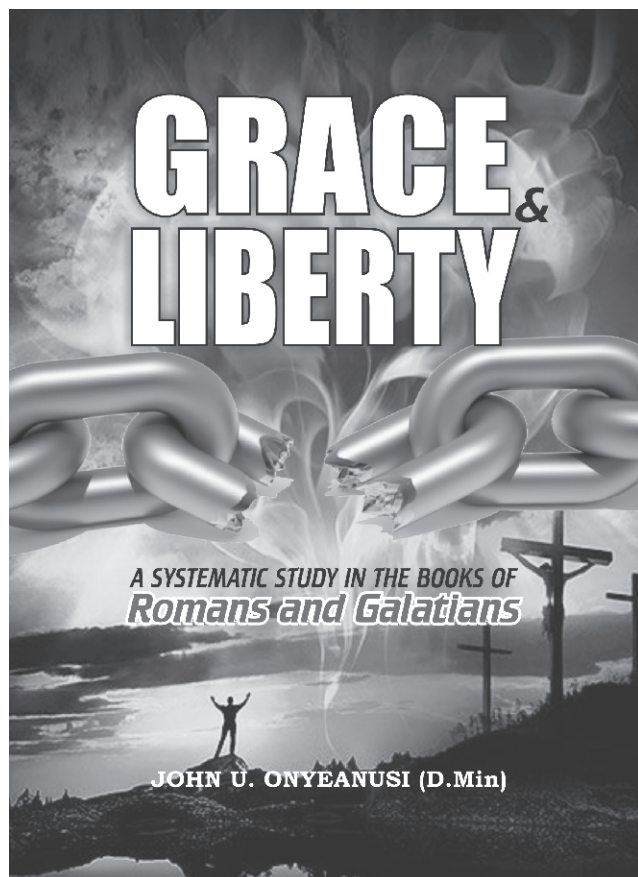




THE BOOK OF ROMANS IN ONE SENTENCE

What is man?

Man is God's creature;

Yes, but man is God's image, and through the misuse of his God bestowed freedom, man is God's shame and man is God's problem; But by that incredible strategy of the cross, God makes it possible for man to become the Creator's child;

And man may become the Creator's co-laborer, and man, Infinite man, may become the friend of an infinite and all Holy God; And ultimately man may be, if he will have it so, God's glory.”

Verson G. Grounds

THE SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

The book of Galatians is a call for Liberty from the law. Paul writes to the church in Galatia in distress as they have quickly abandoned the gospel they originally received. Judaizers had infiltrated the brethren, preaching circumcision and trying to put them back under the yoke of the law. Paul starts out telling them that this is an entirely different gospel. He writes to the church to remind them of grace and that the only means to be justified is by faith in Jesus not by the law.

JU Onyeanus

*D*EDICATION

This book is dedicated to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who saved my soul and later called me into the full-time Ministry.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This is the first book I've written under pressure of a deadline- and I met it. Had it not been for the help of many people who wrote books on the Epistle to the Romans and Galatians, I would not have come even close.

acknowledge the following authors whose books I consulted and which enabled me to beat the dateline; David Guzik whose work helped me a great deal, Alan F. Johnson, Nathan C. Eze, Byrne Brendan Dunn James D. G. Jewett, Robert. Kruse, olin G. Moo, Douglas. Schreiner Thomas, Howard F. Vos. Okpara E. Inworogu, Wilson, Ralph F. Aquinas, Thomas and others.

The Theological Seminary of Northern Nigeria lecturers, especially the academic dean of the Seminary, Rev Jonathan Daluk who encourage me to put my classroom lectures into book form, I appreciate you. I further appreciate my students especially the final year Diploma students of 2018 who encouraged that this book is necessary.

My wife and children understood what it means to have a husband and father who combine pulpit Ministry and Seminary work. I shuttle from Kaduna to Saminaka every month where I teach courses at Theological Seminary of Northern Nigeria as a visiting lecturer. My family graciously endured an unsociable father who spent most of the time on the computer writing through half the night. I thank you all.

FOREWORD

Apostle Paul is the author of the books of Romans and Galatians. He wrote them in the year AD 57 and AD 49 respectively. The central themes of these books are concepts of Grace and Liberty or freedom. Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Rome and Galatia.

The main issue in Galatians is the same one debated and resolved at Jerusalem (AD 49), Cf. Acts'5). The main issues involved two fold questions; Is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as savior and Lord the only prerequisite for salvation? or is obedience to certain Old Testament Jewish practices and laws required in order to gain salvation in Christ?

It appears from the content of the book of Galatians that Paul's opponents were attacking him personally to undermine his influence. He was accused on these issues;

- i. That he was not among the original apostles and void of authentic authority (1:1,7,12;2:8-9).
- ii. That his message contains a great departure from the Gospel preached at Jerusalem (Cf 1:9,2:2-10).
- iii. That his message of grace will result in lawless living (Cf 5:1,13,16,19-21).

This activism of the opponents to Paul triggered a necessary response from apostle Paul to the accusations directly. He defended his own authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ which he received directly from God and endorsed by James, Peter and John. He passionately defined the gospel of salvation as being by grace through faith in Christ (chpts 3-4). He earnestly maintained that the true gospel of Christ involves a freedom from the slavery of Jewish legalism vis-à-vis and the act of sinful nature on the other hand. True Christian freedom involves living by the Spirit and fulfilling the law of Christ (chpts 5-6). The book of Galatians is the most vigorous New Testament defense of the essential nature of the gospel.

With this background the book of Romans which was written later (after the book of Galatians) in AD 57, was written by Paul the apostle to prepare the way for his ministry at Rome and his planned Mission to Spain. The Romans apparently received distorted rumors about Paul's message and Theology (3:8,6:1-2,15) and Paul felt it was necessary to put in to writing, the gospel he had been preaching for 25 years. He sought to correct certain problems in the church occurring because of wrong attitude of the Jews towards Gentiles (e.g. Rom. 2:1-29, 3:1,9) and Gentiles towards Jews (e.g. 11:11-13).

The book "Grace and Liberty: A systematic study in the book of Romans and Galatians", is attempt to elucidate on the central themes of the books of Romans and Galatians. Since Grace is an unmerited favour through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, Liberty is the exercise of that freedom we have in Christ Jesus to show forth the works of the faith in Him. These concepts must be appropriated in their exact measures and placement to avoid heiresses and errors.

Human experience is good but living in Holy Spirit is the best. He brings Rhema from the logo to do justices to the topic. This is what the write has done in this book. Knowledge is inexhaustible, more and more wonderful works can still be done on the topic but this one is a master piece that cannot be ignored as study seems scarce in the realm of theology. This book is scholarly loaded, and spiritually powerful. Be in the spirit as you study it and you will surely be blessed. Shalom.

Prof. Mike P. Musa

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PREFACE

The books of Romans and Galatians are the most important books of the Bible. In the real sense of the word, all that the gospel is all about can be seen in these books more than in any other book of the Bible. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) contains only the narratives- stories about the earthly life of Jesus. But why did Jesus eventually die? What is the true meaning of that death? What did God aim to accomplish through that death of His Son? It was only John that touched these but in the periphery. We often hear and read that Jesus died to save the world from sin. Yes, but what necessitated that death? Man's sin! It sounds simple. Man's sin. The Gospels present the mini biography and the person of Jesus Christ. They contain little or nothing about salvation by grace.

Anyone seeking to see the depth of the love of God for man, the mighty gulf that God did span ... and the richness of grace, he should study these two books. It is only the epistles to the Romans and Galatians that explains what God aims to accomplish through the death of His Son. While the book of Romans reveals the gloominess of this sin, and what it cost God to provide for the reversion of the determined consequence of sin, Galatians speaks of the freedom we have in Christ both in the present and in the future. As you study the two books, you will begin to understand clearly what the core of the gospel is all about.

It is wise therefore to look for the doctrine of Grace and Liberty and what it means in the books of Romans and Galatians, instead of the gospels. This will make the reader value his salvation more. He will bear more fruit, and be more dependent upon the Holy Spirit, through faith. It is my prayer that as you study these foundational epistles, you'll be blessed and encouraged.

John U. Onyeausi (D.Min).

INTRODUCTION

The central message of the letters to the Romans is: "The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (see Romans 1:16).

Paul starts the letter to the Romans by showing that we all need salvation. Everybody can know there is an almighty God, but people are not honouring Him (1:19-21). The gentiles are idolaters and full of sexual sin (1:22-27). The Jews have the law of God, but they do not obey it and sin as well (2:17-24). All men are sinners, and therefore are under the judgment of God. There is no way that we can solve that problem ourselves. However hard we try, we cannot obtain salvation through obeying God: "by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight" (3:20).

After it is explained that there is no hope for us through the things that we do for God, we read that there is hope through what God did for us: we "are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:24). Not our works, but God's grace brings salvation to those "who have faith in Jesus" (3:26). God justifies sinners. That means: he declares that sinners are no longer bad people, but that they are good people. This is a wonderful proof of God's love for us (5:8). Because He pours out love in our hearts (5:6), our lives are full hope and rejoicing. We are no longer enemies with God, but friends!

When we have received forgiveness of sin and have become friends with God, how should we then live? You "must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6:11). We are no longer slaves to sin, but slaves to God. As a result, we live a holy life and are on our way to eternal life (6:22).

Paul then explains that we serve God "in the new way of the Spirit" (7:6), and no longer in the old way of the law, because the law could never lead us to salvation. Yet he acknowledges that sin still dwells within him (7:17). Even when he wants to do good, he does not have the power to do it. The fight between sin and obedience to God always

remains in the life of a believer. Yet we rejoice that those who believe in Jesus will not be condemned (8:1).

The doctrinal part of Romans ends with chapter 8. We read how believers are filled by the Spirit of God (8:9). Because the Spirit lives in us, we please God by obeying him (8:9); we can be sure of the resurrection of the body when Jesus returns (8:11); and we know we are beloved children of God (8:16). All these are wonderful proof of God's love for us that Paul ends Roman 8 with this joyful exclamation that we may celebrate with him: "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God doesn't want us to live fearfully. He wants us to fully plug in to His amazing power that comes through His grace. Unfortunately we sometimes short-circuit God's power through negative mind-set that get in His way.

There is no power shortage in heaven. God is never in a recession. His grace is sufficient to meet every need if we will allow ourselves to be open and available to His will.

We can't really change until we start taking His Word seriously and trust Him to change us. When we make a firm decision to pray and study His Word in areas where we are weak, than God can give us the power to overcome the things that are wrong.

God has all the power you need to do anything you need to do. He loves you and wants to give the power to live your life with joy. Lean on Him with absolute trust in His wisdom and goodness, and live with God-given confidence.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS

AUTHORSHIP

It is generally agreed that the epistle to the Romans was written by Paul on his third missionary journey. A close style of Paul's writing will convince every reader that he was the author of Romans. Paul was an apostle to the Gentles. The concern showed by the author, for the Gentles in the epistle as exemplified in the book, points to the fact that it was Paul. Moreover, Romans is one of the four epistles that have no argument as to their Pauline authorship, others being I and II Corinthians and Galatians. It is almost universally agreed that Paul wrote Romans from the city of Corinth as he wintered there on his third missionary journey as described in Acts 20:2-3. This is based on Romans 6:1 and 16:23 along with I Corinthians 1:14.

DATE OF WRITING

A variety of commentators pick the date of writing anywhere from 53 to 58 A.D. By the time Paul wrote Romans, he had been a Christian preacher for some 20 years. For the purpose of information, let us accept that the book of Romans was written any time between 56 AD and 60 AD. In Corinth, on his way to Jerusalem, he had three months without any pressing duties. He perhaps thought this was a good time to write ahead to Rome, a church he planned to visit after Jerusalem.

PURPOSE OF WRITING

There are many reasons why Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans but it is clear from the Scripture that the main purpose was his intention to visit them. He further wrote to address certain “intellectual” questions which the

saints in Rome are concerned about (which perhaps he learned about through Aquila and Priscilla).

The main purpose of writing the epistle to the Romans was Paul's intention to visit Rome for to contribute to the spiritual growth of the church. This will be discussed fully in the first chapter.



1. (Rom 1:1) Paul introduces himself to the Romans.

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.

- a. Paul:** The life and ministry of Paul (also known as Saul of Tarsus) is well documented in Acts chapters 8 through 28, as well as Galatians 1 and 2, and 2 Corinthians 11 and 12.
- i. It is almost universally agreed that Paul wrote Romans from the city of Corinth as he wintered there on his third missionary journey as described in Acts 20:2-3. This is based on Romans 16:1 and 16:23 along with 1 Corinthians 1:14. A variety of commentators pick the date of writing anywhere from 53 to 58 A.D.
 - ii. By the time Paul wrote Romans, he had been a Christian preacher for some 20 years. In Corinth, on his way to Jerusalem, he had three months without any pressing duties. He perhaps thought this was a good time to write ahead to Rome, a church he planned to visit after Jerusalem.
 - iii. As Paul endeavored to go to Rome, the Holy Spirit warned him about the peril awaiting him in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-14). What if he were unable to make it to Rome? Then he must write them a letter so comprehensive that the Christians in Rome had the gospel Paul preached, even if Paul himself were not able to visit them.
 - iv. Because of all this, Romans is different than other letters Paul wrote to New Testament churches. Other

New Testament letters focus more on the church and its challenges and problems. The letter to the Romans focuses more on God and His great plan of redemption.

- v. We know the letter to the Romans was prized by the Christians in Rome; Clement of Rome's letter in 96 A.D. shows great familiarity with Paul's letter. It may be that he had memorized it, and that the reading of it became a part of virtually every meeting of the Roman church. As well, many scholars (Bruce and Barclay among them) believe that an edited version of Romans - without the personal references in Romans 16 - was distributed widely among early churches, as a summary of apostolic doctrine.

b. A bondservant ... an apostle: Paul's self-identification is important. He is first a servant of Jesus Christ, and second called to be an apostle.

- i. There were several Greek words used to designate a slave, but the idea behind the word for servant (doulos) is "complete and utter devotion, not the abjectness which was the normal condition of the slave." (Morris)
- ii. "A servant of Jesus Christ, is a higher title than monarch of the world." (Poole)

c. Separated to the gospel of God: The idea of being an apostle is that you are a special ambassador or messenger. Paul's message is the gospel (good news) of God. It is the gospel of God in the sense that it belongs to God in heaven. This isn't a gospel Paul made up; he simply is a messenger of God's gospel.

- i. unto the gospel: "St. Paul may here refer to his former state as a Pharisee, which literally signifies a separatist, or one separated. Before he was separated unto the service of his own sect; now he is separated unto the Gospel of God." (Clarke)
- ii. "Some think he alludes to the name of Pharisee, which is from separating: when he was a Pharisee, he was

separated to the law of God; and now, being a Christian, he was separated to the gospel of God." (Poole).

d. The gospel of God: Other New Testament letters focus more on the church and its challenges and problems; Romans focuses more on God. "God is the most important word in this epistle. Romans is a book about God. No topic is treated with anything like the frequency of God. Everything Paul touches in this letter he relates to God. In our concern to understand what the apostle is saying about righteousness, justification, and the like we ought not to overlook his tremendous concentration on God." (Morris)

- I. The word "God" occurs 153 times in the book; an average of once every 46 words - this is more frequently than in any other New Testament book. In comparison, note the frequency of other words used in Romans: law(72), Christ (65), sin (48), Lord (43), and faith(40). Romans deals with many different themes, but as much as a book can be, it is a book about God.
- ii. There are many important words in the vocabulary of Romans we must understand; Bruce quotes Tyndale's preface to Romans: "First we must mark diligently the manner of speaking of the apostle, and above all things know what Paul meaneth by these words - the Law, Sin, Grace, Faith, Righteousness, Flesh, Spirit, and such like - or else, read thou it ever so often, thou shall but lose thy labor."

2. (Rom 1:2-6) Paul introduces his gospel to the Romans.

Which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

-
- a. He promised before through His prophets:** This gospel is not something new, and it is not a clever invention of man. Paul's world was much like ours, with people liked "new" teachings and doctrines. Nevertheless, Paul didn't bring something new, but something very old in the plan of God.
- b. Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord:** This is the center of Paul's gospel, the "sun" that everything this else orbits around. The center of Christianity is not a teaching or a moral system, it is a Person: Jesus Christ.
- i. This Jesus has both a human origin (born of the seed of David according to the flesh), and an eternal existence (declared to be the Son of God). The evidence of Jesus' humanity is His human birth; the evidence of His deity is His resurrection from the dead.
 - ii. The resurrection of Jesus shows His divine power because He rose by His own power: Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again. (John 2:19)
 - iii. "There is a sense in which Jesus was the Son of God in weakness before the resurrection but the Son of God in power thereafter." (Morris).
- c. Declared:** This ancient Greek word (horizo) comes from the idea "to bound, define, determine, or limit, and hence our word horizon, the line that determines the farthest visible part of the earth in reference to the heavens. In this place the word signifies such a manifest and complete exhibition of the subject as to render it indubitable." (Clarke)
- d. Christ our Lord:** It means something that the Apostle Paul called Jesus Lord: "This term could be no more than a polite form of address like our 'Sir.' But it could also be used of the deity one worships. The really significant background, though, is its use in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to render the divine name, Yahweh ... Christians who used this as their Bible

would be familiar with the term as equivalent to deity." (Morris).

e. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith: Paul's gospel impacts individual lives. It isn't interesting theory or philosophy, it is life-changing good news.

- i. The gospel gave Paul and the church grace and apostleship, and one reason those two gifts were given was to produce obedience to the faith. "Without the GRACE, favour, and peculiar help of God, he could not have been an apostle." (Clarke).
- ii. The gospel is big enough and great enough for the whole world; it must go out to impact all nations.
- iii. The gospel had reached the Roman Christians, demonstrating that they are the called of Jesus Christ.

3. (Rom 1:7-15) Paul's desire to come to Rome.

To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

a. To all who are in Rome: Paul had never been to Rome, and did not found the Roman church. This makes the Book of Romans different because most of Paul's letters were to churches he founded. It seems the church in Rome began somewhat spontaneously as Christians came to the great city of the Empire and settled there. There is no Biblical or historical evidence that the Apostle Peter founded the church in Rome.

i. Acts 2:10 describes how there were people from Rome among the Jews present at the Day of Pentecost, so when they returned home that was a start. Beyond that, the origins of the church in Rome are somewhat obscure, but Christians continually migrated to Rome from all parts of the empire. It shouldn't surprise us that a church started there spontaneously, without the direct planting by an apostle.

ii. Even so, through mutual acquaintances or through his travels, Paul knew many of the Christians in Rome by name because he mentions them in Romans 16. Even if Paul only knew many of the Roman Christian by acquaintance, he knew two things about them and every true Christian. He knew they were beloved of God and that they were saints.

iii. Called to be saints: "You notice that the words 'to be' are put in by the translators; but though they are supplied, they are not really necessary to the sense. These believers in Rome were 'called saints.' They were not called because they were saints; but they became saints through that calling." (Spurgeon)

iv. Lenski says Romans 1:8-15 has the feel of "small talk" among those trying to get to know one another.

b. Grace to you and peace from God: Paul formally addresses his readers with his familiar greeting, combining the Greek greeting of grace with the Jewish greeting of peace. This grace and peace is not the kind wish of a man; they are gifts, coming from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

c. I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world:

Paul was thankful for the good reputation of the church in Rome. Because of its location, this church had a special visibility and opportunity to glorify Jesus throughout the empire.

- i. These Christians had to be strong. "The Christians of Rome were unpopular - reputed to be 'enemies of the human race' and credited with such vices as incest and cannibalism. In large numbers, then, they became the victims of the imperial malevolence - and it is this persecution of Christians under Nero that traditionally forms the setting for Paul's martyrdom." (Bruce)
- ii. "The Romanists urge this place to prove Rome the mother church; but without reason: the church of Thessalonica had as high a eulogy: see 1 Thessalonians 1:8." (Poole).

d. Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers: Paul wanted the Roman Christians to know he was praying for them, and praying for an opportunity to visit them (I may find a way in the will of God to come to you).

- i. "No wonder that they prospered so well when Paul always made mention of them in his prayers. Some churches would prosper better if some of you remembered them more in prayer." (Spurgeon)
- ii. For God is my witness is perhaps Paul's acknowledgment of how easy it is to say you will pray for someone, and then fail to do it. He wanted them to know that he was really praying.

e. I may impart to you ... that I may be encouraged: Paul's desire to visit the church in Rome is not merely to give to them, but to receive as well, because Paul realized that in their mutual faith, they have something to give to him.

f. I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now): For a long time, Paul wanted to visit Rome and was only hindered by external circumstances. Perhaps some enemies of Paul implied he was afraid to go to Rome and preach the gospel in the "major leagues," in the Empire's leading city.

g. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise: Paul recognized he had something of a debt to Rome. The Roman Empire brought world peace and order, they brought a common cultural, and an excellent transportation system to the world. Paul used all these in spreading the gospel, so he can best repay this debt by giving Rome the good news of Jesus Christ.

i. Paul was such a tireless evangelist, working all over the world because he believed he had a debt to pay, and he owed it to the whole world.

h. I am ready: Spurgeon wonders if Paul didn't use the words "I am ready" as his motto. Almost the first words out of his mouth when he was saved were, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6)

- Paul was ready to preach and to serve (Romans 1:15)

- Paul was ready to suffer (Acts 21:13)

- Paul was ready to do unpleasant work (2 Corinthians 10:6)

- Paul was ready to die (2 Timothy 4:6)

i. "A Moravian was about to be sent by Zinzendorf to preach in Greenland. He had never heard of it before; but his leader called him, and said, 'Brother, will you go to Greenland?' He answered, 'Yes, sir.' 'When will you go?' 'When my boots come home from the cobbler;' and he did go as soon as his boots came home. He wanted nothing else but just that pair of boots, and he was ready to go. Paul, not even waiting for his boots to come home from the cobbler, says, 'I am ready.' Oh, it is grand to find a man so little entangled that he can go

where God would have him go, and can go at once." (Spurgeon).

- ii. I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also: This is a bold way of talking. "Talk of your brave men, your great men, O world! Where in all history can you find one like Paul? Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, marched with the protection of their armies to enforce their will upon men. Paul was eager to march with Christ alone to the center of this world's greatness entrenched under Satan with the word of the cross, which he himself says is to the Jews, and offence; and to Gentiles, foolishness." (Newell). Ironically - in the mystery of God's irony, when Paul did eventually get to Rome, he came as a shipwrecked prisoner.
- iii. "I do not suppose that Paul guessed that he would be sent there at the government expense, but he was. The Roman Empire had to find a ship for him, and a fit escort for him, too; and he entered the city as an ambassador in bonds. When our hearts are set on a thing, and we pray for it, God may grant us the blessing; but, it may be, in a way that we never looked for. You shall go to Rome, Paul; but you shall go in chains." (Spurgeon).

4. (Rom 1:16-17) Paul introduces the theme of his letter: the righteousness of God, as revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

- a. **After his introduction, Paul introduces his "thesis statement" for his letter to the Romans. Leon Morris says of Romans 1:16 and 17: "These two verses have an importance out of all proportion to their length."**
- b. **I am not ashamed of the gospel reveals Paul's heart.** In

a sophisticated city like Rome, some might be embarrassed by a gospel centered on a crucified Jewish savior, embraced by the lowest classes of people - but Paul is not ashamed.

c. For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone

who believes: This is why Paul is not ashamed of a gospel centered on a crucified savior. He knows that the gospel - the good news of Jesus Christ - has inherent power. We do not give it power, we only stop hindering the power of the gospel when we present it effectively.

- i. The gospel is certainly news, but it is more than information; it has an inherent power. "The gospel is not advice to people, suggesting that they lift themselves. It is power. It lifts them up. Paul does not say that the gospel brings power, but that it is power, and God's power at that." (Morris)
- ii. In particular, Rome thought it knew all about power: "Power is the one thing that Rome boasted of the most. Greece might have its philosophy, but Rome had its power." (Wiersbe). Despite all their power, the Romans - like all men - were powerless to make themselves righteous before God. The ancient philosopher Seneca called Rome "a cesspool of iniquity" and the ancient writer Juvenal called it a "filthy sewer into which the dregs of the empire flood."
- iii. salvation: In the Roman world of Paul's day, men looked for salvation. Philosophers knew that man was sick and needed help. Epictetus called his lecture room "the hospital for the sick soul." Epicurus called his teaching "the medicine of salvation." Seneca said that because men were so conscious of "their weakness and their inefficiency in necessary things" that all men were looking "towards salvation." Epictetus said that men were looking for a peace "not of Caesar's proclamation, but of God's." (Cited in Barclay)
- iv. The gospel's power to salvation comes to everyone

who believes. God will not withhold salvation from the one who believes; but believing is the only requirement.

d. The message of the gospel came for the Jew first and also for the Greek (the non-Jew). This was demonstrated both by the ministry of Jesus (Matthew 15:24) and the initial ministry of the disciples (Matthew 10:5-6).

I. This means that the gospel was meant to go first to the ethnic and cultural Jew, and then to the cultural Greek. "At this time the word Greek had lost its racial sense altogether. It did not mean a native of the country of Greece ... (a Greek) was one who knew the culture and the mind of Greece." (Barclay).

e. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed: Simply, the gospel reveals the righteousness of God. This revelation of God's righteousness comes to those with faith, fulfilling Habakkuk 2:4: The just - that is, the justified ones - shall live by faith.

i. It is essential to understand exactly what the righteousness of God revealed by the gospel is. It is not speaking of the holy righteousness of God that condemns the guilty sinner, but of the God-kind of righteousness that is given to the sinner who puts their trust in Jesus Christ.

ii. Righteousness: William Barclay explains the meaning of this ancient Greek word *dikaioo*, which means I justify, and is the root of *dikaion* (righteousness): "All verbs in Greek which end in *oo* ... always mean to treat, or account or reckon a person as something. If God justifies a sinner, it does not mean that he finds reasons to prove that he was right - far from it. It does not even mean, at this point, that he makes the sinner a good man. It means that God treats the sinner as if he had not been a sinner at all."

iii. "It was the happiest day in Luther's life when he

discovered that 'God's Righteousness' as used in Romans means God's verdict of righteousness upon the believer." (Lenski)

- iv. This declaration is even greater when we understand that this is the righteousness of God given to the believer. It is not the righteousness of even most holy mere man, nor is it the righteousness of innocent Adam in Eden. It is God's righteousness. "The righteousness which is unto justification is one characterized by the perfection belonging to all that God is and does. It is a 'God-righteousness'." (Murray)
- v. This faith (trust) in Jesus Christ becomes the basis of life for those who are justified (declared righteous); truly, the just shall live by faith. They are not only saved by faith, but they live by faith.

f. From faith to faith: The idea behind this difficult phrase is probably "by faith from beginning to end." The NIV translates the phrase from faith to faith as by faith from first to last.

- i. "He saith not, from faith to works, or from works to faith; but from faith to faith, i.e. only by faith." (Poole)
- ii. "Perhaps what it conveys is the necessity of issuing a reminder to the believer that justifying faith is only the beginning of the Christians life. The same attitude must govern him in his continuing experience as a child of God." (Harrison).

This is an "echo" of Paul's message in Galatians 3:1-3.

5. Why man must be justified by faith: the guilt of the human race in general.

1. (18a) The greatest peril facing the human race: the wrath of God. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.

a. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven: The idea is simple but sobering - God's wrath is revealed from heaven against the human race, and the human race deserves the wrath of God.

b. We sometimes object to the idea of the wrath of God because we equate it with human anger, which is motivated by selfish personal reasons or by a desire for revenge. We must not forget that the wrath of God is completely righteous in character.

- i. "It is unnecessary, and it weakens the biblical concept of the wrath of God, to deprive it of its emotional and affective character ... to construe God's wrath as simply in his purpose to punish sin or to secure the connection between sin and misery is to equate wrath with its effects and virtually eliminate wrath as a movement within the mind of God. Wrath is the holy revulsion of God's being against that which is the contradiction of his holiness." (Murray).

c. In Romans 1:16, Paul spoke of salvation - but what are we saved from? First and foremost, we are saved from the wrath of God that we righteously deserve.

- i. "Unless there is something to be saved from, there is no point in talking about salvation." (Morris).

d. In this portion of the letter (Romans 1:18-3:20), Paul's goal is not to proclaim the good news, but to demonstrate the absolute necessity of the good news of salvation from God's righteous wrath.

- i. The wrath of God is not revealed in the gospel, but in the facts of human experience.

2. (18b-23) Why the human race is guilty before God: demonstrations of our ungodliness and unrighteousness.

Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify

Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

- a. **Ungodliness refers to man's offenses against God;** unrighteousness to the sins of man against man.
- b. **Who suppress the truth in unrighteousness:** Mankind does in fact suppress the truth of God. Every truth revealed to man by God has been fought against, disregarded, and deliberately obscured.
- c. **His invisible attributes are clearly seen:** God has shown us something of His eternal power and divine nature through creation, by the things that are made. He has given a general revelation that is obvious both in creation and within the mind and heart of man.
 - i. clearly seen: the universal character of this revelation and the clarity of it leave man without excuse for rejecting it. "men cannot charge god with hiding himself from them and thus excuse their irreligion and their immorality." (lenski).
- d. **Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God:** The problem is not that man did not know God, but that he did know Him - yet we refused to glorify Him as God. Therefore, mankind is without excuse. We didn't glorify God; we transformed our conception of Him into forms and images more comfortable to our corrupt and darkened hearts.
 - i. "Will you kindly notice, that, according to my text, knowledge is of no use if it does not lead to holy practice? "They knew God." It was no good to them to know God, for "they glorified him not as God." So my theological friend over there, who knows so much that he can split hairs over doctrines, it does not matter what you think, or what you know, unless it leads you to glorify God, and to be thankful." (Spurgeon).

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- ii. We can't seem to resist the temptation to create God into his own corrupt image, or even in an image beneath us. One great tragedy in this is that we inescapably become like the God we serve.
 - iii. It is absolutely essential that we constantly compare our own conception of God against the reality of who God is as revealed in His Word. We can also be guilty of worshipping a self-made God.
 - iv. Image in Romans 1:23 is the ancient Greek word *eikon*. It is a dangerous thing to change the glory of the incorruptible God into an *eikon* (image) of your own choosing.

e. Nor were thankful: Man's simple ingratitude against God is shocking. "I cannot say anything much worse of a man than that he is not thankful to those who have been his benefactors; and when you say that he is not thankful to God, you have said about the worst thing you can say of him." (Spurgeon)

- i. "But when you glorify God as God, and are thankful for everything - when you can take up a bit of bread and a cup of cold water, and say with the poor Puritan, 'What, all this, and Christ too?' - then are you happy, and you make others happy. A godly preacher, finding that all that there was for dinner was a potato and a herring, thanked God that he had ransacked sea and land to find food for his children. Such a sweet spirit breeds love to everybody, and makes a man go through the world cheerfully." (Spurgeon).

f. Professing to be wise, they became fools: Our rejection of God's general revelation has not made us smarter or better. Instead, it makes mankind futile in their thoughts, and makes our foolish hearts darkened - and we become fools.

- i. The fact is once a man rejects the truth of God in Jesus, he will fall for anything foolish, and trust far more feeble and fanciful systems that what he rejects from God.

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- ii. This futility of thinking, darkening of the heart, and folly must be seen as one example of God's righteous wrath against those who have rejected His revelation. Part of His judgment against us is allowing us to suffer the damage our sinful course leads to.

3. (Rom 1:24-32) The tragic result of human guilt before God.

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

- a. Therefore God also gave them up:** In His righteous wrath and judgment, God gives man up to the sin our evil hearts desire, allowing us to experience the self-destructive result of sin. This phrase is so important Paul repeats it three times in this passage.

I. Hosea 4:17 expresses the judgmental aspects of God

"giving us up," leaving us to our own sin: Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.

- ii. We err when we think that it is God's mercy or kindness that allows man to continue in sin. It is actually His wrath that allows us to go on destroying ourselves with sin.

b. Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie: In every rebellion and disobedience against God we exchange the truth of God for the lie of our own choosing, and set the creature before the Creator.

- i. Paul uses the definite article; it is not a lie, but the lie. The lie is essentially idolatry - which puts us in the place of God; it is the lie you will be like God. (Genesis 3:5).

c. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions: Paul wrote this letter from the city of Corinth, where every sort of sexual immorality and ritualistic prostitution was practiced freely. The terminology of Romans 1:24 refers to this combination of sexual immorality and idolatrous worship.

- i. This begins a passage where Paul describes the sin and corruption of the pagan world with an amazing directness - so direct that Spurgeon thought this passage unfit for public reading. "This first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a dreadful portion of the Word of God. I should hardly like to read it all through aloud; it is not intended to be so used. Read it at home, and be startled at the awful vices of the Gentile world." (Spurgeon).

d. Paul uses homosexuality - both female and male - as an example of God giving them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.

- i. Some say that the Bible nowhere condemns lesbian homosexuality, but the likewise of Romans 1:27 makes it clear that the sin of homosexuality

condemned in Romans 1:27 is connected to the sin of women mentioned in Romans 1:26.

- ii. Paul doesn't even use the normal words for men and women here; he uses the words for male and female, using categories that describe sexuality outside of human terms, because the type of sexual sin he describes is outside of human dignity.
- iii. Paul categorizes the whole section under the idea of vile passions - unhealthy, unholy. Nevertheless, Paul lived in a culture that openly approved of homosexuality. Paul didn't write this to a culture that agreed with him.
- iv. Paul wrote to a culture where homosexuality was accepted as a part of life for both men and women. For some 200 years, men who openly practiced homosexuality, often with young boys, ruled the Roman Empire.
- v. At times, the Roman Empire specifically taxed approved homosexual prostitution and gave boy prostitutes a legal holiday. Legal marriage between same gender couples was recognized, and even some of the emperors married other men. At the very time Paul was writing, Nero was emperor. He took a boy named Sporus and had him castrated, then married him (with a full ceremony), brought him to the palace with a great procession, and made the boy his "wife." Later, Nero lived with another man, and Nero was the "wife."
- vi. Homosexual practice truly is an abomination in our present culture. Statistics tell us that on average 43% of homosexuals say that they have had 500 or more sexual partners in their lifetime, and only 1% of homosexuals say they have had four or less sexual partners in their lifetime.
- vii. According the Unites States Department of Health and Human Services, 77% of homosexuals say they have met sexual partners in a city park; 62% in a homosexual bar, 61% in a theater, 31% in a public

restroom. Only 28% of homosexuals said that they had known their partners for at least a week before participating in homosexual sex.

viii. Homosexuals often seem to specialize in anonymous sex with no emotional commitment. At one time, London AIDS clinics defined a woman as promiscuous if she had more than six partners in her lifetime. They gave up trying to apply a workable definition to male homosexuals when it became clear that they saw almost no homosexual men who had less than six sexual partners a year.

e. Receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due: Paul speaks of a penalty for homosexual conduct; Homosexuality has within itself a penalty. This speaks of the self-destructive nature of sin; it often carries within itself its own penalty.

i. Sometimes it is the penalty of disease, which is the consequence of violating nature's order.

ii. Sometimes it is the penalty of rebellion, resulting in spiritual emptiness and all its ramifications. The term "gay" is wishful thinking; it sends a message that there is something essentially happy and carefree about the homosexual lifestyle - which there is not.

f. Again, this "freedom" to disobey should be seen as God's judgment, not His kindness; those who engage in such acts are receiving in themselves the penalty of their error.

g. As further judgment, God gives man over to a debased mind, so that things that are disgraceful and sickening are readily accepted and approved.

i. The word debased (or, reprobate in the KJV) meant originally 'that which has not stood the test'. It was used of coins that were substandard and therefore rejected. The idea is that since man did not "approve" to know God, men came to have an "unapproved" mind.

ii. "The human race put God to the test for the purpose of

approving Him should He meet the specifications which it laid down for a God who would be to its liking, and finding that He did not meet those specifications, it refused to approve Him as the God to be worshipped, or have Him in its knowledge." (Wuest).

- iii. A debased mind: Our rebellion against God is not only displayed in our actions, but in our thinking. We are genuinely "spiritually insane" in our rebellion against God.

h. The list in Romans 1:29-31 gives concrete examples of the kind of things which are not fitting. Notice how "socially acceptable" sins (such as covetousness, envy and pride) are included right along with "socially unacceptable" sins (such as murder and being unloving).

- i. Covetousness is literally the itch for more.
- ii. Whisperers: "Secret detractors; those who, under pretended secrecy, carry about accusations against their neighbours, whether true or false; blasting their reputation by clandestine tittle-tattle." (Clarke)
- iii. Is envy a small sin? Envy put Jesus on the cross. Pilate knew that they had handed Him over because of envy. (Matthew 27:18).
- iv. Proud: "They who are continually exalting themselves and depressing others; magnifying themselves at the expense of their neighbours; and wishing all men to receive their sayings as oracles." (Clarke)
- i. Those who either practice or approve of these things are worthy of death; they are the worth objects of the wrath of God.

j. Where does all this violence, immorality, cruelty and degradation come from? Men have abandoned the true knowledge of God, and the state of society is a reflection of God's judgment upon them for this.



THE GUILT OF THE MORALIST AND THE JEW

A. God's judgment upon the morally educated.

1. (Rom 2:1-3) An indictment of the morally educated.

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

a. Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge: In Romans 1, Paul pointed out the sin of the most notoriously guilty; he now envisions those who are generally "moral" in their conduct congratulating themselves that they are not like the people Paul described in Romans 1.

I. A good example of this mind set is Jesus' illustration of the Pharisee and the Publican. If we take those figures from Jesus' parable, now Paul addresses the Pharisee (Luke 18:10-14).

ii. Undoubtedly, in many ways the Jew of Paul's day typified the moralist; but his words in Romans 2:1-16 seem to have a wider application, beyond Jews only. For example, what about Seneca, the Roman moral teacher and tutor of Nero? He would agree

wholeheartedly with Paul regarding the morals of most pagans, but a man like Seneca would think, "I'm different from those immoral people."

- iii. Many Christians admired Seneca and his strong stand for "morals" and "family values." "But too often he tolerated in himself vices not so different from those which he condemned in others - the most flagrant instance being his connivance at Nero's murder of his mother Agrippina." (Bruce).

b. For in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself: After gaining the agreement of the moralist in condemning the obvious sinner, now Paul turns the same argument upon the moralist himself. This is because at the end of it all, for you who judge practice the same things.

- i. As we judge another person, we point to a standard outside of our self - and that standard condemns everyone, not only the "obvious" sinner. "Since you know the justice of God, as evidenced by the fact that you are judging others, you are without an excuse, because is the very act of judging you have condemned yourself." (Murray).
- ii. Practice the same things: Notice that the moralist is not condemned for judging others; but for being guilty of the same things that he judges others for. This is something the moral man would object to ("I'm not like them at all!"), but Paul will demonstrate this is the truth.
- iii. Wuest, quoting Denney on for you who judge practice the same things: "Not, you do the identical actions, but your conduct is the same, i.e., you sin against light. The sin of the Jews was the same, but their sins were not."

c. According to truth it has the idea of "according to the facts of the case." God will judge (and condemn) the moralist on the basis of the facts.

d. The point is made clear: if the moralist is just as guilty as

the obvious sinner how will they escape the judgment of God?

- i. You is emphatic in [do you think] you will escape the judgment of God? Paul is bearing down, letting his reader know that he is no exception to this principle. Paul gets right to the heart of his readers. "Our exhortations should be as forked arrows to stick in men's hearts; and not wound only, as other arrows." (Trapp)
- ii. Lenski on the moralist: "Paul's object is far greater than merely to convict also them of unrighteousness. He robs them, absolutely must rob them, of their moralism and their moralizing because they regard this as the way of escape from God's wrath."

2. (Rom 2:4-5) God's judgment against the moralist is announced.

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

- a. **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering:** Paul points out that the moralist himself is presuming upon the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God, which all should have brought the moralist into a humble repentance instead of an attitude of superiority.
 - i. Goodness may be considered God's kindness to us in regard to our past sin. He has been good to us because He has not judged us yet though we deserve it.
 - ii. Forbearance may be considered God's kindness to us in regard to our present sin. This very day - indeed, this very hour - we have fallen short of His glory, yet He holds back His judgment against us.

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- iii. Longsuffering may be considered God's kindness to us in regard to our future sin. He knows that we will sin tomorrow and the next day, yet He holds back His judgment against us.
- iv. Considering all this, it is no surprise that Paul describes these three aspects of God's kindness to us as riches. The riches of God's mercy is measured by four considerations:
- His greatness - to wrong a great man is a great wrong and God is greatest of all - yet He shows mercy
 - His omniscience - if someone knew all our sin, would they show mercy? Yet God shows mercy
 - His power - sometimes wrongs are not settled because they are out of our power, yet God is able to settle every wrong against Him - yet He is rich in mercy.
 - The object of His mercy, mere man - would we show mercy to an ant? Yet God is rich in mercy.
- v. Knowing how great God's kindness is, it is a great sin to presume upon the graciousness of God, and we easily come to believe that we deserve it.
- b. Men often see the forbearance and longsuffering of God as a weakness in God; they say things like "If there is a God in heaven, let Him strike me dead!" When it doesn't happen, they will say, "See, I told you there was no God." Men misinterpret God's forbearance and longsuffering as His approval, and they refuse to repent.
- i. "It seems to me that every morning when a man wakes up still impenitent, and finds himself out of hell, the sunlight seems to say, 'I shine on thee yet another day, as that in this day thou mayest repent.' When your bed receives you at night I think it seems to say, 'I will give you another night's rest, that you may live to turn from your sins and trust in Jesus.' Every mouthful of bread that comes to the table says, 'I have to support your body that still you may have space for repentance.' Every time you open the Bible the pages say, 'We speak with you that you may repent.' Every

time you hear a sermon, if it be such a sermon as God would have us preach, it pleads with you to turn unto the Lord and live." (Spurgeon).

c. Not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance:

Many people misunderstand the goodness of God towards the wicked. They don't understand the entire reason for it is to lead them to repentance.

i. Men should see the goodness of God and understand:

- God has been better to them than they deserve.
- God has shown them kindness when they have ignored Him.
- God has shown them kindness when they have mocked Him.
- God is not a cruel master and they may safely surrender to Him.
- God is perfectly willing to forgive them.
- God should be served out of simple gratitude.

ii. Are you waiting for God to drive you to repentance? He doesn't work like that; God leads you to repentance. "Notice, dear friends, that the Lord does not drive you to repentance. Cain was driven away, as a fugitive and a vagabond, when he had killed his righteous brother Abel; Judas went and hanged himself, being driven by an anguish of remorse because of what he had done in betraying his Lord; but the sweetest and best repentance is that which comes, not by driving, but by drawing: 'The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.'" (Spurgeon).

iii. "In the New Testament, repentance is not simply negative. It means turning to a new life in Christ, a life of active service to God. It should not be confused with remorse, which is a deep sorrow for sin but lacks the positive note in repentance." (Morris).

d. You are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: Because of this presumption on God's graciousness, Paul can rightly say that the moralist is

treasuring up ... wrath in the day of wrath.

- i. The moralist thinks he is treasuring up merit with God as he condemns the "sinners" around him; actually, he only treasures up the wrath of God. "Just as men add to their treasure of wealth, so dost thou add to the treasures of punishment." (Poole)
- ii. As men treasure up the wrath of God against them, what holds back the flood of wrath? God Himself! He holds it back out of His forbearance and longsuffering! "The figure is that of a load that God bears, which men heap up more and more, making heavier and heavier. The wonder of it all is that God holds any of it up even for a day; yet he holds up all its weight and does not let it crash down on the sinner's head." (Lenski).

e. In the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: This explains part of the reason for God's ultimate judgment is also shown. In the first coming of Jesus, the loving character of God was revealed with greatest emphasis; at the second coming of Jesus, the righteous judgment of God will be revealed most clearly.

3. (Rom 2:6-10). God will judge the moralist because their works also fall short of God's perfect standard.

Who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

a. Will render to each one according to his deeds: This is an awesome and fearful thought, and it condemns the moralist as well as the obvious sinner.

b. Eternal life to those: If there was one who genuinely did

good at all times, they could merit eternal life of their own accord - but there is none, because all, in some way or another are or have been or will be self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness.

c. Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil: Because all fall short of this standard of God's constant goodness, God's wrath will come to all who do evil - without respect to whether they are Jew or Gentile.

- i. This judgment comes to the Jew first. If they are first in line for the gospel (Romans 1:16) and first in line for reward (Romans 2:10), then they are also first in line for judgment.
- ii. The word indignation comes from the idea of "boiling up," thus having the meaning of a passionate outburst. The word wrath comes from the idea of a swelling which eventually bursts, and applies more to an anger that proceeds from one's settled nature.

B. God's judgment upon the Jews.

1. (Rom 2:11-13) God's principle of impartiality.

For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;

a. For there is no partiality with God: Partiality comes from two ancient Greek words put together - to receive and face. It means to judge things on the basis of externals or pre-conceived notions.

- i. Some ancient rabbis taught that God showed partiality towards the Jews. They said: "God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another."

b. For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified: God's

righteous judgment is not withheld because someone has heard the law; it is only held back if someone actually does the law.

I. The Jew - or the religious person - may think that he is saved because he has the law; but has he kept it? The Gentile may think that he is saved because he does not have the law, but has he kept the dictates of his own conscience?

ii. "People will be condemned, not because they have the law or do not have the law, but because they have sinned." (Morris).

c. As many as have sinned without law will also perish without law: Judgment for sin can come with or without the law.

2. (Rom 2:14-16) Possession of the law is no advantage to the Jew in the Day of Judgment.

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

a. Although not having the law, are a law to themselves:

Paul explains why the Gentile can be condemned without the law. Their conscience (which is the work of the law written in their hearts) is enough to condemn - or, theoretically, enough to justify -

I. Written in their hearts: Many pagan authors of Paul's day referred to the "unwritten law" within man. They thought of it as something that points us to the right way. Though it is not embodied in written laws, it is in many ways more important than written laws.

ii. A law to themselves does not mean that these "obedient Gentiles" made up their own law (as we use

the expression "law unto himself"), but that they were obedient to conscience, the work of the law residing in themselves.

- iii. "He indeed shows that ignorance is in vain pretended as an excuse by the Gentiles, since they prove by their own deeds that they have some rule of righteousness." (Calvin).

b. Their thoughts accusing or else excusing them: In theory, a man might be justified ("excused") by obeying his conscience. Unfortunately, every man has violated his conscience (God's internal revelation to man), just as every man has violated God's written revelation.

- i. While Paul says in Romans 2:14 that a Gentile, may, by nature do the things contained in the law; he is careful to not say that a Gentile could fulfill the requirements of the law by nature.
- ii. Though God has His work within every man (resulting in conscience), man can corrupt that work, so that conscience varies from person to person, and our consciences can be damaged, and even restored in Christ.
- iii. If our conscience is condemning us wrongly, we can take comfort in the idea that God is greater than our heart. (1 John 3:20).
- c. Their conscience also bearing witness: People who have never heard God's word directly still have a moral compass that they are accountable to - the conscience.
- I. "God is describing how He has constituted all men: there is a 'work' within them, making them morally conscious." (Newell).
- ii. "He is not saying that the law is written on their hearts, as people often say, but that the work of the law, what the law requires of people, is written there." (Morris).

d. On the day when God will judge the secrets of men, no man can find refuge from God's judgment by

claiming ignorance of His written revelation; violation of God's internal revelation is enough to condemn us all.

i. "God therefore will judge all nations according to the use and abuse they have made of this word, whether it was written in the heart, or written on tables of stone." (Clarke).

e. According to my gospel: Notice that the day of judgment was a part of Paul's gospel. He did not shrink from declaring man's absolute accountability to God.

i. "My gospel.' Does not this show his courage? As much as to say, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God onto salvation to every one that believeth.' He says, 'my gospel,' as a soldier speaks of 'my colors,' or of 'my king.' He resolves to bear this banner to victory, and to serve this royal truth even to the death." (Spurgeon).

f. The idea that God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ is distinctively Christian. The Jews taught that God the Father alone would judge the world, committing judgment to no one - not even the Messiah.

3. (Rom 2:17-20) The boast of the Jew.

Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

a. Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law: Every "boast" of the Jew in this passage concerns the possession of law. The Jewish people of Paul's day were extremely proud and confident in the fact that God gave His holy law to them as a nation. They believed this confirmed their status as a specially chosen people, and thus insured their salvation.

b. Although the Jew should gratefully receive the law as a gift from God, Paul will show how mere possession of the law justifies no one.

4. (Rom 2:21-24) The indictment of the Jew.

You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.

a. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? It comes down to this principle: "You have the law, do you keep it? You can see how others break the law, do you see how you break it also?"

- i. Remember that much of rabbinical Judaism of Paul's day interpreted the law so that they thought they were completely justified by the law. Jesus exposed the error of such interpretations. (Matthew 5:19-48).
- ii. God applies His law to both our actions and our attitudes. Sometimes we only want our attitudes evaluated, and sometimes only our actions. God will hold us accountable for both motives and actions.
- iii. "Hypocrites can talk of religion, as if their tongues did run upon patterns, they are fair professors, but foul sinners; as was that carnal cardinal Cremensis, the pope's legate, sent hither, A.D. 1114, to interdict priests' marriages, and being taken in the act with a common strumpet, he excused it by saying he was no priest himself, but a corrector of them." (Trapp).

b. You who abhor idols, do you rob temples: Morris on the idea of robbing temples: "Clearly some people held that a Jew might well make profits from dishonest practices connected with idolatry, and Paul may well have had this in mind."

c. The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you: Paul reminds the Jew that God has said in the Old Testament that the failure of the Jew to obey the law has caused the Gentile to blaspheme God.

5. (Rom 2:25-29) The irrelevance of circumcision.

“For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God”.

a. For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law: Paul recognizes that a Jew may protest, and say that his salvation is based on the fact that he is a descendant of Abraham, proven by circumcision. Paul rightly answers that this is irrelevant in regard to justification.

- i. The Jew believed that his circumcision guaranteed his salvation. He might be punished in the world to come, but could never be lost.
- ii. In Paul's day, some Rabbis taught that Abraham sat at the entrance of Hell and made certain that none of his circumcised descendants went there. Some Rabbis also taught "God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another" and "All Israelites will have part in the world to come."
- iii. Circumcision (or baptism - or any ritual in itself) doesn't save anyone. In the ancient world, Egyptians also circumcised their boys but it did not make them followers of the true God. Even in Abraham's day,

Ishmael, the son of the flesh, was circumcised, but it did not make him a son of the covenant.

- iv. Circumcision and baptism do about the same thing that a label on a can does. If the outer label doesn't match with what is on the inside, something is wrong! If there are carrots inside the can, you can put a label says "Peas" but it doesn't change what is inside the can. Being born again changes what is inside the can, and then you can put the appropriate label on the outside.
- v. Of course, this is not a new thought. The Law of Moses itself teaches this principle: Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. (Deuteronomy 10:16).

b. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law: If a Gentile were to keep the righteous requirement of the law (through his conscience, as Romans 2:15 shows) within his heart, would he not be justified, instead of the circumcised Jew who did not keep the law? The point is emphasized: having the law or having a ceremony isn't enough. God requires righteousness.

- i. Morris quoting Manson: "If they are loyal to the good they know, they will be acceptable to God; but it is a very big 'if'."

c. And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? This is God's answer to the one who says, "What about the Pygmy in Africa who has never heard the gospel?" God will judge that Pygmy by what he has heard, and how he has lived by it. Of course, this means that the Pygmy will be guilty before God, because no one has perfectly lived by their conscience, or perfectly responded to what we can know of God through creation.

- i. The problem of the "innocent native" is that we can't find an innocent native anywhere.

ii. "What about the Pygmy in Africa who hasn't heard the gospel?" is a good question, but there are two far more important questions:

- What about you who hear the gospel, but reject it? What excuse is there for you?

- What about you, who are commanded to take the gospel to

that Pygmy in Africa (Matthew 28:19), but refuse to do it?

d. Whose praise is not from men but from God: All the outward signs of religion may earn us praise from men, but they will not earn us praise from God. The evidence of our rightness with God is not contained in outward signs or works, and it is not assured because of our parentage; the evidence is found in the work of God in our hearts, which shows itself in fruit.

e. William Newell summarizes Romans 2 with "Seven Great Principles of God's Judgment" that are worth noting:

- God's judgment is according to truth (Romans 2:2).

- God's judgment is according to accumulated guilt (Romans 2:5).

- God's judgment is according to works (Romans 2:6).

- God's judgment is without partiality (Romans 2:11).

- God's judgment is according to performance, not knowledge (Romans 2:13).

- God's judgment reaches the secrets of the heart (Romans 2:16).

- God's judgment is according to reality, not religious.



JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE

A. The righteousness of God's judgments.

1. (Rom 3:1-2). The advantage of the Jewish people.

What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

a. What advantage then has the Jew: Paul has carefully explained in Romans 2 that the possession of the law or circumcision will not save a Jewish person. If this is the case, then what is the advantage of being "God's chosen nation"?

i. After all, if there is no partiality with God (Romans 2:11), what good is it to be Jewish?

b. Much in every way! Paul knows there are many advantages God gave to the Jewish people. In particular, He entrusted them with the oracles of God, which speaks of God's written revelation before the time of Jesus. He gave the Jewish people His Word, and that is an indescribable gift.

i. "This was their prime privilege, that they were God's library-keepers, that this heavenly treasure was concredited to them." (Trapp)

ii. Paul will later expand on the advantage of the Jewish people in Romans 9:4, explaining that Israel also had the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.

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- iii. Poole on the word oracles: "Profane writers make this word to signify the answer that was given by the demons, or heathen gods; and yet the Holy Ghost doth not disdain to make use of this word (as well as divers others,) though abused to heathenish superstition."

2. (Rom 3:3-4) Jewish unbelief does not make God wrong.

For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged."

a. For what if some did not believe? The fact that the Jewish people as a whole to that point had rejected the gospel did not mean that God's faithfulness to them was in vain. It did not mean that God's work was futile or without effect.

- i. "I have to say, with Paul, 'What if some did not believe?' It is no new thing; for there have always been some who have rejected the revelation of God. What then? You and I had better go on believing, and testing for ourselves, and proving the faithfulness of God, and living upon Christ our Lord, even though we see another set of doubters, and another, and yet another ad infinitum. The gospel is no failure, as many of us know." (Spurgeon).

b. Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar: Instead, we are reminded that God will be justified in all His actions. In the end, it will be demonstrated that even our unrighteousness somehow proclaimed His righteousness and glory, even if only in judgment.

- i. "Should any man say that the promise of God had failed toward him, let him examine his heart and his ways, and he will find that he has departed out of that way in which alone God could, consistent with his holiness and truth, fulfill the promise." (Clarke).
- ii. Spurgeon on let God be true but every man a liar: "It is

a strange, strong expression; but it is none too strong. If God says one thing, and every man in the world says another, God is true, and all men are false. God speaks the truth, and cannot lie. God cannot change; his word, like himself, is immutable. We are to believe God's truth if nobody else believes it. The general consensus of opinion is nothing to a Christian. He believes God's word, and he thinks more of that than of the universal opinion of men."

3. (Rom 3:5) Raising an objection regarding the unrighteousness of man and the righteousness of God.

But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)

- a. But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Paul brings the counter-argument of an opponent:** "If my unrighteousness will demonstrate God's righteousness, how can God judge me? My sin ultimately serves to bring Him more glory, and that is good!"
- b. Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?** Paul was familiar with the line of thinking that says, "God is in control of everything. Even my evil will ultimately demonstrate His righteousness. Therefore God is unjust if He inflicts His wrath on me, because I'm just a pawn in His hand."
- i. In theory, the most dramatic example of someone who might ask this question is Judas. Can you hear Judas make his case? "Lord, I know that I betrayed Jesus, but You used it for good. In fact, if I hadn't done what I did, Jesus wouldn't have gone to the cross at all. What I did even fulfilled the Scriptures. How can You judge me at all?" The answer to Judas might go like this: "Yes, God used your wickedness but it was still your wickedness. There was no good or pure motive in your heart at all. It is no credit to you that God brought good out of your evil. You stand guilty before."

c. When Paul says I speak as a man, he isn't trying to imply that he no longer speaks by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and proper apostolic authority. He is explaining that only as a man - a fallen man at that - would anyone dare to question God's justice.

4. (Rom 3:6-8) Paul's answer to the objection raised.

Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"?; as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

a. Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? Paul dismisses the question of his opponent easily. If things were such as his opponent suggested, then God could judge no one!

It is true that God will use even the unrighteousness of man to accomplish His work and bring praise to His name - Judas' betrayal of Jesus is a perfect example. Nevertheless, part of the way God glorifies Himself in man's sin is by righteously judging that unrighteousness.

b. How will God judge the world? For both Paul and his readers it was given that a judgment day was coming, when some would be acquitted and some condemned. He didn't need to contest this point; it was simply understood in that culture.

I. Paul understood that God would judge the world, both Jew and Gentile. The Jews of Paul's day figured that God would condemn the Gentile for his sin, but save the Jew despite his sin.

c. For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? Paul re-states the objection of an imaginary questioner: "If God will glorify Himself through my lie, how can He judge me, since I seem to indirectly increase His glory?"

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- d. Let us do evil that good may come:** This was a perversion of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, and an extension of the objection of his imaginary questioner. If you take the thinking of Paul's adversary far enough, you end up saying, "Let's sin as much as we can so God can be glorified even more." This shows us that one way to examine a teaching is to extend its meaning and consequences and see where you end up.
- i. Of course, let us do evil that good may come was not Paul's teaching. He makes it clear that we are slanderously reported to teach this. Still, it is possible to see how this accusation came as Paul freely preached forgiveness and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, not works.
 - ii. Most Christian preaching is so far from the true gospel of free grace that Paul preached that there is no way anyone could even slanderously report that they taught "let us do evil that good may come." If we find ourselves sometimes accused of preaching a gospel that is "too open" and too centered on faith and grace and God's work then we find ourselves in good company with Paul.
- e. Their condemnation is just:** Paul will not even answer such an absurd twisting of his gospel. He simply says of those who would teach such things or accuse Paul of teaching them, their condemnation is just. God rightly condemns anyone who teaches or believes such a thing.
- i. Twisting the glorious free gift of God in Jesus into a supposed license to sin is perhaps the summit of man's depravity. It takes the most beautiful gift of God and perverts it and mocks it. This twisting is so sinful Paul saves it for last, because it is beyond the depravity of the pagan (Romans 1:24-32), beyond the hypocrisy of the moralist (Romans 2:1-5), and beyond the false confidence of the Jew (Romans 2:17-29).

B. Conclusion: the universal guilt of mankind before God.

1. (Rom 3:9) The guilt of both Jew and Gentile before God.

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

a. Are we better than they? Not at all: Since Paul was Jewish by birth and heritage (Philippians 3:4-6), when we says "we" he means "weJews." The point is that by nature, the Jewish person is no more right with God than the pagan or the moralist. Paul has demonstrated that the pagan, the moralist and the Jew are all under sin and therefore, under condemnation.

b. Under sin is a powerful phrase. It speaks of our slavery to sin, literally meaning "sold under sin." By nature every person knows what it is like to be a slave to sin, both Jews and Greeks.

i. Morris on under sin: "He is regarding sin as a tyrant ruler, so that sinners are 'under' it (JB, 'under sin's dominion'); they cannot break free."

ii. "Under the power of sin, but chiefly under the guilt of sin." (Poole)

2. (Rom 3:10-18) The Old Testament witnesses to the universal depravity and guilt of mankind.

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

a. These quotations from the Psalms (Psalms 14:1-3; 5:9, 140:3, 10:7 and 36:1) and from Isaiah 59:7-8 all support the opening statement: There is none righteous, no, not one.

I. Paul looks at the human condition from top to bottom. He begins with head and moves all the way down to the feet. Warren Wiersbe calls this passage "An X-ray study of the lost sinner, from head to foot."

ii. This look at the human condition is depressing. What's the point? The Apostle Paul wants us to understand our complete inability to save ourselves. The fall touches every part of man's being, and the inventory of body parts corrupted by the fall demonstrates this.

b. There is none righteous, no, not one: When God finds none righteous, it is because there are none. It isn't as if there were some and God couldn't see them. There has never been a truly righteous man apart from Jesus Christ. "Even Adam was not righteous: he was innocent - not knowing good and evil." (Newell).

c. There is none who seeks after God: We deceive ourselves into thinking that man, on his own, really does seek after God. Don't all the religion and rituals and practices from the beginning of time demonstrate that man seeks after God? Not at all. If man initiates the search then he doesn't seek the true God, the God of the Bible. Instead he seeks an idol that he makes himself.

i. "You have gone through this form of worship, but you have not sought after God. I am sick of this empty religiousness. We see it everywhere; it is not communion with God, it is not getting to God; indeed, God is not in it all." (Spurgeon).

d. They have together become unprofitable: The word unprofitable has the idea of rotten fruit. It speaks of something that was permanently bad and therefore useless.

e. With these references from the Psalms, Paul calls virtually every part of man's body into guilt: throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet, eyes are all shown to be filled with sin and rebellion against God.

i. Their feet are swift to shed blood: "For further details, read your daily papers!" (Newell) For example, the Los Angeles Times reported that in 1992 murders reached a record level of 800 in Los Angeles County.

f. There is no fear of God before their eyes: This summarizes the entire thought. Every sin and rebellion against God happens because we do not have a proper respect for Him. Wherever there is sin, there is no fear of God.

i. John Calvin on the fear of God: "In short, as it is a bridle to restrain our wickedness, so when it is wanting, we feel at liberty to indulge every kind of licentiousness."

3. (Rom 3:19-20) Summation: the law cannot save us from our sin and the penalty it deserves.

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin".

a. Whatever the law says: Paul points out that this horrific description of man's utter sinfulness come to us in the law; and it is intended for those under the law, to silence every critic and to demonstrate the universal guilt of mankind - that all the world may become guilty before God.

i. "We may add, that though all the vices here enumerated are not found conspicuously in every individual, yet they may be justly and truly ascribed to human nature, as we have already observed." (Calvin).

b. It says to those who are under the law: If God speaks this way to those who had the law, and attempted to do the law, it is evident that by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight.

- i. Remember that many Jewish people of Paul's day took every passage of the Old Testament describing evil and applied it only to the Gentiles - not to themselves. Paul makes it clear that God speaks to those who are under the law.

c. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight: The law cannot save us. The law can't justify anyone. It is useful in giving us the knowledge of sin, but it cannot save us.

- i. Since the time of Adam and Eve, people have tried to justify themselves by the deeds of the law. In the Garden of Eden Adam tried to make himself presentable to God by making coverings out of fig leaves - and he failed. In Job, the oldest book of the Bible, the problem is presented clearly: how can a man be righteous before God? (Job 9:2) God makes part of the answer clear here through Paul - the answer is not in the performance of good works, in the deeds of the law.
- ii. How we need to deeply understand this - that by the deeds of the law no flesh will be.
 - This means that the law, having been broken, can only condemn us - it can never save us.
 - This means that even we could now begin to perfectly keep the law of God it could not make up for past disobedience, or remove present guilt.
 - This means that keeping law is NOT God's way of salvation or of blessing under the New Covenant.

d. For by the law is the knowledge of sin: J.B. Phillip's paraphrase of this phrase is striking: it is the straight-edge of the Law that shows us how crooked we are.

- i. "Lest any should think that the law hereupon is useless, he goes on to show its use, but a quite

contrary one to what they intended. It convinceth us of our guilt, and therefore is far from being our righteousness." (Poole).

C. The revelation of the righteousness of God.

1. (Rom 3:21) The revelation of righteousness.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

a. But now provides the most glorious transition from the judgment of Romans 3:20 to the justification of Romans 3:21.

I. But now speaks of the newness of God's work in Jesus Christ - it really is a New Covenant. Being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets reminds us that there is still continuity with God's work in former times.

b. Apart from the law: The law cannot save us, but God revealed a righteousness that would save us, apart from the law. This is the essence of God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ: it is a salvation that is offered apart from the law, apart from our own earning and deserving, apart from our own merits.

c. Being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets: This righteousness is not a novelty. Paul didn't "invent" it. It was predicted long ago, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. The Old Testament said this righteousness was coming.

d. Apart from the law: It isn't that the righteousness of God is revealed apart from the Old Testament, but that it is revealed apart from the principle of law. It is apart from a legal relationship to God, based on the idea of earning and deserving merit before Him.

i. "The Greek puts to the very front this great phrase apart from law(*choris nomou*) and this sets forth most strongly the altogether separateness of this Divine righteousness from any law-performance, any works

of man, whatsoever." (Newell)

- ii. God's righteousness is not offered to us as something to take up the slack between our ability to keep the law and God's perfect standard. It is not given to supplement our own righteousness, it is given completely apart from our own attempted righteousness.

2. (Rom 3:22) How this righteousness is communicated to man.

Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

- a. To all and on all who believe:** In Romans 3:21, Paul told us how this righteousness does not come. It does not come through the deeds of the law, it is apart from the law. Now Paul tells us how this saving righteousness does come. It is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe.
- b. Through faith in Jesus Christ:** The righteousness of God is not ours by faith; it is ours through faith. We do not earn righteousness by our faith. We receive righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - i. Through faith "points to the fact that faith is not a merit, earning salvation. It is no more than the means through which the gift is given." (Morris).
 - ii. "But faith is not 'trusting' or 'expecting' God to do something, but relying on His testimony concerning the person of Christ as His Son, and the work of Christ for us on the cross ... After saving faith, the life of trust begins ... trust is always looking forward to what God will do; but faith sees that what God says has been done, and believes God's Word, having the conviction that it is true, and true for ourselves." (Newell).
- c. For the there is no difference:** There is no other way to obtain this righteousness. This righteousness is not earned through obedience to the law; it is a received

righteousness, gained through faith in Jesus Christ.

- i. "There is a little book entitled, Every man his own lawyer. Well, nowadays, according to some people, it seems as if every man is to be his own saviour; but if I had, say; a dozen gospels, and I had to sort them out, and give the right gospel to the right man, what a fix I should be in! I believe that, oftentimes, I should be giving your gospel to someone else, and someone else's gospel to you; and what a muddle it would all be! But now we have one universal cure ... The blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ will save every man who trusts him, for 'there is no difference.'" (Spurgeon).

3. (Rom 3:23-24) Man's universal need and God's universal offer.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

- a. **Being justified:** Paul develops his teaching about salvation around three themes.
 - Justification: an image from the court of law.
 - Redemption (an image from the slave market).
 - Propitiation (an image from the world of religion, appeasing God through sacrifice).
- i. Justification solves the problem of man's guilt before a righteous Judge. Redemption solves the problem of man's slavery to sin, the world, and the devil. Propitiation solves the problem of offending God our Creator.
- b. **Even as all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God is universal, so is the offer of being justified freely by His grace. It is open to everyone who will believe. Morris, quoting Moule:** "The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are short of it; but so are you. Perhaps they stand at the bottom of a mine, and you on the crest of an Alp; but you are as little able to touch the stars as they." Everyone falls short, but everyone can be justified freely by His grace.

c. How do we fall short of the glory of God? It's impossible to describe every way, but here are four important ways man falls short of the glory of God.

- i. We fail to give God the glory due Him, in our words, thoughts and actions.
- ii. We fail to qualify for, and thereby reject, the glory and reward that God gives faithful servants.
- iii. We fail to properly reflect God's glory, by refusing to be conformed into His image.
- iv. We fail to obtain the final glory God will bestow on His people at the end of all history.

d. Justified freely by His grace: Being in such a sinful state, the only way we can be justified is to be justified freely. We can't purchase it with our good works at all. If it isn't made free to us, we can't have it all. So we are justified freely by His grace - His unmerited favor, given to us without regard to what we deserve. It is a giving motivated purely by the giver, and motivated by nothing in the one who receives.

- i. Freely is the Greek word *dorean*. The way this word is used in other New Testament passages helps us understand the word. Matthew 10:8 (Freely you have received, freely give) and Revelation 22:17 (And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely) show that the word means truly free, not just "cheap" or "discounted." Perhaps the most striking use of the ancient Greek word *dorean* is in John 15:25: They hated me without a cause(*dorean*). Even as there was nothing in Jesus deserving of man's hatred, so there is nothing in us deserving of justification - all the reasons are in God.
- ii. Calvin on the use of both the words freely and grace: "He thus repeats the word to show that the whole is from God, and nothing from us ... lest we should imagine a half kind of grace, he affirms more strongly what he means by a repetition, and claims for God's mercy alone the whole glory of our righteousness."

e. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Again, Paul's gospel centers squarely in Christ Jesus. Salvation is possible because of the redemption found in Him. God cannot give us His righteousness apart from Jesus Christ.

f. Redemption has the idea of buying back something, and involves cost. However, God pays the cost and so we are justified freely.

- i. The word redemption had its origin in the release of prisoners of war on payment of a price and was known as the "ransom." As time went on, it was extended to include the freeing of slaves, again by the payment of a price.
- ii. The idea of redemption means that Jesus bought us, therefore we belong to Him. Paul expressed this thought in another letter: For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

4. (Rom 3:25-26) How the death of Jesus satisfies the righteous judgment of God.

"Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus".

a. Whom God set forth as a propitiation: Jesus, by His death (by His blood) was a propitiation (substitute sacrifice) for us. As He was judged in our place, the Father could demonstrate His righteousness in judgment against sin, while sparing those who deserved the judgment.

b. Wuest on propitiation: "The word in its classical form was used of the act of appeasing the Greek gods by a sacrifice ... in other words, the sacrifice was offered to buy off the anger of the god."

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- i. The NIV translates propitiation as sacrifice of atonement; the Living Bible has to take the punishment for our sins.

c. The Greek word for propitiation (hilasterion) is also used in the Septuagint for the mercy seat, the lid that covered the ark of the covenant, upon which sacrificial blood was sprinkled as an atonement for sin. While it might be said that this passage is saying "Jesus is our mercy seat," it probably has more the straightforward idea of propitiation - a substitute sacrifice.

- i. At the same time, the "mercy seat" idea should not be neglected as an illustration of that propitiation. Inside the ark of the covenant were the evidence of man's great sin: the tablets of law; the manna received ungratefully; the budded rod of Aaron, showing man's rejection of God's leadership. Up over the ark of the covenant were the symbols of the holy presence of the enthroned God in the beautiful gold cherubim. In between the two stood the mercy seat, and as sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), God's wrath was averted because a substitute had been slain on behalf of sinners coming by faith. We really can say that Jesus is our "mercy seat," standing between guilty sinners and the holiness of God.

d. Whom God set forth as a propitiation: This shows that Jesus somehow appeased a reluctant, unwilling Father to hold back His wrath. Instead, it was God the Father who initiated the propitiation: whom God set forth.

e. God, in His forbearance, had passed over the sins of those Old Testament saints who trusted in the coming Messiah. At the cross, those sins were no longer passed over, they were paid for.

- i. The idea is that through the animal sacrifice of the Old Testament, those who looked in faith to the coming Messiah had their sins "covered" by a sort of an "IOU" or promissory note. That temporary covering was

redeemed for full payment at the cross.ii. The work of Jesus on the cross freed God from the charge that He passed over sin committed before the cross lightly. They were passed over for a time, but they were finally paid for.

f. That He might be just and the justifier of the one who

has faith in Jesus: At the cross, God demonstrated His righteousness by offering man justification (a legal verdict of "not guilty"), while remaining completely just (because the righteous penalty of sin had been paid at the cross).

i. It's easy to see how God could only be just - simply send every guilty sinner to hell, as a just Judge. It's easy to see how God could only be the justifier - simply tell every guilty sinner, "I declare a pardon. You are all declared 'not guilty.'" But only God could find a way to be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

ii. "Here we learn that God designed to give the most evident displays of both his justice and mercy. Of his justice, in requiring a sacrifice, and absolutely refusing to give salvation to a lost world in any other way; and of his mercy, in providing THE sacrifice which his justice required." (Clarke)

5. (Rom 3:27) Boasting in the salvation which comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ is excluded.

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

a. Where is boasting then? It shouldn't be anywhere. Because we are justified freely by His grace, there is no room for self-congratulation or credit.

b. By what law? Boasting and pride isn't excluded because there is some specific passage in the law against it. Instead, pride is excluded because it is completely incompatible with the salvation that is freely ours through faith. Boasting is excluded by the law of faith.

c. No room for boasting! This, of course, is why the natural man hates being justified freely by His grace; it absolutely refuses to recognize his (imagined) merits and gives no place to his pride whatsoever.

6. (Rom 3:28-30) Justification (acquittal in the court of God) is found, for both Jew and Gentile, apart from the deeds of the law.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

a. Justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law: It isn't that we are justified by faith plus whatever deeds of the law we can do. We are justified by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the law.

i. "Since all works of law are barred out, faith alone is left. Luther so translated, and since his time *Sola Fide* has become a slogan." (Lenski).

b. Apart from the deeds of the law: Doesn't James contradict this in passages like James 2:14-26? How can we say that it is faith alone that saves, apart from the deeds of the law?

i. It is true faith alone saves, but true faith, saving faith, has a distinct character. It is not just agreeing with certain facts, but it is a directing of the mind and will in agreement with God. The whole purpose of the book of James is to describe the character of this saving faith.

ii. Calvin explains: "What James says, that man is not justified by faith alone, but also by works, does not at all militate against the preceding view [of justification by faith alone]. The reconciling of the two views depends chiefly on the drift of the argument pursued by James. For the question with him is not, how men

attain righteousness before God, but how they prove it to others that they are justified; for his object was to confute hypocrites, who vainly boasted that they had faith ... James meant no more than that man is not made or proved to be just by a feigned or dead faith, and that he must prove his righteousness by his works.”

c. This righteousness is offered to both Jew and Gentile.

The universal character of the offer is demonstrated by a simple fact: Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Of course He is. If there is only one God, then God is God of the Gentiles as much as He is God of the Jews. It's just up to the Gentiles to recognize Him as God.

d. There is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith: Not only is this righteousness available to both Jew and Gentile, it is also received the same way by both Jew and Gentile. Since one God justifies both Jew and Gentile, He justifies them in the same way: by faith ... through faith.

7. (Rom 3:31) What of the law then?

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

a. Do we then make void the law through faith? We can see how someone might ask this. "If the law doesn't make us righteous, what good is it? Paul, you have just made the law void. You are going against the law of God."

b. Certainly not! Of course, Paul does not make void the law. As the Apostle will demonstrate in Romans 4, the law anticipated the coming gospel of justification by faith, apart from the deeds of the law. Therefore, the gospel establishes the law, fulfilling its own predictions.



ABRAHAM AND DAVID DEMONSTRATE RIGHTEOUSNESS APART FROM WORKS

A. Abraham is declared righteous through faith.

1. (Rom 4:1-3) Abraham was not justified by works, but declared righteous through faith.

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

- a. What then shall we say:** In building on the thought begun in Romans 3:31 Paul asks the question, "Does the idea of justification through faith, apart from the works of the law, make what God did in the Old Testament irrelevant?"
- b. What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found:** In answering that question, Paul looks at Abraham, the most esteemed man among the Jewish people of his day - even greater than the "George Washington" of the Jewish people.
- c. For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about:** If anyone could be justified by works, they would have something to boast about. Nevertheless such boasting is nothing before God (but

not before God).

- i. This boasting is nothing before God because even if works could justify a man he would still, in some way, fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)
- ii. This boasting is nothing because before God, every pretense is stripped away and it is evident that no one can really be justified by works.

d. For what does the Scripture say? The Old Testament does not say Abraham was declared righteous because of his works. Instead, Genesis 15:6 says that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

- i. Paul makes it clear: Abraham's righteousness did not come from his performance of good works, but from his belief in God. It was a righteousness obtained through faith.
- ii. Generally, the Jewish teachers of Paul's day believed that Abraham was justified by his works, by keeping the law. Ancient passages from the rabbis says: "We find that Abraham our father had performed the whole Law before it was given" and "Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord." The rabbis argued that Abraham kept the law perfectly, even before it was given, in that he kept it by intuition or anticipation.
- iii. The Apostle Paul does not say that Abraham was made righteous in all of his doings, but God accounted Abraham as righteous. Our justification is not God making us perfectly righteous, but counting us as perfectly righteous. After we are counted righteous, then God begins making us truly righteous, culminating in our resurrection.
- iv. "Counted is *logizomai*. It was used in early secular documents; 'put down to one's account, let my revenues be placed on deposit at the storehouse; I now give orders generally with regard to all payments actually made or credited to the government.' Thus, God put to Abraham's account, placed on deposit for

him, credited to him, righteousness ... Abraham possessed righteousness in the same manner as a person would possess a sum of money placed in his account in a bank." (Wuest)

- v. Genesis 15:6 does not tell us how other men accounted Abraham. Instead, it tells us how God accounted him. "Moses [in Genesis] does not, indeed, tell us what men thought of him [Abraham], but how he was accounted before the tribunal of God." (Calvin)
- vi. Remember that righteousness is also more than the absence of evil and guilt. It is a positive good, meaning that God does not only declare us innocent, but righteous.

2. works.

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for right (Rom 4:4-5) A distinction made between grace and righteousness,

- a. **Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace:** The idea of grace stands opposite to the principle of works; grace has to do with receiving the freely given gift of God, works has to do with earning our merit before God.

Wuest on charis, the ancient Greek word translated grace: "Signified in classical authors a favor done out of the spontaneous generosity of the heart without any expectation or return. Of course, this favor was always done to one's friend, never to an enemy ... But when charis comes into the New Testament, it takes an infinite leap forward, for the favor God did at Calvary was for those who hated Him."

- b. **Not counted as grace but as debt:** A system of works seeks to put God in debt to us, to have God owe us His favor because of our good behavior. In works-thinking, God owes us salvation or blessing because of our good works.

God isn't praising laziness here. "The antithesis is not simply between the worker and the non-worker but between the worker and person who does not work but believes." (Murray).

- c. **But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness:** Righteousness can never be accounted to the one who approaches God on the principle of works. Instead it is given to the one who believes on Him who justifies the ungodly.
- d. **Him who justifies the ungodly:** This is who God justifies - the ungodly. We might expect God would only justify a godly man but because of what Jesus did on the cross, God can justify the ungodly.
 - i. It isn't as if God is happy with our ungodly condition. We are not justified because of our ungodliness, but despite our ungodliness.
 - ii. Morris quoting Denney: "The paradoxical phrase, Him that justifieth the ungodly, does not suggest that justification is a fiction, whether legal or of any other sort, but that it is a miracle."
- e. **Just as Abraham believed and it was accounted to him for righteousness,** so our faith is accounted for righteousness. This was not some special arrangement meant for Abraham alone. We can enter into this relationship with God also.

By this we understand that there are not two ways of salvation - saved by works or law-keeping in the Old Testament, and saved by grace through faith in the New Testament. Everyone who has ever been saved - Old or New Testament - is saved by grace through faith, through their relationship of trusting love with God. Because of the New Covenant we have benefits of salvation that the Old Testament saint did not have, but we do not have a different manner of salvation.

3. (Rom 4:6-8) David and the blessedness of justification

through faith.

Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."

- a. Just as David also describes:** King David of the Old Testament knew what it was like to be a guilty sinner; he knew the seriousness of sin and how good it is to be truly forgiven. He knew the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works. If David were judged on works alone, the righteous God must condemn him. Nevertheless he knew by experience that blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven.

"No sinner, and try he ever so hard, can possibly carry his own sins away and come back cleansed of guilt. No amount of money, no science, no inventive skill, no armies of millions, nor any other earthly power can carry away from the sinner one little sin and its guilt. Once it is committed, every sin and its guilt cling to the sinner as close as does his own shadow, cling to all eternity unless God carries them away." (Lenski)

- b. To whom God imputes righteousness apart from works ... blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin:** David agrees with Abraham regarding the idea of an imputed righteousness, a goodness that is given, not earned.

"Our adversaries the papists oppose the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us; they cavil at the very word ... and yet the apostle useth the word ten times in this chapter." (Poole).

- c. In the Psalm quoted (Psalm 32:1-2), David speaks of the blessedness,** not of the one who is justified through works, but of the one who is cleansed through imputation. This is centered on what God places upon us (the righteousness of Jesus), not on what we can do for God.

4. (Rom 4:9-12) Abraham was counted righteous before he was circumcised; therefore he was not counted righteous because he was circumcised.

“Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised”.

- a. Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?** If we are counted righteous by God because of faith, not because of circumcision (or any other ritual), then the blessedness mentioned in Romans 4:7 can be given to the uncircumcised Gentiles by faith.
- b. How then was it accounted?** While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Abraham was counted as righteous in . He did not receive the covenant of circumcision until Genesis 17, which was at least 14 years later. Therefore his righteousness wasn't based on circumcision, but on faith.
- c. The faith which he had while still uncircumcised:** In fact, Abraham, the father of all those who believe, was declared righteous while he was still uncircumcised! How can anyone then say (as some did in Paul's day) that Gentiles must be circumcised before God declares them righteous?
 - i. For the Jewish people of Paul's day, the significance of circumcision was more than social. It was the entry

point for a life lived under the Law of Moses: And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.(Galatians 5:3).

d. That he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised ... who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised: The Jews of Paul's day wanted to use circumcision to declare that they were the true descendants of Abraham. Paul insists that to have Abraham as your father, you must walk in the steps of the faith that Abraham walked in.

- i. "Our father Abraham" is an important phrase, one that the ancient Jews jealously guarded. They did not allow a circumcised Gentile convert to Judaism refer to Abraham as "our father" in the synagogue. A Gentile convert had to call Abraham "your father" and only natural born Jews could call Abraham "our father." Paul throws out that distinction, and says that through faith, all can say, "our father Abraham."
- ii. It must have been a shock for the Jewish readers of Romans to see that Paul calls Abraham the father of uncircumcised people! Faith, not circumcision, is the vital link to Abraham. It is far more important to have Abraham's faith (and the righteousness imputed to him because of it) than it is to have Abraham's circumcision.
- iii. William Barclay explains that the Jewish teachers of Paul's day had a saying "What is written of Abraham is also written of his children," meaning that promises given to Abraham extend to his descendants. Paul heartily agreed with this principle, and extended the principle of being justified by faith to all Abraham's spiritual descendants, those who believe, who also walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham.

5. (Rom 4:13-15) God's promise to Abraham was based on the principle of faith, not law or works.

“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression”.

a. For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law:

Since all God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob happened before the giving of the Mosaic Law, we can't say they were based on the law. Instead, they are based on God's declaration of Abraham's righteousness through faith.

i. “Faith is the ground of God's blessing. Abraham was a blessed man, indeed, but he became heir of the world on another principle entirely - simple faith.” (Newell).

b. For the promise ... through the righteousness of faith: The law cannot bring us into the blessings of God's promises. This is not because the law is bad, but because we are unable to keep it.

c. Because the law brings about wrath: Our inability to keep the law (our transgression) means that it becomes essentially a vehicle of God's wrath towards us, if we regard it as the principle by which we are justified and relate to God.

d. How can Paul say, where there is no law there is no transgression? Because “Transgression is the right word for overstepping a line, and this for breaking a clearly defined commandment.” (Morris) Where there is no line, there is no actual transgression.

i. There is sin that is not the “crossing of the line” of the Law of Moses. The root of sin isn't in breaking the law, but in breaking trust with God; with denying His loving, caring purpose in every command He gives. Before Adam sinned he broke trust with God - therefore God's plan of redemption is centered on a

relationship of trusting love - faith - instead of law-keeping. When we center our relationship with God on law-keeping instead of trusting love, we go against His whole plan.

B. Following Abraham's example.

1. (Rom 4:16) Justification according to grace, through faith. Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

a. It is of faith that it might be according to grace: Faith is related to grace in the same way works is related to law. Grace and law are the principles, and faith and works are the means by which we pursue those principles for our relationship with God.

i. To speak technically, we are not saved by faith. We are saved by God's grace, and grace is appropriated by faith.

b. It is of faith: Salvation is of faith, and nothing else. We can only receive salvation by the principle of grace through faith. Grace cannot be obtained through works, whether they be past, present, or promised because by definition grace is given without regard to anything in the one who receives it.

"Grace and faith are congruous, and will draw together in the same chariot, but grace and merit are contrary the one to the other and pull opposite ways, and therefore God has not chosen to yoke them together. He will not build with incongruous materials, or daub with untempered mortar. He will not make an image partly of gold and partly of clay, nor weave a linsey-woolsey garment: his work is all of a piece and all of grace." (Spurgeon).

c. So that the promise might be sure to all the seed: The promise can only be sure if it is according to grace. If law

was the basis of our salvation, then our salvation would depend on our performance in keeping the law - and no one can keep the law good enough to be saved by it. A law-promise of salvation can never be sure.

i. If the promise "were of the law, it would be unsure and uncertain, because of man's weakness, who is not able to perform it." (Poole).

d. But also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all: If our relationship with God is according to grace (not circumcision or law-keeping), then that relationship is for those who are of the faith of Abraham, even if they are not of his lineage. A Gentile could say, "I am not a Jew, I am not of the law; but I am of the faith of Abraham," and he would be just as saved as a Jewish believer in Jesus would be.

e. The father of us all: The fulfillment of the promise in Genesis 17:4-5 is found not only in Abraham's descendants through Isaac, but especially in his role as being the father of us all who believe - and those believers come from every nation under heaven.

2. (Rom 4:17-18) The life-giving power of the God Abraham believed in.

(As it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed; God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

a. So that he became the father of many nations: Even as it took a supernatural life-giving work to make Abraham the physical father of many nations, it also took a supernatural life-giving work to make him the spiritual father of many nations.

b. God's life-giving power is demonstrated in the manner in which He can give life to the dead and call those

things which do not exist(such as our righteousness) as though they did (by counting us righteous).

- i. If God could call the dead womb of Sarah to life, he can call those who are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) to new life in Jesus.
- ii. "I'm greatly comforted when God speaks about me as righteous, justified, glorified, holy, pure, and saintly. God can talk about such things before they exist, because He knows they will exist." (Smith).

c. This life-giving power was accomplished in Abraham as he, contrary to hope, in hope believed. The life-giving power was evident both naturally and spiritually. Abraham's example also helps us to understand the nature of faith. The conception of Abraham's son Isaac was a miracle, but it was not an immaculate conception. Abraham's faith did not mean that he did nothing and just waited for God to create a child in Sarah's womb. Abraham and Sarah had marital relations and trusted God for a miraculous result. This shows us that faith does not mean doing nothing, but doing all with trust and reliance on God and His miraculous work.

- ii. "All true believers, like Abraham, obey. Obedience is faith in action. You are to walk in the steps of the faith of father Abraham. His faith did not sit still, it took steps; and you must take these steps also by obeying God because you believe him. That faith which has no works with it is a dead faith, and will justify no one." (Spurgeon)
- iii. "Sense corrects imagination, reason corrects sense, but faith corrects both. It will not be, saith sense; it cannot be, saith reason; it both can and will be, saith faith, for I have a promise for it." (Trapp)
- iv. "But some one may object and say, that it is not beyond the course of nature that a man should beget children at that age. Though I allow that such a thing is not a prodigy, it is yet very little short of a miracle." (Calvin)

3. (Rom 4:19-22) The character of Abraham's faith.

And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

a. Not being weak in faith: Abraham's faith was strong but it was also strengthened. He was strengthened in faith.

- i. The idea seems to be that Abraham was strengthened in his faith; but Paul could also mean that Abraham was strengthened by his faith - certainly both were true.
- ii. How we need to be strengthened in faith! "Dear brother, little faith will save thee if it be true faith, but there are many reasons why you should seek an increase of it." (Spurgeon)
- iii. Spurgeon knew that ministers and preachers especially needed to be strengthened in faith. He sometimes shared his own struggles in this area from the pulpit, but wanted to make it clear that his struggles in faith should never be indulged: "Whenever, dear hearers, you catch any of us who are teachers doubting and fearing, do not pity us, but scold us. We have no right to be in Doubting Castle. Pray do not visit us there. Follow us as far as we follow Christ, but if we get into the horrible Slough of Despond, come and pull us out by the hair of our heads if necessary, but do not fall into it yourselves." (Spurgeon)
- iv. "I do not think we shall have many conversions unless we expect God to bless the word, and feel certain that he will do so. We must not wonder and be astonished if we hear of a dozen or two conversions, but let the astonishment be that thousands are not converted when they hear such divine truth, and when we ask

the Holy Spirit to attend it with divine energy. God will bless us in proportion to our faith. It is the rule of his kingdom - 'According to your faith so be it unto you.' O God, give thy ministers more faith! Let us believe thee firmly!" (Spurgeon).

b. He did not consider his own body, already dead:

Abraham, in faith, did not look to circumstances (his own body and the deadness of Sarah's womb) but he looked at the promise of God.

- i. In Romans 4:19, there is textual uncertainty as to if we should read he considered his body as good as dead or if we should read he did not consider his own body. Either is possible, though the second seems a better choice.

c. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief: His faith did not waver; and it gave glory to God. Though it was a huge challenge, Abraham remained steadfast in faith.

- i. "When there is no contest, it is true, no one, as I have said, denies that God can do all things; but as soon as anything comes in the way to impede the course of God's promise, we cast down God's power from its eminence." (Calvin)

d. Being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform: Abraham's faith came because he had been fully convinced of God's ability to perform what He has promised.

- i. Is your God too small? The God of Abraham was able to perform what He had promised, and Abraham was fully convinced of this.
- ii. Some people don't come to Jesus - or go further with Him - because they are not fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. They think, "It is fine for them but it won't work for me." This thinking is a devilish attack on faith, and must be rejected.

e. This kind of faith sees the work of God done. It sees the work of God done in the immediate (Isaac was born in fulfillment of the promise) and in the eternal (it was accounted to him for righteousness).

4. (Rom 4:23-25) Abraham's justification and our own.

Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

a. It was not written for his sake alone: It wasn't only for Abraham's benefit that God declared him righteous through faith; he is an example that we are invited to follow - it is also for us. Paul's confidence is glorious: It shall be imputed to us who believe; this wasn't just for Abraham, but for us also.

b. Who believe in Him who raised up Jesus: When we talk about faith and saving faith in Jesus, it is important to emphasize that we mean believing that His work on the cross (delivered up because of our offenses) and triumph over sin and death (raised because of our justification) is what saves us. There are many false-faiths that can never save, and only faith in what Jesus accomplished on the cross and through empty tomb can save us.

- Faith in the historical events of the life of Jesus will not save
- Faith in the beauty of Jesus' life will not save
- Faith in the accuracy or goodness of Jesus' teaching will not save.
- Faith in the deity of Jesus, and in His Lordship will not save.

c. Jesus died because of our offenses, but was raised up because of our justification. The resurrection has an essential place in our redemption because it demonstrates God the Father's perfect satisfaction with the Son's work on the cross, proving that it was in fact a

perfect sacrifice made by One who remained perfect, even though bearing the sin of the world.

- i. Delivered up because of our offenses: The ancient Greek word translated delivered (*paradidomi*) was used of casting people into prison or delivering them to justice. "Here it speaks of the judicial act of God the Father delivering God the Son to the justice that required the payment of the penalty for human sin." (Wuest).
- ii. "Jesus' resurrection always includes his sacrificial death but it brings out the all-sufficiency of his death. If death had held him, he would have failed; since he was raised from death, his sacrifice sufficed, God set his seal upon it by raising him up." (Lanski)
- iii. "Christ did meritoriously work our justification and salvation by his death and passion, but the efficacy and perfection thereof with respect to us depend on his resurrection ... This one verse is an abridgement of the whole gospel." (Poole).

d. In this chapter, Paul has clearly demonstrated that in no way does the Old Testament contradict the gospel of salvation by grace through faith. Instead it is in fulfillment of the Old Testament, and Abraham, justified through faith, is our pattern.



BENEFITS OF BEING JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH

"In the whole Bible there is hardly another chapter which can equal this triumphant text." (Martin Luther).

A. The benefits of believing.

1. (Rom 5:1-2) Peace and a standing of grace.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

a. Therefore, having been justified by faith: To this point in the Book of Romans, Paul has convinced us all that the only way of salvation is to be justified by grace, through faith. Now he will tell us what the practical benefits of this are, explaining that it is more than an interesting idea.

Justified by faith speaks of a legal decree. Romans 1:18-3:20 found us guilty before the courts of God's law, God's glory, and our own conscience. Then Paul explained how because of what Jesus did for us, the righteousness of God is given to all who believe. The guilty sentence is transformed into a sentence of justified, and justified by faith.

b. First, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ. Because the price has been paid in full by the work of Jesus on the cross, God's justice towards us is eternally satisfied.

- i. This is not the peace of God spoken of in other places (such as Philippians 4:7). This is peace with God; the battle between God and us is finished - and He won, winning us. Some never knew they were out of peace with God, but they were like drivers ignoring the red lights of a police car in their rear-view mirror - they are in trouble even if they don't know it, and it will soon catch up to them.
- ii. This peace can only come through our Lord Jesus Christ. He and His work is our entire ground for peace. In fact, Jesus is our peace. (Ephesians 2:14)
- iii. Remember that the Bible doesn't say we have peace with the devil, peace with the world, peace with the flesh, or peace with sin. Life is still a battle for the Christian but it is no longer a battle against God, it is fighting for Him. Some Christians are tempted to believe the battle against God was almost a better place to be, and that is a dangerous and damnable lie.
- iv. "I am delighted to find that sin stings you, and that you hate it. The more hatred of sin the better. A sin-hating soul is a God-loving soul. If sin never distresses you, then God has never favored you." (Spurgeon).

c. Into this grace in which we stand: Second, we have a standing in grace - in God's unmerited favor. This grace is given through Jesus and gained by faith.

- i. Grace (God's undeserved favor towards us) is not only the means by which we are saved, it is also a description of our present standing before God. It is not only the beginning principle of the Christian life it is also the continuing principle of the Christian life. "We stand translates a perfect tense, used in this sense of the

present, and with the thought of a continuing attitude." (Morris)

- ii. Many Christians begin in grace, but then think that they will go on to perfection and maturity by dealing with God on the principle of law - on the ideas of earning and deserving. Paul spoke against this very point in Galatians 3:2-3 and Galatians 5:1-4.
- iii. A standing in grace reassures us: God's present attitude towards the believer in Christ Jesus is one of favor, seeing them in terms of joy, beauty and pleasure. He doesn't just love us; He likes us because we are in Jesus.
- iv. Standing in grace means that:
 - I don't have to prove I am worthy of God's love.
 - God is my friend.
 - The door of access is permanently open to Him.
 - I am free from the "score sheet" - the account is settled in Jesus.
 - I spend more time praising God and less time hating myself.
- v. "The former rebels are not merely forgiven by having their due punishment remitted; they are brought into a place of high favour with God - this grace in which we stand." (Bruce).
- vi. The Proper Attitude of Man under Grace (William Newell).
 - To believe, and consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.
 - To refuse to make "resolutions" and "vows"; for that is to trust in the flesh.
 - To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth.
 - To testify of God's goodness, at all times.
 - To be certain of God's future favor; yet to be ever more tender in conscience toward Him.
 - To rely on God's chastening hand as a mark of His kindness

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- A man under grace, if like Paul, has no burdens regarding himself; but many about others.

d. Through whom also we have access by faith: Our access into this standing of grace is only by faith, and through Jesus; we cannot work ourselves into this standing. The access isn't just into a standing of grace, but into the very courts of heaven. This is a blessing beyond peace with God. "One may be reconciled to his prince, and yet not to be brought into his presence." (Poole)

- i. Morris on access: "The idea is that of introduction to the presence-chamber of a monarch. The rendering access is inadequate, as it leaves out of sight the fact that we do not come in our own strength, but need an 'introducer' - Christ."
- ii. Wuest quotes Thayer regarding access: "That friendly relation with God whereby we are acceptable to Him and have assurance that He is favorably disposed towards us."

e. We have access: The perfect verb tense of have access also indicates that this is a standing, permanent possession. Because our standing is based on grace, we really can stand and have peace, because we know that our access is a permanent possession. It cannot be taken away at a later time. "And this access to God, or introduction to the Divine presence, is to be considered a lasting privilege. We are not brought to God for the purpose of an interview, but to remain with him; to be his household; and by faith, to behold his face, and walk in the light of his countenance." (Clarke).

f. The logical conclusion to such peace and such a standing of grace means that we can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. When we relate to God on the principle of works, any rejoicing is presumptuous, and any imagined glory goes to us, not God.

- i. Rejoice is the word normally translated boast; it means "a triumphant, rejoicing confidence." (Morris)

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- ii. Hope never implied uncertainty for Paul. J.B. Philipps translates hope as happy certainty.

g. Again, all this only makes sense having been justified by faith. If we are not justified by grace through faith, then we have no peace with God, and we have no present standing of grace.

h. "Alas, how few believers have the courage of faith! When some saints here or there does begin to believe the facts and walk in shouting liberty, we say (perhaps secretly), 'He must be an especially holy, consecrated man.' No, he is just a poor sinner like you, who is believing in the abundance of grace!" (Newell).

2. (Rom 5:3-4) The promise of glory is also for the present time.

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

a. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations: Paul anticipates the accusation that he is too "pie in the sky," that glory for the Christian only applies to the sweet bye-and-bye. Paul replies, "I know we have many tribulations now but we glory in those also."

- i. Paul isn't simply spinning out spiritual platitudes. First, he uses strong words. Tribulations is "a strong term. It does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships" (Morris). Second, Paul lived a life full of tribulation. If this is true Paul knew it better than anyone.

b. Knowing that tribulation produces perseverance: We can glory in tribulations (literally, stresses) because they are the occasion to produce perseverance (endurance).

- i. A runner must be stressed to gain endurance. Sailors must go to sea. Soldiers go to battle. For the Christian, tribulation is just part of our Christian life. We should not desire or hope for a tribulation-free Christian life,

especially because:

- God uses tribulation wonderfully in our life.
- God knows how much tribulation we can take, and He carefully measures the tribulation we face.
- Those who are not Christians face tribulation also.
- ii. "A Christian man should be willing to be tried; he should be pleased to let his religion be put to the test. 'There,' says he, 'hammer away if you like.' Do you want to be carried to heaven on a feather bed?" (Spurgeon).
- iii. "I've heard people advise others against praying for patience because God will then send them tribulations. If that's the way patience comes then, 'God, bring on the troubles.' I need patience!" (Smith).
- iv. "Whatever virtues tribulation finds us in, it develops more fully. If anyone is carnal, weak, blind, wicked, irascible, haughty, and so forth, tribulation will make him more carnal, weak, blind, wicked and irritable. On the other hand, if one is spiritual, strong, wise, pious, gentle and humble, he will become more spiritual, powerful, wise, pious, gentle and humble." (Martin Luther)
- v. "Tribulation worketh patience,' says the apostle. Naturally it is not so. Tribulation worketh impatience, and impatience misses the fruit of experience, and sours into hopelessness. Ask many who have buried a dear child, or have lost their wealth, or have suffered pain of body, and they will tell you that the natural result of affliction is to produce irritation against providence, rebellion against God, questioning, unbelief, petulance, and! all sorts of evils. But what a wonderful alteration takes place when the heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit!" (Spurgeon).

c. Perseverance, character; and character, hope: This is a golden chain of Christian growth and maturity. One virtue builds upon another as we grow in the pattern of Jesus.

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- i. Most every Christian wants to develop character and have more hope. These qualities spring out of perseverance, which comes through tribulation. We may wish to have better character and more hope without starting with tribulation, but that isn't God's pattern and plan.
 - ii. I would rather have God just sprinkle perseverance and character and hope on me as I sleep. I could wake up a much better Christian! But that isn't God's plan for me or for any Christian.
 - iii. Therefore we say - soberly, reverently - we say about tribulation, "Lord, bring it on. I know you love me and carefully measure every trial and have a loving purpose to accomplish in every tribulation. Lord, I won't seek trials and search out tribulation, but I won't despise them or lose hope when they come. I trust Your love in everything You allow."

3. (Rom 5:5) Evidence for hope: God's love in our hearts right now, evidenced by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- a. **Now hope does not disappoint:** The hope that tribulation builds in us is not a hope that will be disappointed. We are assured of this because God has proved His intention to complete His work in us - the proof being the love of God ... poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- b. **Every Christian should know what it is like to have the love of God ...** poured out in our hearts - to have a deep inner awareness of God's love for us.
 - i. Paul's logical arguments in Romans are devastating but the Book of Romans doesn't lack emotion or passionate experiences with God. Paul wants us to think the right thoughts about God, but he also wants us to have the right experience with God - the love of

God ... poured out in our hearts.

- ii. God's love isn't given to us in a trickle, it is poured out in our hearts. Some Christians live as if it was only a trickle but God wants us to know the outpouring of His love.

c. This love is ours by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. A lack of awareness of God's love can often be credited to a failure to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit and to walk in the Spirit.

- i. "The love of God is like light to a blind eye until the Holy Ghost opens that eye ... may the Holy Spirit now be here in each one of us, to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts." (Spurgeon)
- ii. Everyone who is a Christian has the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). But not every Christian lives in the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), and not every Christian walks in the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:4-5).

4. (Rom 5:6-8) A description of God's love towards us.

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

a. When we were still without strength: Paul describes the greatness of God's love. It is love given to the undeserving, to those without strength, to the ungodly, to sinners. This emphasizes the fact that the reasons for God's love are found in Him, not in us.

- i. Who are these people? Who are the ungodly and wicked people Jesus died for? Paul spent the first two-and-a-half chapters of the Book of Romans telling us that we all are those people.

b. In due time Christ died for the ungodly: God sent the Son at the right time, at the due time. It may have

seemed late to some but Jesus' work was done at the perfect time in God's plan: when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son. (Galatians 4:4)

- i. The world was prepared spiritually, economically, linguistically, politically, philosophically and geographically for the coming of Jesus and the spread of the Gospel. "The Scripture everywhere speaks of a certain season or hour assigned for the death of Christ: see Matthew 26:45; John 8:20; John 12:27; John 17:1." (Poole)
- ii. In due time also has the meaning that Jesus died at the due time for us. He died when we were sinners who needed a Savior. His timing was just right for us.

c. Christ died for the ungodly: Paul mentioned the idea of a substitutionary sacrifice with the word propitiation in Romans 3:25. Here, he makes the point again by saying that Christ died for the ungodly. The ancient Greek word for the word *hoper*, which means "for the sake of, in behalf of, instead of."

- i. Other places where *hoper* is used in the New Testament help us to understand this. In John 11:50, we read: nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for (*hoper*) the people. Galatians 3:13 says, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for (*hoper*) us.
- ii. Therefore, to genuinely say "Jesus died for me" you must also say "I have no strength to save myself. I am ungodly. I am a sinner." Jesus died to save and transform these.
- iii. "You will say, 'Oh, I am one of the worst in the world.' Christ died for the worst in the world. 'Oh, but I have no power to be better.' Christ died for those that were without strength. 'Oh, but my case condemns itself.' Christ died for those that legally are condemned. 'Ay, but my case is hopeless.' Christ died for the hopeless. He is the hope of the hopeless. He is the Savior not of those partly lost, but of the wholly lost." (Spurgeon)

iv. "If Christ died for the ungodly, this fact leaves the ungodly no excuse if they do not come to him, and believe in him unto salvation. Had it been otherwise they might have pleaded, 'We are not fit to come.' But you are ungodly, and Christ died for the ungodly, why not for you?" (Spurgeon).

d. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: God's love is a love beyond even the best love among humans. A good man might die a noble martyrdom for the "right kind" of person - such as a righteous man or a good man. But Jesus died for those who were neither righteous nor good.

Is there a difference between a righteous man and a good man in Paul's mind? The difference in Romans 5:7 seems to be that the righteous man is only that - righteous in his personal life but perhaps lacking in feeling for others. The good man by contrast goes beyond the other man by also being kind and benevolent.

e. But God demonstrates His own love: How does the death of the Son demonstrate the love of the Father? Because it was harder for the Father to send His only Son, and because God [the Father] was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

i. "It would be easy to see the cross as demonstrating the indifference of God, a God who let the innocent Jesus be taken by wicked men, tortured, and crucified while he did nothing ... Unless there is a sense in which the Father and Christ are one, it is not the love of God that the cross shows." (Morris)

ii. The work of Jesus on the cross for us is God's ultimate proof of His love for you. He may give additional proof, but He can give no greater proof. If the cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's love, it is also the ultimate demonstration of man's hatred. It also proves that the height of man's hatred can't defeat the height of God's love.

iii. The demonstration of God's love isn't so much in that

Jesus died, but in whom Jesus died for - undeserving sinners and rebels against Him.

5. (Rom 5:9-11) Salvation from God's wrath.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

a. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath: If we are justified by the work of Jesus, we can be assured that we are also saved from wrath through Him. The wrath of God that was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:18) was placed on Jesus as a substitute in the place of the believer.

- i. By nature, some are inclined to preface these great promises of God with "much less then" regarding themselves. God wants them to see it plain and clear: Much more then is the love and goodness of God given to us and much more then can we have confidence in Him.
- ii. Saved from wrath: Whose wrath? God's righteous wrath. It is true that we must be saved from the world, the flesh and the devil but most of all we must be rescued from the righteous wrath of God.
- iii. John Trapp on much more then: "It is a greater work of God to bring men to grace, than, being the state of grace, to bring them to glory; because sin is far more distant from grace than grace is from glory."

b. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God: If God showed such dramatic love to us when we were enemies, think of the blessings we will enjoy once we are reconciled to God! If God does this much for His enemies, how much more will He do for His friends!

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- i. Wuest, quoting Alford: "Not only has the reconciled man confidence that he shall escape God's wrath, but triumphant confidence - joyful hope in God."

c. Much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved

by His life: This reconciliation isn't only helpful when we die; it also touches our life right now. God is forever done dealing with believers on the basis of wrath. He may chasten them as a loving Father, but not in punishment or payment for their sins. Chastening is always to provide loving correction and guidance.

d. Saved from wrath through Him ... we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son ... rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus ... through whom we have now received the reconciliation:

The point is clearly emphasized. What matters is what we have through Jesus. What we have through our own works doesn't matter and can't help us. It's all through Jesus.

B. The Two Men.

1. (Rom 5:12) The spread of sin through the human race.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned;"

a. Just as through one man sin entered the world: The Apostle Paul regarded Genesis 3 as totally, historically true. According to Paul (and Jesus, as He says in Matthew 19:4-6), Adam and Eve were real people and what they did has a lasting effect to the present day.

- i. It is important to understand that the Adam and Eve account is not an optional passage to be accepted or rejected, or allegorized away. According to Paul's theme here in Romans 5, you can't take away Genesis 3 without taking away principles that lay the foundation for our salvation.

- ii. "To Paul, Adam was more than a historical individual, the first man; he was also what his name means in Hebrew - 'humanity.' The whole of humanity is viewed

as having existed at first in Adam." (Bruce).

- b. Through one man sin entered the world:** Paul doesn't prove this, he simply accepts it true from Genesis 3 - sin entered the world through Adam. Significantly, Adam is responsible for the fall, not Eve. Eve was deceived when she sinned but Adam sinned with full knowledge.
- c. And death through sin:** Death entered the world and spread to all men as a result of Adam's sin. God promised Adam, in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Genesis 2:17). The principle of death was introduced into the world when Adam sinned and it has reigned on earth ever since. Every grave is mute evidence to the spread and reign of sin since the time of Adam.
- d. Thus death spread to all men, because all sinned:** Since death and sin are connected, we can know that all men are sinners - because all are subject to death. A sinless man is not subject to death but since every person is subject to death - even the smallest baby - it proves that all (mankind) sinned in Adam.
 - i. This sounds odd to our individualistic ears, but Paul clearly teaches that we all sinned "in" Adam. Adam is the common father of every person on the earth; every human who has ever lived was "in" Adam's genetic makeup. Therefore, all mankind actually sinned in Adam.
 - ii. "All sinned in this case means 'all sinned in Adam'; Adam's sin is the sin of all." (Morris)
 - iii. Humans are mortal - subject to death - before they commit any sin themselves. Since mortality is the result of sin, it shows that we are made sinners by Adam's sin, not by our own personal sin.
 - iv. We may not like the fact that we are made sinners by the work of another man. We may protest, and say, "I want to stand on my own two feet, and not be made a sinner because of the work of another man." Nevertheless, it is fair to be made righteous by the work of another man only if we are also made sinners

by the work of another man. If we aren't made sinners by Adam, then it isn't fair for us to be made righteous by Jesus.

e. All men: This truth may make us uncomfortable, but it is still the truth. The smallest baby is a sinner, subject to death. David understood this when he wrote, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me (Psalm 51:5).

i. We can also know that we are born sinners for other reasons. First, think of how selfish and angry the smallest baby can be. Second, think of how we never have to teach our children to be bad- they learn that quite on their own, with old Adam teaching the lessons.

ii. If babies are sinners, does that mean that they go to hell? Not necessarily. First, we know that the children of believers are sanctified by the presence of a believing parent (1 Corinthians 7:14). Secondly, David had the assurance that his baby would meet him in heaven (2 Samuel 12:23). Finally, we know that at the end of it all, God, the judge of the entire world, will do right (Genesis 18:25).

iii. If there are the children of unbelieving parents in heaven, it is important to understand that it is not because they are innocent. As sons and daughters of guilty Adam, we are each born guilty as well. If such children do go to heaven, it is not because they innocents who deserve heaven, but because the rich mercy of God has been extended to them as well.

2. (Rom 5:13-14) An objection answered: "I thought we were sinners because we broke the Law."

For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

a. Until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not

imputed when there is no law: We know that at the root of it all we are made sinners because of Adam and not because we break the law ourselves. We know this because sin and death were in the world before the Law was ever given.

i. The law was too late to prevent sin and death and it is too weak to save from sin and death.

b. Nevertheless death reigned: The total, merciless reign of death - even before the law was given at the time of Moses - proves that man was under sin before the law. Death reigned ... even over those who had not sinned in the exact way Adam did, showing that the principle of sin was at work in every human.

c. Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come: Paul presents Adam as a type - a picture, a representation - of Jesus. Both Adam and Jesus were completely sinless men from the beginning, and both of them did things that had consequences for all mankind.

3. (Rom 5:15-17) Contrasts between Adam's work and Jesus' work.

“But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”

a. But the free gift is not like the offense: Adam gave an offense that had consequences for the entire human race - as a result of Adam's offense, many died. Jesus gives a free gift that has consequences for the entire human race, but in a different way. Through the free gift

of Jesus, the grace of God ... abounded to many. Adam's work brought death but Jesus' work brings grace.

- b. Paul describes the results of Adam's offense:** Many died; judgment, resulting in condemnation, and death reigned over man. He also describes the results of Jesus' free gift: grace abounded to many, justification (because many offenses were laid on Jesus), receiving abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, and reigning in life.

"He is not saying that death reigned over us all because we all sinned; he is saying that death reigned over us all because Adam sinned." (Morris)

- c. Death reigned ... righteousness will reign:** We could say that both Adam and Jesus are kings, each instituting a reign. Under Adam, death reigned. Under Jesus, we can reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

It is staggering to think of how totally death has reigned under Adam. Everyone who is born dies - the mortality rate is 100%. No one survives. When a baby is born, it isn't a question of whether the baby will live or die - they will most certainly die; the only question is when. We think of this world as the land of the living, but it is really the land of the dying, and the billions of human bodies cast into the earth over the centuries proves this. But Paul says that the reign of life through Jesus is much more certain. The believer's reign in life through Jesus is more certain than death or taxes!

4. (Rom 5:18) Summary: the two men.

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life".

- a. One man's offense ... one Man's righteous act:** From this passage, Adam and Jesus are sometimes known as the two men. Between them they represent of all humanity, and everyone is identified in either Adam or

Jesus. We are born identified with Adam; we may be born again into identification with Jesus.

- i. The idea of Adam and Jesus as two representatives of the human race is sometimes called Federal Theology or Adam and Jesus are sometimes referred to as Federal Heads. This is because under the federal system of government, representatives are chosen and the representative speaks for the people who chose him. Adam speaks for those he represents, and Jesus speaks for His people.
- ii. Again, someone may object: "But I never chose to have Adam represent me." Of course you did! You identified yourself with Adam with the first sin you ever committed. It is absolutely true that we were born into our identification with Adam, but we also choose it with our individual acts of sin.

b. Resulting in condemnation ... resulting in justification:

The outcome of this election - choosing Adam or Jesus - means everything. If we choose Adam we receive judgment and condemnation. If we choose Jesus we receive a free gift of God's grace and justification.

c. The free gift came to all men: Does this mean that all men are justified by the free gift? Without making a personal choice, every person received the curse of Adam's offense. Is it therefore true that every person, apart from their personal choice, will receive the benefits of Jesus' obedience? Not at all. First, Paul makes it clear that the free gift is not like the offense - they are not identical in their result or application. Second, over three verses Paul calls the work of Jesus a free gift, and he never uses those words to apply to the work of Adam. It is simply the nature of a gift that it must be received by faith. Finally, Paul clearly teaches throughout the New Testament that all are not saved.

- i. In what sense then did the free gift come to all men? It came in the sense that the gift is presented, but not necessarily received.
- ii. The idea that all men are saved by the work of Jesus

whether they know it or not is known as universalism. "If the doctrine of universalism is being taught here, Paul would be contradicting himself, for he has already pictured men as perishing because of sin." (Harrison)

5. (Rom 5:19) Summary of the contrasts.

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

a. Adam's disobedience makes mankind sinners. Jesus' obedience makes many righteous. Each representative communicates the effect of their work to their "followers."

b. Many were made sinners: Paul emphasizes the point again. At the root, we were made sinners by the work of Adam. Of course, we chose Adam when we personally sinned. But the principle remains that since another man made us sinners, we can be made righteous by the work of another man.

i. This is the only way for the work of Jesus to benefit us in any way. If every man must stand for himself, without the representation of either Adam or Jesus, then we will all perish. None would be saved, because each of us sins and falls short of the glory of God. Only a sinless person acting on our behalf can save us, and it is fair for Him to act on our behalf because another man put us in this mess by acting on our behalf.

ii. If I robbed a bank and was pronounced guilty by the judge, what would happen if my friend came before the judge and said, "Your honor, I love my friend so much that I want to serve his prison time. I want to stand in his place and receive the punishment he deserves." The judge would reply, "Nonsense. We will not punish you for his crime. That wouldn't be fair. He did the crime, so he has to pay the penalty." It would only be fair for another person to pay the penalty if I was guilty because of another person's work.

iii. The person who says, "I don't want to be represented by Adam or Jesus; I want to represent myself" doesn't understand two things. First, they don't understand

that it really isn't up to us. We didn't make the rules, God did. We simply have to deal with it. Secondly, they don't understand that our personal righteousness before God is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). To God, our personal righteousness is an offensive counterfeit; so standing for yourself guarantees your damnation.

6. (20a) The purpose of the Law.

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.

- a. Paul has shown us that the law does not justify us. Now he shows that in itself, the law doesn't even make us sinners - Adam did that. Then what purpose does the law serve? What good is it at all? Was the giving of the law God's failed experiment? No. There is a clear purpose for the law, and part of it is so that the offense might abound. The law makes man's sin clearer and greater by clearly contrasting it with God's holy standard. The flaws in a precious stone abound when contrasted with a perfect stone, or when put against a contrasting backdrop. God's perfect law exposes our flaws, and makes our sin abound.
- b. There is another way that the law makes sin abound. Because of the sinfulness of my heart, when I see a line drawn I want to cross over it. In this sense, the law makes sin abound because it draws many clear lines between right and wrong that my sinful heart wants to break. Therefore, the law makes me sin more - but not because there is anything wrong in the law, only because there is something deeply wrong in the human condition.

7. (20b-21) The reign of grace.

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- a. **If sin abounded under the law, then grace abounded much more under Jesus.** Literally, the phrase abounded much more means "super-abounded." God makes His grace super-abound over abounding sin!
 - i. We might have expected that where sin abounded,

God's anger or judgment would have abounded much more. But God's love is so amazing that grace abounded much more where we might have expected wrath.

- ii. If grace super-abounds over sin, then we know that it is impossible to out-sin the grace of God. We can't sin more than God can forgive, but we can reject His grace and forgiveness.

b. As Paul stated before, sin reigned in death. But grace reigns also. The reign of grace is marked by righteousness and eternal life and is through Jesus.

- i. Grace reigns through righteousness. Many people have the idea that where grace reigns, there will be a disregard for righteousness, and a casual attitude towards sin. But that isn't the reign of grace at all. Paul wrote in another letter what grace teaches us: For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age (Titus 2:11-12). Grace reigns through righteousness, and grace teaches righteousness.
- ii. Grace reigns to eternal life. God's grace gives us something, and takes us somewhere. It gives more than just everlasting life in the sense that it will never end. Eternal life has the idea of a present quality of life, God's quality of life, given to us right now - not simply when we die.
- iii. Grace reigns through Jesus. There is a King in the kingdom where grace reigns, and the King is Jesus. A life of grace is all about Jesus and others, and not about me. A life of grace doesn't look to self because it understands that this undeserved favor of God is given apart from any reason in self. All the reasons are in Jesus; none of the reasons are in myself. Grace doesn't reign through self, but through Jesus.

c. Even so grace might reign through righteousness: Wherever grace rules, God's righteous standard will be

respected. The legalist's fear is that the reign of grace will provide wicked hearts with a license to sin, but Scripture doesn't share that fear. Grace does not accommodate sin, it faces it squarely and goes above sin in order to conquer it. Grace does not wink at unrighteousness, it confronts sin with the atonement at the cross and the victory won at the open tomb.

- i. Grace is no friend to sin; it is its sworn enemy. "As heat is opposed to cold, and light to darkness, so grace is opposed to sin. Fire and water may as well agree in the same vessel as grace and sin in the same heart." (Thomas Benton Brooks).
- ii. In John Bunyan's classic *Pilgrim's Progress*, a wonderful character is a man named Mr. Honest. He was a traveler along the way, and saw many a fellow pilgrim, some who had set out boldly and strongly but who turned back. He saw others who stumbled at the start but finished in fine fashion. Some began full of faith, but ended in doubt, but others came to greater assurance along the pilgrim's road. Mr. Honest obviously knew a lot about this pilgrimage we call Christianity, and he summed up all his knowledge in his last words:

"Mr. Honest called for his friends, and said unto them 'I die, but shall make no will. As for my honesty, it shall go with me' ... When the day that he was to be gone was come, he addressed himself to go over the river. Now the river at that time overflowed the banks in some places, but Mr. Honest in his lifetime had spoken to one [named] Good-conscience to meet him there, that which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over. The last words of Mr. Honest were, 'Grace reigns!' So he left the world."



MADE SAFE FOR GRACE

A. The believer under grace and the problem of habitual sin.

1. (Rom 6:1) should we live a life of sin so we can receive more grace?

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

a. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Paul introduced the idea that where sin abounded, grace abounded much more (Romans 5:20). He now wonders if someone might take this truth to imply that it doesn't matter if a Christian lives a life of sin, because God will always overcome greater sin with greater grace.

- i. After all, if God loves sinners, then why worry about sin? If God gives grace to sinners, then why not sin more and receive more grace? Some people think that their job is to sin and God's job is to forgive, so they will do their job and God will do His job!
- ii. In the early part of the century, the Russian monk Gregory Rasputin taught and lived the idea of salvation through repeated experiences of sin and repentance. He believed that because those who sin the most require the most forgiveness, a sinner who continues to sin with abandon enjoys more of God's grace (when he repents for the moment) than the

ordinary sinner. Therefore, Rasputin lived in notorious sin, and taught that this was the way to salvation. This is an extreme example of the idea behind Paul's question "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"

- iii. But in a less extreme way, the question still confronts us. Is the plan of grace "safe"? Won't people abuse grace? If God's salvation and approval are given on the basis of faith instead of works, won't we just say "I believe" and then live any way we please?
- iv. From a purely natural or secular viewpoint, grace is dangerous. This is why many people don't really teach or believe in grace and instead emphasize living by law. They believe that if you tell people that God saves and accepts them apart from what they deserve, then they will have no motivation to be obedient. In their opinion, you simply can't keep people on the straight and narrow without a threat from God hanging over their head. If they believe their position in Jesus is settled because of what Jesus did, then the motivation of holy living is gone.

b. Shall we continue in sin: The verb tense of the phrase continue in sin (the present active tense) makes it clear that Paul describes the practice of habitual sin. In this first part of Romans 6, Paul writes about someone who remains in a lifestyle of sin, thinking that it is acceptable so that grace may abound.

2. (Rom 6:2) A life of sin is unacceptable, because our death to sin changes our relationship to sin.

Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

- a. Certainly not!** For Paul, the idea that anyone might continue in sin that grace may abound is unthinkable. Certainly not is a strong phrase. It might also be translated, Perish the thought! Or, Away with the notion!

b. How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Paul establishes an important principle. When we are born again, when we have believed on Jesus for our salvation, our relationship with sin is permanently changed. We have died to sin. Therefore, if we have died to sin, then we should not live any longer in it. It simply isn't fitting to live any longer in something you have died to. At this point, Paul has much to explain about what exactly he means by died to sin, but the general point is clear - Christians have died to sin, and they should no longer live in it. Before, we were dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1); now we are dead to sin.

3. (Rom 6:3-4) The illustration of the believer's death to sin: baptism.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

a. Or do you not know: The implication is that Paul is dealing with fundamental concepts that every Christians should know.

b. As many of us as were baptized in Christ Jesus: The idea behind the ancient Greek word for baptized is "to immerse or overwhelm something." The Bible uses this idea of being baptized into something in several different ways. When a person is baptized in water, they are immersed or covered over with water. When they are baptized with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, Acts 1:5) they are "immersed" or "covered over" with the Holy Spirit. When they are baptized with suffering (Mark 10:39), they are "immersed" or "covered over" with suffering. Here, Paul refers to being baptized - "immersed" or "covered over" in Christ Jesus.

c. Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism

into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father: The believer's water baptism (or, being baptized into Christ) is a dramatization or "acting out" of the believer's "immersion" or identification with Jesus in His death and resurrection.

- i. "From this and other references to baptism in Paul's writings, it is plain that he did not regard baptism as an 'optional extra' in the Christian life." (Bruce).

d. We were buried with Him ... as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life: Paul also builds on the idea of going under the water as a picture of being buried, and coming up from the water as a picture of rising from the dead.

- i. Of course, baptism also has the association of cleansing, but that isn't particularly relevant to Paul's point here.

e. In this regard, baptism is important as an illustration of spiritual reality, but it does not make that reality come to pass. If someone has not spiritually died and risen with Jesus, all the baptisms in the world will not accomplish it for them.

f. But Paul's point is clear: something dramatic and life changing happened in the life of the believer. You can't die and rise again without it changing your life. The believer has a real (although spiritual) death and resurrection with Jesus Christ.

4. (Rom 6:5-10) Paul considers the implications of our death and resurrection with Jesus.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died

with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

a. United together expresses a close union. The phrase "exactly expresses the process by which a graft becomes united with the life of a tree ... The union is of the closest sort, and life from Christ flows through to him." (Morris) It fits in well with Jesus' picture of abiding in Him from John 15.

i. This close union is both in His death and in His resurrection. God has both experiences for us. Paul expressed a similar idea for his own life in Philippians 3:10-11: that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Some are all too ready to be united together in the glory of resurrection, but are unwilling to be united together in His death.

b. Certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection: Our participation in the death of Jesus makes our participation in His resurrection certain.

i. It is far too easy for many Christians to focus solely on the "crucified life," failing to see that it is a part (and an essential part) of a bigger picture: preparation for resurrection life.

c. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him: The death of the old man is an established fact. It happened spiritually when we were identified with Jesus' death at our salvation.

i. The old man is the self patterned after Adam, that part of us deeply ingrained with a desire to rebel against God and His commands. The system of law is unable to deal with the old man, because it can only tell the

old man what the righteous standard of God is. The law tries to reform the old man, to get him to "turn over a new leaf." But the system of grace understands that the old man can never be reformed. He must be put to death, and for the believer the old man dies with Jesus on the cross.

- ii. The crucifixion of the old man is something that God did in us. None of us nailed the old man to the cross. Jesus did it, and we are told to account it as being done. "In us there was nothing even to sicken and to weaken our old man, much less to murder him by crucifixion; God had to do this." (Lenski)
- iii. In place of the old man, God gives the believer a new man - a self that is instinctively obedient and pleasing to God; this aspect of our person is that which was raised with Christ in His resurrection. The New Testament describes the new man for us.
 - The new man, which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:24)
 - The new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. (Colossians 3:10).

d. God uses our death to the old man, the sin nature, to liberate us from sin. A dead man can no longer have authority over us, so we are to remember and account the old man as crucified with Him.

- i. The two other places in the New Testament which mention the old man remind us to consider him done away with, telling us to put off the old man as something dead and gone (Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9). Strictly speaking, we don't battle the old man. We simply reckon him as dead.
- ii. "Evil enters us now as an interloper and a stranger, and works sad havoc, but it does not abide in us upon the throne; it is an alien, and despised, and no more honored and delighted in. We are dead to the reigning power of sin." (Spurgeon).

e. If the old man is dead, why do I feel a pull to sin inside?

It comes from the flesh, which is distinct from the old man. It's hard to precisely describe the flesh; some have called it "the screen on which the inner man is displayed." Our inner being has desires and impulses and passions; these are played out in our mind, in our will, and in our emotions. The flesh is what acts out the inner man.

- i. The flesh is a problem in the battle against sin because it has been expertly trained in sinful habits by three sources.

First, the old man, before he was crucified with Christ, trained and "imprinted" himself on the flesh. Second, the world system, in its spirit of rebellion against God, can have an continuing influence on the flesh. Finally, the devil seeks to tempt and influence the flesh towards sin.

- ii. With the old man dead, what do we do with the flesh? God calls us, in participation with Him, to do actively day by day with the flesh just what He has already done with the old man - crucify it, make it dead to sin. (Galatians 5:24) But when we allow the flesh to be continually influenced by the old man's habits of the past, the world, and the devil, the flesh will exert a powerful pull towards sin. If we let the new man within us influence the mind, the will, and the emotions, then we will find the battle less intense.

- f. That we should no longer be slaves of sin.** For he who has died has been freed from sin: Our slavery to sin can only be broken by death. In the 1960 film *Spartacus*, Kirk Douglas played the escaped slave Spartacus, who led a brief but widespread slave rebellion in ancient Rome. At one point in the movie Spartacus says: "Death is the only freedom a slave knows. That's why he is not afraid of it." We are set free from sin because the old man has died with Jesus on the cross. Now a new man, a free man, lives.

g. Having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him: Since we have already died to sin with Jesus, death no longer has dominion over us. The new man not only has life; he has eternal life.

h. The life that he lives, he lives to God: The new life we are granted isn't given so we can live unto ourselves. With the new life, he lives to God. We aren't dead to sin, free from sin, and given eternal life to live as we please, but to live to please God.

i. "If God has given to you and to me an entirely new life in Christ, how can that new life spend itself after the fashion of the old life? Shall the spiritual live as the carnal? How can you that were the servants of sin, but have been made free by precious blood, go back to your old slavery?" (Spurgeon).

ii. This change in the life of the one who is born again was understood and predicted as a feature of God's New Covenant, where because of new hearts our innermost being wants to do God's will and be slaves to righteousness. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

iii. The eleventh of the original 42 articles of Church of England states this truth with a beauty that only Sixteenth Century English can express: "The grace of Christ, or the Hoie Ghost by him geven, do the take awaie the stonie harte, and geveth an harte of flesh." God takes away our rock-like heart and gives us a soft heart of flesh.

5. Rom 6:11-12). Practical application of the principle of our death and resurrection with Jesus.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

a. Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin: Reckon is an accounting word. Paul tells us to account or to

reckon the old man as forever dead. God never calls us "crucify" the old man, but instead to account him as already dead because of our identification with Jesus' death on the cross.

b. Reckon yourselves to be ... alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord: The death to sin is only one side of the equation. The old man is gone, but the new man lives on (as described in Romans 6:4-5).

c. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body: This is something that can only be said to the Christian, to the one who has had the old man crucified with Christ and has been given a new man in Jesus. Only the person set free from sin can be told, "do not let sin reign."

- i. The Christian is the one truly set free. The person who isn't converted yet is free to sin, but not free to stop sinning and live righteously, because of the tyranny of the old man.
- ii. In Jesus, we are truly set free and are offered the opportunity to obey the natural inclination of the new man - which wants to please God and honor Him.

d. Therefore do not let sin reign: The old man is dead, and there is new life - free from sin - in Jesus. Yet, many Christians never experience this freedom. Because of unbelief, self-reliance or ignorance, many Christians never live in the freedom Jesus paid for on the cross.

- i. D. L. Moody used to speak of an old black woman in the South following the Civil War. Being a former slave, she was confused about her status and asked: "Now is I free, or been I not? When I go to my old master he says I ain't free, and when I go to my own people they say I is, and I don't know whether I'm free or not. Some people told me that Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation, but master says he didn't; he didn't have any right to."
- ii. This is exactly the place many Christians are. They are, and have been, legally set free from their slavery to sin, yet they are unsure of that truth. The following

verses give practical help in living out the freedom Jesus has granted us.

6. (Rom 6:13-14) How to walk in the freedom Jesus has given us.

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

a. Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God: A person can be "officially" set free, yet still imprisoned. If a person lives in prison for years, and then is set free, they often still think and act like a prisoner. The habits of freedom aren't ingrained in their life yet. Here, Paul shows how to build the habits of freedom in the Christian life.

i. In the fourteenth century two brothers fought for the right to rule over a dukedom in what is now Belgium. The elder brother's name was Raynald, but he was commonly called "Crassus," a Latin nickname meaning "fat," for he was horribly obese. After a heated battle, Raynald's younger brother Edward led a successful revolt against him and assumed the title of Duke over his lands.

But instead of killing Raynald, Edward devised a curious imprisonment. He had a room in the castle built around "Crassus," a room with only one door. The door was not locked, the windows were not barred, and Edward promised Raynald that he could regain his land and his title any time that he wanted to. All he would have to do is leave the room of his imprisonment. The obstacle to freedom was not in the doors or the windows, but with Raynald himself. Being grossly overweight, he could not fit through the

door, even though it was of near-normal size. All Raynald needed to do was diet down to a smaller size, then walk out a free man, with all he had before his fall. However, his younger brother kept sending him an assortment of tasty foods, and Raynald's desire to be free never won out over his desire to eat. Some would accuse Duke Edward of being cruel to his older brother, but he would simply reply, "My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave when he so wills." But Raynald stayed in that room for ten years, until Edward himself was killed in battle.

- ii. What an accurate picture showing the experience of many Christians! Jesus has set them forever free legally, and they may walk in that freedom from sin whenever they choose. But since they keep yielding their bodily appetites to the service of sin, they live a life of defeat, discouragement and imprisonment.

b. Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin: This is the first key to walking in the freedom Jesus Christ has won for us is. We are told to not present the parts of our body to the service of sin. The New Living Translation communicates the idea well: Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning.

- i. Your members are the parts of your body - your ears, lips, eyes, hands, mind, and so forth. The idea is very practical: "You have eyes. Do not put them in the service of sin. You have ears. Do not put in the in the service of sin."
- ii. Instruments could be better-translated weapons. The parts of our body are weapons in the battle for right living. When the parts of our body are given over to righteousness, they are weapons for good. When they are given over to sin, they are weapons for evil.
- iii. An example of this is how God used David's hands in the slaying of Goliath for righteousness. Later, sin used David's eyes for unrighteousness when he

looked upon Bathsheba.

c. But present yourselves to God: This is the second key to walking in the freedom Jesus has won for us is. It isn't enough to take the weapons away from the service of sin. They must then be enlisted in the service of righteousness - and, as in any warfare, the side with superior weapons usually wins.

- i. The idea is similar to the manner in which the priests in the Old Testament consecrated their bodies to God. Sacrificial blood was applied to the ear, to the thumb, and on the big toe, showing that those parts of their body (and all other parts) belonged to God and were to be used for His glory. (Exodus 29:20)
- ii. We present ourselves to God as being alive from the dead. This first has the idea that all connection with the previous life - the old man - must be done away with. That life is dead and gone. Secondly, it has the idea of obligation, because we owe everything to the One who has given us new life!

d. For sin shall not have dominion over you: Spurgeon said that these words give us a test, a promise, and an encouragement.

- i. It is a test of our claim to be Christians. Does anger have dominion over you? Does murmuring and complaining? Does covetousness have dominion over you? Does pride? Does laziness have dominion over you? If sin has dominion over us, we should seriously ask if we are really converted.
- ii. It is promise of victory. It doesn't say that "sin will not be present in you," because that will only be fulfilled when we are resurrected in glory. But it does promise that sin will not have dominion over us because of the great work Jesus did in us when we were born again.
- iii. It is an encouragement for hope and strength in the battle against sin. God hasn't condemned you under the dominion of sin - He has set you free in Jesus. This is encouragement for the Christian struggling against

sin, for the new Christian, for the backslider.

e. For you are not under law but under grace: This is the path, the means, by which we can live in this freedom. It will never happen in a legalistic, performance oriented Christian life. It will happen as we live not under law but under grace.

- i. Law clearly defined God's standard, and shows us where we fall short of it. But it cannot give the freedom from sin that grace provides. Remember that grace reigns through righteousness(Romans 5:21). Grace, not law provides the freedom and the power to live over sin.
- ii. This shows again that a life lived truly under grace will be a righteous life. Grace is never a license to sin. "To treat being under grace as an excuse for sinning is a sign that one is not really under grace at all." (Bruce).

f. Not under law but under grace is another way to describe the radical change in the life of someone who is born again. For the Jewish person of Paul's day, living life under law was everything. The law was the way to God's approval and eternal life. Now, Paul shows that in light of the New Covenant, we are not under law but under grace. His work in our life has changed everything.

- i. Paul has answered his question from Romans 6:1. Why don't we just continue in habitual sin so that grace may abound? Because when we are saved, when our sins are forgiven and God's grace is extended to us, we are radically changed. The old man is dead, and the new man lives.
- ii. In light of these remarkable changes, it is utterly incompatible for a new creation in Jesus to be comfortable in habitual sin. A state of sin can only be temporary for the Christian. As Spurgeon is credited with this saying: "The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul."
- iii. John states the same idea in another way: Whoever

abides in Him does not (habitually) sin. Whoever (habitually) sins has neither seen Him nor known Him ... Whoever has been born of God does not (habitually) sin, for his seed remains in him; and he cannot (habitually) sin, because he has been born of God. (1 John 3:6 and 9)

- iv. The changes may not come all at one time, and they may not come to each area of the life at the same time, but they will be there and they will be real and they will be increasing and time goes on.

g. God has made us "safe" for grace by changing us as we receive God's grace; He sets us free and equips us to live righteously before Him. Since we have died to sin, it is unthinkable that we could continue our former practice of sin. Once the caterpillar has been made a butterfly, the butterfly has no business crawling around on trees and leaves like a caterpillar again.

- i. "God has so changed your nature by his grace that when you sin you shall be like a fish on dry land, you shall be out of your element, and long to get into a right state again. You cannot sin, for you love God. The sinner may drink sin down as the ox drinketh down water, but to you it shall be as the brine of the sea. You may become so foolish as to try the pleasures of the world, but they shall be no pleasures to you." (Spurgeon).

B. The believer under grace and the problem of occasional sin.

1. (Rom 6:15) A new question is asked: shall we sin (occasionally) because we are not under law but under grace?

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

a. Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Paul has convinced us that a lifestyle of habitual sin is not compatible with one whose life is changed by

grace. But what about an occasional sin here and there? If we are under grace, not law, must we be so concerned about a little sin here and there?

b. Shall we sin: Again, the verb tense of the ancient Greek word sin is important (the aorist active tense). It indicates dabbling in sin, not a continual habitual sin described in the question of Romans 6:1.

i. "The verb in verse one is in the present subjunctive, speaking of habitual, continuous action. The verb in verse fifteen is in the aorist subjunctive, referring to a single act." (Wuest).

2. (Rom 6:16-17) Spiritual principles we need to understand in order to answer the question.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

a. To whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves: Whatever you present yourself to obey, you become its slave. For example, if I "obey" my appetite constantly, I am a slave to it. So we have a choice in our slavery: sin leading to death or obedience leading to righteousness.

i. One way or another, we will serve somebody. The option to live our life without serving either sin or obedience isn't open to us.

b. Though you were slaves of sin: Paul puts it in the past tense because we have been freed from our slavery to sin. He also says that we have been set free by faith, which he describes as obedience from the heart. The faith is put in God's Word, which he describes as that form of doctrine. All in all, the point is clear: "You put your faith in God and His Word, and now you are set free. Now live every day consistent with that freedom."

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- i. As was seen earlier in Romans 6, we can be legally free and still choose to live like a prisoner. Paul has a simple command and encouragement for the Christian: be what you are.
 - ii. Obedience from the heart is a wonderful description of faith. It shows that faith comes from the heart, not only the mind. It shows that faith results in obedience because if we really believe something we will act according to that belief.
- c. The phrase “that form of doctrine” is part of a beautiful picture. The word form describes a mold used to shape molten metal.** The idea is that God wants to shape us - first He melts us by the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Then He pours us into His mold of truth - that form of doctrine and shapes us into His image.
- i. Adam Clarke on that form of doctrine: "Here Christianity is represented under the notion of a mould, or die, into which they were cast, and from which they took the impression of its excellence. The figure upon this die is the image of God, righteousness and true holiness, which was stamped on their souls in believe the Gospel and receiving the Holy Ghost. The words ... refer to the melting of metal, which, when it is liquefied, is cast into the mould, that it may receive the impression that is sunk or cut in the mould; and therefore the words may be literally translated, into which mould of doctrine ye have been cast. They were melted down under the preaching of the word, and then were capable of receiving the stamp of its purity."

3. (Rom 6:18) Why not then, occasionally sin? Because sin is not our master, and we no longer serve it.

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

- a. Having been set free from sin:** What does it mean to be

free from sin and to become a slave of righteousness? It means that sin is no longer your boss or your master. Now righteousness is your boss, so serve righteousness instead of sin. It isn't right to think about pleasing your old boss when you change jobs.

b. Slaves of righteousness: What does it mean to be a slave? A slave was more than an employee. Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest defines the ancient Greek **word for a slave here by these terms:**

- One born into a condition of slavery
- One whose will is swallowed up in the will of another
- One who is bound to the master with bounds that only death can break
- One who serves his master to the disregard of his own interest

The following was once true in regard to our slavery to sin:

- We were born as slaves to sin
- Our will was swallowed up and captive to the will of sin within us
- Our bondage to sin was so strong that only death – spiritually dying with Jesus on the cross - could break the bondage
- We were so enslaved to sin that we served it to the disregard of our own interest, even when sin destroyed us.

Now the following is true in regard to our slavery to righteousness:

- We are born again, now as slaves to righteousness
- Our will is now swallowed up in the will of God. It is His will that matters to us, not our own.
- We are bound to Jesus with bonds that only death can break; but since He has triumphed over death and given us eternal life, those bonds will never be broken!
- We now willingly serve Jesus to the disregard of our own interests

c. Because we have been set free from sin, we never have to sin again. Though sin is inevitable until our flesh is resurrected in glory, it isn't because God has designed a system by which we must sin.

i. Sinless perfection in this body is an illusion. The Apostle John made this clear in 1 John 1:8: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Yet we know that in the power of Jesus Christ, we can resist the next temptation - and that's all Jesus wants us to be concerned with.

ii. Because of the frailty of man, the Christian at infrequent intervals does yield to the evil nature and sin. But the point is, God has so constituted him, that he need not do so." (Wuest).

d. It is mockery to tell a slave, "Don't behave as a slave" - but you can say that to someone who is set free. Jesus Christ tells us to no longer behave as if we were slaves to sin. We have been set free; now we are to think and live as free people.

4. (Rom 6:19-23) How to keep from enslaving ourselves.

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

a. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh: Paul apologizes for using slavery as an illustration, because it was so degrading and pervasive,

and especially because many of his Roman readers were slaves. Yet he knows that this is an illustration that works well with his readers.

b. You presented your members ... so now present: Paul repeats a point made earlier. First, present your members as slaves to righteousness. This means that we don't show up for work to our old boss.

i. Can you imagine? A new job, and the first day on the new job you leave work at lunch time and go to your old job and ask your old boss what he wants you to do. It just isn't right!

c. Lawlessness leading to more lawlessness: Paul describes a principle ingrained in human nature. Lawlessness leads to more lawlessness. Righteousness leads to holiness - which is more righteousness. This describes the dynamic power of our habits and how we move along in the direction we are pointed.

i. Think of four trees in a row: one at one year of growth, the second at five years, the third at ten years, and the last at 15 years. Which tree will be the most difficult to pull up out of the ground? Obviously, the longer we are rooted in a behavior the harder it is to uproot it - a principle that works both for good and evil.

d. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness: Paul's point is almost humorous. When we were slaves of sin, we were free all right - free in regard to righteousness. Some freedom!

e. What fruit did you have then: To walk in victory over sin, we must think rightly about the fruit of sin. The end of those things is death: The end product of sin is death - not fun. But the end product of righteousness is everlasting life.

i. In a time of temptation, these truths can seem unreal - so we must rely on our faith in these things, not on our feelings while being tempted.

ii. "Consider these three things:

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1. **How little fruit and satisfaction your former sins have afforded you in the very time of committing them.**
 2. **How nothing but shame and sorrow doth follow upon the remembrance of them.**
 3. **How death, yea, eternal death and damnation (unless pardoning grace and mercy prevent it,) will be the certain conclusion of them."** (Poole)
- f. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord:** When you work for sin, your wages are death. When we serve God we get no pay - but He freely gives us the best benefit package imaginable.
- i. Wages of sin: "Every sinner earns this by long, sore, and painful service. O! What pains do men take to get to hell! Early and late they toil at sin; and would not Divine justice be in their debt, if it did not pay them their due wages?" (Clarke)
- g. Answering his question from Romans 6:15, Paul has made it clear:** As believers, we have a change of ownership. The Christian is to fight against even occasional sin because we need to work for and under our new Master. It isn't appropriate for us to work for our old master.



THE WEAKNESS OF THE LAW EXPOSED

A. Dead to the Law.

1. (Rom 7:1-3) The law has authority only over the living.

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

a. In Romans 6:14, Paul told us that sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. After the discussion in Romans 6:15-23 regarding practical implications of this, he now explains more completely how it is that we are no longer under the dominion of the law.

b. That the law has dominion over a man: The ancient Greek wording here has no the before law. This means that Paul speaks of a principle broader than the Mosaic Law. The law that has dominion over us includes the Law of Moses, but there is a broader principle of law communicated by creation and conscience, and these

also have dominion over a man.

c. The law has dominion over a man as long as he lives:

Paul makes the point that death ends all obligations and contracts. A wife is no longer bound to her husband if he dies because death ends that contract. If her husband dies, she is free from that law.

2. (Rom 7:4) Our death with Jesus sets us free from the law.

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

a. You also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ: In Romans 6:3-8, Paul carefully explained that we died with Jesus and we also rose with Him, although Paul there only spoke of our death to sin. Now he explains that we also died to the law.

i. Some might think, "Yes, we were saved by grace, but we must live by law to please God." Here Paul makes it plain that believers are dead to the law as far as it represents a principle of living or a place of right standing before God.

ii. "Believers are through with the law. It is not for them an option as a way of salvation. They do not seek to be right with God by obeying some form of law, as the adherents of almost all religions have done." (Morris)

b. That you may be married to another: However, we are not free from the law so we can live unto ourselves; we are free so that we can be "married" to Jesus and so that we can bear fruit to God.

3. (Rom 7:5) The problem with the law.

For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

a. When we were in the flesh: Under the law, we did not bear fruit to God. Instead we bore fruit to death, because

the law aroused the passions of sins within us.

- b. Paul will explain this problem of the law more fully in Romans 7:7-14.** But now we see his point - that we only come fully to the place of bearing fruit for God when we are free from the law.

4. (Rom 7:6) Delivered from the law.

But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

- a. But now we have been delivered from the law:** The theme of Romans 7:1-5 is summarized. Because we died with Jesus at Calvary, we are dead to the law and delivered from its dominion over us as a principle of justification or of sanctification.

i. The law does not justify us; it does not make us right with God. The law does not sanctify us; it does not take us deeper with God and make us more holy before Him.

- b. So that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit:** Our freedom is given not so we can stop serving God; but so that we can serve Him better, under the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

- c. How well do you serve in the newness of the Spirit?** It is a shame that many serve sin or legalism with more devotion than those who should serve God out of the newness of the Spirit. It's too bad when fear motivates us more than love.

B. Our problem with God's perfect law.

- 1. (7a) Paul asks: Is the law (equal to) sin? What shall we say then? Is the law sin?**

- a. Is the law sin?** If we follow his train of thought we can understand how someone could infer this. Paul insisted that we must die to the law if we will bear fruit to God. Someone must think, "Surely there is something wrong

with the law!"

2. (7b) No, the law is good because it reveals sin to us.

Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

a. I would not have known sin except through the law:

The law is like an x-ray machine; it reveals plainly what might have always been there, but was hidden before. You can't blame an x-ray for what it exposes.

b. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

The law sets the "speed limit" so we know exactly if we are going too fast. We might never know that we are sinning in many areas (such as covetousness) if the law did not spell this out to us specifically.

3. (Rom 7:8) Sin corrupts the commandment (law).

But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.

a. But sin, taking opportunity by the commandments:

Paul describes the dynamic where the warning "don't do that" may become a call to action because of our sinful, rebellious hearts. It isn't the fault of the commandment, but it is our fault.

- i. In his book "Confessions", the great theologian of the ancient church Augustine described how this dynamic worked in his life as a young man: "There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it and carry our spoils away. We took off a huge load of pears - not to feast upon ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply in order to

become a thief. The only feast I got was a feast of iniquity, and that I enjoyed to the full. What was it that I loved in the theft? Was it the pleasure of acting against the law? The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing."

- ii. In American history, we know that the Prohibition Act didn't stop drinking. In many ways it made drinking more attractive to people, because of our desire to break boundaries set by the commandment.
- iii. Once God draws a boundary for us, we are immediately enticed to cross that boundary - which is no fault of God or His boundary, but the fault of our sinful hearts.

b. Sin, taking opportunity by the commandment: The weakness of the law isn't in the law - it is in us. Our hearts are so wicked that they can find opportunity for all manner of evil desire from something good like the law of God.

- i. "The word opportunity in the original is a military term meaning a base of operations. Prohibition furnishes a springboard from which sin is all too ready to take off." (Harrison)
- ii. A waterfront hotel in Florida was concerned that people might try to fish from the balconies, so they put up signs saying, "NO FISHING FROM THE BALCONY." They had constant problems with people fishing from the balconies, with lines and sinker weights breaking windows and bothering people in rooms below. They finally solved the problem by simply taking down the signs - and no one thought to fish from the balconies. Because of our hearts, the law can actually work like an invitation to sin.

c. Apart from the law, sin was dead: This shows how great the evil of sin is - it can take something good and holy like the law and twist it to promote evil. Sin warps love into lust, an honest desire to provide into greed, and law into a promoter of sin.

4. (Rom 7:9) Paul's state of innocence before he knew the law.

i was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

a. I was alive once without the law: Children can be innocent before they know or understand what law requires. This is what Paul refers to when he says I was alive once without the law.

i. "He is not alive with the life that the New Testament writers so often speak about. He is alive in the sense that he has never been put to death as a result of confrontation with the law." (Morris)

ii. "He was quite secure amid all his sin and sinfulness. He lived in the sense that the deathblow had not yet killed him. He sat secure in the house of his ignorance like a man living on a volcano and thought that all was well." (Lenski).

b. But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died: But when we do know the law, the law shows us our guilt and it excites our rebellion, bringing forth more sin and death.

5. Sin corrupts the law and defeats its purpose of giving life; once law is corrupted by sin, it brings death. "And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good".

a. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death: Sin does this by deception. Sin deceives us:

- Because sin falsely promises satisfaction.
- Because sin falsely claims an adequate excuse.
- Because sin falsely promises an escape from punishment.

b. For sin ... deceived me: It isn't the law that deceives us,

but it is sin that uses the law as an occasion for rebellion. This is why Jesus said you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:32) The truth makes us free from the deceptions of sin.

- c. **And by it killed me:** Sin, when followed, leads to death - not life. One of Satan's greatest deceptions is to get us to think of sin as something good that an unpleasant God wants to deprive us of. When God warns us away from sin, He warns us away from something that will kill us.
- d. **Therefore the law is holy:** Paul understands how someone might take him as saying that he is against the law - but he isn't at all. It is true that we must die to sin (Romans 6:2) and we must die to the law (Romans 7:4). But that should not be taken to say that Paul believes that sin and law are in the same basket. The problem is in us, not in the law. Nevertheless, sin corrupts the work or effect of the law, so we must die to both.

C. The purpose and character of the law.

1. (Rom 7:13) The law exposes and magnifies sin.

Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

- a. **Sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good:** Though the law provokes our sin nature, this can be used for good because it more dramatically exposes our deep sinfulness. After all, if sin can use something as good as the law to its advantage in promoting evil, it shows how evil sin is.
 - i. We need sin to appear sin, because it always wants to hide in us and conceal its true depths and strength. "This is one of the most deplorable results of sin. It injures us most by taking from us the capacity to know how much we are injured. It undermines the man's constitution, and yet leads him to boast of unfailing health; it beggars him, and tells him he is

rich; it strips him, and makes him glory in his fancied robes." (Spurgeon)

- ii. "Those who preach only the Gospel to sinners, at best only heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly. The law, therefore, is the grand instrument in the hands of a faithful minister, to alarm and awaken sinners." (Clarke)

b. So that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful: Sin "becomes more sinful" in light of the law in two ways. First, sin becomes exceedingly sinful through contrast with the law. Second, sin becomes exceedingly sinful because the law provokes its evil nature.

- i. "Instead of being a dynamo that gives us power to overcome, the Law is a magnet that draws out of us all kinds of sin and corruption." (Wiersbe)
- ii. Exceedingly sinful: "Why didn't he say, 'exceeding black,' or 'exceeding horrible,' or 'exceedingly deadly'? Why, because there is nothing in the world so bad as sin. When he wanted to use the very worst word he could find: to call sin by, he called it by its own name, and reiterated it: 'sin,' 'exceeding sinful.'" (Spurgeon).

2. (Rom 7:14) The spiritual law cannot restrain a carnal man.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

a. But I am carnal: The word carnal simply means "of the flesh." Paul recognizes that a spiritual law cannot help a carnal man.

- i. Carnal uses the ancient Greek word *sarkikos*, which means, "characterized by the flesh." It speaks of the person who can and should do differently but does not. Paul sees this carnality in himself, and knows that the law, though it is spiritual, has no answer for his carnal nature.

b. Sold under sin: Paul is in bondage under sin and the law

can't help him out. He is like a man arrested for a crime and thrown in jail. The law will only help him if he is innocent, but Paul knows that he is guilty and that the law argues against him, not for him.

c. Even though Paul says that he is carnal, it doesn't mean that he is not a Christian. His awareness of his carnality is evidence that God has done a work in him.

- i. Luther on but I am carnal, sold under sin: "That is the proof of the spiritual and wise man. He knows that he is carnal, and he is displeased with himself; indeed, he hates himself and praises the Law of God, which he recognizes because he is spiritual. But the proof of a foolish, carnal man is this, that he regards himself as spiritual and is pleased with himself."

D. The struggle of obedience in our own strength.

1. (Rom 7:15-19) Paul describes his sense of helplessness.

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

a. For what I am doing, I do not understand: Paul's problem isn't desire - he wants to do what is right (what I will to do, that I do not practice). His problem isn't knowledge - he knows what the right thing is. His problem is a lack of power: how to perform what is good I do not find. He lacks power because the law gives no power.

- i. The law says: "Here are the rules and you had better keep them." But it gives us no power for keeping the law.

b. It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me: Is Paul denying his responsibility as a sinner? No. He recognizes that as he sins, he acts against his nature as a new man in Jesus Christ. A Christian must own up to his sin, yet realize that the impulse to sin does not come from who we really are in Jesus Christ.

- i. "To be saved from sin, a man must at the same time own it and disown it; it is this practical paradox which is reflected in this verse. A true saint may say it in a moment of passion, but a sinner had better not make it a principle." (Wuest)

2. (Rom 7:20-23) The battle between two selves.

Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

a. I find then a law, that evil is present with me: Anyone who has tried to do good is aware of this struggle. We never know how hard it is to stop sinning until we try. "No man knows how bad he is until he has tried to be good." (C.S. Lewis)

b. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man: Paul knows that his real inward man has a delight in the law of God. He understands that the impulse to sin comes from another law in my members. Paul knows that the "real self" is the one who does delight in the law of God.

- i. The old man is not the real Paul; the old man is dead. The flesh is not the real Paul; the flesh is destined to pass away and be resurrected. The new man is the real Paul; now Paul's challenge is to live like God has made him.
- ii. There is a debate among Christians as to if Paul was a Christian during the experience he describes. Some look at his struggle with sin and believe that it must

have been before he was born again. Others believe that he is just a Christian struggling with sin. In a sense this is an irrelevant question, for this is the struggle of anyone who tries to obey God in their own strength. This is something that a Christian may do, but something that a non-Christian can only do.

- iii. Morris quoting Griffith Thomas: "The one point of the passages is that it describes a man who is trying to be good and holy by his own efforts and is beaten back every time by the power of indwelling sin; it thus refers to anyone, regenerate or unregenerate."

c. Warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin: Sin is able to war within Paul and win because there is no power within himself, other than himself, to stop sinning. Paul is caught in the desperate powerlessness of trying to battle sin in the power of self.

E. The victory found in Jesus Christ.

1. (Rom 7:24) Paul's desperation and perspective.

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

- a. O wretched man that I am!** The ancient Greek word wretched is more literally, "Wretched through the exhaustion of hard labor." Paul is completely worn out and wretched because of his unsuccessful effort to please God under the principle of Law.
 - i. "It is worth bearing in mind that the great saints through the ages do not commonly say, 'How good I am!' Rather, they are apt to bewail their sinfulness." (Morris)
 - ii. Legalism always brings a person face to face with their own wretchedness, and if they continue in legalism, they will react in one of two ways. Either they will deny their wretchedness and become self-righteous Pharisees, or they will despair because of their wretchedness and give up following after God.

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- b. O wretched man that I am!** The entire tone of the statement shows that Paul is desperate for deliverance. He is overwhelmed with a sense of his own powerlessness and sinfulness. We must come to the same place of desperation to find victory.
- i. Your desire must go beyond a vague hope to be better. You must cry out against yourself and cry out unto God with the same desperation Paul did.
- c. Who will deliver me:** Paul's perspective finally turns to something (actually, someone) outside of himself. Paul has referred to himself some 40 times since Romans 7:13. In the pit of Paul's unsuccessful struggle against sin, he became entirely self-focused and self-obsessed. This is the place of any believer living under law, who looks to self and personal performance rather than looking first to Jesus.
- I. The words "Who will deliver me" show that Paul has given up on himself, and asks "Who will deliver me?" Instead of "How will I deliver myself?"
 - ii. "It is not the voice of one desponding or doubting, but of one breathing and panting after deliverance." (Poole)
- d. Who will deliver me from this body of death?** When Paul describes this body of death, some commentators see a reference to ancient kings who tormented their prisoners by shackling them to decomposing corpses. Paul longs to be cut free from the wretched body of death clinging to him.
- i. "It was the custom of ancient tyrants, when they wished to put men to the most fearful punishments, to tie a dead body to them, placing the two back to back; and there was the living man, with a dead body closely strapped to him, rotting, putrid, corrupting, and this he must drag with him wherever he went. Now, this is just what the Christian has to do. He has within him the new life; he has a living and undying principle, which the Holy Spirit has put within him, but he feels

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- that every day he has to drag about with him this dead body, this body of death, a thing as loathsome, as hideous, as abominable to his new life, as a dead stinking carcass would be to a living man." (Spurgeon)
- ii. Others see a reference to sin in general, such as Murray: "Body has been taken to mean mass and body of death the whole mass of sin. Hence what Paul longs to be delivered from is sin in all its aspects and consequences."
 - iii. "By the body of death he means the whole mass of sin, or those ingredients of which the whole man is composed; except that in him there remained only relics, by the captive bonds of which he was held." (Calvin)

2. (Rom 7:25) Paul finally looks outside of himself to Jesus.

I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

- a. I thank God;** through Jesus Christ our Lord! Finally, Paul looks outside of himself and unto Jesus. As soon as he looks to Jesus, he has something to thank God for - and he thanks God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 - i. Through means that Paul sees Jesus standing between himself and God, bridging the gap and providing the way to God. Lord means that Paul has put Jesus in the right place - as Lord and master of his life.
- b. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin:** He acknowledges the state of struggle, but thanks God for the victory in Jesus. Paul doesn't pretend that looking to Jesus takes away the struggle - Jesus works through us, not instead of us in the battle against sin.
 - i. The glorious truth remains: there is victory in Jesus! Jesus didn't come and die just to give us more or better rules, but to live out victory through those who

believe. The message of the gospel is that there is victory over sin, hate, death, and all evil as we surrender out lives to Jesus and let Him live out victory through us.

- ii. Calvin calls Romans 7:25: "A short epilogue, in which he teaches us, that the faithful never reach the goal of righteousness as long as they dwell in the flesh, but that they are running their course, until they put off the body."

c. Paul shows that even though the law is glorious and good, it can't save us - and we need a Savior. Paul never found any peace, any praising God until he looked outside of himself and beyond the law to his Savior, Jesus Christ.

- i. You thought the problem was that you didn't know what to do to save yourself - but he came as a teacher, taught you all what to do and you couldn't do it. You don't need a teacher, you need a Savior.
- ii. You thought the problem was that you weren't motivated enough, but the law came in like a coach to encourage you on to do what you need to do and you still didn't do it. You don't need a coach or a motivational speaker, you need a Savior.
- iii. You thought the problem was that you didn't know yourself enough - but the law came in like a doctor and perfectly diagnosed your sin problem - but it couldn't heal you. You don't need a doctor, you need a Savior.



A NEW AND WONDERFUL LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

A. Life in the Spirit contrasted with life in the flesh.

1. (Rom 8:1) No condemnation.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

a. There is therefore now no condemnation: The simple declaration of no condemnation comes to those who are in Christ Jesus. Since the Father does not condemn Jesus, neither can He condemn those who are in Him. They are not condemned, they will not be condemned, and they cannot be condemned.

- i. Paul's therefore is important. It means that what he says comes from a logical argument. It's as if Paul begins, "I can prove what I say here." This is what he proves: if we are one with Jesus and He is our head, we can't be condemned. You can't acquit the head and condemn the hand. You can't drown the foot as long as the head is out of water. Joined to Him, we hear the verdict: "no condemnation."
- ii. In Christ: "This phrase imports, that there is a mystical and spiritual union betwixt Christ and believers. This is sometimes expressed by Christ being in them ... and here by their being in Christ. Christ is in believers by His Spirit, and believers are in Christ by

faith." (Poole)

iii. The verdict is not "less condemnation." That's where many of us are at - we think that our standing has improved in Jesus. It hasn't improved, it's been completely transformed, changed to no condemnation.

iv. We perhaps need to consider the flip side: If you are not in Jesus Christ, there is condemnation for you. "It is no pleasant task to us to have to speak of this matter; but who are we that we should ask for pleasant tasks? What God hath witnessed in Scripture is the sum and substance of what the Lord's servants are to testify to the people. If you are not in Christ Jesus, and are walking after the flesh, you have not escaped from condemnation." (Spurgeon).

b. No condemnation: This place of confidence and peace comes after the confusion and conflict that marked Romans 7. Now Paul looks to Jesus and he finds his standing in Him. But this chapter is more than just the answer to Romans 7; it ties together thoughts from the very beginning of the book.

i. Romans 8 begins with no condemnation; it ends with no separation, and in between there is no defeat.

c. Who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit: These words are not found in the earliest ancient manuscripts of the Book of Romans and they do not agree with the flow of Paul's context here. There were probably added by a copyist who either made a mistake or thought he could "help" Paul by bringing in these words from Romans 8:4.

i. While it is true that those who are in Christ should not and do not consistently walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, this is not a condition for their status of no condemnation. Their position in Jesus is the reason for the standing of no condemnation.

ii. "The most learned men assure us that it is no part of

the original text. I cannot just now go into the reasons for this conclusion, but they are very good and solid. The oldest copies are without it, the versions do not sustain it, and the fathers who quoted abundance of Scripture do not quote this sentence." (Spurgeon)

d. We receive this glorious declaration from God's court:

"No condemnation." We don't receive it because we don't deserve condemnation; we certainly do deserve condemnation. We receive it because Jesus bore the condemnation we deserved, and our identity is now found in Him. As He is condemned no more, neither are we.

2. (Rom 8:2-4) The contrast between life in the Spirit and life in the flesh.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

a. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death: The law of the sin and death was a strong and seemingly absolute law. Every sin we commit and every cemetery we see proves it. But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ is stronger still, and the law of the Spirit frees us from the law of sin and death.

- i. We are free from the law of sin. Though he inevitably does, the Christian does not have to sin, because he is freed from sin's dominion. We are free from the law of death; death no longer has any lasting power against the believer.
- ii. Romans 8:1 tells us we are free from the guilt of sin. Romans 8:2 tells us we are free from the power of sin.

b. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh:

The law can do many things. It can guide us, teach us, and tell us about God's character. But the law cannot give energy to our flesh; it can give us the standard, but it cannot give us the power to live pleasing to God.

- i. Morris, quoting Manson: "Moses' law has right but not might; Sin's law has might but not right; the law of the Spirit has both right and might."
- ii. "The law is weak to us, because we are weak to it: the sun cannot give light to blind eye, not from any impotency in itself, but merely from the incapacity of the subject it shines upon." (Poole)

c. In that it was weak through the flesh: The law is weak because it speaks to our flesh. It comes to fleshly men and speaks to them as fleshly men. But the work of the Spirit transforms us by the crucifixion of the old man and it imparts the new man - a principle higher than the flesh.

- i. "A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine's own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God's, but is the fruit of that divine nature which God gives as the result of what he has done in and by Christ." (Hooke).

d. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son:

The law could not defeat sin; it could only detect sin. Only Jesus can defeat sin, and He did just that through His work on the cross.

- i. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh: In order to defeat sin, Jesus had to identify with those bound by it, by coming in the likeness of sinful flesh. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul carefully chose his words here, indicating that Jesus was not sinful flesh, but He identified with it entirely.
- ii. We could not say that Jesus came in sinful flesh,

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- because He was sinless. We could not say that Jesus came in the likeness of flesh, because He really was human, not just like a human. But we can say that Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh because although He was human, He was not sinful in Himself.
- iii. He condemned sin in the flesh: Sin was condemned in the flesh of Jesus as He bore the condemnation we deserved. Since we are in Christ, we have already had that condemnation come and pass us over.

e. That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us: Because Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law, and because we are in Christ, we fulfill the law. The law is fulfilled in us in regard to obedience, because Jesus righteousness stands for ours. The law is fulfilled in us in regard to punishment, because any punishment demanded by the law was poured out upon Jesus.

- i. Paul does not say that we fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. He carefully says that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us. It isn't fulfilled by us, but in us.
- ii. Simply put, Jesus is our substitute. Jesus was treated as a sinner so we can be treated as righteous.

f. In us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit: The people who enjoy this are those who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Their life is marked by obedience to the Holy Spirit, not by obedience to the flesh.

- i. God wants the Spirit to rule over our flesh. When we allow the flesh to reign over the Spirit, we find ourselves bound by the sinful patterns and desperation that marked Paul's life in his "Romans 7" struggle. Our walk - the pattern of our life - must be according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh.
- ii. Walking in the Spirit means that the course, the direction, the progress of one's life is directed by the Holy Spirit. It is a continued and progressive motion.

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- iii. "Observe carefully that the flesh is there: he does not walk after it, but it is there. It is there, striving and warring, vexing and grieving, and it will be there till he is taken up into heaven. It is there as an alien and detested force, and not there so as to have dominion over him. He does not walk after it, nor practically obey it. He does not accept it as his guide, nor allow it to drive him into rebellion." (Spurgeon)

3. (Rom 8:5-8) The futility of trying to please God in the flesh.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

a. Set their minds on the things of the flesh: Paul gives an easy way for us to determine if we walk in the Spirit or walk in the flesh - to simply see where our mind is set. The mind is the strategic battleground where the flesh and the Spirit fight.

- i. We shouldn't think of those who set their minds on the things of the flesh are the notorious sinners. They may be noble people who have good intentions. Peter meant well when he told Jesus to avoid the cross. Jesus responded to Peter with these strong words: you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. (Matthew 16:23).

b. For to be carnally minded is death: When our minds are set on the things of the flesh (carnally minded) we bring death into our lives. But walking in the Spirit brings life and peace.

- i. We must, however, guard against a false spirituality and see that Paul is talking about the flesh insofar as it is an instrument in our rebellion against God. Paul

is not talking about normal physical and emotional needs that we may think about, only the sinful gratification of those needs.

c. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: The flesh battles against God, because it does not want to be crucified and surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not want to live out Galatians 5:24: those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. In this battle to tame the flesh, the law is powerless.

i. Paul didn't say that the carnal mind was at enmity with God - he put it even stronger than that. The carnal mind is enmity against God. "It is not black, but blackness; it is not at enmity, but enmity itself; it is not corrupt, but corruption; it is not rebellious, it is rebellion: it is not wicked, it is wickedness itself. The heart, though it be deceitful, is positively deceit; it is evil in the concrete, sin in the essence, it is the distillation, the quintessence of all things that are vile; it is not envious against God, it is envy; it is not at enmity, it is actual enmity." (Spurgeon).

d. It is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be:

We can try to do good in life without being subject to the law of God. We may hope to put God "in debt" to us through the doing of good works, putting God under obligation to us. But it doesn't work. In the flesh we cannot please God, even if the flesh is doing religious things that are admired by men.

i. Newell on Romans 8:7: "Perhaps no one text of Scripture more completely sets forth the hideously lost state of man after the flesh."

4. (Rom 8:9-11) Christians are empowered to live in the Spirit.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you,

the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

a. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you: Because the Holy Spirit is given to each believer when they are born again, every Christian has within themselves a principle higher and more powerful than the flesh.

i. "Many sincere people are yet spiritually under John the Baptist's ministry of repentance. Their state is practically that of the struggle of Romans Seven, where neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit is mentioned, but only a quickened but undelivered soul in struggle under a sense of 'duty,' not a sense of full acceptance in Christ and sealing by the Holy Spirit." (Newell).

b. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His: This means that every believer has the Holy Spirit. It is a misnomer to divide Christians among the "Spirit-filled" and the "non-Spirit-filled." If a person is not filled with the Holy Spirit, they are not a Christian at all.

i. However, many do miss out on living the Christian life in the constant fullness of the Spirit because they are not constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit as Paul commanded in Ephesians 5:18. They have no experience of what Jesus spoke about when He described rivers of living water flowing from the believer (John 7:37-39).

ii. How do I know that I have the Spirit? Ask these questions:

- Has the Spirit led you to Jesus?
- Has the Spirit put in you the desire to honor Jesus?
- Is the Spirit leading you to be more like Jesus?
- Is the Spirit at work in your heart?

c. And if the Spirit of Christ is in you, the body is dead

because of sin: Because Jesus lives in us, the old man (body) is dead, but the Spirit lives and reigns, and will live out His salvation even through our mortal bodies through resurrection.

- i. Not only are we in Christ (Romans 8:1), but He also is in you, and because God cannot abide a sinful home, the body (old man) had to die when Jesus came in.

B. Our obligation: to live in the Spirit.

1. (Rom 8:12-13) Our debt is to the Spirit, not to the flesh.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

- a. We are debtors - to the flesh, to live according to the flesh: The flesh (again, in the narrow sense of sinful flesh in rebellion against God) gave us nothing good. So we have no obligation to oblige or pamper it. Our debt is to the Lord, not to the flesh.

- b. For if you live according to the flesh you will die:** Paul constantly reminds us that living after the flesh ends in death and we need the reminder because we are often deceived into thinking that the flesh offers us life.

c. By the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body:

When we put to death the deeds of the body (force the sinful flesh to submit to the Spirit), we must do it by the Spirit. Otherwise we will become Pharisees and spiritually proud.

- i. Paul tells us that not only are we saved by the work of the Spirit, but also we must walk by the Spirit if want to grow and pursue holiness in the Lord. We cannot be like some among the Galatians who thought they could begin in the Spirit but then find spiritual perfection through the flesh.

2. (Rom 8:14-15) Living in the Spirit means living as a

child of God.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

a. It is only fitting that the sons of God should be led by the Spirit of God. However, we should not think that being led by the Spirit is a pre-condition to being a son of God. Instead, we become sons first and then the Spirit of God leads us.

i. Paul didn't say, "As many as go to church, these are the sons of God." He didn't say, "As many as read their Bibles, these are the sons of God." He didn't say, "As many as are patriotic Nigerians, these are the sons of God." He didn't say, "As many as take communion, these are the sons of God." In this text, the test for sonship is whether or not a person is led by the Spirit of God.

ii. How does the Holy Spirit lead us?

- We are led by guidance.
- We are led by drawing.
- We are led by governing authority.
- We are led as we cooperate with the leading. "It does not say, 'As many as are driven by the Spirit of God.' No, the devil is a driver, and when he enters either into men or into pigs he drives them furiously. Remember how the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea. Whenever you see a man fanatical and wild, whatever spirit is in him it is not the Spirit of Christ." (Spurgeon).

iii. Where does the Holy Spirit lead us?

- He leads us to repentance.
- He leads us to think little of self and much of Jesus.
- He leads us into truth.
- He leads us into love
- He leads us into holiness
- He leads us into usefulness

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- b. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption:** Living as a child of God means an intimate, joyful relationship with God, not like the bondage and fear demonstrated by the law. A child of God can have a relationship with God so close that they may cry out, Abba, Father! (Daddy!)
- c. We cry out, "Abba, Father." It is easy for us to see Jesus relating to the Father with this joyful confidence,** but we may see ourselves as disqualified for it. However, remember that we are in Christ - we have the privilege of relating to the Father even as Jesus Christ does.
- i. "In the Roman world of the first century A.D. an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature." (Bruce)
 - ii. Under Roman adoption, the life and standing of the adopted child changed completely. The adopted son lost all rights in his old family and gained all new rights in his new family; the old life of the adopted son was completely wiped out, with all debts being canceled, with nothing from his past counting against him any more.

3. (Rom 8:16) The evidence we are children of God: the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

- a. The Spirit Himself bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God:** Plainly put, Paul says that those who are God's children, born again by the Spirit of God, know their status because the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit that this is so.
- i. This is not to say that there are not those who wrongly think or assume they are God's children apart from the Spirit's testimony. There are also Christians

whose heads are so foggy from spiritual attack that they begin to believe the lie that they are not God's children after all. Nevertheless the witness of the Spirit is still there.

b. We are children of God: We don't have to wonder if we are really Christians or not. God's children know who they are.

- i. Jewish law stated that at the mouth of two or three witnesses everything had to be established (Deuteronomy 17:6). There are two witnesses to our salvation: our own witness and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

4. (Rom 8:17) The benefits and responsibilities of being God's children.

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

a. And if children, then heirs: Because we are in Christ, we have the privilege of relating to the Father as Jesus does - therefore, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

- i. Being a child of God also means having an inheritance. In Luke 18:18 the rich young ruler asked Jesus, what must I do to inherit? But the rich young ruler missed the point because inheritance is not a matter of doing it is a matter of being - of being in the right family.

b. If indeed we suffer with Him: Because we are in Christ, we are also called to share in His suffering. God's children are not immune from suffering.

c. If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together: In fact, our sharing in present suffering is a condition of our future glorification. As far as God is concerned, it is all part of the same package of sonship, no matter how our flesh may want to have the inheritance and the glory without the suffering.

C. Life in the Spirit enables us to understand and endure suffering.

1. (Rom 8:18) Paul's analysis of the present suffering and our future glory: they cannot be compared to each other.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

a. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared: Paul was not ignorant or blind to the sufferings of human existence; he experienced more of them than most any of us today. Yet he still considered that the future glory far outweighed the present sufferings.

b. The glory which shall be revealed in us: Without a heavenly hope, Paul considered the Christian life foolish and tragic (1 Corinthians 15:19). Yet in light of eternity it is the wisest and best choice anyone can make.

c. Revealed in us: This coming glory will not only be revealed to us, but it will actually be revealed in us.

i. God has put this glory into the believer right now. When we are in heaven, the glory will simply be revealed. "The glory will be revealed, not created. The implication is that it is already existent, but not apparent." (Morris).

2. (Rom 8:19-22) All of creation is awaiting and anticipating this coming glory.

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

a. The earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits:

Paul considers that creation itself is eagerly awaiting the revealing of the sons of God; because the creation was subjected to futility because of man's sin, and will benefit from the ultimate redemption of men.

i. Isaiah 11:6-9 describes this redemption of creation in that day: The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

b. Him who subjected it in hope: Only God could subject creation in hope. This was not ultimately the work of either man or Satan.

c. The promised glorious liberty of the children of God benefits not only the children of God themselves, but also all of creation. Until that day, creation groans and labors with birth pangs.

d. The revealing of the sons of God: Certain groups with a "super-Christian" mentality have taken the idea of the revealing of the sons of God to say that all creation is waiting for their particular group of super-spiritual Christians to be revealed in incredibly powerful fashion. This is a purely egotistical fantasy.

e. The whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now: "Creation is not undergoing death pangs ... but birth pangs." (Morris)

3. (Rom 8:23-25) We also groan and wait with perseverance for the coming glory.

Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of

the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

- a. We, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, have been given a taste of that glory to come.** Can we be faulted if we long for the fulfillment of what we have received in the first-fruits?
 - b. Eagerly waiting for the adoption:** We are waiting for our adoption; though there is definitely a sense in which we are already adopted (Romans 8:15), there is also a sense in which we wait for the consummation of that adoption - the redemption of our body.
 - i. God does not ignore our physical bodies in His plan of redemption. His plan for these bodies is called resurrection, when this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:53)
 - ii. God's concern about our physical bodies in the here and now is reflected in passages like 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.
 - c. We eagerly wait for it with perseverance:** The fulfillment of our redemption is something still distant, yet we hope for it in faith and perseverance, trusting that God is faithful to His word and the promised glory will be a reality.
 - i. Morris on perseverance: "It is the attitude of the soldier who in the thick of battle is not dismayed but fights on stoutly whatever the difficulties."
- 4. (Rom 8:26-27) God's help through the Spirit is**

available to us now.

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

a. Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses:

When we are weak, and do not know exactly how we should pray, God Himself (through the Holy Spirit) helps by making intercession for us.

- b. The help that the Holy Spirit brings to express our groaning which cannot be uttered may include praying in the spiritual gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:2, 14-15), but it is certainly not limited to praying in an unknown tongue.

i. The idea is simply of communication beyond our ability to express - deep groaning within us, which cannot be articulated apart from the interceding work of the Holy Spirit.

ii. This, of course, is the purpose of the gift of tongues - to enable us to communicate with God in a manner that is not limited to our own knowledge or ability to articulate our heart before God. The purpose of tongues is not to prove that we are "filled with the Spirit" or especially spiritual.

c. The Holy Spirit's help in intercession is perfect, because He searches the hearts of those whom He helps, and He is able to guide our prayers according to the will of God.

5. (Rom 8:28-30) God's help is an enduring promise; He has the ability to work all things for good and to see us through to glorification.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called

according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

a. And we know that all things work together for good:

God's sovereignty and ability to manage every aspect of our lives is demonstrated in the fact that all things work together for good to those who love God, though we must face the sufferings of this present time (Romans 8:18). God is able to even make those sufferings work together for our good and His good.

b. God is able to work all things, not some things. He works them for good together, not in isolation. This promise is for those who love God in the Biblical understanding of love, and God manages the affairs of our life because we are called according to His purpose.

c. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son: The eternal chain of God's working is seen in the connection between foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. God didn't begin a work in the Romans simply to abandon them in the midst of their present suffering.

i. "Paul is saying that God is the author of our salvation, and that from beginning to end. We are not to think that God can take action only when we graciously give him permission." (Morris)

ii. "Of course I believe in predestination, since it's plainly taught in the Scriptures. The doctrine could be assumed, even if the word was never explicitly used. It's a thrilling truth that doesn't upset me at all. The fact that He chose me and began a good work in me proves that He'll continue to perform it. He wouldn't bring me this far and then dump me." (Smith)

d. To be conformed to the image of His Son: However, our participation in this eternal plan is essential, reflected in

its goal: that we might be conformed to the image of His Son; and this is a process that God does with our cooperation, not something He just "does" to us.

e. The reason for this plan is expressed in that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. God has adopted us into His family (Romans 8:15) for the purpose of making us like Jesus Christ, similar to Him in the perfection of His humanity.

D. The triumphant victory of the life in the Spirit.

1. (Rom 8:31) Paul begins his conclusion to this section: If God be for us, who can be against us?

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

a. If God is for us, who can be against us? If all we had were the first few chapters of Romans some might believe that God was against us. Now that Paul has shown the lengths that God went to save man from His wrath and equip him for victory over sin and death, who can doubt that God is for us?

- i. "Our weak hearts, prone to legalism and unbelief, receive these words with great difficulty: God is for us ...They have failed Him; but He is for them. They are ignorant; but He is for them. They have not yet brought forth much fruit; but He is for them." (Newell)
- ii. Most all men say or think that God is for them - terrorists commit horrible crimes thinking that God is for them. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit guards this statement with an "if," so we may know that just because a man thinks God is with him does not make it so. God is only for us if we are reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ.

b. Who can be against us? Likewise, despite the suffering Christians face, if God is for them, what does it matter if others are against them? One person plus God makes an unconquerable majority.

c. We certainly can be deceived into thinking that God is

for us when He actually is not (as do cultists and those like them). Yet it cannot be denied that for those who are in Jesus Christ, God is for them!

2. (Rom 8:32) Evidence that God is for us: the gift of Jesus Christ.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

- a. He who did not spare His own Son:** If the Father already gave His ultimate gift, how can we think that He won't give us the smaller gifts?

3. (Rom 8:33-39) The security of the believer in God's love.

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- a. Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?** We are secure from every charge against us. If we are declared "not guilty" by the highest Judge, who can bring an additional charge?
- b. Who is he who condemns?** We are secure from all condemnation. If Jesus Himself is our advocate, promoting our benefit, then who can condemn us?
- c. In fact, none of the sufferings of this present time can separate us from the love of God.** No matter what the circumstance, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

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- i. Newell on loved us: "It is this past tense gospel the devil hates ... Let a preacher be continually saying, 'God loves you, Christ loves you,' and he and his congregation will by and by be losing sight of both their sinner-hood and of the substitutionary atonement of the cross, where the love of God and of Christ was once for all and supremely set forth."
 - ii. Earle on nakedness: "This term today suggests indecency on parade. Then it meant a lack of clothes simply because one had no ways or means of getting any."
 - iii. Sword: This word implies execution. It is the only item on the list that Paul had not yet personally experienced in the course of living for Jesus and preaching the gospel (1 Corinthians 4:11 and 15:30).
- d. More than conquerors:** How is the Christian more than a conqueror?
- He overcomes with a greater power, the power of Jesus
 - He overcomes with a greater motive, the glory of Jesus
 - He overcomes with a greater victory, losing nothing even in the battle
 - He overcomes with a greater love, conquering enemies with love and converting persecutors with patience
- e. Nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord:** Nothing which appears to be good or nothing which appears to be evil can separate us from the love of God.
- i. Spurgeon speaks of the confidence great men and women of God had in God's love in ages past: "They did not speak of Christ's love as though it were a myth to be respected, a tradition to be revered; they viewed it as a blessed reality, and they cast their whole confidence upon it, being persuaded that it would bear them up as upon eagles' wings, and carry them all their days; resting assured that it would be to them a foundation of rock, against which the waves might beat, and the winds blow, but their soul's habitation would stand securely if founded upon it."
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HAS GOD REJECTED ISRAEL?

A. Paul's heart for Israel.

1. Chapter 9 brings a slight shift in focus to the Book of Romans.

NOTE:

In Romans chapters one through eight, Paul thoroughly convinced us about man's need and God's glorious provision in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. Now, in Romans 9 through 11, Paul deals with the problem associated with the condition of Israel.

- i. What does it mean that Israel has missed its Messiah? What does this say about God? What does it say about Israel? What does it say about our present position in God? The question goes something like this:
- ii. How can I be secure in God's love and salvation to me when it seems that Israel was once loved and saved, but now seems to be rejected and cursed?
- iii. Will God also reject and curse me one day?
"If God cannot bring his ancient people into salvation, how do Christians know that he can save them? Paul is not here proceeding to a new and unrelated subject. These three chapters are part of the way he makes plain how God in fact saves people." (Morris).

2. (Rom 9:1-2) Paul's sorrow.

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience

also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

- a. **I have great sorrow and continued grief in my heart:** In Romans eight, Paul left us at the summit of glory, assuring us that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So why has Paul now become so somber in his tone?
- b. **Paul has sorrow and continual grief because now he considers a people who seem to be separated from God's love:** unbelieving Israel, who rejected God's Messiah.
- c. **I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit:** Paul uses every possible assurance to declare his great sorrow over Israel. This is something that really bothered Paul and was on his heart.

3. (Rom 9:3-5) The source of Paul's sorrow.

For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

- a. **Paul's great love and sorrow for his brethren is dramatically displayed in his declaration "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren."** Paul says he himself is willing to be separated from Jesus if that could somehow accomplish the salvation of Israel.
 - i. We should not think that Paul merely uses a dramatic metaphor here. The solemn assurances he gave in Romans 9:1 remind us he is being completely truthful.
 - ii. This great passion for souls gave Paul perspective. Lesser things did not trouble him because he was

troubled by a great thing - the souls of men. "Get love for the souls of men - then you will not be whining about a dead dog, or a sick cat, or about the crotchets of a family, and the little disturbances that John and Mary may make by their idle talk. You will be delivered from petty worries (I need not further describe them) if you are concerned about the souls of men ... Get your soul full of a great grief, and your little griefs will be driven out." (Spurgeon).

b. I could wish that I myself were accursed: Paul reflects the same heart Moses had in Exodus 32:31-32: Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin; but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

- i. Of course Paul also shows the heart of Jesus, who was willing to be accursed on behalf of others that they might be saved. (Galatians 3:13)
- ii. We should remember that when it came to ministry, the Jews were Paul's worst enemies. They had harassed and persecuted him from town to town, stirring up lies and violence against him. Yet he still loved them this passionately.
- iii. "It is not easy to estimate the measure of love in a Moses and a Paul. For our limited reason does not grasp it, as the child cannot comprehend the courage of warriors!" (Bengel)
- iv. This is a love that seems beyond us - or beyond me, at least. Yet God can build it in us as we pursue the heart of Jesus for His people.

c. The adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the services of God, and the promises: The pain Paul feels for his lost brethren is all the more severe when he considers how God has blessed them with all the privileges of being His own special people.

- i. The glory speaks of God's Shekinah glory, the visible

"cloud of glory" showing God's presence among His people.

d. Of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came: Paul also considers the human legacy of being God's chosen people. Israel not only gave us the great fathers of the Old Testament, but Jesus Himself came from Israel. This entire spiritual legacy makes Israel's unbelief all the more problematic.

e. Christ ... who is over all, the eternally blessed God, Amen: This is one of Paul's clear statements that Jesus is God. Those who prefer a punctuation that says otherwise impose their pre-conceived views on the text. "The grammatical arguments almost all favor the first position [that it says that Christ is God], but most recent scholars accept the second [that God here refers to the Father] on the grounds that Paul nowhere else says explicitly that Christ is God." (Morris)

i. Wuest, quoting Robertson: [This is a] "clear statement of the deity of Christ following the remark about His humanity. This is the natural and obvious way of punctuating the sentence. To make a full stop after flesh and start a new sentence for the doxology is very abrupt and awkward."

B. Why Israel is in its present condition from God's perspective: Israel missed the Messiah because it was according to God's sovereign plan.

1. (Rom 9:6-9) Has God failed with His plan regarding Israel? No; God has not failed His children of promise.

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

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- a. It is not that the word of God has taken no effect:** Paul thinks of someone looking at Israel and saying, "God's word didn't come through for them. He didn't fulfill His promise for them because they missed their Messiah and now seem cursed. How do I know that He will come through for me?" Paul answers the question by asserting that it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.
- b. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel:** One meaning of the name Israel is "governed by God." Paul says here that not all Israel is really "governed by God." Did God's word fail? No; instead, they are not all governed by God who are of Israel.
- i. "Paul tells us that no one is truly Israel unless he is governed by God. We have a parallel situation with the word 'Christian.' Not everyone who is called a Christian is truly a follower of Christ." (Smith)
- c. The children of the promise are counted as the seed:** God's word didn't fail, because God still reaches His children of the promise, which may or may not be the same as physical Israel.
- d. Paul demonstrates this by pointing out that merely being the descendant of Abraham saves no one.** It is not being children of the flesh that works something before God, but only being children of the promise.
- e. For example, Ishmael was just as much a son of Abraham as Isaac was;** but Ishmael was a son according to the flesh, and Isaac was a son according to the promise (At this time I will come and Sarah will have a son). One was the heir of God's covenant of salvation, and one was not.
- 2. (Rom 9:10-13) Another example of the fact that promise is more important than natural relation: Jacob and Esau.**

And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the

purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

- a. **Our father Isaac:** God's choice between Ishmael and Isaac seems somewhat logical to us. It's a lot harder to understand why God chose Jacob to be the heir of God's covenant of salvation instead of Esau. We might not understand it as easily, but God's choice is just as valid.
- b. **Not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil:** Paul points out that God's choice was not based on the performance of Jacob or Esau. The choice was made before they were born.
- c. **That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls:** So we do not think that God chose Jacob over Esau because He knew their works in advance, Paul points out that it was not of works. Instead, the reason for choosing was found in Him who calls.
- d. **The older shall serve the younger:** God announced these intentions to Rebecca before the children were born, and He repeated His verdict long after Jacob and Esau had both passed from the earth (Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated).
 - i. We should regard the love and the hate God speaks of here as having to do with His purpose in choosing one to become the heir of the covenant of Abraham. In that regard, God's preference could rightly be regarded as a display of love towards Jacob and hate towards Esau.
 - ii. Morris cites examples where hate clearly seems to mean something like "loved less" (Genesis 29:31, 33; Deuteronomy 21:15; Matthew 6:24; Luke 14:26; John 12:25). Yet he agrees with Calvin's idea that the real thought here is much more like "accepted" and "rejected" more than our understanding of the terms "loved" and "hated."
 - iii. All in all, we see that Esau was a blessed man

(Genesis 33:8-16, Genesis 36). God hated Esau in regard to inheriting the covenant, not in regard to blessing in this life or the next.

- iv. "A woman once said to Mr. Spurgeon, 'I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau.' 'That,' Spurgeon replied, 'is not my difficulty, madam. My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob.'" (Newell)

e. Our greatest error in considering the choices of God is to think that God chooses for arbitrary reasons, as if He chooses in an "eeny-meeny-miny-moe" way. We may not be able to fathom God's reasons for choosing, and they are reasons He alone knows and answers to, but God's choices are not capricious. He has a plan and a reason.

3. (Rom 9:14-16) Does God's choosing one over another make God unrighteous?

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

a. Is there unrighteousness with God? Paul answers this question strongly: Certainly not! God clearly explains His right to give mercy to whomever He pleases in Exodus 33:19.

b. I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy: Remember what mercy is. Mercy is not getting what we do deserve. God is never less than fair with anyone, but fully reserves the right to be more than fair with individuals as He chooses.

- i. Jesus spoke of this right of God in the parable of the landowner in Matthew 20:1-16.
- ii. We are in a dangerous place when we regard God's mercy towards us as our right. If God is obliged to

show mercy, then it is not mercy - it is obligation. No one is ever unfair for not giving mercy.

- c. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy:** God's mercy is not given to us because of what we wish to do (him who wills), or because of what we actually do (him who runs), but simply out of His desire to show mercy.

4. (Rom 9:17-18) The example of Pharaoh.

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

- a. The Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up:** God allowed the Pharaoh of Moses' day to rise to power so that God could show the strength of His judgment against him, and thereby glorify Himself.

- b. Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens:** Sometimes God will glorify Himself through showing mercy; sometimes God will glorify Himself through a man's hardness.

- i. We should not think that God persuaded an unwilling, kind-hearted Pharaoh to be hard towards God and His people. In hardening the heart of Pharaoh, God simply allowed his heart to pursue its natural inclination.

- c. We know that Pharaoh did harden his own heart,** according to Exodus 7:13, 7:22, 8:15, 8:19, 8:32, 9:7, and 9:34. But "He does not so much as bother to indicate that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, an evidence of unbelief and rebellion, because he is emphasizing the freedom of God's action in all cases." (Harrison)

5. (Rom 9:19-21) Does the sovereign right of God to choose relieve man of responsibility?

You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault?

For who has resisted His will?" But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

a. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault?"

For who has resisted His will?" Paul imagines someone asking, "If it is all a matter of God's choice, then how can God find fault with me? How can anyone go against God's choice?"

b. Indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Paul replies by showing how disrespectful such a question is. If God says He chooses, and if God also says that we are responsible before Him, who are we to question Him?

c. Does not the potter have power over the clay: Does not God have the same right that any Creator has over his creation? Therefore, if God also declares that we have an eternal responsibility before Him, then it is so.

6. (Rom 9:22-24) Doesn't God have the right to glorify Himself as He sees fit?

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

a. What if God: Again, the same principle from God's dealing with Pharaoh is repeated. If God chooses to glorify Himself through letting people go their own way and letting them righteously receive His wrath so as to make His power known, who can oppose Him?

b. He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy: As well, if God desires to be more than fair with others, showing them His mercy, who can

oppose Him?

c. But also of the Gentiles: And if God wants to show mercy to the Gentiles as well as the Jews (of course, never being less than fair to either), who can oppose Him?

i. "The Jews were inclined to think that God could not make them anything other than vessels of honor. Paul rejects this view and points out that God does what he wills." (Morris)

d. When Paul says that there are vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, we should not think that God has prepared them so. Those vessels do an adequate job on their own.

7. (Rom 9:25-26) The prophet Hosea (in Hosea 2:23 and 1:10) declares God's right to choose, calling those who previously were not called His people.

As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved." And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God."

a. You are not My people: These passages from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 shows how merciful God is. God told the prophet Hosea to name one of his children Lo-Ammi, meaning "Not My People." Yet God also promised that this judgment would not last forever. One day Israel would be restored and once again be called sons of the living God.

8. (Rom 9:27-29) Isaiah (in Isaiah 10:23 and 1:9) declares God's right to choose a remnant among Israel for salvation.

Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth." And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed,

we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.”

- a. The remnant will be saved:** The passage quoted from Isaiah 10:23 speaks first to God's work in saving a remnant from the coming Assyrian destruction. The suffering of God's people at the hands of the Assyrians and others would make them feel as if they would certainly be destroyed. God assures them that this is not the case. He will always preserve His remnant.
- i. God has always dealt with a remnant. "It was stupid to think that, since the whole nation had not entered the blessing, the promise of God had failed. The promise had not been made to the whole nation and had never been intended to apply to the whole nation." (Morris)
- b. We would have become like Sodom:** Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed in judgment. This quotation from Isaiah 1:9 shows that as bad as Judah's state was because of their sin, it could have been worse. It was only by the mercy of God that they survived at all. Sodom and Gomorrah were both totally destroyed, with not even a very small remnant to carry on. Even in the midst of judgment, God showed His mercy to Judah.
- i. The merciful promise is clear: "But if only a remnant will survive, at least a remnant will survive, and constitute the hope of restoration." (Bruce)
- C. Why Israel is in its present condition from man's perspective:** Israel missed the Messiah because they refuse to come by faith.

1. (Rom 9:30-31) Analyzing the present situation of Israel and the Gentiles according to a human perspective.

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.

a. Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness: By all present appearance, the Gentiles found righteousness even though it did not seem that they really looked for it.

b. But Israel ... has not attained to the law of righteousness: By all present appearance, Israel seemed to work for the righteousness of God with everything it had, but did not find it.

c. What was the difference? Why did the unlikely Gentiles find righteousness, when the likely Jews did not? Because the Gentiles pursued the righteousness of faith, and the Jews pursued the law of righteousness. The Gentiles who were saved came to God through faith, receiving His righteousness. The Jews who seem to be cast off from God tried to justify themselves before God by performing works according to the law of righteousness.

2. (Rom 9:32-33) Paul emphasizes the reason why Israel seems cast off from God's goodness and righteousness: Because they did not seek it by faith.

Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

a. Because they did not seek it by faith: We might expect Paul to answer the question "Why?" again from God's perspective, and simply throw the matter back on the sovereign choosing of God. Instead, he places the responsibility with Israel: Because they did not seek it by faith ... they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

i. Paul has already shown in Romans that the only possible way to be saved is through faith, not the works of the law; and that this salvation comes only through the work of a crucified Savior - which was a stumbling block to Israel (1 Corinthians 1:22-23).



ISRAEL'S PRESENT REJECTION OF GOD

A. Israel's rejection of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

1. (Rom 10:1-3) Israel's refusal to submit to the righteousness of God.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

a. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel: Paul again feels compelled to relate his heart regarding his fellow Jews. Paul does not rejoice that they have stumbled at that stumbling stone(Romans 9:32).

i. Paul's heart's desire also translated into concrete action: prayer to God for Israel. Paul didn't just "care," he prayed.

b. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God: Paul will readily recognize that Israel has a zeal for God but he also sees that it is zeal not according to knowledge.

i. This is where so many religious people - even sincere Christians - go astray. They have plenty of zeal but little knowledge.

ii. Zeal for God, but not according to knowledge is a perfect description of Paul himself before his conversion. Saul of Tarsus was a notorious persecutor of Christians before Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-20).

iii. It's remarkable that Paul found something good to say about these Jewish people who persecuted him so mercilessly. "At least they have a zeal for God," Paul says.

c. Their lack of knowledge is reflected in the fact that they are ignorant of God's righteousness, and want to establish their own righteousness.

i. Paul has ably demonstrated in the first several chapters of Romans how futile this is. Plainly put, by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified. (Romans 3:20)

d. Seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God: Israel had a lack of knowledge. But that wasn't their only problem. They also had a moral problem: they have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

i. People cannot come to Jesus without the right information about the gospel but information alone is not enough to save anyone. There must be a radical submission to the righteousness of God, putting away our own righteousness.

e. Again, we cannot neglect the emphasis on personal responsibility. All Paul's teaching of God's election and right to sovereign choice has not diminished man's responsibility.

2. (Rom 10:4-8) The contrast between God's righteousness and our attempts at righteousness.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of

faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

a. Jesus is the end of the law for those who believe. The law ends for the believer in the sense that our obedience to the law is no longer the basis for our relationship with God. The law has not come to an end in the sense of no longer reflecting God's standard or no longer showing us our need for a Savior.

i. "Christ did not come to make the law milder, or to render it possible for our cracked and battered obedience to be accepted as a sort of compromise. The law is not compelled to lower its terms, as though it had originally asked too much; it is holy and just and good, and ought not to be altered in one jot or little, nor can it be. Our Lord gives the law all it requires, not a part, for that would be an admission that it might justly have been content with less at first." (Spurgeon)

b. The man who does those things shall live by them: The Law of Moses makes the path to righteousness through the law plain. If you want to live by the law (find life through the law), you must do the law - and do it completely and perfectly.

c. But the righteousness of faith is based on Jesus, and we don't have to "work" to get Jesus. It is not as if we have to ascend into heaven or descend into the abyss to gain Jesus. We believe and receive.

i. "Unbelief really puts a sad slur upon Christ. She talks about going up to heaven: but suppose it were needed that somebody should ascend to heaven, that would imply that Jesus had never come down from thence to reveal the Father. She talks of descending into the abyss, as if Christ had never come up from the dead. The fact is, all that can be done has been done. Why do

you want to do what is already done? All that can be felt has been felt; why do you want to feel it? 'It is finished,' said Christ, why do you strive to do it over again?" (Spurgeon)

- d. **But what does it say?** "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." Instead of having to go to great lengths to achieve righteousness by the law, we can immediately receive righteousness by faith, by trusting in the word of the gospel.

3. (Rom 10:9-13) How God's righteousness is gained by faith.

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

- a. **If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved:**

God's righteousness is not gained by works (as Paul made plain in Romans 10:4-8). Instead, we gain it by confessing and believing in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

- b. **Confess with your mouth: Confession has the idea of agreeing with. When we confess ... the Lord Jesus, we agree with what God said about Jesus,** and with what Jesus said about Himself. It means we recognize that Jesus is God, that He is the Messiah, and that His work on the cross is the only way of salvation for mankind.
 - i. Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus: We can never forget all that it meant to say that Jesus Christ is Lord.

"If a man called Jesus kurios he was ranking him with the Emperor and with God; he was giving him the supreme place in his life; he was pledging him implicit obedience and reverent worship." (Barclay).

- ii. Wuest, quoting Robertson on Jesus Christ is Lord: "No Jew would do this who had not really trusted Christ, for Kurios in the LXX is used of God. No Gentile would do it who had not ceased worshipping the emperor as Kurios. The word Kurios was and is the touchstone of faith."

c. You must also believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. Some wonder why Paul does not mention the cross or the crucifixion in this passage. But when Paul emphasizes the need to believe that God has raised him from the dead, it is not that we believe the resurrection as opposed to the cross, but as encompassing the work of Jesus on the cross.

d. Believe in your heart: Mere intellectual agreement with the facts of the cross and the resurrection is not enough. You must believe in your heart; and even that belief is not enough with accompanying action: confess with your mouth.

- i. "We believe everything which the Lord Jesus has taught, but we must go a step further, and trust him. It is not even enough to believe in him, as being the Son of God, and the anointed of the Lord; but we must believe on him ... The faith that saves is not believing certain truths, nor even believing that Jesus is a Savior; but it is resting on him, depending on him, lying with all your weight on Christ as the foundation of your hope. Believe that he can save you; believe that he will save you; at any rate leave the whole matter of your salvation with him in unquestioning confidence. Depend upon him without fear as to your present and eternal salvation. This is the faith which saves the soul." (Spurgeon)

e. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness,

and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation: These two together (belief and confession) result in righteousness and salvation. We should not ignore how scandalously simple this is (whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved) and what an affront this is to every attempt of the flesh to be justified, or any attempt to find salvation based on national or ethnic foundation.

i. Both Jew and Greek were quick to give some credit to national or ethnic origin, as if being saved were a matter of being born into the right family. But Paul makes it clear: There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

f. For the Scripture says: "Paul, in saying here, 'For the Scripture saith,' is referring, I think, to the general sense of Scripture, rather than to any one passage. There are several texts from which it may be gathered that believers shall not be put to shame." (Spurgeon).

g. All who call upon Him: Again, note the emphasis on human responsibility. From Romans 9 alone we might think that salvation is God's doing alone, but from Romans 10 we might think that salvation is man's doing alone - together we see the matter from each perspective.

4. (Rom 10:14-15) The necessity of the preaching of the gospel.

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

a. How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Paul rightly observes that it all goes back to the preaching of the gospel, and preachers must be sent - both by God and the Christian

community at large.

- b. How shall they hear without a preacher?** Conceivably, God could have chosen any means for the message of salvation to come, such as angelic messengers or directly working without a human preacher. Nevertheless God's "normal" way of bringing people to Jesus Christ is through the preaching of the gospel.
- c. No wonder those who preach the gospel of peace have beautiful feet - they partner with God for the salvation of men.** The feet speak of activity, motion, and progress, and those who are active and moving in the work of preaching the gospel have beautiful feet!
- d. Obviously, the salvation Isaiah prophesied about could not be salvation through works or the law.** To say "You can be right before God if you work hard enough" is not a gospel of peace, and that message does not bring glad tidings of good news.

B. The prophets foretold this rejection of the gospel by Israel.

1. (Rom 10:16-17) Isaiah foretold Israel's rejection of the gospel in Isaiah 53:10.

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- a. But they have not all obeyed the gospel:** If salvation is so simple, available to all who trust in the person and work of Jesus, then why does Israel seem to be cast off from God? Because many among them had not believed his report - because they have not trusted in God's Word through Isaiah and other messengers of the gospel, they are not saved.
- b. So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:** Saving faith comes through hearing by the word of God. Although Israel heard, they did not exercise saving faith in Christ - making them (and us) all the

more responsible.

- i. "Hearing is a reflection of first-century life. Paul does not raise the possibility of the message being read. While there were people who could read, the ordinary first-century citizen depended rather on being able to hear something." (Morris)

2. (Rom 10:18) Psalm 19:4 testifies to the fact that the word has gone forth, and Israel has heard it, making them more accountable.

But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

- a. **The sound has gone out to all the earth:** "This might seem an exaggeration: the gospel had not been carried throughout all the earth, not even to all the lands that were known to the inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world. Paul was well aware of that; at this very time he was planning the evangelization of Spain, a province where the name of Christ was not yet known (c.f. 15:18-24). But by now the gospel had been carried to most parts of the Mediterranean area where Jews were to be found; and that is all the argument requires." (Bruce).

- b. **"There is not a part of the promised land in which these glad tidings have not been preached;** and there is scarcely a place in the Roman empire in which the doctrine of Christ crucified has not been heard: if, therefore, the Jews have not believed, the fault is entirely their own; as God has amply furnished them with the means of faith of salvation." (Clarke).

3. (Rom 10:19) Deuteronomy 32:21 told Israel that God would use other nations to provoke them to jealousy, because the other nations were brought closer to God than Israel. Yet they ignored this word also, making them more accountable.

But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I

will move you to anger by a foolish nation.”

4. **(Rom 10:20) Isaiah 65:1 also told Israel that God would be found by those who did not seek Him;** this prediction of the gospel going out to the Gentiles and its fulfillment again makes Israel more accountable.

But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."

- a. **The testimony of these prophets help us to understand that we should not be so amazed that Israel,** for the most part, has rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ; this too was foretold.
5. **(Rom 10:21) Isaiah 65:2 tells God's assessment of disobedient, Messiah-rejecting Israel:** they are a disobedient and contrary people, and all the more so because of their great responsibility to God.

But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."



THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

A. Israel and the remnant of grace.

1. (1a) Has God cast away (rejected) His people Israel?

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!

a. Has God cast away His people? Paul's question makes sense as at this point in Romans. If Israel's rejection of the gospel was somehow both consistent with God's eternal plan (Romans 9:1-29) and Israel's own choosing (Romans 9:30-10:21), then does this mean that Israel's fate is settled, and there is no possibility of restoration?

b. Certainly not! Despite their present state, Israel is not permanently cast away. Now Paul will explain this answer.

2. (1b) Evidence that God has not cast away His people: Paul himself. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

a. I also am an Israelite: The fact that Paul has come to faith in Jesus as Messiah proves there are some Jews who have been chosen by God and who have embraced the gospel.

b. I also: Whenever we want evidence of God's work, we could and should look to our own life first. This is what Paul did and what we should do.

3. (Rom 11:2-5) The principle of a remnant.

God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

- a. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew at this present time there is a remnant:** Paul knows that as a whole Israel had rejected their Messiah. Yet a substantial remnant embraces the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God has often worked in Israel through a faithful remnant (as He did in the time of Elijah).
 - i. "It is just possible that Paul, likewise persecuted by his own countrymen, felt a special kinship with Elijah." (Harrison).
- b. Notice that Elijah prayed to God against Israel.** Things were so bad that Elijah prayed against his own people!
- c. Lord, they have killed Your prophets:** Elijah thought that God had cast off the nation and he was the only one left serving the Lord. But God showed him that there was in fact a substantial remnant - though it was only a remnant, it was actually there.
- d. At this present time there is a remnant:** We often think that God needs a lot of people to do a great work, but He often works through a small group, or through a group that starts out small. Though not many Jews in Paul's day embraced Jesus as Messiah, a remnant did and God will use that small group in a big way.
 - i. "It was not the number as much as the permanence of God's plan for Israel that mattered in the time of Elijah ... He put his trust in God's grace, not in numbers" (Morris)

4. (Rom 11:6-10) God's right to choose a remnant according to grace.

And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day." And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always."

- a. If by grace, then it is no longer of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace:** Paul left the previous verse noting that the remnant was chosen according to the election of grace. Now he reminds us what grace is, by definition: the free gift of God, not given with any eye to the performance or potential in the one receiving, but only given out of the kindness of the giver.
- b. If it is of works, it is no longer grace:** As principles, grace and works don't go together. If giving is of grace, it cannot be of works, and if it is of works, it cannot be of grace.
- c. The elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened:** Therefore, God's saving mercy has been extended not to Israel as a whole, but to the elect among Israel, who have received it - the rest are hardened by their rejection.
- d. The quotations from Isaiah 29 and Psalm 69 tell us that God can give a spirit of stupor and eyes that they should not see and He can say let their eyes be darkened as He pleases.** If God is pleased to enlighten only a remnant of Israel at the present time, He may do so as He pleases.
 - i. Morris calls a spirit of stupor "an attitude of deadness

towards spiritual things."

- ii. "The idea is that men are sitting feasting comfortably at their banquet; and their very sense of safety has become their ruin. They are so secure in the fancied safety that the enemy can come upon them unaware." (Barclay) The Jews were so secure in their idea of being the chosen people that the very idea had become the thing that ruined them.

B. God's plan in saving only a remnant at the present time.

1. (11a) Does Israel's stumbling as predicted by Psalm 69 mean that they have fallen away permanently? I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?

- a. **Stumbled ... fall:** As Paul presents it here, there is a difference between stumbling and falling. Israel had stumbled, but they would not fall - in the sense of being removed from God's purpose and plan. You can recover from a stumble, but if you fall you're down.

2. (11b-14) No, God had a specific purpose to fulfill in allowing Israel to stumble - so that salvation would come to the Gentiles.

Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.

- a. **Certainly not! Paul has shown that God is still working through a remnant of Israel today,** but wants to make it clear that the sinning majority of Israel is not lost forever.

- b. **Through their fall ... salvation has come to the Gentiles:** We should not forget that in many instances the gospel only went out to the Gentiles after the Jewish

people rejected it (Acts 13:46, 18:5-6, 28:25-28). In this sense, the rejection of the gospel by the Jews was riches for the Gentiles.

- i. It wasn't that the Jewish rejection of Jesus was Messiah caused Gentiles to be saved. It merely gave more opportunity for the gospel to go to the Gentiles, and many Gentiles took advantage of this opportunity.

c. If by any means I may provoke to jealousy: Yet, Paul's desire isn't only that these riches would be enjoyed by the Gentiles only, but that the Jews would be provoked to a good kind of jealousy, motivating them to receive some of the blessings the Gentiles enjoyed.

- i. "It is a matter for profound regret that just as Israel refused to accept this salvation when it was offered to them, so the Gentiles have all too often refused to make Israel envious. Instead of showing to God's ancient people the attractiveness of the Christian way Christians have characteristically treated the Jews with hatred, prejudice, persecution, malice, and all uncharitableness. Christians should not take this passage calmly." (Morris)

3. (Rom 11:15-21) To the Gentiles: yes, Jewish rejection of Jesus was made into a blessing for you; but consider how great a blessing their acceptance of Jesus will be.

For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do

not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

- a. **If the firstfruit is holy:** The first-fruit probably represents the first Christians, who were Jewish. Their conversion was something holy and good for the church; all the apostles and most of the human authors of Scripture were Jewish. If the conversion of this first-fruit was good for the Gentiles, how much better will it be when the full harvest is brought in!
 - i. Many commentators take the first-fruit here as the patriarchs, but it fits better to see it as the original core group of Christians.
 - b. **Some of the branches ... a wild olive tree:** With the picture of the tree and the branches, Paul reminds the Gentile Christians that it is only by God's grace that they can be grafted into the "tree" of God - the "root" of which is Israel.
 - i. "When an old olive tree had lost its vigor, it seems that one remedy in antiquity was to cut away the failing branches and graft in some wild olive shoots. The result was said to be the invigoration of the failing tree." (Morris)
 - ii. In the Talmud, it speaks of Ruth the Moabitess as a "godly shoot" engrafted into Israel. (Cited in Morris)
 - c. **Do not boast against the branches ... you do not support the root, but the root supports you:** Lest Gentiles think of themselves as superior to Jews, Paul also reminds them that the root supports the branches - not the other way around.
 - d. **Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith:** In addition, any Gentile standing in the "tree" of God is there by faith only, not by works or merits. If Gentiles are unbelieving, they will be "cut off" just as much as unbelieving Israel was.
4. **(Rom 11:22-24) Application of God's purpose in Israel's rejection that the Gentiles might be reached.**

Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

- a. Consider the goodness and severity of God:** Paul stresses the need to continue in His goodness; not in the sense of a salvation by works, but continuing in God's grace and goodness to us - a relationship of continual abiding.
- i. The idea of a continual abiding in the "tree" is also expressed in John 15:1-8.
 - ii. "The conditional clause in this verse, if you continue in His goodness, is a reminder that there is no security in the bond of the gospel apart from perseverance. There is no such thing as continuance in the favour of God in spite of apostasy; God's saving embrace and endurance are correlative." (Murray)
- b. God is able to graft them in again:** And, if Israel has been "cut off" because of their unbelief, they can be grafted in again if they do not continue in unbelief.
- i. "Evidently some Gentile believers were tempted to think that there was no future for Israel. She had rejected the gospel and it had now passed to the Gentiles; Israel was finished, rejected, cast off. God had chosen them instead. It is this kind of pride that Paul is opposing." (Morris)
- c. How much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?** If the Gentiles seemed to "graft" into God's "tree" easily, we know it won't be hard for God to graft the natural branches back into the tree. We can also assume that the natural branches will have the potential to bear much fruit.

C. God's plan for Israel includes their eventual restoration.

1. (Rom 11:25-27) The promise that all Israel will be saved.

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

a. You should not be wise in our own opinion. Christians must not be ignorant of this mystery.

b. Blindness in part has happened to Israel: Paul summarizes his point from Romans 11:11-24. God's purpose in allowing hardening in part to come upon Israel is so that the fullness of the Gentiles can come in.

i. In part has the idea of "temporary"; Israel's hardness is temporary. "One day the Jews will realize their blindness and folly. They'll accept Jesus Christ, and the glorious national restoration of these people will bring in the Kingdom Age." (Smith).

c. Until when that fullness of the Gentiles has come in, God will once again turn the attention of His plan of the ages specifically on Israel again, so that all Israel will be saved. God's plan of the ages does not set its attention on everyone equally through all ages.

d. All Israel will be saved: This all Israel is not spiritual Israel. It isn't "spiritual Israel" in , because that Israel is spiritually blind. Therefore, we shouldn't regard it as spiritual Israel in Romans 11:26.

i. There is a distinction between national or ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel. Paul makes this clear in Galatians 3:7 and other passages. Nevertheless, God still has a purpose and a plan for ethnic Israel, and

will bring salvation to them.

- ii. Another proof that this is not spiritual Israel is because Paul says this is a mystery - and it is no mystery that spiritual Israel will be saved.
 - iii. Harrison on all Israel: "It was the view of Calvin, for example, that the entire company of the redeemed, both Jew and Gentile, is intended. But Israel has not been used of Gentiles in these chapters, and it is doubtful that such is the case in any of Paul's writings."
 - iv. "It is impossible to entertain an exegesis which understands Israel here in a different sense from Israel in verse 25." (Bruce).
- e. Will be saved:** This states clearly for us that God is not finished with Israel as a nation or a distinct ethnic group. Though God has turned the focus of His saving mercies away from Israel on to the Gentiles, He will turn it back again.
- i. This simple passage refutes those who insist that God is forever done with Israel as Israel, and that the Church is the New Israel and inherits every promise ever made to national and ethnic Israel of the Old Testament.
 - ii. We are reminded of the enduring character of the promises made to national and ethnic Israel (and 17:7-8). God is not "finished" with Israel, and Israel is not "spiritualized" as the church.
 - iii. While we do see and rejoice in a continuity of God's work throughout all His people through all generations, we still see a distinction between Israel and the Church - a distinction that Paul is sensitive to here.
- f. All Israel will be saved:** This does not mean there will be a time when every last person of Jewish descent will be saved. Instead, this is a time when Israel as a whole will be a saved people, and when the nation as a whole (especially its leadership) embraces Jesus Christ as

Messiah.

- i. Even as the apostasy of Israel did not extend to every last Jew, so the salvation of Israel will not extend to every last Jew; Paul is speak of the "mass" of Jews when he says all Israel. "All Israel is a recurring expression in Jewish literature, where it need not mean 'every Jew without a single exception', but 'Israel as a whole.' " (Bruce)
- ii. And, when all Israel will be saved, they will be saved through embracing Jesus Christ as Messiah - as unlikely as this seems. They are not saved with some peculiar "Jewish" salvation.
- iii. The Bible indicates this is a necessary condition for the return of Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:39, Zechariah 12:10-11). Jesus will not return again until God turns the focus of His saving mercies on Israel again, and Israel responds to God through Jesus Christ.

g. The Deliverer will come out of Zion: The quotations from Isaiah show that God still has a redeeming work to accomplish with Israel, and that it will not be left undone.

2. (Rom 11:28-29) God's love and calling for Israel still endures.

Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

a. Concerning the gospel ... concerning the election: Even though it seemed that in Paul's generation the Jews were enemies of God and were against the person and work of Jesus, they are still beloved - if for no other reason, then for the sake of the fathers (the patriarchs of the Old Testament).

- i. Of course, they are loved for more than the sake of the fathers, but that by itself would be enough.

b. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable: This is

another reason why God hasn't given up on national and ethnic Israel. This principle, stated by Paul, comforts us far beyond its direct relevance to Israel. It means that God will not give up on us, and He leaves the path to restoration open.

3. (Rom 11:30-32) Paul cautions the Gentile Christians to remember where they came from and where God has promised to take the Jewish people.

For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

- a. **You were once disobedient to God:** The Gentile Christians came from disobedience; yet God showed them mercy, in part through the disobedience of Israel.
 - b. **Obtained mercy through their disobedience:** If God could use the disobedience of Israel for the good of Gentiles, He could also use the mercy shown to Gentiles for the mercy of Israel.
 - c. **God has committed them all to disobedience:** The idea is that God has shut up both Jew and Gentile into custody as lawbreakers. God offers mercy to these prisoners, based on the person and work of Jesus.
- 4. (Rom 11:33-36) Praise to God for His plan and the progress of the plan.**

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

- a. **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! As Paul considers God's great plan**

of the ages, he breaks into spontaneous praise. Paul realizes that God's ways are past finding out, and God's wisdom and knowledge is beyond him.

- i. "The Romans dedicated a certain lake, the depth whereof they knew not, to Victory; so should we admire the unsearchable counsels of God." (Trapp).
- ii. Who would have planned the whole scenario with Israel, the Gentiles and the Church as God has planned it? Yet, we can see the great wisdom and compassion in His plan.
- iii. "It is strange that, with such a scripture as this before their eyes, men should sit down coolly and positively write about counsels and decrees of God formed from all eternity, of which they speak with as much confidence and decision as if they had formed a part of the council of the Most High, and had been with him in the beginning of his ways!" (Clarke).

b. For who has known the mind of the LORD? The quotations from Isaiah 40:13 and Job 41:11 emphasize both God's wisdom and sovereign conduct; no one can make God their debtor.

- i. Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? You can try all you want - but you will never make God a debtor to you. You can't out-give God. He will never need to repay a debt to anyone.

c. Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things: "All these words are monosyllables. A child just learning to read could easily spell them out. But who shall exhaust their meaning?" (Meyer).

- i. It is all of Him: This plan came from God. It wasn't man's idea. We didn't say, "I've offended God and have to find a way back to Him. Let's work on a plan to come back to God." In our spiritual indifference and death we didn't care about a plan, and even if we did care we aren't smart enough or wise enough to make one. It is all of Him.
- ii. It is all through Him: Even if we had the plan, we



LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. The foundation for Christian living.

J.B. Phillips has an outstanding and memorable translation of Romans 12:1-2:

With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give Him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the Plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.

1. (Rom 12:1) The living sacrifice.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

- a. I beseech you:** This reminds us that Paul appeals to our will. God calls us to make a choice about the way that we live for Him.
- b. Therefore brethren:** It is Paul's pattern to begin a letter with a strong doctrinal section and follow with exhortations to Christian living. Paul begs Christians to live a certain way in light of what God did for them.
 - i. "When he uses this pattern Paul is saying that the Christian life is dependent on the great Christian

doctrines." (Morris).

c. By the mercies of God: reminds us that we do this because of the mercy shown to us by God (described well in Romans 1-11), and that we are only able to offer ourselves to God as He works His mercy in us. God commanded us to do this, and He makes it possible for us to do it.

- i. "Whereas the heathen are prone to sacrifice in order to obtain mercy, biblical faith teaches that the divine mercy provides the basis of sacrifice as the fitting response." (Harrison).
- ii. Think of all the mercies of God Paul has explained to us thus far:
 - Justification
 - Adoption in Jesus and identification with Christ
 - Set under grace not law
 - The gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit
 - Help in all affliction
 - Standing in God's election
 - The certainty of coming glory
 - The confidence of no separation from the love of God
 - Total confidence in God's continued faithfulness
- iii. In light of all this mercy - past, present, and future - Paul begs us to present your bodies a living sacrifice. "We must believe that these Divine mercies have persuasive powers over our wills." (Newell)

d. Present your bodies: Connected with the idea of a living sacrifice, this calls to mind priestly service. Spiritually speaking, our bodies are brought to God's altar.

- i. It is best to see the body here as a reference to our entire being. Whatever we say about our spirit, soul, flesh and mind, we know that they each live in our bodies. When we give the body to God, the soul and spirit go with it. Present your bodies means that God wants you, not just your work. You may do all kinds of work for God, but never give Him yourself.
- ii. The previous appeal to the will (I beseech you) means that the will is to be the master over the body. The thinking of our age says that our body must tell the will what to do; but the Bible says that our will must bring

the body as a living sacrifice to God. The body is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. Keeping it at God's altar as a living sacrifice keeps the body where it should be.

- iii. A Greek would never think of presenting his body to God. They thought that the body was so unspiritual that God was unconcerned about it. Paul shows here that God is concerned about our bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:20 reminds us that God has bought our bodies with a price.

e. A living sacrifice: First century people, both Jews and pagans, knew first-hand what sacrifice was all about. To beg that they make themselves a living sacrifice was a striking image.

- The sacrifice is living because it is brought alive to the altar
- The sacrifice is living because it stays alive at the altar; it is ongoing

f. Holy, acceptable to God: When we offer our body, God intends it to be a holy and acceptable sacrifice. The standard for sacrifices made to God under the New Covenant are not any less than the standard under the Old Covenant.

- i. In the Old Testament, sacrifice had to be holy and acceptable to God
 - He shall bring a male without blemish (Leviticus 1:10)
 - But if there is a defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.
 - An offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. (Leviticus 1:9).
- ii. The idea of a sweet aroma to the LORD is almost always linked to the idea of an offering made by fire. There is a "burning" in this matter of a living sacrifice. It also shows that Paul has in mind the burnt offering, in which the entire sacrifice was given to the Lord. In some sacrifices, the one offering the sacrifice and the priest shared in the some of the meat; but never in the burnt offering.
- iii. The holiness we bring to the altar is a decision for holiness, and yielding to the work of holiness in our life.

As we present our bodies a living sacrifice, God makes our life holy by burning away impurities

g. Reasonable service: The ancient Greek word for reasonable (logikos) can also be translated "of the word" (as it is in 1 Peter 2:2). Reasonable service is a life of worship according to God's Word.

- i. The sacrifice of an animal was reasonable service, but only for the one bringing the sacrifice - not for the sacrifice itself. Under the New Covenant we have far greater mercies, so it is reasonable to offer a far greater sacrifice.

2. (Rom 12:2) Resisting conformity to the world and embracing the transformation that comes in Jesus Christ.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

a. Do not be conformed to this world: warns us that the "world system" - the popular culture and manner of thinking that is in rebellion against God - will try to conform us to its ungodly pattern, and that process must be resisted.

b. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind: This is the opposite of being conformed to this world. The battle ground between conforming to the world and being transformed is within the mind of the believer. Christians must think differently.

- i. "I don't want to be conformed to this world. I want to be transformed. How do I do it?" By the renewing of your mind. The problem with many Christians is they live based on feeling, or they are only concerned about doing.
- ii. The life based on feeling says, "How do I feel today? How do I feel about my job? How do I feel about my wife? How do I feel about worship? How do I feel about the preacher?" This life by feeling will never know the transforming power of God, because it ignores the renewing of the mind.
- iii. The life based on doing says, "Don't give me your

theology. Just tell me what to do. Give me the four points for this and the seven keys for that." This life of doing will never know the transforming power of God, because it ignores the renewing of the mind.

- iv. God is never against feeling and doing. He is a God of powerful and passionate feeling, and He commands us to be doers. Yet feelings and doing are completely insufficient foundations for the Christian life. The first questions cannot be "How do I feel?" or "What do I do?" Rather, it must be "What is true here? What does God's Word say?"

c. Transformed: This is the ancient Greek word *metamorphoo* - describing a metamorphosis. The same word is used to describe Jesus in His transfiguration (Mark 9:2-3). This is a glorious transformation!

- i. The only other place Paul uses this word for transformed is in 2 Corinthians 3:18: But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. For Paul, this transformation and renewing of our minds takes place as we behold the face of God, spending time in His glory.

d. Prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God: As we are transformed on the inside, the proof is evident on the outside, as others can see what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is through our life.

- i. Paul here explains how to live out the will of God:

- Keep in mind the rich mercy of God to you - past, present, and future (by the mercies of God)
- As an act of intelligent worship, decide to yield your entire self to Him (present your bodies a living sacrifice).
- Resist conformity to the thoughts and actions of this world (do not be conformed).
- By focus on God's Word and fellowship with Him, be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

- ii. Then, your life will be in the will of God. Your life will prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- iii. You may know what the good and acceptable and

perfect will of God is, but you can't prove it in your life apart from the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

B. Living out the spiritual gifts God has given.

1. (Rom 12:3) A warning to live in humility.

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

a. To everyone among you: Paul will soon speak about how we should exercise spiritual gifts in the body of Christ; but a preface warning about humility is in order, given the inordinate pride that often arises from those who regard themselves as spiritually gifted.

i. We should remember that spiritual giftedness does not equal spiritual maturity; just because a person has substantial spiritual gifts does not mean that they are necessarily spiritually mature or a worthy example to imitate.

b. Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: Paul does not advise any kind of masochistic attitude, but rather he tells us to see the truth about ourselves. When we see ourselves as we really are, it is impossible to be given over to pride.

c. As God has dealt to each one a measure of faith: is probably that we should see even our saving faith as a gift from God, and that we have no basis for pride or a superior opinion of ourselves.

2. (Rom 12:4-5) Unity and diversity in the body of Christ.

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

a. Many members in one body: The church is a unified whole (one body), yet we are distinct within that one body (individually members). In the body of Christ there is unity but not uniformity.

b. We err when we neglect either aspect; unity should never

be promoted at the expense of individuality, and individuality should never diminish the church's essential unity in Christ; He is our common ground, we are one body in Christ.

3. (Rom 12:6-8) An exhortation to use (and how to use) the gifts God has granted to the individual members of the church.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

a. Having then gifts: The difference and distribution of gifts is all due to the grace that is given to us. Spiritual gifts are not given on the basis of merit, but because God chooses to give them.

- i. This idea is related in the ancient Greek word for "spiritual gifts": *charismata*, which means a gift of grace. This term was apparently coined by Paul to emphasize that the giving of these spiritual gifts was all of grace.
- ii. Spiritual gifts are given at the discretion of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says, But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.
- iii. Knowing this should be an insurmountable barrier to pride in the exercise spiritual gifts. However man, in the depravity of his heart, finds a way to be proud about spiritual gifts and insists on exalting men for how God has gifted them.

b. If prophecy: Prophecy must be practiced in proportion to our faith. God may give us something to say to an individual or church body that stretches our faith. If we can't prophecy in faith and trust that God has really spoken to us, we shouldn't do it at all.

- i. We are reminded that prophecy, in the Biblical understanding, isn't necessarily "fore-telling" in a strictly predictive sense. It is more accurately "forth-

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- telling" the heart and mind of God, which may or may not include a predictive aspect.
- ii. This warns us against flippant, "stream of consciousness" prophecy that has no difficulty saying, "Thus says the Lord" at the drop of a hat.
 - iii. In proportion to our faith actually has the before faith. Paul may be cautioning that prophecy must be according to the faith, in accord with the accepted body of doctrine among believers.
 - iv. Some take the proportion of faith to be the proportion of the faith of the audience of the prophecy; this has truth also.
 - v. Prophecy does not have to be practiced in an ostentatious, "heavy" manner, but it does need to be taken seriously by those who prophesy if it is ever to be taken seriously by those who hear.
- c. Ministry:** has in view the broader picture of simply serving in practical ways. Paul sees this as important ministry from the Holy Spirit as well.
- d. Teaching:** has in mind instruction, while exhortation encourages people to practice what they have been taught; both are necessary for a healthy Christian life.
- i. Those who are taught but not exhorted become "fat sheep" that only take in and never live the Christian life. Those who are exhorted but not taught become excited and active, but have no depth or understanding to what they do and will burn out quickly or work in wrong ways.
- e. He who gives:** refers to someone who is a channel through whom God provides resources for His body. This is an important spiritual gift that must be exercised with liberality. When someone who is called and gifted to be a giver stops giving liberally, they will often see their resources dry up - having forgotten why God has blessed them.
- f. He who leads must show diligence:** It is easy for leaders to become discouraged and feel like giving up, but they must persevere if they will please God by their leadership.
- g. He who shows mercy must have cheerfulness:** It can be
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hard enough to show mercy, but even harder to be cheerful about it. This reminds us that the gift of showing mercy is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit.

C. A series of brief instructions on living like a Christian with others. This section shows one thing clearly:

Paul knew the teaching of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount.

1. (Rom 12:9-13) Relating to those in the Christian family.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

a. Let love be without hypocrisy: Of course, love with hypocrisy isn't real love at all; but much of what masquerades as "love" in the Christian community is laced with hypocrisy, and must be demonstrated against.

b. Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good: In some ways, it is often easier for us to either abhor what is evil or cling to what is good rather than doing both. The godly person knows how to practice both.

c. Be kindly affectionate to one another: This is a command, that Christians should not have a cold, stand-off attitude. In honor giving preference to one another shows that the displays of affection are genuine.

i. We should see in this, as much as anything, a call to simple good manners among Christians.

d. Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord: If we are called to warm relations and good manners, we also know that we are called to hard work. The church is no place for laziness.

i. Fervent in spirit could be translated, "with respect to the spirit, boiling."

e. Rejoicing in hope: The call to hope usually has in mind our ultimate reward with Jesus. Paul says we serve God

rejoicing in hope, not rejoicing in results. This shows how we are commanded to do all these things with an eye towards heaven. This how we fulfill the command for hope, patience and steadfast character described here.

f. Patient in tribulation: Difficult times do not excuse us when we abandon hope or patience or continuing steadfastly in prayer. Trials do not excuse a lack of love in the body of Christ or a lack of willingness to do His work.

i. Patience "denotes not a passive putting up with things, but an active, steadfast endurance." Tribulation "denotes not some minor pinprick, but deep and serious trouble." (Morris)

g. Distributing to the needs of the saints: Our care and concern will demonstrate itself in practical deeds done for others, either going to them or inviting them to come to us (given to hospitality)

i. The ancient Greek word for hospitality is literally translated "love for strangers." In addition, "given" is a strong word, sometimes translated "persecute" (as in Romans 12:14). The idea is to "pursue" people you don't know with hospitality. This is love in action, not just feelings.

2. (Rom 12:14) Relating to those outside of the Christian family. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

a. Bless those who persecute you: We are not to have a hateful attitude towards anyone, not even towards those who persecute us.

b. Jesus spoke of this same heart in Matthew 5:46: For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? The surpassing greatness of the love of Jesus in us is shown in that it can be extended to our enemies.

c. Who persecute you: Of course, not all persecution comes from outside the church. Jesus told us the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. (John 16:2)

3. (Rom 12:15-21) How to get along with people both inside

and outside the church.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- a. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep:** This is how we can fulfill the command to be of the same mind toward one another. It is a simple command to be considerate of the feelings of others instead of waiting for them to be considerate of your feelings.
- b. Paul also cautions us to have a humble mind-set.** In refusing to set our mind on high things and in associating with the humble, we simply imitate Jesus. Do not be wise in your own opinion reminds us of how far we still have to go in actually being like Jesus.
- c. Repay no one evil for evil:** recalls Jesus' command in Matthew 5:38-45. We are to love our enemies and treat well those who treat us badly.
- d. Have regard for good things:** in the sight of all men is a way to live out the idea of praising what is good. People should be able to see what is good and what is not based on our conduct.
- e. Live peaceably with all men:** reminds us that though we are in contrast to the world, we do not seek out contention. If it is possible, we will be at peace with all men.
 - i. "If it be possible indicates that it may not always be possible." (Murray)
- f. Do not avenge yourselves:** The one who trusts in God will not think it necessary to avenge themselves. They will leave

the issue of vengeance to God, and give place to wrath - giving no place to their own wrath, and a wide place to God's wrath.

g. With this mind-set, we will do good to our enemies, looking for the most practical ways we can help them.

This is the way we are not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- i. Is the heaping coals of fire on his head something good in the eyes of our enemy or is it something bad? It most likely refers to a "burning conviction" that our kindness places on our enemy. Or, some think it refers to the practice of lending coals from a fire to help a neighbor start their own - an act of kindness that would be appreciated.
- ii. Nevertheless, we see that we can destroy our enemy by making him our friend.



A CHRISTIAN'S OBLIGATION TO GOVERNMENT

A. The Christian and Government.

(Rom 13:1-2) Government's legitimate authority and the Christian's response.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

- a. Subject to the governing authorities:** The connection between Romans 12 and Romans 13 is clear. If the Christian is not to seek personal vengeance, it does not take away the government's authority to punish wrongdoers.
- b. Every soul certainly includes Christians.** Paul simply says that we should be subject to the governing authorities. This was in contrast to groups of zealous Jews in that day who recognized no king but God and paid taxes to no one but God.
- c. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God:** We subject ourselves to governing authorities because they are appointed by God and serve a purpose in His plan.

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- i. No authority except from God: God appoints a nation's leaders, but not always to bless the people. Sometimes it is to judge the people or to ripen the nation for judgment.
 - ii. We remember that Paul wrote this during the reign of the Roman Empire. It was no democracy, and no special friend to Christians - yet he still saw their legitimate authority.
 - iii. "Remember your Savior suffered under Pontius Pilate, one of the worst Roman governors Judea ever had; and Paul under Nero, the worst Roman Emperor. And neither our Lord nor His Apostle denied or reviled the 'authority!'" (Newell)
 - d. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God: Since governments have authority from God, we are bound to obey them - unless, of course, they order us to do something in contradiction to God's law. Then, we are commanded to obey God before man (as in Acts 4:19).
 - e. Those who resist will bring judgment on themselves:** God uses governing authorities as a check upon man's sinful desires and tendencies. Government can be an effective tool in resisting the effects of man's fallenness.
- 2. (Rom 13:3-4) The job of government: to punish and deter evildoers.**

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

- a. Do what is good, and you will have praise:** Paul's idea is that Christians should be the best citizens of all. Even though they are loyal to God before they are loyal to the state Christians are good citizens because they are honest, give no trouble to the state, pay their taxes, and -

most importantly - pray for the state and the rulers.

b. He is God's minister: Paul describes government officials as God's minister. They have a ministry in the plan and administration of God, just as much as church leaders do.

- i. If the state's rulers are God's minister (servant), they should remember that they are only servants, and not gods themselves.

c. An avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil: It is through the just punishment of evil that government serves its function in God's plan of holding man's sinful tendencies in check. When a government fails to do this consistently, it opens itself up to God's judgment and correction.

d. He does not bear the sword in vain: The sword is a reference to capital punishment. In the Roman Empire, criminals were typically executed by beheading with a sword (crucifixion was reserved for the worst criminals of the lowest classes). Paul, speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has no doubt that the state has the legitimate authority to execute criminals.

3. (Rom 13:5-7) The Christian's responsibility towards government.

Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

a. Therefore you must be subject: We must be subject to government; not only because we fear punishment, but because we know it is right before God to do so.

- i. For conscience sake: Christian obedience to the state is never blind - it obeys with the eyes of conscience wide open.

b. You also pay taxes ... Render therefore to all their due:

We are also to pay the taxes due from us, because there is a sense in which we support God's work when we do so.

- i. By implication, Romans 13:6 also says that the taxes collected are to be used by government to get the job done of restraining evil and keeping an orderly society - not to enrich the government officials themselves.

c. Taxes ... customs ... fear ... honor: We are to give to the state the money, honor, and proper reverence which are due to the state, all the while reserving our right to give to God that which is due to God alone. (Matthew 22:21)

d. In light of this, is rebellion against government ever justified? If a citizen has a choice between two governments, it is right to choose and to promote the one that is most legitimate in God's eyes - the one which will best fulfill God's purpose for governments.

- i. As well, in a democracy, we must understand that there is a sense in which we are the government, and should not hesitate to help "govern" our democracy through our participation in the democratic process.

B. The Christian's obligation to his neighbors.

1. (Rom 13:8-10) The obligation to love.

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

a. Owe no one anything except to love one another: On a personal level, the only "debt" we are to carry is the "debt" to love one another - this is a perpetual obligation we carry both before God and each other.

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- i. Some take this as a command to never borrow, but Jesus permitted borrowing in passages like Matthew 5:42. That isn't the sense of what Paul is saying here, though the Scriptures do remind us of the danger and obligations of borrowing (Proverbs 22:7).
 - ii. "We may pay our taxes and be quit. We may give respect and honor where they are due and have no further obligation. But we can never say, 'I have done all the loving I need to do.' Love then is a permanent obligation, a debt impossible to discharge." (Morris)

b. You shall love your neighbor as yourself: Paul echoes Jesus' words as recorded in Matthew 22:36-40. This is one of the two commands upon which hang all the Law and the Prophets.

- i. Love your neighbor means to love the people you actually meet with and deal with every day. It is easy for us to love in the theoretical and the abstract, but God demands that we love real people.
- ii. "No man can compass the ends of life by drawing a little line around himself upon the ground. No man can fulfill his calling as a Christian by seeking the welfare of his wife and family only, for these are only a sort of greater self." (Spurgeon)

c. Love is the fulfillment of the law: It is easy to do all the right religious "things" but to neglect love. Our love is the true measure of our obedience to God.

2. (Rom 13:11-14) The urgency to love and walk right with God.

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

a. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: Because we know the danger of the times and we anticipate the soon return of Jesus, we should be all the more energetic and committed to a right walk with God instead of a sleep-walk with God.

i. How important it is to awake out of sleep! We can do many Christian things and essentially be asleep towards God. What a difference it makes when we are awake!

- We can speak when we are awake
- We can hear when we are awake
- We can walk when we are awake
- We can sing when we are awake
- We can think when we are awake

b. Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light: The illustration is from taking off and putting on clothes. When you get dressed every day, you dress appropriately to who you are and what you plan to do. Therefore, everyday, put on the Lord Jesus Christ!

i. We must cast off before we can put on. "The rags of sin must come off if we put on the robe of Christ. There must be a taking away of the love of sin, there must be a renouncing of the practices and habits of sin, or else a man cannot be a, Christian. It will be an idle attempt to try and wear religion as a sort of celestial overall over the top of old sins." (Spurgeon).

c. The works of darkness are characterized as revelry and drunkenness, licentiousness and lewdness, strife and envy. These are not appropriate for Christians who have come out of the night into God's light.

i. The idea behind the word for licentiousness is "the desire for a forbidden bed." It describes the person who sets no value on sexual purity and fidelity.

ii. Lewdness has the idea of a man who is lost to shame. They no longer care what people think and flaunt their sin openly, even proudly.

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- d. The armor of light is related to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.** When we put on Christ, we put on all the armor of God and are equipped to both defend and attack.
- i. "Putting on Christ is a strong and vivid metaphor. It means more than put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, signifying rather Let Jesus Christ Himself be the armor that you wear." (Morris)
- e. Yet, we are still called to make no provision for the flesh.** We have a work to do in walking properly, as in the day - it isn't as if Jesus does it for us as we sit back; instead, He does it through us as we willingly and actively partner with Him.
- f. God used this passage to show Augustine, the great theologian of the early church,** that he really could live the Christian life as empowered by the Holy Spirit - he just had to do it. And so do we.



HELPING A WEAKER BROTHER

A. Don't Judge Each Other in Doubtful Things.

1. (Rom 14:1-2) Receiving the weaker brother.

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

a. Receive (accept) the one who is weak in the faith: but we are not to receive them for the sake of carrying on a debate with them regarding doubtful things.

i. Receive the one who is weak in the faith: These are words to take seriously. Paul warns us to not make spiritual maturity a requirement for fellowship. We should distinguish between someone who is weak and someone who is rebellious.

ii. There are many reasons why a Christian might be weak.

- They may be a babe in Christ (babies are weak)
- They may be sick or diseased (by legalism)
- They may be malnourished (by lack of good teaching)
- They may lack exercise (needing exhortation)

b. Eats only vegetables: As an example of a doubtful thing, Paul looks at those who refuse to eat meat for a spiritual reason. Perhaps they refused it because they feared it was meat sacrificed to a pagan god (as in 1 Corinthians 8). Perhaps they refused the meat because it wasn't

kosher, and they stuck to Jewish dietary regulations and traditions.

- i. Because some Christian saw nothing wrong in this meat and others saw much wrong in it, this was a burning issue among believers in Paul's day. While the issue of not eating meat for spiritual reasons is no longer directly relevant to most Christians today, there are plenty of issues where some believers believe one way and others believe differently.

c. He who is weak eats only vegetables: In Paul's mind, the weak brother is the stricter one. It wasn't that they were weaker in their Christian life because of what they ate or didn't eat, but they were weaker because of their legalistic attitudes and lack of love towards others.

- i. Undoubtedly these weak ones did not see themselves as weaker. It's likely they thought they were the strong ones, and the meat-eaters were the weak ones. Legalism has a way of making us think that we are strong and those who don't keep the rules the way we do are weak.

2. (Rom 14:3-4) Judging our brother is inappropriate because we are not their masters.

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

a. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat: It would be easy for a Christian who felt free to eat meat to despise those who did not feel free as hopeless legalists. It would also be easy for those who did not eat such meat to judge those who did - but God has received those Christians who eat meat.

b. Who are you to judge another's servant? Paul reminds us that it isn't our place to pass judgment on any fellow Christian. They stand or fall before their own Master,

God - and God is able to make those "meat eaters" stand.

- i. There is a lot of useless, harmful division among Christians over silly, bigoted things. Paul isn't telling these Christians to erase their differences; he tells them to rise above them as Christian brothers and sisters.

3. (Rom 14:5-6) Judging our brother is inappropriate because these are matters of conscience.

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

- a. **One person esteems one day above another;** another esteems every day alike: By bringing in the aspect of observing certain days, Paul lets us know that he is talking more about principles than specific issues. What he says has application to more than just eating meat.
- b. **Let each be fully convinced in his own mind:** In such issues, Paul is willing to leave it up to the conscience of the individual. But whatever we do, we must be able to do it to the Lord, not using "conscience" as an excuse for obviously sinful behavior.

4. (Rom 14:7-9) We live and die to the Lord.

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

- a. **For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself:** We must understand that from beginning to end our life is connected to other lives. Paul reminds the Roman Christians that "No man is an island."

b. Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's: From beginning to end, our lives are to be dedicated to God. Therefore, whatever we do, we do it to the Lord - because Jesus is our Lord (that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living).

5. (Rom 14:10-12) Judging our brother is inappropriate because we will all face judgment before Jesus.

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

a. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? Probably, the use of both judge and show contempt is meant to have application to both the "strict" and the "free" individuals. In either case, the attitude is wrong because we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

i. The strict Christian found it easy to judge his brother, writing him off as an unspiritual meat-eater-compromiser. The free Christian found it easy to show contempt against his brother, regarding him as a uptight-legalistic-goody-good. Essentially, Paul's answer is "Stop worrying about your brother. You have enough to answer for before Jesus."

ii. The judgment seat of Christ: "This is the bema seat, equivalent to the judge's seat in the Olympic Games. After each game, the winners came before the judge's seat to receive crowns for first, second and third places. Likewise, the Christian's works will be tested by fire, and he'll be rewarded for those which remain ... The judgment seat of Christ is only concerned with a Christian's rewards and position in the kingdom, not with his salvation." (Smith)

b. Every knee shall bow: The quotation from Isaiah 45:23 emphasizes the fact that all will have to appear before

God in humility, and give account of himself before God. If this is the case, we should let God deal with our brother.

- 6. (Rom 14:13) Summary:** don't make it an issue of judging, but don't use your liberty to stumble another brother.

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

- a. Let us not judge one another:** In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus helped us to understand what this means - it means judging others according to a standard that we would not want to have applied to our self.

i. This does not take away the need and the responsibility for admonishment (Romans 15:14) or rebuke (2 Timothy 4:2). When we admonish or rebuke, we do it over clear Scriptural principles, not over doubtful things. We may offer advice to others about doubtful things, but should never judge them.

- b. Not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way:** We might stumble or cause our brother to fall in two ways. We can discourage or beat them down through our legalism against them, or we can do it by enticing them to sin through an unwise use of our liberty.

B. Don't stumble each other over doubtful things.

- 1. (Rom 14:14-15) Destroying a brother makes a privilege wrong.**

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

- a. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself:** Paul knew that there was

nothing intrinsically unclean about meat that was not kosher or sacrificed to an idol. Yet there was nothing that could justify the destruction of a Christian brother over food.

i. Trapp on I know and am convinced: "Many, on the contrary, are persuaded before they know; and such will not be persuaded to know."

b. The issue now is not my personal liberty; it is walking in love towards a brother that Jesus loves and died for.

c. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died: If Jesus was willing to give up His life for the sake of that brother, I can certainly give up my steak dinner!

2. (Rom 14:16-18) Pursuing the higher call of the Kingdom of God.

Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

a. Do not let your good be spoken of as evil: Our liberty in Jesus and freedom from the law is good, but not if we use it to destroy another brother in Christ. If we do that, then it could rightly be spoken of as evil.

b. Righteousness is not determined by food and drink: If we place food and drink before righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, then we are hopelessly out of touch with God's priorities and His heart.

c. Serving God with a heart for His righteousness and peace and joy is the kind of service that is acceptable in His sight, and will be approved by men.

3. Use your liberty to build each other up, not to tear each other down.

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things

indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

- a. **Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food:** If eating or drinking something will stumble another brother, then we are not free to do so. Even if we have the personal liberty, we do not have the liberty to stumble, offend, or weaken a brother.
- b. **All things indeed are pure:** Paul will concede the point that there is nothing impure in the food itself; but he likewise insists that there is nothing pure in causing a brother to stumble.
- c. **Nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak:** However, we shouldn't think that Paul would permit this kind of heart to cater to someone's legalism. Paul speaks about the stumbling of a sincere heart, not catering to the whims of someone's legalism.
 - i. For example, when some Christians from a Jewish background were offended that Gentile believers were not circumcised, Paul didn't cater to their legalistic demands.

4. (Rom 14:22-23) The concluding principle of faith.

Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

- a. **Do you have faith?** If you have [strong] faith, and feel liberty to partake of certain things, praise God! But have your strong faith before God, not before a brother who will stumble.
- b. **Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves:** Not every Christian knows this happiness. There are things God may challenge us to give up, but we

go on approving them in our life - thus we condemn ourselves. It may not be that they thing itself is clearly good or bad, but it is enough that God has spoken to us about this matter.

- i. Each of us must ask: "God what is there in my life hindering a closer walk with You? I want to know the happiness that comes from not condemning myself by what I approve in my life." This takes faith, because we often cling to hindering things because we think they make us happy. Real happiness is found being closer and closer to Jesus, and by not being condemned by what we approve.

c. Whatever is not from faith is sin: Paul concludes with another principle by which we can judge "gray areas" - if we can't do it in faith, then it is sin.

- i. This is a wonderful check on our tendency to justify ourselves in the things we permit. If we are troubled by something, it likely isn't of faith and likely is sin for us.



LIVING TO BLESS YOUR BROTHER

A. Being filled in the Christian life.

1. (Rom 15:1-2) Filled with care and concern for others.

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

a. We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves: If you consider yourself strong in comparison to your brother, use your strength to serve your brothers in Christ - instead of using your "strength" just to please yourself.

- i. Bear with: The idea isn't really bearing with, but bearing up the weaker brother - supporting him with your superior strength.
- ii. This goes against the whole tenor of our times, which counsels people to "look out for number 1" and despises those who live lives of real sacrifice for the sake of others. Yet, undeniably Paul points the way to true happiness and fulfillment in life - get your eyes off of yourself, start building up others and you will find yourself built up.

b. Let each of us please his neighbor: It is a simple, yet challenging call to simply put our neighbor first. Paul

later wrote much the same thing in Philippians 2:3-4: Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- i. This does not mean that the church is ruled by the whims of the weak. "A genuine concern for the weak will mean an attempt to make them strong by leading them out of their irrational scruples so that they, too, can be strong." (Morris)

c. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good: This shows that Paul does not mean being a "man-pleaser." Such a person may want to please his neighbor, but not for his good.

d. Leading to edification: All too often, Christians find it easier to tear each other down instead of building each other up; this is a classic strategy of Satan against the church that must be resisted.

2. (Rom 15:3-4) Filled with the example of Jesus, who always put others first.

For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

a. For even Christ did not please Himself: Jesus is the ultimate example of one who did not please Himself, but put others first. Paul's classic development of this idea is in Philippians 2:5-11.

b. As it is written: As Jesus took abuse and suffered wrong for God's glory, He fulfilled what was written in God's word. Jesus showed by example that for the most part we are entirely too quick to vindicate ourselves, instead of letting God vindicate us. Jesus showed how the Father is well able to vindicate us.

c. The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on

Me: The commandment Jesus fulfilled from Psalm 69:7 applies to us as well. It was written for our learning, that we might have hope, knowing we are doing what is right even when it is difficult.

- i. When we respond rightly to the reproaches the world casts against us for Jesus' sake, it bothers them even more. It makes them know there isn't anything they can do against a child of God whose eyes are really on Jesus.
- ii. An old Christian song goes, "I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart" and then goes on to other verses like "I've got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart" and "I got the wonderful love of my Blessed Redeemer down in my heart." One of great verses in that song goes, "I've got the happy hope that heckles heathens down in my heart." The hope we receive even when reproached shows that God is really real to us.

3. (Rom 15:5-6) A prayer for the fulfillment of this attitude in the Romans.

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- a. Now may the God:** The fact that Paul puts these words into the form of a prayer demonstrates that he recognizes that this is a work that the Holy Spirit must do inside us.
- b. The God of patience:** Our God is a God of patience. We are often in so much of a hurry, and God often seems to work too slowly for us. Often the purposes of God seem to be delayed but they always are fulfilled. God's delays are not His denials, and He has a loving purpose in every delay.
 - i. We love God's patience with His people - we need Him to be patient with us! Yet we often resent God's patience with His plan - we think He should hurry up.

Nevertheless, God is patient both with His people and in His plan.

c. That you may: The goal is to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We accomplish that goal by having one mind and one mouth - by unity in our thinking and speech.

4. (Rom 15:7-13) Filled with love for others and joy and peace by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name." And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope." Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

a. Therefore receive one another: Instead of letting these issues about disputable things divide the body of Christ (especially making a division between Jew and Gentile), we should receive one another just as Christ received us - in the terms of pure grace, knowing yet bearing with our faults.

i. Spurgeon on just as Christ also received us: "Christ did not receive us because we were perfect, because he could see no fault in us, or because he hoped to gain somewhat at our hands. Ah, no! But, in loving condescension covering our faults, and seeking our good, he welcomed us to his heart; so, in the same way, and with the same purpose, let us receive one another."

b. As it is written: Paul quotes a series of passages from the Old Testament demonstrating that God intends that the Gentiles to praise Him. Instead of dividing of disputable matters, Jews and Gentiles should unite in Jesus over the common ground of praise.

i. I will confess to You among the Gentiles: The quotation from Psalm 18 describes Jesus Himself giving praise among the Gentiles.

c. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace: The prayer and blessing concluding the section is appropriate. As God fills us with the blessings of His joy and peace in believing, we are equipped to live in this common bond of unity God calls us to.

B. Paul's burden in ministry.

1. (Rom 15:14-16) Paul's reason for writing.

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

a. Able also to admonish one another: Paul didn't write because he felt the Roman Christians couldn't discern what was right before God or admonish each other to do right. Rather, he wrote to remind them, encouraging them to do what they knew was right.

b. That I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles: This is consistent with Paul's calling to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. In fulfilling this call, he didn't just preach the gospel of salvation but also instructed believers how to live before God.

c. That the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable: When the Gentiles live glorifying God, then their offering

to God is acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit - the necessity of such a sacrifice makes Paul's writing necessary.

d. Romans 15:16 is filled with the language of priesthood. Paul says he serves as a "ministering priest" of Jesus Christ presenting the gospel as a "priestly service" so Gentile converts would be an acceptable sacrifice to God.

i. "When he defines his ministry as ministering the gospel of God the apostle uses a word occurring nowhere else in the New Testament which may properly be rendered 'acting as a priest.' So the ministry of the gospel is conceived of after the pattern of priestly offering." (Murray)

2. (Rom 15:17-19) Paul glories in the work God has done through him.

Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient; in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

a. Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus: As he considers his call to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, Paul can glory in God that he received such a call - speaking only of the things God did through him to bring salvation to the Gentiles.

I. "Paul will glory only in what Christ has done through him. He is sure that Christ has done great things through him, and he is glad that he can draw attention to those things. But he is not trying to attract adulation. It is what Christ has done that is his theme." (Morris)

b. In word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient: God

used mighty signs and wonders and the broader power of the Spirit of God to help Paul fully preach the gospel of Christ everywhere he went - from Jerusalem to Illyricum.

- i. I fully preached the gospel of Christ: We sense that Paul would consider "bare" preaching, without the active and sometimes miraculous work of the Holy Spirit evident, to be less than fully preaching the gospel.

c. From Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel: Illyricum is modern Yugoslavia and Albania. This means that Paul's ministry spread from Illyricum in the west to Jerusalem in the East.

d. Paul effortlessly weaves references to each member of the Trinity in Romans 15:16-19. Paul can't talk about God without recognizing His three Persons.

3. (Rom 15:20-21) Paul's desire to preach the gospel in new places.

And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand."

a. Not where Christ was named: Paul did not want to build on another man's foundation. Rather he wanted to do pioneer work for the Lord - not because it was wrong or bad to continue the work begun through another man, but because there was so much to do on the frontiers.

b. But as it is written: Paul saw his pioneering heart as obedience to the Scriptures, fulfilling the passage he quotes from the Old Testament.

C. Paul's Desire to Come to Rome.

1. (Rom 15:22-24) Why Paul hasn't visited the Christians in Rome yet.

For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.

a. *For this reason I also have been much hindered:* It was his great desire to do pioneer work that hindered him from coming to the Romans, though he did desire to see them.

b. *Whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you:* ***Therefore,*** Paul supposes that he will visit the Romans on a future trip to Spain, where Paul will preach the gospel on the frontiers. Stopping off in Rome on the way, Paul anticipates that he can enjoy the support and fellowship of the Romans before he goes to preach the gospel in the regions beyond.

i. Paul probably wanted Rome to be his base of operations for the western part of the empire, even as Antioch was his base for the eastern part.

c. *For I hope to see you on my journey:* Paul had these plans; yet things did not work out according to his plans. He did go to Rome, yet not as a missionary on his way to Spain. He went to Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar, where he would preach the gospel on a different kind of frontier.

i. God had unexpected frontiers for the Gospel in Paul's life, giving him unexpected access to preach to the emperor of Rome himself.

ii. After his release from the Roman imprisonment at the end of the Book of Acts, we have reason to believe that Paul did in fact make it to Spain and preached the

gospel there.

2. (Rom 15:25-29) Paul's Present Plans.

But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

- a. But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints:** Paul would stop in Corinth on his way to Jerusalem, bringing with him a collection from Christians in Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 20:1-3).
- b. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things:** Paul's observation is appropriate: the Gentile Christians of the broader Roman empire had received so much spiritually from the community of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, it was only right that they help the Jerusalem Christians in their need.
- c. I shall go by way of you to Spain:** Paul would indeed head for Rome after his time in Jerusalem, but not in the way he planned!

3. (Rom 15:30-33) Paul's Plea for Prayer.

Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. Now the God of

peace be with you all. Amen.

a. Strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe:

Sensing that danger awaited him in Jerusalem (having been warned several times as recorded in Acts 20:22-23 and Acts 21:10-14), Paul knew he needed the prayers of God's people to see him through the difficulty promised him.

i. Strive together with me: The idea is that Paul wants the Romans to partner with him in ministry through their prayers. The New English Bible translates this, be my allies in the fight. The New Living Bible translates the phrase like this: join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

ii. "Ministers need the prayers of their flocks. With Paul I urge you to strive in your prayers for your pastors. We need your prayers and we thank God for them. Pastors are sustained by the power of the Spirit through the support of their congregations." (Smith)

iii. The ancient Greek word translated strive together is *sunagonizomai* - literally meaning, "agonize together." To emphasize the importance and intensity, Paul repeats the word twice: *sunagonizomai sunagonizomai*.

iv. This same root word for agony is used of the anguished prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus asked His disciples to agonize with Him in prayer. They failed at that critical moment and left Jesus to struggle alone. We must not leave our ministers and leaders to struggle alone. "It reminds us of Carey, who says, when he goes to India, 'I will go down into the pit, but brother Fuller and the rest of you must hold the rope.' Can we refuse the request? Would it not be treachery?" (Spurgeon)

v. "Does it astonish you that a man so rich in grace as Paul should be asking prayers of these unknown saints? It need not astonish you; for it is the rule with the truly great to think most highly of others. In

proportion as a man grows in grace he feels his dependence upon God, and, in a certain sense, his dependence upon God's people." (Spurgeon)

- b. *That I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe:*** Paul knew that his danger in Jerusalem would come from those who did not believe. This was the case, as demonstrated in Acts 21:27-28 and 22:22.
- c. *And that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints:*** Paul knew that the church in Jerusalem was very conservative, and sometimes regarded men like Paul as dangerous innovators; for this reason, he asks the Romans to pray that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.
- d. *That I may come to you with joy:*** The prayers of Paul and the Romans were answered, though not in the manner they expected. Acts 28:15 describes Paul's "triumphal entry" into Rome, so that he did come to them with joy - though also in chains!
- e. *The God of peace:*** Paul here concludes the letter except for personal greetings in Romans 16.



GREETINGS TO THE CHRISTIANS IN ROME

A. Greetings to many different Christians.

1. (Rom 16:1-2) A recommendation of Phoebe.

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

- a. *I commend to you Phoebe our sister:*** Paul certainly knew the value of what women could do in serving the church. Apparently Phoebe was on her way to Rome (probably entrusted with this precious letter!) and Paul sends an advance recommendation of this sister in Christ so the Romans will receive her and support her during her stay in Rome.
- b. *I commend to you:*** Such recommendations were important, because there was both great legitimate need for this kind of assistance, and many deceivers who wanted to take advantage of the generosity of Christians.
- c. *Servant is the same word translated deacon in other places.*** Phoebe seems to be a female deacon in the church, either through formal recognition or through her general service.
 - i. Bible translators have a habit of translating the ancient Greek word *diakonon* as "deacon" when it

speaks of men and "servant" when it speaks of women.

d. *She has been a helper of many and of myself also:*

Paul gives Phoebe one of the best compliments anyone can give. This sort of practical help is essential in doing the business of the gospel.

e. *Phoebe:* This name is the feminine form of a title given to the pagan god Apollo, the title meaning "the bright one." Christians, on their conversion, seemed to feel no need to change their names even if there was some pagan significance to their name.

2. (3-5a) Greetings to Priscilla and Aquilla.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

a. *Priscilla and Aquila* are mentioned in Acts 18:2, 18:18 and 18:26 as associates of Paul and helpers to Apollos. Apparently they were now back in the city of Rome.

i. Spurgeon on Priscilla and Aquila: "When two loving hearts pull together they accomplish wonders. What different associations cluster around the names of 'Priscilla and Aquila' from those which are awakened by the words 'Ananias and Sapphira'! There we have a husband and a wife conspiring in hypocrisy, and here a wife and a husband united in sincere devotion."

b. *The church that is in their house:* This phrase gives us a clue to the organization of the early church. In a city with a Christian community of any size, there would be several "congregations" meeting in different houses, since there were no "church" buildings at this time. Each house church probably had its own "pastor."

3. (5b-16) Various greetings.

Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. Greet Mary, who labored much for us. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my

fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

a. *Epaenetus* is of note because he was apparently among the very first converts of Achaia (the region where Corinth was, where Paul wrote this letter from). Epaenetus was also apparently dear to Paul; beloved isn't a term Paul used cheaply.

b. *Andronicus and Junia* are apparently both Jews (my kinsmen) and had been imprisoned for the sake of the gospel (my fellow prisoners). They were well regarded among the apostles, having become Christians even before Paul did (sometime in the first three or four years after Pentecost).

i. Of note among the apostles has the idea that Andronicus and Junia are apostles themselves (though not of the twelve), and notable among other apostles. If there ever were women recognized as apostles - in the sense of being special emissaries of God, not in the sense of being of the twelve - this is the strongest Scriptural evidence. It isn't very strong.

c. *Amplias*: There is a tomb dating from the late first or early second century in the earliest Christian catacomb of Rome which bears the name AMPLIAS. Some suggest

that this is the same person mentioned in Romans 16:8.

d. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus:

The fact that the household of Aristobulus is greeted, but not Aristobulus himself, made Spurgeon think that he himself was not converted but many in his household were. It made Spurgeon think of the unconverted who live with believers in their house.

- i. "Where are you, Aristobulus? That is not your name, perhaps, but your character is the same as that of this unregenerate Roman, whose family knew the Lord. I might speak in God's name good words and comfortable words to your wife and to your children, but I could not so speak to you, Aristobulus! The Lord sends a message of grace to your dear child, to your beloved wife, but not to you; for you have not given your heart to him."

e. Rufus may be the same man mentioned as a son of Simon the Cyrene in Mark 15:21. This is possible, but Rufus was a common name - so it may have been someone else.

- i. Chosen in the Lord has the idea that Rufus had some eminence among the Christians of Rome. It doesn't really refer to his election in Jesus.

f. Nereus: In 95 A.D. two distinguished Romans were condemned for being Christians. The husband was executed and the wife was banished. The name of their chief servant was Nereus - this may be the same Nereus mentioned here and he may be the one who brought the gospel to them.

g. Of the rest of these names, Paul finds something wonderful to say about almost every one of them - noting their labor, his special regard for them (beloved), their standing in the Lord (approved in Christ ... in the Lord ... chosen in the Lord).

- i. What a tremendous pattern this is - it shows Paul's way of casting about uplifting words in a way meant to build up God's people. He was generous in paying

compliments that were both sincere and wonderful.

h. Greet one another with a holy kiss: This might sound strange to us, but Luke 7:45 shows how common a greeting a kiss was. Jesus rebukes a Pharisee because he had not given Jesus a kiss when He came into his house.

- i. It seems that this practice was later abused. Clement of Alexandria complained about churches where people made the church resound with kissing, and says that "the shameless use of a kiss occasions foul suspicions the evil reports."

4. The value of Paul's extensive greetings to the Roman church.

a. Morris explains that this section demonstrates that the Letter to the Romans "was a letter to real people and, as far as we can see, ordinary people;" it was not written to professional theologians."

- i. "They were like the most of us, commonplace individuals; but they loved the Lord, and therefore as Paul recollected their names he sent them a message of love which has become embalmed in the Holy Scriptures. Do not let us think of the distinguished Christians exclusively so as to forget the rank and file of the Lord's army. Do not let the eye rest exclusively upon the front rank, but let us love all whom Christ loves; let us value all Christ's servants. It is better to be God's dog than to be the devil's darling." (Spurgeon)

b. Notice the women mentioned in this chapter: Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, the mother of Rufus, and Julia. These women are said to have worked for the Lord.

- i. "Ministry in the Spirit by a woman is different altogether from her taking over authority, or infringing upon the order of the assembly of God." (Newell)

c. Notice their work for the Lord: some, like Tryphena and Tryphosa, labored in the Lord. Others, like Persis,

labored much for the Lord. "So there are distinctions and degrees in honor among believers, and these are graduated by the scale of service done. It is an honor to labor for Christ, it is a still greater honor to labor much. If, then, any, in joining the Christian church, desire place or position, honor or respect, the way to it is this - labor, and labor much." (Spurgeon)

- d. Of the 24 names here, 13 occur in inscriptions or documents connected with the Emperor's palace in Rome.** We know that there were Christians among Caesar's household (Philippians 4:22), so Paul may be addressing many of the servants who worked for Caesar who became Christians.

B. Concluding words and warnings.

1. (Rom 16:17-20) A word of warning regarding dividers and deceivers.

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

- a. Note those who cause divisions and offenses:** This has in mind both those who would divide the God's people (cause divisions) and those who would deceive God's people (offenses ... contrary to the doctrine you have learned). Once these have been noted (marked), they are to be avoided.
- i. This is essential to God's purpose for the church. Truth without unity leads to pride; unity without truth leads to a departure from the true gospel itself. Each of these must be guarded against.
 - ii. Now I urge you, brethren: The tone here suggests how

important this was to Paul; "It may well be that Paul took the pen and wrote these words himself ... It is quite possible that Paul wrote these words, then passed the pen back to Tertius for a postscript. Something unusual happened at the end of this letter, and this is a very possible understanding of it." (Morris)

- iii. "Mad dogs are shot; infectious diseases are quarantined; but evil teachers who would divide to their destruction and draw away the saints with teaching contrary to the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles are everywhere tolerated!" (Newell)

b. *By smooth words and flattering speech deceive:* The warning is necessary because these dividers and deceivers do not announce themselves. They use smooth words and flattering speech and always target the simple - usually those who are young in the faith.

- i. Deceive the hearts of the simple: This reminds us that dividers and deceivers don't affect everyone. We don't have to wait until everyone is scattered or deceived until we are concerned with dividers and deceivers.

c. *Do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly:* Dividers and deceivers never want to appear selfish. Typically they perceive themselves as noble crusaders for a great cause. Nevertheless, however they may appear on the outside, their motives are essentially selfish and fleshly.

d. *Your obedience has become known to all:* This means that when it comes to dividers and deceivers, it isn't that the Romans must correct a bad situation. They are already dealing with these situations well, and Paul is glad about it. Yet they must remain diligent against the attacks of the dividers and the deceivers.

e. *Be wise in what is good:* This is the best defense against dividers and deceivers. It is of far more use to know the good than it is to know the evil, to learn about the genuine rather than the counterfeit.

f. The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet

shortly: Any church with the well-deserved reputation of the Romans, who stays on guard against both dividers and deceivers, will see God crush Satan under your feet shortly.

- i. We see that God does the crushing, but Satan ends up under the feet of believers.
- ii. Of course, this will not ultimately happen until Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-3); but every victory God wins for us right now is a preview of that event.

2. (Rom 16:21-24) Greetings from those in Corinth with Paul.

Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

a. Timothy rightly rates a first mention, being one of Paul's closest and most trusted associates.

b. I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle: Tertius was Paul's writer as the apostle dictated the letter. This was Paul's normal practice in writing letters to churches, but this is the only letter where Paul's secretary is mentioned by name.

c. Gaius had such a reputation for hospitality that Paul can say he was regarded as the host of the whole church.

3. (Rom 16:25-27) Conclusion to the letter: praise to God.

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for

obedience to the faith; to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

a. With all the dangers facing the Romans - and every church - Paul fittingly concludes by commending them to Him who is able to establish you. Paul also knows that this will be done according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.

b. According to the revelation of the mystery: Paul means this as the whole plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Though God announced much of the plan previously through prophecy, its final outworking wasn't evident until revealed by God through Jesus.

- i. Now that the mystery has been revealed through the preaching of the gospel, God calls all nations to obedience to the faith.

c. When Paul concludes with to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever, he is reflecting on both the wisdom of God's plan in the gospel and the fact that such wisdom is beyond man. God had a plan no man would come up with, but the wisdom and glory of the plan is evident.

- i. If there is anything Roman explains from beginning to end it is the greatness and glory of this plan of God that Paul preached as a gospel - as good news. It's entirely fitting that Paul concludes this letter praising the God of such a gospel.
- ii. God has also, in the gospel Paul preaches, chosen to glorify Himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ, and to glorify Himself that way forever. Amen!

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

A Systematic Study in the Book of

Galatians

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

i. AUTHORSHIP:

Externally and internally the evidence has been overwhelming in critical scholarship in favor of Pauline authorship of this letter. Galatians is the standard by which Paul's other epistles are often measured.

ii. DESTINATION:

Those churches who lived in the larger Roman provincial region of Galatia extending south.

A. Northern Theory:

Lightfoot identifies these people with the Celts or Gauls who moved across Italy, Macedonia, and Thessaly to the coast of the Hellespont across the sea into Asia Minor. While in Asia Minor they put the whole continent west of Taurus under tribute only to be defeated by Pergamene, placed into a strip of land 200 miles long from the northeast to the northwest and to establish three cities: Tavium, Ancyra, and Pessinus.

Even though there was a unanimous northern position until the eighteenth century, it may be explained by a common error made by the church fathers which was continued by the commentators.

B. Southern Theory:

The lack of information in the Bible about any north Galatia churches, especially in light of the mention of south Galatia churches in Acts 13-14 supports a southern theory. The north Galatia area was isolated, and since Paul was sick when he went there (Gal. 4), it is unlikely that he would have gone three hundred miles to the north.

Finally, "Galatians" was the best term to use to describe the people of the southern districts since it included all without ethnical distinctions. Even though the participle in Acts 16:6 forces Paul to go

north, it does not necessitate that they go as far as northern Galatia. There were other routes.

iii. DATE: AD 49-50

Within the sphere of the southern theory, there are two options for dating the letter: (1) after the Jerusalem council, and (2) before the Jerusalem council

1. After the Jerusalem Council:

Although this is a viable option, a problem arises in placing Galatians 2:1-10 with Acts 15 because Paul only mentions two visits to Jerusalem in Galatians (1:18; 2:1) while Acts records three (Acts 9:26; 11:30; 15:4). Such an inconsistency would completely invalidate Paul's argument in Galatians, and therefore, cancels this option for a later date.

2. Before the Jerusalem Council:

- a. There are also problems with placing Galatians 2:1-10 with Acts 11:30: First, there are no apostles mentioned in Acts 11:30 as in Galatians 2: 2). Secondly, Titus does not fit well in Acts 11:30; he actually fits better with Acts 15. However, these are not as major as the above problem with Acts 15.
- b. There is good support for placing Galatians 2:1-10 with Acts 11:30: (1). The apostolic decree of Acts 15:22 is not mentioned in Galatians 2:1-10. (2). Paul could not have omitted the famine visit as is asserted by some who hold to the Acts 15 view because his argument depends on accuracy. (3) Luke does not need to be charged with error as some do to harmonize this with Acts 15. (4). In Galatians 2:1-10 the meeting with Paul and Barnabas took place with leaders of the Jerusalem church whereas in Acts 15:1-35 the meeting took place before an assembled church. (5) Peter's actions in Galatians 2:11 are less likely after Acts 15 than before it.

Although one cannot be dogmatic, it seems that the earlier date has the fewest major problems. Therefore, the epistle should be dated before the Jerusalem council (c. AD 49-50)

IV. OCCASION AND PURPOSE FOR THE LETTER

- A. The gospel message of the Apostle Paul (that the Christian life began and continued by the grace of God through the faith of His people) was under attack by Judaizers who taught that the Mosaic Law was still a necessary standard for obedience.
- B. Although Paul does spend considerable time in Galatians defending his apostleship, this is not the primary design of the epistle. Paul defends his apostleship in order to exhort the believers in Galatia to continue to adhere to the true gospel which not only includes justification by faith, but also sanctification by faith. He defends his personal life and his theology as a means of defending his gospel message to the Galatians.



FEARS OF A DIFFERENT GOSPEL

A. Fears of A Different Gospel

1. (1-2) The writer and the readers

- a. ***Paul wrote this letter;*** his authorship is virtually unquestioned
 - i. And what a letter this is; Galatians has been called the "Magna Carta (Declaration of Independence) of Christian liberty"; Luther especially loved this letter; he called Galatians his "Catherine von Bora," because, he said, "I am married to it."
- b. ***The stress on Paul's apostolic credentials is important;*** Paul has much to say to these Galatians, and they must understand that he writes with authority, apostolic authority.
 - i. "The word apostle as Paul uses it here does not merely refer to one who has a message to announce, but to an appointed representative with an official status who is provided with the credentials of his office." (Wuest).
- c. ***Paul's apostolic credentials*** are not rooted in a democratic choice, but in a Divine call - both through the Father and the Son.
- d. ***Paul gives greetings from all the brethren with him;*** but the use of I in the letter (1:6) shows that it was not really a collaborative effort.

e. There were essentially two regions of Galatia, one to the north (including the cities of Pessinus, Ancyra and Tavium) and one to the south (including the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe). There has been considerable debate as to if Galatians was written to the northern region of cities or the southern.

- i. "There was a wide difference between North and South Galatia in respect to language, occupation, nationality, and social organization." (Wuest) The north was small cities and mostly agricultural development; the south was full of cities and commerce.

f. Paul was in southern Galatia on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13-14:23), he went through northern Galatia on his second (Acts 16:6) and third (Acts 18:23) missionary journeys.

1.

- i. The debate between northern Galatia and southern Galatia is interesting and adds some understanding to the letter, but not much.

2. (3-5) An Apostolic Greeting

a. Paul uses his familiar greeting of grace and peace, expanding on the mention of the person of Jesus.

b. In the expansion, Paul focuses on the saving work of Jesus - saving us both from sin and from this present evil age, something that the Galatians were battling with, and needed to know that Jesus had in fact come to save them from.

- i. The word for in verse 4 (who gave Himself for our sins) clearly has the idea of substitution; it could be written at the end of a letter by someone who wrote a letter for someone else; this meaning is also clear from the usage in passages like John 11:50 and 2 Corinthians 5:14.
- ii. The particular word for evil denotes someone who is not content in being corrupt themselves; they must also be corrupting others, and drawing them into the

same destruction.

iii. The idea behind the word deliver is not deliverance from the presence of something, but deliverance from the power of something.

c. *The purpose of this saving work* is not primarily to benefit man (though that is part of the purpose), but it is to glorify the Father; part of the problems of the Galatian churches was that their false doctrines were robbing God of some of that glory.

B. The Danger of Another Gospel

1. (6-7) Paul's Amazement

a. Paul seems amazed not so much that they are turning away (this might alarm him, but not amaze him), but that they are turning away so soon

b. *They are turning away* from a Person (Him who called you) as they turn to a false idea (a different gospel); to turn away from the true gospel is always to turn away from the Person of Jesus Christ.

c. *Paul recognizes that this different gospel is not really another gospel at all;* it is not an alternative "good news" in any sense; all it is trouble, brought by those who would trouble the Galatians, perverting the gospel of Jesus

i. Notice that Paul is really not contending for the gospel of Paul, though it is his gospel also; but it is only worth defending and fighting for because it is the gospel of Jesus.

ii. As the person of Jesus is prominent in the true gospel, so are people prominent in this false gospel brought to the Galatians; false gospels don't just happen, they are carried by human (and often sincere) agents.

2. (8-9) A Solemn Curse Upon Those Who Bring a False Gospel.

a. *Paul cares not who brings a false gospel* - if he himself brings it, or an angel from heaven; any agent of a false gospel is worthy only of a particular curse from God.

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- b. Paul seems to have in mind the solemn curses** pronounced by God upon those who break His covenant (Deuteronomy 27).
 - c. The curse is repeated for extra emphasis;** it is really impossible for Paul to express this idea with any more strength.
 - d. Again, notice that Paul is not cursing the concept of a false gospel;** he is cursing people - the carriers of the false gospel

C. The Divine Origin of Paul's Gospel.

1. (10) Paul's Gospel did not come from a desire to please man.

- a. As a bondservant of Christ,** Paul's first obligation is faithfulness to his Master, not the pleasing of man.
- b. Though it is not specifically said, we sense that Paul is contrasting himself here with the false gospel brought to the Galatians, a gospel engineered with the idea of being pleasing to man.**

2. (11-12) The Divine Origin of Paul's Gospel.

- a. In contrast to the false gospel brought by others,** Paul's message comes as a revelation from God - and idea that if true, is the most important fact in the world; if it is false, it is the most dangerous lie in the world
 - i. The world has no shortage of those who would claim a Divine origin for their ideas; but we must be careful that what we receive as Divine revelation really has the credentials.
- b. Paul's own relationship to this gospel is unique;** he could say that he was not taught the gospel by any man, but that it was directly revealed to him by Jesus Himself (strengthening the argument that it is not a gospel from man).
 - i. Men have many marvelous things to teach us, but God's revelation has all things which pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3); now more than ever, the world does not need the good advice and wisdom of

man, it needs a revelation from God.

3. (13-24) Paul's Testimony: Evidence of the Divine Origin of his Message.

a. Paul appeals to his testimony as common knowledge (for you have heard); Paul's story was familiar to Christians in general and especially to those he had personally spoken to.

- i. The value of a personal testimony is not restricted to those who have a dramatic story such as Paul's; the glory of God's working in human lives can be seen just as much in those who think they have a "boring" testimony.

b. Paul's credentials as a zealous Jew, persecuting Christians, are beyond doubt, and establish that Paul was not looking for some other truth when he was first confronted with the gospel of Jesus.

c. His calling was not due to any human initiative, not his own or that of others, but of God alone; again, Paul was not searching for a new revelation, it came to him quite unexpectedly

- i. Unfortunately, many of those who are seeking a "new revelation" will find it - and deception that draws them away from Jesus Christ (like a young Joseph Smith)

d. Additionally, upon his conversion, Paul did not immediately confer with flesh and blood (even the eminent apostles in Jerusalem) to discover the content of the gospel; it was revealed directly to him by Jesus.

- i. We shouldn't think that Paul is saying here that it is wrong to hear of the gospel through others, or that those who do have an inferior salvation; the point is simply that Paul's gospel is not a gospel of man, and this is settled forever because he did not receive it from any man
- ii. Paul did not travel to Saudi Arabia; the area known as Arabia in his day extended all the way to Damascus; he probably lived in some quiet desert place outside of Damascus.

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- e. If Paul did not learn the essential content of the gospel from any man,*** then it is also true that the early Christians were slow in learning just who Paul was in Christ; all they really knew was that he had been dramatically converted - for which they gave glory to God.
- i. Paul's status as unknown is certainly different from our own habit of puffing up any prominent convert as soon as they come to Christ; Paul was happy and well served to spend many years in obscurity before God raised him up.



PAUL DEFENDS THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

A. Paul Presents the Gospel of Grace Revealed to him to the Jerusalem Leadership

1. (1-2) Paul's Trip to Jerusalem after 14 years.

- a. *He went with both Barnabas*** (well respected among the leadership in Jerusalem) and Titus (a Gentile convert)
- b. *Paul went up by revelation***; the idea is that he went to Jerusalem by the express direction of God
- c. *The purpose of this trip*** was to assure the leaders in Jerusalem that Paul was being obedient to God in his presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles; they perhaps had feared that he had compromised the message or the plan of God
 - i. Paul here is describing his dealings with the Jerusalem council (Acts 15)
- d. *If there was any confrontation to be done, Paul did it privately to those who were of reputation***; Paul was not concerned with scoring points in a popularity contest, but in humbly defending God's truth
- e. *Adverse or proud attitude might compromise the very message he was trying to communicate***; so he took caution so that his efforts would not have been in vain

2. (3-5) The Issue Over the Circumcision of Titus.

- a. *Paul's point in verse 3 is that the leadership in Jerusalem accepted Titus, a Gentile convert***, even

though he was not circumcised in accord with the Mosaic law - demonstrating that the Jerusalem leadership accepted Paul's gospel of grace

b. Yet, the lack of circumcision in Titus became an issue

because of false brethren (Paul doesn't hesitate to call these legalists such!) who came out for the sole purpose of bringing Paul and other Christians into bondage

c. Yet, Paul remained steadfast - we did not yield submission even for an hour, yet his motive was not pride, but that the truth of the gospel might continue with you (Christians like those in Galatia)

3. (6) Summary of Paul's point: his gospel or apostolic credentials did not depend on any sort of approval or influence from men, even influential men

a. Paul will not even acknowledge the "big names" among Christians at that time as being "something"; he says whatever they were, it makes no difference to me

b. Paul could say this because he knew that *in God's sight such status and "fame" means nothing.*

c. Paul's time in Jerusalem added nothing to the gospel he preached or the apostolic authority he possessed

4. (7-10) The Jerusalem "Pillars" Approved Paul's Gospel.

a. The "pillars" of the Jerusalem church (James, the brother of Jesus; Peter and John) accepted Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles, even though Paul did not require the Gentiles to come under the Mosaic Law to find favor with God

b. The distinctions between Paul being the apostle to the Gentiles and Peter the apostle to the Jews were not absolute; each did minister to the other groups.

c. The only caution from Jerusalem was that Paul remember the poor - probably the poor saints in Jerusalem, who should not be forgotten by the Gentile believers

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- i. Paul definitely did remember the poor in Jerusalem; he put a lot of effort towards gathering a contribution among the Gentile churches for the sake of the saints in Jerusalem.

B. The Controversy with Peter Over the Acceptance of the Gentiles.

1. (11-13) The reason for Paul's public rebuke of Peter.

a. *Peter had approved of Paul's gospel and ministry when Paul came to Jerusalem (2:9);* and Peter himself had been used by God to welcome Gentiles into Christianity without the precondition of becoming Jews (Acts 11:1-18).

b. *Yet, when Peter came to Antioch (Paul's home church), he refused to fellowship with Gentile Christians* once certain Jewish believers from Jerusalem (who would be "offended" at such fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles) came

- i. The issue wasn't that these Jewish Christians wanted to keep the Mosaic law for themselves; it was that they put their keeping of the Mosaic law above their respect for the unity of the body of Christ, and the implicit demand their actions made on the Gentile Christians
- ii. Peter was essentially saying to the Gentiles, "if you want to fellowship with Jewish Christians, you must come under the law."

c. *Peter acted against what he knew was right out of fear;* and the desire to cater to these legalistic Jewish Christians was so strong that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy

- i. "The defection of Barnabas was of a far more serious nature with regard to Gentile freedom than the vacillation of Peter. . . Barnabas, the foremost champion of Gentile liberty next to Paul, had become a turncoat." (Wuest)

d. *We might be surprised that Peter, who did know better, did this;* but we are only surprised if we don't

believe what God says about the weakness and corruption of our flesh

2. (14-21) Paul's rebuke of Peter and defense of the gospel of grace.

- a. Paul first pointed out the essential hypocrisy in Peter's actions;** apparently, Peter himself had stopped a rigorous observance of the Mosaic law; why then does he imply with his actions that the Gentiles should keep the law when he himself does not?
- b. Paul then goes on to emphasize** that the Jews themselves are not saved by their observance of the law (for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified).
- c. Paul will also acknowledge that Christians - both Jews and Gentiles - are not sinlessly perfect;** yet that does not mean that the work of Jesus is a minister of sin; we can still rely on His work instead of trusting in our own works through the law.
- d. But Paul protests that for the Christian to take up the law, he makes himself a transgressor** - the believer has died to the law, but now lives in and through Jesus Christ, because of the great love Jesus has shown for him.
- e. Paul concludes strongly:** to embrace the law as a principle of living is to set aside the grace of God (the very thing Paul does not do); because if we can be made righteous through the law, then Jesus died in vain - because we would then have at least the potential for satisfying God's righteous requirements in our own efforts.
 - i. Remember that Jesus' prayer in the garden (Matthew 26:39-42) asked that if there be any other way to accomplish what Jesus did not the cross, that Jesus would be spared the cross; He was not spared because there is no other way.



THE CHRISTIAN, LAW AND LIVING BY FAITH

A. The principle of continuing in faith

1. (1) Paul rebukes the foolish Galatians

a. In calling the Galatians foolish, Paul is not saying they are morally or mentally deficient (the Greek word *moros* conveys that idea, and was used by Jesus in parables [Matthew 7:26; 25:1-13]). The Greek word *anoetos* here has the idea of someone who can think but fails to use their power of perception

b. Who Bewitched you has the connotation that the Galatians are under some type of spell; those enamored with false doctrine often seem like this

- i. Barclay translates bewitched as put the evil eye on; the Greeks had great fear of a spell being cast on them by an evil eye
- ii. The way to overcome the evil eye is to not look at it - but to keep your eyes steadfastly upon Jesus always

c. The idea behind clearly portrayed is something like "billboarded"; to publicly display as in setting on a billboard. Paul wonders how the Galatians could have missed the message - he certainly made it clear enough to them

- i. Their vision of Jesus Christ and Him crucified has become cloudy; they no longer see Him and His work on the cross as the center of their Christian lives
- ii. This is a departure from the message Paul preached;

Paul's preaching was like setting up posters of Jesus all over town - if you saw anything, you saw Jesus.

2. (2-3) Paul confronts their departure from the principle of faith.

- a. Obviously, the Galatians received the Holy Spirit through simple faith (Luke 11:9-13);** He was not a "prize" achieved through the works of the flesh
- b. They have been deceived into thinking that spiritual growth or maturity will be achieved through the works of the flesh,** instead of a continued simple faith and abiding in Jesus
 - i. The false belief of the Galatians is not only a contradiction of Paul's spiritual history (related in chapters one and two), but of their own also
- c. This temptation to set our Christian life off-track is a principle strategy of Satan;** if he cannot stop us from being saved by faith, then he will hinder our growth and maturity by faith
 - i. And, when the works of the flesh are substituted for faith, self-confidence and pride are the inevitable result.

3. (4) A Question About the Past.

- a. Apparently, the Galatians had suffered for the principle of faith (probably at the hands of Judaizing Christians)** - does their departure from the principle of faith mean that this past suffering was in vain?
 - i. Acts 14 makes it clear that Paul and his companions were persecuted vigorously (Paul even being stoned and left for dead) by the Jews when they were among the cities of Galatia; surely some of this persecution spilled over to the Christian congregations Paul left behind in Galatia
- b. A better translation of the phrase have you suffered so many things in vain may be "have you had such wonderful spiritual experiences all to no**

purpose?" This may fit the context better; Paul wondering if all the gifts of the Spirit they had received would amount to no lasting value because they have tried to walk by law, not faith.

4. (5) Paul Asks Them to Examine the Source of the Spirit's Work Among them.

a. God supplies the Holy Spirit in response to faith; miracles are wrought by faith; yet the Galatians have been deceived into thinking that real spiritual riches lie in pursuing God through a works relationship

B. Abraham as an Example of Those Justified by and Walking by Faith.

1. (6-7). The True sons of Abraham.

a. Those Who Walk by the Faith of Abraham: Since the push towards this works-relationship with God came from Judaizing Christians, who claimed Abraham as their spiritual heritage, Paul shows that it is really those who walk in faith who are Abraham's spiritual children.

b. Abraham was called righteous because he believed - not because he performed some work, and certainly not because he was circumcised, because the covenant of circumcision had not yet been given

c. Therefore, Abraham is the father of all those who believe God and are accounted righteous - something more meaningful than being the father of circumcision, the symbol of obedience and submission to the law

i. "It is always possible that we should translate huioi Abraam, not so much children (or 'sons') of Abraham as 'real Abrahams.'" (Cole).

2. (8-9) The Blessing of Righteousness by Faith is for all Nations.

a. Paul notices how even back in Abraham's day it was clear that this blessing of righteousness by faith was intended for every nation, for Gentiles as well as Jews, because God pronounced that in you all the

nations shall be blessed

- i. When we see how Paul refers to the Scriptures as a person in verse 8, we understand just how strongly Paul regarded the Bible to be God's word - when the Scriptures speak, God speaks

b. The intention is to destroy the idea that a Gentile must first become a Jew to become a Christian; if that were necessary, God would never have said this blessing would extend to every nation

c. The blessing we receive with believing Abraham is not the blessing of fantastic wealth (though Abraham was extremely wealthy); it is something far more precious: the blessing of righteousness with God through faith

3. (10-12) The Contrast Between the Curse of the Law and the Blessing of Abraham.

a. Living by the works of the law brings us under a curse; because the law itself pronounces a curse upon those who do not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them (Deuteronomy 27:26)

b. The impossibility of becoming just by keeping the law is also demonstrated by Habakkuk 2:4, which reminds us that the just live by faith, not by law

c. If any life unto justification comes from the law, it must come by perfect performance of the law, because the law is not of faith

4. (13-14) Jesus Redeems Us From the Curse of the Law.

a. The law brings us under a curse because we do not fulfill it perfectly; but Jesus redeems us from that curse, by having become a curse for us.

b. Jesus received this curse upon Himself as He hung on the cross, fulfilling the Deuteronomy 21:23 promise of a curse to all who are not only executed but have their bodies publicly exposed to shame

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- i. In the Jewish mind, such exposure was a fate worse than death itself; the humiliation brought upon the executed and their family was clear evidence of the curse.

c. *Jesus bore the curse that we (even Gentiles) might bear the blessings of Abraham* (the blessing of righteousness and life by faith) - but these blessings only come to those in Christ Jesus.

d. *Because this blessing is ours in Jesus, we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith* - not through coming back under the law as the principle for living.

5. (15-18) The Permanence of God's Covenant with Abraham.

a. *Paul first establishes the principle that even with a covenant among men, that covenant stands firm once it is made* - the implication is, "how much more with a covenant God makes!"

b. *In Genesis 22:18, God promised Abraham that in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;* Paul observes that the singular for seed is used, not the plural. God is referring to one specific descendant of Abraham, not all his descendants in general.

c. *Because this was a covenant with a promise in it to the Messiah, we cannot think that it was over-ruled by the covenant God later established with Israel at Sinai.*

- i. The permanence of God's covenant with Abraham is an important principle; it was a unilateral covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15) that was promised forever (Genesis 17:7-8)
- ii. There is no if in the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15); but there are plenty of ifs in the Mosaic covenant (Deuteronomy 28); the Mosaic covenant was between two parties, not a unilateral covenant (Exodus 24:3-8).
- iii. This means that promise of a land (Genesis 12:1;

13:7; 15:18-21), a nation (Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 17:4-6; 22:17) and of a blessing (Genesis 12:2-3; 22:18) stands eternally to Abraham and his descendants, though spiritually the promise of a blessing comes to every nation through Christ.

d. *If the inheritance offered to Abraham was on the basis of law, it might not be permanent - because it would depend, at least in part, on Abraham's performance of the law.* But since the inheritance was offered on the basis of promise, God's promise, it stands sure

e. *Gave in verse 18 is the Greek word kecharistai, which is based on the Greek word charis - grace.* God's giving to Abraham was the free giving of grace; the word is also in the perfect tense, showing that the gift is permanent.

C. The Purpose of the Law Helps Us Understand our Freedom from the Law.

1. (19-20) The Law was Given Because of Man's Transgression.

a. *Part of the reason the law was given was to restrain the transgression of men through clearly revealing God's holy standard;* but the law also excited man's innate rebellion through revealing a standard, showing us more clearly our need for salvation in Jesus (Romans 7:5; 7-8).

b. *A promise depends on one person;* a mediated agreement depends on two. The weakness of the law compared to the covenant of Abraham is shown because it depends on two parties, not God alone.

c. *Boice calls verse 20 "probably the most obscure verse in Galatians, if not the entire New Testament."* One commentator observes more than 250 interpretations of it; another raises the figure to 300.

i. "The general thought seems to be that the promise

must be considered superior to the law because the law is one-sided. The law was mediated, and this means that man was a party to it. The promise, on the other hand, is unilateral; man is not a party to it." (Boice).

2. (21-22) The Law is not Contrary to the Promises of God.

- a. *The law is not evil, opposing God's promise;*** it's problem lies in its inability to impart strength to those who desire to keep it - if the law could have given life, then it could have brought righteousness
- b. *But only faith can bring us out of our confinement of sin;*** law can show us clearly our problem and God's standard, but it cannot give us the freedom that only Jesus can give.
 - i. As Augustine said: "The law only detects; grace alone conquers sin".

3. (23-25) The law as our tutor, our guardian to bring us to Jesus.

- a. *Before God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ was fully evident, we were kept under guard by the law*** - both in the sense of being bound by the law, but also held in protective custody.
- b. *The law, through its revelation of God's character and its exposure of our sin, prepares us to come to Jesus*** - but after we have come, we no longer have to live under our tutor (though we remember the behavior he has taught us).
- c. *Tutor is not an accurate translation of the idea of the Greek word paidagogos;*** the paidagogos did not teach a child; instead, he was the child's guardian, watching over the child and his behavior
- d. *If someone doesn't present the law in a manner which brings people to faith in Jesus, they are not presenting the law properly*** - the way Jesus Himself

presented it (Matthew 5:17-48).

4. (26-29). Our New Place in Jesus.

- a. *We are now all sons of God in Jesus;*** we can enjoy that relationship with God as a loving, caring Father.
- b. *We are immersed in Jesus;*** we have put on Jesus as our chief identity; to put on Christ is to be clothed with Him as your identity.
- c. *We are equal in Jesus;*** if He is our chief identity, that is more important than any prior identity we possessed.

The Jews had a prayer that each man would pray every morning, thanking God that he was not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. Paul takes each of these categories and shows them to be equal in Jesus.

- d. *We are spiritual descendants of Abraham and heirs of God, but all according to promise, not according to law or works.***

- i. The Judaizers were saying to the Galatians that if they would submit to the law and become circumcised, they could enjoy the status of being Abraham's seed - but Paul points out that this is already theirs through faith in Jesus.



HEIRS AND SLAVES, GRACE AND LAW.

A. Heirs and Children.

1. (1-3) An illustration and its Application.

a. *The word child has the idea of a "minor" - not so much suggesting a specific age, as someone who is legally unrecognized as an adult.*

- i. In both Jewish and Greek cultures, there were definite "coming of age" ceremonies, where a boy stopped being a boy and started being a man.
- ii. In the Roman custom, there was no specific time when the son became a man; it was when the father thought the boy was ready, when he thought the time was right.
- iii. "A Roman child became an adult at the sacred family festival known as the Liberalia, held annually on the seventeenth of March. At this time the child was formally adopted by the father as his acknowledged son and heir and received the toga virilis in place of the toga praetexta which he had previously worn." (Boice)
- iv. "There was a Roman custom that on the day a boy or a girl grew up, the boy offered his ball, and the girl her doll, to Apollo to show that they had put away childish things." (Barclay).

b. *An heir - even an heir to a royal throne* - has no particular power as a child, even though they have great

position and responsibility; the heir is under the strict care of guardians and stewards.

c. *The law was our guardian (3:24-25)*, to watch over us while we are still "children"; the law's effect on our corrupt nature was to bring us into bondage under the elements of the world.

d. *Elements of the world:* "To describe it Paul uses the word *stoicheia*. A *stoicheion* was originally a line of things; for instance, it can mean a file of soldiers. But it came to mean the ABC, and then any elementary knowledge." (Barclay)

i. Cole translates the idea: "So too, we, when we were 'young children,' were kept in slavery to the ABC of the universe."

ii. The idea of the "ABC of the universe" is important. If there is any "ABC of the universe" that we must break free from, and that is stressed in pagan religion just as much as Judaistic law, it is the principle of cause and effect. Call it karma, call it "you get what you deserve," or whatever, it rules nature and the minds of men. We live under the idea that we get what we deserve; when we are good, we deserve good; when we are bad, we deserve bad.

iii. Paul is telling the Galatians to go beyond this "ABC of the universe" into an understanding of God's grace. Grace contradicts this "ABC of the universe," because under grace God does not deal with us on the basis of what we deserve. Our good cannot justify us under grace; our bad need not condemn us. God's blessing and favor is given on a principle completely apart from the "ABC of the universe." His blessing and favor is given for reasons that are completely in Him, and have nothing to do with us.

iv. The "ABC of the universe" is not bad in itself; we do and must use it in life, and God has a proper place for it; but we must not relate to God on this principle - He does deal with us on the principle of earning and

deserving

- v. Because this is such an elementary principle, it is so hard for us to shake this kind of thinking. But it is essential if we will walk in grace.

2. (4-5) The Liberation of Heirs from their Bondage

a. *The idea behind the fullness of time is that "the time was right";* Jesus came at just the right time in God's redemptive plan, when the world was perfectly prepared for God's work.

- i. For those who were under bondage to the law, it may seem that Jesus' coming was late; Paul assures us that it was at just the right time.
- ii. "It was a time when the pax Romana extended over most of the civilized earth and when travel and commerce were therefore possible in a way that had formerly been impossible. Great roads linked the empire of the Caesars, and its diverse regions were linked far more significantly by the all-pervasive language of the Greeks. Add the fact that the world was sunk in a moral abyss so low that even the pagan cried out against it and that spiritual hunger was everywhere evident, and one has a perfect time for the coming of Christ and for the early expansion of the Christian gospel." (Boice)
- iii. The time was also right because the 483 years prophesied by Daniel were drawing to a close (Daniel 9:24-26).

b. *Jesus came not only as God's Son, but also as one born of a woman, born under law;* it is only because of both of these "genealogies" that Jesus can save us

- i. Born of a woman may be a veiled reference to the Virgin Birth.

c. *Jesus came to redeem (buy back) those who were under the law;* the picture is of being purchased out of the slave market (our bondage).

d. *Not only are we purchased out of the slave market;* we are then elevated to the place of sons and daughters of

God by adoption!

- i. Paul probably has in mind the Roman custom of adoption, where adopted sons were given absolutely equal privileges in the family and equal status as heirs.

e. *We receive the adoption of sons*; we do not recover it. In this sense, we gain something in Christ greater than Adam ever possessed; Adam was never adopted as a son of God in the way believers are. We err when we think of redemption as merely a restoration of what was lost with Adam; we are granted more in Christ than Adam ever had.

- i. There is a sense in which this is a totally unnecessary blessing which God has given in the course of salvation, and a demonstration of His true and deep love for us. We can picture someone helping or saving someone, but not going so far as to make them a part of the family - but this is what God has done for us.

3. (6-7) Celebrating Our Sonship.

a. *It is fitting that those who are in fact sons have the Spirit of the Son in their hearts*; which enable us to cry out (with Jesus) "Daddy!" to God our Father.

- i. Some think that translating the idea of Abba as "Daddy" is too intimate; Cole writes on Abba: "While it was the usual informal word applied by a child to its father within the home, it is over-sentimentalizing to translate it as 'Daddy'."
- ii. But as Boice points out, "The early church fathers - Chrysostom, Theodor of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret of Cyprus, who came from Antioch (where Aramaic was spoken and who probably had Aramaic-speaking nurses in their childhood) - unanimously testify that Abba was the address of a small child to his father."
- b. There are important distinctions between our sonship and Jesus' sonship: He is the only begotten Son (John 3:16) making Him a Son by essential nature; we are adopted sons and daughters of God, made children by

a legal decree of God.

- c. ***The connection is clear between freedom from slavery;*** sonship and then a status as an heir; but see what we inherit as heirs - God Himself.
 - d. ***The release from slavery, the sonship, the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts, and our status as heirs of God are all birthrights given to us in Jesus;*** these are things we should be living in and enjoying every day of our Christian life.
4. (8-11) **The contrast between the glorious liberty of sonship in Jesus and the bondage false teaching has brought to the Galatians.**
- a. ***The bondage is natural when we did not know God and when we served those things which are not gods;*** but why would someone who knows the true God, and has been set free, place themselves under bondage? This is what the Galatians are doing!
 - b. ***Paul makes an important point when he says or rather are known by God;*** it is really more important that God knows us (in the sense of an intimate, accepting relationship) than it is that we know God.
 - i. Remember the terrible words of judgment in Matthew 7:21-23: I never knew you.
 - c. ***Turn again to the weak and beggarly elements:*** In turning to legalism, the Galatians were not turning to a new error, but coming back to an old one - the idea of a works relationship with God
 - i. Again, Paul uses the same word for elements used in verse 3; as Christians, we can place ourselves under the bondage of a works based, "cause and effect" relationship with God - but this is going back, not forward.
 - ii. "One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a 'second childhood' of

Christian experience." (Wiersbe).

- d. *These elements of the world are weak because they offer no strength;*** they are beggarly because they bestow no riches.
- e. *The false teachers coming to the Galatians and demanding the observing of days and months and seasons and years and other such legalistic matters acted as if this would lead them into a higher plane of spirituality;*** all these weak and beggarly elements of legalism can do is bring us into bondage.
 - i. "Notice how such a verse is at a variance with any and every theory of a Christian sabbath, cutting at the root, as it does, of ALL obligatory observance of times as such" (Alford).
- f. *Again, Paul is amazed that someone would turn from the liberty of Jesus to this kind of bondage;*** but remember that the liberty of Jesus does not cater to or recognize our flesh, while the "spirituality" promoted by legalism does.
- g. *Paul's fear is that this attraction to legalism will mean that his work among the Galatians will end up being in vain.***
 - i. Labored is literally "to labor to the point of exhaustion"; Paul never thought that his gospel of free grace meant laziness in serving God.

B. A Personal Appeal from Paul.

1. (12) An Appeal to Imitate Paul.

- a. *Paul knows well that he is not perfect;*** yet he is a worthy example of consistency with the same gospel through the years.
- b. *Paul can also say for I am as you are;*** he has experienced the same pressures drawing him to legalism that the Galatians were succumbing to.

2. (13-16) Paul remembers his trial in the flesh and the warm response of the Galatians towards him.

a. Possibly, Paul was compelled into the region of Galatia because of some type of physical infirmity suffered while on his missionary journeys.

- i. According to Acts 13, Paul came to Pisidian Antioch (a city of Galatia) from Perga in Pamphylia; this is a rise of some 3,600 feet in altitude - perhaps the altitude was sought because it would be beneficial for whatever was ailing Paul
- ii. Suggestions have been made that Paul contracted malaria in the lowlands of Perga; others have suggested that his problem was depression, or epilepsy, or that his illness is connected with the thorn in the flesh mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12. None of these can be established with certainty.
- iii. Barclay describes the malaria that was said to be common in the region of Pamphylia, where Paul had come from before coming to the Galatians as producing a prostrating pain that has been likened to "a red-hot bar thrust through the forehead"
- iv. When Paul was in the region of south Galatia, he was stoned in the city of Lystra; his attackers gave him up for dead, yet he miraculously survived. Some think that this was the cause of the physical infirmity he mentions.

b. Even though Paul was not a great example of strength and power because of his physical infirmity, the Galatians still received him, and they received him honorably - even to the extent that they would have plucked out [their] own eyes if that could somehow meet his need.

- i. This leads some to believe that Paul's physical ailment had something to do with his eyes; however, he may just be referring to the willingness of the Galatians to give their own eyes as an example of ultimate sacrifice for him.
- ii. Wuest (along with Rendall and Robertson) believe that the Greek text tips the scales in favor of seeing Paul's

physical infirmity as an eye problem (see also Galatians 6:11)

- iii. "As physical infirmity and illness were regarded by Jews and Gentiles alike as a symbol of divine displeasure or punishment, there would have been a natural temptation for the Galatians to despise Paul and reject his message" (Fung).

c. In light of the great love and honor the Galatians had shown towards Paul, and in light of the great blessing they received from God when they showed such to him, the Galatians should not think that Paul has now become their adversary when he confronts them with the truth

- i. "To the degree that ministers and teachers of the Word of God do teach the Word, to that same degree should they be received as the Galatians received the apostle Paul. Ministers should not be received and evaluated on the basis of their personal appearance, intellectual attainments, or winsome manner, but as to whether or not they are indeed God's messengers bearing the word of Christ." (Boice).

3. (17-18) Paul Contrasts his Tough Love with the Warm Approach of the Legalists.

a. Paul will admit that the legalists zealously court the Galatians; and legalism often comes wrapped in a cloak of "love"; but the end effect is for no good.

b. Legalism often reveals itself by its partisan, sectarian spirit; these legalists who were troubling the Galatians wanted actually to exclude the Galatians from other Christians, and to bring them into their own "super-spiritual" party

- i. The zeal desired by the legalists is often more a zeal for the group itself than for Jesus Christ; though Jesus is named, the group is exalted as the main focus - usually as the last refuge of the "super-Christians".

c. Exclude is literally "lock you up"; for now, the legalists

are courting the Galatians, but once they have alienated them from Jesus and from Paul, the legalists will demand that the Galatians serve them - legalism is almost always associated with ecclesiastical bondage

i. "The Judaizers had pursued the adroit course of presenting to them only part of the requirements of the Mosaic law, those parts which might be least repulsive to them as Gentiles. Having gotten them to adopt the festivals and perhaps the fast days, the Judaizers were no urging them to adopt circumcision." (Wuest).

d. Paul will grant that it is good to be zealous in a good thing; he wants the Galatians to be zealous for what is good when he is absent, not only when he is present among them

4. (19-20) An Appeal Based on Paul's Love for the Galatians.

a. Paul rightly considers himself as a father to the Galatians; and he sees that the work of forming Christ in them is not yet complete - so Paul's job among the Galatians is not yet complete

i. The idea of forming Christ in them is similar to the idea of Romans 8:29, For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

b. Paul wishes two things; that he could be present with the Galatians, but also that he did not need to speak to them in such strong words - but their danger of defecting from the true gospel has made such strong words necessary, and has made Paul's doubts necessary to address.

C. An appeal to the incompatible nature of grace and law

1. (21) Paul will appeal to the law to those who claim the law.

a. Paul will not grant that his legalistic opponents have the law as their evidence; he sees that a true

understanding of the law will support the true gospel.

b. *We must remember that Paul is speaking about law and gospel as systems by which we live and approach our relationship with God:* under the system of law, we earn God's favor and blessing through our obedience to His rules, under the system of grace, we receive God's favor and blessing as a free gift, received by faith.

2. (22-23) The contrast between Isaac and Ishmael.

a. *The Jewish legalists who were troubling the Galatians protested that they were children of Abraham, and thus blessed* - Paul will admit they are children of Abraham, but they are like Ishmael, not Isaac!

i. Remember what John the Baptist said to Jews who put too much confidence in the fact that they were Abraham's children: and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. (Matthew 3:9).

b. *The legalists claimed Abraham as their father;* Paul wants to know who their mother was - Hagar or Sarah? Ishmael was born of a slave, and born according to the flesh; Isaac was born of a freewoman, and born according to promise.

c. *Even so, the legalists promote a relationship with God based in bondage and according to the flesh;* the true gospel of grace offers liberty in Christ, and is a promise received by faith.

3. (24-27) The contrast between Sinai and the heavenly Jerusalem.

a. *Sinai was a desert place,* and the place where the law was given, and the land of Ishmael ever since.

b. *But we are of the Jerusalem above, that is, heaven;*

being born from above, we can rejoice with those who rejoice in the miraculous gift of birth God's gives

- i. The quotation from Isaiah also suggests that there will soon be more Christians than Jews - a promise which was fulfilled Slavery Freedom

Hagar - a slave woman.

Sarah - a free woman

Ishmael - born according to the flesh.

Isaac - born through God's promise.

The Sinaitic covenant of law.

The covenant of promise and faith.

The present Jerusalem. The Jerusalem above

The children of the present Jerusalem.

The children of the Jerusalem above (legalists) (Christians).

Righteousness by law Righteousness by faith.

4. (28-31) Application of the contrasts between the two systems.

- a. ***We identify not with Ishmael, but with Isaac***, who was a child of a promise that was received by faith.

- b. ***Even as Ishmael and his descendants have persecuted Isaac and his descendants, we should not be surprised that the modern day people who follow God in the flesh persecute those who follow God in faith through the promise.***

- i. The persecution Christians face "will not always be by the world but also and indeed more often by their half-brothers - the unbelieving but religious people in the nominal church. This is the lesson of history. . . . Today the greatest enemies of the believing church are found among the members of the unbelieving church, the greatest opposition emanating from pulpits and church hierarchies." (Boice).

- c. ***The answer to this problem is clear:*** cast out the bondwoman and her son; law and grace cannot live together as principles for our Christian life - and there is



STANDING FAST IN THE LIBERTY OF JESUS.

A. A Final Appeal to Walk in the Liberty of Jesus.

1. **(1) Summary Statement:** in light of all that Paul has said previously, he now challenges the Galatians to walk in the truth.
 - a. ***The fact is that Jesus has set us free;*** it is our job, with God's strength, to walk in that freedom, and to not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.
 - i. The Jews themselves spoke of the law as a yoke, but they used the term in a favorable light - Paul sees it as slavery.
 - b. ***Someone who is legally made free in Christ can still live in bondage;*** they are deceived into placing themselves back into slavery.
 - c. ***D. L. Moody spoke of an old black woman in the South following the Civil War. Being a former slave, she was confused about her status and asked:*** Now is I free, or been I not? When I go to my old master he says I ain't free, and when I go to my own people they say I is, and I don't know whether I'm free or not. Some people told me that Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation, but master says he didn't; he didn't have any right to. This is exactly where many Christians are; legally free in Christ yet in bondage because their "old master" has deceived them.

d. The idea of a yoke of bondage reminds us of what Peter said in Acts 15:10 about those who would bring the Gentiles under the law: Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? The Jews themselves were not able to justify themselves before God by the law, so they shouldn't put that heavy, burdensome yoke on the Gentiles!

2. (2-4) The Danger of Embracing the Law as a Way to Walk with God.

a. When we embrace the law as our rule of walking with God, we must let go of Jesus; He is no longer our righteousness, we attempt to earn it ourselves

- i. The legalists among the Galatians wanted them to think that they could have both Jesus and a law-relationship with God; Paul tells them that this is not an option open to them - the systems of grace and law are incompatible.

b. When we embrace the law as our rule of walking with God, we must embrace the entire law - we become debtors to keep the whole law.

- i. Again, the legalists among the Galatians wanted them to think they could observe some aspects of the law without coming under the entire law; but when we choose to walk by law, we must walk by the whole law.
- ii. No amount of obedience makes up for one act of disobedience; if you are pulled over for speeding, it will do no good to protest that you are a faithful husband and a good taxpayer; you have still broken the speeding law and are guilty under it.
- iii. We will later see that Paul doesn't care one way or another about circumcision (Galatians 5:6); what he detests is the theology of circumcision as presented by the legalists.

c. When we embrace the law as our rule of walking with God, we depart from Jesus and His grace; we have

fallen from grace.

- i. The danger of falling from grace is real; we often think of “falling away” in terms of immoral conduct, but we are not saved by our conduct. However, we are saved by our continuing reliance by faith on the grace of God; someone may fall from grace and be damned without ever falling into grossly immoral conduct.
- ii. Boice on you have fallen from grace: “The phrase does not mean that if a Christian sins, he falls from grace and thereby loses his salvation. There is a sense in which to sin is to fall into grace, if one is repentant. But to fall from grace, as seen by this context, is to fall into legalism. . . . Or to put it another way, to choose legalism is to relinquish grace as the principle by which one desires to be related to God.”

3. (5-6) The answer of faith to the legalist.

a. *Those walking in the Spirit are waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith*; they are not trying to earn it by performing good works.

b. *Those walking in the Spirit know that being circumcised or uncircumcised means nothing*; but faith working through love (both of which were conspicuously absent in the legalists) matters

- i. As said by Paul in Romans 14:17 - for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

4. (7-12) A Final Confrontation.

a. *Paul recalls their good start in the faith (you ran well), but remembers that it isn't enough to start well* - they are still in danger of falling from grace.

b. *Paul knows that the false teaching comes from a person (who hindered you)*; but it isn't from Jesus (Him who calls you).

- i. At root, the Galatians were leaving Jesus to pursue man's doctrine - in this case legalism.

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- c. *The warning is driven home*** - the corrupting influence of legalism and other doctrines which diminish Jesus are like leaven in a lump of dough; a little soon corrupts the entire mass.
- d. *Wanting to leave the confrontation on a positive note***, Paul expresses his confidence in the Galatians (which is really a confidence in the Lord who is able to keep them); yet Paul is equally confident that judgment awaits those who are leading them astray and away from Jesus.
- i. Remember Jesus' solemn warning against those who would lead one of these little ones astray (Matthew 18:6-7).
- e. *Paul makes it clear that he no longer preaches the necessity of circumcision***; the fact that he is persecuted by the legalists is evidence enough of this. Instead, Paul proudly bears the offense of the cross.
- d. *Finally***, Paul wishes that those who demanded circumcision among the Gentiles would go all the way themselves, and amputate their genitalia altogether, not merely their foreskins
- i. Sacred castration was known to citizens of the ancient world; it was frequently practiced by pagan priests in the cults in the region of Galatia; the idea is something like this: "If cutting will make you righteous, why don't they do like the pagan priests, go all the way and castrate themselves?"
- ii. Paul also is wishing that these legalists would be cut off from the congregation of the Lord as required by Deuteronomy 23:1: He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD.

B. How to Live in the Liberty of Jesus.

1. (13-15) Using Liberty to Love each Other.

- a. *The great fear of the legalist is that liberty will always be used as an opportunity for the flesh***; Paul recognizes this danger, but his warning shows that it

isn't inevitable

- i. Rendall on opportunity: "This term was applied in military language to a base of operations, and generally to any starting-point for action." We are tempted to use our liberty in Jesus as a "base of operations" for selfish sin.

b. *The antidote for using liberty as an occasion for the flesh is to through love serve one another;* it isn't through an obsessive, contemplative attitude of navel-gazing that we overcome the flesh, but by getting out and serving others.

c. *This attitude of service towards one another fulfills the great commandment (You shall love your neighbor as yourself),* and it keeps us from destroying ourselves through strife

- i. The simple idea of loving your neighbor as yourself has been twisted into the idea of putting self-love as the foundation for a healthy human personality; instead, the simple idea is that as we naturally take care of ourselves, we should also take care of others
- ii. "The primary meaning is not that we must properly love ourselves before we can love others . . . but that we are to love our neighbor with the same spontaneity and alacrity [speed] with which we love ourselves." (Fung).

2. (16-18) Using Liberty to Walk in Holy Living.

a. *Simply put, if we walk in the Spirit (instead of trying to live by the law), we will naturally not fulfill the lust of the flesh* - again, the fear of the legalist - that walking in the Spirit gives license to sin, and that only legalism can keep us holy - is just plain wrong

- i. "Life by the Spirit is neither legalism nor license - nor a middle way between them. It is a life of faith and love that is above all of these false ways." (Boice)
- ii. "The mistake that is made so often is that the Mosaic law is substituted for the restraint of the Holy Spirit, and with disastrous results. . . . A policeman on the street corner is a far more efficient deterrent of law-breaking

than any number of city ordinances placarded for public notice." (Wuest).

b. *The struggle within us results from the battle between the Spirit and the flesh;* our flesh is that aspect of our being which is essentially a moral neutral, yet has been trained in rebellion by the old nature, the world, and the devil

- i. Even though the old man was crucified with Christ, and is dead and gone (Romans 6:6), his influence lives on through the flesh - and will battle us until we experience God's final antidote to the flesh: a resurrection body.

c. *The antidote to the flesh is not found in the law, but in the Spirit* - and if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

3. (19-21) Examples of the Works of the Flesh that Walking in the Spirit Helps Us to Overcome.

a. *This catalog of sins include sensual sins, religious sins, interpersonal sins and social sins;* while we should not regard this as an exhaustive list, it adequately gives the idea

- i. Licentiousness has the idea of "ready to sin at any time"; it describes someone who will always flaunt public decency
- ii. "There is ample evidence to show that the sexual life of the Greco-Roman world at the time of the NT was sheer chaos. Such evidence has come not from Christian writers but from pagans who were disgusted with the unspeakable sexual immorality." (Fung)
- iii. Sorcery (translated witchcraft in the NIV) is the Greek word *pharmakeia*, from which we get our word for "pharmacy"; in the ancient world, the taking of drugs (especially hallucinogens) was always associated with the occult, and the Bible's association with drug taking and sorcery points out that drugs open up doors to the occult that are better left closed.

b. *To walk in these works of the flesh* is to be in plain rebellion against God, and those in plain rebellion against

God will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- i. "The tense of the verb (present) indicates a habitual continuation in fleshly sins rather than an isolated lapse, and the point is that those who continually practice such sins give evidence of having never received God's Spirit." (Boice).

c. Paul may sound rigid or even harsh here, but he is consistent with the Biblical idea of conversion; when we come to Jesus to have our sins forgiven and our soul saved, He changes our life also - not all at once, and not to perfection, but a real change none the less (1 John 3:5-9)

- i. As Spurgeon put it, "the grace that does not change my life will not save my soul".

4. (22-26) Examples of the fruit of the Spirit that walking in the Spirit produces in our lives.

a. Paul seems to use the singular term is love in describing the fruit of the Spirit; the other terms simply describe what God's love will look like in our lives.

b. This fruit is not produced by the law (and of course they are not against the law), but like all fruit, it is produced by a simple abiding in the vine, the source of life (John 15:5).

c. Walking in the Spirit means that we will, in partnership with God, do to the flesh what He has already sovereignly done to the old nature: crucify it with Christ, and live as if it is crucified with Christ.

d. The passions and desires of the flesh are what give it its power in us; in our rebellion, we twist the God-given desires of our flesh and corrupt them into unholy lusts.

e. True life in the Spirit is shown by walking in the Spirit, and living in the Spirit, showing the fruit of the Spirit - "spiritual gifts" are a means to this end, not evidence in themselves of the Spirit's work.

f. True life in the Spirit is always shown by its humility, not by an arrogant "we're the super-Christians" attitude



FINAL INSTRUCTION

A. Personal Responsibility and Helping Others.

1. (1) Restoring those who are in sin.

- a. Paul recognizes that there may be those among the Christians in Galatia who have been ***overtaken in a trespass***; such ones need to be restored by those who are spiritual.
- b. **This job of restoration is often neglected in the church**; we have a tendency to either pretend the sin never happened, or we tend to react too harshly towards the one who has sinned. The balance between these two extremes can only be negotiated by the ***spiritual***.
- c. Restoration must always be done in a ***spirit of gentleness***, with full understanding of our own weakness and corruption; those doing the restoring must guard against the temptation of pride, as well as the same temptation the weaker one has struggled with.
- d. **The influence of the legalists among the Galatians made this warning necessary**; "Nothing reveals the wickedness of legalism better than the way the legalists treat those who have sinned." (Wiersbe)

2. (2-5) Bearing Each Other's Burdens and Bearing Our Own Load.

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- a. As we bear one another's burdens, we are fulfilling the simple law of Jesus:** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34-35).
- b. This reminds us of how often God is here to meet our needs through other Christians;** those who have a "just me and Jesus" idea of life have a limited view of how Jesus meets our needs.
- c. Often it is pride, rooted in a lack of self-examination, that keeps us from ministering to others as we should;** Paul cautions us to put away these, so that we can minister to each other.
- d. Our renunciation of pride and our willingness to examine ourselves will result in rejoicing in himself alone;** we will have confidence before God because we have judged ourselves, we have let God's judgment begin with us - as it should, because we are all personally accountable before God
- i. The rejoicing in himself means having joy at your own walk with the Lord, not feeling spiritual because those around you may be falling.
- e. Does for each one shall bear his own load contradict bear one another's burdens? Not at all;** in one Paul speaks of our final accountability before God, and in the other he speaks of our need to care for others in the body of Christ.
- i. The word for load in verse 5 is a common term for a man's back pack; the word for burdens in verse 2 is a different word meaning "heavy burdens" - those that are more than a man should carry.

3. (6-10) Doing Good to Others in the Household of Faith.

- a. Paul first points to the necessity of those who are**

taught supporting (share in all good things) those who teach them; his idea is focused on financial support, but not limited to it

- i. "Of the variety of interpretations of Paul's words here the most common is also the most likely: this takes share in the sense of active giving and all good things in the sense of physical goods (Luke 1:53; 12:18-19; 16:25)" (Fung).

b. For those who are hesitant to share in all good things with those teaching them, Paul reminds them of God's principle of sowing and reaping - if they want to reap to the Spirit, they should not hesitate to sow to the Spirit with whatever resources God has given them.

- i. A farmer reaps the same as he has sown; he also reaps more if he has sown more, and the relationship between what he sows and what he reaps is exponential.
- ii. Paul isn't saying that you should support your teachers just for their good, but, under the principle of reaping and sowing, it is for your own good also.

c. In emphasizing God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap, Paul is not promoting some law of spiritual "karma" that ensures we will get good when we do good, or always get bad when we do bad (such an absolute law would damn us all); instead he speaks simply about the management of our resources.

- i. We may fool ourselves by expecting much when we sow little, but we cannot fool God, and the results of our poor sowing will be evident.

d. As we wisely manage our resources before God under the principle of sowing and reaping, we need patience - because the harvest does not come immediately after sowing the seeds.

e. So, not losing heart, we seek to do good with our resources, and to do good to all - but especially to

those who are of God's family.

- f. *The use of us and we in verse 9 indicates that Paul is speaking to himself as much as the Galatians;*** his work among them had not yet really been rewarded, so he should not lose heart either.
- i. Outside the Bible, the phrase for lose heart is used for the kind of fear and weariness a woman experiences during labor but before delivery - an agonizing time!

B. Final Words

1. (11) Introduction to Paul's Personal Postscript.

- a. *Paul's custom was to dictate his letters to a secretary, but to personally write a short portion at the end,*** both to authenticate the letter and to add a personal touch.
- b. *Paul points out that he has written this last part with large letters;*** perhaps because he had poor eyesight and could not read or write small print.

2. (12-13) A Final Word Regarding the Motives of the Legalists among the Galatians.

- a. *Their motive is to make a good showing in the flesh, and to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ;*** this is why they are trying to compel you [the Galatians] to be circumcised.
- b. *It isn't really that they have a passion for the law and pleasing God;*** they don't even really keep the law themselves. But they want the Galatians to be circumcised so that they may wear the submission of the Galatians as a badge of achievement
- i. Even as David had boasted in the two hundred foreskins of the Philistines he had killed, so these legalists wanted the allegiance of these Gentiles primarily as a trophy.
- c. *Of course, the legalists would say that their motives were only to please God and to honor His law;*** but

Paul sees through this false claim, exposing their true motives, rooted in fleshly pride.

3. (14-15) A Final Word Regarding the Motives of Paul.

a. *Paul's heart is to care nothing for amassing a personal following, caring only for the glory of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* - by which Paul considers himself dead to the world, and the world dead to him.

i. Paul's implied contrast between his motive and the motives of the legalists reminds us that all legalism and attempts to gain righteousness or favor from God on the basis of our good works is an essential rejection of Jesus' work on the cross; it is enough for Paul to declare that he glories only in the cross, and not in any human achievement.

b. *What matters to Paul is not our observance of the law* as such (though Paul definitely speaks to our moral responsibility in passages like Galatians 5:19-21), but what matters is what God has done in us - a new creation.

I . At root, Christianity is something God does in us, not something we do for God; this can simply define the difference between grace and law.

c. *Paul will not allow others to boast in the fact that they are uncircumcised;* all that is irrelevant! What matters is being a new creation in Jesus.

4. (16) A Blessing on Those Who Walk in God's Truth.

a. *Just as Paul was willing to pronounce a curse on those who taught false doctrines* (Galatians 1:8-9), he is also willing to give a blessing to those who walk according to this rule - who are the true Israel of God, the descendants of Abraham according to faith

5. (17-18) Last Words.

a. *Paul writes as one who has suffered for Jesus, and*

who bears those marks on his body; having suffered so, he can say from now on let no one trouble me, in the sense that it is fruitless for anyone to try, because he has already endured the worst.

b. Some have thought that Paul speaks here of a phenomenon known as the stigmata, where some claim to have marks on their body similar to Jesus' (wounds in the hands, feet, side, or head) as a result of an intense mystical identification with Jesus; such a view reads much into the simple words of the text - usually to justify an unhealthy mysticism.

i. But in the ancient world, slaves were branded with the name of their master, and "Instances are recorded of soldiers branding themselves with the name of their general in token of their absolute devotion to his cause." (Rendall); Paul says that his scars are his "brands" of allegiance.

c. Paul can wish nothing greater for the Galatians than that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit; if this is so, they will walk in a grace relationship with God, instead of the legal, performance based relationship that endangered them so - an appropriate end for the letter and prayer for all our lives.

i. "After the storm and stress and intensity of the letter comes the peace of the benediction. Paul has argued and rebuked and cajoled but his last word is GRACE, for him the only word that really mattered." (Barclay).

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