

A Study of the Book of Romans

Introduction

Romans is usually the first listed of Paul's letters, though it was not the first one he wrote. It is considered to be the greatest of his letters. In the 16th century, Bible translator William Tyndale wrote of Romans:

No one can read it too oft, or study it too well; for the more it is studied, the easier it is; the more it is chewed, the pleasanter it is; and the more groundly it is searched, the preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth therein [William Tyndale, 1534 edition of the English New Testament Prologue]

Romans is the only part of Scripture in which is a detailed and systematic presentation of the main features of Christian doctrine.

Author

Paul is the author (1:1). Romans is the longest of Paul's letters with 7,114 words. Letters were not a typical method of religious instruction in Judaism. But as more people became believers, Christianity spread from Jerusalem to distant places. Letters, as even emails today, establish a type of personal presence with the receiver.

Date Written

It was written at the close of Paul's third missionary journey, probably during the "three months" he was in Greece (Acts 20:3), which would be in the late winter or early spring of A.D. 57, when Paul was in Corinth [Cenchrea (16:1) being its eastern harbor].

Recipients

Romans 1:7 identifies the recipients as believers living in Rome. They are saints, whose faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world (v. 8). Paul greets 15 distinct groups of believers in 16:3-15. He had met some of these believers from Rome in other places, such as Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2, 18). He mentions 26 individuals by name (16:3-15), more than in any other epistle.

Purpose

The book focuses on believers, not on doing evangelism with unbelievers (such as the gospel of John 20:30-31). The gospel to the Roman believers was not the message of everlasting life (which they already believed). Rather, it was the application of God's Word in their daily life.

This epistle quotes the Old Testament some 57 times, more than any other New Testament book. It repeatedly uses key words—*God* 154 times, *law* 77 times, *Christ* 66 times, *sin* 45 times, *Lord* 44 times, and *faith* 40 times. Throughout church history, this epistle has been considered to be the most important book in the New Testament.

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Some of Paul's presuppositions:

- He assumed the existence and full deity of the God of the Old Testament. He held that God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign Ruler of the universe.
- Man has received a measure of freedom from God so humans can choose to pursue sin. However, if they do, they are still in the sovereign hand of God. The consequences of that sin has effects both now and forever.
- Paul's view of history was that of Old Testament revelation. Adam was the first man. He rebelled against God's authority. The result was the dethronement of God in the minds of Adam's descendants, the degradation of humanity, and the defilement of creation.
- Especially significant are two individuals: Abraham and Jesus Christ.
- "Salvation" is an umbrella term: it covers justification, sanctification, glorification, redemption, propitiation, etc.
- Romans reveals the degradation that has resulted from human sin. The ruined race is divided into two parts: Gentiles who have the light of God's wisdom and power through nature, and the Jews, who in addition to nature also have had the light of Scripture—but the Jew behaves the same way as the Gentile. So Paul concludes: "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (3:23).

Outline

I'm choosing this simple outline, which is easier to memorize, so we can think the book.

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Introduction (1:1-15)

1:1—Paul—his Gentile name (Saul was his Hebrew name)

—**a bond-servant of Christ Jesus**—one who chooses to be in submission, as a servant for life (Ex 21:2-6). A bond-servant owned nothing and was nothing apart from his master.

—**called as an apostle, set apart**—a “sent one” to the Gentiles (though not one of the Twelve—1 Cor 15:5-9). Paul’s assignment from Jesus was “...*he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel*” (Acts 9:15). Therefore, he has the authority Jesus Christ has given him to instruct the believers of the church age (Eph 3:2-3).

1:2—for the gospel [“good news”] **of God**—The subject of the good news is God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

—**which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures**—the gospel did not originate with Paul or the revelation made to him. This reference (to what we call the Old Testament) prepares the reader for the many Scripture quotes Paul will use throughout the book, beginning in 1:17. This gospel of God was not just prophesied, it was **promised...through His prophets**.

1:3—concerning His Son—Jesus is always the Son of God. He is deity. “*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Rev 19:10).

—(1) **who was born** [“became”] **of a descendant of David according to the flesh**—Jesus’ humanity was the highest, not just an Israelite but a messianic qualification (2 Sam 7:13-16; Isa 11:1-2; Micah 5:2; Matt 1:1-17; Luke 2:4; 3:23f). Yet “...*David both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day*” (Acts 2:29).

1:4—(2) who was declared [lit. “designated”] **the Son of God**—God the Father declared Jesus to be the Son at His baptism (Matt 3:16-17) and at the Mt of Transfiguration (Matt 17:5).

—**with power**—[*dunamis*, dynamite] power is part of the designation, appointment

—**by the resurrection from the dead**—Both His tie to David and His resurrection from the dead show Christ’s deity and humanity.

An Application—It is not simply one event but the **power** to resurrect the dead. Christ’s resurrection is “*the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep*” (1 Cor 15:20). Where there are first fruits, there will also be a harvest that will include resurrection of everyone who has ever died. So the resurrection of the dead to life has already begun in the resurrection of Jesus. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor 15:25-26). God has determined to abolish death only in and through His Son. Jesus has the “*keys of Hades and of death*” (Rev 1:18), and He will completely empty them both!! The destiny of every human is in the hands of Jesus Christ!!

—**according to the Spirit of holiness**—Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18, 20), and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:17; Luke 4:14).

An Application—In Romans, the Holy Spirit plays a prominent role, both in the resurrection of Jesus and in the spiritual resurrection which enables the Christian life (8:11-13), since it is He who produces holiness in the Christian experience.

—**Jesus Christ our Lord**—who is the **Son of God**, who has the power over death.

This initial statement about the gospel says nothing about the redeeming work of Christ on the cross, but rather about the infinite worth of the Son that made His saving work possible. So we see all three of the Godhead involved.

1:5—through whom—Paul links his apostleship to the resurrected Jesus Christ
—**we have received grace and apostleship** —The favor of God. Paul has received both grace and apostleship through the power of the resurrected Jesus.
—**to bring about the obedience of faith** [lit. “faith’s obedience”], i.e., faith in God’s Son is the starting point from which obedience proceeds.
—**among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake**—this good news was for all people, not just the Jews. [Notice, it did not bring them to obey the Law of Moses (to “become” a Jew), but to obeying God by trusting in Jesus Christ.]

1:6—among whom [the Gentiles] **you also are the called of Jesus Christ**—Just as Paul was called to be an apostle, these Romans (and us) were called to become saints. Those “*whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified...*” (Rom 8:30).

1:7—to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints—the specific believers in Rome, called as saints. There is no instruction for being called to any job, etc. The apostles were called to be apostles, but we are not. Rather, we are to be obedient to God wherever and whatever we are doing.

An Application—You may have an opportunity or an inclination or desire, but that is not a calling of God. We are only called to salvation. If you say “God called me to...” and it doesn’t work out, is it God’s fault? Jesus appeared to the apostles and personally called them to that responsibility. The rest of us are called to be saints, to obedience to God.

—**Grace** [favor, gift] **to you and peace** [inner peace, not circumstantial peace] **from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**—both deity, the only source of grace and peace.

1:8—First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all—Paul was always so thankful for anyone who escaped the damnation of sin and had eternal life in Jesus.
—**because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world**—Though they were not Paul’s “converts,” he had heard about their faith in other places within the Roman Empire. Perhaps the gospel was taken to Rome after the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10).

1:9—For God, whom I serve in my spirit—Jesus said, “...*the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth...*” (John 4:23-24).
—**in the preaching of the gospel of His Son**—Paul was all about proclaiming the gospel
—**is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you**—we do not have to have specific requests to pray for, but can mention others in our prayers, even whether we know the person or not.

1:10—always in my prayers making request—he was not demanding but requesting

—if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you—Paul did not know that his trip to Jerusalem would result in his arrest and finally getting to Rome as a prisoner of the Romans. God gave him his request, but not as he would have thought.

An Application—The plan of God (His sovereignty) is different than His will (His desire). For example, He is *“not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”* (2 Pet 3:9), but His plan is *“that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth”* (2 Thess 2:12). So God’s plan will happen. But we pray that we may choose to act according to His desires. His will (and plan) includes the free will of humans.

1:11—For I long to see you so that I may impart [“to share what one has”] **some spiritual gift** [lit. “benefit”] **to you**—the benefit of his teaching them their spiritual life **—that you may be established**—“to decide and not change.” Paul’s goal was to *“present every man complete in Christ. And this purpose also I labor...”* (Col 1:28-29), i.e., maturity in Christ.

1:12—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you [saints], **each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine**—mutual encouragement

1:13—I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far)—His decision and plan was to go to Rome, but for some reason (he does not tell us why), he was prevented from going. It could be weather-related for travel, it could be *“because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome”* (Acts 18:2), or some other reason.

—so that I may obtain some fruit [“spiritual benefit” v. 11] **among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles**—belief in Christ does not change. It is the same at Paul’s time as it is now. It’s the same for the Jew and the Gentile. One gospel for the whole world.

1:14—I am under obligation—it was his desire and his stewardship (1 Cor 9:16-17) **—both to Greeks** [sophisticated, educated] **and to barbarians** [uncouth, uneducated] **—both to the wise** [the Greeks] **and to the foolish** [the barbarians]—The gospel is the great equalizer: every person is lost without it and equally saved by it.

1:15—So, for my part, I am eager to preach [proclaim] **the gospel to you also who are in Rome**—in Romans 10:14f, he wrote, *“How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a proclaimer?”* They need the knowledge of the special revelation of the Scriptures to understand and have faith [believe] in Jesus.

1:16—For I am not ashamed of the gospel [the power of life in Jesus Christ]—Paul felt “obligated” (v. 14), eager (v. 15), and he was not ashamed, he had confidence in the gospel **—for it is the power** [*dunamis*, from which we get the word “dynamite”] **of God for salvation** [“deliverance”]—an umbrella term describing all aspects of deliverance (justification, redemption, reconciliation, sanctification, glorification, et. al.). The English word “salvation” prejudices us to understand “salvation from hell.” But after Romans 1:16, the Greek word for “salvation” does not occur until 11:11, totally absent from his discussion on “justification” in chapters 2–4, where you would expect it to occur. [Zane Hodges, *Romans*] **—to everyone who believes** [faith]—notice nothing is added, such as good works, etc. When someone understands something is true, they will believe it. If they do not

understand it is true, there is no way to believe it anyways. If I say, “Believe in pink elephants,” you cannot do it because you understand it is not true, they do not exist. —**to the Jew first**—The gospel came to the Jews first—the Scripture was written primarily by Jews, Jesus was a Jew, Paul was a Jew, it came out of Judah. The plan of Jesus was “*be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). So at the beginning of the church age, the priority was the Jews, but that has now been fulfilled, so we are in the time of the “*remotest part of the earth.*”

—**and also to the Greek**—Greeks are non-Jews, another term for “Gentiles”

1:17—For in it—i.e., the gospel, the power of Jesus, the Son of God

—**the righteousness of God**—this phrase is used 8 times in Romans (1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 [twice]), and used only one other time (2 Cor 5:21). The gospel of Christ is the message that reveals the righteousness of God. “God’s power never operates contrary to, or inconsistently with, His righteousness.” [Hodges]

—**is revealed**—[Gk. *apokaluptetai*] revelation, to make fully known. Humans can understand the power and divine nature of God through creation (v. 18f), but the righteousness of God is only understood through the gospel revelation and is appropriated through faith. A person either believes or they do not believe. (There are no works involved.)

—**from** [not *apo*, meaning a point of departure, but *ek*, meaning “on the basis of something”] **faith to faith**—faith is the medium through which God’s righteousness is attained. But also, God’s righteousness is given directly to faith itself. One’s “*faith is accounted to him for righteousness*” (4:3, 5, 22-24). Righteousness of God is not connected with works or law-keeping at all. Referring to Genesis 15:6, Abraham’s faith was what was accounted as righteousness. So, God’s righteousness is attained *from* [by means of] faith, also [righteousness is] granted for [to] faith.

—**as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”**—This is one of the promises by the prophets from the Old Testament (v. 2). Quoting Habakkuk 2:4.

In Romans, *faith* plays no role in Paul’s discussion of Christian living, ... *faith* should be the crucial term only in his discussion of justification. From Romans 3:22–5:2 [justification], the word *faith* occurs a total of 20 times. But from Romans 5:3–8:39 [the Christian life] there is *not even one occurrence!* It is in no sense legitimate to say that in Romans the justified person is presented as living “by faith.” [Zane Hodges, *Romans*] In fact, the Christian life is lived in obedience to the revealed Word of God.

[This verse is very difficult, and the interpretations vary a lot. I’m choosing here Hodges’ interpretation, as he is the Greek professor.]

Martin Luther wrote, “Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith.... This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.” [Constable, *Romans*, p. 25] Faith (trusting what one understands is true), not works.

Chapter 1 – Natural Revelation through Creation

1:18—For the wrath of God [divine anger]—God has poured out His wrath on sin time after time in history (the curse, the Flood, Babel, Sodom, Egyptians, Jericho, Jewish Exile, etc.) and it will be poured out again in the Tribulation.

An Application—John 3:36 says, *...he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.* Without Christ, every person lives in the state of abiding in the wrath of God. “Wrath” of God in the Bible is an earthly thing. The Lake of Fire is God’s justice, not His wrath.

—**is revealed** [*apokaluptetai*] **from heaven**—this is the contrast parallel to verse 17.

“Righteousness of God is revealed...” and the “wrath of God is revealed.” Both originate with God in heaven. Repetition of *apokaluptetai* highlights the contrast.

—**against all ungodliness**—focuses on man’s irreligious spirit, producing evil conduct

—**and unrighteousness of men**—focuses on man’s conduct. It is precisely this condition that results in the wrath (anger) of God.

—**who suppress** [prevent, keep from] **the truth in unrighteousness**—not only do unbelievers have ungodliness and unrighteousness, they also keep people from the truth, again resulting in the wrath of God. Here Paul will speak specifically about idolatry.

An Application—For example, our culture tries to keep us from the gender identity of male and female (truth), created by God in His image, by controlling what pronouns we use, and forcing schools, businesses, et. al. to accept homosexuals and trans, etc.

1:19—because that which is known [knowable] **about God**—Gk. there is something (not all things) to be known about God that is available to all men

—**is evident** [“clear, perfectly plain”]

—**within them** [all mankind throughout history, since creation]—this revelation does not stop with perception but is expected to include within them a reflection and drawing a conclusion in their thinking about the Creator, using reasoning and logic God gave them.

—**for God made it evident** [“clear”] **to them**—Humans are spiritual beings. In contrast to animals, humans are creative, have morality (a knowledge of right and wrong), and know they will die, yet believe there is an afterlife of some sort (as evidenced in religions).

An Application—Anyone you witness to already has a knowledge of God through creation. However, they may be suppressing that truth with their unrighteousness. God is just and could not rightly condemn those who are totally ignorant of Him. Therefore, He has made Himself evident to them so every person who ever lived is without excuse and will be judged according to the knowledge that they have.

An Application—A prominent early church writer said it was not the pen of Moses that initiated the knowledge of the Creator. ...Mankind, though they had never heard the name of Moses—to say nothing of his book—know the God of Moses nonetheless. [Tertullian, “An Answer to the Jews,” chapter 2].

1:20—For—tied to verse 19, which states the fact, and verse 20 stating the process

—**since**—from the very beginning, several thousand years before Moses wrote in 1500 B.C.

—**the creation**—the world did not evolve, it was created, and it had a beginning. They know every effect has a cause greater than the effect. A nest has a bird. A house has a builder. Humans are born with reason and logic to determine the fact that the more complex creates the less complex. “*The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands*” (Psalm 19:1).

An Application—Evolution is the religion of atheists, who say there is no God. It claims the living (more complex) evolved from the non-living (less complex). But there is zero observation of such a thing. Creation tells us that we humans were made by someone more complex—i.e., God.

—**of the world**—the earth, including the physical universe around it

—**His invisible attributes**—because God is spirit, He is invisible to visible humans

—**His eternal [before the world] power and divine nature [His deity]**—these are attributes of God in creation, but not ALL His attributes (such as truth, love, holiness, et. al.).

—**have been clearly seen** [made plain, to perceive clearly] through observation of the evidence, what they can see with their natural senses. For example, if my road is clear of snow (the evidence), I can clearly see (reflect and conclude) a snowplow has removed the snow.

—**being understood** [to carefully think about what this means] **through what has been made**—the revelation does not stop with perception, but is expected to include reflection, drawing a conclusion [*being understood*] about the Creator. Using human reason and logic. The world did not evolve on its own, it was **made**.

—**so that** [purpose] **they are without excuse** [to defend or justify one’s actions]—for worship and submission to God (natural revelation), but they “*suppress the truth in unrighteousness*” (v. 18). [However, everyone needs to hear the words of the gospel of Jesus to be saved (special revelation of the Scripture). But to believe Jesus is God is to first believe there is a God.]

1:21—For—The Greek connective. Verse 21 builds on verse 20 which builds on verse 19.

—**even though they knew God**—that a deity exists whose power created the world

—(1) **they did not honor** [give glory] **Him as God**—worship Him for His deity.

—(2) **or give thanks**—be thankful for what He has done, His works, His creation, their very life itself

—(3) **but they became futile** [useless, nonsense] **in their speculations** [reasonings]—when a person abandons knowledge of God, they still need to recognize some power in the universe greater than them, so they are left with nonsense (things like superstitions, idolatry (Acts 14:15), astrological “signs,” etc.). A person believes in evolution because they have already rejected a Creator God. So they are left with evolution—believing life came from non-life (a rock—but where did the rock come from? Something has to be an eternal cause). Read Isaiah 44:12-20.

—(4) **and their foolish heart was darkened**—humans moving away from God, thinking in darkness, blinding their eyes, so they cannot see any light (John 3:19-20). Godless philosophy leads to moral perversion, they are intertwined. Out of the darkness arose the hideous distortion of Deity found in idolatry.

1:22—Professing to be wise—Since they reject divine revelation, there is no hope of coming to the truth in themselves. Without God’s truth, they have no way to tell what is true

and right and what is false and wrong. But they take the attitude of great wisdom, confusing their own darkness for light.

—**they became fools**—Some Christians accept evolution based on the unfounded foolishness of unsaved men above the flawless truth of God’s Word. Rather than progressing, they actually regress. They become fools.

1:23—and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God—God comes with accountability and morality. Man-made images do not, and even encourage corruption.

—**for an image in the form of corruptible man**—they elevated themselves to God’s position. For example, a two-inch-long discolored tooth, claimed to be Buddha’s and retrieved from his funeral pyre in 543 B.C., is worshipped by millions of Buddhists enshrined in a golden lotus blossom surrounded by rubies in the Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka.

—**and of (1) birds and (2) four-footed animals and (3) crawling creatures**—their idolatrous images descend to the lower orders of creation. The first commandments given to the children of Israel when they escaped Egypt were, “*You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them*” (Exo 20:3-5). Yet at that very time, the Israelites were making a golden calf to worship (32:1-6; see also 2 Kings 17:13-16). Modern Hindus refuse to kill or harm most animals and insects because they might be a deity or the reincarnated form of a human who is transmigrating from one stage of his karma to another.

An Application—When people see the power of deity in an object, it is a superstition (such as a rabbit’s foot, or lucky shirt). If the object represents a deity, it is a false religion (such as most idolatry). See the Relational Concepts’ “What About Superstition” (p. 10).

1:24—Therefore—the reasons Paul mentioned in verses 18-23

—**God gave them over**—lit. “to hand over”—repeated in verse 24, 26, 28. Because mankind abandoned God for idols of his own making, God abandoned them. [There is no suggestion here of God’s direct intervention (such as sending the prophets to Israel to try to restrain sin) but rather God simply took His hands off, and let the sin produce its ugly results in human life.] Fallen mankind is not concerned about their sin but only about the pain from the unpleasant consequences sin brings. So they take medicine, drugs, alcohol, psychoanalysis, etc. as a means to escape what cannot be escaped except by removal of the sin. But sometimes God does supernaturally pour out judgment on sinful mankind (the Flood, Sodom, the tribulation—2 Thess 2:10, etc.).

—**in the lusts [desires] of their hearts to impurity** [“decay” as happens to a dead body]—Jesus said all sin originates in the heart (Matt 15:19-20; also Jer 17:9; Prov 4:23). The heart is the basic nature, inner being, character of a person that results in what they do.

—**so that their bodies would be dishonored among them**—The irony is that our society is consumed with honoring and taking care of our bodies (exercise, diet, cremes, makeup, etc.), yet in books, movies, and tv, brutality, murder, and sexual promiscuity and perversion are constantly glamorized. We sexually, economically, criminally, and verbally abuse one another. Soldiers in war, abusing and killing innocents.

What About ... Superstition

By Dave DeWitt

Definition

Superstition is “a widely held but unjustified belief in supernatural causation leading to certain consequences of an action or event, or a practice based on such a belief.” [New Oxford American Dictionary]

Practically, we can think about a lucky shirt, a four-leaf clover, or a rabbit’s foot. But notice:

- It is unjustified, no objective case can be made for it.
- It is a belief, someone understands it to be true.
- It is supernatural, not observable in the natural universe.
- It is a causation because it leads to certain consequences.

Examples

The ancient world (like the modern world) was filled with superstition. Most ancient superstitions were connected to idolatry. People believed that if they gave sacrificial gifts to the idols of their gods, the gods, or the idols, would make their lives better, or at least not make them worse, via some “supernatural causation.” When the focus was on their gods, that was mysticism. When the focus was on their idols, that was superstition. For example, the Israelites “...*have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!’*” (Exodus 32:8).

God sometimes used the superstition of the people to accomplish His purpose. For example, when Jonah was on a boat headed for Tarshish instead of Nineveh (Jonah 1), God caused a great wind to almost sink the ship. The sailors used their superstition to determine whose god was causing the wind. God used their superstition to get His prophet thrown overboard. But we should not get the idea that God approved of their superstition. [I am not here going to talk about supernatural demonic activity. I am only discussing the superstitions of people.]

Habakkuk 2:19, *Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’ To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’ And that is your teacher?*

Isaiah 44:9, *Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit.*

Jeremiah 10:2-8, *...For the customs of the peoples are delusion; because it is wood cut from the forest, the work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. They decorate it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers. So that it will not totter. Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, and they cannot speak, they must be carried because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, for they can do no harm, nor can they do any good. ...they are altogether stupid and foolish.*

People built and worshiped idols because they thought the idols had some supernatural significance. Idol worshipers had an “unjustified belief in supernatural causation.” They were superstitious. But Isaiah said it was *futile...of no profit*. Jeremiah said it was *altogether stupid and foolish*. When the people saw the idol as a representative of a god, that was false worship. When the people saw the power in the idol itself, that was superstition.

The Apostle Paul ran into superstition after he was delivered from a shipwreck to the island of Malta.

Acts 28:3-4, *But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, “Undoubtedly this man is a murderer,*

and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.” [But when Paul did not die] they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.

The superstition, the “unjustified belief in supernatural causation,” led the people of Malta to two contradictory conclusions, neither of which could be verified by any objective evidence.

Humans Are Superstitious

We humans have physical life like plants and personalities like animals, but unlike plants and animals, we are spiritual beings with the capacity for thinking beyond the material universe. And we humans have not just the capacity but the tendency to look beyond the physical/personal world and imagine “supernatural causation.”

Why do we humans favor superstition over rational justification? Paul gave us a clue. He told us that our spiritual nature allows us to know about God through rational observations of our universe (Romans 1) and our consciences (Romans 2). The problem is we can also come to that knowledge with the impure lusts of our hearts (Romans 1:24). For example, it is easier to believe in a lucky rabbit’s foot because the rabbit’s foot does not demand obedience or accountability. Luck from a rabbit’s foot is all about me and the lusts of my heart. The rabbit’s foot gives me no morality or commandments. To believe there is luck in a rabbit’s foot is superstition. It is “unjustified.” No objective case can be made for it.

We knock on wood, wear our lucky shirt to the ball game, and carry lucky charms. We believe things happen in groups of three. We believe black cats, stepping on sidewalk cracks, walking under ladders, and doing something on Friday the 13th leads to bad luck. **Stop it! That is just a bunch of silly nonsense!**

Here Is What Makes Superstition Sinful

If superstitions are true, then what causes them? God? If God causes my team to win if I wear my lucky shirt, then I can maneuver God to do what I want by simply wearing my lucky shirt. But most Christians would probably not think they could maneuver God into making their team win if they wear their lucky shirt. Then what does cause their team to win, if they wear their lucky shirt? Fate? Mother Earth? The Universe? Karma? Some unknown mystical force? Is this mystical force separate from God? Well, if so, then God has competition.

If I believe in superstition, then either I have power over God, or something else does. It is important to understand that in the Bible there is absolutely no superstition whatsoever prescribed, or sanctioned, by any of the people led by God.

If I get my knowledge of “supernatural causation” from Bible study, my belief is objectively justified. The Bible is not some universal mystical force. It is a hard copy of revelation which actually exists in the real world. It can be examined by anyone and everyone. The accuracy of what the Bible says: creation, the history of Israel, the literal fulfillment of prophecy, the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and the accounts of the apostles are all available for examination by anyone. We have over 5,800 complete or partial manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek, its original language. There are nearly 20,000 in other languages. And if we had no manuscripts at all, all but 11 verses could be obtained from other ancient manuscripts that quote from it. There is nothing: no history, no science, no ...isms or ...ologies or any study of our universe, more objectively justifiable than the Bible.

Superstition, on the other hand, is not objectively verified by anyone. As Jeremiah said, it is *altogether stupid and foolish*.

An Application—After a list of immoralities, Paul reminded the Corinthian believers, “*Such were some of you; but you were...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...*” (1 Cor 6:11). The offer of salvation is always there, no matter what the sin is.

1:25—For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie—reminding us of Adam, who exchanged the truth of God and believed the lie of Satan. It’s not only the truth about God but God’s truth concerning things: that the human can exist independent of God, be self-sufficient, self-directing, and self-fulfilling.

—and worshiped and served the creature—They have totally rid themselves of God by substituting other objects in His place. Mankind worshipping and serving themselves and their depraved desires. The creature becomes the focus of everything. Mary is a creature (created being) both worshiped and served (even called a co-redeemer) in some religions.

—rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen—God, the Creator, who desires us to be all He created us to be, good, righteous people worshipping and serving Him. Though God can be grieved by man’s sin and unbelief, God’s glorious Being is not affected by these things at all. He is the Creator and He is blessed forever—the beginning and end.

1:26-27—For this reason—that is, because of mankind’s rejecting the true God for false gods of their own making, for worshipping the creature rather than the Creator...

—God gave them over to degrading passions—strong lustful physical desires

—for their women exchanged—to totally rid themselves of what was natural sex of male with female, given by God, by substituting unnatural homosexuality in its place.

—the natural function for that which is unnatural—pertaining to the nature, by instinct—animals know that males mate with the females. It is humans who abandon that for something against nature, against the way they were made. God made humans male and female and commanded them to reproduce. Homosexuality is anti-natural.

—and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error—There seems to be a strong level of lust among homosexuals. The homosexuals of Sodom were so consumed with their lust, even though they were made blind, they “*wearied themselves trying to find the doorway*” into Lot’s house to pursue their passion (Gen 19:11; see also Judges 19:22ff). Homosexuality is abandoning the way God created men and women for a perversion, a degrading passion. If the world was all homosexual, humanity would soon die out. Even in Roman times, sexual promiscuity was connected to certain diseases.

1:28—And just as they did not see fit [of no value] to acknowledge [to recognize something as being what it truly is] God any longer—

—God gave them over to a depraved mind—for the third time, *God gave them over...*this time to a worthless mind—a word used of weeds. They are not only worthless, they choke out anything that is of value. Jesus said, “*That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man*” (Mark 7:20-23).

—to do those things which are not proper—things that ought not to be done

1:29-31—*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* [empty self-display], *inventors of evil* [nothing evil is beyond the range of their corrupt inventiveness, even if no one has thought of it before, such as being “trans”], *disobedient to parents* [it’s taught today—schools say, “don’t tell your parents...”]

1:31—*without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful*—the words are “no understanding,” “no trustworthiness,” “no loving,” “no mercy.”

1:32—*and although they know the ordinance of God*—although they do not recognize the existence of God any more, they still have a consciousness of God’s righteous standard. They may steal—but stealing from them is “wrong.” They may commit adultery—but no one better sleep with their spouse, etc.

—*that those who practice such things are worthy of death*—criminals are to be punished. Murderers even getting the death penalty.

—*they not only do the same but also give hearty approval to those who practice them*—sin actually gets elevated to an approvable lifestyle choice—making evil a virtue. For example, abortion changes “murder” to a “woman’s right over her own body.”

An Application—Their conscience has a concept of morality: right and wrong—they may choose their own right and wrong, but morality exists among humans that animals do not have. Pets will often (not always) adopt their owners’ morality.

Chapter 2 – Natural Revelation through Conscience

2:1—*Therefore*—this verse needs to be connected to 1:29-32

—*you have no excuse* [to defend or justify one’s actions]—why?

—*every one of you who passes judgment*—all mankind, who, as a judge, feel morally superior to others (who practice greed, gossips, boastful, etc.)

—*for* [“in fact”] *in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself for you who judge practice the same things*—of gossiping, unloving, boastful, etc. It’s an attitude of condemning such things in others but somehow ignoring or excusing them in oneself.

2:2—*And we know* [“aware,” even “obvious,” Gk. a verb suggesting an instinctive/intuitive knowledge (not the usual word for “know”)] *that the judgment of God rightly* [corresponds to truth] *falls upon those who practice such things*—the sins of 1:29-31. Human perception may distort right and wrong, but God will not. His judgment is true (Rom 3:4).

2:3—*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?* Yes, they do because they judge by their own perverted perspective, which the sin nature always skews to its own advantage. But God’s judgment is always truthful.

2:4—*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience*—humans take for granted the riches of God’s kindness. “...for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt 5:45). We live in a time similar to the days before the Flood. But judgment will come.

—not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?—This is the only mention of “repentance” in all of Romans. It is *metanoia*, meaning to change one’s mind. God has patience, wanting mankind to turn to the truth of God Himself (2 Pet 3:9).

2:5—But—instead of changing their minds about God

—because of your stubbornness [Gk. *sklerotes*, our word *sclerosis*, used for hardening of body tissue —these people have hardness of heart] **and unrepentant heart** [refusing to turn to God]

—you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God—referring back to 1:18, this is the day in which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven. God’s wrath is evident all around us. *“the wages of sin is death”* (6:23). The world suffers and is condemned (8:20-22).

An Application—Many see verse 5 as prophecy about end times, but it seems to fit better with the previous section. For people today who refuse to turn to God and persist in their sinful behavior, God gives them over to the consequences of their sin. It is His wrath against that sin. Notice Paul uses “you” and “your” in previous section but now changes to “those” and “they” in the next section.

Now is a theme closely related to the previous section but at the same time giving new information. The eternal judgment of God...

2:6—[Gk. “this One,” “He”] **who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS**—Judgment will be just—God gives each person what they deserve from their works. For the first time, Paul is now referring to *eternal life*.

An Application—At the Great White Throne Judgment, all unbelievers (whose names are not in the Book of Life) will be judged according to their deeds (Rev 20:11-15). This implies various degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire.

2:7—to those who by perseverance [for humans, this is short-lived, if at all] **in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life**—but as Paul will point out in 3:10, *“There is none righteous, not even one.”* Or as Jesus said, *“...you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matt 5:48).

An Application—This verse is often misunderstood as a real possibility, despite Paul’s statements to the contrary in 3:19-20. Instead, this is a principle. As Paul also wrote, *“For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law”* (Gal 3:21). So in principle, God rewards true obedience, but in practice, no one ever acquires eternal life that way. Paul is building his case...keep on reading...

2:8—but [instead] **to those who are selfishly** [thinks only of himself rather than of God] **ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation**—now Paul places this in contrast to v. 7. Mankind disobeys the truth of God, turning to idolatry and obeying unrighteousness. Not only do they have the wrath of God in this life, but they will have the wrath of God for eternity.

2:9—There will be tribulation and distress [anger and wrath of God] **for every soul of man who does evil**—why is there suffering in the world? Here’s why. They do evil. **—of the Jew first**—because they have more knowledge of God in the Mosaic Law, etc.

—**and also of the Greek** [Gentile]—who have the knowledge of God from creation

2:10—but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek—but, of course, none of them do good. Again, a principle, not an actual reality.

2:11—For there is no partiality with God—Whatever privileges the Jews have, his race does not receive an exemption from the wrath of God toward the Gentile world. In fact, it seems like the Jew may even have a priority of the wrath because “*from everyone who has been given much shall much be required*” (Luke 12:48).

2:12—For all who have sinned without the Law [which is all non-Jews] **will also perish without the Law**—the Mosaic Law will not be an issue in the final judgment. They will not be held accountable for it (see verses 14-16).

—**and all who have sinned under the Law** [which is all the Jews] **will be judged by the Law**—However, the Jew has the standard of the Mosaic Law, and they will be held accountable for it.

2:13—for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God—Jews believe this—that they are acceptable to God because they have the Torah (Mosaic Law).

—**but the doers of the Law will be justified**—A person is declared right by what they do, not by what they simply believe. However, James 2:10 says, “*Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*” There are no doers of the Law.

An Application—The same can be said for doing Bible study—we think if we agree with the passage, it “counts” with God, when what He desires are “doers” not just “agree-ers.”

How can God fairly judge the Gentile world if they have no law to be judged by, and if only the “doers of the Law will be justified,” how is Gentile judgment possible at all?

2:14—For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves—they have a sense of morality that God has placed in humans. There are many instances in the Old Testament, before the giving of the Law, which shows lying (Gen 20:9) and murder (Gen 4:14), for example, known to be wrong.

An Application—Paul was not saying there is no morality outside of the Law. Instead, he acknowledges morality itself is an evidence of the work of the Creator God.

2:15—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—the conscience is where morality resides, and it is inside the person, not outside in books, laws, culture, societies, etc.

An Application—Adam and Eve were given a command by God to obey. When they disobeyed, it seems that conscience was given to them, when they ate “*from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*” (Gen 2:17; 3:22). At first, obeying God was not seen as morally “good,” but as soon as they ate, “*the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked*” (Gen 3:7), and they hid because they knew they did “wrong.” Now disobeying God was a morality to them—good and bad, not just a command.

2:16—on the day when, according to my gospel [part of the gospel is that God will judge!] **God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus** [*“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son”* (John 5:22)]—putting this together with verse 15, God, through Jesus, will judge the secrets of men, and their consciences will alternately accuse or defend them, as a witness before the Judge. Jesus said, *“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give an account of it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned”* (Matt 12:36-37). Here Paul extends the words to the thoughts of their hearts, and their motives (usually secret).

An Application—One’s conscience can be “good” (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19) and “clear” (Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 13:18), but it can also be “guilty” (Heb. 10:22), “corrupted” (Titus 1:15), “weak” (1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12), and “seared” (1 Tim. 4:2). All people need to trust the Lord Jesus Christ so that *“the blood of Christ” might “cleanse [their] consciences”* (Heb. 9:14). Sins in our thoughts should be confessed for cleansing, too. We need to be constantly evaluating our conscience—is our morality God’s morality?

The vulnerability of the Jews:

2:17—But if you (1) **bear the name “Jew”** and (2) **rely upon the Law** and (3) **boast in God**—They are proud to be called a “Jew” because God Himself gave them the Law.

2:18—and know His will and approve [“discern” or “determine”] **the things that are essential** [“to sift and test with a view to approving something”], **being instructed out of the Law**—

2:19—and are confident [because they are “instructed” in v. 18] **that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness**—so the Jew has confidence in his own capacity to help others to escape their ignorant blindness.

2:20—a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth—The Jew thinks he is a guide, a light, an corrector, and a teacher. While the Gentiles are blind, in darkness, foolish, and immature. What vanity!! How condescending!!

An Application—The Law is holy and good (Rom 7:12). Yet even these holy writings were a source of pride for the Jew, in spite of the fact that those very writings condemned him (3:19-20). *“Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin”* (Rom 3:20), but the Jews made it into a works’ righteousness.

2:21-22—you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? [Gk refers to the willingness to receive property stolen from temples for the purpose of reselling such items for profit]—Their performance did not match their confident self-assessment.

2:23—You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? They claimed special standing before God while at the same time bringing Him great dishonor.

2:24—For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written—in Scriptures like Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22.

An Application—Such a thing should not be said of us as followers of Christ!!

Hypothetically—

2:25—For indeed circumcision is of value—To the Jews it indicated being chosen by God, much like infant baptism to a Roman Catholic. But it only had value if...

—if you practice the [written] Law—To the Jew, circumcision was to introduce them into keeping the covenant of obeying God’s Laws.

—but if you are a transgressor of the Law [which, of course, they are], **your circumcision has become uncircumcision**—But if they did not obey the Law, then they were like the Gentiles, who did not have circumcision. They have no advantage over the Gentile.

2:26—So if the uncircumcised man [Gentile] **keeps the requirements of the Law** [which, of course, he cannot do], **will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?** —so the Jew has no advantage over the Gentile, whether he is circumcised or not, whether he obeys the Law or not.

2:27—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? So if the uncircumcised Gentile keeps the Law, will he be the judge of the circumcised Jew who does not keep the Law?

2:28—For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly [circumcision], **nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh—**

2:29—But he is a Jew who is one inwardly—not outwardly by circumcision **—and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter**—i.e., from the Law, which no one can keep. This is not new information.....

Moses said, “*circumcise the foreskin of your heart*” (Deut 10:16). “*Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul*” (Deut 30:6).

—and his praise is not from men, but from God—praise from men means nothing. What does God think?

God is impartial in regard to His dealings with, and His future judgment of, humanity. The Jew has no special claim on Him by knowing the Law or because of circumcision.

Chapter 3 – Personal Sin

3:1—Then what advantage has the Jew? —Pertaining to Paul’s words in 2:17-24

—Or what is the benefit of circumcision?—Pertaining to Paul’s words in 2:25-29

These would be the questions raised because of what he just said about circumcision and being a Jew.

3:2—Great in every respect—although circumcision did not provide salvation, being a Jew had many privileges that Gentiles did not have, the main one being...

—First of all that they were entrusted—not merely ‘receiving’ but being a custodian of them, to care for them

—with the oracles [the very words] of God—Up to now, Paul talked about creation and the conscience giving an awareness of God, but the Jews also had the revelation of the very words of God, His special revelation in the Scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament). But with this high privilege also came high responsibility—to believe and obey.

3:3—What then? If some did not believe—Paul does not speak of Jewish misunderstanding of their Scriptures but of their unbelief. From the New Testament perspective, their unbelief in Jesus was a problem of unbelief in their own Scriptures (John 5:39. 46). [Paul will deal with faith in Christ in the section starting with 3:21.]

—their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?—Paul’s form of the question anticipates a negative answer. For example, in Israel, only 2 of the men spies believed (Joshua and Caleb), but God was faithful and brought the Israelites into the Land as He promised to do. Their mistake now was in believing that God’s unconditional promises to the nation of Israel applied to all individual Jews at all times.

3:4—May it never be!—One of Paul’s favorite phrases in Romans. Gk. *Mē genoito*—also used in 3:6; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11. It’s the strongest negative Greek = impossible.

—Rather [contrast], let God be found true, though every man be found a liar—even if every single person who ever lived declared God to be faithless, they would all be liars and God will be true and faithful to His Word (Psalm 116:11).

—as it is written—the words of Scripture from Psalm 51:4, Israel’s most beloved King David’s sorrow after his sin with Bathsheba:

“THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS—David admitted that God was in the right and he was in the wrong. *“against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight.”* He did not attempt to argue a special relationship as a way of averting God’s wrath.

AND PREVAIL [victorious] WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED [lit. “in your judging”]—David wept for his son who died as a consequence of David’s sin, but then *“he came into the house of the Lord and worshipped”* (2 Sam 12:20).

An Application—This will also be demonstrated at the Great White Throne Judgment when mankind will be found to be sinners, and God will be justified and be victorious when He judges them.

3:5—But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God—If our unfaithfulness makes no difference to God’s faithfulness, what need is for us to be faithful and why should we be blamed for being unfaithful?

—what shall we say? —assumes a negative answer

—**The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He?**—Paul already said God’s wrath is being revealed against all human unrighteousness (1:18), to the Jew first as well as Greek (2:8-9). If God overlooks any sin, that would make Him unrighteous.

—**(I am speaking in human terms.)**—i.e., according to human logic (in Paul’s mind, a perverted nonsense). It is interesting that the problem to the human mind is more about God’s faithfulness than man’s unfaithfulness!!

3:6—May it never be!—Gk. *Mē genoito*. It is unthinkable. Far from it!! Impossible!!

—**For otherwise, how will God judge the world?** If God were unjust, He would not be qualified to judge the world.

An Application—God does not cause evil. By His good existence, evil (perverted good) exists. You cannot have a broken arm unless you have an arm. But evil does reveal two of God’s attributes. God is love, therefore, He gives mankind a free will to love Him. Without free will, love is not possible. Also, God is just, therefore, He will judge and punish those who do not choose Him and choose evil instead. For eternity, the lake of fire will be the place where evil is contained and be full of people who chose that. The New Earth and New Jerusalem will be the place where God’s righteousness is contained and be full of people who chose that.

3:7—But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? —If God is glorified by mankind’s failure, why does He punish that failure? Here Paul seems to be even talking about himself, both a sinner and a recipient of God’s saving righteousness.

3:8—And why not say (as we are slanderously [“blasphemously”] reported and as some claim that we say)—Paul notes that he has been charged by some as teaching this very thing—but.....

— **“Let us do evil that good may come”?** **Their condemnation is just**—their condemnation is just not only for their charge of God’s unfaithfulness, but also for the false charge that Paul himself was one its proponents.

To summarize, in verses 1-8, Paul raised and answered four objections Jews might have:

1. The Jews are a privileged people (vv. 1-2).
2. God will remain faithful to the Jews despite their unfaithfulness to Him (vv. 3-4).
3. God will be merciful since the Jews' failings have magnified God's righteousness (vv. 5-6).
4. God will overlook the Jews' sins since they contribute to the glory of God (vv. 7-8).

Self-righteous people still raise these objections. Some people assume that because God has blessed them, He will not condemn them (objection one). Some believe the character of God prohibits Him from condemning them (objection two). Some think that even though they have sinned, God will be merciful and not condemn them (objection three). Some feel that since everything people do glorifies God in one way or another, God would be unjust to condemn them (objection four). [Constable, *Romans*]

3:9—What then?—Paul has already condemned the immoral pagan, the moral pagan, and then the moral and immoral Jew.

—**Are we better than they?**—Are any of us, in ourselves, better than the groups already shown to be condemned before God?

—**Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin**—The entire human race, with absolutely no exceptions, are all under sin.

An Application—Even Christians are sometimes tempted to think that God saved them because they were somehow more deserving of salvation than others. But if a person is saved, it is only “...by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (Eph 2:8-9).

Paul refers to Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 53:1-3; 140:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 59:7-8; and Proverbs 1:16. These are not exact verbatim quotes but an accurate representation of the passages he cites. [Possibly he dictated them from memory to his scribe Tertius (16:22).]

What mankind does not do—exposing mankind’s deficiencies—unrighteousness:

3:10—as it is written—the ultimate proof—the Word of God

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE—everyone and everything is tainted by sin. Their basic character is unrighteous.

3:11—THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS—no spiritual perception. “Natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him...” (1 Cor 2:14). The unsaved are “darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart” (Eph 4:18)

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD—no pursuit of a genuine knowledge of their Creator. [God seeks them, and they respond. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...” (John 6:44).]

An Application—Fallen mankind sees turning to God as a threat to their life-styles, so they make every effort to escape the gospel (John 3:19-20).

3:12—ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE—wrong direction, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

—**TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS**—they accomplish nothing worthwhile, even when you add them all together.

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD—righteous before God

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE—not even one single individual who does righteousness.

The sinful words and deeds mankind does, exposing mankind’s depravities—no spiritual devotion. The members of our body are the vehicles through which sin becomes a reality.

3:13—“THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE—their corrupt words come out of their throats like the stench of an open grave, unmistakable evidence of death within.

WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,” —even themselves (Jer 17:9)

“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS” —poison to whoever hears them

3:14—“WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS—So from throat to tongue to lips to open mouth, the words show their deep sinfulness.

3:15—“THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD—actions follow the words

3:16—DESTRUCTION [ruin] **AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS**—brutality of murder, whether in cities or in wars. Jesus said, Satan “*was a murderer from the beginning*” (John 8:44). As soon as sin entered the world, we read that Cain killed his brother Abel (Gen 4:8).

3:17—AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN—their sinfulness results in conflict at every level of their experience—in marriages, families, work place, etc.

3:18—“THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES”—So we come full circle—“*when they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful*” (1:21). From that root grows humanity’s poisonous plant of wickedness.

3:19—Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law—i.e., the Jews

—**so that every mouth may be closed**—whether Jew or Gentile

—**and all the world may become accountable to God**—the impartial Judge

3:20—because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified [declared righteous] **in His sight**—the Law offers mankind no hope of every becoming justified before God. The reality is all humans are sinners who have broken the Law. [In 2:13 he was discussing the principle by which God will judge mankind, by what they do, not just by what they believe.] James says, “*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all*” (2:10). If you break one law, you are a lawbreaker.

—**for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin**—the Law had the function of bringing people to the Messiah for justification (Gal 3:22). The Law exposes humanity’s wickedness. [But the Jews turned it into a works’ righteousness. Rather than being convicted of breaking the Law, they interpreted the Law in such a way that it was “keepable,” therefore, making them think they were righteous. Man’s laws are keepable. But Jesus said, “*You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt 5:48). Try that for one minute!!]

An Application—Eternal judgment is the outcome to which unrighteousness is leading all of mankind. At the judgment, only the doers of the law will be justified, not its mere hearers. Since there are no such persons, mankind’s situation looks hopeless—and it is hopeless. We need God’s solution.

3:21—But now—Gk. is emphatic—like Paul is shouting out the solution!!

—**apart from the Law**—because “*through the Law comes the knowledge of sin*” (v. 20), it exposes man’s unrighteousness.

—**the righteousness of God**—not seen in creation or the conscience

—**has been manifested**—made visible, appeared

—**being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets**—God’s righteousness must be told about in God’s revelation, the Holy Scriptures. It is not a human idea, it’s God’s idea. For example, the holiness of God, God is truth, God does not change, God is love.....

3:22a—even the righteousness of God—the standard of God Himself and His character
—**through faith in Jesus Christ**—this specifies the necessary object of faith—Jesus Christ.

—**for all those who believe**—trust what they understand is true—that the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ for me who believes. Whether they are Jews or Gentiles, it is the same message for all people, for all time, and all places. Salvation is not just for a certain group of people. It’s available for all. But is actually appropriated only by “those who believe.” [Hebrews 11 shows that in all ages it was “by faith” in God.]

3:22b—for there is no distinction—Jew or Gentile, i.e., all mankind

3:23—for all—same “all” as verse 22—for all people, for all time, and in all places
—**have sinned**—past tense, there are no quantities (too much or too little)
—**and fall short of the glory of God**—part of God’s glory is the absolute perfection of God’s righteousness. All presently continue to fall short of the glory of God. Therefore, all must find justification in the way now described...

3:24—being justified—it is an one-time act, not a process, and it is something God does, not man. It means having been made righteous, it does not mean to make righteous. For example, in a wedding ceremony, it would not be the “I do,” but rather at the end, when the officiant says, “I give you Mr. and Mrs.” He is declaring them to be married.

—**as a gift**—“...it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8). Something freely given, not earned.

—**by His grace**—“...by grace you have been saved” (Eph 2:8). The favor of God. A favorite word of Paul’s, used by him 24 times in Romans.

—**through the redemption**—obtained by purchase, a ransom payment for sin

—**which is in Christ Jesus**—not simply brought about by Christ but actually found *in* Him

3:25—whom God [displayed publicly] one word, lit. “to cause to be” or “to bring forth” “to present”—i.e., God caused the redemption in Christ Jesus

—**as a propitiation**—The Hebrew equivalent word in the Old Testament is the “Mercy Seat” in the Holy of Holies. It was the covering over the Ark of the Covenant. It was the meeting place between God and man. The sacrificial blood of the Day of Atonement was sprinkled on the mercy seat (Lev 16:1-17). Rather than Christ being a type of Mercy Seat, it would instead be that the Mercy Seat was a type of what Christ would be, a foreshadow. In Christ, God and mankind can meet.

—**in His blood**—lit. “by the means of” His shed blood—Paul may be continuing to think of the Mercy Seat, sprinkled with blood. But redemption is in the person of Jesus, His blood being the price that was paid.

—**through faith**—understanding this is true, not by works of the Law.

An Application—The New Testament knows of no other way to God except through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). God appointed Jesus as the Mercy Seat. The place where God can meet humans.

—**This was to demonstrate** [“proof”]—The sacrificial work of Christ on the cross was proof of—**His righteousness**—

—**because in the forbearance** [“holding back, delay”] **of God**—God was dealing with mankind in light of the future work of Christ. It was a temporary withholding of judgment until the full penalty of sin could be paid. It was proof of His righteousness.

—**He passed over the sins previously committed**—the sins that mankind did before Christ was crucified. The righteous judgment for that sin was not yet seen.

An Application—It would be like using a credit card, knowing the full price would be paid later. For example, God forgave David’s sin, knowing Jesus would die to pay for that sin. Often we would expect God to exercise justice rather than grace and forgiveness in the OT, but He held back or delayed His dealing with sins sometimes because of Jesus’ future payment for those sins.

3:26—for the demonstration [“proof”], **I say, of His righteousness at the present time**—In the death of Christ, God offers “proof” of His righteousness in ages past, and His righteousness at the present time also.

An Application—All of mankind’s sin, whether past or future at the time of the cross, is dealt with by the death of Christ.

—**so that**—for the purpose, the result being...

—**He would be just** (righteous) **and the justifier** (the One who declares righteous) **of the one**—God, apart from man’s works, justifies the one who believes in Jesus, and the cross is the basis for this justification and shows it to be a fully righteous act.

—**who has faith in Jesus**—After the coming of Jesus, it was no longer adequate to believe simply in a Messiah whose identity was unknown. Now the Christ (Messiah) has appeared, and His name is Jesus (Phil 2:9-11). Now the righteousness of God comes by faith in the man named Jesus.

3:27—(1) Where then is boasting? Boasting is the fruit of pride. Even if we boast about God “using” us—that’s pride and anti-grace.

—**It is excluded**—“eliminated.” Works are totally independent of anything man does before or after faith. Whether done before or after conversion, they remain works.

An Application—The Reformation “salvation” denied good works entrance through the front door, but good works were often reintroduced through the “back door.” That is, thinking there is no true justification without good works (you must do “good” works to show you are saved). But for Paul, grace and works are opposites (Rom 11:6). When you mix faith and works, you change the basic nature of both. Faith takes away from works, and works take away from faith.

(2) **By what kind of law?** Meaning an operating rule or principle

—**Of works?**—any kind of works

—**No, but by a law of faith**—the operating principle of faith in Jesus, works eliminated

3:28—For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law—this would also include any and all acts of obedience to the Law’s commands. So it’s not just the Law as a system but the “works” of the Law.

3:29—(3) Or is God the God of Jews only?—who have the Law

—(4) **Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also**—since the works of the Law are irrelevant when a person is justified by faith, such justification is available to all mankind, whether they have the Law or not.

3:30—since indeed [is One] **God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith** [~~is one~~]**—**there is only one God for all humanity who will justify any human being by means of faith. [The “is One” should be at beginning.]

3:31—(5) Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! [*Mē genoito*] **On the contrary, we establish** [confirm] **the Law**—The Mosaic Law is fulfilled in God’s plan when it makes one aware of sin and leads a person to Faith in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4 — The Faith of Abraham

Paul had said (in 3:21) **apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets**—Now he will explain...

4:1—What then shall we say [about this...] **that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?** Abraham lived in 2,000 B.C., about 500 years before the Mosaic Law in 1500 B.C. The first “Jew.”

4:2—For if—a first class conditional sentence, meaning, i.e., “for argument’s sake...”
—**if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about**—because Abraham was held in high esteem as the first Jewish ancestor.
—**but not before God**—if Abraham was justified by works, then he cannot boast about that before God. He was on the same level as all other humans.

4:3—For what does the Scripture say? And Paul quotes Genesis 15:6. The initial call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 contained the promise “*and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*” Galatians 3:8 says that promise was a prediction: “*The Scripture, foreseeing that that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.’*” Salvation through faith in the Messiah would come through Abraham’s family—the Jews.

But in Genesis 15:2-6, Abraham complained to God, “*Since You have given no offspring to me...*” God then showed him the heavens, and stated, “*So shall your descendants be.*” At that point, “*Then he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.*”

—**“ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD**—had faith in the revelation/promise of God
—**AND IT** [i.e., Abraham’s belief/faith] **WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS”**
—Abraham’s faith became a substitute for the righteousness he otherwise lacked. For Paul, when “*Abraham believed God,*” the transaction called “justification” occurred in the absence of works of any kind. For this event, only faith mattered. **It is a faith-righteousness, not a works-righteousness.** Abraham is the first one in the O.T. record to have his faith “*credited to him as righteousness.*” Abraham becomes the prototype for this experience in all succeeding generations (over 4,000 years now!!).

An Application—Christ paid for our “works-failure,” and God gives a “faith-righteousness” to the believer. There can be no judgment for works because there are no charges. The final judgment is only for the unrighteous/unjustified. Jesus said, “*he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and does not come into judgment, but*

has passed from death into life" (John 5:24). [Remember, Paul already explained how God passed over the sins in the past in anticipation of Christ's paying for those sins (3:25). But that was given only to those "who had faith."]

4:4—Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due [earned]—Everyone who works in a job knows this. From Abraham's example, one must conclude that giving of righteousness was an act of Divine grace. If works had been involved, this righteousness would have been a form of compensation/wages.

4:5—But to the one who does not work—one who does not do works for righteousness —**but believes in Him**—has faith in Christ
—**who justifies the ungodly**—justification has to come from God, and how does God give justification to the ungodly (all of humanity)
—**his faith is credited as righteousness**—by faith, not works. Works are completely irrelevant to it. We have a faith-righteousness, not a works-righteousness.

4:6—just as—in a similar fashion, the example from David
—**David also speaks of the blessing** [the well-being] **on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:** —quoting Psalm 32:1-2.

4:7—"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN—it is a great blessing to have sins forgiven
—**AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED**—but the sins are still there, just covered

4:8—"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT"—this is a far greater blessing—in terms of justification, God charges the justified person with nothing at all. We have an imputed righteousness, apart from works, on the basis of faith alone. Therefore, the presence or absence of forgiveness is irrelevant.

An Application—From David's psalm, a great blessing is the forgiveness of sin, but an even greater blessing is justification for the person whose sin the Lord will not even take into account. [Of course, we know it's through the redemption in Jesus (3:24). But that's not what he's talking about here. He will talk about that in the next chapter.]

4:9—Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also?—This is part of Paul's argument—for Jews and Greeks, no distinction. All have sinned. Justification is available to all, and to all by faith.
—**For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS"**—Paul already established that Abraham's faith was credited as righteousness.

4:10—How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Circumcision is a work, and like every other kind of work, it is not part of justification.
—**Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised**—The father of the Jewish race was himself uncircumcised when his faith was credited to him as righteousness.

4:11—and he received the sign of circumcision—The question, then: What was the role of circumcision if it made to contribution to the righteousness Abraham received by faith?
—**a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised**—God chose in Genesis 17:1-14, to enter a covenant relationship with Abraham (after 15:6). A

sign of that covenant was circumcision. If Abraham were still unrighteous in God's sight, such a covenant would be unthinkable. So the sign of the covenant was also a seal of the righteousness by faith Abraham now had.

—so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised—The reason he received this righteousness by faith while uncircumcised was so all believing Gentiles can look back to him as their spiritual example.

—that righteousness might be credited to them—the case of Abraham was actually designed to encourage Gentiles to believe in order that they too might receive righteousness the same way.

4:12—*and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision [Jews], but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised [Gentiles].* Abraham has a double fatherhood here: (1) as the physical model of all those who are literally circumcised, and (2) as the spiritual model of all the circumcised who are justified by faith. Thus the Jews could become Abraham's children in this second, superior sense.

4:13—*For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world*—as mentioned in verse 3, Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 contained the promise "*and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*" Galatians 3:8 says that promise was a prediction: "*The Scripture, foreseeing that that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.'*"

—was not through the Law—which did not exist until some 500 years later

—but through the righteousness of faith—the world will be populated and possessed by Abraham's spiritual descendants, both Jewish and Gentiles, through the righteousness of faith

4:14—*For if those who are of the Law are heirs*—justified based on keeping the Law
—faith is made void—because both works and faith cannot co-exist. If there are works (keeping the Law)—faith is voided (ineffectual, powerless)

—and the promise is nullified—becomes nothing, comes to an end

4:15—*for the Law brings about wrath*—"*through the law is the knowledge of sin*" (3:20), making wrath inevitable because all are sinners.

—but where there is no law, there also is no violation—when righteousness is by faith, then there is no law (works) and no violation of the law and no wrath.

4:16—*For this reason it [the promise of v. 14] is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace*—God's grace is a gift freely given to those who receive it by faith

—so that the promise [of God's grace] will be guaranteed to all the descendants—spiritual descendants, who receive righteousness based on faith

—not only to those who are of the Law—Jewish believers

—but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham—Gentile believers

—who is the father of us all—in all nations, those who believe

4:17a—(as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU")—(Gen 17:5-6). **Made** is a past event with present effects (Gk)

4:17b—*in the presence of Him whom he believed* [had faith for his justification]

—**even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist**—death and non-existence are not hindrances to Abraham’s God since He possesses resurrection power and the power to bring things into being, probably referring to the previous statement (***I made you***). That there were not many nations at the time God made the promise to Abraham was no impediment to God. He speaks of those who did not yet exist as though they did.

4:18—*In hope against hope*—humanly speaking, Abraham was past hope for a physical child (he was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90—Gen 17:19). God waited until it was physically impossible for this couple to have children. Then He repeated His pledge (Gen 17:5). Abraham’s faith in God was unchanged, but the circumstances changed. Their advanced years now made it impossible apart from supernatural intervention.

—**he believed**—yet his faith was based on the hope that God’s promise gave him

—**so that he might become a father of many nations**—this was God’s promise, not just of one physical nation, but a spiritual father of many nations

—**according to that which had been spoken, “SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE”**—Gen 15:5—God verbally promised Abraham

4:19—*Without becoming weak in faith*—or as verse 20 says, *he did not waver in unbelief*
—**he contemplated his own body**—he had to ignore his own body and Sarah’s own body
—**now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb**—From what I learned, each female has a certain number of eggs at birth. During her cycle, she sheds one of those eggs. When the eggs are gone, she can no longer get pregnant. Not only were Sarah’s eggs gone, her whole reproductive function was ended for many years. “*By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive even beyond the proper time of life*” (Heb 11:11). So God not only placed an egg in her, He jump-started her whole “dead” reproductive system. Besides Mary, who became pregnant without a sperm, Isaac is the next miracle birth, being called “*only begotten son*” (Heb 11:17), meaning, “one of a kind.”

4:20—*yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith*—He kept his mind focused on the promise of God—not on his circumstances.

—**giving glory to God**—God received so much glory when Abraham believed Him and His promise.

4:21—*and being fully assured* [convinced] **that what God had promised, He was able also to perform**—Abraham glorified God by his strong conviction that God could perform what He had promised, no matter how difficult it seemed. He believed God’s power to fulfill His word.

4:22—*Therefore IT* [Abraham’s faith] **WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM** [imputed] **AS RIGHTEOUSNESS**—In 4:5, Paul also wrote, “*his faith is counted for righteousness.*”

An Application—Understand what this is saying. Somehow it seems easy to believe our works would count as righteousness to God. But No—it’s not possible. Here, Paul says our faith is counted or considered righteousness to God! [Of course, our sin is paid for by Christ on the cross—he will talk about that in the next chapter.] We need to be righteous to come into the presence of God, and faith (not works) counts as that righteousness.

4:23—Now not for his sake only was it written that it [righteousness] **was credited to him**—of course, this was a historical record in the Word of God

4:24—but for our sake also, to whom it [righteousness] **will be credited**—but Abraham’s faith was intended to offer scriptural support to the proclamation about Jesus.

—**as those who believe** [faith] **in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead**—Abraham, remember, said of God... **who gives life to the dead** (v. 17). So we believe in the same God in whom Abraham believed.

4:25—He who was delivered over—human beings delivered Jesus to the authorities to execute Him, but God was behind all of that (Acts 2:23).

—**because of our transgressions**—God accepted Christ’s death as payment for our sins. Christ became the Mercy Seat so God and humans could meet. Our sins required Christ’s death.

—**and was raised because of our justification**—the first mention of the resurrection of Jesus since 1:4. Our justification required Christ’s resurrection.

—Christ’s resurrection provides a valid proof that God is righteous in deciding to justify the one who has faith in Jesus. A dead martyr would provide no such validation.

—Verse 25 is a “hinge” verse, concluding the portion begun in 3:21 and anticipating what will follow in chapters 5–8, where Paul will show the implications that this truth has for our Christian experience.

An Application—Regeneration (salvation) is a work of God the Father (chooses us—Eph 1:4) and the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-14). Justification (declared righteous) is a work of God the Father. Though both occur at the same time and both occur at the moment of faith.

Chapter 5 — The Accomplishments of the Cross

5:1—Therefore—what follows rests on what preceded it. Verses 1-11 are now a bridge section to 5:12–8:39, to the experiential Christian life.

—**having been justified by faith**—looking back to a fact that we were saved by faith, as believers, what are the results of that decision...

—**we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**—this is mentioned first as a contrast to his elaborate description of God’s wrath in verses 1:18–2:5. This is a judicial peace as an act of God as our Judge. This is not an inner tranquility, rather it is a peace which results when a king and his rebellious subjects are at war and now are at peace.

5:2—through whom also we have obtained our introduction [access] by faith

—**into this grace**—an additional benefit of justification by faith is access to God’s grace.

—**in which we stand**—always in the present tense, we are always in the grace of God. So we both “stand” in “this grace” [justification] and also we “possess access into” it [obviously, through prayer].

An Application— “...since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh...let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...” (Heb 10:19-22). Normally, the

purpose of veils is to hide, to create a barrier to the Holy of Holies, the presence of God, but Jesus' death changed the definition of veil to "having access" to God in prayer. —**and we exult [joy] in hope** [lit. "expectation"] **of the glory of God**—standing in His actual presence one day, so exciting we can exult in it.

5:3—And not only this, but—in addition to exulting in one day being with God —**we also exult in our tribulations**—temporary, here on earth. The unrighteous should see their troubles as an expression of Divine wrath (1:18f). But the righteous can now see their tribulations from a new vantage point—they can actually have positive results. —**knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance**—endurance, to bear up under difficult circumstances (as a believer, not life in general). Job wrote, "*When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold*" (Job 23:10). Tribulations are opportunities to trust God.

An Application—"consider it joy, my brethren when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance...that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4; see also 1 Peter 1:6-9).

5:4—and perseverance, [proven character, Gk. one word]—going through a test with special reference to the result, the idea of approvedness, in contrast to God's wrath, which expresses disapproval of unrighteous mankind and their conduct (1:18f). —**and proven character, hope**—[lit. "expectation"]—our progress in character development [being "*transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (12:2)] will testify to God's grace in our lives.

5:5—and hope [lit. "expectation"] **does not disappoint**—our tribulations can actually move us to have a deeper appreciation of His love —**because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts**—not just a little bit of His love, but filled, more than sufficient, abundant, overflowing. He loved us so much before we were saved that He sent His Son to die for us (John 3:16), how much more is His love poured out in us now that we are His children. —**through the Holy Spirit who was given to us**—at salvation, another benefit of our justification. The Holy Spirit makes that love a joyous realization within us. The unbeliever has no such desires or experiences.

5:6—For—an emphatic position—the basis of the experience of verses 1-5 is..... —**while we were still helpless**—we were unable, our lack of strength or ability, to experience what he just said in verses 1-5. The process started when we were helpless... —**at the right time**—as Paul says in Gal. 4:4, "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son.*" At the precise moment in human history that God had planned for it. —**Christ died**—the exact moment of Christ's death in history was planned by God. It's the starting point of God's love and the life He wants for us. —**for the ungodly**—that would be all the human race, before and after His death

5:7—In human terms, **For one will hardly** [rarely] **die for a** [morally] **righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare** [lit. "be bold enough"] **even to die**—perhaps someone would die to save someone they thought was good (a parent for a child, a teacher for a student, for example).

5:8—But [in contrast] **God demonstrates** [made known by action, but the word also means “recommends”] **His own love** [*agape*, giving] **toward us** [ungodly sinners]—as a basis for trust and a source of encouragement
—**in that while we were yet sinners** [*“there is none righteous, not even one”* (3:10), when we were helpless (v. 6)], unable to save ourselves
—**Christ died for us**—everyone was an unsaved sinner at the moment of Christ’s death

5:9—Much more then—in this and verse 10 are the most significant hinge verses in the entire book of Romans. *“Much more”* is also used in verses 10, 15 and 17. It is arguing from something known or assumed to a conclusion that naturally follows from it.
—**having now been justified by His blood**—assumed to be true (from 3:21–4:25)
—**we shall be saved** [delivered]—the logical future, which follows from *“been justified by His blood.”* [The translation “saved” assumes a reference to salvation from hell. But that is not Paul’s progression of thought, not the wrath he has been talking about.]
—**from the wrath of God through Him**—this “wrath” is clearly identified as God’s present displeasure with *“all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”* (1:19-32). It is the divine penalty imposed on human sin here and now. He almost repeats this again in verse 10.

5:10—For if while we were enemies—unbelievers, living under the wrath of God for sin
—**we were reconciled to God**—the enmity [wrath of God against sin] has been removed.
—**through the death of His Son**—God accepts us as righteous on the basis of our faith in His Son—our faith-righteousness
—**much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved** [delivered] *in the experience [of] by His life*—this sanctification concept will be developed in chapters 6–8.

5:11—And not only this [being delivered from His wrath], **but we also exult** [joy] **in God**—in verse 3 he mentioned joy in tribulations. Now he says we will also have joy in God Himself.
—**through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now**—Christ’s death (v. 10) is why we now have this reconciliation and joy.
—**received the reconciliation**—it was provided through Christ’s death, but it must also be “received” by mankind. It is received when we are justified by faith, when we meet God at His Mercy Seat (3:25).

An Application—Through Christ’s death, all the people of the world were reconciled (changed so they are able to be saved). But that salvation has to be received, by faith in Jesus Christ, so all people need to be reconciled. We are reconciled—be reconciled (2 Cor 5:18-21).

Paul is now going to launch into an extended discussion of the Christian life (5:12–8:39). It is the longest such discussion to be found anywhere in Paul’s epistles.

The Sin Problem and Its Solution (5:12-21)

5:12—Therefore—in view of this (vv 9-11), **just as through one man sin entered into the world**—i.e. through Adam. The world had no sin until then.
—**and death through sin, and so death spread to all men**—it is universal
—**because all sinned**—what Adam and Eve did in the garden produced descendants who, without exception, have committed sin. Therefore, universal death.

But how did humans sin in the absence of God's law? Adam at least had the law forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But what law did the next generations have that they violated in the absence of God's commands so they "sinned"?

5:13—*for* ["in fact"] ***until the Law sin was in the world***—beginning with the murder of Abel in Genesis 4. Read Genesis, which recorded so much sin during that time, that "*the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Gen 6:5).

—*but sin is not imputed* ["charged to the account of someone"—see Philemon 19a] ***when there is no law***—there is no specific list of laws that they broke. However, remember chapter 2, where Paul said the law is written on each person's conscience in a way that permits God to judge individuals as individuals.

5:14—*Nevertheless*—despite the fact that there could be no itemized list of sins then **—***death reigned from Adam until Moses* [1500 B.C., when the Law was given]—this is evidence that sin was in the world during that time. Death reigned over humanity. It motivated all kinds of evil. Cain got rid of Abel, etc.

An Application—this long section ends with 8:38-39, "*...neither...death...will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

—*even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam*—Adam had a specific and unique instance of sin, but death was able to extend beyond Adam to all mankind, even though there were many other kinds of sin.

—*who is a type of Him who was to come*—of course, Paul is not saying that Adam portrays the personal characteristics found in Jesus. But Adam is a type in that he was the source through which sin entered the world. As Jesus is the source for redemption in the world.

5:15—*But* [contrast] ***the free gift*** [from Christ] ***is not like the transgression*** [sin from Adam]—the type is the effect Adam had on many, although he was just one man. Jesus also has had, and continues to have, an effect on many, though He was just one man.

—*For if by the transgression of the one the many died*—the death humans experience is the result of a single man's offense.

—*much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many*—this grace *abounded...much more* than the sin.

5:16—*The* [free] ***gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned***—the effect, or what happened, when Adam sinned

—*for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation* [Gk. not just a pronouncement but a punishment, the penalty]—the judgment/curse brought on mankind because of Adam's sin. Physical death and bondage to sin were the result of the judgment.

—*but on the other hand the free gift* [of God's grace] ***arose from many transgressions resulting in*** [faith] ***justification***—a reversal to slavery to sin, resulting in righteous action

5:17—*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one*—human sin became inevitable, so also death became inevitable, inescapable, it reigns.

—*much more those* [certain people—3:24] ***who receive*** [faith-righteousness]

—**the abundance of grace**—immense potential to produce a spiritually triumphant life
—**and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ**—it's not life (vs. death) that reigns but certain people reign in life.

5:18—So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men—this picks up the idea of verse 12. The “one transgression” was that of “one man” (Adam). The “condemnation” was death that came to all men. This summarizes vv. 13-17.
—**even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of** [that belongs to and is characterized by] **life to all men**—it is a genitive of description, = “a life-kind of justification,” founded upon Christ’s own risen life (4:25), available to all men.

5:19—For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were [actually] **made sinners**—servitude to sin. In verse 18 it was called a “transgression,” here it is called “disobedience.” Adam’s disobedience to the command of God brought about the tragedy of sin and death.

—**even so through the obedience of the One the many will be** [potentially (that is, those who receive Him, 5:11)] **made righteous**. In verse 18, it was called “one act of righteousness,” here it is called “the obedience of the One.” The obedience of Jesus Christ is moving us to the next chapter, which is a discussion of our own obedience to God in the Christian life (chapters 6–8).

5:20—The Law came in so that the transgression would increase—the law served the purpose of exposing sin for what it was: an offense against God. Sin has a greater negative significance when there is a law that forbids it. For example, you might drive 65 mph down a road with no speed sign, but if there is a posted sign of 35 mph, your transgression of 65 is increased.

—**but where sin increased**—remember 3:20, *through the Law comes the knowledge of sin*. [The purpose of the Law was NOT to make people righteous—though the Jews changed the meaning of the Law into keepable man-made rules.] They sinned before the Law, but the Law increased the opportunity for sin because it called more things sin. (After the Flood, they could eat all animals but after the Law, they could only eat some animals. Eating pork, for example, was now sin.)

—**grace abounded all the more**—it is the Gk “hyper”—so grace is super-great. The **Law** increased the sin, but grace abounded even more.

5:21—so that, as sin reigned in death—absolutely sure thing

—**even so grace would reign through** [lit. “by means of”] **righteousness** [Gk. “right into”] **to eternal life** [vs. sin’s reign in death] **through** [faith in] **Jesus Christ our Lord**—God’s grace reigns when the believer reigns “in life” through Jesus. When the believer gains victory over sin, grace is reigning in the believer’s life experience. The subject of the next chapters.

Chapter 6 — Positional Sanctification

6:1—What shall we say then? Are we to continue [habitual persistence] **in sin so that grace may increase?**—In light of 5:20-21, do we conclude that we should sin more so grace may increase? No. That is a false conclusion called “libertinism,” claiming with no law, there is freedom to sin. Consequently, church history is filled with man’s attempt to control sin with man-made laws.

6:2—May it never be!—Gk. *Mē genoito*—Unthinkable!! Inconceivable!! Inappropriate!!
—**How shall we who died to sin still live in it** [sin]?—It is inconceivable that believers in Jesus Christ should go on living their lives in sin, to habitually practice it. That would be a contradiction to our relationship to sin, since we have actually died to it. For example, it would be like if one’s husband died, to continue to act like he is alive (set a place at the table for him, wash his clothes, etc.).

But how have we died to sin?

6:3—Or do you not know [a sort of rebuke] **that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized** (immersed) **into His death?**—Some think Paul is using “baptism” as a physical public identification with Christ. However, it seems more likely that both “baptism” and “burial” are here being used as metaphors (he certainly could not mean we are actually buried).

6:4—Therefore we have been buried [also a kind of immersion] **with Him through baptism** [immersion] **into death**—Jesus’ burial was not part of His saving work.

An Application—Burial shows that the person has in fact died. Baptism was a complete immersion. Taken together as metaphors, when we believed in Jesus, the power of our lifestyle of habitual sin was completely immersed and buried in Jesus. Its power is dead.

—**so that** [purpose] **as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father**—notice that Paul sets up a tension here. The believer is not able to share in Christ’s resurrection in the same way that one can share in Christ’s death.

—**so** [also] **we too**—but just as Christ was raised as a new (resurrected) being
—**might walk in newness of life**—we are already positionally “alive from the dead” (vv. 11 and 13). It happens at salvation. A one-time event. We do not keep spiritually dying and spiritually being raised over and over. These are spiritual events that radically alter the inward reality of our being and how we live our life. Just as sin characterized our old life, so righteousness now characterizes our new life.

An Application—When a person is justified, God not only declares that person to be righteous but He also begins to develop Christ’s righteousness in that person. Salvation is not simply a transaction but is a transformation, a “new life.” The new man will continue to grow in holiness, no matter how slowly or falteringly because by its very nature, life grows. “...the Word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe” (1 Thess 2:13). It’s obedience in the daily decisions of everyday relationships and responsibilities. A *renewing* one’s mind (Rom 12:2). [There is a false teaching today that we need to continue to be “re-saved.” Rather than growing and maturing in Christ, the person confesses their salvation all over again. This is taught in New Calvinism and practiced in Catholicism.]

6:5-6—For if [“since”] **we have become united with Him**—Gk. root “to grow up” or “come up,” an agricultural image describing this immersion as a kind of spiritual planting.

—**in the likeness** [shared experience] **of His death**—It was His death that He dealt with sin (vv. 1-4), and at salvation our sin is dealt with.

—**certainly we shall also be in the likeness** [a common type of experience] **of His resurrection**—brought to a new life

—**knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him**—the “old self” has died. The Bible does not teach that the sin nature was eradicated at salvation or is ever eradicated in this life. But the “old self” is what was controlled by sin.

—**in order that** [purpose] **our body of sin** [the sum total of all the sin committed through our physical bodies] **might be done away with**—

—**so that we would no longer be slaves** [to serve] **to sin**—it’s power no longer exists

6:7—for he who has died is freed from sin—just as once a person dies, he or she has no more earthly obligations. So now sin has no claim of any kind on the person who has been united with Christ. [We will not be free from sin’s enticement until our glorification. But sin will even lose its enticement here on earth as we mature in Christ.]

6:8—Now if [“since”] **we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him**—Since we have received Christ as our Savior, we shall also live our life with Him as our Savior. We who will live together with Him in the future can live together with Him in the present by the power of the Holy Spirit (8:11).

6:9-10—knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master [authority] **over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all**—Jesus died once, and He will never die again. Because He lives, death no longer has any authority over Him. He paid for all our sins. Now He is free.

—**but the life that He lives, He lives to God**—the life Christ lives is totally oriented to God

6:11—Even so—the relationship of Christ to sin and to God is exactly the way believers should relate to sin and to God

— **consider** [Gk word used in 4:3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24—believers consider (present tense—to continue), i.e., constantly view yourself—Paul used the same Greek word here as he did in his explanation of justification] **yourselves to be dead to sin**—Our relationship to sin has changed.

An Application—If we count on sin not having that power, we will be more apt to resist temptation, to stay clear of sin, to say “no” to sin.

—**but alive to God in Christ Jesus**—as Jesus was alive to God after His resurrection

6:12—Therefore—reorient our behavior in the light of this truth

—**do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts**—to “reign” is to be overtaken and controlled by sin. Giving it a power it should not have in your life. Obeying lusts produce sin. Control lusts before they get to the sin-stage.

6:13—and do not [command] **go on presenting the members of your body** [its eyes, arms, legs, etc.] **to sin as instruments of unrighteousness**—that pursued sinful aims and activities

—**but present yourselves** [Gk. make yourselves available] **to God as those alive from the dead**—this is a positive. Believers have a choice of what to see, what to listen to, what to say, what to think about, etc.

—**and your members as instruments** [its eyes, arms, legs, etc.] **of righteousness to God**—make a conscious commitment to God and to His will in His Word.

6:14—For sin shall not be master over you—you must not let sin to rule over you
—**for you are not under law**—a person could not be justified (saved) by the Law nor can the Law be useful for Christian living.

—**but under grace**—this freedom from sin’s authority is precisely because we are under grace, and not the Law.

6:15—What then? Shall we sin [specific acts of sin] **because we are not under law but under grace?** This is not a repeat of verse 1, where he said **Are we to continue** [habitual persistence] **in sin?** Paul has now answered that as “no” because we have died to sin. Now he addresses individual acts of sin.

—**May it never be!** [Gk. *Mē genoito*—Unthinkable!! Inconceivable!! Inappropriate!!]

6:16—Do you not know that when you present yourselves—your actions
—**to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey**—definition of a slave = one who obeys.

—**either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?**—obvious choice is obedience to God and righteousness. Who would wish to produce death?

An Application—Realize that sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay. [Constable, p 99]

6:17—But thanks be to God—Paul thanks God for the Roman believers
—**that though you were slaves of sin**—before they became believers
—**you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching** [admonition, instruction] **to which you were committed** [“turned over to”]—“you submitted without reservation to the creed you were taught” [Jerusalem Bible]

6:18—and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness—these believers now serve God and His righteousness, and turned away from sin. It seems that as humans we must be slaves of something. The choice is “sin” or “righteousness.”

6:19—I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh—he is describing this in human terms they can understand. The Romans were very familiar with slavery and the reigning of the Roman Empire Caesars.

—**For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness**—Giving oneself over to evil, results in more evil for the unbeliever

—**so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification**—now, giving oneself over to righteousness, results in holiness. Sanctification is not passive or automatic. It requires some human action, a decision, made by the believer.

6:20—For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness—righteousness was powerless in their lives, no control, was not their master. As unbelievers, they could do no righteousness, which comes only from a justified believer.

6:21—Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed?—there was no righteousness, no benefit, to being slaves to sin, in fact, the outcomes of the sin may be things of which we are now ashamed.

—For the outcome of those things is death—spiritual and physical and eternal death

6:22—But now—having become believers

—having been freed from sin and enslaved to God—alive to God and His righteousness

—you derive your benefit, resulting in [progressive] sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

6:23—For the wages of sin is death—pay or compensation, what is due because of some specific work, i.e., the payment for sin is spiritual death here and eternal death in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:14).

—but the free gift [unearned, grace] of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

An Application—There are only two options:

Sin and work resulting in spiritual death in the Lake of Fire

OR

Accept the free gift of God, which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Summary:

In chapter 6, Paul prescribed four steps designed to promote positional sanctification:

- (1) We must “know” certain facts about our union with Christ, specifically that sin no longer possesses the dominating power over the believer that it has over the unbeliever (vv. 3-10).
- (2) We must “reckon” (believe) these facts to be true of us personally (v. 11).
- (3) We must “present” ourselves to God in dedication as His slaves to perform righteousness (vv. 12-14).
- (4) We must “obey” God (vv. 15-23). If we do not, we will find ourselves falling back under the domination of sin in our lives—and becoming its slaves once again.

Each of these verbs has the force of an active command. Each represents something every believer should do. These are our basic responsibilities in our positional sanctification regarding our relationship to sin. [Constable, p 101]

Chapter 7 — Experiential Sanctification

7:1—Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law)—we may first think he means only the Mosaic Law, but it seems to be rather law in general, even the Roman law and the Mosaic Law. This is not an allegory, it is an analogy!!
—that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?—An obvious point, one which no one can dispute. A person has to be alive to be under the authority of a law. This is just an illustration, not a specific teaching on being a widow, etc.

7:2—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—marriage is only for life here on the earth. Jesus said, “*in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven*” (Matt 22:30). Death ends the obligations of the marriage.

7:3—So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress—(this example has nothing to do with divorce).
—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—physical death ends marriage laws. A widow who marries again is not guilty of adultery.

7:4—Therefore, my brethren—for believers, an application of his illustration
—you also were made to die [by an act of God in response to faith in Christ] **to the Law through the body of Christ**—his main point here is that death ends law obligations!
—so that you might be joined to another—with no obligations to the Law, we are free to be joined to Christ, who, in fact, is superior to the Law. Like the death of the spouse brings a complete change of marital relationship.
—to Him who was raised from the dead—as explained in chapter 6
—in order that we might bear fruit for God—Paul also wrote, “*we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works...that we should walk in them*” (Eph 2:10).

7:5—For while we [including Paul] **were in the flesh** [controlled by the sinful nature, before they were believers], **the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law**—negative commands often awaken yearnings for the forbidden. Think of Adam and Eve’s wanting to eat the one fruit God told them not to eat.
—were at work [Gk. *energeito*, “energy”] **in the members of our body to bear fruit for death**—our sinful passions (aroused by the Law) give energy to the members of our body (eyes, ears, tongue, etc.) to produce the fruit of spiritual death.

7:6—But now—new life of faith in Christ Jesus
—we have been released [“discharged”] **from the Law,**
—having died to that by which we were bound [hindered]—the Law, rather than being an aid to produce holiness, actually hindered them from doing it. [Hodges] This is not a reflection on the Law itself, but on the counterproductive influence of the Law on the flesh (v. 5). The Law did not die, we died to living by the Law.
—so that we serve [enslaved to God] **in newness of the Spirit**—here and 6:4 are the only times this word is in the NT (*newness of life*—6:4), possible for believers, like Christ’s resurrection to a new life.
—and not in oldness of the letter—of the Law

An Application—Paul already wrote sin and death are no longer master over us (6:9-10, 18). Now he adds the Mosaic Law is also no longer master over us. We are freely joined to Christ.

7:7—What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?—The Mosaic Law is not sinful simply because it makes us aware of what is sinful. It is similar to an x-ray machine that reveals a tumor.

—**May it never be!** [Gk. *Mē genoito*—Unthinkable!! Inconceivable!! Inappropriate!!]

—**On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law**—the Law exposes sin so that it can be recognized as sin. How could a person be aware that some things were sin unless God told them so (for example, Adam eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). It's not that sin had no existence without the Law, but without the Law, sin is less active, for Law arouses "sinful passions" (v. 5).

—**for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET"**—perhaps Paul used the tenth commandment because it has to do with our desires, from which all other sins come.

7:8—But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment—as Paul already said, he was not even aware of coveting until he heard the command, then coveting came alive —**produced in me coveting of every kind**—it does this as mentioned in verse 5, by arousing our sinful passions.

—**for apart from the Law sin is dead** (dormant or inactive). Sin is not an issue until a person sins. But the Law arouses sinful desires.

An Application—The serpent was lurking in the garden prior to man's fall, but had found no opportunity to attack man until the commandment, "You shall not eat of it" (Gen 2:17) had been given. But the responsibility for sin is the sin itself. All the Law does is to make Paul aware of the evil character his own heart was capable of.

7:9—I was once alive apart from the Law—[This is the first time the personal pronoun "I" occurs in Romans, and it occurs 8 times in verses 9 to 25.] Paul is drawing on his personal experience with the Law. He is talking about the struggle of the Christian life, his own, too. It does NOT mean when he was an unbeliever, as unbelievers are not "once alive." He's already stressed the point that "death reigned from Adam to Moses" (5:12-21).

—**but when the commandment came**—he became aware of the commandment

—**sin became alive**—Gk. "to function after being dormant" [BDAG]

—**and I died**—the joyous experience of walking with God was ended.

7:10—and this commandment, which was to result in life [if it had been perfectly obeyed], **proved to result in death for me**—only the Christian can experience both "life" and "death" in Paul's sense here of these terms. The commands of the Law should have a positive, not a negative effect.

7:11—for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me [about the value of the sinful act—like Satan convinced Eve she would not die if she ate the fruit] —**and through it killed me**—joyous experience of walking with God ended.

7:12—So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good—the Law is not to blame. Sin is to blame. The character of the Law is holy and good. The x-ray machine is good, even though it shows the tumor. Don't blame the x-ray.

7:13—Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? Is the Law like a sword that kills us instead of helping us?

—**May it never be!** [Gk. *Mē genoito*—Unthinkable!! Inconceivable!! Inappropriate!!]

—**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** [“sinful in the extreme” (BDAG)]—sin used a good thing (the Law) to produce death, in order that it might appear as the sinful thing sin was. It is extreme because it is not only sinful but when disobeying a commandment of God, it is extremely sinful.

7:14—For we know that the Law is spiritual—i.e., it is good and from God, it is sinless —**but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin**—sin rules because of our basic human sin nature. As believers, we are no longer a slave to sin, but our sin nature is still sinful. Sin no longer dominates us, but sin still has a strong attraction for us, since our basic human sin nature is still sinful, and we have that throughout our lifetime.

7:15—For what I am doing, I do not understand—Paul's confusion and frustration —**for I am not practicing what I would like** [“wish” occurs 7 times in vv. 15-25] **to do**—his struggles have no positive result. The Christian's own personal wishes can never accomplish one's goals.

—**but I am doing the very thing I hate**—in fact, he does the very opposite of what he wants to do, even the very things he hates

7:16—But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good—his inward desire shows he agrees that the Law is good, so he is aware that what he actually does is evil.

7:17—So now, no longer am I the one doing it [my new nature in Christ], **but sin which dwells in me**—his disobedience to the Law is the accomplishment of sin. But the Christian's inner new self remains sinless.

7:18—For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh—his sin nature —**for the willing is present in me**—in his new nature in Christ —**but the doing of the good is not**—in his sin nature

7:19—For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want—the victorious Christian living is not an automatic thing. It's a constant struggle. It is not that a Christian's experience is simple and natural. Your new nature wants to do good, but your sin nature prevents it. Your new nature does not want to do evil, but your sin nature does it anyway.

7:20—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—Paul repeats verse 17, so this is an important point.

7:21—*I find then the principle that evil is present in me* [ready, at hand, lies alongside me]—it is hard **to do** what is good, but it is extremely easy to do what is evil. One needs, so to speak, only to reach out and pick it up, it's right alongside of you.

—***the one who wants to do good***—as one grows as a believer, there is a greater desire to do the good that God wants you to do. However, the sin nature does not get less. It does not shrink. That evil is always present within us as long as we are in this body on earth.

7:22-23—*For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.*

There are several “laws” here:

- (1) ***law of God***—the moral code of God, seen mostly in the Mosaic Law
- (2) ***law in the members of my body***—this overcomes the *law of God* (1) and overcomes the *law of my mind* (3) by means of sin (4).
- (3) ***law of my mind***—one's understanding that the law is “holy” and “spiritual”
- (4) ***law of sin***—therefore, he is taken captive, to do the evil thing he does not wish to do.

7:24—*Wretched man that I am!*—This total disconnect between his inward, holy desires of his new nature in Christ and the impulses/actions of the sin nature in his physical body left him wretched.

—***Who will set me free from the body of this*** [that he has described as a believer, v. 25] ***death?*** Because obviously, he is not able himself to deliver himself. It's like an albatross hanging around the spiritual “neck” of the regenerate inward man. It continually drags him down to defeat. [Hodges]

7:25—*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*—what we cannot do, God can do—which Paul will describe in chapter 8.

—***So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind*** [and understanding, in my new nature in Christ] ***am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh*** [my sin nature] ***the law of sin***—this summarizes the chapter. So the inward, redeemed new nature does not and cannot do the sin he hates. Just as the sin nature cannot do anything righteous (3:10).

An Application—The Christian life is always a struggle between your godly desires from your new nature in Christ and your sinful desires of your sin nature (which you will gladly leave behind when you go to heaven). Understand that your new nature will grow and mature, but your sin nature will not lessen. It is always 100%. Your new nature has to get stronger through maturity in Christ.

Also, this corrects the popular idea that our struggle with sin is only against specific sins. It is also a struggle against our basic sin nature. It also shows that our basic human nature is not essentially good—it is bad. Sanctification does not come by obeying laws. Neither does it come by just determining to do it. Read on to chapter 8.....

Chapter 8 — Ultimate Sanctification

Paul's previous discussion (7:1-25) focused on the inadequacy of the Mosaic Law for effective Christian living. In fact, the Christian is dead to it (7:1-6), and efforts to live under it only result in defeat (7:7-25). So we must look elsewhere for deliverance from the body's enslavement to the law of sin. So ***thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*** (7:25). But how is that victory realized? Chapter 8 describes the triumphal living that is possible through Jesus Christ. Chapter 8 is "the chapter of chapters for the life of the believer." [Constable, *Romans*] This chapter contains the most references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. It's the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life that produces victorious Christian living.

8:1—Therefore—conclusion of everything Paul wrote from chapter 3 on.

—***there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus***—Paul already stated that believers are justified, declared righteous, and stand in the grace of God, not under His wrath, and possess eternal life (5:2; 1:18; 5:17-18). This is the starting point of sanctification. However, the second step is how a Christian person *walks*.

—["who walk not in the flesh, but after the Spirit" is at the end of verse 1 in the KJV, but is not found in the earliest manuscripts of Romans. Because this is at the end of verse 4, the meaning of the passage is not affected.]

8:2—For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—the subject is no longer Christ's work for us but the Spirit's work within us. In fact, it is the Spirit who baptized believers into Christ Jesus (6:3-4), and now indwells them (8:9).

—***has set you free from the law of sin and of death***—that he referred to in chapter 7.

8:3—For what the Law could not do weak as it was through the flesh—The Law could only appeal to our sin nature, because no one had a new nature in Christ. So it urges us to obey but does not provide the power for obedience.

—***God did***:—God Himself accomplished this deliverance over sin

—***sending His own Son***—God sent Jesus to do something about sin.

—***in the likeness of sinful flesh***—NOT "in sinful flesh" but "in the likeness" of sinful flesh, i.e., human but without a sin nature.

—***and as an offering for sin***—He is a sinless sacrifice for sin.

—***He condemned sin in the flesh***—God did not change the Law, instead He dealt with the problem of our sin in the flesh, those who have received the Law.

8:4—so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit—"The thing that couldn't be done by living under the Law can in fact be achieved by walking in relation to the Spirit." [Hodges] The Law addresses our sinful flesh but cannot deliver us from walking according to the flesh. But now we walk in the newness of life in Christ Jesus, walking according to the Spirit, which allows us to walk according to the requirement of the Law.

8:5—For those who are according to the flesh set their minds ["focus" or "mind-set"] **on the things of the flesh**—i.e., to be fond of sin. While trying to be holy, Paul found himself focused on the sins that the Law forbade. The Law said to not covet, but then all he could think of was coveting. His fleshly orientation doomed him to commit the very sin he sought to avoid. And, of course, our sin nature is constantly luring us to fleshly things.

—but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit—the things of the Spirit, for example, would be the Word of God, written by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21).

8:6—For the mind set on the flesh is death—setting the mind on the flesh is to operate in the sphere of death.

—but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace—but setting the mind on the Spirit is to operate in life and peace.

8:7-8—because—for this reason, that the Law commanded what the flesh really did not want to do and forbid what the flesh did want to do.

—the mind set on the flesh is hostile [enemy] toward God;

—for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so—they are trapped in a life of continuous defeat and hostile toward God.

—and those who are in the flesh cannot please God—i.e., unbelievers

8:9—However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit—i.e. believers

—if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you—then you have the option to walk in the Spirit

—But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him—i.e. that person is not a believer

8:10—If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness—physical bodies are dead [not physically, but the reign of death in 7:24], but the Spirit gives life within those very dead bodies. Apart from the Spirit's intervention, the result will be spiritual defeat.

8:11—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—we have the same Spirit in us who raised Jesus from the dead. Therefore, He can give spiritual life to our mortal bodies. Then we can walk in “newness of life.” This experience happens because of the Spirit's very presence, not merely by means (actions) of His presence.

8:12—So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh —although sin still remains in our mortal flesh, we need to not let...sin reign...so that we obey its lusts (6:12).

8:13—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must [will] die (8:6)—see also 7:9, 11, i.e., cutting one off from the experience of a God-filled life, spiritual maturity.

—but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live—the joy-filled experience of walking with God, living the way God intended us to live. Even rejoicing in sufferings (5:4).

8:14a—For all who are being led by the Spirit of God—this is NOT an appeal to some mystical “inner direction.” This is conformity/obedience to the revealed will of God found in the Word of God (written by the Spirit of God—2 Peter 1:21). There is no mystical revelation in the Bible.

8:14b-15—these are sons of God—For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again—comparing Paul’s similar statement in Galatians 4:1-7, this expression is a reference to the life-experience of the adult son who is not under the law. To be under the law is to experience a spirit of slavery (bondage). This says, “I must do this,” rather than “I want to do this.” The bondage under the law produced fear when disobeyed, being threatened with retribution. Therefore, because of an inability to keep the law, there was a continuous threat of retribution/fear. Paul also wrote, “...*cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them*” (Gal 3:10).

—but you have received a Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”—*adoption* (as it does also in Gal 4:5) refers to the adult son, who is grown up, freedom from obeying the Law, and under grace (Rom 6:14), not under another law.

8:16—The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God—“This verse is often misunderstood as a reference to some kind of inner (mystical) witness ‘to’ (as opposed to ‘with’) our human spirit that gives us a subjective assurance that we are born again. Paul knows nothing of this kind of ‘inner witness.’ This false conclusion is usually based on the English translation which sounds like it could mean that.” [Hodges] But BDAG says the meaning of the verb here is “to provide supporting evidence by testifying, [to] confirm, support by testimony.” [p. 957] So The Spirit supports the testimony of our human spirit when we claim God as our heavenly Father. A two-fold witness: our inner spirit and the Holy Spirit.

8:17—and if children, heirs also, heirs of God—all believers are heirs of God, our Father
—and fellow heirs with Christ—Jesus has the position of the *firstborn* (v. 29), so to be co-heirs with Christ is to be co-heirs with the Firstborn. This is our position in Christ.
—if indeed—this leaves open the opposite possibility, of not suffering
—we suffer with Him—co-suffering is the present experience
—so that we may also be glorified with Him—co-glorified is the future experience

8:18—For [Gk. a marker of clarification (BDAG)] ***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*** [BADG, “*which is waiting for us*”]—though suffering now can seem almost unbearable, it is dwarfed by the greatness of the future glory. Similar to 2 Corinthians 4:17.

8:19—For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God—Paul is not only thinking of the glorification of the individual person but of our participation in the glorious transformation of the entire creation. Here Paul personifies creation to make his point. God’s nature does not exist simply to perish. Rather, it “longs” for a time when it will be present in all its glory, as God had created it. Both us and creation will be revealed in glory at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

8:20—For the creation was subjected to futility—“state of being without use or value” [BDAG].

—not willingly—it was not due to any act of its own will

—but because of Him who subjected it—God cursed creation because of the Fall of man. “*Cursed is the ground because of you*” (Gen 3:17).

—in hope—connected with verse 21

8:21—*that the creation itself also*—God cursed it, and God will set it free from the curse **—*will be set free from its slavery to corruption***—the world is in bondage to evil, corruption, and death

—*into the freedom of the glory of the children of God*—just as believers will experience freedom from death in our eternal bodies (1 Cor 15), so creation will be free from its corruption [*“the wolf and the lamb shall graze together, ... they shall do no evil or harm”* (Isaiah 65:25), in Christ’s Millennial Kingdom]. [Remember, at that time, we will be resurrected and in our eternal bodies.]

8:22—*For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together*—the verbs suggest the idea of “in unison.”
— ***until now***—from the Fall until Paul’s writing here

8:23—*And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit*—what we have with the Holy Spirit today is a kind of first fruits, the first of the whole we will have when we are glorified.

— ***even we ourselves groan within ourselves***—suffering because of the curse, ...*our outer man is decaying*... (2 Cor 4:16).

—***waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body***—experiencing the Spirit’s power in our mortal bodies deepens our longing and expectation for the full realization of the Spirit in the future, complete victory over sin, in our eternal body.

8:24—*For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?*—the perfect deliverance by the Spirit is not yet a reality, but it is a certainty, a hope.

8:25—*But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance* [endurance—especially in the suffering] ***we wait eagerly for it***—so we are in the same situation as creation, eagerly waiting for full freedom from corruption and death. Here Paul returns to 5:3-5, where affliction produces endurance which produces hope.

How can we endure sufferings? Paul’s answer is two-fold: (1) by Spirit-assisted prayer (vv. 26-27) and (2) by keeping our focus on the God’s purpose, which brings us to co-heirship with Christ (vv. 28-32).

8:26—*In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness*—while we anticipate our glory with our Lord, we are still weak and groan while on earth (v. 23).

—***for we do not know how to pray as we should***—we do not have the ability to assess any situation we are in, so we do not know what is even necessary and best to pray about. Walt Henrichsen, as an older man, said he was now glad God did not give him everything he prayed for in his life. In hindsight, he had a different assessment of situations. Solomon wrote, *“Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few”* (Eccl 5:2).

—***but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us***—obviously, we do not know what the Spirit is praying for since, if we did, we would also pray for that. This phrase seems to give us assurance that even if we do not know how to pray, the Spirit is interceding for us in our prayers to God. We are not alone in our prayers.

—**with groanings too deep for words**—it seems like the point here is that we, who do not know how to pray as we should, are the ones with groanings too deep for words. In a suffering situation, for example, a person may not be able to even have the words to pray. In the context, verse 22, says *creation* groans, and in verse 23 says, ...*we ourselves groan within ourselves*. Groaning is what a fallen, aching, broken people and creation do. The Holy Spirit is not fallen, aching, or broken. [John Piper, “The Spirit Helps Us in our Weakness,” Youtu.be, Oct 23, 2012, minute 54f] The Holy Spirit takes our groanings to the Father. But He doesn’t groan. — “Although some commentators have thought that the *groanings* referred to here are those of *the Spirit*, this seems quite improbable” [Hodges, *Romans*].

—“groaning” means “a deep inarticulate sound [not words] in response to pain or despair” [Dictionary]. It seems like a negative word, inappropriate for the Spirit of God. The Spirit does not need to groan. He knows everything. He is God. He is omniscient.

—Humans and creation groan because of the suffering and despair of sin and the curse. The point of these verses is that when we have the mind of the Spirit, there is life and peace (v. 27). God (the Father, Son, and Spirit) is the God of hope, not despair. Why would I pray if the Spirit is groaning, in despair, too? I pray because I have hope, life, peace in God.

—Verses 15-16 tell us that it is “*the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.*” The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, as God’s children, to our heavenly Father. He knows our hearts and when we are hurting and groaning. He brings our groans to the Father, interceding according to the will of God, to have hope, life, and peace in God.

8:27—and He who searches the hearts—the secret thoughts, inner self, mind. He knows our weaknesses, He knows we do not know how to pray as we should. It’s where our groaning is. Sometimes we cry out to God in anguish. God searches our hearts, not just what we say.

—**knows what the mind of the Spirit is**—Paul uses the same phrase in 8:6, “*the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace.*” The Spirit desires us to experience “life and peace.” So this is the aim of His searching our hearts and His intercession for us.

An Application—Paul also wrote in Philippians 4:6-7, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*”

—**because He intercedes for the saints**—“intercedes” is “to plead, entreat, supplicate.” By definition, groanings are “inarticulate” because of suffering and despair.

—**according to the will of God**—in harmony with God’s desires for us, that we set our minds on God, not on our sin nature (vv. 5-6), i.e., the Spirit is asking according to what God wants, not necessarily what we want (especially if that’s from our sin nature).

An Application—Our weakness is that we still have a sin nature. Examine our prayers. What is according to your sin nature, what is according to God’s will? For example, we may pray for success of something worldly (in sports, school, or business) OR ask that God be glorified in that situation or that a person will stand firm in their faith or display the fruit of the Spirit. Those are *according to the will of God*.

8:28—And we know that God causes—omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscience

—**all things**—Gk. the totality of existing things (see Heb 2:8-10)—people and creation

—**to work together**— “to engage in cooperative endeavor, help.” [BDAG] We can be confident that our place within God’s purpose is in harmony with the unfolding history of creation. We are part of a bigger plan.

—**for good**—good in this chapter is the age to come, when all things **will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God** (v. 21). This is our **hope** (vv. 23-25).

—[This verse is so misunderstood, usually just this part of the verse is used to express the idea that all events in our personal lives (esp. negative events) actually produce good results. It’s an inclination in modern Christianity to think of the Christian experience in a self-centered way! It’s all about ME!]

—**to** [with] **those who love God**—believers

—**to those who are called according to His purpose**—there are no accidents or unknowns. God is moving the world according to His purpose and plan. For example, we know from Scriptures, that the world is going to get worse to culminate in the reign of the antichrist in the tribulation. So we can expect more wars, more cosmic events, etc. as we move in that direction. But this evil will end in good when Christ defeats it at His Second Coming and ushers in His glorious kingdom.

An Application—Believers who are suffering in this world as believers are working together with creation which also suffers (vv. 21-22), as labor pains, awaiting the day of glory when Christ returns. So it’s no longer my personal sufferings but rather ours and creation’s, preparing the way for the age to come when God’s glorious purpose will be revealed. [BTW, he is not talking about the suffering we bring on ourselves because of our own sinfulness.]

8:29—For those whom He foreknew—He knew us as if we already existed before we existed. Paul wrote, “[God] ...*saved us...not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity*” (2 Tim 1:9). It’s God’s purpose and grace that determined our salvation, not depending on His foreknowledge of our faith.

—**He also predestined** [caused—v. 28] **to become conformed to the image of His Son**—the “good” is defined as conformity to the image of Jesus Christ.

—**so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren**—Jesus is preeminent among believers (see verse 17).

8:30—and these whom He predestined, He also called—connected to verse 28, *called according to His purpose*. His plan in eternity past, but happening in the here and now.

—**and these whom He called, He also justified**—“*according to His great mercy has cause us to be born again*” (1 Peter 1:3). This is the main topic of 3:21–5:11, where the privileges of justification (5:1-2) lead to triumphant and hope-filled suffering (5:3-4).

—**and these whom He justified, He also glorified**—here Paul picks up the theme of “glory” mentioned first in v. 17, and developed in vv. 18-21.

8:31—What then shall we say to these things? A rhetorical question—there is nothing we can say in light of this overwhelming reality, that God’s relationship to us stretches from eternity past to eternity future. What He willed for us when He knew us in eternity past is something He is in the process of accomplishing right now, which is preparing us for the final stage of this whole experience, i.e., glorification.

—**If God is for us, who is against us?** Again, a rhetorical question—who can truly oppose God?

8:32—He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for [on behalf of] us all—since God made such an enormous sacrifice when He delivered His Son to suffer sin’s eternal consequences in full measure on the cross. This was worth more than all of creation put together!! So the greater benefit.....

—**how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?** Makes the lesser benefit reasonable, i.e., creation itself [*all things*—v. 28] in its glorified form because we are co-heirs with Christ, who is heir of all things. We will co-reign with Jesus (2 Tim 2:12; Rom 8:17; Rev 2:26-28; 3:21).

8:33—Who will bring a charge against God’s elect [chosen ones—see Eph 1:4]?—perhaps we are tempted to say that we are guilty and deserve the suffering we are experiencing.

—**God is the one who justifies**—declares us to be righteous [by faith, not works]

8:34—who is the one who condemns?—So we’ve come full circle back to verse 8:1, **there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**

—**Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God**—because our the price of our justification was Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension back to glory with the Father

—**who also intercedes for us**—although mentioned in Hebrews, Paul nowhere else in his epistles refers to Christ interceding for us (he did refer to the Holy Spirit doing that in v. 27). John wrote, “*we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...*” (1 John 2:1-2).

An Application—Perhaps Paul was even thinking of Satan’s accusation of Job, who suffered enormously. And Rev 12:10 says Satan still attempts that today. But in verse 38, Paul says neither angels, principalities nor powers can get through our Intercessor!!!

An Application—So we have both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ interceding for us. No wonder Paul can say the next verses.....

8:35—Who will separate us from the love of Christ?—...*Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me* (Gal 2:20). Now that we are justified, co-heirs with Christ, headed for glorification, who or what can separate us from Christ’s love?

—**Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**—These 7 things represent everyone and everything that causes our suffering.

8:36—Just as it is written in Psalm 44:20-21,

“FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG—like dying over and over all day long because of our suffering here on earth.

WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED,” usually on a day of feasting (1 Sam 25:1-11), it was expected the sheep would be slaughtered.

8:37—But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer—it’s the word *huper*, from which we get hyper, or super. We don’t just survive, we super-conquer, because we are

part of God's plan of ultimate glorification. *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ...for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal* (2 Cor 4:16-18).

—**through Him who loved us**—both God (v. 38) and Christ Jesus (v. 39).

8:38—For I am convinced—Paul brings this whole section (positional sanctification, experiential sanctification, and now ultimate sanctification) to a conclusion based on his complete conviction.

—**that neither death, nor life**—nothing in our experience of living, nor in the cessation of that experience

—**nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers**—no supernatural being, no matter its power (like the antichrist, for example)

—**nor things present, nor things to come**—nothing that exists now nor anything that will exist in the future (like the tribulation, for example)

8:39—nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing—nothing in the highest level of existence (Satan and demons, for example) or the lowest level, nor any other thing—which is everything, because only God is eternal and not created. Absolutely everything other than God is something created.

—**will be able to separate us from the love of God**—repeating verse 35, who or what will separate us from the love of God? Answer: nobody and nothing.

—**which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**—even persecution and suffering will not separate us from the love of God.

“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing.

.....

Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also,
The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever.”

Chapter 9 — The Call of God In the Past

Paul now moves from the triumphal assurance of our position in Christ to the depths of his sorrow over the spiritual condition of his kinsmen, the Jews. What are thrilling truths to us who believe are devastating to all unbelievers, especially unbelieving Jews, who felt secure in their racial heritage from Abraham and their legalistic ceremonies in rabbinical traditions.

9:1-2—I am telling the truth—Paul’s position was based in the truth of Jesus Christ.

—**in Christ**—as a believer in Jesus Christ

—**I am not lying**—in 11:31, Paul again says, “*The God and Father of the Lord Jesus... knows that I am not lying.*”

—**my conscience testifies with me**—This is very personal to Paul. Some may have thought he was against the Jews because he taught a Law-free gospel.

—**in the Holy Spirit**—speaking with the Holy Spirit testifying he is telling the truth

—**that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart**—those who have unbelieving loved ones know the sorrow and grief Paul feels in his heart for his own kinsmen.

9:3—For I could wish—not to be understood as an actual prayer or wish but “I almost wish” [based on an potential imperfect in Gk]

—**that I myself were accursed**—*anathema*, used only here at 1 Cor 12:3; 16:22; Gal 1:8-9

—**separated from Christ**—this is an exaggeration, expressing his deep emotion (especially as he saw the Gentiles gladly accepting Christ, but his own people rejecting Christ). Perhaps reminding us of the emotion of King David at the death of his son Absalom, “...if only I had died in your place!” (2 Sam 19:33).

—**for the sake of**—i.e., his desire for them to be saved

—**my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh**, the Jews, who were for the most part unbelieving and even hostile to the gospel.

9:4-5—who are Israelites—descendants of Jacob, whom God re-named Israel (Gen 35:10). Interestingly, the term *Israel/Israelite* occurs 12 times in chapters 9–11, but nowhere else in Romans.

An Application—for historical clarification—The Northern Nation of Israel (10 tribes) was taken captive to Assyria in 722 B.C. The Southern Nation of Judah (including the tribe of Benjamin) was taken captive to Babylon in 586 B.C. Judah, however (the word “Jew” derived from “one from the nation of Judah”), returned back to the Land after 70 years. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. At the time of the writing of Romans, therefore, the “Jew” would actually be from the tribe of Judah. [Often, however, “Jews” simply means the opposite of “Gentiles.”] Paul himself was of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5). (But at the beginning of chapter 9, Paul is talking about all the descendants of Jacob. [Side Note: The dispersion of the Jews and destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem happen in A.D. 70, after Paul’s lifetime.]

—**to whom belongs the adoption as sons**—Exodus 4:22-23; Deut 14:2, which is similar to the individual privilege which belongs to us as believers (Rom 8:15).

—**and the glory**—the glory of God appeared to the Israelites in a cloud after they left Egypt (Exodus 16:7, 10). Then He appeared at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:16-18), and at the opening of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35).

—**and the covenants**—the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12), the Mosaic Covenant at Mt. Sinai (Exo 19:5-8), the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7), and the New Covenant (Jer 31:31).

— **and the giving of the Law**—614 of them in Exodus, Numbers, and Leviticus

—**and the temple service**—including the Tabernacle tent and the Temple build by Solomon, and the Temple built by Nehemiah, renovated by Herod the Great, in existence at the time of Paul (destroyed in A.D. 70) along with the sacrifice system of worship

—**and the promises**—including the promise of the Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom, made to the Israelites as a nation

—**whose are the fathers**—as descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

—**and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh**—the nation of Israel produced “the Savior of the world” (John 4:22, 42). Jesus was a Jew.

—**who is over all**—The Eternal God, who rules over all things, became an Israelite. There is no higher privilege for any nation.

—**God blessed forever. Amen**—a sort of doxology at the end of Paul’s description of the special relationship of Israel with God, which intensifies his grief for their salvation.

9:6—But it is not as though the word of God has failed—this unbelief is consistent with Scripture and is part of God’s purposes related to mankind, as Paul will continue to show. So how do we account for Israel’s unbelief? By God’s selectivity (choosing), even at the time of the patriarchs, before there was a nation.

—(1) **For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel**—in 2:28-29, Paul said, “*he is not a Jew who is one outwardly...but he is a Jew who is one inwardly.*” From God’s perspective, God’s saving purpose does not include all of Israel in a biological sense, but a spiritual faith righteousness, in the heart. God’s intention from the beginning was a saved remnant from the nation, true all through Israel’s history.

9:7-9—(2) nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s [physical] **descendants**—this was God’s choice of Isaac over Ishmael.

—**but: “THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED”**—quoting Genesis 21:12. It’s by the announcement of God Himself that Isaac is designated as the “true” seed of Abraham, i.e., as the recipient of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-4).

—**That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God**—Isaac was a direct gift to Abraham through his miraculous birth (see Romans 4). Unbelieving Israelites, like Ishmael, can only speak of a physical connection with Abraham. Isaac is the biblical example of a chosen believer in God.

—**but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants**—Abraham even prayed to God that “*Ishmael might live before Thee!*” But God said, “*NO, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son...*” (Gen 17:18-19).

—**For this is the word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON”**—(Genesis 18:10, 14) Scripture itself distinguishes between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise, which was given twice to Abraham.

An Application—This is a significant example because the promise made to Abraham was way before he even had a son, and because both he and Sarah were so old, it took a miraculous birth. This all proved it was God’s choice, not a “natural” selection.

9:10-13—(3) And not only this—that Isaac was chosen on the basis of promise...

—**but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man**—whereas in the example of Isaac and Ishmael, two different mothers were involved, and someone

might say the choice was the status of the differing two mothers (one the master's wife, the other a slave), but now in this example, the parents of both Esau and Jacob are the very same.

—**our father Isaac**—the father of every Israelite. No Israelite was descended from Esau, though Isaac and Rebekah were his parents, too.

—**for though the twins were not yet born**—Rebekah was pregnant with twins—as equal as two people could possibly be.

—**and had not done anything good or bad**—the choice had nothing to do with the behavior or the character of either of them

—**so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand**—very strong in the Greek, “by choice purpose.” The purpose was based on God's choice and not on anything done or not done by the twins or their parents. It did not fluctuate with, nor was influenced by, what Esau and Jacob did or did not do after they were born. It was already announced and settled before their birth.

—**not because of works but because of Him who calls**—This is not talking about their salvation but simply re-emphasizing that natural, physical descent was not the basis for God's sovereign choice. Paul does not talk about why God chose Jacob over Esau. The fact that it is not revealed means it is none of our business.

—**it was said to her** [a prophecy] (Gen 25:23). It was already announced and settled. This prophecy had the purpose that God's choice before they were born would stand firm. This prophecy transcended all of the events that followed the birth of these twins.

—**“THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER”**—This is stated later by Isaac when Esau complains about losing the blessing (Gen 27:36). Isaac says, “*Indeed I have made him [Jacob] your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants...*” (Gen 27:37).

—**Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED”** (Malachi 1:2-3). Esau's heritage (the Edomites) was inferior to Jacob's (the Israelites). God “hated” Esau in the sense that He did not choose him to receive the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

These are three illustrations that show God's present dealings with the nation of Israel was never based on physical descent from the patriarchs, nor was it based on their works. It has always been based on God's purpose and His choice.

9:14—What shall we say then?—What should we therefore conclude about God?

—**There is no injustice with God, is there?** —Did God bypassing the firstborn sons, Ishmael and Esau, imply that God was arbitrary and unjust?

—**May it never be!** ! [Gk. *Mē genoito*—Unthinkable!! Inconceivable!! Inappropriate!!]

9:15—For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY—
Romans 9–11 contain 9 of the 11 uses of the root “mercy” in the epistle.

—**AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION”** [“grace”] (Exodus 33:19). It is part of the very glory of God to give mercy and grace upon whomever He wishes. It is our need, inadequacy, or failure that needs mercy in the first place. To make it a human entitlement is to destroy its gracious character and turn it into a divine obligation. [Hodges, *Romans*] Then we would be in charge of what God should do.

9:16—So then it does not depend on the man who wills [desires] **or the man who runs** [works], **but on God who has mercy**—Mercy does not occur simply because someone wishes it or strives for it. God, not humans, determines who receives His mercy, and it's for His purposes, not our purposes or desires. “...*God, who has saved us, not according to our*

works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (2 Timothy 1:9).

9:17—For the Scripture says to Pharaoh—We probably think Pharaoh deserved God's judgment. But here, Paul does not speak of Pharaoh's merits, or lack of them. Rather, God's demand to Pharaoh was, "*Let My people go...*" (Exodus 4:23; 5:1). And it is precisely this point on which God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Before Moses even went to see Pharaoh, God told him, "*...I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go*" (Exodus 4:21).

—“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”—But here we find God's reason for hardening Pharaoh's heart, that God's name would be glorified *throughout the whole earth*. This actually happens, as said in Joshua 2:9-10; 9:9; and 1 Samuel 6:6 (and we could say, even today, people know about the crossing of the Red Sea).

9:18—So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires—Paul's purpose here is not to justify what God did, but to insist that God has every right to do it. And the right to show mercy necessarily involves also the right not to show mercy.

9:19—You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?”—How could anyone do anything differently than His desire, and why would God blame us for what we do?

9:20—On the contrary [contrast, opposite], **who are you, O man, who answers back to God?**—Verse 19 is an inappropriate response, since it is the creature intruding into the counsel of his Creator. "Who do you think you are to answer God back?" Humans have extreme limitations on knowledge.

—The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?—The difference between the inanimate object and the human who molds it is absurd. Yet, the difference between the human and God is even greater and even more absurd.

An Application—This very issue is what Job asks. "*Then the Lord answered Job...and said, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”... “I will ask you, and you instruct Me! Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?”... “Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?”... “Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.”* (Job 38:1-4; 40:8; 41:11).

9:21—Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?—The potter has every right to do whatever he or she wants with the clay. No one questions that right.

9:22—What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels [humans] of wrath—unbelieving Israel must remain unbelieving because they are currently objects of God's wrath that He has poured out on the earth because of mankind's sin (chapter 1). Even here and now, God is patient and merciful—the full wrath of God has not yet fallen on this nation.

—**prepared** [Gk. past action with a continuing result] **for destruction** [“ruin”]?—That is not to say all Israelites are doomed to the lake of fire. But Israel itself was destroyed and living under God’s wrath for worshipping idols (and killing Jesus). This wrath was fulfilled in part in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the dispersion of the Jewish nation (after Paul’s lifetime). [But individual Israelites may respond in faith to the gospel, just as individual Gentiles may respond in faith.]

An Application—In the Bible, divine wrath [as in the curse] belongs to time and the earth, none of it belongs to eternity. The destiny of the lost in the lake of fire is an issue of justice, not an expression of God’s wrath. [Hodges, *Romans*]

9:23—And He did so—made His destructive power known
—**to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy**—there can be no mercy known without the vessels of wrath. Mercy is non-judgment. Adam did not receive mercy before he ate the fruit. *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:8).
—**which He prepared** [Gk. past action with a continuing result] **beforehand for glory**—as He did for the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction

An Application—Wrath to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, mercy to the Israelites. The Old Testament is often a record of God’s wrath against the enemies of His people, and His patience and mercy (lovingkindness) given to His people, even though they, too, turn away from Him.

9:24—even us, whom He also called—in 8:30—*“and these whom He predestined, He also called and these whom He called, He also justified”*—*“according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again”* (1 Peter 1:3)
—**not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles**—we, whom He also called, are the vessels of mercy to whom God is making known the riches of His glory (v. 23)—both from among the Jews and among the Gentiles. “God’s mercy has overleaped the boundaries of Israel itself and has gone out to the Gentile world.” [Hodges]

9:25-26—As [not equivalent to “fulfilled” but rather a simple conformity (“like”) with what Paul is talking about] **He says also in Hosea** [2:23; 1:9-10], **“I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED.’” “AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”**

—Scripture proves that those who were not God’s people can by God’s gracious act become His people. Emphasized here is that being the people of God is something brought about only by God’s invitation [calling], and His call can then completely transform what appeared to be a case of divine rejection into an object of love and privilege of being “sons of the Living God.”

9:27—Isaiah [10:22-23] **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**—God’s mercy to Israel is greatly reduced to just a segment of the whole nation. Jesus said, *“...for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads*

to life, and few are those who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Perhaps this knowledge is comforting to Paul's sorrow over the non-response to the Gospel among the Jews (9:2-3). Today, that remnant of Israel that is saved is within the church.

9:28—FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY"—this Isaiah passage is about the end times, the Tribulation, the judgment that will come upon the whole earth, and only the Jewish remnant (at least 144,000) will be physically saved to enter the Millennial Messianic Kingdom—some Gentiles, too.

9:29—And just as Isaiah [1:9] foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY ["survivors], WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH"—cities of devastating temporal judgment. But for God's mercy, Israel might be as completely wiped out as those two notorious cities. Again, fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation, as a remnant of Jews, who are saved, are left alive to go into the Messianic Kingdom. God's actions in the past and prophesied future.

The chain of quotations has established the fact that God who sovereignly gives mercy on whom He wishes (9:14-18) is acting now in a way consistent with Biblical revelation. He postpones His ultimate judgment on the vessels of wrath while dealing mercifully with the vessels of mercy, both Jewish and Gentile (9:19-24). The fact that there are just a remnant of Jews who believe and receive this mercy is predicted by both Hosea and Isaiah. [Hodges]

9:30—What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness—through a works system. They had no Law to conform to.
—attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith—They simply heard the message of salvation through Jesus Christ and many believed—faith-righteous.

9:31-32—but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law—the result of law-keeping is not righteousness (it's usually pride).
—Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works—the result of works is what you think you are due (Rom 4:4). You "earned" it.
—They stumbled over the stumbling stone, i.e. because He did not teach a works salvation. He said it takes faith, not works. They had to abandon their whole mentality of righteousness and how to obtain righteousness. In that respect, less of them will believe.

An Application—Anyone who thinks they are going to the presence of God via a works system has a lot to un-think in order to pursue it by faith. In that respect, the pagan who believes in nothing is more open to faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ for salvation.

9:33—just as it is written [in Isaiah 28:16], "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING [Gk. "collision," "to make contact with something in a bruising or violent way" (BDAG, p. 882)]

—AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE—arouses opposition.

—AND HE WHO BELIEVES [faith, understanding He is the truth] IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

Chapter 10 — Israel’s Present Rejection

10:1—Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God—our hearts’ desires often are turned into prayer to God.

—**for them is for their** [specifically, the Jews] **salvation** deliverance [as already mentioned, in Romans Paul is talking about the current state of God’s wrath in the world, not about eternal life, an unfortunate translation, as the word “salvation” usually connects with hell in people’s minds]. Also, the lake of fire (commonly known as “hell”) is not a place of God’s wrath. It is a place of His justice. His wrath takes place on earth. The unbelieving world is living in a state of the wrath of God, as is evidenced by wars, murders, etc.—the consequences of not honoring and worshipping the Creator God (Rom 1–3).

10:2—For I testify about them [the Jews] **that they have a zeal for God**—Paul himself had a zeal for God when, as an unbelieving Pharisee, he jailed and even killed Christians (Acts 22:3; Gal 1:14).

—**but not in accordance with knowledge**—zeal is often the greatest barrier to true knowledge.

An Application—When a person is driven by feelings or emotions, those often become the enemy of knowledge. And they believe the feelings or emotions trump knowledge. Knowledge of the truth, of course, should result in a zeal for the God of truth.

10:3—For not knowing about God’s righteousness—which comes “*through faith in Jesus Christ, which is for all and is upon all who believe*” (3:22).

—**and seeking to establish their own**—a works’ righteousness by the works of the Law, which Paul already said was a futile effort, for “*by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified*” (3:20). So not only were they ignorant of God’s righteousness, they were ignorant of their own unrighteousness. Therefore, there was no need for a Messiah to deliver them.

—**they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God**— We make God and/or Jesus into what we want Him to be rather than letting Him make us into what He wants us to be, which requires subjecting ourselves to Him.

An Application—The Jews accepted the Rabbinic Talmud as the explanation of the Torah (Law). The Talmud reduced the Torah down to keepable laws, which produced their version of righteousness. Today, we have paraphrases, dynamic equivalents, movies, books, podcasts, youtubes, all things that reduce God’s righteousness in His Word into something keepable, and we end up not subjecting ourselves to the righteousness of God.

10:4—For Christ is the end [goal] **of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes**—The Law could not make anyone righteous because a person would have to keep it perfectly (James 2:10). Only Jesus did that, 1500 years after it was given.

10:5—For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness—The Law demands absolute perfection in every detail. James wrote, “*Whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all*” (James 2:10). The Law could not give righteousness and the Law could not give life. Paul also wrote, “*For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law*” (Gal 3:21).

10:6-7—*But* [contrast] **the righteousness based on faith**—as Paul has been presenting in Romans

—These are not quotations from Scripture but rather using terminology Jews would be familiar with, building on Deuteronomy 30.

—**speaks as follows: “DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART**—because it is “*with the heart a person believes*” (v. 10). One who has faith-righteousness will not say in their heart...

—**‘WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?’ (that is, to bring Christ down**—because He did already come down from heaven.

—**or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)**—because we already know Jesus was resurrected from the dead

10:8—*But what does it* [faith-righteousness] **say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART”**—faith is available, no matter who you are or where you are. You do not have to be a Jew and have the Law. Faith-righteousness is near everyone. —**that is, the word of faith which we are preaching proclaiming**—the spoken word. The gospel is special revelation that has to be proclaimed in words.

An Application—We do not need to go someplace special or be with a special priest to find Christ. Yet most religions, even “Christian” ones, want to seemingly “control” where Christ’s presence is. Paul wrote, “*The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands*” (Acts 17:24). Jesus is “*near you...in your heart.*”

10:9—**that if you confess with your mouth**—this is not an one-time event. This is not a salvation decision. In keeping with the context of the book, 1:19-22 described people who “suppressed” the truth about God. Here, Paul is saying one needs to freely and often express the truth about God, and not be ashamed, as Paul will go on now to explain.

—**Jesus as Lord**—you do not make Him Lord of your life. He is already Lord. You acknowledge what He already is. “*In Him all things hold together*” (Col 1:17).

—**and believe** [faith-righteousness] **in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**

An Application—Paul also wrote, “*if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins*” (1 Cor 15:12-20). It’s only a martyr’s death, if Christ is not raised.

—**you will be saved delivered**—from God’s wrath on unbelievers

10:10—**for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness**—if you understand it is true, you believe it, you have faith (belief) righteousness (as opposed to works righteousness).

—**and with the mouth he confesses**—acknowledging Jesus as Lord, Creator, rather than suppressing this truth, resulting in God’s wrath (1:18).

—**resulting in salvation—deliverance** from the wrath of God. Whether Jew or Gentile, whoever continues to suppress the truth about God cannot expect to be delivered from God’s wrath. For example, the emotional and psychological trauma of homosexuality and transgenderism, as they are reaping the results of those decisions and actions, God’s wrath, when they exchange the truth about God for a lie. Jesus said, “*He who created them from the beginning made them male and female*” (Matt 19:4). This was before the Fall.

Before the curse. When they suppress the truth and exchange the truth of God for lies, God gives them over to that hardening. Pharaoh hardened his heart, then God hardened it.

An Application—Neither Paul nor the rest of the NT requires confession as a condition for receiving everlasting life (see Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8-9; 1 Tim 1:16).

10:11—For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES [faith-righteousness] IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED” Ashamed [Gk]. As Paul said of himself, “*I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation [deliverance] to everyone who believes [faith-righteousness], to the Jew first and also to the Greek*” (Rom 1:16).

10:12—For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all—all human beings are equally under the Lordship of Christ. He created them, He died for them, and He will one day judge them—without distinction.

—**abounding in riches**—as he said in 9:23; God “*desires to make known the wealth of His glory upon the vessels of mercy.*”

—**for all who call on** [appeal to Him as the Lord He truly is] **Him**—see 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22. To those who habitually confess Him as the God He truly is. It marks them as believers in Jesus Christ.

10:13—for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED”—delivered from Divine wrath of God He has on all unbelievers, who suppress the truth about Him. This is a statement from Joel 2:32. There, whoever appeals to the Lord will be delivered from the wrath of the Tribulation and enter into the blessing of the Millennial Kingdom. Here Paul uses it the same way, only delivered from God’s current wrath on the earth against those who suppress the truth about Him.

An Application—When Christ is in your life, you don’t lie, you don’t steal, you are not unkind, you are forgiving, you do not complain.....consequently, you live a life of inner peace with God. To practice sin is to live with the consequences (wrath) of God against that sin. Israel itself was living under the wrath of God—Who turned away from them and to the Gentiles.

10:14—How then will they call on [appeal to] **Him in whom they have not believed?**—who have no faith-righteousness? First comes belief [faith-righteousness], then comes the appeal to Christ (see v. 12).

An Application—The riches of Christ abound only to those who appeal to Him (v. 12), but they have to believe (faith-righteousness) before they can appeal.

—**How will they believe** [have faith-righteousness] **in Him whom they have not heard?**
—**And how will they hear without a preacher [proclaimer]?**

10:15—How will they preach [proclaim] unless they are sent?—they must be sent by God with this message, much as Paul was called by God with this message (1:1).

—**Just as it is written** [in Isaiah 52:7], “**HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!**”—if a person believes (faith-righteousness), of course, they are so happy with this good news of deliverance from wrath.

10:16—However, they did not all heed the good news—the good news was near to them (specifically, the Jews), it was proclaimed to them, but it was not united with faith-righteousness.

—for Isaiah says [52:13–53:12], **“LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED [faith-righteousness] OUR REPORT?”**—Isaiah reveals the rejection of Messiah and His suffering, and the Jews’ rejection of their Messiah. The Jews not only rejected the message, they rejected the proclaimer of the Good News.

10:17—So faith[-righteousness] **comes from hearing** [“the message” or “the report” of the Good News of verse 16],

—and hearing [the message] by the word of Christ [some Gk. texts say “God”]. So the Good News message of deliverance from His wrath comes right from God Himself.

10:18—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”—Notice Paul does not say he is quoting [as he says, “for Isaiah says” in verse 16]. It is similar to the universal testimony of creation in Psalm 19:4, but Paul’s meaning here is that the Gospel message is universal. It’s gone out to the ends of the world.

10:19—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”—The Jewish inclination to resist and reject the Gospel because so many Gentiles have believed (Acts 13:45-51).

10:20-21—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 I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE.”— Paul started this unit of 10:1-21 in 9:30-31. God allowed Himself to be found by the Gentiles in obtaining a righteousness by faith that they were not seeking. Israel rejected this same righteousness.

Chapter 11 – Israel’s Future Salvation

11:1—*I say then*—introducing first sub-unit (vv. 1-10)

—*God has not rejected His people, has He?*—after the description of Israel’s unbelieving state, this question naturally comes up. Is God, therefore, done with Israel?

An Application—Many do claim that God has rejected the Jews, even some Christians who teach “replacement theology,” that the church has replaced Israel, therefore, all the promises made to Israel (rather than having a literal future fulfillment) are spiritually fulfilled in the church. *Mē genoito!* This completely contradicts Romans 11 !!!!

—*May it never be!*— *Mē genoito!*

—*For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin*—this is a literal, physical description. The tribe of Benjamin was absorbed into Judah, taken to the Babylonian Exile and returned back to the Land.

An Application—Notice how Paul, even after his new birth in Christ, still claims for himself that he was one the Israelites, descendants of Abraham. Paul was living proof that God has not rejected His ancient people the Jews.

11:2—*God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew*—God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as Paul has described in chapter 9. He cannot “unchoose” those He chose (also see 4:19-22).

—*Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah* [1 Kings 19:9-18, who lived in the 800s B.C.], ***how he pleads with God against Israel?***—In Elijah’s day, there were also just a few who believed in God. So few, in fact, Elijah actually thinks he was the only believer left.

11:3—“*Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS*—the messengers from God!!

—*THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS*—rejection of worship of God

—*AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE*”—Elijah thinks he is the only messenger of God left, and they are trying to kill him!!

11:4—*But what is the Divine response to him?*—a direct statement from God to Elijah

— “*I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN* [males] *WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL***”—which would be even more counting their households with wives and children. God had information not available to Elijah.**

An Application—Reminding us of how different God’s perspective and information is than our own. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isaiah 55:9).

11:5—*In the same way then*—Paul now applies Elijah’s experience—***there has also come to be at the present time***—to their current situation.

—*a remnant*—just as God preserved a remnant for Himself at the time of Elijah, so He is preserving now a remnant for Himself from Israel.

—*according to God’s gracious choice*—“the choice God made in grace,” i.e. those who did believe were God’s choice to be a remnant belonging to Him from within an unbelieving

nation of Israel. He chose to have mercy on some (like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) ... although the nation went into exile.

An Application—While both sovereignty and free will are clearly taught by Paul, the precise interplay between them is never addressed anywhere in his letters. It remains a mystery to us. We do not have enough information to understand it. But do not trump one to negate the other. Both are 100% true.

11:6—But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace—if it's grace, it's not works. If it's works, it's not grace. There is no mixing of grace and works without destroying the character of both.

11:7—What then? —therefore, the conclusion...

—**What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained**—because they were seeking righteousness by works of the Law

—**but those who were chosen obtained it**—faith-righteousness, thus demonstrating that God has not cast away His people. And He has chosen this remnant to demonstrate this fact.

—**and the rest were hardened**—works-righteousness hardens people to the truth of grace

11:8—just as it is written [primarily in Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah; 29:10],

—**“GOD GAVE THEM**—God is responsible for their stupor and blindness and deafness

—**A SPIRIT OF STUPOR**— “unable to think”

—**EYES TO SEE NOT**—

—**AND EARS TO HEAR NOT**—do not hear the gospel. Also in Matthew 13:14-15 and Acts 28:26-27.

—**DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY**—Few believed in God in the Old Testament—Joshua and Caleb vs. the other ten spies, for example, and few believed at the time of Christ. They were trying to throw Him off a cliff, kill Him—actually, in their hatred they did kill Christ. That hatred by the Jews carried over into the early days of the church (Acts 7–8).

11:9—And David says (Psalm 69:22-23),

“LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,

AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM—possibly the blessings of God on the Jews in David's day lured them into a feeling of worthiness, turning the Law into a works system that they could keep. So the blessings became a snare.

11:10—“LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED [blinded] **TO SEE NOT,**

AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER”—backs bent from heavy burden of works

11:11—I say then—introducing second sub-unit (vv. 11-27)

—**they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?** —Did this mean Israel no longer exists as a national entity with the covenants of God from the Old Testament?

—**May it never be!**—*Mē genoito!*

—**But** [instead] **by their transgression salvation [deliverance] has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.** So God's mercy to the Gentiles is not for the Gentiles' sake alone, but to stir up the Jews so they, too, can obtain mercy.

An Application—If the church was Jewish, the Gentiles would have needed to become Jews also to be saved (as they did in the Old Testament). But the church is neither Jew nor Greek. It's a new creation (Eph 2:11-22).

11:12—Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!—There are so many passages on the blessings on Israel during the Messianic Kingdom, whose riches will overflow to the whole world (Isaiah 60:1-3; 62:1-3; Micah 4:1-4; Zech 8:11-13, 20-23).

11:13—But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify [maximize—highly visible display] **my ministry**—Paul did not focus on his Gentile ministry only because he was ignoring the Jews but...

11:14—if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save deliver some of them—He had the same goal as God did. He wanted the Jews to say, “We want that, too.”

11:15—For if their rejection [nationally, Israel has been set aside] **is the reconciliation of the world**—5:10-11, peace with God, because Israel rejected Jesus, He died, and the world was changed so that they are able to be saved. The issue is no longer sin, that was paid for on the cross, the issue now is what will they do with Jesus?

—what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?—so dramatic would be the restoration of Israel (in the Messianic Kingdom), like raising someone from the dead.

11:16—If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also—the remnant believing is like the first piece of dough, looking forward to the day of the Messianic Kingdom when all Israel will be delivered—11:26 (remember—the kingdom begins with all believers). Looking forward.....

—and if the root is holy [Abraham's faith, their origin], **the branches are too**—Abraham's descendants. Looking backward.....

11:17—But—the Greek word here is not a contrast but rather a new direction, “Now, then.”

—if some of the branches were broken off—the Gospel is reaching the Gentile world.

—and you, being a wild olive—one that is not cultivated, the Gentile world that had never received the special efforts God made through Jewish history to spiritually cultivate His chosen people.

—were grafted in among them—the Gentiles brought nothing of spiritual value, no history of the character and works of God.

—and became partaker with them—the Gentiles share in the spiritual advantages the Jews have and the knowledge of God's care and purpose for the Jewish nation.

—of the rich root of the olive tree—the Scriptures, even the NT, are written by Jewish men (some think Luke was a Gentile, but what we know is he wrote to a Gentile). Even Jesus Himself was a Jew. All this is the rich root of the tree.

11:18—do not be arrogant—Pride from common belief (even today) was that God's rejection of Israel for its unbelief was a permanent state of affairs. But Paul shows that it is temporary.

—toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you—From Moses to the Apostle John, the writers of the Bible were Jewish, the apostles were Jewish, the future kingdom is Jewish.

11:19—You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that [purpose] I might be grafted in”—This is not legitimate grounds for pride. They were broken off because of their unbelief, not so the Gentiles would believe.

11:20—Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief—not because of works **—but you stand by your faith**—what the Jews lost because of their unbelief, the Gentiles gained by faith, and they now stand by faith, remaining in the olive tree.
—Do not be conceited—this has nothing to do with the individual’s perseverance in the faith. He’s talking about the collective personification of the Gentiles.

11:21—but fear—for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either—if the Gentile world ceases to be an instrument for the gospel, God could return His focus to Israel. This will happen in the Tribulation. The church will already be gone—Raptured. The believers are 144,000 Jews (Rev. 14).

An Application—Much of what passes as Christianity today is not Biblical Christianity at all. Just as Judaism rejected the Gospel, so does the Gentile world. The Gentile failure is more and more evident as time passes. Paul wrote, *“preach the Word!...For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth...”* (2 Tim 4:2-4).

11:22—Behold then the kindness [their present privilege—Gentile Christians] **and severity of God** [unbelieving Jews]; **to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness,**
—if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off—God’s kindness collectively to the Gentiles, as the primary instrument for the spread of the Gospel.

11:23—And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief—i.e., they come to God in faith, not works of the Law.
—will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again—as the instrument of God in spreading the Gospel.

An Application—At the Rapture, the (primarily) Gentile church will be “cut off” from its administrative responsibilities (God reps) on earth, and at that time, Israel will once again have the mediatorial representative responsibility on earth (i.e., a change in administration/dispensation). We can observe that future prophecy is about the antichrist trying to annihilate the Jews.

11:24—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—Gentiles were wild by nature, ignorant, lacking spiritual cultivation that God administrated for centuries to Israel.

An Application—Key to Paul’s discussion is that there is no room on the tree for both kinds of branches! The natural ones need to be removed in order to graft in the wild ones. Then

the wild ones need to be removed in order to graft back in the natural ones. For sure, this is teaching (1) the church does not replace Israel [the natural branches do not become wild branches], and (2) there is still a future for Israel [the wild branches do not become natural branches]!!

—how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?—in fact, Paul says that will happen (vv. 25-27), when Israel recognizes Jesus as their Savior and Messiah. This is not a new tree—it's their own olive tree, based on their own history with God.

11:25—For I do not want you, brethren—Paul wants the believers to be informed **—to be uninformed of this mystery** —a mystery is something that has not been previously revealed (uninformed). But now is known.

—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—i.e., to think they are somehow better or wiser than the Jews (based on being uninformed) because they are branches.

—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel—some Jews have believed (and are part of the church age)

—until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in—this precise numerical extent of fullness is a figure known only to God, but whenever that figure is reached, God will turn once again to His purposes with Israel.

An Application—So we see that the hardening of Israel is partial and temporary. They had a past and they will have a future. The church has not replaced Israel. The church is also temporary, and with no future (on earth). It disappears from the earth at the Rapture.

11:26—and so all Israel will be saved [delivered from God's wrath of the Tribulation]—at the end of the Tribulation, when Jesus returns, Jewish rebels will be killed as will be the rest of the unbelievers (Ezek 20:34-38; Rev 19:21). Those Jews left alive are all believers, who are delivered into the Messianic Kingdom (such as the 144,000 Jews in Rev 14).

—just as it is written [Isaiah 59:20-21]—prophecy proves a literal interpretation of the written Scripture.

—“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION—the Second Coming of Jesus, a Jew, will deliver the Jews from the wrath of God (as we've been observing throughout Romans). See Zech 12:10.

—HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB [all 12 tribes]”—“ungodliness” is the same word used in Romans 1:18, *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*

11:27—“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS”—The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-37) is *with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...and I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*” This is possible, of course, because Jesus died to pay for their sin.

11:28—From the standpoint of the gospel [they are] enemies for your sake—there are no verbs in the Greek. Paul is summarizing. The Jews are now the enemies of the Gospel so that the Gospel can come to the Gentiles.

—but from the standpoint of God's choice [they are] beloved for the sake of the fathers—But from God's point of view, they are beloved because of God's commitment to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

11:29—*for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*—God will not and cannot go back on His promises to the Jewish patriarchs. The failure of Israel in Paul’s day (and in ours) in no way diminish their standing and privileges in God’s sight.

11:30-31—*For just as*—two clauses that correlate to each other
—***you*** [Gentile believers] ***once were disobedient to God but now*** [church age] ***have been shown mercy because of their*** [Jewish] ***disobedience***
—***so these also now have been disobedient that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy***—during the Tribulation, when the Jews will believe in Jesus.

11:32—*For God has shut up all in disobedience*—all are on the same level—disobedience to God
—***so that He may show mercy***—mercy found only in Jesus Christ, for both Jews and Gentiles
—***to all***—the bottom line with both the Jew and Gentile—all have become potential objects of God’s mercy, as a result of their disobedience. Mercy will overtake Israel just as it has overtaken the Gentiles. The gospel is *for the Jew first and for the Greek*” (1:16).

11:33—*Oh, the depth* [1] ***of the riches both*** [2] ***of the wisdom and*** [3] ***knowledge of God!***—Paul is moved by the depths God is above all the tragedy and evil of human disobedience and unbelief—of all humans, both Jews and Gentiles.
—***How unsearchable*** [Gk. “untraceable] ***are His judgments*** [that Israel will one day be restored] ***and unfathomable*** [mercy to the Gentiles] ***His ways*** [such a plan]!

11:34—*For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?* —Isaiah 40:13; Job 41:11. All this was in no way the result of a human counselor or advice from anyone.

11:35—*Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?* God’s actions were only a product of His mercy.

11:36—*For from Him and through Him*—God is the Divine source of everything.
— ***and to Him are all things***— And everything is done for His own interests
—***To Him be the glory forever***—God deserves the glory, not just now, but forever
—***Amen***—This is the climax of the discussion begun in 9:1. A doxology of sorts.

Chapter 12 – Being Transformed

- In the first main unit (1:18–8:39), Paul dealt with the role of the Law in the gospel. It cannot be, nor was it ever intended to be, a means of justification before God or a tool for effective Christian living.
- In the second main unit (9:1–11:36), Paul showed that Israel was not permanently set aside. Israel is beloved for the sake of the Patriarchs, and God's promises to them are irrevocable, they will one day again be the object of God's mercy.
- Now in this unit (12:1–15:13), Paul appeals to his readers to live lives that reflect God's mercy on them.

12:1—Therefore I urge you, brethren—for the first time in Romans, Paul gives a direct command for the actual personal behavior of the believer.

—**by the mercies of God**—the “mercy” of God occurs 11 times in Romans and connects this section with everything he has written so far. How much mercy has God given you?

—**to present your bodies a living**—in 6:11, he wrote, consider yourself to be “*dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” By the Spirit's power, we can “*walk in newness of life*” (6:4). The deeds of the body are put to death, but the body itself is living because it is alive with the very life of God.

—**and holy sacrifice**—although Paul does not refer to being a priest, we are to live in an atmosphere of holy priestly activity.

—**acceptable** [pleasing] **to God,**

—**which is your spiritual** [Gk. “reasonable,” “mental,” “true”]

—**service** [occurs 5 times in Romans 6 (vv. 13 (2x), 16, 19 (2x), here, and in 14:10; 16:2)]. It means “put at someone's disposal” [BDAG, p. 778]

—**of worship**—devotion to God

12:2—And do not be conformed to this world—a negative described in 8:5-7. Do not have a mind-set on the things of the flesh, hostile to God. This would be outward behavior.

—**but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**—this is a positive process of spiritual change accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit (see 8:1-13; 2 Cor 3:18). It is a renovation of your understanding that will then transform your behavior.

—**so that you may prove**—discover or discern, it does not deal with finding out God's will but with doing it. Doing God's will results in an experiential demonstration of its excellence.

—**what the will of God is**—when we actually perform the will of God in our lives, we will discover that His will is...

—**that which** [all three are united] **is good** [excellent] **and acceptable** [pleasing] **and perfect** [superior, complete]

12:3—For through the grace given to me—although Paul was an apostle, and had an apostle's authority, he saw himself as an object of the grace of God.

—**I say to everyone among you**—first, a believer should have the proper perspective of one's role among other believers

—**not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think**—“to set one's mind on, be intent on,” to think one's spiritual gifts are badges of status within Christianity

—**but to think so as to have sound judgment**—sensibly assess their giftedness

—**as God has allotted to each a measure of faith**—God does not give every gift to every person. God determines the role each person will have within the Body of Christ (1 Cor

12:13-31). Don't aspire beyond the spiritual status that God assigned. However, in addition to our spiritual gifts, we are to practice all the gifts when given an opportunity.

12:4—For just as we have many members in one body—believers in the body of Christ are similar to the parts of a physical body

—and all the members do not have the same function—whether it's your physical body or the body of believers, there are a variety of functions performed by these members

12:5—so we, who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another—we are all part of a team, part of one body, so we should collaborate

12:6—Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us—the gifts are according to what God gives, grace=gift. And God is so creative, giving different gifts.

—each of us is to exercise them accordingly—the Body of Christ benefits when every gift is actually exercised.

—if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith—prophecy must be tested (1 Cor 14:29). True prophecy must be in agreement with the faith (Bible). It is a speaking gift.

12:7—if service, in his serving—an activity, which would be different in different circumstances (for example, to widows (Acts 6:1-6); orphans (James 1:27) or to the sick (1 Thess 5:14).

—or he who teaches, in his teaching—one must study and know the true knowledge of the Bible (Nehemiah 8:5, 8), "*handling accurately the Word of truth*" (2 Tim 2:15), explaining the truth of God's Word.

12:8—or he who exhorts, in his exhortation—consoling, encouragement, response to the truth, motivating

—he who gives, with liberality—giving with generosity (2 Cor 8:9), "*...not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Cor 9:7).

—he who leads, with diligence—eager, readiness to expend energy and effort

—he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness—kindness to someone in need, with graciousness (better translation)

12:9—Let love be without hypocrisy—love is primary (1 Cor 13), but it is too easy to hypocritically profess love while disguising hostility or selfishness in the heart.

—Abhor what is evil—don't let love soften one's attitude toward evil. Sadly, this happens too much. The family (or friend) relationship is more important to maintain than to take a stand against what is evil in God's eyes (things like fornication, adultery, homosexuality). But remember, someone who claims to be a Christian has a different responsibility than someone who is an unbeliever. Do not hold an unbeliever to Christian morality.

—cling [be devoted] **to what is good**—particularly for those who are loved.

12:10—Be devoted to one another in brotherly love—a real feeling for the worth and welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ

—give preference to one another in honor—honor one another above yourself, profound respect for each other, lead the way (show the way) of giving honor to one another

12:11—not lagging behind in diligence—“earnest commitment in discharge of an obligation or in experience of a relationship” [BDAG, p. 939]

—**fervent in spirit**—to be stirred up emotionally, excited, zealous, “enthusiastic and diligent devotion in pursuit of a cause, idea, or goal” [BDAG, p. 1405]

—**serving the Lord**—diligence and zealous efforts (1 Cor 7:22-23; Col 3:22-23).

12:12—rejoicing in hope—expectation, anticipation of future reward (1 Cor 3:11-15)

—**persevering in tribulation**—endure, bearing up under hardship and suffering

—**devoted to prayer**—so valuable, especially at times of stress (1 Thess 5:17)

12:13—contributing to the needs of the saints—alleviating the material needs of other Christians

—**practicing hospitality**—a manifestation of Christian love and meeting the needs of other believers

12:14—Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse—mostly this would come from non-believers, but not necessarily. When we are tempted to use harsh and disparaging language either about them or to their face, instead express that God’s goodness would be theirs.

12:15—Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep—possess true sympathy. Desire emotions that are appropriate to the circumstances of others.

12:16—Be of the same mind toward one another—desire that others should experience what we ourselves would like to experience.

—**do not be haughty in mind** (reputation), **but associate with the lowly**—Gk. inter-personal relations, be humble and associate with poorer people

—**Do not be wise in your own estimation**—social climbers, one who actually believes they are special and should impress other people

12:17—Never pay back evil for evil to anyone—no exception. Impulses and rationalizations are easy to come by. “They deserve it!”

—**Respect** [make provision] **what is right in the sight of all men**—stop and think of how what you say or do will be perceived by others (either believers or unbelievers). Conflicts can be reduced if one is careful to give a little forethought as to how their actions will be perceived.

12:18—If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men—peace may not always be possible, but at least we should seek that the cause for the conflict does not lie within ourselves. Can we say, “I, for my part, have no hostility against him/her.”

12:19—Never take your own revenge, beloved—revenge aims for a balancing of accounts, how the score ought to be settled.

—**but leave room for the wrath of God**—maybe we are afraid God will show mercy!!

—**for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord** [Deut 32:35]—Our own inappropriate revenge may short-circuit what God would otherwise do Himself. Revenge is what God does, not what we are to do. For one thing, we do not have all the information and wisdom God has.

12:20-21—“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.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Be an overcomer!

Chapter 13 – Relating to Society

13:1—Every person—Paul makes no exceptions here. **Every person**—that includes us, too.

—is to be in subjection [submit to] **to the governing authorities**—for sure, there must be some of the Roman believers who were very resentful of the Roman power, so probably shocking that Paul said this.

—For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God—Here’s Paul’s reasoning. It’s not just that God “allows” governments, God establishes or arranges them, put in place (even though we elect them in America). God “rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Daniel 4:25).

13:2—Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God—opposing government is opposing God. There is no Biblical authorization to disobey it.

—and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves—Paul does not make it clear here if the condemnation comes from the government or from God.

An Application—This does not authorize an earthly official to command direct disobedience to God. If that happens, Peter said, “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). When the human command conflicts with the Divine command, the Divine command is to take precedence. However, there could still be consequences of disobeying the government. For example, there is much martyrdom of saints during the reign of the antichrist in the tribulation (Rev. 6:9).

13:3—For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil—If you do not break the law, even if it is a bad law, you have no consequences to fear.

—Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good [i.e., obey the law] **and you will have praise from the same**—being law-abiding may even result in praise from the government.

13:4—for it is a minister of God to you for good—even what we would call evil governments can be for some good. For example, under Communism in Romania, there was no stealing. You could leave your purse on the park bench, come back an hour later, and it would still be there.

—But if you do what is evil [do not obey the law], **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**—so in an evil world, God has chosen governments to control the evil. Of course, when the law and government are evil, as a believer, you may end up disobeying that law, and it will result in punishment. Obeying God, but disobeying the government, will still result on the consequences of disobeying the government. Also under Communism, it was illegal for Christians to gather to study the Bible. So we were often afraid of getting caught for disobeying the government.

An Application—When mankind was left to itself, “*wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gen 6:5). After the Flood, God established governments, “*from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed*” (Gen 9:5-6), establishing capital punishment for murder. Of course, the totally righteous government will exist under the Messianic King, where again “*wrath on the one who practices evil.*”

13:5—Therefore it is necessary [*Anankē*—where we get English anarchy—rebellion, mutiny, insurrection] **to be in subjection**—to obey laws of government. Those who do not obey are seen as insurrectionists or in rebellion. It's anarchy.

—**not only because of wrath**—of the government because of disobedience (v. 4)

—**but also for conscience' sake**—knowing that governments are in place by the hand of God (v. 1-2).

13:6—For because of this—fear of government and conscience's sake before God

—**you also pay taxes**—tax collectors were (and “are”?) notorious for overcharging and enriching themselves with the additional funds (for example, Zaccheus in Luke 19:2-8).

—**for rulers are servants of God**—they asked Jesus, “*Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?*” Jesus answered, “...*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*” (Matt 22:21).

—**devoting themselves to this very thing**—i.e., as servants of God (though they, of course, are totally unaware of this very thing).

13:7—Render [to do, pay] **to all what is due** [owed] **them: tax to whom tax is due**—not just specific taxes, but all taxes

—**custom to whom custom**—a type of toll tax (Matt 17:24-27)

—**fear to whom fear**—if you do not pay your taxes

—**honor to whom honor**—tax collectors are doing their jobs. Respect that.

13:8—Owe nothing to anyone—Paul generalizes that whatever anyone owes to anyone, it should be paid, our overall financial obligations (Matt 5:42; Luke 6:35).

—**except to love one another**—what is owed to others, especially believers, is love [*agape*, giving without expecting return]—1 Cor 16:14; 2 Cor 2:8; 8:24; Gal 5:13; Eph 1:15; 4:2, 15, 16; Phil 2:2; 1 Thess 4:9

—**for he who loves his neighbor**—a lawyer asked Jesus, “*Who is my neighbor?*” Then Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan, the answer is to BE the neighbor, not look for the neighbor (Luke 10:29-37). Give to the one who comes across your path, who needs help, especially if they are a Christian.

—**has fulfilled the law**—not that they have kept all the law perfectly, but love is doing what the law requires.

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”—Love does not produce what is bad for a neighbor. These commands are all designed to prevent wrong treatment of another (one's neighbor).

13:10—Love does—this is not a “feeling” love, it is *agape* love, it is DOING. It is the supreme Christian virtue (1 Cor 13:13).

—**no wrong** [harm] **to a neighbor**—

—**therefore love is the fulfillment of the law**—As Jesus said, “*You shall love the Lord your God'...this is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law...*” (Matt 22:37-40). But loving God is #1. Some people put #2 as #1. Their relationship with people as more important than obeying the morality of God. For example, they will let their

adult child sleep in their house with a girlfriend (or boyfriend) who is not their spouse, committing fornication, in trying “to keep” the relationship.

13:11—Do this—love one another (v. 8)

—**knowing the time**—the imminent return of our Lord Jesus, the Rapture—1 Thess 4:11-15

—**that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep**—don’t be lulled to sleep (spiritually) by the pleasures of this world or be influenced by those who suggest the Lord may not return at all.

—**for now salvation [deliverance (from the wrath of God on earth)] is nearer to us than when we believed**—each passing day in the faith brings the Rapture ever closer and the glorification Paul talked of in 8:23-25

An Application—The process of deliverance (5:9) begins with our present life in the Spirit (8:13, 23), but the consummation of this deliverance happens at the coming of Jesus.

13:12—The night [of spiritual darkness in the world] **is almost gone, and the day is near**—the time has moved on, getting closer to the reign of righteousness. All prophecy is closely tied to time.

—**Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness** [night clothes] **and put on the armor of light** [day clothes]—live a life of righteousness, so you will look forward to the coming of our Lord.

13:13—Let us behave properly as in the day—Paul is urging the readers to behave as if the day was already here and they were living in it.

—**not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy**—the deeds of darkness

13:14—But [instead] **put on** [like a garment] **the Lord Jesus Christ**—the positive

—**and make no provision**—that is, do not set your mind on (see 8:1-13; 12:1-2)

—**for the flesh in regard to its lusts**—of verse 13. The negative.

An Application—Do not set your mind on the things of the flesh and its lusts. Whatever you think about, you will end up doing. The Christian should not spend time thinking about how he/she could or would facilitate the sinful desires of their flesh. Our mental and moral focus should be on Jesus Christ.

Chapter 14 – Dealing with the Weak in Faith

14:1—Now accept—“to receive into one’s home or circle of acquaintances” [BADG, p. 883]
—**the one who is weak in faith**—definitely believers, but probably a temporary condition, due to their lack of knowledge and application of Scripture (a new believer, for example).
—**but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions**—not those drawn directly from God’s Word. Opinions are about conclusions drawn from a person’s own thought processes, not things specifically stated in the Word. We don’t accept them with the goal or purpose of correcting them.

An Application—Of course, Paul is not referring to moral or doctrinal compromise. However, although a particular matter is not in itself wrong, it can easily lead to doing what is actually wrong. For example, it may be a person’s friendship with an unbeliever who can lead the weak believer into sin.

14:2—One person has faith that he may eat all things—including meat. The mature believer knows I Timothy 4:3-4, where some “...advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude.” But here in Romans, the issue is a weak believer, who maybe doesn’t even know these verses in Timothy.

—**but he who is weak eats vegetables only**— possibly from pre-Christian opinions, such as Jews not eating pork, for example, or not eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8:1-8). The reason for their opinions is not the issue here.

14:3—The one who eats is not to regard with contempt [to despise] **the one who does not eat and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats**—each one is subject to pride for their view and contempt for the other’s view
—**for God has accepted him**—as a believer. If we regard that person with contempt, we are putting ourselves above God, who has accepted both of them as His children.

14:4—Who are you to judge the [house] servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls—only the master has the right to pass judgment on his own servant.
—**and he will stand for the Lord is able to make him stand**—each believer is God’s servant, so it’s up to Him to judge His own household, and the Holy Spirit can convict a believer.

14:5—One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike—very similar to what he said about food in verse 2.
—**Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind**—again—it’s opinion (but should be well-thought-out decisions), again, not a morality in the Scriptures. Food issues could be more private, but certain days were more disruptive as it involves others.

14:6—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—therefore, Paul does not see any difference in meaning between these things. They all have a God-consciousness in their decisions.

14:7—For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself—no Christian lives in isolation, as if his/her experience concerned only his or herself.

14:8—for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s—we cannot avoid our connection with Him in whatever we do or in whatever happens to us

14:9—For [in fact] **to this end** [intended goal]
—**Christ** (1) **died and** (2) **lived again,** (3) **that He might be Lord** [lordship] **both of the dead and of the living**—see John 5:22, 27—Christ is Lord of both the weak and strong.

14:10—But you, why do you judge your brother?—criticizing
—**Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt** [to despise]?—
—**For we will all stand before the judgment seat [bema] of God,** and we will all give an account of ourselves to God (v. 12; see also 1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:9-10; 2 Tim 2:12, 15; 4:6-8; 1 John 2:28; 4:17-19).

14:11—For it is written —Isaiah 45:23; Philippians 2:10
**“AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME,
AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.”**
—Rev 20:11-15 would include unbelievers before the Great White Throne Judgment to give account of their lives, they will bow to the Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, worship and acknowledgement, but also accountability for what they did. Both unbelievers at the White Throne and believers at the Bema will give an account of themselves to God.

14:12—So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God—Jesus is Lord, and we will all give an account to Him—focus on your own day of accounting rather than the “failures” of other believers. [Not for condemnation, sin was paid for by Christ on the cross. He is the foundation of our belief, but we will be accountable for how we build on that foundation (1 Cor 3:10, “let each man be careful how he builds upon it,” see vv. 11-15).]

14:13—Therefore—based on these previous verses
—**let us not judge one another anymore**—forget what we did, determine to do different
—**but rather determine this**—this is a decision we need to make, a determination
—**not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way**—our own conduct must not be an obstacle over which another believer trips or falls. Because of our own accounting before God, we should be careful of how our behavior affects others.

14:14—I know and am convinced [persuaded] **in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself**—the ordinary things of human life, like food and days (not violations of God’s moral law)
—**but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean**—so the uncleanness of the thing in question is due only to the perception of the individual, and in fact, it actually is unclean for that person.

An Application—If a person does not share Paul’s knowledge that nothing is unclean in itself, their freedom and maturity in the Lord Jesus is restrained. For example, playing a card game is not unclean, but if it is unclean to a person, then for that person they would not play cards.

14:15—For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love—don't just run roughshod over the feelings of the weaker believer. What is the loving thing to do?

—Do not destroy [lit. “ruin”] **with your food him for whom Christ died**—it is the opposite of edification. If one is led to violate his own conscience, they actually sinned against God.

14:16—Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing [as the stronger believer] **be spoken of as evil**—if the stronger believer eats food in the presence of the weaker believer, which the weaker believer considers bad, then the weaker believer will likely be moved to speak against [say something evil] about what the stronger believer has done.

14:17—for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking—our freedom to eat or drink is not what is the defining characteristics of God's kingdom (believers).

—but (1) righteousness and (2) peace and (3) joy in the Holy Spirit—these are the characteristics of believers in the kingdom of God.

14:18—For he who in this way serves Christ [as v. 17b] **is acceptable to God**—our eternal rewards are directly related to what we do in this life.

—and approved by men—and acceptable to other believers

14:19—So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another—mature believers pursue things that produce peace and edification

14:20—Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense—the stronger believer is the one who freely gives up their own rights so as to not hurt a fellow believer

14:21—It is good—contrast to “evil” in verse 20

—not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles—Paul wrote, “if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1 Cor 8:13).

An Application—This is what we do in the presence of other “weaker” believers. He is not saying that in the privacy of one's own home we should avoid meat, etc. That is private — and should remain private—not my liberty forced on others. Also, a person has to be moving (growing) to stumble, i.e., if a person is rigid in their religious mores, and they are not growing, then your freedom in Christ may not make them stumble. But I should also not force them to do something against their own conscience/opinions.

14:22-23—The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves [that God is ok his/her Christian liberty]. **But he who doubts is condemned if he eats** [one without liberty should not be forced to act against their convictions—if they do, their own act condemns them], **because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin**—for them.

It seems we must conclude that it is the weak believer who has these opinions. The stronger believer has freedom in Christ. The more opinions [laws] one has, the weaker they are because Paul has shown how laws are the enemies of grace. There is no sanctification (spiritual growth) when one is obeying laws, even if they are our own laws (or opinions). Hopefully maturity (freedom in Christ) will increase and opinions will shrink.

Chapter 15 – The Stronger Believer

15:1—Now we who are strong [in convictions and conscience] **ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength** [lit. “the ones who are not strong”] **and not just please ourselves**—of course, God has given us things to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17), but not to do so when it knowingly hurts another believer. We should freely give up our rights.

15:2—Each of us is to please [same word as “please” in v. 1] **his neighbor for his good, to his edification** [building up], not just of this individual person but of the whole body of Christ altogether. We should not flaunt our liberty in Christ. Try to not offend.

An Application—Wonder if I am the weaker believer? I should endeavor to not be offended at other believers’ liberty. For example, wonder if another drinks wine. The Bible only prohibits drunkenness, not drinking altogether. We need to examine our own opinions. I wonder if anyone is completely free from their extra-biblical convictions.

An Application—We must sort out what is truly a personal extra-biblical conviction and what is actually a works-salvation. For example, at our conference in Poland, they served fish on Friday. I challenged them about it because it was part of the works-salvation of the Roman Catholic church. What message were we sending by eating the fish on Friday? The next two conferences, we had chicken!!

An Application—Also, here we’re talking about the sanctification of believers. Does the situation change if we’re talking about the salvation of unbelievers? Especially if they are counting on a works’ salvation. Key would be our own motivation.

15:3—For even Christ did not please Himself—Jesus prayed, “*Not My will, but Thine be done*” (Luke 22:42). Jesus came to do the Father’s will.
—but as it is written, “THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME” [Psalm 69:9]—see John 5:23, 43; 8:41-42, 48-49

15:4—For whatever was written in earlier times—all the OT Scriptures (1 Cor 10:11), even to the NT writings which had already been written (James and Galatians).
—was written for our instruction—to teach us, to help us learn
—so that through perseverance [to continue to bear up under difficult circumstances]
—and the encouragement [to give confidence or persuasion to do something]
—of the Scriptures we might have hope [expectation to glorify God, v. 9]—certainly Hebrews 11 is such a passage.

15:5—Now may the God, who gives perseverance and encouragement—plus Jesus (v. 3), plus the Scriptures (v. 4)
—grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus—that the believers would have the same mind toward each other (vv. 1-2).

15:6—so that [purpose] **with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**—all of us believers together would sound like one voice in giving glory to God.

15:7—Therefore, accept one another—in any non-essential matters (tattoos, jewelry, hairdos, women wearing slacks, Bible teachers not wearing suits, etc.)
—**just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God**—Christ accepts all believers but He only approves of those believers who are walking in the truth (Rom 16:10; 1 Cor 11:19; 2 Cor 10:18; 13:6-7; 2 Tim 2:15), in essential matters, described in the Bible.

15:8—For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision [the Jews] **on behalf of the truth of God**—Jesus came to the Jews in His earthly ministry by...
—(1) **to confirm the promises given to the fathers**—Matt 12:40; 15:1-20; 21:42; 22:44; 26:31; John 5:39-47; 6:31-51, 58; 19:28. Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies to the Jews.

15:9—(2) and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy—the Gentiles had no covenants from God, so anything spiritual for them is because of God’s mercy
—**as it is written,**
**“THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES,
AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME”**—2 Sam 22:50; Ps 18:49

15:10—Again he says,
“REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE”—Deut 32:43—Gentiles together with the Jews, rejoicing in the Messianic Kingdom, so today the Jews rejoice with the Gentiles in the church age.

15:11—And again,
**“PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES,
AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM”**—Ps 117:1

15:12—Again Isaiah says,
“THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE—lineage of King David
AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES—in the Messianic Kingdom, Christ’s rule will be over all the people in the world: Jews and Gentiles
IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE”—Isaiah 11:10

15:13—Now may the God of hope [the Father (Jesus in v. 12, and Holy Spirit at end of verse), **hope** is expectation
—**fill you with all joy and peace in believing**—mentioned in 14:17, the result of believing
—**so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit**—it’s the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives that enables us to have this hope, through the Word (Luke 24:32, 45; Acts 6:3; 7:51; 9:31; 11:24)

Conclusion: Paul’s Role in the Gentile World (15:14–16:20)

15:14—And concerning you, my brethren [Roman believers] **I myself also am convinced** [persuaded]
—**that you yourselves are full of goodness**—positive moral qualities
—**filled with all knowledge**—spiritually mature, knowing the Scriptures and sound doctrine
—**and able** [competent] **also to admonish** [instruct and correct] **one another**—

15:15—But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again—Peter also wrote, “I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even

though you already know them...as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder" (2 Pet 1:12-13).

—because of the grace that was given me from God—the favor of God given to Paul

15:16—to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles—so Paul could speak boldly to these Gentile believers. The gospel has been new knowledge for them, who didn't know God before

—ministering as a priest the gospel of God—Paul's authority from God, bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, who are delivered from the wrath of God (1:16-17; 5:9-10; 10:9-10)

—so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable—their offering was their very lives, a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God (12:1-12)

—sanctified [set apart] by the Holy Spirit—Here again we see the Trinity in this verse: minister of Jesus, gospel of God, and sanctified by Holy Spirit

15:17—Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God—God is the initiator and provider and power behind it all.

15:18—For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me—both God and Paul are in the ministry of the gospel
—resulting [to change from one thing to another] in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed—what they say and what they do

15:19—in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit—signs and wonders have never been a normative experience either in Israel or in the church. Rather, "...the word...first spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:2-4). Miracles substantiated new revelation.

—so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ—north of Macedonia, where people from Illyricum settled. No record of this, but he possibly went there from Macedonia.

15:20—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—Paul wanted to take the gospel to new places, where it had never been proclaimed before. The Gentiles were spread far and wide, as was Paul's ministry to them. He had a missionary strategy.

15:21—but as it is written,

**"THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND"**—Isaiah 52:15

15:22—For this reason—wanting to take the gospel to new places, as the gospel was already well-established in Rome. There were "visitors from Rome" at the sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Plus Priscilla and Aquila came from Rome (Acts 18:2).

—I have often been prevented from coming to you—many times he planned to visit them but had been prevented (Rom 1:13), it seems, from his desire to evangelize in places where the gospel had not formerly come.

15:23—but now, with no further place for me in these regions—not that he personally visited every city, but people from those regions believed and took the gospel "home."

—and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you—Paul had been praying for them, and wanted to see them *“in order that...you may be established...I may be encouraged together with you...each of us by the other’s faith...that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles”* (Rom 1:10-13).

15:24—whenever I go to Spain — for I hope to see you in passing—from Asia and/or Greece, Rome would be on the way to Spain (most western country of the continent). It’s where Jonah wanted to flee to (Jonah 1:3), and where ships brought King Solomon *“gold, and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks”* every three years (1 Kings 10:22).

—and to be helped on my way there by you, financially (1 Cor 9:1-18; 2 Cor 8–9, Phil 4:14-17)

—when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—he evidently did not plan to stay very long in Rome, which had been evangelized, but Spain had not been (but unknown to him at the writing of Romans, he will be arrested and stay at least 2 years in Rome in rented quarters under arrest—Acts 27–28).

15:25—but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints—by the time of Paul, the believers in Jerusalem were suffering persecution and poverty.

15:26—For Macedonia [northern Greece—Thessalonica, Berea, Philippi] **and Achaia** [Greece—Corinth, Athens]—1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:2-4, **have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem—**these gifts from the Gentile believers to the Jewish believers was a sign of fellowship, breaking down their divisions.

15:27—Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things—Gentiles were evangelized and disciplined by missionaries like Paul, Timothy, Barnabas, sent out with the gospel from Jerusalem. So now, the saints in Jerusalem needed physical help, so the Gentiles were able to help them, out of thankfulness for the Jerusalem believers spiritually caring for the Gentiles. This would also be evidence of the Gospel being received among the Gentiles, as it was among the Jews.

15:28—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—the Gentile gift brought by Paul would also include Paul’s testimony of his ministry among them, such as what was reported at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

15:29—I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ—i.e., doing what God wanted him to do—evangelism and discipleship

15:30-33—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—Paul knows the Jews in Jerusalem are against him. But he did not know that this very thing was how he would get to Rome.—**so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company—**what a joy to find *“refreshing rest”* with believers of like mind. It’s a rare joy!!

—Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Chapter 16 – A Note of Greeting

16:1-2—*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea* [eastern port of Corinth (Acts 18:18)]; *that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.*

—It seems like Phoebe is the one carrying this letter from Paul to the Romans. Notice she is described as “one who serves” and “helper,” not a formal teacher of believers there.

An Application—Who to trust? The one who comes highly recommended by someone you already know and trust. You can serve that function, too, as you recommend others. But make sure you truly know the person and what they believe if you are going to recommend them for spiritual instruction to other believers.

16:3-5a—*Greet Prisca and* [husband] *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*—They were originally from Rome, and had left there when Claudius commanded all the Jews to leave Rome (Acts 18:2). They came to Corinth and worked making tents with Paul, as they were tentmakers by trade. Paul took them with him to Ephesus when he left Corinth (Acts 18:18-19). When Paul left Ephesus for Jerusalem, they remained in Ephesus for ministry there, and they, privately as a couple, took Apollos’ aside and explained the “*way of God more accurately*” to him (Acts 18:24-28). Notice the believers met in their house, and they are always referred to as a couple.

16:5b—*Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first* [lit. “firstfruits”] *convert to Christ from Asia*—of which Ephesus was the leading city. Firstfruits indicates the harvest of more converts to come.

16:6—*Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you*—rather than exactly what she does, the emphasis is on her willingness to grow weary in serving them.

16:7—*Greet Andronicus and Junias* [male or female?], *my kinsmen* [“relatives,” possibly of the same Jewish tribe from Tarsus] *and my fellow prisoners* [when exactly? As Paul had been imprisoned many times—2 Cor 11:23], *who are outstanding among the apostles* [obviously they were not one of the 12 but were evidently early leaders among the believers in Rome—possibly having taken the Gospel here after Acts 2:10], *who also were in Christ before me*—they became believers before Paul did when Paul himself was persecuting believers (Acts 8:1-3).

16:8—*Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord*—nothing else is known

16:9—*Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved*—nothing else is known

16:10—*Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ*—this was Paul’s desire for Timothy (2 Tim 2:15), as well as himself (1 Cor 9:27).

—**Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus**—Aristobulus himself is not greeted, and we do not know if he was a believer, perhaps he had already died, but his family are believers.

16:11—Greet Herodion, my kinsman—probably a tribal Jewish connection (v. 7)

—**Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord**—implies that not all of the household of Narcissus were believers. But Paul greets the believers there.

16:12—Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa [female names], **workers in the Lord**—was common for members of a family to have the same root name. So possibly these are sisters. Probably they are freedwomen with some independence.

—**Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord**—a female name. Rather than use “my beloved” (vv. 5, 8, 9), Persis was evidently well regarded by all who knew her.

16:13—Greet Rufus, a choice [eminent] **man in the Lord**—Rufus is mentioned in Mark 15:21, where it is indicated that he was one of the sons of Simon, the man who was compelled to bear the cross of Jesus. It’s commonly thought that Mark was written in Rome (as the “gospel” of Peter, who was martyred in Rome).

—**also his mother and mine**—Paul received motherly care from her. If the father of Rufus was Simon who carried the cross of Jesus, that would make the mother of Rufus the wife of Simon. But these are all conjectures.

16:14-15—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—Paul’s ties with them are less than the previously mentioned believers.

16:16—Greet one another with a holy kiss—Paul also writes this in 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26. This was obviously a warm greeting among the believers (although in Romania the believers still practice it!).

—**All the churches of Christ greet you**—Paul is in contact one way or another with believers in Greece, Asia, Judah, and is the conduit for shared messages and greetings

16:17—Now I urge [earnestly encourage] **you, brethren**—believers

—**keep your eye on**—watch out, be alert for, spiritual enemies, these would not be the weak believers he mentioned in chapter 14, which was about opinions. These here are false teachers, contradicting the Word of God. Look with intensity, scope them out (where we get the word “microscope”).

—**those who cause dissensions**—“divisions,” to cause people to be angry, to cause people to think of one another as enemies (see Acts 20:27-32).

—**and hindrances**—trap, the type which has a stick which when touched causes the trap to shut—the object, of course, is to deceive, what Jesus called whitewashed tombs (Matt 23:27), look good on the outside but are full of dead men’s bones.

—**contrary to the teaching which you learned**—especially here in Romans, the apostolic teaching they had received [“*exchanging the truth of God for a lie*” (1:25)]

—**and** [keep on] **turn[ing] away from them**—reject them, this is an on-going problem

An Application—the reason many “Christians” are more easily deceived is because they have not “learned” the Scriptures!!

16:18—For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting—Paul also wrote, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth...” (2 Tim 4:3-4; see also 2 Cor 11:13-15).

16:19—For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you—Paul does not consider these Roman believers to be the ones who are unsuspecting, but nevertheless, it’s always wise to warn everyone you can.
—but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent [undiluted] in what is evil—wisdom and goodness and innocence are good defenses against evil.

16:20—The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet—false teachers are under Satan’s influence—but Satan is doomed, he will be crushed
—The grace [gift] of our Lord Jesus be with you—

16:21—Timothy my fellow worker greets you—Timothy replaced John Mark as Paul’s ministry companion on his journeys. He was Paul’s spiritual son (Phil 2:22).
—and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen—as earlier, these may be from Paul’s Jewish tribal area of Tarsus (v. 7)

16:22—I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord—Tertius was Paul’s scribe [amanuensis], writing down what Paul was saying. He was obviously a trustworthy believer, even greeting the Roman believers himself.

16:23—Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother—believing men in Corinth

16:24—[The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]—this is not found in a number of the major Greek manuscripts and is not considered genuine.

16:25-27—Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ—sanctification taught by Paul here in Romans
—according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested—a revelation from God to Paul (Eph 3:3-6)
—and by the Scriptures of the prophets—all we need to know is in the Scriptures
—according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations—not just to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles in all the nations
—leading to obedience of faith—faith-righteousness, not works-righteousness
—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen—there is no other God. The purpose of all history is to give glory to God (not the salvation of man—that, too, gives glory to God, but there are many things in the Bible that are not about salvation but do give glory to God).