practical nature of the believer - the behavior of a Christian. We as believers are to be different from all other people in the world because "we have been spiritually separated from them" - we are the "separated ones." Hence, we should live accordingly.

Verse 32 gives the third purpose of their “agonizing prayer” for Paul: **so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.** “Joy” is from *chara*, which gives our name “Kara,” and comes from the root *charis*, the Greek word for “grace.” When we receive God’s grace, we will receive His joy. “Joy” is also part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

Will is *thelo*. There are two basic words translated “will” in the Greek New Testament. One is *thelo*, which means to will from the heart (see Matthew 26:39), *O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as you will . . .* The other is *boulomai*, meaning to will from the mind (see 2 Peter 3:9), *The Lord is . . . not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.*

In the last verse of Chapter 15 Paul gives his benediction before his personal greetings begin in Chapter 16 - **now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.** “The God of peace” refers to Romans 5:1 where Paul said, *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* The greatest peace anyone can have and experience is peace with God. Once our peace with God is established through faith in Jesus Christ, all enmity with God ceases. Before that, as unbelievers, we are at odds with God - we have no spiritual discernment and no relationship with Him. Paul pronounces the greatest possible blessing upon them - to experience God’s peace on an ongoing basis. **Amen** comes from the Hebrew root *amen*, which means “so be it.”

2. Paul recommends and greets his fellow servants (Romans 16:1).

Even though the Apostle Paul had never visited the Church at Rome (see Romans 15:14-15), he obviously knew many Christians in that church and wanted to mention many of them here, just like we would do in a very personal letter.

a. Paul recommends Phoebe to the believers in Rome (Romans 16:1-2).

► *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever manner 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].

If we were to search in the New Testament for Scriptural grounds for deaconesses in the local church, these two verses would be a good place to start. **Commend** is a compound Greek word *sunhistami*: *sun*, meaning with or together, and *histami*, which means to stand, put or place; hence, to stand in a prominent place. **Servant** is *diakonon*, the feminine form of *diakonos* from which we derive “deacon,” a servant in the local church. Used with the phrase “of the church,” it supports the appointment of deaconesses in the local church.

Cenchrea was the eastern port city of Corinth, some eight miles east. **Saint** is *hagioi*, which means “set apart ones.” God sets apart (for holy purposes) those who believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. A “saint” is a believer in Christ, not someone who earns special status before God or the Church at large. The Greek word translated “helper” is *prostatis* and is probably better translated “protector.” Most likely Phoebe protected or hid away Christians who were suffering from Roman persecution. Such protection could have resulted in her own death (see verse 4).

b. Paul sends greetings to Prisca and Aquila (Romans 16:2-5a).

► *Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house [Romans 16:3-5a].*

Prisca and Aquila are mentioned in Acts 18:2 and 26, 1 Corinthians 16:19, and 2 Timothy 4:19. They were great friends to Paul, and encouragers to him. **The churches of the Gentiles** is an interesting phrase found only here in the New Testament. In Acts 2 and 4, the local church in Jerusalem was predominantly Jewish. In fact, in Acts Chapter 11 the Apostle Peter went to that church to explain his guidance from God and his subsequent actions in Acts 10, when he went to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile. However, as the universal Church grew throughout the Roman Empire, the local churches became predominantly Gentile. Recall that in the theme verses for Romans, 1:16-17, the Apostle Paul says that the Gospel was presented first to the Jews.

The church that is in their house was the usual meeting place for local churches. Some cities like Syrian Antioch, Jerusalem, and Ephesus had built special buildings that served as local churches, but mostly the local churches met in the larger homes that could accommodate the Christians who met together (Hebrews 10:24-25).

c. Paul sends greetings to 24 specific Christian servants whom the Lord used to touch his life, either directly or indirectly (Romans 16:5b-16).

► *Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodian, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you [Romans 16:5b-16].*

This section teaches us several things about God's blessings upon His children:

◆ Each and every Christian is useful to the Lord. The Apostle Paul has something positive to say about every one of these believers. Each one of us has been given at least one spiritual gift, Romans 12:3-8. Every one of these believers was evidently using their gifts to edify the Body of Christ. It caused the Apostle Paul to remember them by name.

◆ Each and every Christian is important to the Lord. The last thing the Lord talks about in Revelation 22:12 and following is introduced with *My reward is with Me . . .* Jesus is watching every believer and is storing up heavenly rewards for those who faithfully serve Him here.

♦ Each and every Christian needs to be recognized and appreciated by their fellow Christians; hence, **Greet one another with a holy kiss**. We are to show brotherly affection to one another and acknowledge one another. No one in the Body of Christ is unimportant. As Paul said in Romans 13:7, *Render to all what is due them . . . honor to whom honor*. The world of unbelievers cannot appreciate what we are all doing to advance the Kingdom of God. Hence, we will be misunderstood, ridiculed, and made fun of by unbelievers, some of whom are members of our own families and in our local churches. We need consistent encouragement from our fellow believers who understand the sacrifices we are making.

3. Paul gives his final instructions and greetings (Romans 16:17-27).

a. Watch out for those who cause dissension (Romans 16:17-18).

► *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 [Romans 16:17].*

Dissensions and hindrances have been a regular part of local churches for nearly 2,000 years. They will not stop until the Lord returns. **The teaching** of the Apostles, who inspired by the Holy Spirit went on to write the entire New Testament, is what the dissenters and the hinderers will attack. If they can divide us over what God has said in His Word, then they can split our churches. It is so important to understand and cling to the “fundamentals of the faith.” These fundamentals are wonderfully expounded in books like *Basic Theology* by Dr. Charles Ryrie, *Not by Bread Alone* by Dr. Steven Waterhouse, Lewis Sperry Chafer’s *Systematic Theology*, and others. If a new interpretation or strange interpretation comes along concerning basic doctrines of the Christian faith, we must *be careful*. It is probably false and is designed to mislead Christians and will split churches.

Such men, false teachers, are simply slaves to their own appetites, looking for attention for themselves by leading astray the hearts of young believers.

b. Put your knowledge of Holy Scripture into practice - obey it (Romans 16:19-20).

► *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. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet [Romans 16:19-20].*

Obedience is the practical application of knowledge of the Word of God. Jesus said in John 14:21, *He who has my commandments and keeps them, is the one who loves Me . . .* We must study the Word of God to become **wise in what is good**. We do not have to experience evil before we can resist it. We can be **innocent in what is evil**.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet is certainly on God's timetable, not ours. **Soon** to God could be thousands of years. In the meantime, while we wait for God to crush Satan, we need **the grace of our Lord Jesus** on a daily basis.

c. The Christians with Paul also send their greetings (Romans 16:21-24).

► *Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen [Romans 16:21-24].*

Tertius was the "recording secretary" for the Apostle Paul as he dictated his letter to the Roman believers. The technical name for such a secretary was an *amanuensis*. Some of the older Greek manuscripts do not include verse 24; therefore, the translators included it, but in brackets. The New American Standard Version is based primarily upon the family text type called "Alexandrian" found in and around Alexandria, Egypt. That group of manuscripts excludes this verse.

d. Paul's final benediction: he gives glory to God (Romans 16:25-27).

► *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, but now is manifested and by the Scriptures of the*

prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen [Romans 16:25-27].

My gospel was not exclusive to the Apostle Paul. It was the same Gospel preached by Jesus Himself in John 3:16 and by the other Apostles, such as Peter in Acts 2. **The mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past** is God's creation of a separate spiritual family called the Body of Christ, which includes both Jews and Gentiles (see Ephesians 2:11-22).

The nations is *ethnos*, which gives our word "ethnic." In spite of the Nation Israel rejecting their Messiah (Romans 9-11), God is still reaching the world for Christ. God's mercy is still at work, still available, even though Israel, albeit suffering terribly over the last two millennia, has still been preserved.

Through Jesus Christ is because He is *the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me* (John 14:6).

