

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE SAINTS AT ROME

by Bryan Vinson, Sr.

Rewritten In Simple English With Notes

by Paul K. Williams

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Forward

In 1974 Bryan Vinson, Sr. of Longview, Texas, U.S.A. published his commentary on the Book of Romans. I bought a copy at that time and have treasured it as one of the best commentaries on the book.

The drawback of the book is that it is written in very difficult English. I work with people who use English as a second language and I know that they cannot understand this book. Yet I wanted them to be able to profit from Bro.

Vinson's excellent work.

Bro. Vinson is now dead. So I asked his son, Foy Vinson, if I could rewrite the book in simple English for the benefit of those who use English as a second language. He was enthusiastic about the idea and gladly gave me permission.

I have kept the same format as the original book. There are a few places where I have a different interpretation of a passage. In those places I have given Bro. Vinson's comments, then in a separate note given my ideas. And a few times I have inserted the comments of others. I have used the New American Standard updated text.

It is my hope that this book will prove very useful. It will give those whose second language is English a scholarly commentary which they should be able to understand without trouble. At the same time it should be just as useful for those whose first language is English. I believe the reader will find the commentary clear and practical.

March, 2001

Paul K. Williams

Eshowe, South Africa

Outline of Romans

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—From *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* by Charles R. Erdman

Introduction

In about the year A.D. 58, twenty eight years after Jesus was raised from the dead, the Christians in Rome received a letter. Sister Phoebe from Cenchrae brought it (Romans 16:1-2). It was from the great and beloved Paul the apostle who was probably at Corinth on his third preaching journey when he wrote it.

Rome was the famous capital of the civilised world. Nero had been the emperor for four years, and the Roman Empire was doing very well. Nero had not yet become the cruel persecutor of Christians which he later became. (His persecution of Christians began in A.D. 60 and continued until his death in A.D. 68.) People came to Rome from all over the world, and the church in Rome had members who had moved there from other places.

The New Testament does not tell us when the church in Rome began, or how it began. When the Holy Spirit came on the apostles in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2), Jews from Rome were there. It may be that they went back to Rome and preached the gospel. When they received the letter from Paul, the church was probably more than twenty years old and had members from many different places.

Most of the Christians in Rome were Gentiles (non-Jews), but there were a good number of Jews among them. They must have been excited to receive a long and obviously very important letter from Paul. When they read it they discovered that it discussed the most important things of salvation, and that Paul explained how Jews and Gentiles are saved in the one body. They must have studied the letter and discussed it to be sure they understood it properly. Then they made copies for others. And we today are able to read it.

The book of Romans is one of the most difficult books of the New Testament to understand. It deals with the same subject as the book of Galatians, but it goes into greater detail. It is different from the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians, while Romans is written to both Jews and Gentiles.

In Romans Paul writes to convince Jews and Gentiles that they are both sinners and that they are saved alike by the gospel. He deals with the objections of Jews. They did not understand why God gave them circumcision and the Law of Moses, nor did they understand the great promises which God gave to Abraham and others. And he writes to unite brethren who can easily draw apart.

I am sure that the brethren in Rome were happy to read that Paul intended to come to them. He first was going to Jerusalem to deliver money for the poor saints, money which came from Gentile churches in Macedonia, Achaia, Asia and other places. Then he hoped to come to them. He did go to Rome, and although he was a prisoner when he got there, the brethren welcomed him with joy (Acts 28:14-15).

Romans is a wonderful book. Some of its teachings have been misused, and in this commentary those passages are explained properly. There is rich treasure on every page, in nearly every verse. May God bless the student as he or she studies.

Chapter One

Verses 1-2: ¹ Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,

This beginning statement names the writer and tells us about Paul and his relationship to Christ. He was *called as an apostle* and *set apart for the gospel of God*. He is a servant and an apostle. Paul is humble and he has a deep understanding of the great responsibility Christ gave to him.

He was *set apart for the gospel of God*. The gospel comes from God. If a person says that the gospel did not come from God, he is saying that the gospel is not worth much. But Paul calls it “the gospel of God”. This means that the gospel is worth more than anything else. Since Paul was an apostle for the gospel of God, his apostleship was a very valuable thing.

God used the *prophets* in Old Testament times to tell about the coming gospel many centuries before it came. Paul was preaching the gospel which had come just as the prophets promised.

Verses 3-4: ³ concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

The gospel began in the mind of God and was announced by the prophets. Now Paul talks about the subject of the gospel, Jesus Christ. Paul describes where he came from and His relationship to man and to God.

He was made *flesh*, and He was a *descendant of David*. This was promised in prophecy. If Jesus had not been a descendant of David, Paul could not have been preaching the true gospel. The fact that Jesus was the descendant of David shows that He was human and that he fulfilled the prophecies.

But the gospel concerns “*Jesus Christ our Lord*”. This shows us that he is the divine Son of God. He had to be the Son of God in order to be “Lord”.

How can we know that Jesus is the Son of God? There were records of the ancestors of Jesus. They proved that He was the son of David. However, no records could prove that He was the Son of God. He is the Son of God in His spirit. His fleshly body had a beginning, but his Spirit always was. He, nevertheless, came to be the Son of God. There was a change in his relationship. He had always existed, but He became the Son of God.

Before He came to the earth, Jesus was equal with the One who is now His Father. He became a Son to the Father when God became His Father. Many people write confusing things about this which do not make sense. As an example, some write about “the eternally begotten Son of God”.

Jesus sometimes called himself “the Son of man” and at other times he called himself “the Son of God”. He was both. As “the Son of man” He was the descendant of David. But how can we know that He is the “Son of God”?

When Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, He performed many different miracles. They proved that He was the Son of God. The greatest miracle was the raising of the dead. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the greatness of God’s power when He raised Christ from the dead. (Eph. 1:19) When Jesus cast out a demon, the people were amazed that “*with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits*”. (Luke 4:36) They saw that He had both authority and power. He acted by the authority of God and used the power the Father gave him. God does not give such power to a man who is making false claims. The greatest act of all time was the resurrection of our Lord, and He was raised so that He became Lord of the living and the dead. We must believe completely that Jesus was raised from the dead or we cannot be saved. He had to be raised in order to be able to save.

Verses 5-7: ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ ⁷ to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was saved through grace. He said that he was not worthy to be an apostle because he had persecuted the church. He wrote, “*By the grace of God I am what I am*” (1 Cor. 15:10). However, in the above verses Paul was not just talking about his salvation. The grace of God saved him and made him an apostle so that he could do something for others. He was not made an apostle for his own benefit. He was “*to bring about the obedience of faith*” among all the Gentiles.

The expression “*obedience of faith*” tells us two things: 1) Faith *produces* obedience, and 2) faith *directs* our obedience. Without faith there can be no obedience of faith, though a person can have faith without obeying. Paul's work was not finished when the Gentiles believed. His job was to produce obedience of faith in them.

This shows that a person is not saved by faith *only*. Paul's apostleship was given to produce the *obedience* of faith. If faith only without obedience saves, Paul's work would be finished when he caused people to believe. But it was not finished then. His work was to produce “the obedience of faith”.

Paul's job was to produce the obedience of faith among all nations. This is the same job which all the apostles were given in the great commission. Paul's commission was the same as that given to the twelve apostles who were told to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and were told that those who believed that which was preached and were baptised would be saved (Mark 16:15-16). Baptism is an act of obedience, and when one is baptised because of the faith created in the heart by the gospel it is an obedience of faith.

All obedience shows faith. And all faith comes from some source. Obedience shows that we are under a greater person. If one's faith is in God, he will show his faith by doing what God says. If a person believes in the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God, he will do what men want him to do.

“For his name's sake” tells us that the one we must obey is Jesus Christ our Lord. The “*obedience of faith*” was obedience to Christ, and the thing which caused this obedience was hearing the word of Christ.

Paul did not write to those in Rome because they were Roman citizens. He wrote to those who were the *called of Jesus Christ*. They were the called because they were called by the gospel and they obeyed it. The called ones are *saints*, or holy persons, and *beloved of God*. Therefore this letter was written to Christians. Paul wrote it to greatly increase their appreciation of what it means to be a Christian. He did this by telling them how God's plan of salvation began, developed and was revealed.

This opening blessing to the brethren at Rome is like what Paul wrote to other brethren. Paul showed his great love for them when he connected *grace and peace*. Peace comes from grace, God is the one from whom it comes, and Christ is the one who brought it.

Verses 8-12: ⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world ⁹ For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you ¹⁰ always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you ¹¹ For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established ¹² that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

Their faith was spoken of *throughout the world*. This means that they first had to know this faith, and second that they spoke about their faith and

obeyed it. We know that their lives were changed by their faith because people spoke of their holy living. Yet they still needed the prayers of the apostle.

Paul's service to God was in the gospel of Christ. He preached that gospel and lived it. He wanted to come to Rome if it was the will of God so that he could help them. He wanted to give some spiritual gift to them. Spiritual gifts were given by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:14-18; 19:1-7). The fact that Paul wanted to give them a spiritual gift shows that no apostle was in Rome. If an apostle were there, he would give them the gift and Paul would not need to come there for that purpose.

The purpose of the spiritual gift was "*that you may be established*". At the time Paul wrote this book truth was being revealed through the prophets and apostles. Paul wanted to give them a gift so that they could receive this revelation. When the word of God was completely revealed, no spiritual gift was needed (See 1 Cor. 13:8-13). There are no apostles today, and no need for spiritual gifts.

Paul was an apostle with the power to give spiritual gifts, but he said that both he and the Roman Christians had the same faith. This means that the ones who gave gifts or received gifts were not greater than those who did not have gifts (1 Cor. 14:12). Spiritual gifts were given and received for the good of all Christians. They did not make anyone better than anyone else.

The gifts are no longer given, but faith continues (see 1 Cor. 13:13). It is a great and continual blessing that we have faith. All Christians have the same faith. We get it from the same Bible, we believe the same thing, and we all share the benefits of that faith.

Verses 13-15: ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish ¹⁵ So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Paul planned to go to Rome, but he was prevented. On one occasion Paul tried to go to Bithynia but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow him to (Acts 16:7). He wanted to go to Thessalonica once and again, but Satan hindered him (1 Thess. 2:18). So there were different reasons why his travel plans were stopped on those occasions. In chapter 15:20-24 Paul indicates that the reason he was prevented from coming to Rome was that there was still preaching which he had to do in areas east of Rome where the gospel had not been preached.

He wanted to have *fruit among them* —that is, he wanted to preach the gospel and convert those to whom he preached just as he had done among other Gentiles. This means he thought he would be preaching mostly to Gentiles rather than to Jews in Rome, though there were both Jews and Gentiles in the church there.

He felt *under obligation* to preach the gospel to all. He was obligated to do this because he was an apostle, but others have the same duty. Timothy was solemnly commanded to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:1-2). The early Christians who were forced to leave Jerusalem went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Paul said that though he preached the gospel he had nothing to boast of (1 Cor. 9:16). Why? He was commanded to preach and a woe rested on him if he did not.

He prayed for opportunity to preach, and so should every one who loves and knows the redeeming truth of the gospel. However, he could only do what he was able to do, so he said “*so for my part*”. So should we all. One has a duty to do only what he is able to do when he has opportunity. We should work to improve our abilities and make opportunities.

Verses 16-17: ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

All that was written *before* this statement was looking to it and was an introduction to this greatest of statements. Further, all that is written *afterward* through the eleventh chapter was written because of what this statement means. It is the keynote of this letter. If we fail to understand its importance we fail to understand the whole epistle. We must therefore carefully analyze these verses.

Paul was truly *not ashamed of the gospel* because he wanted to preach the gospel in Rome. If he had been ashamed of the gospel, he certainly would not have wanted to go there to preach. It is possible to be ashamed of the gospel. If a person denies that it is the power of God unto salvation, he is ashamed of the gospel. Those who say that the Holy Spirit must save people directly are ashamed of the gospel because they deny that the gospel is God's power to salvation. They think the gospel will not save unless the Holy Spirit directly and miraculously changes the heart of the sinner.

The statement that “*the gospel is the power of God for salvation*” says nothing about the power of God to do other things. God does use power other than the gospel to do other things, but for man's salvation it alone is God's power. God is all powerful, and he has chosen the gospel of Christ to save man. Because it is *God's* power we know that the gospel is everything that is needed to do the job. It is POWERFUL!

Yet, its power to save is only for those who believe. The gospel does not force anyone to be saved. It has power to cause people to believe if they listen with good hearts. Those who will not be persuaded by the gospel will not be saved.

The gospel reveals *the righteousness of God* — not His personal righteousness, but His way of making man righteous. The gospel is God's power to justify the sinner, and it does this by causing men to believe. This power does not save

the unbeliever, and there is nothing revealed to tell us of any power which God uses to save the unbeliever.

The expression “*from faith to faith*” has been interpreted in different ways. The gospel reveals that only the believer can be saved, and this fact becomes a motive for believing the gospel (see Galatians 2:16). I would not say that it is a compelling and irresistible motive, for no honest person can believe anything without strong evidence to justify his belief. But when the truth is revealed that salvation is offered to those who believe the gospel, there is a strong motive to give attention to the claims of the gospel which one would not do if faith were not necessary. The general indifference of our time is largely because people do not think it is necessary to know the truth and to believe it.

I believe “*from faith to faith*” is explained by that which is written, “*the righteous man shall live by faith*” (Habakkuk 2:4). Faith is present from the beginning of spiritual life, and faith is what develops, directs and causes us to continue our lives for God (Colossians 1:23). Similar expressions are used in Psalm 84:7 (“*from strength to strength*”), 2 Corinthians 3:18 (*from glory to glory*”), and John 1:16 (*grace for grace*).

(Note: Connie W. Adams suggests a different understanding. In a personal letter to me he wrote: “In verse 16 Paul said the gospel is God’s power to save the believer. One becomes a believer based on the message of the gospel delivered. ‘*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God*’ Rom. 10:17. It appears to me that what Paul is saying is that from the system of faith [the gospel] personal faith [conviction followed by obedience] is derived. So it is from faith [the gospel system of truth] that we come to faith [personal conviction with all that follows].” PKW)

If it does not matter what a person believes, it cannot matter whether he believes or not, but Paul says that the gospel is God’s power to salvation to every one who believes, *to the Jew first and also to the Greek*. Believing is an intelligent action which requires clear evidence to produce. The gospel contains the evidence of God’s righteousness, or more properly, His justification. This is a justification by faith and not a justification by law. Because this is so, the ones who are justified are to live a life of faith. The issue

is clearly formed and the theme of this letter is made clear: justification by faith instead of justification by law.

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

Paul here moves the discussion from the guilt of sin. He now writes about what sin produces—the suffering which comes as a result of God’s wrath poured out upon the sinner. The gospel not only saves from the guilt of sin, it saves us from what sin causes. This makes the blessedness of salvation by faith much greater.

Not only does the gospel reveal the salvation of those who believe it, but it clearly shows the condemnation of those who do not believe (Mark 16:16). When people reject the truth of God when they can know it, God is angry with a righteous wrath. He is angry because He made the truth known to them but they rejected it. They did not take notice of the evidence for it.

“Suppressing the truth in unrighteousness” means that although they possess the truth they are unrighteous. *Ungodliness* tells about one’s attitude toward God, and *unrighteousness* tells about men’s attitude and conduct toward one another. Paul speaks first of ungodliness, then in the latter part of the chapter he describes the progressive unrighteousness of those who reject the knowledge of God.

Verses 20-21: ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

It is possible to *clearly see* things which are *invisible*. They are seen through things which *are* visible. The seeing was not physical but mental—*being understood* by the things which were made. Therefore people have been able to see the invisible attributes of God ever since the world was made.

The attributes (abilities or qualities) of God which can be seen through the creation are His *eternal power* and *divine nature*. If a quality is eternal, the one who possesses it is eternal. The creation of the world required power which cannot be measured, and the power existed before the world was created. This is why God's eternal existence can be known from the facts of creation. This knowledge caused the unrighteous ones to be *without excuse*. *When they knew God they failed to honor Him as God*. At the first they knew God, but they did not act on that knowledge. They deliberately refused to honor God. This was ungodliness, which was shown clearly when they did not give thanks.

They were not thankful for what they received from God and they were not thankful to God who gave those things. They were like the nine of the ten lepers Jesus healed (Luke 17:12-19). Unthankfulness is the lowest quality of human character, yet it can often be seen among Christians.

They became *futile in their speculations*. They decided they did not need God, but that they could take care of themselves. It is easy for man to deceive himself into thinking he is all sufficient and can direct his own steps. When man thinks too highly of himself he ruins himself. The desire to be as gods pushed mother Eve into ruin for herself and her offspring. *"I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23).

However, Paul is not describing people who had no religion. They rejected the knowledge of God in order to worship something else. Their ignorance was willful and came from their desire to worship something else. They were greatly to be blamed.

Verses 22-25: ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

²⁴ ¶ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

To exchange a lie for truth is always wise, and to exchange truth for a lie is always foolish. They claimed to be wise, but because their hearts were darkened and foolish they acted like fools. In their foolish wisdom they exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and changed the glory of an incorruptible God for a likeness of corruptible (perishable) man. This was the first thing they changed because of their ungodliness. This one giant step led to others, finally resulting in the worship of images of humans and animals and even creeping things. Each step away from God led to other steps, and because they had erased the knowledge of God from their hearts everything which might keep them from further sin was gone. Their unrighteousness increased and increased. These verses describe what happens when people reject God. First the purpose of God's creation is rejected. Then people change the purpose of the natural functions God has given them. *Their bodies were dishonored among them* . When we use our bodies for the functions God has made them for, we honour God. When people change the proper use of their bodies into uses God did not make their bodies for, these people dishonour their bodies and God. So long as they knew God and glorified him they honoured him in honouring themselves by using their bodies in the way he designed them.

Such perversion as is described here has often been practiced and is being widely practiced today. It is even becoming acceptable in society today.

True worship is the most important and meaningful thing which man can do. But man, separated from the true God by his own choice decided to worship other things. This passage describes the changed course which man chose. God has always been a jealous God and will tolerate no other gods before Him (Matthew 4:10).

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

Because of their idol worship God gave them up to these *degrading* (that which brings something low) *passions*. The language is clear and direct enough to enable anyone to understand the practices Paul refers to. One cannot imagine any lower moral practices. Thus we see that when men abandon God for ungodliness, everything which keeps them from further wickedness is removed, and God allows them to sink to the revolting level described here. Very intelligent men in times past and in the present have been homosexuals. Yet Paul says such is against nature; hence, it is unnatural and a perversion of what God has made the human body for. Today this class of human filth has its own church and is openly and brazenly seeking to be accepted by the denominations in this country. We read of marriage ceremonies being performed uniting persons of the same sex. All such developments come because of unbelief even though some of them claim to believe in God.

Paul does not clearly say what *the due penalty of their error* is, but he says they received it *in their own persons*. Some think it was physical disease brought on by such practices. Certainly the disease of AIDS is spread by homosexuality, and it can be said that this is the due penalty of their error.

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

When men ignore and reject God, God is going to do something. We cannot mislead the One who knows the thoughts and intents of every heart, and God will not ignore us when we show we despise Him. When the conduct of these Gentiles sank lower and lower, *they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer*. This is easy to understand. Their actions were hated by God. If they acknowledged God their consciences would hurt them and they would feel miserable. They had to choose. Either they could forget about God or they could change their conduct. They chose to forget God.

Because they rejected the knowledge of God, *God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper*. God did not try to stop them from becoming more and more evil. The list of evils which they practiced is depressing reading. This kind of conduct is what comes as a natural course when people reject the knowledge of God.

We do not have to think that all the sins listed in this passage were practiced by each person, but all these sins were present in their society and were common among them. *Being filled with all unrighteousness* is a summary of the terrible evils listed. These evils are so many and terrible that it would be difficult to add any more to the list. A brief notice of these particular sins is deserved:

Fornication: This sin is listed in the King James translation of the Bible. (See also Galatians 5:19). It has to do with sexual relations outside of marriage

and is sinful because the law of God says that we must have sexual relations only with the person we are married to. History shows that there have been many periods of time when fornication was widespread, and it is certainly widespread today.

Wickedness: The wicked man is one who desires all kinds of evil and prefers evil instead of good.

Greed: Greed is a very strong desire which, because of its strength, leads a person to do wrong things in order to get what is desired. A man may desire fame and wealth so much that this becomes his consuming ambition. His whole life is devoted to getting those things. Truly the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10); therefore it is right to name this sin along with the others in this list. Paul says that greed is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). This is true because the greedy person loves what he wants more than he loves God.

Evil: This is translated “malice” in the King James Version. The evil person is one who feels ill-will toward others. He wishes harm on those he hates. He may hide his true feelings, but God knows his heart. When a person is evil, he will harm the person he hates if he has the opportunity. Malice is much like envy because envy often causes the malice. *Envy* is the bad feeling a person gets when he sees the good things which another person has.

Murder: The first recorded sin after Eden was when Cain murdered his brother. When we think about it correctly, whenever a person murders he murders his brother because we are all creatures of God and made in his image. We are all the children of the same Father because we are all his creatures. The greatest indignity that can be offered to God is to murder a fellow man who was made in the image of God.

For this reason God commanded that the murderer must be killed by other people (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:1-4). In many countries there is no death penalty for murder. These countries are failing to follow the clear command of God. A nation which will not carry out the command of God by executing murderers is storing up wrath from God.

Strife: All striving is not condemned, for we are to strive together for the faith of the gospel (see Romans 15:30). The strife which is wrong is that which comes from sinful desires and leads to violent quarrels, even murder; and it destroys peace.

Deceit: To mislead another in any matter is to practice deceit. Through deceit men become wealthy, attain positions of honour and power, and also often escape the just punishment for their evil deeds. By deceit the ends of justice are constantly being defeated.

Malice: This word is translated “malignity” in the King James Version. It is when bad feelings toward others result in all kinds of evil treatment of them.

Gossips: These are the secret slanderers; they act cowardly. A slander is a lie told to harm a person. A slander whispered can travel farther than a truth shouted from the housetop! The gossip tells his story as if he is sorry to have to tell it, but his heart is filled with evil pleasure when a good name is blackened. Gossiping comes from envy and malice, and it produces ruin which often cannot be repaired.

Slanderers: These are all those who tell lies to hurt other people. Often they do this when the one they slander is not present. Their front-line witnesses are “They say”, and “Now I cannot tell you who told me, but this is what I heard” almost always followed with: “Don’t tell anyone I told you”.

Haters of God: When one hates God he hates the one who is infinitely good. It is almost unthinkable that people will hate God. Men first had to take away the knowledge of God and in its place create a false picture of God before they could hate Him. Unhappily, some of the doctrines and commandments of men have so misrepresented Jehovah as to make Him hated instead of adored. This emotion of hate comes about because of a misunderstanding of God.

Insolent: To be insolent is to have an air of superiority, of being above, hence a looking down on others. It is to be rude, insulting, disobedient.

Arrogant: (Proud) Man has nothing to be proud of except that which God has given him. God gives us life and every good and perfect gift. If God gives

one person greater ability than another, that person cannot boast. His ability came from God, not from himself. When a person has greater ability, he has a greater responsibility to use that ability in God's service, and that fact should humble the man. But when men forget God, pride comes and when anyone succeeds more than another he becomes arrogant.

Boastful: These are proud ones who must let others know why they are so proud—they tell about what they have done. The apostle asked the question in this letter: *“Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith”* (Romans 3:27). Boasting comes from too great a love of our own selves and a lack of trust in the Lord.

Inventors of evil: God is not the author of evil—Satan is. When men stopped communicating with God they had only one other source to be influenced by. So what they invent shows the influence of the one to whom they are subject.

Disobedient to parents: There is a duty for children to obey parents. This is why disobedience to parents is listed as a sin along with the other terrible things. In the Ten Commandments God commanded “honor your father and mother”. This did not create the duty; it has always been the duty of children to obey their parents. Because the child is dependent on his parents, the child must honour his parents. When children learn to disobey their parents they will learn to disobey all proper authority. It is easy to see this in the many strikes and riots in schools, street demonstrations and riots, and other such things in every nation of the world. The underlying cause is the rejection of God in the thinking and lives of all such people who despise law. When children are not brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord there is created the climate for these conditions.

Without understanding: Why is this a sin? It is because it is possible to understand God's will (Ephesians 5:17), and those who misunderstand do so because they do not want to understand.

Today multitudes are willingly ignorant of what they should know and do not understand their moral and spiritual responsibilities. Because *“The fear of the*

Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10), those who do not fear God do not understand.

Untrustworthy (Translated “covenant-breakers” in the King James Version): These people cannot be trusted to do what they promise. It is better not to vow (promise), than having vowed, not to keep it (Ecclesiastes 5:5). If one borrows money or buys something on credit and then is slow about paying, he is showing that he cannot be trusted. I have known preachers who were blacklisted by merchants because they would not pay their bills, and yet they continued to enjoy the recognition and respect of brethren by being used in their congregations!

Unloving (“without natural affection” KJV): Nothing is worse in a parent than when he neglects to care for the physical, moral and spiritual needs of his child. Great as the duty of children to parents is, that of the parent to the child is greater (2 Corinthians 12:14). The family is the basic society, and where family ties are loosed the very foundation of all society is undermined. Today we see a deterioration of family life caused largely by the urbanization of society. If these conditions are not reversed, they will result in the destruction of our nation.

Unmerciful: This is a hardness of heart and a stubbornness which causes a person not to help others, and not to forgive others. The unmerciful person is pitiless and insensitive to the common problems and troubles of our fellowman. Christians are commanded to be merciful and courteous, not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing. Judgment will be without mercy to those who show no mercy, but happy are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

This completes the list of sinful acts which the Gentiles engaged in, but the closing description makes their attitude even worse. This goes beyond every outward expression of evil and gives an insight to the evil within when it becomes fully ripe. Many have engaged in sins who really wished for others to escape from those sins, but the depravity pictured here is so deep that they were pleased that others also sinned. They got satisfaction from one another. It says, “and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who

practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

I do not think that “death” here is physical death. My reasons are: first, all die physically whether they ever sin, and, secondly, some of these sins were private and within and of themselves were not criminal acts for which they would be executed. Today the powers that be, *as ordained by God*, do not put people to death for deeds that are immoral only, but for deeds that are criminal—for crimes rather than for sins. One may lust in his heart and be guilty of sin, but not guilty of a crime against society.

If, however, the death of which they were worthy is everlasting separation from God, and if the suffering is what they receive when one is separated from God, they must have known that there is an existence after death. One cannot know this simply by looking at nature. But I believe that there is something inside man which tells him that life on earth is not the whole of our existence. We must believe this in order for our consciences to work. However, because this death is connected with the wrath and indignation of God, it must be spiritual death. This death is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Verses 1-3: ¹ Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³ But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

There is a principle which Paul here uses to condemn many people. The principle is that God is impartial in His judgment. The one who *passes judgment* has *no excuse* because *you who judge practice the same things*. Jesus taught this in Matthew 7:1. There were people who were passing judgment yet were practicing the very things they condemned. How could they do this? They could do this only if they believed that God was partial, that God is a respecter of persons. Paul denies that.

There is a religious doctrine taught today which says that God is partial. The doctrine says, “Once a person is saved, he cannot be lost. He will go to heaven even if he commits many sins.” This doctrine is called, “Once saved, always saved,” and it denies that God’s *judgment rightly falls upon those who practice such things*.

Paul’s statement shows that there were people who thought that the Gentiles described in chapter one were condemned, but they also thought they could do the same things without being condemned. These people must have been Jews. They thought that because they were the chosen people of God, they would be saved even though they were committing sins.

Justice and truth are the qualities which God must have in order to be the righteous Judge. If some people must be punished for their sins while others who do the same things are not punished, those qualities are destroyed and God cannot be the righteous Judge. Human judges do not always follow the

principles of justice and truth, but when God judges He always follows justice and truth.

It was right for the Jews to condemn the Gentiles in their evil conduct. But the Jews also were condemned for their sins. When they condemned the Gentiles they were proving that they themselves also should be condemned.

Verse 4: Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Repentance shows that the person knows that he is guilty, and it shows that the sinner understands that the One he has sinned against is infinitely *good*. *Tolerance and patience* grow out of God's goodness.

God was always very good to the Jews, and He showed great tolerance (forbearance) and patience (longsuffering) toward them in their sins. He gave them time to repent, showing them many evidences of His goodness. But they despised all of these good things, and they did not pay attention to God's warnings. They treated God in a bad way. The result is found in the next verses:

Verses 5-6: ⁵ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ⁶ who will render to each person according to his deeds:

This statement points to God's *judgment* and what leads to it. First, this judgment is a *righteous* one. God will judge according to what is true and what is just. Further, His judgment will be individual. God does not judge groups of people; He judges *each person* separately. This should lead us to understand that what others do or fail to do makes no difference to our judgment. The *deeds* by which we will be judged are everything the person has done—his thoughts, words and actions. These deeds are done in the body,

that is, while we live here (2 Corinthians 5:10). God does not judge us by what we do out of the body or what we do after we die.

The deeds we do in the body are *storing up* something. Jesus taught that we should not lay up treasures on earth, but should lay up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20). So we are all gathering and increasing treasures for eternity. The people Paul is writing about are storing up *wrath*. This is God's wrath (righteous anger) directed toward the sinner. The *day* is the day of judgment which is, of course, the day of wrath for the sinner. That day will reveal the wrath of God when He causes the sinner to be punished.

Verses 7-11: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life ⁸ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

This sets forth an event which is coming and from which we cannot escape. It is when God will finally punish or reward every individual who has ever lived. His judgment will be eternal (Matthew 25:46) and therefore will never be changed. There are only two destinies for everyone—one of blessedness and unending happiness, and the other of never-ending pain and suffering. This judgment will show finally and completely that God does not show partiality.

At the house of Cornelius God showed Peter that He does not make a difference between persons. *Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him"* (Acts 10:34-35). If God's judgment is just, He must be impartial. Christians must be like God. We must not make a difference between persons (James 2:1-4).

But God does see the difference in character.

When Paul describes those who will receive eternal life, he writes that they are *seeking for* something. If they are seeking for it, they have not yet received it. They are seeking for *glory and honor and immortality*. The words “mortal” (subject to death) and “immortal” (never dying) are always used to refer to man’s body, not his spirit. Therefore glory, honour and immortality are what we will receive in the resurrection. No one has them while he is still living on the earth.

The way we seek glory, honour and immortality is *by perseverance in doing good*. We get these blessings by patiently doing our duty toward God and never giving up.

The word *eternal* describes the length of time we shall have *life*. The character of the life is a life of honour, glory and immortality. And it will never end. Praise God!

Verses 9 and 10 repeat what was said in verses 7 and 8. He who *does good* is the one who continues patiently in doing good, and the reward is for everyone who does good whether he is a Jew or a Gentile. In this life we have our differences of race, of politics, of social classes, but all these apply only to life on earth. These differences do not continue into the day of judgment and they do not affect how God will judge us. We have to understand these differences and act wisely according to them while we live, but they do not affect how God judges us.

The children of God have peace now, but the peace of these verses is for that time when glory and honour shall be given to the righteous. In that endless realm there will be nothing to disturb the peace enjoyed by the redeemed. It shall be everywhere and endless.

Those who are selfishly ambitious are the ones who are against the truth and what it demands. Their ambition is shown in their disobedience, and their character is evil because they do evil. Because they do evil they are condemned, and because they have rejected the truth they will never be delivered from that condemnation.

The terms *wrath and indignation* describe God's attitude and feelings toward them because of their evil. *Tribulation and distress* describe the suffering which they shall endure because of God's wrath and indignation. God shows His wrath and indignation by pouring out on them endless punishment.

Verses 12-16: ¹² ¶ For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law ¹³ for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified ¹⁴ For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them ¹⁶ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Here human beings are separated into two classes: those who are *without the Law* and those who are *under the Law*. Both sin. But according to 1 John 3:4 sin is the transgression of the law (God's law), and where there is no law there can be no sin (Romans 4:15; 5:13). We must understand then that *the Law* means "the Law of Moses". Those *without the Law* were the Gentiles who were not under the Law of Moses, yet were still under law to God.

Law is the expression of the will of the lawgiver. God had to give His law to the Gentiles before they could be under it. Just what that law contained is not stated, but it must have included some of those things which were in the Law of Moses because Paul says they did those things. Paul does not say how they received this law, but most likely it carried down from that early period when God first spoke to man.

Any law will justify the person who never breaks it, but Paul is only talking about being condemned by law. Those not under the Law were not condemned by it. But those who were under the Law had to obey it, and their condemnation came because they disobeyed it. The Jews loved to *hear* the

Law read, and evidently they thought this was all they had to do. They did not think they had to live by all that the Law said they were to do.

They are not the only ones who think that way. Even today many Christians listen to sermons and go to Bible classes, thinking that when they do that they are *doing* the will of Christ. This passage though shows the big difference between hearing and doing. There can be no doing without hearing, but there is much more hearing than doing.

The *just* are those who are *justified* (made sinless) by God. They are the ones who are not condemned. One may be just in the eyes of men and be condemned by God. Being just is the greatest need of every person. Those who think soberly want this above all other things.

Paul says the Gentiles do the things of the law *instinctively*. God gave law to the whole world from the beginning of time. We cannot know how much knowledge of this law remained in the memory of the Gentiles. But though there may have been a faint remembrance of this law, there is within the nature of man a sense of the rightness or wrongness of certain acts. This is true because he is a moral creature, made in the image of God. This is the area where, being without a written law, their conscience bore witness to the character of their acts, and their thoughts either accused or excused them. This natural capacity of telling the difference between right and wrong caused some to do those things contained in the Law, not because it was in the Law of Moses (for it was not given to them and they did not have it) but because of this inborn moral sense of right and wrong.

(Note: Clinton Hamilton explains: “These Gentiles who practice what the law commands do so by *nature* . This evidently means that they have a sense of right and wrong developed by observing what had been handed down by tradition, and by reflecting on the natural order of the created world.” Then he gives several examples of how men can see from practice that murder, theft, and lying are not good. He continues: “These Gentiles become a law to themselves. Their conscience is such that they must observe what they believe is right. This is their law. Some of these things agree

with what the written law from God demands. But they came to their conviction in the natural order and not by being instructed in the law.” *Truth Commentary, The Book of Romans, pages 140-141* .

Jim McGuiggan points out: “We must not confuse moral capacity with knowledge of God’s commands. Before the laws are made known there is the moral capacity... One thing is clear, if people *learn* God’s laws from rational deduction (reasoning) they didn’t learn it from inborn moral knowledge.” *The Book of Romans, pages 101, 102*.

These two commentators agree that there is no inborn law in man. The law which the Gentiles do by nature is what men have discovered by practice is good. I think this is right. PKW)

Because the Gentiles went further and further away from the knowledge of God, their consciences were affected. The more they denied God and showed their dislike for Him, the harder their consciences became. The same thing is true today. Ungodliness and unrighteousness are increasing everywhere, and this is evidence that many have reprobate minds with consciences which no longer work.

The expression “*according to my gospel*” does not mean that the Jews and Gentiles of whom Paul writes will be judged by the gospel Paul preached. It means that the day of judgment in which they shall be judged is the time the gospel reveals as the day of judgment. Those Jews and Gentiles who lived before the time of the gospel will not be judged by the gospel. The truth of the gospel includes the teaching of the judgment of all men, and each shall be judged by the law under which he lived. Otherwise the judgment could not be just.

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

The Jew had confidence that he would go to heaven because of two things: first, he was a *Jew* ; and second, he *relied upon the Law*. In chapter 3 Paul writes that the Jew had an advantage over the Gentile because God gave him the *oracles of God*. Here we see that the Jew relied on that Law. They were also confident of going to heaven because they were the descendants of Abraham. John the Baptist rebuked the Jews for this when he said to them, “*and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham*” (Matthew 3:9). John the Baptist was sent by God because the Jews were not ready for the Messiah. He came to turn the Jews back to God. Being the children of Abraham and having the Law of Moses were not enough to save them.

Then Paul shows how the Jews thought of themselves. They were very proud of their knowledge of God, that they knew what was right, and that they could teach others what was right.

Their pride in these things increased their guilt. They were hypocrites. They taught others but the Gentiles did not listen. The reason given is in the following verses.

This passage clearly describes the state of the Jews when Jesus taught among them. It shows why Paul was right in condemning them for their great hypocrisy. They were proud of being the people of the true God, but they did not obey His will.

Paul’s description of those Jews can be applied to many of us today. We proudly say that we have the truth and do not follow human creeds, that we

are members of the one true body of Christ and not of human denominations. Yet we fail to show in our lives the spirit and behavior which should come from such wonderful things. We must never forget that the Lord knows this very well, and He will judge us in the same way that He judged the Jews of Paul's day.

The Jews had the form of knowledge and of the truth in the Law, but their traditions destroyed the effectiveness of this truth and knowledge in their lives. Human traditions were always the poison which caused people to fall away from the truth because as these traditions grew they more and more became a substitute for the truth of the Law. By their traditions the Jews transgressed the commandment of God (Matthew 15:3). By our traditions we transgress the gospel of Christ! Human traditions not only take the place of the truth, but they make the truth hard to see and cause people to dislike it. This leads people to know less and less of the truth.

Verses 21-22a: ²¹ you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal ²² You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?

These two sins come within the moral law. They apply to all men whether they are in covenant relation with God or not. It is a great inconsistency for one to try to teach others what is wrong with the things he himself is practicing. The only way such a person can excuse his conduct is for him to believe that the sinful acts of one who is not a child of God are not sins when they are committed by a child of God. But Paul condemns this idea when he asks the questions of these verses.

If a Christian today is willing to condemn others for acts of which he (the Christian) is guilty, his actions show that he believes a Christian cannot sin. Yet John wrote exhorting brethren not to sin, and said that we all sin (1 John 1:8-10; 2:1). There is an idea which is the opposite of this. Some teach that it is all right for those who are not Christians to fight in defence of their country, but it is a sin if Christians do that!

Christians are told, “*Let him who steals steal no more*” (Ephesians 4:28), and “*Flee immorality (fornication)*” (1 Corinthians 6:18). These words tell us that we must guard ourselves against those sins because we may fall into them. But this is quite different from commanding this of others while we are doing those evil things.

Verse 22b: You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

Now Paul writes about spiritual conduct. He pictures the same sort of contradiction between what one pretends to believe and what one does. It is right to *abhor* (hate) *idols* , but it is wrong to *rob temples*. If you do this while you abhor idols, your guilt is made worse. The thought suggested is that while they condemned the worship of idols they would steal idols from heathen temples, and the only reason to steal them must have been to worship them!

The King James Version translates this phrase, *commit sacrilege*. To commit sacrilege is to make sacred things common or unholy. In this general sense it would include any act where the holy is mixed with the unholy. It would include introducing human practices into the area of divine things. When one does that, he shows that human things are equal in worth to the things given by God. This is sacrilegious. The Jews were accused of this in Ezekiel 22:26. “*Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them*”. In modern religion this is being done in many areas. Any new practice different from what God has given is an act of sacrilege.

Verse 23: You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

This states clearly that breaking law *dishonors* (shames) him whose law it is. To break the law of the government shows disrespect for the government. When children disobey parents they dishonour them. This is why the

command “*Honor your father and mother*” means to obey them. When the Jews broke the Law they “despised Moses’ law” and dishonoured God who gave it.

We honour the one who gave the law when we obey the law, and when we disobey the law we dishonour the one who gave it whether the law is from men or from God. This is why when there is a conflict between the laws of men and the law of God we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). We must honour God above all others. So it does not matter what the law is. If we disrespect the law, we disrespect the one who gave it. So the good of any law is not in the law but comes from the one who gave the law. Therefore when people refuse to obey the gospel they are showing disrespect for the Lord who gave its requirements, including baptism. This is why when we break one commandment of the law we are guilty of all. Each point of the law came from the lawgiver. To show disrespect for any one law is to show disrespect for the lawgiver.

Verse 24: For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” just as it is written.

This is the most serious charge which can be made against anyone. The Jews claimed to love God, but their lives showed the opposite. Not only did this cause their ruin, but it ruined those whom they sought to proselyte (convert) to their faith. This difference between what men claim to believe and what they practice has caused more injury to the cause of truth than anything else. The Jews claimed their God was the only true God, yet their lives caused the Gentiles to think that the God of the Jews was not what the Jews said He was. Even so today among those who claim to follow the Christ there is such a great difference between what they say they are and what they really are that the unbelieving world does not feel attracted to Christianity.

But unbelievers should go back to what the Bible says, to the practice of the church in the first century before men changed from the faith and practice revealed in the gospel. Only in the New Testament can one learn what the early Christians believed, taught and practiced. You are deceiving yourself when you judge Christianity by what men do instead of judging it by the

claims of the gospel itself. Those who say they believe in the completeness of the scriptures and in the one Lord and His church often live far beneath the level that such belief requires and was shown in the lives of the first Christians. This is true not only in the individual behavior of Christians and in their daily moral conduct, but it is also seen in the repeated desire to corrupt the spiritual work and worship of the church.

Verses 25-27: ²⁵ ¶ For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision ²⁶ So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision ²⁷ And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?

The apostle here continues his comparison between the Jew and Gentile so that the condition of the Jews will be more clearly seen. He does this by comparing their behavior with the behavior of some Gentiles. His purpose is not to justify the Gentiles because the description of them in the first chapter shows that they should be condemned.

The Jews relied too much on outward acts of worship. They did not have the internal qualities of character shown by a life of righteousness. This was especially true in the way they looked at circumcision. Circumcision to them was a sign of their covenant relation to God. They came into this relationship at birth, so circumcision was not the thing which put them into the covenant. If they failed to be circumcised they would be cut off from the covenant, yet circumcision was not enough to keep them in the favour of God. They had to keep the Law. Whatever good thing came from circumcision came only if they kept the Law. This means that when they broke the Law, circumcision became worthless and it was as if they were uncircumcised.

On the other hand the Gentiles were uncircumcised. Paul paints an imaginary picture of them as if they keep the righteousness of the Law. If they do that, will they not be accepted by God as though they were circumcised? This is the

question which the Jew needed to answer. Paul is saying that when the Gentiles keep the moral requirements of the Law, even though they are uncircumcised they become righteous. This shows the absolute necessity of keeping the Law.

This does not mean that the Jew could keep the Law *without* circumcision and be approved by God. The Jews were required to be circumcised. The Gentiles were not. Paul says nothing here which will allow a person to neglect any requirement of God. If God had required the Gentiles to be circumcised Paul could not have written what he did. Gentiles did not have to be circumcised because circumcision was only for those who were in covenant relationship with God—the Jews.

Many have made a comparison between circumcision and baptism, saying that baptism is not necessary if one believes in Christ and lives a good life. But there is an important difference. The Gentiles were never required to be circumcised. That is why they could be righteous without circumcision. Baptism is required of all believers, both Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:27-28). We cannot be righteous without it.

Now if the Gentile obeys the law, what effect will that have on the disobedient Jew? By his obedience he condemns the disobedient. This principle has always been true. It was true of Noah in his condemnation of the world. He did what God commanded and in so doing showed his condemnation of those who did not. Even so today those who obey the gospel and live according to its teaching condemn those who refuse to obey—simply by their example of obedience.

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

Paul is not teaching here that a Jew is not a Jew, for this would be contrary to clear facts. This is an example of using a negative in order to emphasize that

the positive is greater. That is, he is not the Jew God approves of who is simply a Jew. God approves of the Jew whom Paul describes. Of course circumcision *is outward in the flesh*, and this is the way the Jews were circumcised. But Paul means that this is not enough. It was not enough when the Law was still God's Law; it is certainly not enough now.

Here we find the terms "*letter*" and "*spirit*" used in contrast for the first time. They are found also in chapter seven and in 2 Corinthians 3:6. In both these places the meaning is clearly a contrast between the law and the gospel, between the first and second covenants. Therefore I feel that Paul is here using the thought of verses 26-27 to shift the thought from fleshly Israel to spiritual Israel. The Law was written on tables of stone and it had many carnal (fleshly) commandments. Christ's new order introduces a very different system which works on its subjects from within rather than from without. Men cannot read the thoughts and know the motives of one another. This causes us to praise or condemn one another on the basis of what we see outwardly in one another. But God can and does look within. We need to first "*make the inside of the platter clean*" (Matthew 23:26). The law which God has given to control our lives is to be written in our hearts and minds.

Because we fail to understand that God's interest is in what goes on in our hearts, we listen too much to the praises of men. There were those who, though they believed in Christ, would not confess him. They were afraid that they would be put out of the synagogue (John 12:42-43). Why? They loved the praises of men more than the favour of God. There are many like them still, wanting the praise of men and therefore pleasing men in what they do in religion and other things. Jesus condemned this condition in the strongest words.

At the time Paul wrote one was *a* Jew who was born of Jewish parents, who broke the Law and depended on circumcision, while he who was *the* Jew was he who kept the Law and appreciated the proper place of circumcision. Today one is a Christian by the *new* birth, but he must continue to follow Christ in order to go to heaven. To say that one who has been born again will go to heaven even if he does not live a life of obedience to Christ is to do the same as the Jew who thought that because he was circumcised physically he would go

to heaven. To be *the* Christian whom God favours and saves is to be the one who continues to follow the Savior in all things.

Chapter Three

Verses 1-2: ¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? ² Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

In the last section Paul showed that the Jews were guilty just like the Gentiles because they were hearers rather than doers of the Law. Paul now asks questions which might come to the mind of the Jew. If the Jew is lost because of his sins, just like the Gentiles, then *what advantage does the Jew have*? Why did God give him the Law and command him to be *circumcised*?

Paul answers in clear and strong words that the Jew does have an advantage. He does not say what the advantage of circumcision is, but he says that the chief advantage of the Jews was that *they were entrusted with the oracles of God*. The “oracles of God” were the Old Testament scriptures, and this implies that the Old Testament brought all the other blessings God promised them.

The Old Testament, its history and Law, has been very important to man. It is terrifying to think of what man would be without it. How could man know where he came from? Where could he find those high moral principles which became the laws of governments and showed what true justice is? These were given to the Jews. They were blessed by these laws. And through them all other people were blessed.

It is good for us to think about a greater advantage. Today we have the oracles of God which are the New Testament. They are able to guide men in the way of salvation from sin and in paths of righteousness. If the Jews had a blessing because they had the Old Testament, what a great advantage we have today!

Though Paul did not tell the advantage of circumcision, the expression “*great in every respect*” includes circumcision. Circumcision did hold a profit for the Jew. It reminded him of the covenant relationship which he had with God and the blessings which came from that relationship. But this profit did not come

from circumcision alone. He also had to keep the Law. It is the same today. God's blessings to us do not come when we do only one thing which He commands but do not do the rest. For instance, Peter told believers to *repent and be baptized* in order to receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). This means that believing, repenting and being baptised are all necessary if we wish to be forgiven. If we say that we are saved because we have done only one or two of these things, we are like the Jews who thought they were saved because they were circumcised and had the Law. Because they did not keep the Law, they were not saved. And because people do not do ALL that God says to do to be saved, they are not saved today. This same principle can be applied to everything God tells us to do.

Verses 3-4: ³ What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? ⁴ May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That You may be justified in Your words, And prevail when You are judged."

Here is another question the Jew might ask. "Because some of the Jews did not believe, did this make God unfaithful"? God made promises to the Jews with conditions. If God was going to bless them, they had to have faith in God and they had to obey His commands. But they thought they would be blessed even if they did not keep the commands. It is like a child who is told that he will be given a sweet if he will keep quiet for ten minutes. The child does not keep quiet but thinks he should get the sweet anyway.

But Paul's question implies something more. When a person does not believe what God says, that person shows that he thinks God is not truthful. If a person disbelieves the gospel he is denying that God who gave the gospel and Jesus Christ who brought the gospel are faithful. People today show that they do not think God is faithful. They like to prove a thing to be true by what men say rather than by what God says. If "everyone" says that we don't have to be baptised, then people think that what God says is not important. This shows that they do not believe God.

In such things the position which is absolutely true is, *let God be found true, though every man be found a liar*. This does not mean that every man is a liar, but every man who disagrees with God is a liar because God is true. He is true in character, and all that He says is true. It is “*impossible for God to lie*” (Hebrews 6:18). So whenever man disagrees with what God says, man is the liar and God says the truth, even if every man disagrees with God.

When the theories and doctrines of men are compared with what the Scriptures say, every issue must be decided in favor of the Scriptures. It does not matter how many men accept a position in religion, the truth must be found in the Scriptures.

For God to be *justified* is to show that both what He says and what He does are true and just. God will always be justified when He is judged because He is always truthful and faithful. Christians have a strong reason to hold fast the profession of their faith because “*He is faithful who promised*” (Hebrews 10:23).

Verses 5-8: ⁵ But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.)

⁶ May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? ⁸ And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), “Let us do evil that good may come”? Their condemnation is just.

In what sense could their unrighteousness demonstrate the righteousness of God? It could only be that their sins made a contrast to the justice of God and the comparison showed God to be righteous.

The *righteousness of God* is His own righteousness and does not mean His plan for making man righteous. The whole setting here involves man's lie and God's truth, man's sins and God's justice.

So the Jew was in a hard place. Because God is righteous, God must judge both Jew and Gentile in the same way. The Jew had to agree that God's righteousness forces Him to punish the Jews for their sins, because if He did not judge the Jews for their sins, He could not judge the Gentiles for theirs. And the Jews knew that the Gentiles should be punished.

Also notice, in order for God's judgment to be righteous on the Jew and Gentile He must punish the evil and give everlasting blessedness to the righteous. There is a teaching that God is so good that He will save everyone eternally and will not punish anyone. But this doctrine means that God is not righteous. If He is righteous He must punish the evil person.

Next Paul gives himself as an example of one who should be punished. The Jews will agree that it is just for God to punish Paul. He left the faith of his fathers and what he preached was regarded as a lie by the Jews. Remember, Paul is answering the question, "*But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?*" If Paul was preaching a lie, his unrighteousness would demonstrate the righteousness of God, and by the reasoning of the Jews he should not be regarded as a sinner. To teach error would produce good because God's truth would be exalted in contrast to the error. This would be *doing evil that good may come*. He says that some had charged him with teaching this, but he says that this is *slander*. He never taught "*Let us do evil that good may come*".

But many use this principle to justify unauthorised practices in religion. They believe that the end (the result) justifies the means (the method used). This is the most popular way in which people promote and defend human ideas in religion. When someone adds something to the worship or service of God, he tries to defend himself by saying that "it is doing good". He is saying that because good is being done the thing itself is right. This is the old argument that "The end justifies the means." When Briney defended the Missionary Society in his debate with Otey he said it was right for churches to have the

Missionary Society because it did a lot of good. And the same defence is made of many things now being practiced for which there is no scriptural authority. They say, "But look at the good we are doing!" Their argument is that the good which is accomplished makes the unauthorised means they use justified.

Paul says concerning those who falsely accused him of teaching this, "*Their condemnation is just*". The Law of Moses said that it was a sin to bear false witness. And it is a sin today. Some said that Paul taught that we should do evil that good may come. They lied! To misrepresent the word of another is a terrible sin. We should be careful to rightly understand the position of another before stating it. And if we knowingly and maliciously misrepresent another the sin is made even greater. Even when we oppose false doctrine we must be careful to state the doctrine properly. It is wrong to misstate it in order to refute it. Truth never needs the assistance of misrepresentation in exposing error. Those who accused Paul of teaching "*Let us do evil that good may come*" were false witnesses.

Verses 9-20: ⁹ What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰ as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one;

¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.” ¹³ “Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,” “The poison of asps is under their lips”; ¹⁴ “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”; ¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷ And the path of peace they have not known.” ¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

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

In chapter one Paul began showing the sinfulness of Gentiles and Jews. In these verses he brings this charge to a climax. He says that we, the Jews, are no better than they, the Gentiles. This is true because both are guilty of sin. Paul is talking only about the guilt of sin. In God's sight the Jew is no better than the Gentile because the Jew is a sinner just as the Gentile is.

Verses 10-18 contain a series of quotations from the Old Testament. In many ways the Jews stood in a better light than the Gentiles, but as far as their guilt or innocence of sins was concerned, the Jews were just as guilty as the Gentiles. These words from the Old Testament prove without doubt that the Jews were sinners.

(The Old Testament scriptures quoted are from the book of Psalms and from Isaiah. They do not mean that every single Jew was

wicked. Psalm 14:3 says that there is no one who does good. But in verse 5 David shows that it is the evil-doers who were in trouble because God was with the “righteous generation”. In Jeremiah 5:1 God told Jeremiah that there was no righteous man in Jerusalem. But Jeremiah was there and he was righteous. And we know that Baruch was there and other righteous ones. But in both cases ungodliness was everywhere. It was right to say that “all” were wicked. It was right of Paul to use the verses to show that the Jews were wicked in the same way that the Gentiles were.

These verses do not say that babies are born guilty of sin. They do not say that babies are born with a sinful nature that makes it impossible for them to do righteous things. The verses are not talking about babies. Romans 7:9 shows that a baby is “alive” toward God. PKW)

He described them in the following terms: “*None righteous*”, that is, there were none who lived righteously or had been justified; and because they lived unrighteous lives and were not forgiven, they were not righteous. Further *none understood* the law of God. They did not understand the real character of the things God required, nor did they understand that it was right for God to condemn the people who did not keep those commandments. They were charged with *not seeking after God*. They did not try to learn more correctly and follow more righteously after God. Any time one does not work hard to learn and follow the will of God, that one becomes less and less righteous. They had less and less interest in God, and this led to *turning aside* from the way of faith and obedience. The charge of *becoming useless* means that they lost all value for God. God called the Jews to be His people to help bring about the salvation of all mankind, but their sinful lives made them useless for this purpose. They lost their good influence on others because of their sins and even caused the Gentiles to blaspheme God. When any person or group of people stops doing good he becomes unprofitable, for we are only useful if we *seek good*. Their uselessness is emphasized by the words, *not even one*.

Not only did they fail to do good, but they actually did evil. The description given in the Old Testament verses which Paul quotes showed that their evil

was almost as bad as that of the Gentiles. The terms which describe their *throat, tongue, lips* and *mouth* show the evil use of speech. The ability to speak sets man apart from other creatures and shows man's kinship with God. The Jews became very guilty when they took the gift of speech and used it for low and evil purposes. They knew that God had spoken to them. He made known His will by speaking to them through the prophets. This knowledge should have caused them to use words to do good. But their speech was corrupt in its character. They used words to deceive people, and their words were like poison to ruin the people around them.

The words "*their feet are swift to shed blood*" show that they eagerly committed murder. *Destruction and misery* were the results of their actions, and *peace* was unknown to them.

Such sinning without restraint was possible only because *there was no fear of God before their eyes*. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10); and when men cast away that fear nothing will stop them from doing evil except the punishments other men do to them. This is the reason there is such a frightful amount of crime in the world today. People do not fear God, therefore they do evil. They probably will not be caught by the police, and if they are caught they will probably not be convicted of their crimes, and if they are convicted their punishment is very light. The only thing which will keep people from doing wicked things is the fear of the Lord, and this fear has long ago largely disappeared. If people truly feared the Lord there would not be such disrespect for law and order by the public or the courts.

All of these Old Testament verses apply to someone, but to whom? The apostle now states a truth and applies these verses. He states *that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law*. But the verses he quoted were taken from the law under which the Jews lived, and therefore what it said applied to them. They were the ones who were such terrible sinners. In chapter two he charged them with sin, but now he proves this by verses from the Law. In the face of this proof, the Jews could no longer say that they were innocent. Their guilt is written on the pages of the Bible.

His conclusion is that *by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight*. The Jews thought that their works justified them, but they were not justified in God's sight. It is important to notice here that God is the One who justifies, and therefore all those who are not justified by Him are under condemnation. The Law brought the knowledge of sin to those who were under that Law. Paul says, "*I would not have come to know sin except through the Law*" (Romans 7:7). This does not mean that if a person is ignorant of the Law he can break that Law without sin. It means that the Law makes that which is sinful to appear more clearly and fully to be sin. All of the commandments forbidding sin and the penalties for breaking the Law show how sinful sin is.

Verses 21-23: ²¹ ¶ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Both Jew and Gentile were guilty and condemned by their sins. Now Paul brings the thought up to the present time, the time of the giving of grace. The Law and the prophets told about this time of forgiveness long before it came. The Law could not justify those under it because it had no way to forgive sins, but the Law and the prophets showed how people would one day be able to receive the righteousness of God through the faith of Christ.

But this scheme of redemption will only appeal to those who understand their need. Only those who realize that they are guilty and are lost want to be saved. The purpose of what Paul has written up to this point is to cause all to understand that ALL are sinners—all are lost. So he writes that conclusion in clear terms. God's plan of salvation is for all sinners. Men must be convinced that they are themselves guilty, for that is the only way men are lost.

John Calvin taught, and his teaching is believed by many religious people, that all babies are lost because they are born with the guilt of Adam's sins on their souls. If that doctrine were true, then Paul went to a lot of work for nothing.

He wrote three chapters to prove that all men are sinners because of their own sins. If babies were born guilty of sin, he did not have to write any of that. All he would need to do would be to state that all are guilty because they are born guilty. But he did not do that. He showed that we are all guilty because of what we have *done* , not because of what we have *inherited* .

Paul laid down the great proposition that the gospel is God's power to save those who believe, the Jew first and also the Greek (1:16). This clearly implied that both the Jew and the Greek were lost. (The rest of what he wrote up to this point was to prove that they *were* lost.) He showed how deep into sin both had sunk, and he did this in such a way as to take away every ray of hope for salvation by any way men could think of, and to lead the guilty to seek the Lord while He can be found and to call upon Him while He is near.

The righteousness by the faith of Christ is for *all those who believe*. It is not for the unbelievers. And it is for *all* believers, not just for the Jew. Christ did not give one gospel for the Jew and another for the Gentiles. Some have taught that the Jews were required to be baptised but the Gentiles were not. In South Africa a large Zulu denomination claims to have a Zulu Christ because a white Christ is not for the blacks. But clearly there is no difference in the need for salvation nor in the way of salvation. All are saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

Why is there no difference in the way of salvation? The answer is, "*All have sinned*". All are equally guilty, and all have to be saved in the same way. The main reason for man's existence is to glorify God. But because all men have sinned, men have *fallen short of the glory of God*. Look at the terrible power of sin. God made us so that we can give Him glory. Sin makes it impossible to do that!

The purpose of worship is to give God glory. But sinning defeats our efforts to glorify God. When men change the worship which God has demanded they sin by adding that which God does not want or changing that which He has given. They defeat the purpose of worship. A corrupt worship does not glorify God. I wonder if those who introduce changes in worship ever think about this truth.

Verses 24-26: ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Moses Lard says with respect to this language: “In this compressed and comprehensive sentence we have the ground of the whole remedial system. On this ground depends everything. To expand it, in all its amplitude, would be to write the history of human redemption, from its conception in the mind of God up to its consummation in the glorification of the saved.”

According to verse 22, the ones who are being saved by this *grace* are those who believed. *Being justified* is accomplished through God’s grace; justification is not earned by those who receive it. Further, God gives complete justification to the believers. It is not partial nor is it temporary. It is fully, freely and completely given. This shows that human works of righteousness cannot earn justification. And justification is described as *redemption (paying the price to free a slave)*. Redemption was made possible by Christ and cost Him *His* life’s blood. Being redeemed from the bondage of sin they were justified from its guilt.

In the wisdom and justice of God the shedding of blood was necessary to remission of sins because the penalty for sin is death and the life is in the blood. However the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), though without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22). In order to take away sins there had to be the shedding of blood of greater value than that of animals. The price of redeeming those enslaved by sin is the precious blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:19).

God *displayed* Him *publicly* to be a satisfying sacrifice. Jesus shed His blood and offered it to God in heaven, and His sacrifice was accepted by God. This shows that God planned the death of Jesus—He displayed Him purposely. He

did this to show His *justice* and *righteousness*. His righteousness is shown in the forgiveness of those sins committed before Christ died. To *propitiate* is to satisfy wrath or cause one to be favourable, and since God showed that the sacrifices under the law were not enough to forgive sins, Christ was set forth as a sin offering (Hebrews 10:5-14). His redemption reached back to save those who sinned under the first testament that they might receive the promise of eternal life (Hebrews 9:15). During all those many years before Christ came God exercised *forbearance* toward those who sinned until in the fulness of time He sent forth His Son, born under the Law to redeem them who were under the Law (Gal. 4:4-5). In doing this He *demonstrates His righteousness* through the offering of Christ.

But how could He be righteous or just by justifying the sinner? There are some who are called Universalists. They teach that God cannot be just and condemn the sinner, that He is infinitely good and therefore cannot punish man after death for his sins. A man who at one time was a Universalist stated their belief in these terms: "God is infinitely good, and of course must have designed in the beginning, and must still design the greatest possible good of his whole creation.

The greatest possible good of his whole creation requires the universal salvation of all. But God is infinite in power, and, of course, can carry out his design to promote the greatest possible good— the universal salvation of all, into full execution. As, therefore, God designs in His infinite goodness to save all men, and can in his infinite power save all, all men will and must be saved." This man, who had renounced his former faith, turned this reasoning around and applied it to what happens to man on earth, and showed by this reasoning that universal happiness can and must exist here and now. But the facts show that such is not true and therefore the reasoning is false.

Now Paul appears to be reasoning from the other end of the matter. He is saying that God's justice requires all sinners to be condemned and punished. But Paul has already proved that all are sinners, so this means all deserve to be punished.

Since the sinner deserves to be punished, how can God be *just* and yet the sinner be *justified*? Only by Christ dying for the sinner and the sinner believing on Him. This means that in order for God to be just, the salvation is only for the believer. It is not just for God to save the unbeliever. Therefore the blood of Christ cannot save the unbeliever and he has no hope.

Verses 27-28: ²⁷ ¶ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Paul gives here the clear conclusion that *justification is by faith and not by the works of the Law*. In the next chapter he will talk about this in detail, and it will become the theme which continues through the rest of the book to the twelfth chapter. It lies under everything he says in this letter.

Boasting here is of course human boasting which shows pride because of what one has done or can do. In salvation we cannot boast because we cannot save ourselves by our own efforts. The Law of Moses gave the will of God to those who were under it, and if they kept it perfectly they would have been justified and they could have boasted about their justification. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). If they did not ever break the Law, they would have had no sin. If they had been able to do that, they could have boasted because they by their own efforts would have been justified.

But anyone who did not keep the law completely was not justified, and he could not boast. He was a sinner. Paul already proved that all men have broken God's laws and are therefore sinners. Therefore no one was ever justified by the Law. If there had been a law which could have given life then righteousness would have been by the Law. But the scripture shut up all men under sin (Galatians 3:21-22). The sacrifices under the Law could not justify anyone, therefore those under the Law could not be justified by it. So then, anyone who said he was saved by the Law was saying that he never sinned. And only the one who never sinned would be able to boast.

The Law of Moses is called a *law of works*, in contrast to the *law of faith*. It is *the* Law, but it is also *a* law—a law of works. Works are the identifying feature of this law, and faith is the leading quality of the other. I do not believe that this means there was no faith involved in the Law of Moses or that there are no works required by the law of faith. Rather, the faith of the one who was trying to be justified by the Law was in himself and was in his perfect works. That is why he could boast. But the one who is under the law of faith trusts in another as the justifier through His grace. Boasting then is not fitting for the Christian; in fact it is forbidden because there is no reason for it.

Paul's conclusion is that man is *justified by faith apart from the works of the law*. This means that no man, Jew or Gentile, is justified by the works of the Law. Whoever is justified is justified by faith. This is true because God justifies, and He justifies those who believe. But why does He justify only those who believe? Because He can be just only by justifying them and no others.

There are two different ideas we must not confuse. Paul teaches that all have sinned. This does not mean that all men have to sin and cannot do otherwise. I cannot believe that God condemns any man for doing what it is impossible for him not to do. Man does not have to sin. While recognizing the truth that we all sin we should not seek to defend ourselves by the plea that we are not able to live without sinning. Jesus did, and in His humanity He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.

That we are justified by faith is true; that we are justified by faith *only* is not true. Paul says that we are saved by faith, but nowhere in the Bible does it say we are saved by faith *only*. When Martin Luther translated the Bible into German he inserted the word *only*. We are told that he did this because he greatly opposed the teaching of the Catholic Church on works of “supererogation” (works which earn salvation). But one false doctrine should not be opposed by creating another false doctrine of an opposite kind. Unfortunately, extremes often produce other extremes, and Luther is not the only one who has produced such things.

Verses 29-31: ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

31 ¶ Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

Since law is a rule of action, the law of faith tells us that there is a rule of the action of faith. This is the faith of which we cannot boast. It is the gospel of Christ. Since He is our ruler, this system of faith is the rule or law by which we are justified. This law requires obedience, and therefore the “obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5) results in one’s justification from sin. The gospel of Christ is the power of God to save. It is to be preached to those who are lost and therefore need salvation. The idea that a person is not lost until he hears the gospel and that he only becomes lost by rejecting the gospel is wrong. He is lost because of his sins and the gospel is offered to him so he can be saved.

The question then arises as to whose God it is that justifies the sinner. If He is the God only of the Jews, then it would follow that only the Jews would be justified. But Paul says He is the God of the Gentiles also, and this means that He also justifies them. There is not one God to justify the Jew and another God to justify the Gentile. This would be polytheism (the religion of having many gods), and the Scriptures teach that there is one God. The same Scriptures teach that there is one Lord and one faith, and since the one God made the one Lord to be our King, and He gave us the one faith, and justification is by this faith, it follows that it is the same God who justifies both the Jew and the Gentile. He is not a tribal God—He is the God and Creator of all men.

Since Jews and Gentiles both stand before God the same way, He justifies both in the same way. *The circumcised* are the Jews and *the uncircumcised* are the Gentiles. Paul used those terms the same way in Galatians 2:7, and in that letter he says that anyone who preaches a gospel other than what he preached is accursed (Galatians 1:8-9).

The final question is “*Do we then nullify the Law through faith?*”? This is just what the Jew would ask after hearing this teaching. Paul earlier asked the question, “*Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?*” (3:1) His answer showed that the chief advantage was that they had the oracles of God, but that they were not justified by the works of the Law. So it would be logical for the Jew to ask, “Do we then nullify the Law through faith?”

This was a good question. It occurred because the Jew thought that the Law was given to justify him. If that had been the purpose of the Law, then what Paul teaches in this section would “nullify” (make of no effect) the Law, because Paul says that no man is justified by the works of the Law. There are many people today who are like those Jews. They say, “If you keep the Ten Commandments you will go to heaven”. If that was the purpose of the Ten Commandments, then what Paul writes here would nullify the Ten Commandments. Paul teaches that no one can be justified by keeping the Law, or even the part of the Law which is the Ten Commandments.

The problem which this question poses can only be solved when we understand that the Law was given for a different purpose. It was not given to justify anyone. The Galatian letter explains this with clearness: the Law was given to bring the Jews to Christ, that they might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). So if the Law was given to justify the Jews, then the Law was made void by Paul’s teaching that all are saved by faith. But when we understand that justification was never the purpose of the Law, but that the Law was given to bring us to Christ, then the Law is *established*.

This completely refutes the idea that man can be saved by following the teaching of the Old Testament scriptures, and that the Old Testament stands on the same level with the New Testament. That covenant killed; this covenant makes alive. That one was the letter; this one is the spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:6-9)

But how does Paul, in his teaching here, *establish the Law* ? He does so by showing that it is the gospel which is God’s power to save and that justification is attained by faith. We can see that the Law was to prepare for

the justification which was to be brought by the gospel. The Law is established when we understand its true purpose and that this purpose has now been realised. This is the only way anything can be established in the sense Paul uses. It stands because we see its true usefulness.

The commandment was holy, just and good (Romans 7:12). In its character it was holy, in its principles just, and in its purpose good. It is good because it is holy and just. These principles stand because the gospel system, the new covenant, became the end (the goal) of the Law for justification to them that believe (Romans 10:4). God planned to redeem man through the gospel of Christ before He gave the Law of Moses. When the gospel came, it completed the process of redemption. It did not make the Law void or purposeless. The Law was not given to save men but to bring men to Christ, and it did that.

In the Greek original from which our English Bible is translated, the article “the” is not found in front of the word “Law”. The conclusion of some is that any law is established by teaching and practicing obedience to it. This is true, but I do not believe this is what Paul teaches here. I believe the Law here mentioned is *the* Law, and the establishment of that Law did not come about because Paul practiced its teaching. Paul was a sinner along with all other Jews. To establish the Law is the opposite of making the Law void (nullifying the Law), and the same law is under consideration in both expressions. Paul understood that some would say that his teaching concerning the Law and the gospel would nullify the Law, but he affirms that what he here teaches actually establishes the Law. This presents the Law in its proper role. It was given before the gospel as a guide and an influence to prepare for the time of grace when justification by faith would come.

The Seventh Day Adventists and others misuse this statement to prove that the Law is still in force. When they do this they show that they do not understand what Paul is teaching. If the Law is of force today, and since justification is impossible by it (as Paul says), then the Law is void. It is not able to save anyone, and that is the only reason it should exist today. The Law is only established when it accomplishes what it was given to do. When we understand that the Law was temporary, and that when its purpose was accomplished it was done away, we then see that the Law is established. He

took away the first that He might establish the second (Hebrews 10:9). When the second (the gospel) came it showed the usefulness of the Law. It was necessary for the beginning of the gospel. The purpose of each—the Law and the gospel—was the same: the justification of sinners. The Law was given first to prepare the way for the gospel which accomplished this purpose.

Chapter Four

Verses 1-5: ¹ What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

It is clear that the question in verse 1 was to the Jews because they were the people who came from Abraham. Remember that Paul’s main purpose in this letter is to correct the wrong ideas of Jewish Christians about the Law of Moses and especially how that Law affects Gentile Christians. The book of Romans teaches about the great plan of redemption which God designed before the foundation of the earth. But its main purpose is to do what the book of Galatians does, except that in Romans Paul says a lot more about the matter than he does in Galatians. In both letters Paul teaches that the Law of Moses was never given to save anyone, that it was given to bring people to faith in Christ, that it has been done away and that both Jew and Gentile are now saved by faith in Christ.

Since the Jews came from Abraham it is a good thing for Paul to use him as an example. He was their *father according to the flesh* ; and they were very proud of this. But what did he find according to the flesh? Was he justified by being circumcised or by other fleshly commands?

If Abraham was justified by trusting in the fleshly works which he did, he could *boast, but not before God*. Paul is saying that Abraham stood before God just the way the Jews did. If he had trusted in his works the same way the Jews did he would have boasted, but such boasting would not be before God because God would not accept it.

It is good at this time to emphasize the principle which lies under the point Paul makes here. There is a great difference between the way God looks at things and the way men do. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, God's ways and thoughts are higher than man's (Isaiah 55:9).

God is the One who justifies or condemns. If we trust in man's ideas we will be lost. It is fatal to think that because man likes something that God likes it.

Also, in the case of Abraham if he had boasted he would have boasted about himself, not about God. If Abraham had saved himself by his fleshly works, there would have been no need to glorify God; he would have earned his justification without God.

Then Paul turns from the false idea to the true one, the one which comes from the Scriptures. *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness"*. Was this the justification of a sinner who had never been saved? No. This is a quotation from Genesis 15:6, and when this was said Abraham was already the servant of God. I think it worth the space to print here what R. L. Whiteside says on this point:

1. God had appeared to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees and commanded him to go into a *land which would be shown him, and promised to bless him, and to make a great nation* of him, and to bless all families through his seed (Gen. 12:1-3; Acts 7:2-3).
2. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to *receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went*" (Heb. 11:18). By faith he obeyed, and trustingly did as commanded not knowing where he was going. Strange conduct for an unforgiven, condemned sinner!
3. When he reached the place of Shechem, in the land of Canaan, "Jehovah appeared *unto Abraham, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land; and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him*" (Gen. 12:6-7). Why this promise, and why this worship, if Abraham was then an unforgiven sinner?

4. Abraham moved on to a mountain between Bethel and Ai, “and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah” (Gen. 12:8)

5. After his unfortunate visit to Egypt, he returned to the altar between Bethel and Ai “and *there Abram called on the name of Jehovah*” (Gen. 13:3-4). Can anyone believe that an unforgiven sinner was thus worshiping Jehovah and calling on his name?

6. When he returned from the slaughter of the kings who had taken Lot captive, *Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, “blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High”*. As Abram was blessed, or happy, and as he was described as “Abram of God Most High”, it is certain that he was not a condemned alien sinner.

7. After these things and before the promise of a son, the Lord said to him: “Fear not, *Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*” (Gen. 15:1). That settles it. God would not tell an unforgiven sinner not to fear; neither is he the shield and exceeding great reward of such a sinner.

Why have not all these things been taken into consideration by our super-exegetes [those who pretend to know all about what the Bible means]? It is certain therefore that the language in Gen. 15:6 and Romans 4:3 does not refer to the justification of an alien sinner, and they greatly err who so apply it. It is true that Paul was trying to convince the Jews that this justification happened before the giving of the law, but he was using this well known fact to offset their claim that a person had to be circumcised after the manner of Moses, or he could not be saved. Their own father Abraham, of whom they boasted, would be cut off by their arguments for the law.

The *favor* (reward) Paul writes about is righteousness. But *now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due*. If one obeyed every command of law—any law given by God—he would earn righteousness by his sinless behavior. In that case he would not be given righteousness as a favour, but he would have it as what was due as a debt. When God reckoned righteousness to the man who obeyed Him perfectly, He

would be giving the man only what was due to him. However, the smallest disobedience of any law given by God brings about guilt, and since no law can justify those who disobey it, righteousness for any person who has ever sinned is given by God as a favour or grace.

“But to the one who does not work” does not mean “the one who does not obey”, but it means “the one who tries to do right but is not perfect”. That one is a sinner, he is *ungodly*. *The godly do not need forgiveness for their godliness, but the ungodly need forgiveness for their ungodliness. But notice that even though he is ungodly, if he believes in Him who justifies the ungodly* God justifies him and *his faith is credited as righteousness*. Abraham did things which were sinful, but God credited him with righteousness because of his faith.

Verses 6-8: ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.”

Paul was using the strongest possible arguments to persuade his Jewish readers. He first used Abraham as an example of one who was made righteous by God, but not by works. Here he uses King David. In this case David wrote that the *man to whom God credits righteousness is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account*. Certainly God does not credit (impute) sin where there is no sin, nor does he forgive sin where none has been committed. To credit (impute) sin is to charge one with the guilt of having sinned. When sins are forgiven the credit (imputation) is taken away and the person stands as though the sin had never been credited to him. *“Blessed* indeed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.”

However, the sinner is guilty before God until God forgives his sin. We must not understand Paul’s words to mean that a man can sin without becoming guilty before God. That is the same as saying that one cannot sin. The teaching here is that the sinner’s faith counts for his forgiveness, and in such a case God justifies the ungodly. God does this by forgiving his iniquities and sins.

Verses 9-10: ⁹ ¶ Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, “Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.” ¹⁰ How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

Paul has proved that the blessing of justification is by faith. Now he tells us which persons receive this blessing—was it the Jew only, or also the Gentile? There were Jewish Christians who argued that the Gentile Christians could not be saved unless they were circumcised and agreed to keep the Law. Paul now addresses this point.

He has already proved that Abraham was blessed with forgiveness when he believed. Now he uses Abraham to prove that God’s forgiveness is not for circumcised men only. He does this by telling us that when God credited Abraham with righteousness (Genesis 15:6) Abraham was not yet circumcised. This proves that circumcision is not necessary in order for a person to be forgiven. The blessing of righteousness is not only for the circumcised, but also for the uncircumcised—the Gentiles.

The blessing of forgiveness for Jew and Gentile is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham— *“In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed”* (Genesis 22:18). This is the promise Peter talked about on Pentecost when he said, *“the promise is to you and to your children, and to all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord God shall call.”* (Acts 2:39) The promise is salvation from sin.

(Note: Another understanding of the promise in Acts 2:39 is that it is the giving of the Holy Spirit. If that is its meaning the verse is parallel to Mark 16:17 and the verses following. PKW)

Verses 11-12: ¹¹ and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

Paul says here that *circumcision* was a sign. To the Jews this sign meant that they were God's people—that they were in covenant relation with Him. Circumcision did not make the Jews God's people; they became His people when they were born. They had to be circumcised because they were God's people.

Circumcision was a *sign* or a *seal* to Abraham. A sign tells something, and a seal makes something sure. By using these words Paul causes us to look beyond circumcision to the thing which circumcision signified and sealed. It was *a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised*. It showed he was already righteous because of his faith. It showed that *he might be the father of all who believe*. He had to have righteousness by faith in order for him to become the father of all who believe, and he had this righteousness before he was circumcised. So his circumcision was a seal which pointed to his being a father of those who believed, and it was given because of his righteousness which made it possible for him to become their father.

Verses 13-16: ¹³ For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; ¹⁵ for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

¹⁶ ¶ For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

When God called Abraham out of Ur of Chaldees, He promised that He would make him to be a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3). The promise was fulfilled when Israel became a fleshly nation. But *the promise that he would be heir of the world* was not fulfilled in the nation of Israel. The promise was for *the world*. It could not be fulfilled in the one nation of Israel.

The Law under which the Jews lived belonged to the nation of Israel, and the promise of making Abraham a great nation was fulfilled through the Law. The fleshly descendants of Abraham were the citizens of this earthly kingdom.

But the spiritual descendants of Abraham are the ones who are citizens of the world-wide kingdom. The promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 22:18 was: “*And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*”. This meant he was to be heir of the world.

Moses E. Lard says that the fulfillment of this promise will take place in the future when the earth will be made new. I do not believe this is true. Psalm 2:8 speaks of the time when Christ will be King. It says, “*Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.*” This is when the promise to Abraham was fulfilled. Christ is NOW King (Acts 2:33-36). He is “*heir of all things*” (Hebrews 1:2).

But Paul is not here trying to prove that Christ is the heir of the world or is he trying to explain the nature of His kingdom. Paul is talking about how the heirship (the right to inherit) is accomplished. He says that it did not come about *through the Law*. He says that it came through the righteousness of faith.

This is a continuation of Paul's argument that we are justified by faith rather than by law. Because the kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of righteousness, the inheritance must be based on righteousness. But since righteousness cannot be earned by law, the inheritance must be obtained by the righteousness of faith.

If those who are of the Law are heirs then *faith is made void (worthless)*. Why? Because *the Law brings about wrath*. How? Because when a man broke the Law he became guilty; the Law could not take away the guilt; therefore righteousness by the Law was not possible. When men tried to be justified by the Law, they could never receive forgiveness. Because they did not come to God by faith to be forgiven by His grace, they did not receive the righteousness which is by faith, thus *faith is made void and the promise is nullified*. Because man is guilty he causes God to have wrath toward him. Unless that guilt is removed, the wrath will always be there. Paul has proved that all men are guilty before God and that faith is the condition of forgiveness. This means that the act of forgiveness is an act of favour (grace) by God. No matter what God tells us to do in order to receive forgiveness, the act of forgiveness must be recognized as an act of grace. Mankind—the whole world—stands guilty before God; and only by His favour can man be saved from his guilt and its punishment. God promises this forgiveness, and the promise is to all men, *the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all*. The grace of God has appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). Therefore the promise is sure in its blessings to all the seed of Abraham; not to his fleshly seed, but to his spiritual seed (Galatians 3:24-29).

This statement shows that the seed of Abraham come from all the nations of the world. These are not his fleshly descendants, but his spiritual descendants.

Galatians 3:29 shows his descendants are Jew, Gentile, bond, free, male and female. So when verse 16 says that Abraham *is the father of us all* it means that he is the father of us in a spiritual sense, not a fleshly sense.

The statement, *but where there is no law, there also is no violation*, expresses a truth of great importance. If we connect it with the definition that sin is transgression of law (1 John 3:4), it proves that all men are under law, because all have sinned.

Cornelius, the Gentile to whom Peter preached in Acts 10, was a very good man. Some have said that he was not a sinner. They say that because God heard his prayer, he was not a sinner. (The man Jesus healed of blindness said, *"We know that God does not hear sinners."* [John 9:31]) Those who say Cornelius was not a sinner use Romans 4:16, saying that Cornelius was not under the Law, therefore he could not transgress it, therefore he was not a sinner. But if this were true, the whole Gentile world was not under law and were not sinners! But Paul showed they were sinners in Romans 1:18-3:23.

Notice this. In Galatians 3:19 Paul says *the Law was added because of transgressions*. That means there were transgressions before the Law was given. But where there is no law there is no transgression. The only conclusion is that man was under law before the Law of Moses was given. Man has always been under law; he is now under law, and will be as long as he is subject to the will of God, and so shall he be both now and forever. Some angels sinned, and from this we must conclude they are under law.

(Concerning Cornelius. The statement of the man healed of blindness is a general statement which we recognize as true. The rebellious sinful man will not be heard by God. The man said this to show that Jesus would not be able to work miracles if He were a sinner. But Cornelius was seeking to know the will of God, and God heard his prayer. However, God did not save him the instant he prayed. The angel told Cornelius to send for Peter who *"shall speak words to you by which you will be saved"* [Acts 11:14]. PKW)

In these verses Paul seems to be stressing that for the one who is justified by faith there is no law. There is no law in the sense that he is not condemned by the law. Therefore there is no sin for which he will be condemned to punishment by the law. He is forgiven because of his faith.

Verses 17-21: ¹⁷ (as it is written, “A father of many nations have I made you”) in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. ¹⁸ In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, “So shall your descendants be.” ¹⁹ Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; ²⁰ yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

This section deals with the character and strength of Abraham’s faith. His faith could be no stronger than the source from which it came. How sure was the divine promise upon which this faith rested? That promise was so sure that God spoke of it as already done, “*A father of many nations have I made you*”. God considered him already to be a father of many nations, even though it would be many hundreds of years before the promise would be completely fulfilled.

Abraham, though, had a problem. *In hope against hope he believed*. The problem was that his age and Sarah’s age and barrenness (never having any children) were entirely against any hope of becoming a father. *Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb*. But since God had promised, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God.

In hope against hope he believed. Abraham believed in hope. Since faith is *assurance of things hoped for* (Hebrews 11:1) he had great confidence that

God would do this for him because he was *fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform*. Nothing Abraham had seen could prove such a hope. He had never seen a man and wife his age have a child. His hope had to rest completely and solely on what God had said, believing that He could and would do what was entirely the opposite of Abraham's experience.

God's promise required that He have the power to make the dead live. God did make Sarah's dead womb live again, and the birth of Isaac was possible because He did so. Years later when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, we are told by the Hebrew writer that by faith Abraham offered him, "*he considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type*" (Hebrews 11:19). The writer of the Hebrew letter gives the inspired comment that Abraham received, in a figure, Isaac from the dead, or that Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac even after he offered him as a sacrifice just as he had received Isaac in the first place when God brought him forth from Sarah's womb which had been dead. I believe the latter view is correct. Abraham reckoned that God would bring Isaac back from the dead after he killed him because God had already brought him forth from the dead womb.

(Note: I think that both positions are correct. Abraham believed God would raise Isaac, and God did just that. In the mind of Abraham, Isaac was dead because Abraham was completely obedient to his God. When the angel showed Abraham the sheep to be sacrificed, Abraham received his only begotten son back from the dead "as a type" of Christ who was the only begotten son of God. PKW)

But it was in his faith in God's promise to make him a father of many that his faith was not weak, despite the age of both him and Sarah. He was not able to become a father because of his age; she was not able to be a mother because she had never been able to bear a child. But this did not cause unbelief in the promise of God. His faith was strong. He believed with no doubt or misgiving simply because God had spoken. The strength which this faith gave him led him to glorify God, and to honour Him by obeying everything God

commanded him to do being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

Note that Abraham's complete and unquestioning confidence was that God would do what He promised. His faith did not come from his own desires apart or in addition to what God had promised. It was a faith which believed God was able to do what He had promised; it was not one which believed that God would do something which He had *not* promised. When our faith is the faith Abraham had, then we will walk in the steps of that faith. Many people have a different faith. Some have a faith that God will save those who do not believe or who are disobedient, but that faith does not come from hearing the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). God has not promised to save the unbelieving or disobedient. If we have the faith of Abraham, we believe what God has said. That faith believes the promise that we will have forgiveness of sins if we believe the gospel, repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38). It is the faith that trusts every promise of God **on the terms and conditions which He has given** , even when one is not able to understand fully how God is able to do what He has promised.

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6). God knows whether we have this faith for He is able to understand the thoughts and intents of every heart. He knows whether we are walking by faith or by sight, whether our faith stands in the power of God or the wisdom of men. And we can know whether we have this faith by looking into the word of God and into our own hearts.

The faith of Abraham was not something which he formed by and within himself. It was formed and determined by what God said, rather than by what Abraham might have felt. So must our faith be. We believe what God says because we believe He is God, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Our faith in what anyone says springs from our faith in the person who speaks; our faith in what is spoken depends upon our faith in the one speaking.

Verses 22-25: ²² Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness. ²³ Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, ²⁴ but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Paul says that because of the character and quality of Abram's faith, his faith was *credited to him as righteousness*. This statement implies that if his faith had not been the earnest faith which Paul described, it would not have been credited to him as righteousness.

Abraham's faith grew, and so must ours. Neither his faith nor Sarah's faith was great when he fathered a son by Hagar in order to help God's promise come to pass. This event is a lesson to us that God does not need or accept unauthorized actions by us to help in carrying out His purposes. All such efforts by man have been rejected by God. We should learn from those efforts that we must take God at His word, do as He directs, and trust Him fully to complete all the blessings He has promised for mankind. There were times in the lives of the apostles when they showed a weakness of faith, and Jesus rebuked them for that. Christians are admonished to grow in grace and knowledge of the truth (2 Peter 3:18). We are told to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2). The Thessalonians were praised by Paul because their faith "grows exceedingly" (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, ²⁴ but for our sake also. Just as his faith was credited for righteousness, even so shall our faith be credited for our righteousness. It is not a faith which simply believes what he did, but a faith which accepts the truth regarding what God has done concerning Jesus. We must *believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead*. This includes both the fact that He was raised and that God is the One who raised Him up. In chapter 10:8-9 the apostle says, "*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be*

saved". These verses say that the one who believes shall be "saved". This means that to be credited with righteousness is the same as being saved.

No single fact in history begins to be as important as the resurrection of Jesus. It is the most unusual event which ever occurred in time. Christianity is founded on this fact; if Christ was not raised from the dead, the Christian religion is just an untrue story. It is amazing that some claim to be followers of Jesus while they do not believe He was raised from the dead! As Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:17, if Christ was not raised our faith is vain and we are still in our sins.

Why is that so? If He were not raised, He has not ascended to heaven and He is not our High Priest. In such a case He never entered the Most Holy place and there made an offering for our sins. His death then was in vain, and it did not produce any benefit to man nor was it pleasing to God.

He was delivered; that is, He was delivered up to die on the cross for our sins. His death was an offering made for others. He did not die for His sins—He had none. He shed His blood for the remission of our sins, our transgressions.

In saying He was delivered up for our sins, there are two thoughts suggested. First, He was delivered up, or died, because of our sins. And second, He was delivered as an offering for our sins. Certainly, then, if we had not sinned He would not have died. If there had been no sin there would have been no death; but sin brings death and only by the death of Jesus is it possible for sin to be forgiven and death to be eventually abolished. The person who believes in the being of God, while disbelieving in the fact that He raised Jesus from the dead, is but a "deist", and as such he can never be saved.

In this concluding statement we find an inseparable relation between the death of Jesus and His resurrection. While His death was necessary to His resurrection, the resurrection was necessary for His death to take away sins. If He had not died, He could not have been raised, and if He had not been raised He need not have died.

When we think about the greatness of God's power when He raised Christ from the dead, and when we understand that this was done for our justification, we should be able to form a very deep and enlarged appreciation of what it means to pass from a state of condemnation to one of justification. Further, the faith which brings about our justification is in those things God did in order to make it possible for us to be justified. Hence, the saving power of faith is in that which is believed, not just the act of believing.

Chapter Five

Verses 1-5: ¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Chapter four proved that justification is by faith and not by law. It taught that God made justification possible and that He offered it to those who will come to Him by faith.

This chapter begins by describing what justification does for us. The blessing which we receive at once is “*having been justified by faith*”. This is described as having *peace with God*. Before we are justified we cannot have peace with God. Until a man is justified he is condemned by God for his sins and his sins cause him to be at war with God. But when his sins are forgiven, no longer credited to him, there is nothing to keep a man from God. We are reconciled (made to be friends again), all bad feeling is taken away, and man is at peace with God. Sin has always been and always will be the one and only thing which can come between God and man.

This peace comes *through our Lord Jesus Christ*. He reconciled both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body through the cross (Ephesians 2:16). By His death on the cross, Christ put to death the enmity (condition of being an enemy) between God and man. This is the same as saying that He abolished the Law so that Jew and Gentile can be reconciled to one another in one body, and that He made the sacrifice for sins for all so that we can all be reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:13-18).

God is in Christ reconciling the world (mankind) to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Peace with God comes only to those who are reconciled through Christ; those who are out of Christ cannot be reconciled to God. Or, to say the same thing in a different way, those who are reconciled to God through Christ are reconciled in Him. They are baptized into Him (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), and being in Him they are new creatures (Romans 6:4). In Him we are to let the peace of God guard our hearts (Philippians 4:7), to which He has called us in one body (Colossians 3:15), and be thankful.

Among those who claim to be followers of Christ, the greatest contradiction is when those who claim to be at peace with God are enemies of one another. We are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). The worst condition of human life is to be cut off from God, and the second one is when His children are enemies of one another. The most blessed condition we can think about is to be at peace with God.

Also through Christ *we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand*. That is, we are introduced into this grace through what Christ does, and by our faith in Him. Without what Christ has done, we can have no peace. Without our faith in Him, we cannot get into this grace.

Many are fooling themselves into believing that they have peace with God when they have not done what Jesus tells us to do. They depend upon their feelings to tell them that they have peace. But our feelings are not evidence of what God has done. To have peace with God, we must listen to Christ.

But not only do we become Christians by grace, but in *this grace...we stand*. We stand in a state of grace, and by this grace we are able “having done all to stand” (Ephesians 6:13) and we receive blessings without end. Just as we cannot become children of God without grace, we cannot continue being saved without God’s continuing grace.

When we stand by grace in this sure salvation we receive the fruits of salvation. The first is that *we exult (rejoice)*. The eunuch from Ethiopia came up from the water of baptism a saved man and went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39). Anyone who understands that he is a guilty sinner will rejoice when he

understands that he is saved from those sins. But our rejoicing is for more than our past salvation. *We exult in hope of the glory of God.* The glory of God is the glory which God gives to the saved. It is the eternal life given to those who seek for glory and honour and immortality (Romans 2:7). When we are delivered from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:21), then we will receive what we hope for. Until that time, we rejoice in this hope.

Our hope is strengthened by our troubles, therefore *we also exult in our tribulations.* When we suffer because we are faithful to Christ, our sufferings produce good fruit. We are warned not to suffer because of doing wrong things (1 Peter 3:17). But if we suffer as Christians, we are to glory. We glory *knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.* No one will get to heaven unless he perseveres—keeps on serving God in spite of troubles. Those who have little faith will stop serving God when the scorching winds of persecution blow on them, but those who are rooted and grounded in the faith will become stronger and more steadfast when such troubles come. James says that we should count it all joy when we fall into many trials, *knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance* (James 1:2-3). James also says, “*Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him*” (James 1:12). Paul is saying the same thing here. He says that *perseverance* when we are tested produces *proven character.* And *proven character* gives us hope.

The reason we have hope is that God approves of us. It is not what man approves which counts, it is he whom God approves. “*For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends*” (2 Corinthians 10:18). This *hope does not disappoint.* We are not disappointed now and we are not ashamed for people to know that we are Christians. It will not disappoint in the future. When the final judgment comes we will be with Christ.

Our hope comes from the love of God. *Because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.* We must know about this love so that we can have hope. Hope rests on faith,

and faith comes from the testimony of God given by the Spirit. He gave this testimony in the gospel which the apostles gave and wrote down. I believe that this is the way the Holy Spirit has shed abroad in our hearts this love of God for us. We understand God's love because of what He has done for us. This knowledge causes the hope that we have and continues to strengthen that hope.

Paul writes here that *the Holy Spirit was given to us*. We cannot tell from these words in what sense the Holy Spirit was "given to us." Perhaps he means that the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles and prophets to reveal the gospel to them (John 16:13). This is certainly true. Or Paul may mean that the Holy Spirit is given to us as promised in Acts 2:38. The New Testament teaches both of these things.

(Note: Paul uses the present tense, as Peter did in Acts 2:38. The people Paul was writing about had the Holy Spirit when he wrote, and the people Peter preached to were promised "the gift of the Holy Spirit." We cannot necessarily infer from those statements that the Holy Spirit is given to people today. PKW)

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

Read these verses. Your heart will thrill with thanksgiving to Christ and our Father above. Here is the heart of the plan of salvation. Here we find why God decided to save us and how He finally accomplished this. *We were helpless*. We could do nothing to take away our sins. Then *at the right time Christ died for the ungodly*. He did not die at a time which was not right. He did not die too soon or too late. In the fulness of time God sent forth his son, born under the Law to redeem those who are under the Law (Galatians 4:4-5).

But there are some who think Jesus did not die at the right time. They teach that He came to establish His kingdom but found that the Jews would not

accept Him as king. They teach that He changed His mind and decided to establish the church instead of the kingdom, intending to come again and set up His kingdom when the Jews would accept Him. If this theory is correct, then Jesus came at the WRONG time.

The truth is that Jesus did exactly what He came to do. The church IS the kingdom, and it was in the eternal purpose of God (Ephesians 3:11; Colossians 1:13). He came at the right time.

Because of what Christ did we have the assurance of our hope. We can never be ashamed of this hope. He died for us to give us eternal life, therefore our hope will never disappoint.

The death of Jesus was for our benefit. *We were still helpless.* We could not save ourselves. Though man is able to sin, he is not able to deliver himself from his sins. This is why Jesus died, that freedom from sin might be ours. *Christ died for the ungodly.* But Hebrews 2:9 says: “*But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone*”. If He died for the ungodly, and He died for everyone, that means everyone is ungodly. Of course. That is exactly what Paul proved in the first three chapters of Romans.

To show how great God’s love is Paul describes how men feel about dying for others. He says: *For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.* This means that the good man is the person who is better than the righteous man. A righteous man is one who is fair in all his dealings with others; he is never guilty of wrongdoing in these relations. But a good man is not merely just. He is generous toward others.

But in the sight of God all men are unrighteous and bad. Man will hardly die for a righteous man; but Christ died for the ungodly. Man might die for a good man; Christ died for bad or wicked men. These verses are a commentary on the famous verse in John 3:16 —“God so loved the world”.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We can never completely understand the greatness of God's love toward us. We can only think about how God showed His love by allowing Christ to suffer on the cross. He died "that we might have eternal life". When we understand why Christ died, we can begin to understand how great God's love is. What God wants for us is the final blessedness of being with Him in heaven. We can only humbly fall down and praise our God!

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

This passage tells us that because we are now blessed (*justified by His blood*), we have confidence that we will have future blessings. We *were reconciled to God through the death of His Son*. But His life after His death does something for us. His death was not enough to bring us these blessings. He had to be raised from the dead. All the benefits of His death come about because He has been raised. Truly, then, if Christ was not raised from the dead we are of all men to be most pitied, because there is no blessed future for us.

In both verse 9 and verse 10 there is the expression "*much more*". These words are used to compare what Jesus *has done* with what Jesus *shall do*. *We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son*. In verse one Paul says we are justified by faith, and here he says we are reconciled by the death of Jesus. It is His death and our faith in His death that together bring about our salvation. Being reconciled, we are to "live by faith". When we live by faith, *having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life* from the punishment to come.

It seems that Jesus does more for us by his life than He did with His death. To be *saved by his life* means that in living He works for our final salvation. Hebrews 7:25 says, "*Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them*". Romans 8:34 says: "*who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He*

who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us". He is now living, sitting at the right hand of God as King. He is also our high priest who intercedes (pleads) for us before the throne of God. What comfort and encouragement this gives to us! Are you afraid to become a Christian because you may not be able to live the life God wants you to live? Then take courage. Christ is always working for those who are His. Yes it is true *that "in many things we all offend (sin)"* (James 3:2), but we have a great High Priest who is over the house of God. Through Him we will be able to receive our final salvation from the wrath of God. He who gave so much to save us from our past sins will be sure to do everything needed to finish the work of saving us eternally.

Verses 11-12: ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

¹² ¶ Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Christians rejoice (*exult*) in their troubles (verse 3). Now Paul tells us that we also *exult in God* because we receive *reconciliation* through the blood of Christ. The word "reconciliation" comes from the verb "reconcile" which means "to change from being enemies to being friends". No longer is there trouble between us and God. We have received the reconciliation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, we should rejoice greatly.

Reconciliation came through the Lord Jesus Christ. Two things were required from Him—the shedding of His blood and the offering of His blood as our High Priest (Hebrews 9:11-12). He died for our sins and went to heaven as our High Priest. In heaven God accepted the offering of His blood and Christ sat down at His right hand. We are no longer the enemies of God—we are friends because of what Jesus Christ did for us.

Now Paul introduces a contrast between two persons, one who introduced sin into the world, and one who provided the escape from sin.

There are two very different ideas about what the word *death* means in this passage. It can mean physical death or spiritual death. Both are the fruits of sin. The statement which Paul makes here does not tell us which death he means. We will have to decide which death Paul means by looking at everything Paul is writing about.

Moses E. Lard in his commentary on Romans argues that *physical* death is the death meant by Paul. However, I am persuaded that it is not physical death, but rather *spiritual* death which Paul is here discussing.

First, let us examine the position that the death is physical. If it is physical death it means that not only did Adam die as a punishment for his first sin, but all men so die. The words “*because all sinned*” gives the reason why all men die. Because all men sin, all men die. It is true that in one sense we all sinned when Adam ate the forbidden fruit. Since he represented the human race as the first man, humanity sinned when he sinned. This is the sense in which the writer of the Hebrew letter says that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:4-10). He was not living in the days of Melchizedek, but since he was still in the body of Abraham, when Abraham paid tithes Levi paid tithes through him. If Paul means physical death, this has to be the way “all sinned” when Adam sinned.

It is true that we all die physically because of Adam’s sin—his one and first sin—though we are not guilty of that sin. We may say that we should not suffer because of someone else’s sin but we often do. Children suffer much when their father commits the sin of drunkenness. Because Adam ate the forbidden fruit Adam was driven from the garden where the tree bearing the fruit of life was. If he had continued to live in the garden he would have eaten of the fruit and continued to live physically. So God drove him out. Because we cannot eat of the tree of life we also have to die. Why? Because we are created with mortal bodies and only the fruit of the tree of life can stop death.

But what was Paul discussing in the verses before this passage? Paul was writing about reconciliation. Reconciliation was necessary because sin, which was introduced by Adam when he obeyed Satan, separated us from God and made us enemies of God. Paul contrasts the work of two persons—Adam and Christ. Through one man sin entered the world; by the other righteousness entered the world. The fruit of Adam’s sin is death and the fruit of Jesus’ work is life. The life is life with God, spiritual life; therefore the death must be spiritual death, which is what sin brings immediately.

But we are not separated from God by reason of Adam’s sin, but only by our own sins. Hence we are dead in trespasses and sins because of our sins—because all sinned.

Paul does not teach that we inherit the guilt of sin. He used chapters 1-3 to show that all are sinners because they commit sin. He did not say that we are sinners because we inherit sin. And here in verse 12 he says that all die *because all sinned*. Each one of us commits his own sins, therefore each one dies.

Verses 13-17 are parenthetical. To show this in the King James Version these verses are enclosed in parentheses, and in the New American Standard Bible they begin with a dash. They explain in greater detail what Paul has already said. Paul’s argument continues in verse 18.

Verses 13-14: ¹³ for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

“For until the Law sin was in the world” tells us that even before God gave the Law of Moses there was sin in the world. “*But sin is not imputed when there is no law*” means that no man can be guilty of sin if there is no law. The conclusion, then, is that whenever man sinned there was law because sin is

transgression of law (1 John 3:4). Paul was writing about the time before the Law of Moses. God had law before the Law. *Death reigned from Adam until Moses* because men were sinning against God's law. It reigned (ruled) over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam.

It is clear that Paul is not saying that all humanity sinned in Adam. If we sinned in Adam then we all sinned the one sin. But Paul writes that *death reigned over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam*. From Adam to Moses people died, not for the sin of Adam, but for their own sins which were different from the sin of Adam.

We conclude from this that Paul is writing about spiritual death, not physical death. Physical death is the result of Adam's one sin. It is not the result of each person's sins. But it is spiritual death which we all suffer when we sin, even when we do not sin after the likeness of Adam's sin. This spiritual death is separation from God.

Adam is a type of Him who was to come. Adam is a type of Christ. When Paul wrote Christ had already come. The reason he used the present tense ("is") is that he was writing about the period of time which stretched from Adam to Moses. At that time Christ *was to come*.

Here I wish to copy the comments of Moses E. Lard: "Type is from the Greek *tupos*, and this from *tupo*, to strike; and it means an impression or print made on something by a blow designed to produce it. It has also several other similar meanings, and means the metallic form which produces printed letters on a page. Religiously, type applies to anything that is given for the purpose of likeness to something else. A type is a shadow of something which is to come. The type may be a person, a thing, or an event. The thing which the type is like is the antitype. Moses delivering the Israelites from Egypt was a type of Christ delivering people from sin; the snake Moses put on a pole which healed people from snakebite when they looked at it was a type of the crucifixion of Christ and the fact that people are healed by believing in Him who died on the cross. A type may be like the antitype in many different ways. It can be like the antitype, or it can be a contrast, in one point or in many. In the case of Adam, he was like Christ in many ways. He was the natural head of the human

family; Christ is the spiritual head of the redeemed. But the thing Paul wrote about is the likeness between their acts and what happened as a result of their acts. Adam did one thing—a sin; Christ did one thing—obedience to death. Adam’s sin affected the whole human race, Christ’s crucifixion did also; but their acts affected mankind in different ways.”

Lard then wrote that Adam’s sin brought physical death on all men, and the one act of obedience by Christ caused all men to be raised from the dead. Although I believe this to be true, I believe the similarity between Adam and Christ is simply that sin was introduced by the type— Adam; the remedy for sin (justification by faith) was introduced by the antitype—Christ. The verses which follow show that this is so.

Verses 15-17: ¹⁵ ¶ But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶ The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

When Adam sinned he broke a positive law—“you shall not eat”. When he sinned he did not break a moral law; it was not immoral to eat the fruit. But man is a moral creature and he is under moral law because of his nature. Therefore though Adam sinned by breaking a *positive* law, men since that time have been breaking many *moral* laws. This seems to be the meaning of the words “even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam”. (v. 14)

The action of Jesus overcame more than the results of Adam’s first sin. *The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned.* Jesus came to

overcome everything produced by all the sins of all the people who have ever lived or who shall live on this earth. Much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

Let us study the words “*life*” and “*death*” in these verses. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Whatever happened to mankind because of Adam’s sin happened to everyone. That means that no matter what anyone did or will do, Adam’s sin affects him exactly the same as everyone else. By that argument we have to conclude that it is physical death which came to all men because of Adam’s sin. Men are mortal, and because Adam was driven from the Garden in Eden men cannot eat of the tree of life and live. If Adam had stayed in the garden, he and all others who have been born could have eaten of the tree of life and lived forever on the earth.

According to this argument, what we lost *unconditionally* in Adam we *unconditionally* gain again in Christ. If Paul is talking about *physical* death, which we all suffer whether we sin or not (unconditionally), then all men must gain *physical* life because of Christ’s death on the cross. What men lost was the life in the garden of Eden which Adam had before he was driven out. If Christ came to restore that then all men must live again on this earth in a perfect Eden.

But this is not why Christ came! It is true that all men will be raised from the dead (John 5:28-29), but they will not be raised to the same circumstances as Adam had in the garden. The unsaved will be raised to an unending *existence*, not to unending *life* ! There is a definite difference between existence and life. The unsaved will be raised to an unending death, spiritual death, and so far as I can determine, to all the experiences of *mortality* . Nowhere does the Bible say that the wicked will have immortality. Only the saved will be immortal. But only those who receive immortality will receive the complete life which Adam had before his sin. The wicked will not receive that. And if we say that

Christ came to restore physical life to all, what good is that “life” to the wicked who will be lost forever?

Verse 17 says: *For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.* We see that death reigned through Adam and life reigns through Christ. If the death is physical, then the life must be physical, but this is clearly not true. The life is spiritual, and therefore we must conclude that the death is also spiritual. Death reigned because of the transgression of Adam. He was the first one to sin, and through him sin entered into the world.

But we have all sinned, and we are under the reign of death even while we continue to live physically. We are delivered from the reign of death when we *receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness* through Jesus Christ. But when we receive the gift of righteousness, we are already living physically. The death we have experienced is spiritual death. Therefore the life we receive is spiritual life.

But how do the righteous reign? They *will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.* The redeemed are now reigning with Christ! These verses tell us about two conditions of man while he is living on the earth. Death reigns before a man is saved, and life reigns after he is saved.

Verses 18-19: ¹⁸ ¶ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

These verses connect with verse twelve and say the same thing that verse says. The *condemnation* came because of the sins men committed. Growing out of what one man did, sin spread to the whole family of mankind. Because all sinned there resulted condemnation to all men.

And so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. No one is condemned unconditionally (without sinning), and no one is made righteous unconditionally (without obeying). These verses are not talking about the conditions which bring about condemnation and life, but they are showing where condemnation and life come from. Jesus was made perfect through his obedience to the will of God. This is why He became the author of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:8-9). It was disobedience by Adam that brought him ruin; it is by the obedience of Christ than many are able to become righteous. A sinner is one who has or does sin, and sin is an act. An act by one cannot be put into another, and Adam's sin cannot cause us to be guilty. We are guilty because of our own sins. It is the same with what Jesus has done. His obedience does not become our obedience. We have to obey Christ ourselves. If Christ's obedience could be "imputed" (become ours), then everyone would be saved without obeying, and this is clearly not true.

How were we all made sinners by the sin of Adam? It was through the conditions brought about by Adam's sin. The temptations and environmental influences tended to cause man to sin, so that by Adam's disobedience the many were made sinners. Actually they were made sinners by their own sins, and not his. How are we all made righteous by the obedience of Christ? It was by the obedience of Christ that we are able to be made righteous, by our own obedience to the faith.

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

The Law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). But does this mean that there was no truth and grace in the Law, and no law with grace and truth? No one can think that! But these terms are placed against one another to show that the ministry of Jesus is greater than the ministry of Moses. God blessed those who lived under the Law of Moses, and

Paul in this letter says that the Law was good. And the Law was true; it was the true will of God to the Israelites.

But here we are told that the purpose of the Law was *that the transgression would increase*. Why? The more laws one must obey, the more will be his violations of law. Since this Law was God's Law, any breaking of the Law is sin. *Where sin increased*, and where people understood that the Law was not able to save from sin, there was a sense of helplessness. This caused a desire to escape from sin and to accept anything which God gave to bring about that escape. This escape is provided in the gospel.

When we need something but understand we cannot do anything to get it, we rejoice greatly when someone gives us what we need. God is able to save us no matter how many sins we commit. *"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him"* (Hebrews 7:25).

Paul writes: *as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign*. Sin and grace are ruling forces. Sin rules "in death", while grace rules in life. This means that the final result of sin is death and the final purpose of grace is life. Clearly this means that the death is spiritual and, unless grace saves us, it will be eternal. But no matter how powerful the rule of sin is, the power in the grace of the gospel of Christ is able to overcome it.

This passage was given to make us sure that God is able to save us no matter what our sins. We need have no fears. Every sin that one may commit can be forgiven, except the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31). What God has provided by His grace is able to justify all who come to Him through faith in Christ. And this grace reigns *through* the system of *righteousness*. This righteousness brings *eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Truly, He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

Chapter Six

Verses 1-6: ¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

Paul asks the question in verse one because it is what a person might ask after reading what he wrote at the end of chapter five. He wrote, *“The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more”*. “So”, the questioner asks, *“Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?”* Paul answers almost with a shock, *“May it never be”!*

If he had said no more, the issue would have been settled completely. But he gives reasons why it may never be. He reasons that it cannot be because *“How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”* Before they were made dead to sin, they had been dead in sin. In sin, they were dead to God. When they were delivered from sin they were separated from sin; they became dead to sin. Being dead to sin, they could not live in sin. They were separated from it and could not continue in its guilt and practice.

Paul did not write verse three in order to teach a lesson on baptism. He supposes they already know what he says about it. *“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”* If they know this, they will be able to see clearly why baptism shows they must no longer sin.

To be baptised into Christ is to come under His authority. That was done when they were baptised in His name. A person can only be baptised properly when he decides that he must become subject to Christ and he desires the salvation from sin promised in baptism.

But in being baptised they were buried with Him. No one was ever sprinkled with Him, for Jesus was never sprinkled, neither did He ever command anyone to be sprinkled with water or have water poured on them. This passage, together with Colossians 2:12, clearly proves that baptism is immersion (putting under the water). A person does not need to know the original language (Greek) to learn what action baptism is. The statement, “*therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism*”, means “we are buried by baptism”. The verb, baptise, tells of an act. Therefore in baptism there is action. But Paul here tells us that the action is a burial. In the act of sprinkling, as well as in the act of pouring, there is not a burial; in the act of immersion there is a burial.

Many religious denominations sprinkle or pour water on people and call that baptism. Therefore many people believe that if a person has water sprinkled or poured on him he is baptised. But when we read “*we have been buried by baptism*” we know that baptism cannot be sprinkling or pouring. It is a burial. In addition, Paul wrote to the Ephesians that there is “*one baptism*” (Ephesians 4:5). Since baptism requires an action, and since Romans 4:4 and Colossians 2:12 say that the action is a burial, there can be only one action—immersion. We cannot take the term *one* and make it mean *three*—immersion and sprinkling and pouring.

Nor can we say that one is buried by sprinkling or pouring. But everyone can understand that one is buried by immersion. This then clearly shows that the action of baptism is immersion, and not sprinkling or pouring.

These verses also teach that baptism is a burial in water *one time*. Just as Jesus was buried once, so we must be buried in baptism once. It makes no sense to bury a person three times. That is not in the likeness of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

When Paul writes *“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death”* he does not mean that there can be some doubt. It means “since” we have become united with Him. This means that just as we have been united (planted) with Him, so *“we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection”*.

When a person is baptised he is united with Christ in the likeness of His death. This person *“shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection”*. These words do not point to a future resurrection of the body, but they mean the resurrection of the body from the burial in water when baptized.

Just as a burial means that a person has died, so being raised from the dead means that there must be a new life. So Paul writes, *“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”*. Death and resurrection separate the old life and the new life. This means there has to be a great difference in the two lives.

This verse clearly shows that we must be buried in baptism in order to have the new life. This is an explanation of Jesus’ words in John 3:5: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”*. The new birth is only completed when we are raised from the waters of baptism.

“Our old self was crucified with Him”. Paul wrote to the Galatians: *“ I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me”* (2:20). To the Colossians he wrote: *“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God”* (3:3). They were dead to their former lives of sin, therefore they *“laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him”* (Colossians 3:9-10).

The gospel is addressed to sinners, and only sinners need it. It is God’s power to save them. But the gospel is given to save them *from* their sins, not *in* them. In saying *“that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our*

body of sin might be done away with”, Paul is saying that the old life must be put to death. We can no longer live it. Only in this way can the body of sin be destroyed. The body of sin is the total of all one’s sins. The only way sin can be destroyed is by blotting it out. This means that in order to have forgiveness of sins we must repent, which is when we change our will and decide to stop sinning.

In this section Paul shows that God expects the saved to live a very different life from their former way of life. How sad that so many “Christians” have changed their manner of life only a little, if any.

Verses 7-11: ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin. ⁸ ¶ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This instruction is for the spirit of man, therefore the death and life are spiritual. We have to die to sin in order to live with Him. Just as Christ in being raised from the dead dies no more, so we are to die no more. We no more will be dead in sin. Note that verses 3 and 4 say that we have been baptized into death. Our death to sin is completed in baptism and not before.

The thought that Christ *having been raised from the dead is never to die again* sets forth the idea that He is the first fruits of those who are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). Lazarus had been raised from the dead, but he had to die again. But Jesus defeated death in His resurrection.

We are buried in baptism because we are dead to sin. Then we are raised not to sin but to live unto Christ. If we live with Christ we cannot live in sin. While He lived on the earth Jesus was in the flesh. His flesh was mortal, and thus He had to die. But *He died to sin once for all*. He died in order to take away sin. He died for the remission of sins, but not His own. “*So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for*

salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him”
(Hebrews 9:28).

When we are baptised we are united with him in the likeness of His death and burial, and baptism becomes our death to sin and burial. But He was raised from the dead and the life that He lives, He lives to God. So when we come from immersion in water, we must *consider ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus*. We have a new life which has a new direction. In the old life we served the fleshly desires as our fleshly mind desired. The new life is given to God and is controlled by a spiritual mind, a mind which loves the things of the spirit.

If we are fleshly minded we are enemies of God (Romans 8:6-7). If we are alive with God we must be controlled by the spirit. But since God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19), the only way we can be alive to God is through our Lord Jesus Christ. There can be no spiritual life apart from Christ. *“But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).

God knows that His children will sin, but He does not give us permission to live a life of sin. God is not pleased at any sin in the life of a child of God, but He has made it possible for us to receive forgiveness if we sin. If this were not true, none of us would have a hope of heaven. But though God forgives the sins of His children when they walk in the light and confess their sins (1 John 1:9), He will not forgive those who live a life of sin. This whole passage is directed against that idea.

It may be added that in this we see a picture of baptism which makes it very important. The denominational world refuses to see what baptism really is for. A careful study of these verses shows its true value.

Verses 12-14: ¹² ¶ Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Here we find sin described as if it were a person who can rule another. Sin reigns when we obey what it wants us to do. We do this when we obey its lusts. Lust here means the desire to do evil. The desire is not in itself sin, but when we obey it we sin. James tells us that we are tempted when we are drawn away by our own lust, and enticed (James 1:14). When lust conceives it brings forth sin, and sin when it is finished brings forth death (James 1:15). *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.*

Paul says that *we* must not let sin reign. This shows clearly that God has given us the ability to make our own choices. We are free moral agents. We can refuse to obey the lusts of sin, or we can obey. This shows that we are free to decide what to do, and we are responsible for the choices we make.

There are two ruling powers: *unrighteousness* and *God*. The great thing is that we do not have to obey unrighteousness. Paul says: *present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.* We were delivered from sin by God's grace when we obeyed Christ in faith. Sin shall not be master over us because we are not under law but under grace. Law does not bring forgiveness. But we have been delivered from the condemnation of the Law by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. We now have forgiveness (grace) and live in that forgiveness. Because of that we can listen to God and willingly obey him. Sin shall not be master over us! Forgiveness is the key. Being made free from sin, becoming dead to sin, we are able to cast off the dominion of sin.

Paul says more about this in Colossians 3:1-5: *"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated*

at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”

Notice that Paul tells the Christian not to present his members as instruments of unrighteousness but to present them as instruments of righteousness to God. There is a difference between the *you* and the *instruments*. The *you* is the spirit, whereas the instruments are the members of the physical body. It is the job of the spirit to control the body; the body is not to control the spirit. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Sin does not come from the body, it comes from the spirit. The spirit is the part of man which controls whether a man sins or not. The body is under the control of the spirit. If man is only a body without a spirit, he is just an animal and he cannot sin. Only because man is a spirit can he be a responsible creature and be able to sin.

To the Galatians Paul wrote: *“Walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please”* (Galatians 5:16-17). I believe Paul means the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit. Spirit is placed in contrast to the flesh here. It must mean the human spirit because otherwise there is not a proper balance between the words “spirit” and “flesh”. The desires of the spirit are worth more than the desires of the flesh. When the spirit wants one thing and the flesh wants another, the interests of the spirit must come first. To walk after the spirit is to live and act in the interest of the spirit, in contrast to the fleshly way of living where the desires of the fleshly man are first.

Verse 15: ¶ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

This is almost the same question as in verse 1. All that has been written between verses 1 and 15 has been to answer this question. The grace of God has made it possible for us to be delivered from the guilt and power of sin. The Law was not able to deliver us. But this does not give us any reason to think that grace gives us the right to sin.

Verse 16: Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Notice that this is a picture of slavery when we choose to obey. If man were born in sin, unable to choose to do good (as Calvinism teaches), he would not be able to choose to be the slave of sin unto death; he would be forced into slavery. But these words are written to Christians and show that we have the freedom to choose, even to choose to sin. But we are told by the Calvinists that even though the child of God can sin, he cannot sin so as to be lost. They say that the Scriptures teach that all saints will continue to be saved even to final salvation in heaven. But Paul here says that those who present themselves as slaves of sin shall come to death. This clearly is not physical death, because we all have to die whether we sin or not. This is the death of the spirit, everlasting death, and will come even on the Christian who does not repent and change his conduct.

The two choices we can make are: to be slaves of obedience or to be slaves of sin. This means that sin is disobedience. When we are slaves to the will of God our lives will show that in obedience to His will. The result is not death, but righteousness resulting in life. All human life ends in either life or death, unending happiness or unending punishment. God does not give a third condition. God wants all men to be saved, but His desire has not caused Him to save anyone except through the truth. He wants all men to be saved, but He wants all men to come to a knowledge of the truth so that they can be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

Verses 17-18: ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Paul is not giving thanks that they were slaves of sin. He is thankful that even though they had been slaves of sin, they were made free from sin. But in Whom and by what action were they made free? This is a very important matter—as important as the freedom which they received. They did something to be free. If they had not done this they would still be slaves of sin.

Paul is talking about the thing he has taught from the beginning of the chapter. They became dead to sin and were buried, and having been buried they were raised to walk in newness of life. In the new life they are slaves of righteousness; in the old life they were slaves of sin.

But when did the change take place? Paul writes: *having been freed from sin*. In the King James translation it reads: *Being then made free from sin*. They became dead *to* sin when they repented and stopped their practice of sin; they became free *from* sin when they *became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which (they) were committed*. They obeyed the *form*, or *mold*, or *pattern* of the teaching they had received.

The teaching about Jesus includes His death, burial and resurrection. When they were baptised they obeyed the form, or pattern of that teaching. In baptism we, like Jesus, are buried and raised again. This is how we obey from the heart that form of teaching.

Clearly sprinkling or pouring water on the head of a person does not picture the burial and resurrection of Jesus. But when a person is immersed in water and raised from it he clearly pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

This passage completely answers the question as to when the sinner receives forgiveness from God. We are made free from sin when we obey from the heart that form of teaching to which we were committed. This verse teaches

plainly that a person who believes and repents is NOT saved from his sins BEFORE he is baptised. This verse answers every argument that teaches a person can be saved without baptism.

Baptism is an act of obedience. But it must be *from the heart*. If we are going to please God, every act of obedience must be from the heart. The religion of Christ is a heart religion. Outward acts are worthless unless they come from the heart.

The heart is that part of man where his intelligence, his emotions and his will are. For obedience to be from the heart it must be the action of a mind which has learned, a soul which has come to love God, and a will which has turned from serving sin to serving God.

Because a person must obey from the heart to be made free from sin, the one who never hears the gospel and the one who does not believe cannot be baptised. Also, if we obey from the heart we have to understand the will of the Lord about baptism, which includes the reason for baptism, which is *for the remission of sins* (Acts 2:38). If a person believes he is saved *before* baptism, he does not obey from the heart when he is put under the water. He must be seeking a good conscience before God when he is baptized (1 Peter 3:21).

Verse 19: I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

When Paul spoke *in human terms* he spoke according to the knowledge of human things. They did not have to have deep knowledge of spiritual things in order to understand Paul. It was easy for them to see that what Paul was saying was true.

They knew that when a slave left one master to become the slave of another he must be loyal to serve his new master. In the same way, they had before been slaves of sin but now they are slaves of righteousness. They had before

presented the members of their bodies *to impurity and to lawlessness*. *Impurity* tells us that they lived a life ruled by the impure desires of the body.

Lawlessness means they had lived in rebellion to God. This impure and lawless life *resulted in further lawlessness*, and this was the pattern of their lives. Now, having been freed from the terrible master called “sin”, they are to present the members of their bodies to do those things which can be called *righteousness*. The result of doing this service is *sanctification*. When they were freed from sin they were set apart, separated unto the service of God in righteousness.

Verse 20: ¶ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

That is, they were free from having to do righteousness. Of course, they were responsible persons and should have been doing righteous things. But because they were in sin and serving sin, they were not trying to live a life of righteousness. Now they could look back and remember that they felt no duty to righteousness.

This means that they now are free from a life of slavery to sin. Now they should find no interest in serving sin.

Verses 21-22: ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

We are attracted to a life because we think it will give us what we want. Paul calls upon those who have been redeemed to think about the benefit that their former lives produced. *What benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed?* Does sin bring good results? All that can ever be said of sin in the life of anyone is that some sins bring temporary

pleasure, pleasure while in the action of sin. But after that it never produces good or even desirable fruit.

Paul says that they are now ashamed of what they did. This shows that they had become real Christians. No Christian can think about the sins of his past life without being ashamed of them. But if the fruits of sin are good, we would not be ashamed of what we did. Since we are ashamed, the conclusion is that the benefit of sin is only bad. In fact, he says *the outcome of those things is death*. Death—being separated from God now and forever. Sin destroys character now, and it brings eternal death to those who live in it.

“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God” shows the great difference between what they were and what they now are. They are servants to God; they are His, and they must serve only Him. Paul spoke of himself in relation to God as *“Whose I am and Whom I serve”* (Acts 27:23). Because we are His, we must serve Him.

But what is the benefit of this service? *You derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life*. Sanctification is holiness and being set apart for the service of God. The outcome of that is eternal life. This is spiritual life when we are always with God, and it will never end.

So the life which we receive and its eternal nature are the exact opposite of the life of slavery to sin. The slave to sin is in a state of death where he is cut off from God even while he is alive on earth, and this death will continue forever when he dies. The slave to righteousness, because he has been saved, has a life devoted to holiness, and it will continue into eternity when he dies. I understand that the words “eternal life” do not describe the kind of life the Christian has, but simply tells us how long it will last. The life is spiritual life, and Christians have that life now. This wonderful life which we have now and which we enjoy more and more will continue after death where we will enjoy it much more because we will be with the Lord (Philippians 1:21-24). Then we will enjoy our life in the presence of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the angels and all the redeemed of earth. Further, at that time we will be free from all fleshly lusts and diseases. We will have immortal and incorruptible bodies.

Everything will be perfect to give us complete joy and happiness. We cannot imagine the blessings of that reward! They are too great for our minds.

Verse 23: For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin pays wages. We get a proper wage. No one will be underpaid or overpaid. The word “wages” means something we receive because we earn it. The wages of sin will be just.

All men are not equally guilty of sins. The one who does not know his master’s will shall be beaten with few stripes (Luke 12:48), not because he didn’t know his will, but because he didn’t do it. The reason for not doing is that of not knowing. But he who knows his master’s will and does not do it shall be beaten with many stripes. Why? Because he knew it? No. But because knowing it, he did not do it.

This gives no comfort for those who live in ignorance of God’s will. But it certainly should terrify those who, while they know God’s will, do not do it. The wages for each are given according to the character of the person who has not done God’s will.

Eternal life, however, is not given as wages paid for a life of faith and obedience. After we have done all that we can, we are still unprofitable slaves, and we should understand ourselves to be such (Luke 17:10).

Eternal life cannot be earned. We shall receive it as a gift. *The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* It is God’s gift to dying men, given by Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. He came that we might have life and that more abundantly. Without Him we cannot have this life now, nor receive it in an abundant entrance into heaven.

Chapter Seven

Verses 1-3: ¹ Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? ² For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. ³ So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

The main theme of chapter six is “Freedom from sin”. The main thought of this chapter is “Freedom from the Law”.

Paul begins by noticing that *the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives*. There is a time when law must be obeyed. That time is “as long as a person lives”. He asks, “*Do you not know (this), brethren?*” He is speaking to those who know law and who know when law applies.

This is a general truth and applies to every law. It is true of the law of a country. As long as we live we must obey the government. This is true *because “whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law”* (Romans 3:19). We are under it, however, only so long as we live; when we are dead it says nothing to us.

Paul applies this general truth to the Law of Moses. His purpose is to teach a lesson about their relationship to the Law in the past and in the present. This means that Paul is writing to Jews who had become Christians. The next two verses show that this is so.

To illustrate his point Paul talks about *the married woman*. His illustration does not apply to the unmarried woman. It is the married woman who is *bound by law to her husband while he is living*. This is a specific law, *the law concerning the husband*. This is the law which says that a wife is bound to her

husband as long as the husband lives. Paul is not here teaching a lesson on marriage. He uses the law concerning marriage to illustrate his point that law rules us only when we live.

However, that does not take away from what Paul tells us about the marriage relationship. It is true *that the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living*. Paul does not talk about any exceptions to this law because he is not teaching on that subject. Jesus gave the one exception in Matthew 19:9 when He said: *“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery”*.

Some teach that what Paul says here cancels what Jesus said. This is not true. It is God’s will that a man and woman, when they marry, are to remain married until one of them dies. If that marriage is broken before the death of one of them, at least one of them has to be guilty of breaking the law of God which joined them together. Paul, however, does not deal with that because it does not have anything to do with the point he is making about law.

Paul’s point is that marriage is a covenant which binds wife and husband together for life. The covenant does not bind either one when there is death. Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) have a different teaching concerning marriage. They say that marriage is for both time and eternity. When Mormons marry for eternity, they think death will not end the marriage but that they will still be married in the eternity which they expect to come after death. This directly contradicts what Paul says in these verses.

The death of the husband frees the married woman from the law of her husband. Being free is the exact opposite of being bound. While he lives she is bound; when he dies she is free. Free in what sense? Free to marry another, for she is no longer married to the first because he died. *“But if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man”*.

Verse 4: Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.

In Paul's illustration concerning marriage, the living wife is freed from the dead husband; here the dead Christian is made free from the Law— *you also were made to die to the Law*. The truth is that the Law becomes dead to us *through the body of Christ*. This means the death of His body on the cross. Colossians 2:14 says: *“having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross ”*. Ephesians 2:14 says: *“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall”*. The dividing wall between Jew and Gentile was the Law. It has been taken away.

But let us go back to Paul's illustration of the married woman and her husband. Though Paul does not say so, it is clearly true that the husband who dies is free from the law concerning his wife. After he dies his spirit still lives, but *“in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven”* (Matthew 22:30). He is dead to the law concerning his wife. So also when the Jew becomes a Christian he dies to the Law because he sees that the Law was taken away by Jesus.

What the Jew sees when he turns to Christ is that the Law is no longer of force. The truth is he was “alive” to a law which has been dead ever since Jesus died on the cross! The Law has been abolished. *“Then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will.’ He takes away the first in order to establish the second”* (Hebrews 10:9). In Christ he dies to the Law.

This verse not only says that they were dead to the Law, but it gives the reason for that death. Remember, Paul is trying to prove to the Jewish Christians that neither they nor the Gentile Christians have to keep the Law of Moses. Some Jewish Christians were teaching the Gentile Christians that they had to be circumcised and keep the Law (See Acts 15:1). This shows that the Jewish Christians were keeping the Law in order to be saved. But if they were keeping

the Law in order to be saved, they were like a woman married to two husbands! He says: “*you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God*”. If the Law is still living and men must obey it to be saved, then Christians are married to two husbands! This cannot be. The one who was alive to the Law (the Jew) had to die to the Law in order to be joined to Christ. Jesus will not permit us to be joined to Him in adultery!

Ephesians 5:22-33 and other passages teach that the church is the bride of Christ. In this verse (Romans 7:4) our husband is identified as “*Him who was raised from the dead*”. This makes it clear that the church was not married to Him who was NOT YET raised from the dead—that is, the church did not begin before the resurrection of Jesus (see also Matthew 16:18).

When a man and a woman marry they intend to produce fruit, the fruit of children. Those who are joined to Christ are joined *that we might bear fruit for God*. We cannot bear fruit for God unless we are joined to Christ. And the fruit is the fruit of righteousness (Romans 6:16). Righteousness—right doing—is doing the things which Christ, our Husband, tells us to do. In everything we do we must listen to our Husband. “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father*” (Colossians 3:17). If we do things He does not tell us to do, if we go beyond His written word (1 Corinthians 4:6), we are not bearing the fruit of righteousness. The works (fruit) we produce are not produced “for God” but are truly “works of righteousness which we have done” (Titus 3:5) that do not glorify God.

Verses 5-6: ⁵ For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

The words *in the flesh* do not mean “in the body”. Paul and those he wrote to were in the body when he wrote, but he is writing about something which was in the past. Also, the thing which made the change was that they were *released from the Law*. The only ones who were under *the Law* were the Jews, so this is written to the Jews among the saints in Rome. While they were under the Law, they *were in the flesh*. The Law of Moses was a fleshly law which had fleshly (carnal) commands, and it was for those who were the fleshly descendants of Jacob (Israel). They were brought under the Law by a fleshly birth.

We are brought under the blessings of the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21) by a spiritual birth. The gospel, which is a spiritual law, becomes the rule of our lives.

While the Jews were *in the flesh, the sinful passions were at work in the members of [their bodies] to bear fruit for death*. These sinful passions (strong desires) are said to be *aroused by the Law*. Can this mean that if there had been no Law there would have been no sinning? Certainly not, because sin was here before God gave the Law to Israel. The sins were aroused by the Law because the Law showed what things were sinful. Perhaps a man did sinful things but did not know they were sinful. The Law showed that those acts were sinful (verse 7). And when the person knew that they were sins, he was aroused to do them (verse 8). When the Jews obeyed their sinful passions, those acts bore fruit for death, eternal death. Under the Law they sinned, but the Law was not able to deliver them from their guilt. The fruit of their actions was death.

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound. When they were released from the Law they became dead to it. They had been *bound* by the Law, therefore it was their master. But when they sinned, the master could not give them freedom from their sins. When they came to Christ, they were not only released from their sins but they were released from the Law by which they were bound. Now there exists a two-fold freedom. In this freedom there is still the life of service to live. We are the servants of him whom we obey (6:16). Those who come to Christ are loyal to Christ and change the direction and character of their service. They *serve in*

newness of the Spirit whereas the Jew under the Law served in *oldness of the letter*. They are now under the new covenant, whereas they were under the old covenant.

Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 says that the letter kills but the Spirit gives life. These are what the Law of Moses and the gospel of Christ lead to. Under the Law, the passions of sin, leading to sin, resulted in eternal death. Under the new covenant the Christian, who is not under the old fleshly covenant of Israel, serves in newness of spirit and receives eternal life.

Verse 7: ¶ What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.”

Paul here asks another question which might come to the mind of his readers. He answers it strongly — *May it never be!* It is wrong to say that *the Law [is] sin*. Yes, the Law worked in their members. But Paul is not saying that the Law encouraged sinning. What he writes is: *I would not have come to know sin except through the Law*. This does not mean that he would not have sinned if he did not know the Law. Gentiles who did not have the Law sinned. They probably sinned without knowing that they sinned—at least they may not have understood how bad sin was and that sin causes spiritual death. No one can understand sin as God sees it unless God shows him what sin is.

The Law told Paul what sin in general was, and told him what acts were sinful. If Paul had not known the Law he still could have coveted. But without the Law he could not have known it to be the sin that God shows it is.

The scripture where this command is found is Exodus 20:17. This is one of the Ten Commandments and Paul says it is a part of the Law. Yet he says that this Law is dead, or that those he writes to are dead to it because they were delivered from it. This is clear proof that the Ten Commandments have been abolished, that no one living today is living under the Law given to Israel on Mt. Sinai. There are those who bind the Sabbath today. They teach that only the part of the Law which they call “the ceremonial law” was abolished at the

cross. But this verse shows clearly that the Ten Commandments are included in the Law to which we are dead.

Verses 8-9: ⁸ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;

Paul here speaks of sin as if it was a person. It took *opportunity through the commandment*. It acts just as Satan did when he tempted Eve. God had said man should not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan turned this commandment around and deceived Eve into sinning. In the same way Paul says sin takes opportunity through the commandment “you shall not covet” to cause him to *produce coveting of every kind*.

Without any law there can be no sin. If there is no law, sin is dead. This is true because sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). We cannot sin unless there is a law for us to break. Some teach that today we are living under grace and that we are not under any law at all. If that is true, then we cannot sin because there is no law for us to sin against! But man has never been without law. He has always been able to disobey law and therefore to sin.

Many, many religious people teach that babies are born guilty of sin—that they inherit the sin of Adam. However there is nothing in the Bible which teaches this. Not only that, but many Bible verses show that babies do not inherit sin. I believe that Romans 7:9 is the strongest and clearest verse in all the Bible to show that the doctrine of inherited sin is false.

Paul says that *I was once alive apart from the Law*. This must mean that there was a time in the life of Paul when he was not responsible to the Law—he was “apart” from it. But the Law was given long before he was born. The only way in which he could be apart from the Law is that when he was a baby he was an innocent person who was not condemned by the Law. He was not subject to the Law. Yet he was alive, not just physically but spiritually. If he had been born guilty of sin, he would have been dead, not alive. This means

that he and everyone else are born into this life innocent before God. He did not inherit the sin of Adam, and no one else does, either.

But *sin became alive* to him. When? *When the commandment came*. When he became older and became responsible before the Law, *sin became alive and [he] died*. He did not die physically, but spiritually.

Some do not like the term “spiritual death”, but I think their objection is wrong. Before the Ephesian brethren became Christians they were *dead in [their] trespasses and sins* (Ephesians 2:1). They were not physically dead; they were spiritually dead. If they were “dead”, something had to die. Since it was not the body, it had to be the spirit.

This does not mean that the dead spirit was not able to do anything. Death is when something or someone is separated from that which gives it life. James 2:26 says, “*The body without the spirit is dead*”. So also the spirit without God, who is the Father of spirits, is dead. “*But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives*” (1 Timothy 5:6). This can only mean that though she is alive physically, she is dead to God and has no spiritual life.

Verses 10-13: ¹⁰ and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; ¹¹ for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³ ¶ Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

These verses explain verse 9. They show that the Law and the commandment of the Law are not the real cause of Paul’s sin. Sin, here spoken of again as if it

were a person, took *an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me*. It deceived, just as sin deceived Eve. The commandment clearly said “Do not covet”, but sin influenced Paul to think it did not mean what it said and that to violate it would not hurt him. Therefore he sinned, and because sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), the Law *killed me*. Paul was separated from the approval and favour of the Lawgiver, God.

But when the Law killed him, the Law could not be criticised. *The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good*. It is “righteous”, therefore when a person is punished because he breaks it, his punishment is just. The Law is “good”; it is given in order to bring good things. But the good will only come when the person obeys the Law.

The next question is: *Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me?* In verse 11 he said that sin took advantage of the commandment and killed him. His answer is clear: *May it never be!* It was sin that did the awful work, which used that which was good (the Law) to cause his death.

But what good did the Law do, then? When sin caused Paul’s death, *through the commandment sin [became] utterly sinful*. In order for us to see how bad sin is we must see what sin brings. Sin brings death. Surely this teaches us that sin is utterly sinful!

The Law gave the death penalty for many of the sins of the people. It gave very severe punishments for other sins. *“Every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty”* (Hebrews 2:2). The history of the Jews is a history of punishment after punishment for their disobedience to the Law.

Yet the physical death which many of the Jews suffered for their disobedience is not the death Paul writes about. Paul died, yet his body still lived. His sins cut him off from God, and unless his sins were forgiven he would suffer the punishment of eternal death in hell. Hebrews 10:28 says: *“Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or*

three witnesses". The next verse tells us that those who sin against Christ will have a much greater punishment.

Verses 14-15: ¹⁴ ¶ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

Paul uses two terms—"spiritual" and "of flesh". *The Law is spiritual* but Paul was *of flesh*. "Spiritual" here means "devoted to the interests of the spirit", and "of flesh" means "devoted to the interests of the flesh with its desires". Paul was divided. He had the Law and knew it. He knew that when he acted "of flesh" he was doing the wrong thing. *I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.*

David wrote: "*From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way*" (Psalm 119:104). So Paul hated the false way because he got understanding from the Law, which was spiritual. Through the Law he knew what was sin, and through the punishments of the Law he saw the utter sinfulness of sin. So he hated those things which he did which were against the Law. He was a divided man.

Verse 16: But if I do the very thing I do not want to do I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.

At the very time Paul broke the Law, his conscience condemned him. His mind was *confessing that the Law is good*.

Verses 17-20: ¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ *But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

Here we find the apostle making a difference between his better self and that part of him which acts in a bad way. In fact, he sets himself apart from that part of himself which does evil, and he calls it “*sin which dwells in me*”. He says that *in himself* (and he makes it clear that he means “*in my flesh*”) *nothing good dwells*. I understand Paul to mean that his flesh was so controlled by evil desires that he believes no good thing dwells in and comes from the fleshly part of his being. Surely he does not mean the fleshly need for food and drink and all other proper needs and desires of the flesh.

Paul says: *the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not*. The act of willing is his own action. It is not the action of the flesh. When he does the bad thing he says, “*I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me*”. What he calls his “flesh” in verse 18 he calls “sin” in verse 20.

What he wills to do is good. It is his own will. But the hold of the flesh is so strong that he does not find how to do what he wants to do. In verse 19 he writes: *For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want*. This is an example of what Jesus said: “*the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Matthew 26:41).

Language cannot describe a more miserable condition for a human being than this. The unending fight between the baser desires (the flesh) and the nobler desires (the spirit) of man is perfectly described by Paul. The hopelessness and despair which comes from losing the fight over and over is truly awful.

It is good at this point to ask the question: “Of whom is Paul speaking in these verses (15-20)?” I suspect that when they read this most people think it expresses the feelings and experiences of Paul as a Christian, and therefore it

describes all Christians in varying degrees. But if this is a true and accurate picture of Paul, showing the total and inescapable misery he experienced, what about the rest of us? Certainly he stands forth in the New Testament as a Christian as pure and good as any follower of Christ has ever been. If Paul was miserable, what about those who are less spiritually mature?

Also, when we read in other places what he says about his own life we cannot harmonise many of his statements with the description in Romans 7. One example will be enough. He wrote: *“but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9:27). In Romans 7 Paul was talking about the time before he became a Christian and was freed from the Law. That was when he was powerless.

This section says that one purpose of the Law was to make sin appear “utterly sinful”. However, it is clear that the sinner did not always fully understand the sinfulness of what he was doing. Saul of Tarsus persecuted Christians to the death while living in good conscience (Acts 23:1), and the Jews put the Messiah to death “in ignorance” (Acts 3:17). They knew what they were doing, but they did not understand the sinfulness of their acts. Paul later said that his persecution of Christians made him chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). He said that he was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13). But it is clear that these sins were not those he speaks about in these verses. This is true because in persecuting Christians his conscience did not hurt him, but the sins he speaks of in Romans 7 caused his conscience to hurt him.

Verses 21-23: ²¹ ¶ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Here we find two different parts of his being in which law dwells; one law dwells in his flesh, or in the members of his body, and another law dwells in

his mind which is his inward man. These laws fight against one another, and one brings the other into captivity.

The law of God is in his mind, and he delights in it after the inward man. The inward man is the spirit, and since the law of God is spiritual it is proper that the spirit will be delighted in it. The law of God is in the best interests of the spirit. The other law is the law of sin.

Law here carries the thought of rule and control. The interests of the spirit are one thing, and the sinful desires of the flesh are contrary to that. There is a war between them. The law of God never wars against the proper desires of the flesh, but the law in Paul's members, which is the law of sin, warred against the best interests of the spirit. And in that war, it brought the law of God into captivity. This means that he obeyed the demands of the law of sin, and disobeyed the demands of the law in his mind.

Verses 24-25: ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Paul felt helpless. *The body of this death* had defeated the law of his mind. He was a prisoner! He cries out in his wretchedness, "*Who will set me free from the body of this death*"? There was nothing he could do to rescue himself. He was completely hopeless. Someone else had to deliver him. Who could it be?

This is a description of those under law before the gospel came to man, and it particularly describes the Law under which the Jews had been for many centuries. It is true that those under any law cannot get deliverance from sin through that law. If there had been a law given which gave life, then justification would have been by the Law, Paul said in Galatians 3:21. The Law which God gave to Moses was the best law one can think of. If law could give life, then the Law of Moses would be the law to do that. But law cannot give life. Why? Because the law was weak through the flesh (Romans 8:3). It was

weak because it did not have the power to overcome the weakness of the flesh—that is, it could not give the forgiveness of sins!

Because the Law could not give him forgiveness, Paul was “wretched” (very unhappy). He cries out for deliverance. The Law under which he lived could not help him, it could not deliver him from the slavery of sin.

In Romans 6 Paul taught about the blessedness of freedom from *sin*. When a man is free from sin, he is no longer a slave of sin. In chapter 7 Paul is teaching about freedom from *the Law*. In order that the reader can appreciate freedom from the Law, this chapter pictures the condition of helplessness and ruin into which those under the Law had fallen. The Law gave no escape from this condition.

To carry Paul’s teaching forward, we can say that he is telling the Jews in general, and especially Jewish Christians, that because salvation does not come by the Law, they must not try to bind the Law on Gentile Christians. The Law cannot save the Jew; how then can they think the Law can save the Gentile when it is added to the gospel of Christ? Paul said in Romans 1 that the gospel is God’s power for salvation. He has now demonstrated that the Law cannot save. He has destroyed every reason which they might give for binding circumcision and the Law on Gentiles.

Paul’s wonderful answer to the problem is, *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* Jesus has provided deliverance from the death which sin caused. Christ came to set the captives free and to loose those who were bound. Since we are delivered by God through Christ, the description of hopelessness in this chapter cannot be a picture of Christians. It is a picture of the Jews under the Law. And it is a picture of all those who try to be pleasing to God without Christ.

His last sentence is: *So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.* This is a summary of what he has described in this chapter. He serves the law of God with his mind, but he serves the law of sin with his flesh when he obeys its sinful desires. The problem is that the law in his mind cannot win over the law

in his members. There has to be another force brought in. This new force will do what the law in the mind cannot do. It will destroy the law of sin. This is what the gospel was given to do.

Chapter Eight

Verses 1-2: ¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

In chapter 7 Paul described the hopeless and helpless condition of the man under the Law who had no forgiveness. Here he tells us that in Christ we are delivered from that condition—*there is now no condemnation* . What a blessing to *those who are in Christ* .

The word “*now*” is important. Those who are in Christ “now” have what those in time past did not have. This tells us that Paul is talking about two time periods—the time when the Law of Moses was God’s law for the Jews and the time (“now”) when the gospel of Christ is given to all men. They were then under condemnation (sentenced to punishment), now they are not under condemnation.

Those who are in Christ now have freedom. Paul does not say that those who are in Christ can never be condemned in the future. They “now” have been delivered from the condemnation they had while under the Law. This is a freedom which they could not have while under the Law.

In the King James and New King James translations the phrase “*who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*” is found at the end of verse 1. It is not certain that these words were in the original letter written by Paul. The translators of the New American Standard Bible think it was not in Paul’s letter, whereas the translators of the King James version think it was. We however do not have to worry whether it was there or not, because the same phrase is in verse 4. It is true that those who are in Christ do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

A person walks according to the flesh when his mind pays attention to the things of the flesh. A person walks according to the spirit when he listens to

what is good for his spirit. The spirit in this verse is not the Holy Spirit, but the spirit of man.

The person who walks according to the flesh is working to satisfy the desires of the flesh. The person who walks according to the spirit is the one who is interested in the things which are good for his spirit and who does those things. He is thinking about what is good for his spirit now and for eternity. Because the good of his spirit is his main aim, he lives according to the spirit.

In chapter 7 Paul wrote of two laws. Both of those laws were trying to rule over the man. Those laws were (1) the Law of Moses, and (2) *the law of sin and of death*. The “law of sin and of death” is the law which says “the man who sins will die”. In the battle to rule over man, the law of sin and of death won. The man was made a prisoner to the law of sin (Romans 7:23).

In 8:2 Paul introduces a third law, and he says that it wins over the law of sin and of death. It made Paul free. He was made free from the law of sin when he was obedient from the heart to the form of teaching which was delivered to him (6:17-18). And since sin brings death, Paul calls this law the law of death. It is a law which rules a person because the person sins, and it gives death as its wages (6:23).

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the third law. It is not certain why that law is called the law of the Spirit. There are different ways in which this law can be connected to the Spirit. I believe that it is the Spirit’s law because it was revealed by the Holy Spirit. He is the One who was sent by the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal His gospel. “The law of the Spirit” and “the law of Christ” are not two different laws. We have one lawgiver, Christ. He revealed this law by the Spirit, and therefore I believe that this is the proper meaning of these words.

The life is “*in Christ Jesus*”. The law of the Spirit brought us into Christ. In Christ we have life. Jesus said, “*the words that I speak to you, they are spirit and life*” (John 6:63). The words were not actually life, they were words. But the words produced life. So the law of the Spirit is the law which brings life, and that life is in Christ.

To say that there is no condemnation is to say that they were saved. But the gospel is God's power to save, therefore the gospel and the law of the Spirit are the same. The Law of Moses could not deliver men from the law of sin and death, yet there is a law which delivers us. This means that law has the power to save. We are free from the Law of Moses so that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus may save us. We are under law today. Every citizen is under the law of his government. Christians are citizens of God's kingdom and are under law to God. The simplest definition of law is "the expression of will". God has always had a will for man to obey. When this will is put into words, it becomes law.

Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 9:21 proves this: *"to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law"*. In this verse he is saying that when he preaches, his method depends on those to whom he is speaking. When he preached to the Jews he appealed to the Law of Moses to help prove that Jesus is the Christ. When he preached to the Gentiles who did not have that Law, he used another way of proving that Jesus is the Christ. In Athens he appealed to the testimony of one of the Athenian poets, but he did not appeal to the Law or the prophets of the Old Testament (Acts 17:22-31).

But in this verse Paul is quick to guard against a wrong conclusion. Even though Paul made himself as one without the Law, he was under law to God, and this law is the law of Christ. Christ is King and He has a law to govern His subjects. This law gives the way in which a person can become a citizen. Truly the law of Christ is the law of the Spirit, and this law is the law of life in Christ Jesus. It is Christ's law because it came from Him, and it is the Spirit's law because He is the One who made it known, and it is the law of life because it brings life.

Verses 3-4: ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Verse 3 explains why the law of the Spirit made us free from the law of sin and death. Paul says that the Law of Moses could not make us free, and he gives the reason why. The reason is that the Law was weak. But the weakness was because of the flesh. The flesh is weak because it is so easy to sin. The law was weak because it could not free anyone from the sins committed through weakness. The law condemned those who broke its laws, but it could not take away sins.

But God sent *His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh*. This does not mean that Jesus was a sinner. He was not born in sin, nor did He ever commit a sin. Why, then, did Paul emphasize that Jesus was sent in the likeness of *sinful flesh*? The reason must be that Paul wanted to emphasize the weakness of man because he sins.

But notice: Man is the same kind of person before and after he sins. Man has a weakness toward sin. He is not a sinner when he is born, but he is weak and can sin easily. Jesus was sent to the earth with the same weakness, yet He did not sin. This shows that man is not a sinner when he is born, but becomes a sinner when he commits sin. And it shows that even though man is weak through the flesh, he does not have to sin.

Jesus came *as an offering for sin*. He came to take away the sins of the world. He did this by becoming a sin offering. He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the offering of Himself (Hebrews 9:26). The Law of Moses could not make men free because its sacrifices could not take away sin. Only Christ could do that. Therefore the law of Christ, the gospel of Christ, can make us free from sin so that we can have life with God.

Jesus said that He came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-18). When He fulfilled it He fulfilled its righteousness. He brought the justification (forgiveness) which the Law could not bring. The Law spoke of this righteousness and those who were under the Law tried to find it. The problem was that the Jews under the Law tried to be justified from sin by the Law (Romans 10:3) which could not give it. Jesus came to bring the righteousness which they could not get without Him. The Law is fulfilled in us because Jesus brought what the Law pointed to—the complete justification from sin.

However, this purpose is fulfilled *in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*. The person who is attracted to the gospel of Christ is interested in the things of the spirit. After he receives the gospel, he walks according to the spirit. The social gospel, which provides food, good times, and other things which appeal to the flesh, is an enemy to the purpose of the gospel found in the New Testament.

Verse 5: For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

I believe that the “spirit” here is the human spirit rather than the Holy Spirit. First, if this is not true then the balance in the contrast between the flesh and spirit is not there. The contrast is between the flesh and the spirit, and this means that the spirit is the spirit of the person who also is a person of flesh. Secondly, if the spirit is the Holy Spirit, then the things of the Spirit are the revelations of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). That would mean that until the gospel was given the human spirit could not mind the things of the Spirit because they had not been revealed.

Paul simply tells us what every thinking person should be able to see—that the person who is interested mainly in the things which are “of the flesh” will be interested only in those things which will give him the things which satisfy the flesh. On the other hand, the one who is seeking after the things which will be good for his spirit will be busy about those things which will help his spirit.

The best men of all ages have sought after the things of the spirit, the things which produce the security, growth and well-being of their souls.

Verses 6-8: ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because *the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so* ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Here Paul writes about the results of setting one's mind either on the flesh or the spirit. One whose mind is set on the flesh is in a state of spiritual death because he is separated from God. There is no spiritual life apart from God. The one whose mind is set on the spirit is at peace and has life. He has life with God, he is at peace with God. This life is given through Christ, and therefore He is our peace. Being justified by faith we have peace with God.

The reason why the mind set on the flesh is death is that *the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God*. The interests and desires of the fleshly mind are against the will of God. Such a person loves the things God hates and his life is opposed to God. He may not realize it but it is still true that he is an enemy of God. Paul also writes that the mind set on the flesh *does not subject itself to the law of God*. Why?

Because the law of God is not for the mind set on the flesh. It is given for the higher and nobler mind, the mind that understands that he must serve God and which devotes itself to the service of God and to the things which are good for his own spirit. This person is like God, because he is working for the good of his spirit which was made in the image of God.

Paul emphasizes that the fleshly mind is separate from God and against God by saying that *it is not even able to do so* ⁸ *and those who are in the flesh cannot please God*. The man who minds the flesh cannot be subject to the law of Christ. There is no way he can please God. God's law is not given for such a mind. The interests of the one who minds the flesh are so different and are so opposed to God's ways that they cannot be brought together.

Those who are called “Calvinists” have misused these verses as translated in the King James Version. They teach that we are born “depraved”, that is, that when we are born we are only able to do and think evil, never able to mind the spirit. They teach that God must send the Holy Spirit directly to a man in order to change his nature from fleshly to spiritual. They say that “in the flesh” means “being unsaved.”

If this is a true doctrine it means that no unregenerated (unsaved) person can do a thing which God will be pleased with. The doctrine says that such people cannot think a good thought or do a good deed at all. Their doctrine teaches that “in the flesh” means “in the body” and that every person is “in the flesh”. The New American Standard Bible shows what the phrase really means. The phrase is translated “*the mind set on the flesh*”. We are responsible for what become our goals. We decide what to set our minds on. We are born with the ability to make choices, either for the flesh or for the spirit. If we live after the flesh and neglect the spirit, we will become and remain the enemy of God, not able to be subject to His law.

Verse 9: ¶ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

People who are living in their fleshly bodies may not be “in the flesh”. If the Spirit of God dwells in them they are in the spirit, not in the flesh. They are in their own spirit because their lives are controlled by the spirit instead of the flesh.

But if we are in the spirit, *the Spirit of God dwells in us*. This is also called *the Spirit of Christ*. It is the same Spirit; there is not one Spirit of God and another Spirit of Christ.

Paul is writing about a very serious thing. To think that one *does not belong to Him* is a painful thought. Jesus is coming back to receive His own, and if we are not His He will not come for us.

Paul is saying that if Christ is in us the Spirit of Christ is in us, and this Spirit is obviously the Holy Spirit. I know that some have the idea that the Spirit of Christ simply means the attitude and way of thinking of Christ. If that is true Paul is saying that we are in the spirit if we have the attitude of Christ. But such an attitude and way of acting is the result of self-development and growth, as Paul shows in Philippians 2:5-8. We have spiritual life from the time we obey Christ and are born again, before we develop and grow in Christ. This means that the Holy Spirit dwells in us as we are growing.

In Acts 2:38 Peter promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who were baptised. The gift of the Spirit comes because we are in the spirit, or alive spiritually. With brother Whiteside I say: “But the Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit. He dwells in the Christian; that is plainly affirmed. And I dare not deny what Paul here affirms.”

(Note: In Acts 2:38 Peter promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to those baptised on that day, the first day the gospel was preached in its completeness. This promise was not repeated. I think this gift was the power to perform signs, as given by the laying on of the apostles' hands [Acts 8:16-18] which gifts are no longer given [1 Corinthians 13:8-13]. I agree that “the Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit” and that “He dwells in the Christian”. But He dwells in us as His word dwells in us. He controls us through His word. If His word does not control our actions and thoughts, we do not belong to God. PKW)

Verse 10: If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

If Christ is in a person, the Spirit of Christ which is the Holy Spirit is in him. Therefore, if the Holy Spirit is in a person, that person has spiritual life. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in a person whose spirit is separated from God.

The spirit is alive because of righteousness. Righteousness is here the same as “justification”. Justification from sin changed the spirit from death to life.

Because a person is justified, his spirit becomes a proper home for the Spirit of Christ.

In what sense, then, is the body dead while the spirit is alive? Paul speaks in the present tense, and yet the physical body is not dead at the time in which Christ is in a person. I think he is making a contrast between the body and the spirit of man which is true concerning the body of all men.

The body is dead in the future. It is under the sentence of death that rests on all men because of Adam's sin. Therefore the meaning of this verse is, as I understand it, "and if the Spirit of Christ be in you, though the body is under the sentence of death, the spirit is alive because it was justified from sin". The life which Christians possess will not stop when the body dies; Jesus tells us that those who live and believe in Christ shall never die. We receive this life by faith, and we keep it eternally by walking by faith.

Verse 11: But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

God is going to do something by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is something He will do to our bodies, and it is said to be the act of giving life. But one gives life only to that which is dead. At the time this is done the body is dead.

In what sense is the body dead? Actually or figuratively?

In what sense was the body of Christ dead when it was raised up? Literally and actually. Paul says that God raised up the body of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. By this same Spirit He will give life to our mortal bodies.

Since Paul speaks of the resurrection of the body of Jesus, the *also* shows beyond doubt that our bodies will be given life at the resurrection in the last day. The word *mortal* which describes our bodies is important. The body of Jesus was mortal and so are the bodies of all men. They all die a physical death. The use of the word here strengthens the thought that Paul is talking

about the physical death of the body, and the literal raising of it from the dead.

Because all men will be raised from the dead (John 5:29), some say that this verse cannot refer to the resurrection. This verse says that God *will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you*. God does not raise the wicked dead to “life”. He raises them to “eternal destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Only those who have the Spirit of Christ will be raised to “life”. John 5:29 says that there is a resurrection to life and a resurrection to damnation. Paul writing about himself said , “*if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*” (Philippians 3:11). He knew that he would be raised regardless of how he lived, but he was saying that he was using his whole life so as to be raised to life and not to damnation. And so this verse (Romans 8:11) is talking about those who will be raised to life because the Spirit dwells in them.

Paul is not saying that God will give life to our bodies from the grave *because* the Spirit of God dwells in us. He is saying that the Spirit who dwells in us is the same Spirit by which God raised Jesus from the dead, and He is also the Spirit whom He shall use to raise up our bodies.

The great chapter on the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15, says that the body which is sown (planted in the earth) is a natural body, whereas the one raised is a spiritual body. Also, he says that this corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality. This happens when the body is raised a spiritual body. But notice that everything he says about the resurrection is about the ones who are saved. This is clear from the appeal in the last verse: *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord*.

Verses 12-13: ¹² ¶ So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

We must not live after the flesh. In Galatians 5:13 Paul wrote: “*For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another*”. If we live according to the flesh we use our time, affections and efforts to do what the flesh wants. But if we live according to the flesh we *must die*. It should be clear to everyone that we will die physically no matter how we live. The death Paul speaks of here is death of the spirit—when the spirit is separated from God and He rejects us.

But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Who must do this? The Christian must do what this verse says. He must put to death the deeds of the body in order to live. The job is for each one of us. If we ignore this responsibility, we will die forever.

Beginning in the fifth chapter Paul wrote in detail about the different things that the flesh and the spirit of man do, and in the seventh chapter he described how those under the Law were not able to win over the flesh. But this verse tells us to put to death the deeds of the body. And this is something “you” are to do.

But it is to be done *by the Spirit*. What is this spirit? The answer is not easy to find. Certainly the human spirit is to use its power to control the flesh, and the flesh must not control the spirit. But if the spirit here is the human spirit, who or what is the “you”? Because of what Paul writes after this, I think it most likely that the spirit in this verse is the Holy Spirit.

How can one through the Holy Spirit tame the demands of the flesh and put an end to its unlawful desires? How does the Spirit give us the ability to do this?

The answer is this: The revelation of the Holy Spirit, which is the New Testament, instructs us, gives us light and gives us directions. This revelation also gives us the motives to cause us to do these things. These are the things the Holy Spirit does of which the child of God is conscious.

But I believe that there is an aid rendered by the Spirit in this effort, even though we are not and cannot be conscious of this. If a person objects to this idea because the aid through the Spirit cannot be consciously known by the Christian, that person might consider this idea: that if we were conscious of such aid by our feelings or in some other way, then we would be powerless to withstand it. If this were true, every Christian would be under an irresistible influence, and none would be lost, and all personal responsibility therefore would be taken away.

(Note: What Bro. Vinson says about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit doing something in addition to what the word of God does is not clearly taught in the Bible. It is not proved by these verses or any others. God answers our prayers for strength, and He does not always explain how. But there is no clear evidence in the scriptures that the Holy Spirit dwells in us in any other way than through the word of God working in us. When we are led by the word of God, we put to death the deeds of the body and live. PKW)

Now think of the wonderful result when we put to death the flesh: *“you will live”*. When, and for how long? Now and forever! Think about having a life which is spiritual, the life of the spirit, which will never end. This is what these words tell us.

Verses 14-15: ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

What Paul here writes includes both how we become children of God and how we remain children. It is addressed to those who are children, and it says that they are the ones who are being led by the Spirit of God.

Some say that “once a child, always a child” no matter how a person lives. The one who teaches this doctrine uses the example of the relationship of a physical child to his physical parents. He says that your child never stops being your child no matter how bad he acts. A parent may not like what a child

is doing, yet the child remains his child anyway. The conclusion is that if a person becomes a child of God, he will continue to be a child of God no matter how he acts.

This sort of reasoning has often made me wonder how one who is a child of the devil can ever stop being his child and become a child of God. Certainly he cannot become a child of God unless he first stops being a child of the Evil One. But if we use the example of a physical child and a physical father, the conclusion must be that the child of the devil can never stop being a child of the devil!

There were some in the church at Corinth who had stopped, in some important sense, being the sons or daughters of God. Yet they could not have come into the church of God without having become children of God. In his moving appeal for them to come out from those unbelievers who worshiped idols, Paul quotes the promise by God to receive them when they came out, and that He would be their Father and they his sons and daughters. 2 Corinthians 6:18 says, “ *‘And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me’, Says the Lord Almighty*”.

But it is only those who are *led by the Spirit of God*, who are *sons of God*. How does the Spirit of God lead? It is surely true that the directions given in the Word of God, together with the motives supplied in the Bible, lead us to live as a child of the heavenly Father. The very setting or surrounding language of this statement lends strength to the persuasion that through the indwelling of the Spirit there is being exercised by Him an influence in the life of such a one as to cause their sonship with the Father to continue. How this is done, if so, I dare not express an opinion.

(Comment: Again I point out that there is no evidence in the Bible that the Holy Spirit leads us through some inner influence separate from the word of God. This is an opinion for which there is no clear biblical proof. Those who are led by the Spirit are those who listen to His word. PKW)

The rest of this passage describes the great difference between the spirit which the sons of God once had and the spirit which they now have as the children of God. Paul writes: ¹⁵ *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”*

The spirit of fear is what all those who are not Christians have. But sons of God have not received the spirit of slavery leading to fear *again*. This shows that before they were sons of God they had the spirit of fear. Now they have received a different spirit, the spirit of sonship. They had the spirit or attitude of sonship because they were sons of God. Because they understood that they were sons they had no fear.

If the child of God studies the love and goodness which the Heavenly Father has for His children he will never have the spirit of fear. Everything the Father does for His children comes because of a father's love, and just as our earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, much more does our Father in heaven know how to give good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:11).

To cry “*Abba! Father!*” is simply to speak because of the great joy which comes when we know that God is our Father. It expresses the spirit of sonship. The word “Abba” is the common word for “Father” which the Jewish people of that time used.

Verses 16-17: ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

In this section Paul is talking about what the Holy Spirit does for the Christian and the benefits we receive from Him. We must understand that the testimony of the Holy Spirit is telling us that we are now children of God, not only that we became God's children. However, in order to BE a child of God we must BECOME a child of God. Just as it is necessary for the Holy Spirit and our spirit to agree about BEING a child of God, this testimony is also necessary to show that we BECAME children of God.

The only testimony which the Holy Spirit gives about how to become or continue to be God's children is in the New Testament. Further, the Holy Spirit cannot bear testimony with my spirit unless I know His testimony.

Therefore I must first find what the Holy Spirit says a person must do to become a child of God. I do this by studying the New Testament, which is His testimony. Then my spirit can testify that I have done those things which the Holy Spirit revealed.

It is the Spirit's testimony that sinners must not only believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but also repent and be baptised for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). The Spirit's testimony is true. How, then, does my spirit testify? My spirit testifies that I have done the things the Holy Spirit says to do in order to be the child of God. I have believed in Jesus Christ, repented of my sins, and been baptised for the forgiveness of my sins. My spirit testifies with the Spirit that I have become a child of God.

How can I know that I continue to be a child of God? The Spirit testifies by the word of the New Testament that a child of God must live in a certain way. He is to live after the spirit rather than after the flesh. He is to possess the spirit of a son, rather than that of a servant, and as God's son he is to be free from the spirit of fear. As we continue to study the word of the Spirit, we find just how a child of God must walk. This is the testimony of the Spirit.

My Spirit testifies with the Spirit that I am a child when, after reading the testimony of the Spirit, my spirit can say, "I am doing those things. I love the things of God and am walking in the spirit". Then I have the two-fold assurance of the testimony of the Spirit and the testimony of my spirit that I am a child of God. What a blessing!

Since we know that we are sons, we can know that we are *heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*. In 1 John 3:1-3 John tells us about this also. Our future is sure. Because we are children of God we will inherit the blessings which He has promised His children. (It is implied that if we are not children, then we will not inherit. The blessings of eternal life in heaven are not for everyone.) What a wonderful blessing it is to be a child of God both now and

in heaven. Peter tells us that there is an inheritance reserved in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:4), but this inheritance is for those who are heirs, and if we are children then we are heirs.

The greatness of this inheritance is shown by the fact that we are not only the heirs of God but we are fellow heirs with Christ. We share our inheritance in common with Christ. Just as we read of the Gentiles being fellow heirs with the Jews who believed in Christ (Ephesians 3:6), so here we find the same term telling us that we are *fellow heirs with Christ*. When Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God and seated on His throne as Lord, He became heir of *all things*! There is an inheritance waiting for us so great that we cannot imagine what it will be.

Paul shows the greatness of that inheritance by saying that we will *also be glorified with Him*. *If indeed we suffer with Him*, we will be glorified with Him. We must suffer with Him in order to be glorified with Him in heaven. He suffered in the past and He is glorified now. Our sufferings are now and our glorification is future. When we suffer because we are faithful to Him, then we are suffering *with* Him; but if we suffer for some other reason our suffering is not *with* Him. Paul is not telling us to suffer. He is simply recognizing the truth of another scripture which says, “*Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus was made lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and because of this He was crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews 2:9). His suffering was a death offering for our sins; ours is not. We suffer because the world hates us just as it hated Him (John 15:18-19; 17:14). Even though Jesus was speaking to the apostles in these verses, the same thing is true for all of His followers (1 John 3:13).

These scriptures do not tell us to force ourselves to suffer or to seek to cause others to persecute us. But if we are careful to be faithful to Christ we can be sure that the world will hate us. We will have to suffer.

Verse 18: ¶ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

At the present time there are sufferings, then there shall be glory. The enemies of the Lord cause the Lord's people to suffer; God gives the glory to His people. Suffering and glory come from different causes, but the greatness of each is even more different. How can we compare the suffering which is only in this life to the glory which shall be for eternity? Paul wrote: "*For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison*" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

This life is a preparation for the eternal life. When we suffer for Christ we can use those sufferings to make us what God wants us to be, and shall receive glory in the future. The very statement that *affliction* produces *glory*, which is described as *an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison*, shows that the sufferings we experience now will have a bearing on our blessedness hereafter.

Each person has his own sufferings, and each person shall have his own glory. This glory is going to be *revealed to us*. We do not have it now, nor do we know it. It is *far beyond all comparison*.

Here Paul is writing about something which is very great. It is a subject which is important to every reasonable person on earth, and it gives us the most satisfying assurances for the future of the child of God.

Verses 19-20: ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

These verses and the next two are difficult to understand. Before anyone tries to say what they mean he must admit that they are difficult to understand and

that he may be making a mistake in his interpretation. The most difficult point to determine, I think, is the meaning of the word “*creation*” in these verses.

This verse grows out of the verse before. The subject of that passage is the child of God. I therefore conclude that the *creation* of this verse is the child of God. In that verse Paul sets forth a connection between a present suffering and a future glory; in this verse he expresses a present longing for this future blessedness. The earnest longing of the creation is that deep longing and continuing desire for a future resurrection and glory. Here we suffer; there we shall be glorified. We suffer in this body, and from this body of suffering we will be raised with a body in which there will be no suffering or shame.

The phrase “*for the revealing of the sons of God*” is a description of the resurrection. To me this suggests that there shall be a clear difference between the resurrection of God’s children and the resurrection of those who are not, even though they will all be raised at the same time. *The revealing of the sons of God* does not mean that it is the time when it is revealed to the children of God that they are His children. God has made known how to become and how to be sons of God, and we know that we are His children (1 John 3:1). But the world does not know that we are the children of God. In the resurrection all the world will know which ones belong to our Father. The sons of God will be revealed to them. Later in this chapter Paul writes that the called and justified are glorified. Glorification is the goal of the whole system of forgiveness and reconciliation.

For the creation was subjected to futility not willingly means that we did not choose the suffering which we have to endure. We suffer *because of Him who subjected it*. God is the one who has ordained the “futility” (worthless thing) which we suffer. When we are saved from sin, we still have to endure the sufferings which all men have to suffer. Salvation does not take away that futility. We are saved from our sins; we are not saved from physical suffering. Everybody has to suffer because we are humans.

But the new creation has hope, the hope that we will be delivered from the bondage of corruption in the resurrection day.

Why did God will that those who are His shall be subject to futility? It is my judgment that, first, it is not good for God to give us material rewards for becoming Christians. That is why God does not promise them. If in this life the child of God did not have to suffer as other human beings do, then this would attract people to God through the flesh—and that cannot be. God's appeal is to the spirit, and we must respond to Him with all our heart.

There is also a value to suffering. When Christians bear up under sufferings they become strong. Their spiritual growth comes about through suffering. When we are properly “exercised thereby” we produce the character that God wants us to have (see Hebrews 12:5-11; 2 Corinthians 4:17).

Verse 21: that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

God made even the child of God a slave to corruption—that is, even the child of God has to die. But God also gave the child of God the hope that he will be freed from that slavery. This is a hope that is real, a hope of a great change. He will receive real freedom—*the freedom of the glory of the children of God*.

Here we are slaves; there we shall have glory. Here our slavery is to corruption. But this body which will decay will be delivered from that corruption in the resurrection.

Into what state shall that body be delivered? Into the freedom of the glory of the children of God! To those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor and immortality there will be eternal life. But this hope is only for the children of God.

Verses 22-23: ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

There are two groups or classes in these verses. One is called *the whole creation*, and the other is called *ourselves*. This second group are those who have *the first fruits of the Spirit*. This means that the *whole creation* does not have the first fruits of the Spirit. Only *we ourselves* have these first fruits. This means that *the whole creation* is more than *the creation* of verse 19. If *the creation* of verse 19 means the saved people, then *the whole creation* means all the people. Those who have the first fruits of the Spirit are the same as *the creation* in verse 19—those who are saved.

What is the meaning of *the first fruits of the Spirit*? Brother Whiteside held that those who have the first fruits are the apostles but that *the whole creation* is the whole human race. I cannot understand how it is fitting to think of the apostles set forth apart from the whole human race. If I thought “ourselves” were only the apostles, I would think the whole of which they were a part would be the family of God, all of His children. I agree with Whiteside that the whole creation is the entire family of man, but I disagree with him on who “ourselves” are. I believe those who have the first fruits of the Spirit are the entire family of God—all Christians.

We ask again, what is the meaning of the words “*the first fruits of the Spirit*”? I agree with Moses Lard who said that it means the Spirit which is given to those who have obeyed the gospel, as taught in Acts 2:38 and 5:32.

(Note: Neither verse says that all Christians for all time shall receive the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 was a promise to those on Pentecost. The apostles were present to give them the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands [Acts 8:17-18]. Acts 5:32 is a reference to the witness of the Holy Spirit which He gave by the signs performed by many early Christians who had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. [See Mark 16:20; Acts 2:33.] Acts 5:32 does not promise the Holy Spirit to others. PKW)

Also, this accords with the language of Ephesians 1:13-14: “*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,*”¹⁴

who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

(Note: These verses refer to the miraculous coming of the Holy Spirit to the first Gentiles [Acts 10-11] and to the gifts which were given to Gentile Christians after that. This is the seal that the Gentiles are saved on the same basis as the Jews. These verses do not tell us that Christians today receive the Holy Spirit. PKW)

In Bible times the first fruits of the harvest were a pledge that the rest of the harvest would come. Christ is the first fruits of those who sleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). Because He was raised, we can be sure that all will be raised. This verse tells us that because the Holy Spirit was given, we can be sure that we will receive the inheritance God has promised to us—the redemption of our body. Jesus not only redeemed our spirits, but He redeemed our bodies. They belong to Him (1 Corinthians 6:20) and should be used to serve Him now. In the resurrection He will come to claim them and to change them into the likeness of His glorious body. Philippians 3:21 says: *who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.* And 1 John 3:1-3 says: *See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.* ² *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.* ³ *And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

The teaching that our bodies will be raised to live on this earth for a thousand years contradicts the truth that our bodies will be spiritual bodies. In order to live on this earth we will need material bodies which will need to eat, drink and breathe. But when we are raised from the dead, our bodies will be spiritual bodies. We will be like Jesus. We will not live here on earth any more. We will live in heaven. Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 for a description of our resurrected bodies.

Many people believe that the whole creation, vegetable, animal and spiritual, was cursed because of Adam's first sin. These people believe that all life, vegetable and animal shall be delivered from this curse at the coming of Christ. They teach that this earth will be made new. They say that life as it was before Adam sinned will again be enjoyed by all of creation. This teaching imagines that there was no death of any kind before Adam's sin, and that all death of every creature was caused by Adam's sin. With Whiteside, I wonder how man could eat what God made for him, both vegetable and animal, except those things died before he could eat.

Therefore I reject the idea that the whole creation of this verse includes the vegetable and animal kingdoms. I believe "the whole creation" is the human family only. Only people with proper minds can have the feelings and longings which these verses say the whole creation has.

I do not think that the lower creation (animals and vegetables) can have these feelings and longings. I agree with Campbell that such creatures do not have fear or hope in death.

But man is different. Man, even when he sinks as low as the description given in Romans 1, still fears a future judgment. But disobedient people cannot have any hope of future blessings, except as wishful thinking because of their strong desire. But the Christian is looking forward to the time when his body will be redeemed from its corruption, and when that body will enter into its eternal and immortal state of glory. The redemption of the body is the fulfillment of God's plan to save man (Ephesians 1:13).

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

Here we are told that we are saved in, or by, hope. How does hope save? It saves because it influences the one who hopes. Hope and fear cause us to choose what we do. Both hope and fear are good to have. But as the Christian grows, the influence of hope becomes stronger than the influence of fear. John

tells us that the child of God who has this hope purifies himself even as Christ is pure (1 John 3:1-3). As he perseveres in doing good (Romans 2:7), the hope of eternal life becomes stronger and stronger, thus keeping him on the path of salvation. As he grows older and closer to the time of death, the child of God looks more and more to the time when he will be with God, and the things of this world become less attractive to him.

Verses 26-27: ²⁶ ¶ In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Commentators do not agree as to what the spirit is in these verses. Some say that the spirit is the spirit of a man, not the Holy Spirit. Alexander Campbell gave this explanation in the first volume of the Millennial Harbinger. He admitted that he was the only one who believed this explanation. Some commentators today also say that the spirit in these verses is the human spirit. Campbell's reasoning shows the great powers of his mind, and I disagree with his position only after careful study.

In this section of the chapter there is a special way the words "we" and "us" are used. They are used to include all of man. They cannot be understood to mean only the body. If the spirit in this verse is the spirit of the Christian and not the Spirit of God, it means that "we" who "know" are different from "the mind of [our] spirit". That does not make good sense. But Paul says that the spirit does something for "us" because "we" are not able to do it for ourselves. "We" pray, but we are not able to pray as we should. We do not always know what we need, therefore we do not always pray for what we should. We have deep longings inside ourselves. We realize that we need something. But we do not know exactly what our needs are and we are not able to speak the words which tell of those needs. They are but groanings on our part.

The *groanings too deep for words* are not the groanings of the Holy Spirit. They are our groanings when we cannot speak the words which tell of our

deepest needs. The Holy Spirit then takes them up and gives them the words which they need. He is able to do this because He knows what is the mind of the spirit (of the Christian). He knows the interests, longings and attitudes of the human spirit. This makes Him able to *intercede* before the throne of mercy in the way which is pleasing to God.

We can be sure that the Holy Spirit does not ask things for us which are not the will of God. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have perfect agreement in thought, purpose and action.

I am sure that every sincere child of God feels that he is not able to say exactly what he needs when he prays to God. These verses give us a reason to be thankful.

1 Corinthians 2:11 tells us that no man knows the things of a man save the spirit of man. Therefore the thoughts, longings and utterances of “us” and “we” must be the thoughts, longings and utterances of our spirit. Hope helps us to be patient and to wait for our final triumph, but also the Spirit of God helps us in our prayers, and possibly in other ways we do not know. These verses make us sure of the assistance of the Holy Spirit in our prayers.

The things which are of greatest importance for our well-being are those things which are spiritual. If the “spirit” of these verses is the human spirit, it would mean that our spirit would be a mediator or intercessor between itself and some other. This could not be true. Our spirit cannot intercede for itself, because the act of interceding is done for another.

(Dennis C. Abernathy makes a strong argument different from the above interpretation. He argues that this verse refers to prayer which was inspired by the Holy Spirit during the years when the gifts were given to Christians, and that it does not apply to Christians today. His point is that in the years when revelation was not complete, prophecy, preaching and prayer were assisted supernaturally by the Holy Spirit. Now that the whole truth has been given to us, the Holy Spirit does not have to give us this aid.

Truth Magazine, 2 September 1999. This is worth considering, but I believe Bro.Vinson is right. PKW)

Verse 28: ¶ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

This is one of the most important judgments ever written. These truths should be a never-ending and ever-increasing source of confidence and joy to those who love the Lord. This statement stands between two things. Paul has just written of the blessings which flow from God's love. After this passage Paul gives a deep explanation showing that the things which God does for us fill all time. These things began when God planned how to save man, and they continue for us until we receive heaven itself. We cannot ever fully appreciate how important this statement is.

First we must understand what the words *all things* include. "All things" mean those things which rightly fall within the context (words surrounding this verse). These words do not include all the good things and bad things which happen to us in this life. Many times it has been stretched and misapplied to mean this. If this were true, evil would become good. It would become true that "we may do evil that good may come", which Paul clearly said could never be true. (Romans 3:8)

(Note: I believe Bro. Vinson's reasoning here is faulty. I see nothing in the context to limit "all things". The limitation is found in the words, "to those who love God". Evil still remains evil, even though God can bring good out of it. The brothers of Joseph intended evil when they sold him as a slave, but Joseph loved God. God was able to use that evil act to bring good both to Joseph and to his family. God cares for the Christian. Nothing can separate him from the love of God. God is able to use every circumstance to bring good. PKW)

These "all things" are all those things God has done and now does for us: the death of Christ, His resurrection, His ascension and priestly functions now

being carried out for us. But these things are only for those who *love the Lord* and who are *called according to His purpose*. Of course, the ones who love the Lord and the ones who are called are the same people. They show their love by keeping God's commandments, and those who keep His commandments are the called according to His purpose (1 Peter 2:21; 3:9). Only those who love the Lord can be named "the called". He calls us by His gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Those who hear and obey its call are the called. Those who do not follow the gospel cannot be considered "called". Everything God has done and is doing is for the good of the called. God never does anything to hurt those who love God.

The expression "*called according to His purpose*" does not include all of the callings which men have invented. God calls us by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). The gospel is His power unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Any other call is not according to His purpose. It is not His purpose to call us directly by the Holy Spirit. It is not His purpose to call us by an angel. The only ones who are His called are those who have listened to the gospel and are obeying it. These are the ones for whom God is working all things together for good.

Verses 29-30: ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Because Paul writes in the past tense, some think that the people Paul writes about have already been raised from the dead. They think Paul is talking about the ones who were raised when Christ was crucified (Matthew 27:51-53). This is a mistake.

God often uses the past tense when He speaks of things which "are" or "will be". If you read your Bible very much you will know that this is true. The past tense adds strength and truth to the statements. God knows what is to come. It will surely come to pass. It is as though it has already happened. Men cannot speak in this way of their plans. James warns us that we should always

say, “if the Lord wills” (James 4:15). But with God it is different. What He plans happens!

What Paul is writing about had not been finished. Paul gives us God’s purpose. His words describe the people who have been called according to His purpose, and they include all the redeemed. Paul puts before our eyes the entire plan to save man. His words show that God knows the ones He approves, even before they are born. He knows the ones who have been *predestined* (those whose *destiny*—final destination—has been decided beforehand), and their destiny is *to become conformed to the image of His Son*.

When God first decided to save man He saw that the saints will be raised from the dead and that their bodies will be changed into the image of the body of His Son. Christ will change us by the working of the power He has to put all things under His control (Philippians 3:21). This teaches that the resurrection of the body is the last and greatest work of man’s salvation. But notice: Paul does not tell us that the bodies of the unsaved will be changed in this way. Their destiny is eternal corruption (Galatians 6:8).

The phrase *so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren* tells us that Christ is the firstborn one and all Christians are the secondborn ones. He was raised first, and we also will be raised. If we are not raised, then His resurrection is meaningless. He cannot be the firstborn unless we are raised like Him.

(Note: The “firstborn” is the one who has authority over the others born in the family. So Jesus is the One who has authority over all of us who are His brethren. PKW)

These whom He predestined, He also called. This means that the ones God chose from the beginning are the ones whom He calls. They are the ones who love the Lord, and they show that love by obeying Him—they keep His commandments.

Before God started His plan to save man He decided what He would do for the saved. The saved would be glorified. These verses tell us about His plan in a

wonderful way. There are no other verses in the Bible which give such a high thought as these. They lift the spirit of man above all things on this earth and sweep it away to the world of glorified saints and to the enjoyment of the indescribable blessings of the heavenly world.

Much has been written concerning this purpose of God. When did God decide to save and glorify man? Most people seem to think that before God made man He decided to save him. Very far back in some sort of eternity they say that God formed this purpose, that it is an eternal purpose.

But a little thought will show that this cannot be true. First, the words “eternal purpose” contradict this idea. If God had to decide to save man, that means there was a time before He made that decision. How could the purpose be “eternal” if there was a time before the decision was made?

In Ephesians 3:10-11 Paul says, *“so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord”*. The church is in the plan of redemption. It is *in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord*. But when did this plan come into the mind of God?

It does not seem reasonable to me to say that God had a purpose to save man before there was any need to save him. If we use the verses which say that God’s plan was before the foundation of the world, and we use those verses to prove that God decided to save man before He made Him, we use the word “world” to mean the earth, sun and stars. However, I agree with MacKnight who says that the words of Ephesians 3:9 (which is translated in the King James Version as: *“to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid with God, who created all things by Jesus Christ”*, and which is translated in the New American Standard Version as: *“and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things”*) mean “which was hid from the ages”, and, “which was hid from the Jews under the Mosaic dispensation by God”. And think of this. If the purpose of

God to redeem man began before man was created and if it was hidden with God, from whom was it hidden? Before creation only Deity existed, and Deity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) could not hide something from itself! Therefore the purpose could not exist before those from whom it was hidden were made. The way in which God's purpose was eternal is that God planned to save man for all eternity. The fulfillment of God's plan is eternal.

Verse 31: ¶ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

The words *these things* include all those wonderful things Paul has just listed. If God has decided to glorify His saints, what terrible accident or persecution can keep God from doing what He has decided to do? Nothing can stop God from doing what He has decided. That means that for us who love God and who therefore obey His will, there is no force which has the intelligence or the power to stop God from giving us what He has promised to give.

Verse 32: He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

This is an argument from the greater to the lesser. God did the greatest thing for our salvation by giving His Son. Since God loved us that much, it is sure that He will give us all the things He has promised.

The *all things* of this verse are the same things as the *all things* of verse 28. God will give us everything needed to bring about the glory which He has purposed for us through Jesus Christ. Nothing could ever be said which would give greater assurance to God's children. The obedient believer can never doubt. These truths must have been a solid fortress and refuge to those early Christians who were under great persecution. They can give us the same assurance today.

Verse 33: Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

Because it is God who justified those whom He has called, no one can change what He has done. Some people added commandments and said that they must be obeyed. They taught that if a person did not obey those commandments, he could not be saved. Some Jews were doing this. They insisted that Christians must keep the Law of Moses. But God's elect are those whom God justifies, and He justifies those who keep His commandments, not the commandments of men. Since the Law of Moses was no longer His law, even for the Jews, it was wrong to insist that Christians must keep that Law. It is just as wrong for men to insist that believers must keep the laws of the denominations. When we keep human traditions instead of the commandments of God, we make God's commandments void (worthless) (See Matthew 15:1-14). Those who say that God's children are sinning because they do not keep man's traditions will not be able to bring a charge against God's elect in the judgment. Those who believe and follow God will be saved, no matter what man says.

Verse 34: who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

All those who oppose the children of God are fighting against Christ. He died for us, was raised, and is at the right hand of God. He is interceding (taking our part) for us. Who is greater than Christ? God is listening to Him as He pleads for us. We do not have to worry about those who condemn us for not following the commandments of men.

Verses 35-36: ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

Does *the love of Christ* mean the love we have for Christ or the love Christ has for us? It is my understanding that here Paul means “the love Christ has for us.” All of the things in verse 35 are powerless to keep Christ from loving us. They cannot come between us and Christ’s love.

The reason I think that *the love of Christ* cannot mean “the love we have for Christ” is that the things in this verse sometimes cause children of God to lose their love for Christ. When Jesus foretold the difficulties during the coming destruction of Jerusalem He said, “*Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold*” (Matthew 24:12).

But no matter how many or how terrible are the sufferings brought against us, they can never separate us from Christ’s love for us. He will continue to plead for us. And when these things happen because we belong to Christ we are only receiving what we have been told to expect. The quotation in these verses is from Psalm 44:22. It indicates a fear that because they were having persecutions the Lord had forsaken them. We can think the same thing when bad things happen to us. We think that when everything is going well, then the Lord is with us. But if bad things happen to us, we think the Lord has forgotten us. These verses teach us that we cannot judge things that way. No matter how bad things become, God’s love is still there.

Merrill Tenney observes: “The Roman church was probably small and weak. Repressive measures under Claudius (A.D.49), who endeavored to keep Christianity out of the city, had prevented any rapid increase in members. It was largely an underground movement, which had not grown materially during the three years of Nero’s reign following the death of Claudius in A.D. 54. The Roman Christians were still insecure and were wondering what new turn the imperial policy might take.” — *The Reality of the Resurrection*, p. 77. Paul’s words here must have helped these Christians very much.

Verses 37-39: ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here Paul lists many things which people think can separate us from the love of God. They cannot!

God loves all men, but this is not what these verses are talking about. This is the love of God for those who will come to Him. It is the active love which caused Him to plan the way to save men and to send Jesus Christ to bring it about. It is continuing through the work of Jesus who is the mediator for the children of God. It is *the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*.

All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). The words “in Christ” refer to Him as a person, to that which He has and will do. It does not mean the same as “in the church”, for some spiritual blessings can be found out of the church and are necessary to becoming a member of the church. But God gives us all these spiritual blessings in Christ. We can separate ourselves from God’s love, but no power outside of ourselves can ever do this.

This chapter has brought the student of the Roman letter to the mountain peak of thought. No area of thought in the Bible, and certainly none outside of the Bible, can lead the human mind to as high a height as this chapter, I think. For this reason I have written more comments on these verses than I have elsewhere. Here we find the abounding riches of His goodness supplied in Christ and the powerful provisions for our salvation and spiritual security spoken of in ways which are powerful and thrilling. It humbles the heart and enriches the soul of those who drink deeply from its words.

Chapter Nine

Verses 1-2: ¹ I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

Paul has a deep sorrow. In the following verses he tells us what people he is sorrowing for. He speaks of his sorrow in a special way. It is like he is taking an oath to show how deep his feelings are. He says *I am telling the truth in Christ* .

Paul is in Christ. This tells us that everyone who is in Christ, every Christian, must speak the truth at all times. He is speaking to the saints at Rome, and to us today.

When he speaks, he says *my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit*. We can read Paul's words, but God knows his heart. The Holy Spirit knows that what Paul says is true because the Holy Spirit knows what is in Paul's heart. When we speak to others and tell them that what we say is true we should always remember that the Holy Spirit knows whether we are telling the truth. He knows our heart.

Paul says *I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart*. Paul's sorrow was "great", and it was always in his heart. He wants the Roman Christians to know of this sorrow.

Verses 3-5: ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, ⁵ whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Paul shows his love for these people by describing them in wonderful words. They are *Israelites* according to the flesh, and they are Paul's *kinsmen according to the flesh*. These were Paul's people. And they were the kinsmen of Christ because He was born a Jew.

Also, God adopted the Jews as His sons in a way no other people were. They were given *the glory* of the special times when God appeared to them and showed His great power. *The covenants* are all the covenants God made with them, including the promise that the Christ would come from a descendant of Abraham. *The giving of the Law* was a great event when even Mt. Sinai shook and the Law was given to them. *The temple service* was the special worship at the temple. This was given by God and showed that God loved them and that they were His special people (John 4:22). God gave *promises* of material things such as the land of Canaan, and the promise of the Messiah for the blessing of all nations. *The fathers* (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons) were their fathers. It was through them that *the Christ is according to the flesh*.

He ends by saying, *God blessed forever*. In those words he shows his great thanksgiving to God for these great and true things.

Paul writes these things to prepare his Jewish readers for what he is going to say next. They are not going to like what he writes. He does not like it either. He is very sorry that his brethren are lost. When he says *I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren*, he implies that they are lost and that they are accursed and separated from Christ. Of course, he has already in this letter showed that they are guilty before God and that they are lost. But here he is dealing with their pride. Pride was the great wall which kept them from seeing their true condition before God.

Paul does not say that he does wish himself accursed from Christ for their sake. Paul could not save the Jews by being cut off from Christ. He is teaching that, if it were possible and he could do it, he would wish himself accursed in order that they could be saved. I have never known of another person who had such an unselfish love for others. Even Christ was cut off from God for only a

moment to make possible our salvation, (**Note: It is not necessarily true that Jesus was cut off from God even for an instant. His statement, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?” is a quotation from the beginning verse of Psalm 22. Jesus may have quoted it to cause us to understand that His death on the cross fulfilled that prophecy. PKW**) and for Paul to say that if it were possible he would wish to be forever cut off from Christ shows feelings of unselfish love which I am not able to understand.

Verses 6-7: ⁶ ¶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: “through Isaac your descendants will be named.”

Paul wants the Israelites to be saved, but He is not blaming God for their lost condition. *It is not as though the word of God has failed.* Even though most of fleshly Israel had rejected the Christ, the word of God’s promise did not fail. There is an Israel to which the promise does apply. It is spiritual Israel. When God speaks about Israel what He says sometimes applies only to those fleshly Israelites who became Israel in the spirit. Paul shows that this is easily understood when we see that God limited the promise He made to Abraham. They are not *all children because they are Abraham’s descendants.* Abraham’s first son was Ishmael, yet the promises were not fulfilled through him. It was through Isaac that Abraham’s descendants were named. Here was an election of God, and the Jews could see that it was just.

Verses 8-9: ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. ⁹ For this is a word of promise: “At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Here Paul makes a difference between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise. It is only the children of the promise who are going to be the children of God.

The promise was given to Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old and after Ishmael had been born. God told Abraham that Sarah would bear him a son, and the next year she did. You will remember that Abraham and Sarah had tried to help God fulfil His promise that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Sarah was getting old and was not able to have children. So Sarah gave Abraham her handmaid Hagar, and to Abraham and Hagar were born Ishmael. But Ishmael was not the son of promise. The plan of Abraham and Sarah was not God's plan. Ishmael was not the fulfilment of the promise.

If the only thing that mattered was that the son should be born to Abraham, then Ishmael would have fulfilled the promise. But Paul is showing that fleshly descent is not how one becomes the son of God.

Verses 10-12: ¹⁰ And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹ for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

God made a further choice. He decided that the promise should not go to both of the sons of Isaac and Rebekah, and that it should not even go to Esau, the first one born. God chose Jacob. The Jews were the sons of Jacob. They did not say that God was wrong when He chose them instead of the sons of Esau. They recognised that God had the right to choose Jacob and not Esau. Paul is using this example to show that God has the right to choose to save the Gentiles. God has the right to choose the ones He wants.

God chose Jacob instead of Esau when *the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad*. God chose because of His plan, not because Jacob or Esau did anything good or bad. God did not even choose the one born first, which was almost always the custom. God said, "*The older will serve the younger.*" This promise was fulfilled in a literal way because the nation of Edom which came from Esau served Israel which came from Jacob.

But the important thing about God's statement to Rebekah is that the seed which had been promised to Abraham would come from the younger son instead of the older.

Esau and Jacob both did things which were bad. Jacob and his mother deceived Isaac in order to get the blessing which Isaac wanted to give to Esau. Esau traded his birthright for some food. They lied and deceived, but everything they did only caused God's purpose to be fulfilled, *in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand*. The purpose of God stands. It stands because He has the right to choose.

Note this: Paul is not here discussing the election, or choosing, of a person to be *saved*. He is talking about God's right to choose a people for Himself. He had the right to do this when *the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad*. God does not choose a person to be saved or lost before he is born. We are chosen by the gospel when we believe and obey that gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

Verse 13: Just as it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

Malachi 1:2-3 says, *“I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob; ³ but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”* This shows how God fulfilled His promise concerning the descendants of Jacob and Esau. God showed less love for Esau's people than for the people of Jacob. God first chose Jacob, and then He blessed Jacob's people.

Verse 14: ¶ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

God “hated” Esau and “loved” Jacob. Was this “injustice” (not being fair or just)? Paul denies that God can ever be unjust!

Here is a great problem with Calvinism. Calvinists teach that God chooses which persons will be saved and which persons will be lost before those people are born. When God chose Jacob and did not choose Esau, He did not decide that one would be saved and the other lost. He decided only that the promise He gave to Abraham would be fulfilled through Jacob. If God chose to take Jacob to heaven and to condemn Esau to hell even before they were born, then God would have been unjust. God does not do that because there is no injustice with God. Every man is saved or lost because of his own choices.

God had to make a choice between Jacob and Esau. Christ could not come through both of them. God chose that the Christ should come through the nation which came from Jacob, not from the nation which came from Esau.

Verses 15-17: ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion”. ¹⁶ So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.”

When Moses asked God to show him His glory, God said , *“I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion”* (Exodus 33:19).

When God gave Israel the land of Canaan, he was “having mercy” on them. The Israelites did not drive the Canaanites from the land because Israel was more powerful. God was with Israel, and that is why they were able to conquer the land. This was the working of God after the counsel of His own will. Paul speaks of Jewish Christians in Ephesians 1:11: *“also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will”*. God purposed to redeem man through Christ. God was working out that purpose when He chose the Jews to be His people. The decision to call the Jews to be His people was God’s choice alone. It did not depend upon what the Jews wanted or what they did.

Verses 17-18: ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.” ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

The scripture Paul refers to is Exodus 9:16 where God said to Pharaoh: “*But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth*”.

God did not raise Pharaoh up and allow him to remain king because He wanted to do a kind thing to him. Pharaoh was only an instrument God used to carry out the purpose of God. The Jews understood this and they understood that God was right to harden Pharaoh’s heart.

How does God harden a person’s heart? In the Exodus record Moses says that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (7:3), that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened (8:19), and that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15). How can it be that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart and that Pharaoh hardened his own heart?

God does not harden a person’s heart directly. Pharaoh hardened his heart by his stubborn attitude. God hardened his heart by sending the plagues. If Pharaoh had not been stubborn, his heart would have been softened by the terrible things God sent on the Egyptians. God did not make him evil, and He did not force him to harden his heart. God simply used Pharaoh’s evil to produce what God wanted to happen.

God said that the plagues which He sent on Egypt came *in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth*. God used evil Pharaoh in such a way that God was glorified.

Verses 19-21: ¹⁹ ¶ You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this”, will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

Paul now sees an objection which the Jews could make. Paul is proving that God has rejected the Jews as His people. But the Jews might say, “*Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?*” The Jews might say, “After all, God chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Israelite nation. Since no one can resist His will, why does God find fault with us now? We are only what He has chosen us to be”.

Paul’s reply to this thought is important to us today. God is the Supreme Creator. Everything which is now in existence was made by Him. Since He makes us, He has the right to do what He wants with us. We do not have the right to complain against God.

Paul illustrates this by the example of the man who makes things from clay (the potter). He makes the vessels for the uses he wants to make of them. So God has the right to decide how to use what He has created.

This whole passage talks only about God’s choice to use some individuals and nations to carry out His purpose to save man (vessels of honour) and His choice to use others who are not carrying out His purpose (vessels of dishonour). Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel were vessels of honour.

The potter does not ask the clay what it wants to be before he makes a vessel. He makes what is needed, either a vessel of honour or of dishonour. Even so God chose the Israelites in order to bring about His plan to save all men through Christ. They had nothing to do with the choice, either by being good or bad.

God did not make the vessels of dishonour evil. They were simply those people who did not have the honour to be part of the people through whom Jesus came. They were no more evil or good after God selected the Israelites than they were before.

Calvinism (the religious system started by John Calvin) has greatly misused this passage. It has tried to use these words to teach a horrible doctrine—the doctrine that God has chosen which ones are to be saved or lost before they are born. We must not use Paul’s words to teach what he is not talking about in this passage.

Verses 22-24: ²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

Here Paul reaches the point he has been reasoning toward. He has said that God chose certain persons to carry out His plan for bringing Christ into the world and for blessing all the nations through Him. Now he asks: If the Gentile nations in the past, and Esau, and Pharaoh were all *vessels of wrath prepared for destruction*, and the Jews were chosen to be vessels of honour, why find fault with God? There was a time when the Jews were God’s chosen people and the Gentiles were “vessels of dishonour”. But the Jews were chosen to bring about God’s plan. They were not chosen because they were better than the Gentiles.

Why did God endure with patience the vessels of wrath (the Gentiles, Esau, Pharaoh, etc.) who were prepared for destruction? *He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.* The whole purpose of calling the Jews and rejecting the Gentiles was to make known the riches of God’s glory upon vessels of mercy. The vessels of mercy are the ones whom

God has called to salvation—both Jews and Gentiles. Spiritual blessings for all the called are what we have now.

This is what God was working toward when He chose some to be vessels of honour and some to be vessels of dishonour. These were temporary things. The permanent things are the spiritual blessings which we have today. God did not choose the Jews to be His people in order to save them, nor did He choose that they should always be His people. He chose them in order to bring about salvation to all who believe.

Notice that Paul specifically says that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, are the heirs of the riches of His glory. The Jews had received the riches of His goodness in the past (2:4); now both Jews and Gentiles are receiving the riches of His glory.

Verses 25-26: ²⁵ As He says also in Hosea, “I will call those who were not My people, ‘My people’, And her who was not beloved, ‘beloved’”. ²⁶ “And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, ‘you are not My people’, There they shall be called sons of the living God”.

Here Paul quotes Hosea 2:23 to show to the Jews that God planned to give His blessings to the Gentiles. The prophecy proves what Paul has been saying—that God planned all along to make Gentiles His people.

This was the best way for Paul to finish his argument to the Jews. They believed the Old Testament. They believed, and rightly so, that the scriptures were inspired by God. Therefore a clear prophecy that the Gentiles should be called *‘beloved’* ought to settle the matter.

Paul appealed to the scriptures as the highest and final argument. We should do the same today. Every position we take and every doctrine we teach should be based on the statements of the inspired scriptures. When we teach and defend those doctrines we should do so by showing that the scriptures teach those things.

But the Jews rejected what their own scriptures said. In John 5 we read that Christ rebuked the Jews for rejecting Him and He presented a series of evidences to show that He was the Son of God. Then He appealed to what God had said to Moses and then said, *“Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”* (John 5:45-47) Now Paul is using the scriptures, and the same things would be true. All that Paul wrote would be useless if they would not believe what Hosea wrote.

There is an important difference between what God called the Jews of the Old Testament times to be and what He calls the Gentiles to be today. The Jews were God’s children only in a physical sense, while those who are God’s children today, both Jew and Gentile, are His spiritual children. They had physical blessings—a land, an earthly kingdom, etc. But we have the promise of heaven! How we should rejoice because this is true!

Think about the condition of the Gentiles before Christ and then think about their condition today. Then, they were without Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:12) Now, in Christ, we are no more foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Then, we were not the people of God; now, we are His people, not by fleshly birth but by spiritual birth.

Here we find Paul joining the Jew and Gentile together, showing that God blesses both together, as he had shown in chapter one verses sixteen and seventeen. But what is the real position of the Jews under Christ? This becomes the next thing which he writes about:

Verses 27-28: ²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; ²⁸ for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly”.

This quotation from Isaiah 10:22-23 contrasts the few Jews who accepted Christ with the great number who rejected Him. The few who will be saved are *the remnant*, while the great number who will be lost are *as the sand of the sea*. The work which *the Lord will execute* is the work of saving the remnant. It can be called the work of righteousness, or the work of justifying all those who believe and obey the gospel. The Lord will do what He has promised *upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly*.

God did not want bad things to happen to those who do not obey the gospel. He did not force anyone to disobey Him. He is not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). The reason the great number of Jews are lost is that they rejected the Lord of their own free will. They were unwilling to obey Him as their Lord and Redeemer. (Luke 13:34)

The main reason why the Jews did not accept Christ, and why they do not accept Him today, is that Jesus did not come to be the kind of Messiah which they thought the Messiah should be. They wanted an earthly, powerful king who would raise a powerful army and destroy their enemies. It is amazing that some Christians have the same idea about the Messiah. They say that Jesus will come again, raise a big army and destroy His enemies. The Bible does not teach this.

Verse 29: And just as Isaiah foretold, “Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah”.

This is found in Isaiah 1:9. The “posterity” is the “remnant”, the few Jews who would be faithful to God. If there had been no faithful Jews, then they would all have been destroyed, like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19).

The Lord of Sabaoth means He is the Lord of hosts (armies). The expression is used also in James 5:4. It is used to emphasise the power of God to destroy and punish. He had the power to destroy all of the Jews, but He left a posterity (remnant).

Verses 30-31: ³⁰ ¶ What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; ³¹ but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

These words must have hurt the Jews very much. They tell the true condition of both the Jews and the Gentiles. They explain why the Gentiles received righteousness and why the Jews did not. Paul talks first about their conditions before the gospel was given. Now their conditions are reversed by the gospel.

This is an example of the truth that it is easier to teach a person the truth when he is free of wrong ideas about God and how to please Him than it is to teach one who has false ideas. The Jews were very hard to teach because they had the wrong idea about the Messiah. They were looking for a king to rule on earth and fight the Romans. Their wrong idea caused them to reject Jesus as the Messiah.

Further, they had a wrong idea about how to be right with God. They thought that if they kept the law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers they would be righteous. Therefore they rejected salvation by faith through Jesus. They tried to be justified by “*a law of righteousness*”, that is by a law through which they thought they could be righteous. Therefore they rejected the only way of righteousness, which is faith in Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the Gentiles were not seeking righteousness. They had no idea about righteousness or how to find it. But when the gospel was preached to them, they accepted it and obtained the righteousness from God. They did not have a wrong idea of how to obtain righteousness, so they were open to the truth when it was preached.

It is true that the Gentiles, especially the Greeks, searched for wisdom. This is why most of the “wise and noble” were not among the called of God. But seeking after wisdom was not as big a stumbling block to the Gentiles as seeking after righteousness by the law was to the Jews.

This letter together with Paul's letter to the Galatians gives the complete answer to the problem of the Jews. In Galatians Paul gives a short and direct answer, showing clearly that the law of Moses never brought salvation and that men must be saved by the gospel of Christ. In Romans Paul uses a longer and more indirect argument which continues through the first twelve chapters.

The Jews thought that by keeping the Law they could find righteousness, which Paul also calls justification and salvation. But they did not keep everything in the Law. They broke the Law, and therefore they failed to attain to the righteousness which is through law. The Gentiles were not trying to get righteousness through the Law, yet they received righteousness through the gospel—the system of faith—when they believed and obeyed it.

Verses 32-33: ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ just as it is written, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed”.

In chapter four Paul clearly shows that all men are justified by faith. Here he is telling what happened to the Jews because they did not seek to be justified by faith. They tried to get justification, but by the works of the Law, which they failed to keep completely. Therefore, Paul says they are not being justified.

But why did they not seek justification in the place where they could find it? First, they made a mistake in thinking there could be justification by the Law. Secondly, they rejected Him through whom justification could be received. Instead of Jesus being their Saviour, He is to them a stumbling stone.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block...*” (1 Corinthians 1:23). They stumbled because they did not see in Him the Messiah they were looking for. And the reason they did not see was because they were looking for a Messiah who would be an earthly ruler and would rescue them from the Romans. When the Messiah came to rescue

them from their sins, they could see no use in that. They thought their law delivered them from their sins.

In so doing they made two mistakes: the Law could not do what they wanted it to do, and Jesus did not come to do what they wanted the Messiah to do. Therefore they failed completely in what they tried to do through the Law and in what they expected the Messiah to do.

God did not lay the stumbling stone because He wanted them to stumble. Jesus was the stone of stumbling because of their stubbornness. There is a remnant of Jews who believe. To them Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. God wills that all should believe, but when the Jews in their stubbornness refused to see the wisdom and power of God, Jesus became a stone of stumbling to them. Jesus said that those who found no occasion of stumbling in Him were blessed (Matthew 11:6). This means that no blessing rests on those who found in Him an offence.

In conclusion, let us notice that Paul's teaching in this chapter on the subject of election was for the purpose of taking away the false ideas of the Jews. They were wrong in thinking that they were righteous because of the Law. And they needed to understand that the Gentiles are heirs of salvation together with the believing Jews. In every instance of election which Paul wrote about, nothing pointed to an election of those people to salvation or damnation. Their election was only to bring about God's plan for the salvation of mankind. If we fail to understand this, we will think that God elected some to salvation and others to condemnation regardless of what they did or were going to do. This would mean that God is guilty of saving or condemning people whether they follow Him or not. The book of Romans makes it clear that only those who obey by faith (1:5) will be saved, and that it is up to each one of us to make up his own mind to believe and obey. On the other hand, God has the right to do what He wishes to do. We must recognise that He has made choices of people in carrying out His will.

Chapter Ten

Verses 1-3: ¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. ² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³ For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Paul's wish for Israel is his *heart's desire*. How deep was this desire! How it moved him! This powerful desire leads him to pray *to God for them*. God is the One who can help. Paul prays *for their salvation*.

We might ask, "Why pray to God? He desires the salvation of all. Our prayer cannot change His will, for we are praying for what He wants". Christians must pray for all men (1 Timothy 2:1), and for different things for men as they have need and as Christians have need. Paul's prayer is concerned wholly with the salvation of Israel. It is God's will that His children speak to Him about their sincere desire for the salvation of the lost. We must pray according to God's will. The fact that it IS God's will should cause us to pray for it. Paul prayed because he knew they were lost. This hurt him greatly and caused him to pray.

Today if we say that people are lost, men say that we do not have love. Paul did not say they were lost because he hated them. He loved them!

Why were they lost? It was not because they were lazy in their attention to God. Paul wrote that *they have a zeal for God*. This means that they had a lively and burning interest in doing things for God. But their zeal made their condition even sadder, because their zeal was *not in accordance with knowledge*. They worked hard, but they were ignorant about God's ways.

Knowledge is not enough. People with knowledge can be lost. But if a person does not have knowledge, all of his work is for nothing. A person must have knowledge in order to please God. Jesus said, "*and you will know the truth,*

and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32). The truth cannot make us free unless we “know” it.

But the Jews were ignorant. They did not know how God saves men, how He justifies men, how He gives men righteousness. They did not know about *God’s righteousness*. In their ignorance they tried *to establish their own* righteousness, thinking that they could do this by keeping the Law. The result was *they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God*.

What Paul writes about the Jews is true of every denomination or human system of religion. Ignorance of God’s righteousness leads men to be zealous to establish a righteousness by “faith only”, or by some other means which is not from the Bible. Their zeal for God will not save them, just as the zeal of the Jews did not save them.

Paul knew what he was writing about. He was one of those Jews, and before his conversion (Acts 9) he was relying on the Law for righteousness. And it was all because he was ignorant. *Verse 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Because the Jews tried to find righteousness by keeping the Law, they did not receive it. *Christ is the end of the law*. The word “end” in this verse means “the goal, or purpose” of the Law. The Law of Moses did not bring righteousness. It pointed to Christ, who brought righteousness. The whole Law was fulfilled in Jesus. Without Him the Law was incomplete. He is “the end of the Law”.

This verse does not teach that the Law ended when Christ came. It is true that the law came to an end when Jesus was crucified (Colossians 2:14-17), but in this verse Paul is talking about **the goal of righteousness**. The Law could not bring righteousness. It could only point to Him who would bring righteousness. Those Jews who rejected Christ rejected “the end” of the Law. Christ brings *righteousness to everyone who believes*.

Verse 5 ¶ For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

Paul had earlier written to the Galatians (3:21) *“If a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law”*. But law alone cannot give righteousness. The reason is described in the quotation from Leviticus 18:5 which Paul gives in this verse: *“the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness”*. The conclusion is that the one who seeks righteousness by the Law must keep ALL of the Law. He has to *live by that righteousness*.

Here is the weakness of the Law. In order to be righteous by the Law the people had to keep ALL of it and never break it. But because of the weakness of the flesh of those who were under the Law, no one ever kept it perfectly (Romans 7:7-25). Therefore no one became righteous by keeping the Law.

Jesus came to bring righteousness. He kept the Law—every bit of it. He had the righteousness which came from the Law. He showed what the end (goal) of the Law was.

Verses 6-9: ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)”. ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

The righteousness based on faith is different from the righteousness based on the Law. Righteousness by faith does not require sinless obedience. We need only to submit to the will of Christ. You show that you will follow Christ when

you make the simple confession of *Jesus as Lord* when you *believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead*.

We must truly believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. Only then can we confess that Jesus is Lord. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the proof that He is Lord (Acts 2:36).

Believers do not any longer look for Christ to come to this earth and be raised from the dead. We *do not say in our hearts, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)*". We know that He has done that already. We believe that His sacrifice brings us righteousness.

How simple is this salvation! It does not require perfect law-keeping. It requires faith!

We can be sure that the one who believes and obeys the gospel of Christ is saved. It is as sure as it is possible for God to make it. The word of God, which is always correct, tells us about this salvation. We can have no doubt. We can know that we are saved when we do what the Bible says. If we doubt that we are saved when we have done what God tells us to do in His word, then we are showing that our belief is not true belief.

Verse 10: for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

In this verse, *righteousness* and *salvation* mean the same thing. This verse clearly shows that we are not saved by faith *only*. Mark 16:16 is another verse which shows that one must do more than believe in order to be saved.

A person must believe in order to confess truthfully. You cannot truly confess until you have true faith. But if it is true that we are saved by faith *only*, it means that we are saved *before we confess!* But if we are saved before we confess, we cannot confess *resulting in salvation*. Clearly this verse shows

that we have to confess *before* we can be saved. Therefore, we have to do something *after* we believe in order to receive salvation.

It is possible to believe and to refuse to confess. John 12:42-43 says —“*Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God*”. It is clear that these rulers were not saved. Yet they believed!

Verse 11: For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed”.

This is a quotation from Isaiah 28:16 which is a prophecy of the Messiah. Those who believe in Christ *will not be disappointed*. They can be sure that they will receive what is promised.

The entire verse says: “*Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed’*”. The believer can be sure because Christ is the *tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed*. Christ will never fail. He has been tested. He was put to death and Hades could not hold Him. He won over the powers of death and the tomb. The believer will not be disappointed.

Verses 10-12: ¹⁰ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³ for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved”.

Joel wrote in Joel 2:32: “*And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered*”. In Acts 2 Peter quoted this text, and it is clear that “the Lord” is Jesus Christ. Paul makes the same application here. And the verse says, “*Whoever*”. This is why *there is no distinction between*

Jew and Greek. “Whoever” means every person who calls. Christ is abounding in riches for all who call on Him.

The Jews who believed in Christ did not fully understand this truth until some years after the gospel began to be preached. It was not until Peter’s vision in Acts 10 that he understood that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he who fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:34-35). What Joel wrote, and what Paul writes here, go together with what Peter learned.

Those who love God and who love all men give great thanks to God for this truth. Christianity is for all men who will listen to and obey the gospel.

What does it mean to *“call on the name of the Lord”*? It does not mean simply to pray and ask Him to save us. We call on the name of the Lord when we put ourselves under Christ and do what He says to do.

In the book of Acts the stories of how people became Christians show how we call on the name of the Lord. It is not by prayer. Saul of Tarsus prayed for three days. After that the preacher told him, *“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name”* (Acts 22:16). When Saul got up and was baptised, he was calling on the name of the Lord. He was doing what the Lord told him to do to be saved. We must do the same. Those who pray but are not baptised in order to have their sins washed away have not called upon the name of the Lord as the Bible says they must. They therefore do not have the promise of this verse. They have not been saved!

In 1 Peter 3:21 Peter writes: *“Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*. In baptism we appeal to God for a good conscience. That is the same as saying that we call on the name of the Lord.

It is very sad that men teach we can be saved by faith without baptism. Their teaching keeps people from calling on the name of the Lord to be saved!

Verse 14: ¶ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

A person calls on the name of the Lord because he believes. He believes because of the things preached to him. He cannot believe unless someone preaches to him.

This means that the salvation of a man depends upon whether he hears the gospel. God does not save people directly by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts. This is why Jesus gave the Great Commission. Jesus said to His apostles, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:15-16). People must hear in order to be saved.

People who teach we do not have to be baptised to be saved sometimes say that the reason we do not have to be baptised is that baptism depends upon the actions of someone other than the one being saved. In other words, they say that because a second person is involved, it cannot be true that baptism saves.

But belief requires another person, too. A person cannot believe without a preacher! God’s plan for salvation makes our salvation depend upon whether someone teaches us or not. Thus, the objection that because baptism requires another person to help does not make any sense. God’s plan depends upon other people.

Verse 15: How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!”

This verse is not teaching that a church must send a preacher, or that God must “call” a person to preach. The words here mean that the message of the gospel had to be given to men who were chosen by God to deliver it. Jesus sent

the Holy Spirit to the apostles to guide them into all the truth (John 16:13) and commanded them to *teach them to observe all that I commanded you* (Matthew 28:20). They were the ones who were “sent”. The message of the gospel was given to the apostles. If God did not give the message to official messengers, no one could hear and be saved.

The message was given to the apostles, not to the church. The church is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15) and each Christian is to teach others. But the message came from God through the apostles and prophets. The apostles were “ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:20) and “earthen vessels” (2 Corinthians 4:7). People today are messengers, preachers, evangelists—but they are not ambassadors or earthen vessels because people living today are not the ones to whom the gospel was first given.

A popular religious teaching is that God gives faith to a man directly through the Holy Spirit. The questions Paul asks in verses 14 and 15 show that this teaching is false. These questions show that a man gets faith from the teaching of the gospel. There is no verse which says man gets faith in any other way.

Paul’s statement about the feet of those who bring good news is taken from Isaiah 52:7: *“How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”* Isaiah was speaking about the messengers who said that Israel would return to Judea from captivity in Babylon. But the words mean more than that. They speak a universal truth and especially apply to those who bring the good news of salvation from sin.

The word “beautiful” in verse 15 seems also to mean “timely”. Jesus came at the right time (Galatians 4:4), and the gospel was preached at the time God planned.

Verses 16-18: ¹⁶ ¶ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

¹⁸ ¶ But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.”

The King James Version translates verse 16: *“But they have not all obeyed the gospel.”* To “heed” means to “obey”, and “the good news” is “the gospel”. All those who heard the gospel did not obey the gospel.

The reason God wants the gospel to be preached is to cause people to obey (heed) it. Paul began the book of Romans by saying that he had *“received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles”* (Romans 1:5). He ends it by writing, *“but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith”* (Romans 16:26). The gospel was preached to all nations in order to produce obedience from faith.

But why did not all obey the gospel? They heard the gospel but did not obey. Jesus commanded the apostles to preach the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15), and they did that. *“Their voice has gone out into all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world”*. Within one generation the gospel had been preached to the whole world (Colossians 1:23).

It was not God’s fault that they did not obey. He planned the whole way of salvation. It was not Christ’s fault. He carried out the plan by dying on the cross. It was not the fault of the Holy Spirit. He delivered the gospel to the apostles. It was not the fault of the apostles. They faithfully preached the message just as the Holy Spirit gave it to them. And they preached to all men.

The reason why most did not obey the gospel is because those who heard either did not believe, or when they believed they did not obey. God does not

force people to be saved. Each person must respond to the gospel with his whole heart and obey. When men harden their hearts against the gospel, they are to blame. They are causing their own destruction. God has done everything to save them, but they reject His gospel.

Now look at the statement: “*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*”. The word of Christ is contained in the Bible. The whole power to produce faith is in the words of the Bible. Everything we must believe is found in the Bible. And anything which is not taught in the Bible is no part of saving faith.

Because that is true, and because it is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6), we understand that we can only please God when we do what is authorised in the New Testament. Now we know how to be accepted by God. We must act by faith, which Paul calls “obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5). We must do just what God tells us to do in His word, the New Testament.

If we do something which is not authorised by the New Testament, we cannot expect to please God. Such actions are not “by faith”. When we do what we want to do instead of what God tells us to do in the New Testament, we are being disobedient and are acting by our own authority, not God’s. When this happens we are in danger. In the judgment day we may find ourselves among those to whom Jesus will say, “*I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS*” (Matthew 7:23). This is the most serious matter we can think about.

If we are careful to do only what is authorised in the New Testament, we will be able to find exactly how to walk to please God. The just shall live by faith, and we must walk by faith.

Also, the spirit of faith is, “I believe, therefore I speak” (See 2 Corinthians 4:13). No man has the right to speak anything which is not found in the Bible. “*Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God*” (1 Peter 4:11). God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:3).

Finally, when we obey there has to be someone who tells us what to do. If we obey, we show by our actions that there is someone whose word must be followed. However, we cannot obey until we know what to do. The one whom we obey has to tell us. That is what God has done. He did this when he sent the preachers (the apostles) with His message. When we read and study this message, we find what God wants us to do. Then we obey because we believe Him and believe that He has the right to command us. Proper obedience comes out of faith.

Verses 19-21: ¹⁹ But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, By a nation without understanding will I anger you.” ²⁰ And Isaiah is very bold and says, “I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” ²¹ But as for Israel He says, “All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

God’s prophets told the Jews about His plan. There were many prophecies which said that Gentiles would be God’s people. When Moses prophesied just before Joshua led Israel into Canaan, he saw that the Jews were going to be unfaithful to God. He prophesied that God would punish Israel, and he wrote: *“They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation”* (Deuteronomy 32:21). This was a clear prophecy that God would give His blessings to *that which is not a nation*, that is, a nation other than Israel. These blessings would be so great that Israel would become jealous.

Isaiah’s prophecy is very clear. It is found in these words in Isaiah 65:1: *“I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’ To a nation which did not call on My name”*. The prophecies were there. So the answer to the question *“Surely Israel did not know, did they?”* is, *“They should have known. It was written by their prophets that the Gentiles would be blessed by God”*.

Why did the Gentiles not seek after God? And how were they able to find God when they did not seek Him? Jesus said, “*Seek, and you shall find*” (Matthew 7:7), yet they found God without seeking Him.

They did not seek God because they were ignorant of Him. They worshiped idols and were filled with wickedness. They could not seek God because they knew nothing about Him.

Therefore, God looked for them. When He found them, they were happy and listened to the gospel. Their souls were saved. Many burned their books and destroyed their idols when they understood the glad message about salvation.

The Jews and the Gentiles were in different conditions when they heard the gospel. The Jews had great advantages because God had given them the Law and the Prophets (Romans 3:1-2). This should have caused the Jews to listen to the gospel with open hearts and good understanding. They should have been quicker to listen than the Gentiles. But it was the other way around.

How did God feel about the Jews? And what was their attitude toward Him? Verse 21 quotes Isaiah 65:2 in which God said, “*All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people*”. God was longsuffering. “All the day long” He stretched out His hands, trying to get them to accept His blessings. But there was only a “remnant” who listened to Him. Most of the Jews rejected salvation through Jesus Christ.

The Jews rejected the gospel because they hated it and were angry with its message. They were “disobedient and obstinate”. The word “obstinate” means “stubborn, unwilling to change”. They heard the gospel. God had pleaded with them “all day long”. He did that first through the Old Testament prophets to prepare them for the gospel, then He sent Jesus and the apostles and all the other preachers. They stoned Stephen and put James to death. They persecuted the followers of Christ without pity. When Jesus preached they argued with Him and told lies about Him.

This was caused by their foolish pride. First, they rejected Jesus because He was not the kind of Messiah that they thought God would send. They would

not change their minds even when Jesus showed through His miracles and His teachings that He was the Son of God. They were too proud to change. And second, they hated the Gentiles. They did not want them to be saved. Therefore although God had given them every advantage, they closed their hearts to Jesus and to the gospel.

Chapter Eleven

Verses 1-5: ¹ I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³ “Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.” ⁴ But what is the divine response to him? “I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.

This chapter continues the theme which is in the last of chapter 10. The theme is the attitude of God toward the fleshly nation of Israel. The question is, “Has God rejected those who once were his people?” They were His people and they were His nation. But God rejected the nation. They were the descendants of Abraham, and God had promised Abraham to make a great nation from him. God did that. But now God is not accepting or rejecting a nation. Now He is only looking at the individual person. And God will accept a person who has faith and will reject the person who does not. This means that the individual must do something in order to be accepted by God.

The last verses of chapter 10 might cause the Jews to say that there is no hope for them. The scriptures quoted there say that the Jews are a disobedient and obstinate (stubborn) people. So Paul asks the question, “*God has not rejected His people, has He?*” His clear answer is, “*May it never be!*” He shows that God has not rejected His people by talking about himself.

Paul was *an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin*. This proves that Paul was one of those whom God said were His people. But even though he was a Jew, he was not rejected by God. This proves that God did not condemn all of the Jews. A Jew could be saved.

Then Paul tells about Elijah. That great prophet thought that he was the only one in Israel who was following God. God replied, *“I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal”*. God saw the individuals in the nation who were faithful, and they were His. Even though the nation as a whole had rejected Him God had seven thousand in that country who were still following Him. (See 1 Kings 19 for this story.)

Paul draws this conclusion: ⁵ *In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice*. A “remnant” is a small piece of cloth left after a garment has been cut out of a large piece. A remnant of people are the few who are left after the large number are taken away. Therefore Paul is saying that now there are a few Jews who are faithful to God and who belong to Him.

They are not His because He decided they would be His no matter what they did. They are His *according to God’s gracious choice*. They are His because they have faith in Christ and are obeying Christ (see Romans 1:5), and therefore they are the saved by grace through faith, even though they are part of a nation which rejected Christ.

Verse 6: But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

If we are saved by grace it means that God chooses to save us because He is kind. We do not deserve to be saved. We do not earn our salvation.

In the King James Version there are these additional words in verse 6: *But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work*.

These words were probably not written by Paul, but they are in harmony with his argument. If we can earn our salvation (salvation *on the basis of works*), we do not need grace (favour or kindness which we do not deserve). If we are saved by God’s favour, we have not earned it by our own works. If we earn salvation by perfect obedience to God’s law, then we are not saved by grace but by our own works. Paul has shown that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). None of us can earn salvation. If we are saved, we have to be saved by grace.

Verses 7-8: ⁷ ¶ What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; ⁸ just as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day.”

“Those who were chosen” are the remnant of Israel. The *rest* of Israel *were hardened*. The reason they did not get what they were seeking was that they had *eyes to see not and ears to hear not*. This is a reference to Isaiah 29:10 —*“For the Lord has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers”*. (See also Isaiah 6:9-10.) Jesus referred to Isaiah’s statements in Matthew 13:13-15, and Paul spoke about them in Acts 28:24-27.

They were blind and deaf because their hearts were wicked and stubborn. God made them blind. He did not force them to be blind. He allowed them to become blind. God never forces a man to understand. He does not force him to be saved. If he is hard-hearted, God allows him to be so. When the gospel is preached to such a man, he becomes even more hard-hearted, just as Pharaoh hardened his heart when God brought the plagues on Egypt (Exodus 7:3,14,22; 8:32).

Paul wrote these words about thirty years after Jesus was crucified. The blindness of the Jews had continued *down to* that *very day*. It continues even in this day.

Verses 9-11: ⁹ And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them. ¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever.”

¹¹ ¶ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

Here Paul quotes Psalm 69:22-23. Verse 21 says, “*They also gave me gall for my food And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*”. This happened to Jesus on the cross. God was saying through David that the blindness and stubbornness of the Jews came to them because they rejected Jesus and killed Him.

The *table* is where a person eats his food. In this prophecy *their table* will *become a snare and a trap*. The food is religious food, the food which comes from their teaching and belief. They kept on in their wrong beliefs and practices like blind men. They were trapped and continued to turn away from Christ.

This picture of the Jews is very bad. Very evil things came to them because they rejected Jesus. They are blind, and their backs are bent with troubles “forever”. As long as they reject Jesus they will suffer these bad things. They still reject Jesus. And they can continue to expect trouble. The history of the Jews tells us that they have had many, many troubles since God began their punishment when He caused the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Today they are scattered all over the world. Many of them are now in Israel trying to make it their homeland, but they are always in trouble there.

Paul asks, “*They did not stumble so as to fall, did they?*” Paul is asking, “Did God make them stumble (trip, begin to fall) because He wanted them to fall?” But Paul asks the question in such a way that we know the answer. God did not want them to fall. God does not want anyone to be hurt. He does not want evil to come on anyone. It is His will that all the Jews be saved, just as it is His will that all men everywhere should be saved. They stumbled and fell because of their hard hearts.

But their fall brought good to other people. God can use evil things to bring good things. *But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous*. God wants the Gentiles to be saved, just as He wants the Jews to be saved. When the Jews did not listen to the gospel, the apostles preached to the Gentiles. For several years the gospel was preached only to the Jews. But when the Jews showed that they did not want the gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46).

Verse 12: Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

The problem is to know what *their fulfillment* means. When the Jews rejected Christ, the gospel was preached to the Gentiles and the Gentiles became “rich”. “*Their fulfillment*” will cause even more blessings to come to the Gentiles. I believe *their fulfillment* means a more complete rejection of Christ by the Jews.

If Paul means by *their fulfillment* that most or all of the Jews will receive Jesus, he is changing what he has already said. Therefore I believe Paul is looking forward to a time when the Jews will be hardened even more than they were at the time he was writing.

As the Jews were scattered and persecuted, they were not able to persecute the Christians in the way they did at the beginning of the gospel. It is also true that when they were scattered they carried the knowledge of God to countries where people had no knowledge, and the gospel was preached to people who already knew God.

(NOTE: A different idea is given by Clinton Hamilton. He writes: “If the rejection of the Messiah by Israel resulted in such a good effect as the salvation of the Gentiles, then how glorious and full will be the benefit when a number of Israel come to obedience and salvation... Paul is not speaking of the conversion of all of the Jews or Israel. However, if their fall and defeat resulted in the fulness of the Gentiles, then more certainly will fulness be the result for those who believe in Christ.” *The Book of Romans*, pp. 643-644.)

Verses 13-14: ¹³ But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

Paul loves the Jews. He works hard to save the Gentiles, hoping that some of the Jews will also want that salvation. He hopes his countrymen will be jealous in a good sense. They will then listen to the gospel.

He speaks to the Gentiles because he is the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Galatians 2:7). He also speaks to warn them that the Gentiles who are saved must not become proud, because they, too, can fall (verses 17-18).

Verse 15: For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

The ones who were rejected by God were the Jews. *“The reconciliation of the world”* is the saving of the Gentiles who believed and obeyed the gospel. There were more Gentiles who obeyed the gospel than Jews. Some of the Jews believed and obeyed and were received by God. *Their acceptance* by God was *life from the dead*. Both Jews and Gentiles were lost in sin. They were dead in sin. When they were baptised they were raised from the dead (Romans 6:3-7) and walked in newness of life.

Verse 16: If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

Because the gospel was first preached to the Jews, and because the first fruits of souls were from the Jews, all of the Jews were “holy”. This does not mean that all of the Jews were saved. It means that God was willing to save the Jews. Paul’s illustration is taken from baking bread. If part of the dough is acceptable (holy), then all of the dough can be used. The second illustration is of a tree. If the root of the tree is good, then the branches will be good, too.

Paul speaks the same way in 1 Corinthians 7:14 when he says: *“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy”*. The husband does not become saved because he is married to a Christian, but he is acceptable to God as a husband

and the children are accepted. So the Jews were accepted as a people who had the right to be saved.

Verses 17-21: ¹⁷ ¶ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹ You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰ Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; ²¹ for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

The tree was a picture of God's favour. *Some of the branches were broken off.* Most of the Jews did not believe in Jesus. They no longer were God's people. They were branches which were broken off.

The Gentiles who believed came from a *wild olive* tree. They were not God's people. But they *were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree.* Believing Gentiles are now God's people. All of the blessings of being God's people are for the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Now Paul warns the Gentiles against pride. It is easy for the Gentile Christians to think that God loves them more than He loves the Jews. The Gentile Christians say, “*Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in*”. Paul admits that this is true. He says, “*Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief*”. Most of the Jews were rejected by God—because of their unbelief. And the Gentiles were “grafted in” because of their faith. But there is nothing to boast about. *Do not be conceited, but fear.* The lesson is not that God loves the Gentiles more than the Jews. The lesson is that ANYONE who stops fearing God, who stops living by faith, will be cast off by God! A Christian CAN be LOST! We need to FEAR. *For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.*

Remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. The gospel came through the Jews. Paul writes in Romans 15:27: “They (the Gentile Christians) are indebted to them (the Jewish Christians). For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things”. Gentile Christians should be thankful for the faithful Jews in Old Testament times and the faithful Jews in New Testament times, because it is through them that God brought the gospel to the world.

Some have used this passage to say that babies should be baptised. They say that the old olive tree was the Jewish church in Old Testament times. There were babies in that church. Since Gentiles are grafted into that church, babies should be in the church today. But this passage says that unbelief is what cut some off from the tree, and faith is what caused some to be grafted in. Babies cannot have faith. They are not included in the tree. The olive tree does NOT represent the church. It represents the grace or favour of God.

Verses 22-24: ²² Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³ And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

Some people talk about God’s kindness all of the time. Others like to talk only about the punishments (severity) of God. It is not good to talk only about one thing and not the other. If God loves, He must hate. If God does good things when people listen to Him, then He must punish people who will not listen to Him. So Paul tells us to *behold then the kindness and severity of God*. We behold (see) these things when we see what God did to the Jews who fell and to the Gentiles who continue in faith. God was severe (hard) toward those who fell away from faithful obedience. Toward those Gentiles who believed, God

has been kind, but He will only be kind if we *continue in His kindness*. That means God will be kind if we continue doing those things which bring His kindness—faith and obedience. If we do not continue, we *also will be cut off*.

On the other hand, if there are Jews who turn from unbelief and obey Jesus Christ in faith, they *will be grafted in*. After all, it is easier to graft a branch into the tree from which it was cut off than to graft a branch from a wild olive into the good olive tree. So, if God was able to give His grace to believing Gentiles, He is able to do the same to Jews when they believe.

Verse 25: ¶ For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

The word *mystery* does not mean something which we cannot understand. In Ephesians 3:1-12 Paul says that he wrote the mystery so that we can read and understand. The word *mystery* means something which cannot be known until God tells us what it is. In this case, the mystery is the *partial hardening* which *has happened to Israel*.

Paul wants them to understand this mystery so that *you will not be wise in your own estimation*. When we think we are wise, we are usually foolish. Paul is going to take away our own wisdom and give us the wisdom of God! True wisdom does not make us “wise in our own estimation”. We do not think we are better than others.

There is nothing in the Bible to make a Christian puffed up. When a person is full of pride, that person is unwise. Preachers need to be very careful. It is easy for a preacher, who has studied the Bible more than most Christians, to be puffed up with pride. Every preacher must fight against this sin!

Paul says that the hardening which happened to Israel was *partial*. Some of the Jews became Christians, therefore they were not all hardened. Those who were hardened were to blame. They did not need to be hardened. They hardened themselves!

Paul talks about this blindness in 2 Corinthians 3:15—*“But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart”*. He adds that when they turn to the Lord the veil will be taken away. Therefore, until Israel turns to Christ the blindness will continue.

The partial hardening is to continue *until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*. This means that the partial hardening will continue until the great majority of the church is made up of Gentiles. Only in the early period of the church were there great numbers of Jews in the church. As time went on and Christianity was spread to all nations, the number of Jewish converts became very few.

Some teach that when the fullness of the Gentiles is reached the Jews will no longer be hardened and will believe in Christ. Paul’s words do not necessarily mean that. Those who teach this are teaching what they cannot prove. Paul’s words can mean that when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then the Jews will be completely hardened! This agrees with history.

Verses 26-27: ²⁶ and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. ²⁷ This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

The word “*all*” has been emphasised by some. They say that *all Israel will be saved*. But these people forget the word before “all”. Paul says “so” all Israel will be saved. The way all Israel will be saved is by faith in Christ, being grafted into the olive tree again by faith. This is the way all men everywhere are saved. There is no other way of salvation.

In verse 26 Paul refers to Isaiah 59:20-21 where Isaiah says—*“A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the Lord.* ²¹ *‘As for Me, this is My covenant with them,’ says the Lord: ‘My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring,’ says the Lord, ‘from now and forever.’”*

This clearly shows how all Israel will be saved. They will be saved through the Redeemer (Jesus). The saved will be those who turn from transgression (sin) and who will not depart from the words which God has given.

In verse 27 Paul may refer to Isaiah 29:7. Paul says it this way—*“This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins”*. The covenant which takes away sins is the new covenant of Jesus Christ. Study Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:6-13. Note that under the new covenant God will remember sins no more.

God has made no difference between Jew and Gentile. Whatever he says that the Jews must do, He says that the Gentiles must do. And the blessings are the same. Everything which He promises to believing Jews He promises to believing Gentiles. God does not save nations; He saves individuals. He does not promise to save the Jewish nation, nor all of the Jews. He saves those who believe.

Verses 28-29: ²⁸ From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; ²⁹ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Here Paul makes a difference between the gospel and God’s choice. Concerning the gospel, the Jews are enemies. Whose enemies? God’s enemies! Yet they are *beloved for the sake of the fathers*.

God chose to work out the plan of salvation through Israel. He made promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He promised that through Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). Jesus came through them. In these things the Jews were beloved by God.

But they rejected the Messiah and His gospel. They became the enemies of God. When a person becomes the enemy of the truth of the gospel, he becomes the enemy of God!

However, when they became enemies of the gospel, they became *enemies for your sake*. When God rejected them, the apostles and other preachers turned to the Gentiles and preached to them. Therefore the fact that the Jews became the enemies of the gospel caused blessings to the Gentiles.

The gifts and the calling of God were the promises that God gave that Jesus would come through Israel. God called Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants to be the ones to bring Jesus, and salvation, to the world. God chose them for this job, but He did not choose them to be saved. Each one who was saved was saved because of his faith.

God did not change His promises to the Jews. Everything He promised them He fulfilled, and Jesus came through them as He planned. But He never promised to save them all in heaven. Salvation has always been for those who themselves decide to believe and obey. It has never been for all people of a nation.

Verses 30-31: ³⁰ For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

Here Paul compares the Gentiles to the Jews. The Gentiles *once were disobedient to God*. The Jews *also now have been disobedient*. The actions of the two are now different from what they were.

The disobedience of the Jews caused “mercy” to be shown to the Gentiles. When the Jews disobeyed the gospel, the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. Now Paul says *that because of the mercy shown to you* (Gentiles) *they* (Jews) *also may now be shown mercy*. Perhaps Paul saw that the disobedience of the Jews was going to be punished by God. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the Jews were scattered throughout the nations. This might cause them to see the Christians in those nations and be converted. Paul says that this is possible. He does not say that it will happen.

Verse 32: For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

Paul is now back to what he told us in Romans 3:23. Here Paul emphasises that God wants to *show mercy to all*. God will forgive unbelief when they believe, and will give forgiveness for their sins when they repent and are baptised (Acts 2:38). When God saves men through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, He does this according to His mercy (Titus 3:5).

This great statement that all are disobedient but that God wants to save all causes Paul to say:

Verse 33: ¶ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Look at these wonderful words. “Depth” (the measure of how deep something is), unsearchable (something we can search for but never find), and unfathomable (so deep that we can never find the bottom). These describe the *riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

Paul is not talking about God’s wisdom in creating the world. He is talking about God’s wisdom in providing salvation for man in his sins. God has used all His wisdom and knowledge in bringing us salvation through Jesus Christ. He even used the Jews when they rejected the gospel. When they rejected the gospel, the Gentiles received the gospel and were saved. Paul has also said that God can use the Gentiles to save the Jews!

However, salvation always depends on the person to whom the gospel is preached. God does not use the Holy Spirit to directly change a person’s mind. The power of salvation is the gospel (Romans 1:16). Everyone who is saved must hear that gospel and let the gospel change his mind and actions. This is the only way of salvation for all men.

God's decisions are unsearchable because they come from Him alone. Man cannot look into the mind of God. God's ways are too far above the ways of man for man to find them out, because God's thoughts are too high for us.

This verse is a rejoicing statement. Paul rejoices when he thinks about all the things which this letter is about. What Paul began in chapter one comes to a climax in this chapter. Salvation for all those who believe!

I believe that when a Christian begins to understand the greatness of this letter, he will say the same thing that Paul said. When the Christian understands the greatness of God's wisdom and the beauty of God's plan of salvation, he will not want to do anything except what God wants him to do. He will not want to change God's will or add anything to it. He will be happy to accept exactly what God has given in the gospel.

Verse 34: For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

These questions answer themselves. Isaiah 55:9 —*“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.”* Jeremiah 10:23—*“I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.”*

There is no way man can discover the way of salvation. Only God can tell men how to be saved. He did that through His apostles and prophets (1 Corinthians 2:9-16). God be praised!

Verse 35: Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?

No man can make God owe him something. When we have done everything, we can only say, *“We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done”* (Luke 17:10). Everything He does for us is a gift we do not deserve.

Verse 36: For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

This section of the letter ends in a very reverent way. Man did not glorify God. He forgot God and sinned against Him. Yet God is the One to whom all glory belongs. The highest reason for man's life is to glorify his creator. Man can do this only by doing the will of God. Any time man goes away from the will of God he takes away from the glory that he should be giving to God.

The gospel of Christ is truly the good news of God's grace and mercy. It has been presented in these chapters in its grandest light. If we listen carefully to what Paul has written, we will never want to put our trust in the wisdom of man.

The chapters which follow tell Christians how to live according to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Chapter Twelve

Verse 1: Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Paul now speaks to *brethren*. God gave them *mercies* (kindness). The mercies are salvation. The *brethren* are the ones who are saved by God. In Romans 11:32 Paul wrote: “*For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all*”. God wants all people to be saved. Paul is speaking to brethren who received the mercy of God. These are the ones who believe and obey.

Paul begs the brethren to do something with their bodies. My body must do what my spirit tells it to do. Brethren must *present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice*. This sacrifice is a life of service to God. To sacrifice is to give or offer up. Christ gave His body for others; He died on the cross. Here Christians are urged (begged, pushed in the direction of) to give their bodies in life to the service of God. This is a *living sacrifice*. It is not the sacrifice of a dead animal. This is a daily sacrifice, a *holy* sacrifice, a sacrifice which is *acceptable to God*. It is the spiritual service of worship.

This tells us that we must give our whole selves to God. We must serve Him with our bodies. We must not hold anything back. When the animal was sacrificed, the entire animal including its life was given. We who are Christians are like that animal, only we offer a living sacrifice. We do this by giving our bodies, not just our minds, in complete obedience to Christ.

Verse 2: And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

This verse tells how to be living sacrifices. We Christians must no longer serve Satan. No one can serve two masters, for he will hate the one and love the

other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24). When we become Christians, we must change our minds. To be a friend of the world is to be the enemy of the Lord (James 4:4). “*This world*” means the people who are not Christians. The world hated Christ, and it hates those who belong to Christ. If we are *conformed to this world* we will be like the world. We will think like the world thinks, and we will do what the world does. When Christians become like the world, they are not the salt of the earth or the light of the world.

The word “*transformed*” is a very strong word. A caterpillar (worm) makes a little house (cocoon). It stays in the cocoon until it is transformed into a butterfly or moth. When it comes out of the cocoon, it is entirely different. So the Christian must be transformed into the image of Christ. He must become entirely different from the world.

God gave the gospel to change us. It changes our minds and our loves. We think differently and we love different things. When we obey the gospel, we are changed from being citizens of Satan’s kingdom into being citizens of the kingdom of God’s Son (Colossians 1:13). All of this changes our lives so that we live in a different way.

The church should never follow the example of the world. Christians must let Christ tell them what is right and what is wrong. This will cause the *renewing of the mind*, which is what transforms us. We must let the Holy Spirit teach us through His word.

When we do this, we will *prove what the will of God is*. Our lives will show what God really wants. People will see Christ in us. They will be won to Christ even when we do not preach (1 Peter 3:1-2).

Unfortunately many “Christians” are not living sacrifices. When people see these “Christians” they do not see the *good and acceptable and perfect* will of God. They see a religion which is not pure. This is not the religion Jesus died to establish.

The perfect will of God changes the people who listen to it. When people see these changes, they see what God wants them to see. They see that the will of God does great things. We who are changed see God's *good and acceptable and perfect* will working in us. We understand that we have complete salvation because of it. We see that God's word works to make us exactly what God wants us to be.

Man always wants to add to God's word. Man thinks that the word of God is not enough. So men add religious organisations which are not in God's word. They add special duties to what God has given (see Colossians 2:20-23). They try to get people to come to church by adding things to entertain people. When men do this they show that they do not believe God's word alone will do the job. And when they add to His word, they take away from the saving power of that word. There is only one gospel (Galatians 1:6-9), and when we add something to it we make a new gospel which cannot save.

We need to be satisfied with what God has given! If we will put His word to work in our lives, we will prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Verse 3: ¶ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Paul is here saying something which is very important. It is so important that Paul says it *through the grace given to me*. Paul was chosen to be an apostle of Christ. He was chosen by God's grace. Paul is now speaking as an apostle of Christ. This means that what Paul is writing is from Jesus, Himself. Of course, all that Paul writes is from Jesus. But Paul shows that what he says here is very important. He says that it comes from Paul, the apostle.

It is hard for men to obey what Paul here commands. He says *to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think*. We are full of pride. It is easy for us to think we are something when we are nothing. When men praise us, we get puffed up.

How should we think of ourselves? We are *to think so as to have sound judgment*. If we think too highly of ourselves, we are like a drunk person. We are not sober. We must look at ourselves as God sees us, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

What is the *measure of faith* which God has given to each person? The word “measure” can mean a measuring instrument, that by which we can see whether something is right or wrong. The word of God is this measuring instrument. When we measure everything by the Word of God, we will not think too highly of ourselves. We will be like Christ.

But Paul does not seem to be talking about this. He is talking about what God *allots* to each man. God gives to each man a *measure of faith*. What does God give to us? Paul is not talking about spiritual gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12:7-10) because God did not give these *to each*. Only some Christians had spiritual gifts. Yet God allots to each man a measure of faith. One man has the ability to speak well. Another is a good singer. Another can show mercy. A mother has the ability to nurse her children. Each person is given what we call “abilities” and “opportunities”.

When I understand that every ability I have comes from God, that every opportunity to do good comes from Him, then I can have *sound judgment* about myself. If I am more intelligent than others, I understand that my intelligence was given to me by God. I cannot boast about that. If I am richer than others, I can only thank God. I cannot boast. And I will use my riches to bless others.

If I do not have the abilities which make me a leader, I will look to see what God has given to me so that I can serve Him. I will understand that when I do whatever I can for Him, I am precious in His sight and am accepted.

No man can enter the kingdom of heaven if he is full of pride. Jesus said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:3).

How can I have this sober judgment about myself? I can have sound judgment when I measure everything by the faith which God has given. I do what God wants me to do. I do not get puffed up by doing things He has not commanded, and I see that everything He says for me to do is precious in His sight.

Verses 4-5: ⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Here is how we have sound judgment. Every member of a physical body is important, and every member of the church (the spiritual body) has an important job. The members of the physical body work together. They are joined together in one body and are *members one of another*. If I hurt my toe, my whole body feels the pain and works to help the toe. This is the picture of the church. Every member has a job to do which is important, and we are *individually members one of another*. We need each other. We rejoice with one another and sorrow with one another. But we *do not have the same function*. Each has been allotted a measure of faith to use in building up the body.

Verses 6-8: ⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

All talents which anyone has are gifts from God. They are gifts *according to the grace given to us*. We must rejoice in what we have. And we must *exercise them accordingly*. God wants us to use them for the good of the whole body.

The gift of *prophecy* is the only one of these gifts which required more than natural ability. A prophet was a person who spoke what God told him to speak. The gift of prophecy was given by the Holy Spirit. In the days when God was still revealing the New Testament, God gave this gift to some men and women in the church. Paul says the prophet must use his gift *according to the proportion of his faith*. The prophet had to speak exactly what God gave him to speak. He had to speak it all, and he was not to add to it.

The rest of the gifts which Paul names are things which we do with our natural talents. These are given by God, therefore they are “gifts”. One person can do something better than another person can. This is his gift. He is to use this gift in the body.

Service means doing things to help others. Can you do this? Then work hard at this service. He who *teaches* is the one who knows the will of God and has the ability to teach it to others. He is one of those described in 2 Timothy 2:2. If you teach, give yourself to the job.

The ability to *exhort* is not often found today. “Exhort” means “to encourage, to build up, to cause people to want to do things, to get them excited about their duties”. Notice that it follows teaching. It does not come before teaching. First the truth must be taught. People must understand the truth and see that it should be followed. Then it is time for exhortation. Teaching gives the light, and exhortation moves us to walk in the light. Many years ago it was common for one man to preach and another man to exhort. This is a good pattern to follow.

The one who *gives* must give *with liberality*. This word is translated “simplicity” in the King James version. The idea is that when a person gives, he must be sincere in his giving. He wants to do good with his money. He is happy that he can give. He gives “liberally”, which means he gives freely without being stingy. He does not give to get the praise of men (Matthew 6:1).

The one who *leads* is to do this *with diligence*. The Greek word which is here translated “leads” is found in 1 Timothy 5:17; 3:4,12. There it is translated “rule” and “manage”. The leader must give careful attention to his work.

Sometimes a leader thinks of himself too highly. He thinks about his high position. But Paul says that he is to be a worker. He has a job to perform, and must do it.

He who *shows mercy* is to do that *with cheerfulness*. We must be happy that we can forgive someone.

Verses 9-13: ⁹ ¶ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Here are a number of orders. They are short commands, yet they give us very clear and sometimes difficult instructions.

We are to *love without hypocrisy*. You can say that you love another person when you do not. Judas greeted Jesus with a brotherly kiss, but Judas was betraying the Saviour. We must be careful what we do. We must look into our hearts and be sure that our love is real. There must be no pretending.

We must *abhor* (hate strongly) *what is evil*. If you *cling to what is good* you will hate what is evil. You cannot love both. We have to work hard to hate what is evil because the world is telling us that evil is good. Let us keep studying the word of God. Then we will hate fornication, lying, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and every other form of sin. Let us cling to what is good, praising those who do good and trying always to do good ourselves. We know what is good only by reading the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We must not call something “good” when it is not what the New Testament tells us to do.

Brothers and sisters in Christ must *be devoted to one another in brotherly love*. Our love for one another must be strong and continuing. Because we love one another, we *give preference to one another in honor*. This means we

put our brothers first over ourselves. We are unselfish. We give our brothers honour.

“Not lagging behind in diligence” means not to be lazy. “Diligence” means giving careful attention to our work. We first must find what we can do in the Lord’s service. Then we must give our attention to that work. We must not be lazy.

The opposite of lagging behind in diligence is *fervent in spirit*. “Fervent” means “eager” or “enthusiastic”. This is not the excitement which comes when our emotions are stirred by music, dancing, or other outside things. The Christian is fervent in spirit because he understands his relationship to Christ. He stands on the foundation of the word of God. This gives him confidence and comfort and eagerness to do the will of God. It is not something that he has for a little while and then loses. Because his faith is rooted firmly in God’s word, he continues fervent his whole life through.

We are fervent in *serving the Lord*. The servants of the devil serve the devil enthusiastically. They give themselves to sinful things. The servants of God serve God with their whole hearts. They do not have a divided heart, thinking they can serve God while also serving Satan.

The Christian’s life is a life of *rejoicing*. Our rejoicing is because of our *hope*. Hope is confident expectation; we are sure that we will receive heaven as our reward. Hope is the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19). Keep your eyes on heaven, Christian.

When we rejoice in hope we are able to *persevere in tribulation*. “Tribulation” is trouble, and all Christians are going to have trouble (2 Timothy 3:12). When we have a bright hope, we can keep on living for Jesus (persevering) even when we have trouble.

In serving the Lord we must be *devoted to prayer*. When the Christian has clothed himself with the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:13-17), Paul tells him: “*With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the*

saints” (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer is a blessing which God gives to the Christian. We must use prayer all of the time.

From the beginning of the church the disciples of Christ helped the poor saints (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 11:27-30). We love one another. Therefore we *contribute to the needs of the saints*. Although we are to do good to all men, we are especially to look after the saints (Galatians 6:10). The New Testament tells us that churches cared for saints and sent money to needy churches for their poor. There is no authority for churches to give money to anyone except poor saints. Individual Christians help those who are not saints as they are able to do so. But the church is given the task of helping poor saints—only. (The difference between what the individual Christian is to do and what the church is to do is seen in 1 Timothy 5:16).

Hospitality means “love of strangers”. Hebrews 13:2 says, “*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it*”. Examples of this are Abraham and Lot (Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-3).

Verses 14-16: ¹⁴ ¶ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Jesus told His disciples how to treat those who do bad things to us (Matthew 5:38-48). Paul says the same things here. The Christian must not take revenge when people do bad things to him. God will punish the wicked man, and the government will sometimes punish him. The Christian must leave the punishment to God and the government. When someone does something wicked to us, we want to fight back. But the wrath (strong anger) of man does not work the righteousness of God (James 1:20). Therefore bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

It is harder to *rejoice with those who rejoice* than it is to *weep with those who weep*. When good things happen to people we often have envy. We do

not rejoice because we wish the good thing happened to us instead of to them. We must lay envy aside and desire the spiritual milk of the word. If we love our brother, we are happy when he is happy.

It is very comforting when someone is sad because I am sad. When he sits with me and weeps with me I know I am not alone. There is someone who loves me and is touched by my sorrow. We should be touched by the sorrows of our brethren. We should weep with those who weep.

We weep and rejoice with one another when we are *of the same mind toward one another*. We have the same faith. We love the same things. We follow the same Lord. Therefore we love one another and are always wanting the best to happen to one another.

If we are of the same mind toward one another we will not be *haughty in mind*. “Haughty” means “proud, thinking one is very important”. The rich person may think he is better than the poor man. The person of one race may think that those of another race are not as good as he is. The intelligent man may think that the man of poor intelligence is not important. Men sometimes think that women are not as important as men. This kind of thinking must stop. We are all servants of God. What we have comes from God. Every person is important to our Saviour. The rich man will be sad when he sees the trouble the poor man has. We will rejoice together and weep together.

If we are not haughty we will *associate with the lowly*. There are no class distinctions in Christ. We are all sinners saved by the grace of God. We are fellow-labourers in the vineyard, fellow-citizens of the kingdom of God. The poor man is of as much value as the rich man, and the rich man is of as much value as the poor man.

The one who is *wise in his own estimation* is wrong. This person wants everyone to listen to him. He thinks he is important. We must listen to God. If I want someone to listen to my judgment, I must be sure that I show what the word of God says. My wisdom is not important. God’s wisdom is all that matters.

Verse 17: Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

Why did Paul have to warn us? Why did he say “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone”? It is because it is natural to want to hurt the one who hurts us.

This is a very strong statement. Paul said NEVER! If someone lies about me, I must NEVER lie about him. If he cheats me, I must NEVER cheat him. I must NEVER pay back evil to evil—TO ANYONE—even to a government which is corrupt and evil.

Men are looking at us, therefore we must *respect what is right in the sight of all men*. It is important that we always do right. It is important for people to see that we do right. Christians are the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Only by respecting what is right can they be these things.

Verse 18: If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

It is not always possible to be at peace with men. But the Christian must try to be at peace— with all men. However, he must always teach and practice the truth, even when this causes men to persecute him. And he has the right to defend himself when his life is in danger.

We must never be silent about the truth. Sometimes we know that if we speak what the Bible speaks on a subject some of our brethren will be unhappy. In order to keep peace, we keep silent. This must not be. We must preach and teach the whole truth (Acts 20:20,26-27) even when it causes brethren to become angry with us.

The one who works for peace does not want his own way. He is willing to listen to what others want and is willing to cooperate with them. He is careful in what he says and is humble in his attitude.

Verse 19: Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

The Lord is the one who will punish the wicked. We can be sure because God’s word tells us. In Deuteronomy 32:35 God says, “*Vengeance is Mine, and retribution*”. If we believe God we know that every wicked person will be punished. This is why we do not have to take our own revenge. In

Matthew 25 Jesus says that all the nations will be gathered to Him in the judgment day. The wicked will go away into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31-46). No one will escape.

Those who do wicked things against the disciples of Christ will be punished. Jesus said, “*whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea*” (Matthew 18:6). When a person sins against a disciple of Christ, he sins against Christ. (See Acts 9:5.)

Christian, you should be afraid to sin against a fellow Christian. If you do, you sin against Christ! Christ will punish!

Verses 20-21: ²⁰ “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The Christian must do the opposite of evil. When his enemy is hungry, the Christian must feed him! It is not enough when we do not seek revenge. We must do more than that. We must do good to our enemy.

Paul here quotes from Proverbs 25:21-22 which says, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For you will heap burning coals on his head, And the Lord will reward you.”

When we do good to our enemy, we *heap burning coals on his head*. The idea is that our good deeds make our enemy ashamed. He has painful sorrow for what he has done.

If we do evil to our enemy, we are *overcome by evil*. Do not let your wrath cause you to do evil! But when we do good to our enemy, we *overcome evil with good*. Satan does not have us. We do good. We overcome the temptation to do evil. We even overcome the evil in the other person.

How can we do this? John says: “*This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith*” (1 John 5:4). We can do good when people do evil to us—if we have faith. We do the good by the strength which God supplies because of our faith in Him.

Chapter Thirteen

Verses 1-2: ¹ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

In chapter 12 Paul says that Christians must not hurt those who do wrong things against them. In this chapter Paul says that the government must punish the evildoer.

First, Paul says that *every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities*. God is a God of order. If there is no law, there can be no order. Therefore God has made governments to give law and keep order. God did not say that only one kind of government is right. The government may be a kingdom or a democracy. But God wants all men to be under a government. Anarchy (where there is no law and everyone does what he thinks is best) is not right.

We must not *resist* (oppose, fight against) *authority*. Religions which tell people to fight against the government are against God. When some were fighting against the South African government they said that the government was “illegitimate”. God’s word does not argue about such things. Whether you think the government is doing right or not, whether you think those men have a right to govern or not, you must submit. Every government of men will do things which are not best, and sometimes they do things which are very wrong. At the time Paul wrote these words the Roman government was in control. That government did many wrong things. It even put Christians to death because they would not worship the emperor. But still the command was, “Do not resist”.

God gave government. Therefore the job of government is good. Until recently the Jehovah’s Witnesses taught that the governments of men came from

Satan. They were wrong. Government comes from God.

Verses 3-4: ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

Rulers need to know what their job is. The government *is a minister of God to you for good*. Its job is to be a *minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil*. In general, this is what governments do. There is much corruption and laws are sometimes evil. But God has decided that we must be ruled by governments of men. And they usually punish evildoers.

Of course, if the government tells us to do something which is against God's law, we must refuse to obey. When the Jewish court commanded Peter and the apostles not to teach or preach in the name of Jesus, Peter and the apostles answered, "*We must obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29). In such a case we must resist, but we do no more than is necessary to obey God. We do not fight against the government.

The government *does not bear the sword for nothing*. This means that the government has been given the sword by God to punish the evildoer. A sword is used to kill. This verse shows that the government has the right to kill the criminal. In fact, that is what God has ordained. In all of the Bible God has commanded that those who commit serious crimes should be put to death.

Verse 5: Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Here Paul gives two reasons to obey the government. The first is *because of wrath*. We should be afraid to disobey because the government will punish us. This is its God-given duty.

But the Christian has another reason to obey the government. He must obey *for conscience's sake*. Maybe the government will not find out that we disobey. Maybe we can escape punishment. But we know that we cannot escape from God. We must have a good conscience. If we do not have a good conscience we cannot be saved. The Christian knows that he must obey the government. Therefore he obeys because of his conscience.

Verse 6: For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

Servants of God should be paid for their labour, and *rulers are servants of God*. God has given the government the right to get money by taxing the people. It cannot do its work without money. The Christian is a citizen of the kingdom of God, but he is also a citizen of the country where he lives. He has duties to both. Jesus said, “*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's*” (Matthew 22:21).

Remember that Caesar, the ruler of the Roman Empire, was a heathen. He did not worship God. His army had conquered Israel and the Jews did not like to pay taxes to Caesar. Often we find ourselves under a government which we do not like. The command from God is just the same. “Pay taxes”.

Verse 7: Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

If government is going to work in the right way the citizens must give it the proper honour. We must respect the rulers and give them the tax which they ask for. We may not like the man who is ruling us but we must honour him because of the office which he holds.

Verse 8: ¶ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

We must pay our taxes. If we do not pay them, we “owe” them. We must pay everything which we have promised to others. It is a sin for Christians to go to a shop and agree to pay for something and then not pay. We Christians must be very careful about getting into debt. It is a sin when we cheat someone by not paying what we have promised.

What we do owe and can never pay is love to one another. I must always keep “paying” this debt. I must always give love.

He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. All of God’s laws which tell us how to treat other people are fulfilled when we love. If we love, we will not murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, etc. Love is the unselfish desire for the good of the one we love. We will not do anything to harm the one we love.

Verse 9: For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Old Testament commandments told how we must act toward one another. Those commandments are still true and are a part of the New Testament. They are true because they are the actions of love. Jesus said that there are two commandments upon which the Law hangs. In Matthew 22:37-40 we read: *“And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment.³⁹ The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”*

No one ever committed adultery when he had a proper love for the people he was harming. Adultery comes from selfishness. The one who commits that sin does not care how much he hurts people. The same can be said about murder, stealing and coveting.

Loving our neighbour is the second commandment. The first is to love God with all our heart. We must love Him even more than we love ourselves or our

neighbour.

Verse 10: Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

To fulfil law is to obey what it says. God's law is good. When we love, we do what that law says to do. God has given law to help us. Everything is from love. When we love our neighbour, we will work those things which will do good to him.

When we do something which is not God's will, it is not good. Jesus said that He could call angels to rescue Him from death, but He said, "How then would the scriptures be fulfilled?" The scriptures taught that He must die for the sins of all men. He had to die to fulfil the scriptures. Therefore Jesus obeyed the scriptures and did not call the angels.

We fulfil a command when we obey it. There is a purpose to every command. The commands are given to bring good to man and glory to God. When we love our neighbour, we carry out the purpose of the law. We do good to him.

Verse 11: ¶ Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

Time is passing. Opportunities to do good slip away with time. We must be doing the Father's will NOW. We cannot call back the opportunities we missed.

It is *the hour for you to awaken from sleep*. This means we must stop being lazy. We must begin to care for our brother. We must be busy doing good to him. Jesus said, "*We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work*" (John 9:4). Peter wrote, "*For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles*" (1 Peter 4:3). The Christian has no time for the works of Satan. And the Christian must not spend his days doing nothing to carry out the will of his Father in heaven.

When our sins are forgiven we are saved. Therefore Christians have salvation now. But in this verse we find that there is a salvation in the future. *Now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.* What is it?

This salvation was nearer than when the Roman saints believed. They did not yet have it. It was the salvation from the body which dies and goes to the grave. It is the salvation into the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Romans 8:21). As long as we live on the earth we will get sick, get hurt, and die. When our bodies are raised from the dead, then our salvation will be complete.

Verse 12: The night is almost gone, and the day is near.

Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

In this verse Paul uses the words “night” and “day” with a special meaning. “Night” means the wicked world, the world of men who do not listen to the law of God. They are in darkness, the night of wickedness.

Paul says that *the night is almost gone*. Wickedness has become very great. It cannot become much greater. Also, this world will pass away. It will not last forever.

Paul then says, *the day is near*. He does not say how near. It is nearer than when they believed. It is near because it is the next thing in God’s plan. It is the day when Jesus will come and the saints will be raised (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). This is what the Christian is living for.

Paul then says plainly, *Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light*. The deeds of darkness are all sorts of evil. The armour of light are the good deeds we do to obey Jesus. Those deeds give us a shield, a protection, against evil.

Verse 13: Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

We walk in the light of God's word; that means we walk in the day of righteous living not in the night of wickedness. We know that God sees everything we do. We cannot hide because He can see in the darkness. If we always act so that God will be pleased, we will not need the darkness to cover what we do.

Six things are listed. They are things which are darkness and which must be left behind by Christians. *Carousing* means drunken feasts and dances in which people do many wrong things. *Drunkenness* means to drink alcohol and become affected by it so that our behaviour changes.

Sexual promiscuity means to have many sexual partners. This was the way men worshiped some of their gods. It is the way the world says to have a good time. *Sensuality* means all kinds of evil sexual things. It includes pornographic pictures, moving one's body in a way to arouse sexual desire in those who watch, putting one's hands on another's body in order to cause lust. *Strife* is all kinds of arguing and fighting. *Jealousy* is when a person feels bad toward another person because that person has what the first person wants.

Verse 14: But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Since we leave the works of darkness behind, we do not plan ways in which we can do those things any more. We must *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*. This means that we work hard to do what He wants us to do. We grow more like Him each day. Sometimes we fail to be what we want to be. We do not stop trying. By the grace of God we will put on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Chapter Fourteen

Verses 1-3: ¹ Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. ² One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. ³ The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

In the last verses of chapter thirteen Paul says that we must love our neighbour. Here Paul shows what we will do if we love our brother. We must love all men, but we must especially love our brethren. There is a problem. He is talking about how we must treat our brothers in Christ when we are faced with this problem.

The problem which Paul talks about is that there are differences between brethren. He calls one “weak” and the other “strong”. In what are they weak or strong? Some are weak in their understanding of the truth concerning some things. They do not properly understand “The Faith”.

I do not believe that they are weak in faith (trust, conviction). They have strong faith in Jesus. But they do not have the knowledge that the strong ones have. Those who do not have the knowledge are the ones Paul calls *weak in (the) faith*. The ones who have the knowledge are the strong in the faith.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *“Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge”* (1 Corinthians 8:1). I think Paul wrote this in irony (meaning that NOT all had knowledge, but they only THOUGHT they had knowledge). Later in verse seven of the same chapter he wrote: *“However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled”*. Some did not know that an idol is nothing. Because they did not have this knowledge, when they ate meat which had been sacrificed to the idol they ate it TO the idol. They were not weak in what they believed. They were weak in understanding what the gospel teaches.

Paul writes about eating meat, first where the Christians were Gentiles, and second where the Christians were both Jews and Gentiles. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 8 and 10), he was writing to a Gentile church. Before they were converted the Christians at Corinth worshiped idols. At Rome the Christians were both Jews and Gentiles. This caused a problem because of the different backgrounds of these people. The law of Moses made it wrong for Jews to eat pork and many other meats. When Jews were converted they had to be taught that the law of Moses was done away and that they could eat any meat. However, because they lived for years under the law, some of them did not want to eat pork. They did not fully understand what the gospel said about eating meat, thus they were weak in the faith. The Gentile Christians did not worry about this because they had always eaten all kinds of meat. It was easy for them to see that the law of Moses did not govern them.

So here is the problem. What must the meat-eaters do with those who do not eat meat? What must those who refuse to eat meat do with the meat-eaters?

It is easy to see that these brethren were not treating one another right. Paul now tells them what to do. Paul tells the strong in the faith to *accept the one who is weak in (the) faith*. The weak one is a brother. The strong must *accept* him as a brother and fellowship him completely. The strong must not treat the weak one as a “partial” brother.

But when we accept the weak brother, we must not do this *for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions*. The strong brother knows that the opinions of the weak brother are not correct. But the weak brother must be accepted as he is. It is all right for him to have his opinions.

This shows that the opinions are not matters of faith. We must believe and teach everything which is given in the gospel. We cannot accept people who are believing and teaching against God’s will. If God’s law said that all **MUST** eat meat, then the weak brother who does not eat meat would be sinning. But God’s law does not say that. It matters not whether a man eats meat or not. Therefore when the brother refuses to eat meat he is not sinning against God. He must be accepted.

The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him . If we refuse to accept a brother we must show that the brother is disobeying God's word. We must not refuse to accept him when he does things differently from us unless we can show that God's word condemns his actions. And the weak must not insist that everyone do things their way. They must show from the Bible that it must be done that way. If they cannot do this, they must accept the brother who does not do things the way they do.

The weak brother is to accept the strong. He must not condemn the strong brother for eating meat. The action of the one does not affect the standing of the other before God. God has accepted him. So when one brother says "I can't eat meat", he must not say, "If you eat meat you are sinning and I won't fellowship you". And the brother who eats meat must not think that the brother who refuses to eat is stupid, or worthless, or less of a Christian than the meat-eater.

No Christian has the right to look down on another for having a different view on any matter, and especially in matters which do not make any difference. The instructions which Paul gives to the weak toward the strong are based on the fact that God has received him. If God receives someone, no Christian can reject him.

Verse 4: Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

No man has the right to judge the servant of someone else. The Christian is the servant of Jesus. Jesus is the only one who has the right to judge His servants. If I set myself up as a judge, I am actually condemning Jesus!

No matter how much people may condemn a servant of Jesus, *Jesus is able to make him stand*. This is a very comforting thought. The Lord shall be our judge. Men may speak against us and reject us, but what they say will not make any difference. Jesus will make His own judgment.

Jesus said, “*Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted*” (Matthew 23:12). It is also true that many whom men praise shall be humbled, and those whom men humble may be praised in that day when He shall judge the world in righteousness.

Verses 5-6: ⁵ ¶ One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

Paul does not tell us why some men thought one day was more important than another. We cannot guess why they did. Some think that the important day was the sabbath, and that Paul says that it is right to observe the sabbath. However, in other places Paul shows that it is wrong to observe the Jewish days. He wrote to the Galatians — “*You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain*” (Galatians 4:10-11). And to the Colossians — “*having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. ¹⁶ ¶ Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day ¹⁷ things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ*” (Colossians 2:14-17).

We can see from the verses to the Galatians that the way they observed days was not right. The verses to the Colossians tell us that the law of Moses was taken out of the way, therefore the Jews do not have to keep the days any more. Therefore I do not believe we can use Romans 14:6 to teach that it is right to keep the sabbath.

God made all of the days, and they are all of the same importance. No difference between them can be made unless God makes it. Under the law God

made a difference, but God took away this difference when He took away the law. In the New Testament the first day of the week has a special importance. It is the day when the disciples under the teaching of the apostles gathered to break bread (Acts 20:7). When they ate the Lord's Supper they remembered the death of Jesus. This is the only clear difference between it and any other day of the week.

When we think about the first day of the week we may decide that it has a special meaning because Jesus rose from the dead on that day. We can notice the difference in meaning between the sabbath and the first day of the week. The Jews kept the sabbath remembering that they were delivered from slavery in Egypt; the Christians observe the first day of the week remembering the day on which Jesus arose to die no more. We can also see that the last day of the week looked backward and the first day of the week looks forward to the new life Jesus made possible by His triumph over death.

What days did some Roman Christians consider more important? I do not think we can know. This is a time when we need to consider what Paul has said—that where God has not made a law we should not.

Verses 7-9: ⁷ For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

This statement has been used to teach that people depend upon each other, and therefore we need to have good relations with one another. It is true that we depend upon each other, but this verse does not talk about that. This verse tells us about our relationship to the Lord.

We depend upon the Lord completely, and we are always under His will, whether we are living or dead. The Lord's servants will answer to Him, not to anyone else. We are under the care of Him and we must obey Him. Others do not belong to Jesus. And we do not belong to anyone else! We are under the authority of Jesus in a way we can never be to anyone else. This is why He

died, was raised, and now lives. He, and only He, can be the Lord of the dead. Others have authority over people while they live, but they cannot be lords to anyone who dies.

Jesus showed His authority by doing miracles while He lived on the earth. He showed His power over Satan by casting out demons. It is a serious thought that no one can escape His power. We can disobey Him while we are living; but after we die we will have to do what He tells us to do. Even the demons had to obey Jesus. The things which are made out of matter and all spirits obey Jesus. Only man can disobey, and He will pay the price for disobedience!

Verses 10-12: ¹⁰ ¶ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.” ¹² So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

The first question is for those whom Paul calls “weak”, and the second is for the “strong”. *We will all stand before the judgment seat of God.* Each one is to live for Christ now, and each one will be judged by GOD! How then can you set yourself up as a judge? God is the judge!

The judgment is certain. When Jesus came forth from the dead He proved that He will judge the world (Acts 17:31). If you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, you must believe that He will judge the world. If you do not believe this, you cannot be a child of God.

When we stand before the Judge in the judgment, we will be judged as individuals. Jesus will not judge congregations. God judges congregations and nations and families now. He sends bad things on them as punishment. But after we die, there will be no more such judgment. Each person will receive punishment or reward for what he does while he is living (2 Corinthians 5:10). We will not be judged by what we do AFTER we die. *“It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). Every Christian should live each day knowing that what he does that day will be brought

before the Lord in judgment. If we live that way, we will live a better life day by day.

While we live on the earth we can bow our knee to Jesus and we can confess Him before men to His glory and our salvation. But if we do not obey Him now, we will bow our knee and confess His name at the judgment. *“Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God”*. The one who refuses to confess Christ in this life will then confess to his shame and damnation.

Paul’s choice was given in these words: *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me”* (Galatians 2:20). This should be the choice of all.

Verse 13: ¶ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.

When must we not judge one another? This command applies to the things Paul has written about. It is wrong to condemn someone who is not condemned by God. This is the only thing Paul writes about.

We must judge between good and evil. As we grow in Christ we are able to do a better job of this. Hebrews 5:14 describes the mature Christian in this way: *“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil”*. We must be very careful to judge what is good and what is evil.

When we do that, we judge the person who does good or evil. We must do that. We must know who are the false prophets if we are going to avoid them. We must test the false teachers (1 John 4:1). We must turn away from those who cause division contrary to the true teaching (Romans 16:17). We must not encourage those who go beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).

But in matters where there is no sin, *let us not judge one another anymore*. Instead, we must *determine this not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way*. It is a terrible thing to cause a brother to sin! When we condemn a brother for something which is not wrong, we are putting temptation in his way. Instead of that, we should be careful never to put a stumbling block in a brother's way. We have the right to eat meat. But this right does not give us permission to ruin our brother.

Verses 14-15: ¹⁴ I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

Paul says that the “strong” ones are right. All meat is clean; all meat can be eaten by the Christian. It is clean because the law of Moses which made some meat unclean is no longer the law we must follow. We follow the gospel of Christ. The gospel of Christ allows us to eat all meat (1 Timothy 4:4-5).

However, *to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean*. This man is weak in the faith. He thinks meat is unclean. If he eats it while he believes it is unclean, he sins! Because he believes it is a sin to eat, when he sees a brother eating the meat he *is hurt*. This does not mean that his feelings are hurt. It means that he may eat the meat he thinks is unclean. He sees his brother eating it, so he eats it. But because he thinks it is unclean, he sins. The strong brother who eats meat can cause his weak brother to be lost!

Paul uses strong language when he writes to the strong. He says, “*you are no longer walking according to love*”. When they eat meat when it can “hurt” the weak one, they are not thinking about that brother. They are only thinking about their stomachs! Romans 13:10 says: “*Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law*”. Our love must be so strong that we will do without things which it is lawful for us to have. We will love our brother too much to cause him to stumble. We will understand that he is one for whom Christ died.

Brethren, when we consider the things of the church we must be careful. We must not push for what we want if it causes the consciences of our brothers to be hurt. We must not force them to do what they think is wrong. We love them. We do not want them to sin.

Verses 16-17: ¹⁶ Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This is an important matter. *The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking.* This is why it does not matter whether a person eats meat or not. God has left us free in eating. There is no law which makes it a matter for the kingdom of God.

Note that Paul talks about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is here. Those who are in the church are in the kingdom. When we obey the gospel we are translated into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). We are born into the kingdom (John 3:3-5).

Clinton Hamilton comments:

“Basically, the kingdom of God consists of those persons who have responded to the gospel summons or call and in whose hearts God and Christ rule through their obedience to the gospel. The emphasis in the idea of kingdom is the rule of God. Consequently, the kingdom of God is not food and drink. Rather, it is wholly spiritual in nature, not material. However, the members of this kingdom live in the material world and need food and drink. In the exercise of their liberties with reference to the use of the material world, Christians must be ruled by the gospel as to what they may do under a given set of circumstances. But that which pertains to the kingdom is spiritual, i.e. righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”—*The Book of Romans*, pp. 770-771 .

What gives character, direction and accomplishment to the kingdom of God? It is first *righteousness*. We become righteous when we listen to the gospel, believe it, repent of our sins, confess Christ and are baptised for the forgiveness of our sins. We are then saved (1 Peter 3:21), born again (John 3:3-5), raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-6). When we become citizens of the kingdom, we must live righteously.

When we live righteously, we will have *peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit teaches us through the New Testament. When we listen and obey, we become righteous, and we have peace and joy. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of peace, for He is the Prince of Peace. If we destroy the peace in the kingdom we commit a serious sin. Woe to those who do this. We must always try to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). When we cause division we destroy unity and peace, and we take away the joys that come with that peace. Many times men have brought into the church things which Christ did not authorise. This has caused division and destroyed peace between brethren.

Verses 18-19: ¹⁸ For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Those who are in the kingdom should want to do one thing—that is to serve Christ. When we do that we are *acceptable to God*. How do I know that God approves my service? The only way is for Him to tell me. He does this in the New Testament. When I do what the gospel tells me to do, I know that I am acceptable to God.

This service will also be *approved by men*. Paul does not mean that all men will be happy with what we do. Worldly men will be very unhappy and will certainly not approve. But men who understand and love God's ways will approve when we do what God says.

We must *pursue* (run after, always look for) *the things which make for peace*. We do this when we do the will of God and do not do the things which

men command. This is the peace which is the fruit of righteousness, not the peace of the world. It is not “peace at any price”. It is the peace which God loves.

We must also pursue *the building up of one another*. We all need the help of brethren to build us up. It is not a building up of the things of human wisdom and worldly riches. It is a building up in a greater and deeper knowledge of and respect for the word of God.

Verses 20-21: ²⁰ Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

Here are two sets of values—the work of God and food. We cannot compare the two! One is eternal and the other is unimportant. Since food is not the important thing, *do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food*. We tear down the work of God when we eat meat and cause our brother to sin.

We have the right to eat meat and to drink wine, when no ill-effects come to our brother. But when we eat meat or drink wine and that causes my brother to stumble in his walk with God, my eating or drinking is evil! Why would I do that? I do it only if I do not love my brother as I should. I think my eating is worth more than his soul. How very tragic.

A soul is worth more than the whole world. If I eat and drink and do not think about the soul of my brother, I am acting foolishly and selfishly. It is better not to eat or drink those things. The soul of my brother is worth more than the food!

When might drinking wine cause my brother to stumble? With today’s highly intoxicating wines, to drink even a little may cause my brother to drink too much! Then I have caused him to sin. It is better never to drink wine.

How can we apply these principles to the church today? I believe that the principles of Paul's teachings apply to many situations. Suppose I see nothing wrong with the practice of the congregation. If I insist on that practice when others are convinced it is sinful, I can cause great harm. Whatever good I think that practice will do is overcome by the harm which I do to my brethren.

Verses 22-23: ²² The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. ²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

The faith of this verse is one's own personal persuasion. But since the things Paul is writing about are not commanded nor are they forbidden, it makes no difference whether one's "faith" approves or disapproves of these things. Others do not have to believe what you believe. Therefore *have it as your own conviction before God*. It is not your duty to convert others to your conviction.

This shows that what Paul writes about are not matters of the will of God. We must teach others the will of God, and we must teach all of it (Acts 20:26-27). The spirit of faith is, "I believe, therefore, I speak" (2 Corinthians 4:13). The faith of these verses does not have that spirit.

How can a man condemn himself in what he approves? He must first believe that what he is doing is right. But if when he does this he causes his brother to sin, he is condemned by God.

In recent years those who pressed new things on the church over the conscientious objections of godly men and women condemned themselves in what they approve. When they brought instrumental music into the worship, or orphan homes supported by the church, or sponsoring churches to run Bible schools, they caused division in the church. They did not believe these things were necessary. God can be worshiped and served without any of them. But they loved these things so much that they let division and bitterness come while they insisted that these things be put into the church. If these things

were matters of indifference, which those who introduced them said, then their actions were condemned by what Paul writes in Romans 14. Of course, these things are not authorised in the New Testament and those who introduced them are condemned doubly. They did not care for the souls of those who objected to these introductions, and the things they brought in are condemned by God's word.

He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin. Here is an important principle. It is not wrong to eat meat. But if a man thinks it is wrong, and if he eats when he believes it is wrong, he has sinned! A right action becomes sinful if the one who does it believes it is sin.

Why is it sin? The act is right. The sin is in the heart of the person who eats. He believes it is wrong, yet he does it anyway. He has sinned against his conscience.

Suppose he believes that something is right when it is really wrong. The principle does not work in reverse. Whatever is wrong is sin, even when we believe it is not sin. Saul of Tarsus thought in his heart that persecuting disciples of Christ was pleasing to God. But he was sinning by doing that (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

We must always be careful to do what our conscience approves. Yet we must be sure to listen to God's word so that we will truly do right.

SUMMARIZING THIS CHAPTER: Those who were weak in the faith needed to educate themselves concerning the eating of meats and observing days, so that they would not remain weak in the faith, or lacking in their knowledge of the truth. Those who were the strong in the faith, knowing the truth concerning these practices, were under obligation to love their weaker brethren, and to be forbearing with them in their ignorance.

Chapter Fifteen

Verses 1-4: ¹ Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. ² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. ³ For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.” ⁴ For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Here Paul continues to tell brethren how to act toward each other. The *strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength*. We love the weak ones. We think about their weaknesses when we do things. We must *not just please ourselves*. We do not want to do anything which will hurt the weak brother (Romans 14:21).

We must not do what we want to do if it may cause our brother to sin. Each one is *to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification*. It won't hurt the strong brother to stop eating meat or observing days. But to eat meat when it causes a brother to sin against his conscience is very bad. We can destroy our brother if we are not careful (Romans 14:15).

It is more important to please your neighbour than to please yourself. Why? Because if I please myself, I do not do good to others. If I please my neighbour, I help him please God.

However, Paul is talking about things which are right in themselves. If I please anyone by doing the wrong thing, I am not doing what Paul says to do. We must please God before we please our neighbour, because we must love God more than we love our neighbour. When we give in to the pressure of brethren or friends and do what they want us to do when we know it is wrong, we sin greatly. This becomes a real problem when brethren introduce things into the worship or organisation or work of the church which is not authorised by God. We must not cooperate with such brethren when they are doing wrong.

Paul uses Jesus as the example of one who did not please Himself, but rather pleased others.

³ *For even Christ did not please Himself.* He uses the words of Psalm 69:9 to prove this: *“The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me”*. When David wrote this he was talking about himself. Here Paul applies the words to Christ. With Jesus it was the same as with David. When Jesus was persecuted because He did the will of God, the reproaches (insults) were against God. Jesus pleased God, not Himself, even though the Jews hated him for it. And when Jesus pleased God, He did that which helps the people God loves.

Christ suffered the insults and persecutions, but He was the One who won the victory. The scriptures give us the hope which Jesus had. *Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* Those things gave encouragement and perseverance to Jesus, and they give us courage, too.

Christian, you need to study the Old Testament. Its history helps us greatly. There are good examples which we should follow, and there are bad examples which warn us. We see God’s love and care for His people, and we see how He hates sin and punishes the sinner. Those scriptures encourage the Christian to seek the good of others rather than the good of himself. They help the Christian to stay strong. They give him comfort and wisdom. They give him hope.

Verses 5-6: ⁵ Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the language of prayer. It is addressed to God who *gives perseverance and encouragement*. Paul wants God to *grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus*. The Christians in Rome were divided; the weak and the strong were not treating each other as they should.

And some of the Jews had insisted that the Gentile Christians accept the law of Moses and be circumcised. Paul taught on these things. Now he prays for them to be likeminded toward one another. They must accept one another. The Jew must accept the Gentile and the strong must accept the weak. They are all beloved of God. Jesus is the Saviour of them all. Each stands equal before the Lord to receive blessings from Him, and each must follow Him in everything He says.

Therefore, *with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* God is not one God to the Jew and another God to the Gentile. He is the same God to all Christians, both Jew and Gentile. The thing the Christian wants most to do is to glorify God. This is why God created us.

Verses 7-9: ⁷ ¶ Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, ⁹ and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, “Therefore I will give praise to You among the Gentiles, And I will sing to Your name.”

In order to *accept one another*, brethren must be of one mind in their faith and feelings. When we accept one another we can praise God in worship with one mouth. Then God is glorified. This shows how serious it is for the children of God to be divided. Those who cause division contrary to the doctrine of Christ (Romans 16:17) will be punished by God.

Christ received both Jews and Gentiles. He *has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers.* When He died on the cross, He died for the Jews; and all the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were fulfilled for the faithful among the Jews. And he has become a servant *for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy.* The promises to Abraham included all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3). So Jesus died for the Gentiles. Now Jews and Gentiles together glorify God for showing mercy to them.

Paul quotes the words of Psalm 18:49 and 2 Samuel 22:50, “*Therefore I will give praise to You among the Gentiles, And I will sing to Your name*”. These are the praises of David to God. He saw the day when God’s people would include *the Gentiles*. He saw that God’s people would be both Jews and Gentiles and would sing to God together.

Verses 10-12: ¹⁰ Again he says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.” ¹¹ And again, “Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, And let all the peoples praise Him.” ¹² Again Isaiah says, “There shall come the root of Jesse, And He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, In Him shall the Gentiles hope.”

Here Paul quotes other verses of the Old Testament. They all point to the time when Jesus would come and bring the Gentiles and Jews together in one body. These verses say that the Gentiles will “rejoice”, “praise the Lord”, and “hope”. These verses should convince the believing Jews that they must accept the Gentiles. There must be no prejudice in their hearts against them. These verses should help them to see that they must not tell the Gentile Christians to be circumcised and keep the law.

Verse 13: Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The joy and peace which Paul wants them to have comes *in believing*. This means that joy and peace do not come directly from God through some special act of the Holy Spirit. They come from God indirectly, through understanding and believing the gospel. If we believe what Paul wrote in this letter we will have joy and peace. This will cause us to *abound in hope*. *The power of the Holy Spirit* to give us hope is in the word which He has revealed. Paul said in chapter one that the gospel is the power of God to salvation (v. 16). This gospel is from the Holy Spirit, and it has power to give us an unshakeable hope.

Verse 14: ¶ And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

Now Paul shows his faith in them. He is sure that his instructions in this letter will heal every division. They are *full of goodness*. Now that Paul has taught them the things they need, they are *filled with all knowledge*. As a result they are *able also to admonish one another*. If we study this book carefully we also can use the knowledge it gives to admonish (warn) one another.

Verses 15-16: ¹⁵ But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

It is necessary to be clear and bold in our teaching. Paul wrote *very boldly on some points* because they needed teaching on those things. He taught with the authority *that was given him from God*. So we must teach with the authority of the scriptures. I have heard preachers teach the truth in such a timid and general way that only a few were able to understand the truth they were teaching. This is not the way Paul taught.

Paul was appointed an apostle. He considered this a high honour. He therefore was careful *to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles*. He took his job seriously and gave his attention to it. He *ministered as a priest the gospel of God*. As an Old Testament priest offered up incense or the sacrifice of an animal, Paul offered up the preaching of the gospel of God. This was so *that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable*. He was giving the Gentiles to God. He did this by giving them the gospel of God. When they accepted it, Paul was able to present the Gentiles to God because they had been *sanctified by the Holy Spirit*. God can accept only a holy (sanctified) sacrifice. In order for Him to accept the Gentiles, they had to be sanctified. They were sanctified when they heard the gospel which came from the Holy

Spirit, and when they believed and obeyed that gospel. Jesus said, “*Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth*” (John 17:17).

Verses 17-21: ¹⁷ Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. ¹⁸ For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, ¹⁹ in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. ²⁰ And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man’s foundation; ²¹ but as it is written, “They who had no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand.”

Paul was happy in what God had done with Him. God made him the apostle to the Gentiles, and Christ was with him in his preaching. Paul was in many dangers, but Christ saved him from them all. When Paul preached, the Holy Spirit gave him the power to perform *signs and wonders*. Paul boasted about these things, but he was not boasting about himself or his power. They were the things *pertaining to God* which *Christ had accomplished through* him.

The reason Paul performed signs and wonders was to confirm (prove) the word he preached (Mark 16:20). The only way Paul could offer up the Gentiles to God was for them to be sanctified by hearing and believing and obeying the gospel. Therefore he preached and performed signs and wonders to convince the hearers that he was preaching the truth.

Paul preached over a wide area. He always tried to go to new places “*so that I would not build on another man’s foundation*”. The foundation of the word of God was laid by preaching the gospel. Paul laid the foundation at Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:10-11) by being the first to preach the gospel there. He preached in these many places because he wanted to carry out the job which Christ had given him. He was preaching so that “*They who had no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand*” (Isaiah 52:15, especially as

translated into Greek in the version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint).

Though the Bible has gone throughout the world, the true gospel is today unknown in many, perhaps most, places. Oh that men, many men, would make it their aim to preach Christ where he is not truly named! Christ needs men who are not building on other men's foundations.

Verses 22-24: ²² ¶ For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; ²³ but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you ²⁴ whenever I go to Spain for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while —

Paul was not going to stop in Rome. He would come to them on his way to preach in Spain, a place where he would be able to lay the foundation by preaching the word of God to them for the first time. Until Paul wrote this letter he had been busy preaching in the areas which are now the countries of Turkey and Greece. There was *no further place for me in these regions* so he wanted to go to another place, Spain. Rome was on the way to Spain, so he planned to stop with the brethren there, preach to them, and be helped on his way by them.

We do not know whether Paul ever went to Spain. He did go to Rome, but when he got there he was a prisoner of the Roman government (See Acts 21-28).

Verses 25-27: ²⁵ but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷ Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

Paul wrote this letter when he was on his third preaching journey. On that journey he asked Gentile churches in Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia to make contributions for the poor saints in Jerusalem. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 8:13-14: *“For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality ¹⁴ at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality”*. There was a great need for money to supply the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem. It was a temporary need. When the need was supplied, no more giving would be necessary. Later a need might arise among the Gentile churches. Then perhaps the Jerusalem church would be in position to send money to them. This is the pattern of churches helping one another.

Note: The money was not sent to some institution which was set up to permanently take care of the poor or the orphans or the widows of an area. The money was sent to the church where the poor were found, and it was sent only as long as there was a need.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 Paul gave instructions for gathering the money. He wrote in verse 2: *“On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come”*.

This collection was made for saints, not non-saints. It was sent to the church where the poor saints were, not to some institution taking care of all poor. It was sent while there was need and would stop when the need was taken care of. This is the pattern for church benevolence.

Individuals are told to do good to all men, to take care of their own widows, and to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions (Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 5:16; James 1:27). The verse in 1 Timothy shows that there is a clear difference between what individuals must do and what the church must do.

Paul here gives a reason why the Gentile churches were giving money for the Jerusalem saints. *“For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things”*. They were

thankful that the gospel had come from Jerusalem. They were happy to send money to their beloved brethren.

Verses 28-29: ²⁸ Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

In order to *finish this*, Paul was going with the messengers of the churches to take the contribution to Jerusalem. He wanted to *put my seal on this fruit of theirs*. This was very important to Paul. Prophets told him that he would go to prison in Jerusalem. He continued on his way, saying that he was ready to die if necessary (Acts 21:13). Paul wanted the Jerusalem brethren to understand the love that the Gentile brethren had for them. Just as he wrote the book of Romans to bring the Jewish and Gentile Christians together in unity, so he went to Jerusalem with the contribution for the poor saints hoping to bring the Jewish and Gentile brethren closer together in unity.

Paul expected the Roman Christians to help him on his trip to preach in Spain. It is wonderful that he could expect that. He understood that their love for all men would lead them to give money so that he could preach in still another place.

When he came he expected to *come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ*. He was able to do this (Acts 28:17-31). God blessed him because he was doing the work of Christ.

Verses 30-33: ³⁰ ¶ Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, ³¹ that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; ³² so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. ³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Paul begs them because of the cause of Christ and because of the love which the Holy Spirit gives. He begs them *to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me*. They love the cause of Christ and they love one another because of the word of the Holy Spirit. This unites them with Paul and he calls on them to work in prayer for him.

These words show that God works things to answer prayer. This does not require Him to perform miracles. In His providence He sees that certain things are done, all in answer to our prayers. It is important to *strive together in your prayers to God*. God listens to the prayers of righteous men (James 5:16). Note also, praying is work. We are working together when we pray for one another.

Paul asked them to pray for two things. First, *that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea*. This prayer was heard. When he was attacked by the mob in the temple, Roman soldiers rescued him (Acts 21:27-40). Later when there was a plot to kill him, his sister's son warned him and he was rescued again (Acts 23:12-35). Finally he was delivered from the hands of the Jews when he was sent to Rome for trial (Acts 27:1).

Second, Paul asked them to pray *that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints*. This was why it was important for Paul to go to Jerusalem with the money. Even some of the believing Jews did not completely trust Paul. This prayer, too, was heard when the brethren received him gladly (Acts 21:17-20).

Paul also came to the brethren in Rome in joy, even though he was a prisoner (Acts 28:15).

His final words are full of love and meaning. *“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”* May this be our continuing prayer for one another.

Chapter Sixteen

Verses 1-2: ¹ I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; ² that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.

Many people say that Phoebe was a “deaconess”. This verse does not say that. Phoebe could have been a servant of the church without having the “office” of deaconess. She could have *been a helper of many* by helping them as she was able. When she helped them she was a servant of the church. It is not good to think that every time someone is a servant of the church he or she must have an office.

Paul was probably at Corinth when he wrote the letter to the Romans. Cenchrea was very close to Corinth. There is a narrow piece of land (an “isthmus”) which joins the upper part of Achaia to the lower part. Corinth was the seaport which faced west on that isthmus. Cenchrea was the seaport on the east coast (see Acts 18:18). This is the only place in the Bible where this church is named.

It seems that Paul knew Phoebe well for she not only was a helper of many but she helped Paul as well. He asked the brethren at Rome to *receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints*. She was a “saint”, and all brethren should receive “holy persons” in a good way. We are fellow-saints.

Paul also asked them to *help her in whatever matter she may have need of you*. She was a helper of many. It was now time for the brethren at Rome to help her. Brethren are people who help one another.

Probably Phoebe carried this letter to the brethren in Rome.

Verses 3-16: ³ ¶ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; ⁵ also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epäenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. ⁶ Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. ⁸ Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹ Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. ¹⁰ Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹ Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. ¹² Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. ¹⁵ Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Paul had never been to Rome but he knew a large number of brethren there. This was natural. Rome was the great capital city of the Empire. And it was the business centre of the empire. It drew people from everywhere. So people who were converted in Asia, or Greece, or Syria, or Judea went to Rome. Paul knew many of them.

Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila, Paul's *fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks*, are well-known to those who read the book of Acts. They were Jews who came from Rome to Corinth. Paul lived with them and worked at the trade of tentmaker with them. When he left Corinth for Jerusalem, they travelled with him as far as Ephesus. At Ephesus they taught

Apollos, that great preacher of the gospel, the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:1-3; 24-28). We are made to love these two very much by knowing that they risked their own necks for Paul, and by knowing that all the churches of the Gentiles gave thanks for them.

Paul said to *greet the church that is in their house*. The New Testament does not tell us that any church owned a meeting house. We read where there were churches in the houses of Nymphas (Colossians 4:15) and Philemon (Philemon 2). Hamilton writes: “Some of the Roman homes were built around an open court that would provide a good meeting place”. It must have been a joy for a family to build a house in which the church could meet.

Paul described many of these people as being “in Christ”, and their labour was “in the Lord”. A Christian is in Christ, and our labour “in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58). This means that if our labour is “out” of the Lord it is worthless. We must be “in” the Lord (which means we must be Christians), and what we do must be “in” the Lord (which means that we do what the Lord says). Those who have not come into Christ by being baptised (Galatians 3:27) are working for nothing. Those who do things which are not given by Christ in His word are working for nothing. These people were in the Lord and they were working in the Lord.

Andronicus and Junias were relatives of Paul. Paul was put in prison a number of times, and they also had been in prison for Christ. Therefore Paul calls them *my fellow prisoners*. Paul did not convert them. They *were in Christ before me*. They were men whom the apostles in Jerusalem knew and loved.

Paul calls Herodian (verse 11) *my kinsman*. We cannot know whether he was a relative of Paul or whether Paul was calling him “my fellow countryman—a Jew”.

Rufus (verse 13) must have been a fine Christian. He is called *a choice man in the Lord*. At some time Paul became very close to the mother of Rufus, for he calls her his mother, also.

Others are called, “*my beloved in the Lord*”, “*our fellow worker in Christ*”, “*the beloved who has worked hard in the Lord*”. Paul loved his brethren. He felt close to them. He was happy when they worked for the Lord.

Because Paul knew many of the brethren in Rome, he knew of the problems in the church. When he wrote the letter to the Romans, he knew that the Jews and Gentiles in the church were sometimes not receiving one another, and he knew that there were problems between the weak and the strong.

In verse 16 Paul wrote: “*Greet one another with a holy kiss*”. In Bible times men greeted one another with a kiss on the cheek (Matthew 26:48-49; Luke 7:45; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12). Paul is not here commanding that the form of greeting must be a kiss. He is making sure that the brethren make the kiss a “holy” kiss. It must not be the kiss of a hypocrite, like the kiss of Judas. Today we may greet one another with a handshake, or a hug, or in some other way. When brethren greet one another, the greeting must be “holy”. It must mean that we truly love one another.

Paul also wrote in verse 16— *All the churches of Christ greet you*. The churches which knew that Paul was writing asked him to send their greetings. They wanted the brethren in Rome to know that they loved them and accepted them as their brethren. Sometimes today brethren use these words when advertising to the world. This is not the way Paul used these words. This greeting was from churches to *brethren*.

Verses 17-18: ¹⁷ ¶ Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. ¹⁸ For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

Paul wanted the brethren at Rome to be united (Romans 15:5-7). In this letter he taught that Jew and Gentile are both saved in the same way and that there is no difference between them in Christ. They must receive one another. He

told them in chapter 14 that they must not judge one another in things which the Lord has not condemned. It is important that they all be united in Christ.

Those people who tried to destroy that unity were enemies of Christ.

Therefore he wrote, *keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.*

Notice that these people were teaching *contrary to the teaching which you learned*. They were not teaching the pure gospel preached by Paul. This was causing *dissensions and hindrances*. “Dissensions” are quarrels and arguments. They lead to fighting with words and to division. “Hindrances” are things which keep us from doing something. In this case, the hindrances were keeping the brethren at Rome from following the teachings of Paul. They were causing brethren to make differences between one another.

When division comes to a church we must be careful to see what and who causes it. Those who stand for the truth against error do not cause the division. It is those who do things *contrary to the teaching which you learned*. When people teach things which are not found in the gospel they must be opposed by the gospel. If they keep pressing those things and cause dissensions and hindrances, they must be marked and avoided.

We must do two things to these men. First, we must *keep your eye on* them. We must not think that maybe their false teaching and divisive ways will stop. We must name their names. We must show that their teaching is wrong. Second, we must *turn away from them*. It is not enough to condemn their teaching and their actions. The church must take action. This action is described in 1 Corinthians 5; Titus 3:10-11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:14-17.

The teachers and overseers in a church must know the gospel of Christ. They must *be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock* (Acts 20:28). They must *hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that they may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict* (Titus 1:9). They must *silence* the false teachers (Titus 1:11) by

teaching the gospel clearly and by leading the congregation to avoid the false teachers.

Unfortunately, the false teachers who are *slaves of their own appetites* (verse 18) use *smooth and flattering speech*. This *deceives* even some elders and other leaders. Then the false teachers use those leaders to cause division and force faithful brethren to leave the congregation.

In the modern history of the church division has been caused when brethren have brought in instrumental music in worship, the missionary society, sponsoring churches, church-supported orphan homes and colleges, entertainment as a work of the church, and many other things. The ones who bring these things into the church are smooth-talking men. They make their new things seem very good. But they must be opposed because they are bringing in things *contrary to the teaching* .

Paul wrote that *such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites*. Men like high positions. They like people to praise them. And they like money. These things make them slaves of their own appetites. They then use flattering speech to get what they want. We must know the truth so that we do not listen to them.

Verses 19-20: ¹⁹ For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

¶ The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

This shows that Paul did not think there was great danger from the false teachers when he wrote. The church had a good report. He was rejoicing over them. But even with a good church there is danger, and he wanted them to be warned. He wrote: *I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil*. So we must be wise. We will become wise by learning the gospel well. We will become wise by imitating those who are following Christ. To be

innocent in what is evil is to have nothing to do with evil. It means that we will oppose the false teacher and avoid him (verse 17-18). We will not let evil take root in the congregation.

Verses 21-24: ²¹ ¶ Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

22 ¶ I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.

23 ¶ Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother. ²⁴ [The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]

Bible students know Timothy well. He was Paul's faithful companion and fellow-worker. Three of Paul's relatives send greetings, so Paul had relatives in several places! Gaius was one of the first converts in Corinth, baptised by Paul's hands (1 Corinthians 1:14). He had Paul stay at his house and the church met at his house.

Paul wished the very best for those brethren when he wrote: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* (Many scholars believe that these words were not in the letter which Paul wrote but were added by someone at a later time. It doesn't make any difference. These words express what was in Paul's heart.)

Verses 25-27: ²⁵ ¶ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

In his closing words Paul asked God to bless them greatly. He described God as *Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ*. Paul tried to establish (strengthen) them by teaching that gospel in this letter. He wanted to strengthen them further by coming to them (Romans 1:11-12). We are established by the gospel!

He described the gospel as *the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested*. The gospel was a mystery during all those long ages before Christ, but now it has been made clear. All men are saved through Jesus Christ!

This mystery had already been preached to all the nations. And it was the same gospel for them all.

At the beginning of this book Paul wrote that *we* (Paul) *have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake* (Romans 1:5). In this book in which he wrote of salvation by faith, he made it clear that salvation was by *obedient* faith, not by faith alone (James 2:24). Here at the end of the book he used the same words. He said that the mystery had been made known *leading to obedience of faith*. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). But in order for that faith to be a saving faith, it must lead to obedience of faith.

Paul's letter to the Romans gives us a deep understanding of the will of God. No other book of the Bible gives us so much. In this book the thought is higher, the understanding is richer, and the appreciation of God's love is greater than can be found anywhere else. In Paul's letter to the Romans we have a mine of material. We can dig and dig in this mine and never get everything that is there for us. When we study the book our hearts are made more righteous and our minds are made richer. Here we can find food for our souls that we can find nowhere else.

Paul closes by giving everlasting praise and glory to God through Jesus Christ. When we study this book we can only do the same. *To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen*

