

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

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**(As always, revisions are necessary when new
information is obtained)**

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ROMANS

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

Romans is one of the three most important books in the New Testament. It begins with underscoring the unrighteousness of man regardless of what he may think or do and then presents the case for the righteousness and justice of God regardless of what man may think or do. It goes on to clearly explain what it means to be under the New Covenant in Christ. It shows and states the difference between being under the Old Covenant in contrast to being under the New Covenant. The other two books are Galatians (perhaps the clearest statement) and the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is very important, albeit often misunderstood and misinterpreted due to the editorial use of the pronoun "we".¹

The purpose of this study is to reach into the heart of the apostle's message for the congregation(s) in Rome in the middle of the first century A.D. (C.E.) so that the intent of the epistle is clearly known and the message clearly understood by all who read it. The recipients are both from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. But Paul's main focus is on the Jews to persuade them to fully believe in Christ and the provisions of the New Covenant while at the same time come to the place where they can release their bondage to the law without guilt or doubt. The majority of the epistle is focused on this evangelistic effort. But it is also didactic as Paul teaches all, Jew and Gentile how to view their citizenship in the kingdom as well as how to view and accept each other regardless of the differences between them.

Paul hopes that the prejudice between Jew and Gentile can be set aside and that the personal result of the epistle (if Paul succeeds in his efforts) is a full acceptance of each other in our common faith in Christ. The church at Rome is in the midst of a divisive spirit, Jew against Gentile and Gentile against Jew. Paul prays to: 1. Bring his Jewish brethren into a full understanding of why Christ is the Messiah; 2. Bring the Jewish and Gentile factions in the church into a unity based in essentials rather in disunity based in arguments over the non-essentials of personal preferences, culture and tradition - especially the dietary issue. "The kingdom of God," he points out, "is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (14:7)

The relationship with God, as it is built on one's faith in Christ alone for their hope and salvation, should stand as the sole ground for spiritual and personal fellowship. An unconditional acceptance of all as brothers and sisters in Christ without reference to lineage, background, religious knowledge or training, cultural, linguistic or any other

¹ I John is also misinterpreted for the same reason as well as for the fact that it is written to counteract early Gnosticism which had invaded the church with heresy.

petty difference would please the apostle, but even more so would the encouragement, love and building up of one another in our most precious faith. As he writes in his conclusion, “Let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food.” (14:20)

This study is also done to examine and refute some of the popular theology regarding pre-destination, pre-determination and the nature of Israel and just exactly who is saved and who is not and why.

Introductory notes.

Two men come to mind as primarily responsible for allowing us to receive the impact of The Book of Romans. The first is the apostle Paul who wrote this incredible work of theology. The second is Martin Luther without whom we might have never read and understood it, as it was kept under wraps in the cloistered Roman Catholic Church to be read by ordained clergy only.

Let’s take the last one first. It was Martin Luther who, on October 31, 1517, posted his famous 95 theses on the castle church door at Wittenberg, Germany. These 95 articles (or questions) challenged the scriptural validity of Catholic doctrine and practice.

This came about because twelve years earlier, while riding a horse toward the village of Stotternheim, (in central Germany near Erfurt) Luther had a terrifying experience in a thundering rainstorm when a bolt of lightning struck a tree next to the path upon which he was riding and slammed him to the ground. He cried out, “Saint Anne, save me and I’ll become a monk!” Two weeks later he entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt and dedicated himself to the harsh rigors of this discipline. The more he served and studied, the more he felt his unworthiness until he was overcome with a miserable sense of his own sinfulness. The harder he worked, the less relief he felt and God brought him no relief or mercy. Upon being counseled to love God by his confessor, Luther blurted out, “I do not love God, I hate him!”²

This dedicated monk then turned to scripture itself for truth and consolation. As he contemplated Christ’s death on the cross and what it meant that God did not spare his own Son, the seeds of understanding the love and grace of God began to germinate in Luther’s heart and mind. After ten years of study, Luther again pondered the words of St. Paul in his epistle to the Church at Rome. The phrase, “For in it the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, ‘but the righteousness man shall live by faith.’” These first four chapters of Romans gripped Luther until he recalled, “Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and

² This account, quotations, and what follows is a reflection of Bruce Shelly's research found in, "Church History in Plain English," Thomas Nelson, Publisher, 1982; 1995 Word publishing; paperback; pages 237-

the statement that, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.”

Thirty-seven years later in 1552, Luther completed his commentary on the Book of Romans. His first paragraph in his introduction reads, “This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.”³

But just two years after his enlightenment in 1517, Martin Luther initiated theological debates that brought about the reformation and ultimately the scriptures to each and every person. The additional assistance of the invention of the printing press by Guttenberg made the Bible available to the masses. Martin Luther was a key to bringing us both the truth of salvation by grace through faith alone, apart from works, and the Scriptures wherein these truths are found. Though Luther had many faults and theological errors that included a strong anti-Semitism blaming the Jews for Christ’s death as well as faulting them for not recognizing Christ as the messiah. In his waning years, Luther advocated persecution and death for those that would not repent. But through Luther, and others to follow, the book of Romans changed the face of the world.

Of course, the author of the Book of Romans was Paul. There is really no serious dispute about this. Romans is listed immediately after Acts, and is the first epistle in the New Testament because its authenticity has been so widely acknowledged.

Let’s take a look at Paul and the city where he was born and raised. Born “Saul” he grew up in a Greek founded city called Tarsus probably before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Tarsus is about 400 miles (by sea) from Jerusalem, 500 by land. Its foundations were laid around 1000 years before Christ by Greek explorers. It was built into a major city by Alexander The Great in 300 B.C. and became the capital of the province of Cilicia. It lies up river about 10 miles from the Mediterranean Sea and was accessible by boat. A harbor was built, a university founded and the city became a center for commerce, trade, culture, philosophical debate, and political and military power. Under Caesar Augustus, it was made into a provincial capital with a Roman Governor. It issued its own coinage.

³ Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Martin Luther; Zondervan Publishing House, 1965; Introduction by Luther, pg. xi.

The city, at its zenith, may have been populated by as many as a half-a-million people. Agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce, textiles, education, fishing, and shipping were the principle parts of Tarsus' working life. There were four things the people were proud of: (1) The cool, clear Cydnus River that transected the east part of the city. About the size of the Colorado River, only deeper, the river ran for 200 miles and brought ships in from both East and West. Young Saul no doubt enjoyed swimming in the river watching ships come and go as well as hiking in the beautiful mountains, hunting and exploring as he went along. (2) Tarsus boasted an excellent and safe harbor.⁴ One time, c. 44 B.C. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, sailed up the river from the sea to meet Mark Anthony in Tarsus, where they plotted to gain power in the empire after Julius Caesar's death and also had a torrid love affair. (3) It possessed a fertile plain and rich soil excellent for farming and raising livestock. (4) Tarsus commanded a wagon road made across Mt. Tarsus which had been cut through a narrow gorge 100 yards long at an elevation of 3,600 feet called The Cilician Gates. The pass through the mountains was a very rough, rocky and uneven natural feature, but cutting a road through was an engineering feat of great proportions and solidified Tarsus as one of the key trading cities in the empire. The improvements opened up trade from East and West, and coupled with Mediterranean access caused the commercial activity, including boarding houses, manufacturing, repair and many trade related businesses to flourish.

But who was this man to whom the church at Rome contacted and asked his apostolic insight into the many questions and challenges they faced? Born and raised in Tarsus, Saul was proud to be a citizen of this city. Once he identified himself by saying, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city." (Acts 21:39) The population of Tarsus was largely Jewish. Saul was raised in a strict Jewish home with at least one sister, and perhaps other siblings. (Acts 23:16) He was a significant student of Judaism and both practiced it and defended it.

We can learn something about Saul's thinking from the scriptures. He first enters the scene at the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:58-8:3. "When they had driven him (*Stephen*) out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!' Having said this, he fell asleep. Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. *Some* devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul *began*

⁴ Since that time the harbor has filled in, the river diverted to the east (by Justinian, 6th century) and then its route moved a little further east and directed to feed irrigation to farmlands. The ancient river flow and harbor are barely distinguishable in modern times and have been filled in, built over or replanted with trees and made into parks.

ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison”.

Saul was probably around 30- 40 years of age when this occurred. What other things can we learn about Saul from the following passages? From Philippians 3:4-6, what do we learn? In Acts 23:6-8? In Acts 22:24-29? In this last passage, Paul speaks of his Roman citizenship.

What about Roman citizenship? Beginning some 287 years before Christ, Italy, with Rome as the capital, had grown to an impressive strength. But strength brought challenges. Most of these were political. Once ruled by a king, Rome now turned to a Senate representation with two parties, the party of the Patricians, and the party of the Plebeians, represented by “Tribunes”. These officials represented the interests of the territory from which they came. At that time in Italy, Rome, and the outlying territories were simply an alliance of city/states.

It was not militarily strong, but like an amphictyony, a loose collection of territories aligned together with common economic and cultural interests. The need arose for greater unity and the ability to gain military strength for defense. So the Senate worked on and developed a constitution designed to unify the alliance. Following this, the city/states were banded together for reasons of defense, and those citizens who banded together were incorporated into a citizen body becoming citizens of Rome. Rome moved to becoming a Republic in that the citizenry had representation in the Senate, and this ruling body could address its interests and concerns. (See “The Romans” by Barrow, page 52-53)

The benefits then were: Citizens were defended by the Roman Army (police). Citizens had the right of protection, the right to own property, which could not be confiscated by Rome. They had the right to trade freely with the “Empire” without tariff, the privilege of free travel upon Roman roads, the right of free expression, the right to due process before legal consequence was administered, the right of free religious expression, the privilege of seeking military or political appointment of office, and limited taxation.

To become a citizen, (1) You could be born a citizen by birth to a citizen. (2) You could purchase one’s citizenship. (3) It could be conferred upon you for specific contributions you have made to the welfare of the empire (note page 91, 93 of Barrow) Saul was born a citizen due to his family already possessing citizenship. (Acts 22:28)

All these provisions were in place by the time Paul was born but the Roman Republic was being replaced by an Imperial Government and the First Emperor, Caesar Augustus, began his principate in 27 B.C. and ruled until 14 A.D. It was this dramatic

change in Roman governing power that has a dramatic effect on the spread of the Gospel. Under the first emperor's rule Christ was born. Paul writes in Galatians 4:1-5,

“1: Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, 2: but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. 3: So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. 4: But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5: so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

The timing of the events both in Rome and in Bethlehem are no coincidental accident in my mind.

EVENTS LEADING TO PAUL WRITING THE CHURCH AT ROME.

The question is, “How did the Epistle to the Church at Rome come to be written and how did the church begin there in the first place?”

On the day of Pentecost as recorded by Luke in Acts, chapter 2, we are told that people (Jews) from all over the empire were there for this great feast closing out the feast of the Days of Unleavened Bread (The Feast of Weeks) which had begun with Passover. Pentecost is also called The Feast of First Fruits (or Harvest), and it was upon this day that the first fruits of the church were born. There were some 120 followers of Jesus people in attendance at the home of John Mark's mother including the disciples, Mary, Jesus' mother, His brothers and sisters and many followers such as Mary Magdalene, and other notable women. Those witnessing this great event were, “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia (Minor), Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans, and Arabs...”⁵

The most interesting are the visitors from Rome and Pontus. Aquila was a native of Pontus and he and his wife were also citizens of Rome.⁶ The reason I mention this is that no Apostle arrived at Rome to preach the Gospel until the 60's and letters to the church there came before any apostolic visit as well. Paul had never been to Rome and did not begin the Church at Rome. There is no record or hint of a visit from Peter either. The New Testament says enough about both Paul and Peter's lives to let us know that the Petrine tradition of the founding of the church at Rome is false.

But we do have a strong connection between the church at Rome and the church in Jerusalem long before Paul wrote his epistle. Here's what we know. It was in John

⁵ Acts 2:9-10. Highlights point out the possibility that Aquila and Priscilla may have been in attendance.

⁶ Acts 18:2.

Mark's mother's home the "120" gathered on that day to await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Visitors to the feast included citizens of both Pontus and Rome. I will conjecture that Aquila and Priscilla may have been there as well. Assuming they were among the thousands converted to Christ on that day, they may have had opportunity to pursue discussion with the disciples later on and even with John Mark. Returning to Rome, they began to bring others to faith in Christ and a church began in their home. As the stories and rumors and legends about Jesus' life grew, they may well have contacted John Mark and asked him to give them the real facts. We have strong tradition the Gospel of Mark (written by John Mark) was, 1. The first Gospel written and, 2. Written to the church in Rome.

The church had been in existence for over twenty years prior to an apostolic visit. There may have been more than one congregation in Rome. Therefore, the message got there by other means, and that other means may well have been through people witnessing this event and being touched by the Truth and the Holy Spirit on the morning of Pentecost. When Peter spoke to the thousands that morning explaining why the miracle was happening (Acts 2:14-36), the response was extraordinary (Acts 2:37-47). From among the thousands saved that day, some wonderful people returned to Rome and began a work among the Jews there. I am going to take a leap of romance there and say that it could have been Aquila and Priscilla. Let's look at Paul's Chronological table for a moment (Pages 8-10; 64; and also Acts 18:1-18)

*Excursus – Early Persecution by Roman authorities

Following the rule of Gaius Caligula, Rome was in chaos. Caligula, through his self-indulgence, lust, sadism and despotism brought the center of power to a place of public disgrace. While draining the treasury to finance his whims, he demanded recognition as a god. Bordering on lunacy, the empire began to deteriorate at a rapid pace. In their disgust, the same military that had elevated him to power in the first place, finally assassinated him. In his place, the Praetorian Guard thrust Claudius, the handicapped nephew of Tiberius, upon the throne against the wishes of a reluctant senate in 41 A.D.

Claudius (41 A.D. -54 A.D.) strove to regain stability and the confidence of the people as under Augustus. One means of doing so was to require a uniform dress code to help unify all citizens of the city around common pride in their capital city. What Claudius didn't know was that The Jews would not adorn any gentile clothing for religious reasons. The Jews objected to the requirement that all citizens be "Romanized" in dress and custom as a sign of their privilege. Claudius could not rescind his decree because Rome played no favorites, so Claudius faced a dilemma. But, there were other problems in Rome's dealings with the Jews and the new sect called "Christians".

Rome's basic policy was one of religious toleration. For most citizens, all they needed to do was to honor Caesar, and, from time to time, burn incense to him as a god in the midst of their pantheon of gods. The Jews were exempted from this obligation as were the Christians as long as they were seen as a sect of the Jews. But the seeds of resentment were beginning to germinate. Three things were cited as reasons to be suspicious of the Jews and the Christians. Beginning during Claudius' reign, they intensified through the reign of his successor, Nero.

I. Separatism (aloof, distinct, different)

- A. Non-conformity to pagan dress and practices. There was a silent, unspoken condemnation of the pagan lifestyle.
- B. Rejection of pantheism
- C. Refusal to begin meals with a liquid offering and prayer to the gods as Pagan meals began.
- D. Refusal by Christians and Jews to attend temple feasts.
- E. To Christians and Jews, gladiatorial combat in the amphitheaters was inhuman and demeaning.
- F. Many Roman occupations had to do with idolatry: temple construction and maintenance, clothing manufacture, teaching - even nursing and medical practices were all wrapped up in some sort of idolatry and Christians and Jews refused to be a part of it.
- G. Slavery was objected to.
- H. Sexual and marital impurity was condemned.

There was a general withdrawal from society and Jews and Christians kept to themselves.

II. Suspicions and Rumors about Christians and Jews.

- A. Christian and Jewish worship was closed to the public. So, in suspicion and resentment, rumors began to circulate about:
 - 1. Secret sexual orgies.
 - 2. Hypocrisy.
 - 3. Cannibalism (based on the Lord's Supper).

III. Accusations of atheism fueled by:

- A. Jewish and Christian resentment of the Roman (Greek) pantheon of gods.
- B. Caesar worship, as it developed, was shunned and refused. Repeating the phrase "Caesar is Lord" became the test for political loyalty. Even in Jesus day, Pilate was moved by the claim of the Jews that Jesus was a claimant to

Caesar's throne. They said to Pilate, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar." They soon cried out as well, "Away with him, crucify him!" Pilate then asked, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he delivered Him to them to be crucified."

When objections were made by the Jews to Claudius' mandate to wear clothing according to the custom of the Romans, Claudius was caught in a dilemma. But he was relieved of the burden when great disturbances occurred in Rome as the propagation of the Gospel clashed with the Jewish community and subsequently among the constabulary called in to restore order. Claudius finally executed the order that all Jews, whether Christian or not were to be expelled from Rome.

(End of excursus)

Claudius's decree to expel the Jews (and Christians as well) from Rome occurred in 48-49 A.D. This resulted in Aquila and Priscilla moving to Corinth. There, they encountered a Jewish-Christian Rabbi named Paul. (Acts 18:1-18, - c. Spring of 50 A.D.) After more than 18 months, Paul, along with Priscilla and Aquila, set sail for Ephesus (Acts 18:19). Now we mentioned that no Apostle had direct connection with the founding of the church at Rome. This was not true at Ephesus. Paul was the first apostle to visit there and when he arrived with Priscilla and Aquila he planted some seeds. (Note: Acts 18:19-22) Leaving Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus, Paul returned to Antioch (of Syria) by way of Caesarea. (Late 51 A. D. to early 52 A.D.) Sometime later, he began his third missionary journey. (Acts 18:23-19:1-10; 54 A.D.) Paul was then in Ephesus for more than two years. During this time several things happened:

(1) Apollos had arrived at Ephesus (probably early-mid 53), is instructed by Priscilla and Aquila and heads to Corinth to try to help quell the turmoil there. (Acts 18:23-27).

(2) Paul arrives at Ephesus in late 53 or early 54 A.D. and stays until 56 A.D. He meets with Priscilla and Aquila and the church which is meeting in their house. He writes to Corinth sending the epistle by the hand of Timothy. (Acts 19:1-41, I Corinthians 16:19) Paul's preaching in Ephesus causes a division in the synagogue and the church is moved to the school of Tyrannus. It may be that those meeting in Aquila and Priscilla's home also move together there. Their home probably could not accommodate the growth.

(3) Claudius is assassinated by his 5th wife, Agrippina who poisons him because he refuses to designate her son Nero as his successor. He wanted his son Britannicus to succeed himself.

(A note about Claudius. His first consort was Messalina. She bore him a son, Britannicus. An adulteress, she then plotted Claudius' death with her lover Silius but was found out and put to death. Claudius planned to have Britannicus succeed him. But his next consort, Agrippina, was not content to simply be Empress so she murdered Claudius in 54 A.D. to secure the succession of her son Nero through whom she hoped to rule. Nero ascended to the throne at age 16. Burrus, prefect of the Praetorian Guard and Seneca, the great Roman playwright, were his tutors. All seemed well for a time but power captured Nero's fancy and he threw off all constraint including his mother's influence. He had her murdered and she died cursing the womb that had borne him. He also murdered his first wife, Octavia, for the favor of another woman. By 62 A.D., Rome was led by a madman. In eight years Nero had grown to be an emaciated, sickly madman and just two years later would ignite the city into flames to make room for theatres in which to display his artistic talent.)

(4) The ban on the Jews/Christians is lifted by Nero. (54-55 A.D.)

(5) Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquila leave Paul in Ephesus and return to Rome (55 - 56 A.D.) Perhaps they stopped by Corinth on their way to try and help settle matters down, but if so, it was brief. Paul remains at Ephesus and writes II Corinthians upon the return of Timothy who does not bring good news. Events at Ephesus are beginning to heat up. (Acts 19:11-20)

(6) Priscilla and Aquila arrive at Rome and reunite with other Jewish Christians (and gentiles as well) and begin to establish a congregation of worship and teaching in their own home. Many of those whom Paul met and worked with at Corinth and Ephesus have returned to Rome as well.

(7) Paul has a great conflict in Ephesus in trying to deal with the general unrest among the silversmiths and merchants. (Acts 19:23 ff.) He leaves for Macedonia desiring to bring some conclusion to the turmoil at Corinth (c. 57 A. D.) Apollos has already left Corinth and returned to Ephesus. From Macedonia Paul again writes to Corinth (Possibly II Corinthians 10-13) and sends it by the hand of Titus. Titus returns sometime later with good news. Paul writes another note of reconciliation (possibly the remainder of II Corinthians) and sends it on ahead of him by the hand of Titus prior to his arrival at Corinth. Titus does a good job of preparing the way for Paul. Paul remains there three months.

THE OCCASION AND THE RECIPIENTS

(8) From Corinth (or more likely from Cenchrea), Paul writes to the church at Rome, (c. 57- 58 A.D.). He has been contacted by the church which is meeting in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. In his answer to problems and questions posed to him, he writes back using Tertius as his amanuensis (note: Romans 16:22). There had been, apparently, some correspondence from time to time with the church at Rome because of the issues Paul addresses in the epistle. I can say with confidence that each book in the New Testament is written because of conflicts, questions, or disagreements in each church to whom Paul wrote. In most cases, the issues are the same, but each congregation has its own challenges Paul (and other apostles) found need to address.

As one reads chapter 1:11-15; and chapter 15:22-29 one can see the quandary Paul is in as he, on the one hand, deeply desires to come to Rome but on the other hand, having collected a considerable amount of money to take to the poor and disenfranchised Jewish believers in Jerusalem, desires to get it to them. The trip by ship to Rome from Cenchrea is relatively short. His dear friends Prisca and Aquila are there as well as many he came to know who had been expelled under Claudius. Now, having returned to Rome, Paul longs to see them now that they are all back there. But, he decides the needs of the poor in Jerusalem is greater than his own desire to see his beloved friends and decides to go there. Perhaps that is why we have such a lengthy epistle. Paul could have gone to Rome and not written so much at length.

In his epistle to the church at Rome, his strong language regarding the issues he covers reveals some knowledge of the conflicts in the church. Many of these are the conflicts between the Jewish understanding of the plan of God and the gentile respondents to the Gospel who have not submitted to the Law or traditions of the Jews. By the time we get to chapter 6:17-19 we know many of the serious and complex problems Paul is addressing to people within the congregation in Rome where Prisca and Aquila host the church in their home.

We find that he is writing to multiple audiences and keeping them straight is an important matter. This is common in the apostolic epistles as writing letters and getting them to their addressees is not an easy matter. Though Paul addresses both Jews and Gentiles, his focus is primarily on Jews. He notes this right off in 1:16. In each these two groups he addresses problems each has. Among the community in Rome the church is involved with, there are faithful followers, unbelievers, believers who are living corruptly, believers confused as to the meaning of the gospel, sceptics and so on. It appears that there are specific challenges in many areas. Among these are: 1. The need to evangelize many Jews who are intrigued about the gospel but are yet to come to faith. 2. Considerable conflict among a number of Jews about the place of the

Gentiles in the kingdom of God; 3. The place of the Law in the plan of salvation and the life of the believer; 4. The matter of Christian conduct by both Jews and Gentiles, including freely indulging in sinful activities because grace covered sin; 5. The matter of understanding the entire gospel message and its application to believers. 6. The necessity to come to an acceptance and oneness with each other despite the differences and criticisms that each group (Jews and Gentiles) have against each other.

Some of the epistle can be viewed as a defense against the distortions made by Judaizers regarding his teachings. For example, he states in 3:8, "And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), 'Let us do evil that good may come'? Their condemnation is just."

Paul is very adamant about how to treat the "weaker brother" especially when it came to dietary issues between the Jews and Gentiles. This is frequently addressed in several of his epistles. The general moral and spiritual decadence among Roman citizens is not unlike the challenge Paul faced at Corinth. As in Galatians, he is also forced to defend his apostleship to those who may be skeptical in the Roman congregation.

(Note: 1:28-2:3; 2:22-25; 15:14-16 for other examples of a personal interest or response to the problems at the church.) There are issues is the conflict between Jew and Gentile regarding the basis of salvation, custom, diet, etc.

In the 15th and 16th chapter of Romans, we discover much about what was going on. (Note also in 1:11-15 regarding his desire to get to Rome) He commends Phoebe of Cenchrea to them as she apparently was traveling to Rome (16:1-2). This indicates a close association with those in Cenchrea and suggests the epistle may have been written from there. Perhaps she carried the epistle with her. On the other hand, Tertius notes that "Gaius" is host to himself and the "whole church". That is, the church meets in the home of Gaius and it is there that Paul and others like Gaius and Tertius may be residing while in Cenchrea. In addition, Tertius sends greetings from "Erastus, the city treasurer." Corinth probably had a city treasurer, but we don't know if Cenchrea did, being a suburb of Corinth. So, this may add support for a Corinthian origin. Prisca and Aquila have already resumed residence in Rome and are hosting the church in their house (16:3-5). Information no doubt comes to Paul from them regarding matters addressed in the letter (16:17-19). It is likely that the church needs a greater authority to answer questions than Prisca herself. She humbly defers to Paul and he obliges. The letter is probably written in late 57 or early 58 A.D. Nero is emperor and has been for two to three years. He is about 19 years of age and guided by the senate. The empire is functioning well at this time. By the time Nero reaches his twenties, he begins to recognize the power he has and it corrupts him.

Brief History

“The traditional date for the founding of Rome, based on a mythological account, is April 21, 753 B.C. The city and surrounding region of Latium has continued to be inhabited with little interruption since around that time. Recent (2014) excavations have revealed a wall built long before the city's official founding year. The archaeologist uncovered a stone wall, and pieces of pottery dating to the 9th century and the beginning of the 8th century, and There is evidence of people arriving on the Palatine hill as early as the 10th century BC.

“The origin of the city's name is thought to be that of the reputed founder and first ruler, the legendary Romulus. It is said that Romulus and his twin brother Remus, apparent sons of the god Mars, who were suckled by a she-wolf after being abandoned, decided to build a city. After an argument, Romulus killed Remus and named the city Rome, after himself. After founding and naming (as the story goes) Rome, he permitted men of all classes to come to Rome as citizens, including slaves and freemen without distinction. To provide his citizens with wives, Romulus invited the neighboring tribes to a festival in Rome where he abducted the young women from amongst them (known as The Rape of the Sabine Women). After the ensuing war with the Sabines, Romulus shared the kingship with the Sabine king Titus Tatius. Romulus selected 100 of the most noble men to form the Roman senate as an advisory council to the king. These men he called *patres*, and their descendants became the patricians (wealthy ruling class). He also divided the general populace into thirty districts. The districts formed the voting units in the assembly.”⁷

Though legend, this tale takes into consideration the many peoples who began to build Rome from its pastoral beginnings. Its early government was that of a representative republic but it became an empire with an emperor just before Christ's birth, ending the republic. The first emperor was Octavian, better known to us as Caesar Augustus.

⁷ From Wikipedia online

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER ONE

I. Salutation.

Chapter 1:1-7. Verses 1-7 are a single sentence the length of which is common to Paul.

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, 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, 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.”

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

It is customary for Paul to establish his authority as an apostle in his epistles. This and his opening salutation style helped distinguish his writings from false teachers claiming apostleship. His practice, as well as that of many others, was to use a trained scribe called an amanuensis to actually write what he dictated. Even this book of Romans, though authored by Paul, was set on parchment or vellum by Tertius (16:22) who makes a note of his work. In Galatians, to assure his readers of the authenticity of his authorship, he even noted in Galatians 6:11, “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.”

He has run up against objections to himself as being an apostle, and his teachings, because he was not one of the twelve. None of the twelve, however, could ever have handled the task to which Jesus appointed Paul (Saul). His background, education, position, citizenship, and scholarship were critical to extending the Gospel to both gentiles and Jews. Paul makes no apology for his apostleship even though in the early days he had to vigorously defend it (Galatians, chapters 1 and 2).

Note: “Paul” - Παῦλος (Paulos), Saul’s Roman name (Latin), sometimes connected with the idea of “small” or “little.” Because his family were “Hellenistic” Jews - - that is born and raised outside of Israel in a predominantly Greco-Roman Gentile society – they carried both a Hebrew and a Hellenistic name. This was common and

we see it in Daniel 1:7 where the names of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (now captive in Babylon) were changed to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Even Daniel's name was changed to the Babylonian "Beltshazzar", though seldom referred to by that name.

"bond-servant" – "δοῦλος" a slave - either by purchase, subjection, indentured or voluntary. A slave could be bought and sold and was considered the property of the one who purchased him/her. Paul makes the position clear when he writes in I Corinthians 6:20, "For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." And in I Corinthians 7:21-23, "Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men." And in Acts 20:28 to the elders at Ephesus he said, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

So we are slaves through being purchased from the auction block or the "Pawn Broker" and that is the idea of redemption.

"called" – "κλητὸς" -has received a summons from Jesus Christ

"apostle" – "ἀπόστολος" from "ἀπο" and "στέλλο", preposition "from" or "off" connected to "stand" or "set", thus, "set apart" – not from "ἀγιωσ" but "ἀφωριζω", "separated from others", "appointed."

"gospel" – "εὐαγγέλιον" "good message" (from ἄγγελος -angel) Luke 2:10

Comment: Paul was born a citizen of the Roman Empire. But the shocking realization occurred that, though he was born to a strict Jewish family with an impressive lineage, he was not actually a citizen of God's kingdom. Thus he sees himself as little more than a purchased slave in God's household by the grace and love of God, and is grateful for the privilege.⁸ This is why he sees his role to speak of the "gospel of God."

The word apostle in the New Testament does not only apply to the twelve. In fact, Jesus is called an "apostle" in Hebrews 3:1; Barnabas in Acts 14:14; Matthias in Acts 1:26; and Andronicus and Junias, in Romans 16:7. The original twelve are commonly designated as *the apostles*, while Paul is seen as an apostle along with the others so designated.

⁸ Exodus 21:2-6 speaks of the voluntary slavery of one who loves his master and does not wish to be released.

He sets forth his calling and purpose as a called apostle set apart for the gospel of God defined in verses 2-4.

1:2-3:

2: "...which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3: concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,..."

Comment: He frequently refers to the "Scriptures" as having foretold and promised the coming of the Messiah in the manner Jesus appeared. [See Acts 18:19 (Apollos), Titus 1:1-3, Gal 3:8,] This was contrary to popular Jewish thought. But Paul makes it clear to objectors that the scriptures are clear about the matter and that Jesus is the true and only fulfillment of the promises. Though he doesn't mention which scriptures to which he is referring, the Davidic lineage was well known to the Jews and could be traced to both Joseph and Mary as we have in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. We can be assured that the scriptures of the prophets are the ones he, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila as well as the other apostles and teachers were using in their public ministry in the synagogues and churches. These would include passages in Micah, Isaiah, the Psalms, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Amos, The Torah, and many others.

1:4:

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,..."

Comment: Jesus' authenticity, identity and authority is grounded solely in the fact of His resurrection from the dead. This is the foundation of why we believe what we believe. Paul's strongest argument about the importance of Christ's resurrection is found in I Corinthians 15.⁹ Only the greatest power, beyond any man's ability could raise the dead to life.

"According to the Spirit of holiness" – Noting that only the most divine act has set Jesus apart and above all others. This is of God. This is denoted by His resurrection. He is the "Holy One". This act is evidence of the true God at work, in Christ, on our behalf.

1:5-6,

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

⁹ See this author's work on the validity of the resurrection on line at www.bibleclassroom.org under "Bible Studies" "topical," "the Resurrection."

you also are the called of Jesus Christ;”

5: Note: The “we” probably includes himself and the twelve and perhaps those traveling with him.

“grace” – “χάρις” A gift of favor. On what basis do we receive favor from God? (see comment below)

“unto (kata) obedience of faith” – the purpose of the apostles call is to bring about the obedience of faith among the gentiles. This means to bring them to faith and to a life that is lived accordingly to the faith that is preached. In other words, one’s obedience is to the beliefs which are contained in the gospel (truth) of Jesus Christ and a corresponding walk thereafter.

“faith” – “πίστις” entrust oneself to, confidence, belief, the basis upon which one decides his course of action.

“among all the Gentiles” – as we see in 1:6 that “all of you gentiles” are also among the “called” and not excluded.... "called" is invited or summoned ("kletohs" not "eklektohs")

“for His name’s sake” - “on behalf of His name” or “regarding His name” - more on this in a moment.

Comment: Coming to them first was the grace of God that, by the gospel, transformed called men including Paul to be apostles. Then, the purpose of this apostleship is to bring “forth the obedience of faith.” True obedience to God is to have complete faith and trust in Him and rest in and on His promises spoken through the prophets. Jesus made it clear that it was not works of the flesh that pleased God, but faith. In John 6:27-29 Jesus said,

27: "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28: Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29: Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

“Gentiles” are those not of the Jewish faith or tradition. Paul is quite clear that the Gentiles are to be included in the outreach of grace. This is clear in the prophets as well. He begins to correct the misunderstanding that, in some way, the Gentiles are unclean and thus to be avoided. However this idea is not found in the Scriptures. Quite the opposite. The descendants of Abraham were to be a light to the Gentiles and bring blessing to the world. The Jews soon abdicated this role and made Judaism an exclusive religion.

“His name’s sake.” All the attributes of the name of God - His power, glory, majesty,

love, justice, righteousness, holiness, promise and so much more is vindicated and made real and true when His salvation completed in Christ is received and believed by both the Jew and the Gentile.

1:7:

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."

Comment: That is those believing Gentiles in Rome are called out from among the larger Gentile population and now a part of the "called of Jesus Christ" and called as "saints" along with those Jews who are called as well.

"Called" is from "klatos" meaning to summon or invite. The use of this word here and in other places describing "saints" (believers) is more than an invitation that was heard. It also includes a positive response to that invitation and indicates a deeper "call" than simply an external voice to be heard. This is a spiritual call, reaching to the depths of a person's soul and prompting him to make a serious, life changing decision. Once the decision is made to place one's life into the hands of God through faith in Christ, that person now becomes one of the chosen or "elect."

Thus, "to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints..." Beloved of God is more than "God so loved the world." It shows special favor for those who have acknowledged Jesus as Lord and believed in all God has done for us through Him. Because we have shown Jesus to have great value in our hearts, we now are the beloved. "Saints" is "ἁγιο(υ)ις", those set apart to God, no longer as lost in the darkness and sin of the world.

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and The Lord Jesus Christ" – Because they are "ἁγιο(υ)ις", "saints", The grace and peace they (we) receive from God and Jesus is unlike the world's "grace and peace". This is divine gifts and favors. There is a divine, eternal security in this that cannot be damaged or negated by anything or anyone. (Note Romans 8:31-39) We are at peace in our relationship with our Heavenly Father, our "Abba" Father.

We will see as this epistle develops that the grace of God is not a license to sin and live in debauchery as some are claiming. Some also have been claiming that Paul teaches this and he will vehemently deny this and condemn those who propose such things (3:8).

II. Thanksgiving - 1:8-12

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.”

1:8-12, Note: Paul thanks “*his* God through Jesus Christ” for them all. He makes it clear from the start that among the pantheon of gods represented in Rome, that Paul comes to them specifically in the name of the God of Jesus Christ alone, and Paul, as well as others, have heard of the vibrancy and power of the congregation at Rome as they proclaim the same God in Jesus.

The phrase, "...because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world" could mean that either the faith they exhibit is being proclaimed or, more likely, that the faith they believe in (the gospel) is being proclaimed throughout the "world" (by the apostles - particularly Paul who may be saying so to encourage them). It does not mean that they, themselves, are proclaiming the faith everywhere as we have no information that anyone from the Roman congregation was doing so.

The term “world” “kosmos” focuses not on the planet as we understand the term, but on the various people and cultures found in the empire.

Paul prays for them (God is his witness) and he requests of God that he might come to them to impart a spiritual grace or gift to them so they might be “established – “στηριχθῆναι”, from: (“στηριζω” and “ιστημι”) that is, “established”, “made to stand”, “strengthened”, “made firm”, (not to say that in under the teaching you are now receiving that you are not standing strong), but with the understanding that we can share mutual gifts that will “encourage” both of us “para-ka-leh-oh” – from preposition “para” – “near”, “beside”, and “ka-leh-oh” “to bid or call”. One who is called to one’s side with the purpose of comfort, help, encouragement, lifting up, exhortation, strengthening, etc.

This term is used of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16-17, 26-27; 15:26-27; 16:7-15. This same term describes an important purpose for which the church is to assemble: Acts 11:20-24; 14:21-22; 15:30-33; 16:9, 40; 18:27; 20:1-2; Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 14:26-33; II Corinthians 1:3-7; Colossians 2:1-5, 4:7-9; I Thessalonians 2:9-12, 3:2, 6-

8; 5:9-14; II Thessalonians 2:16-17; II Timothy 4:1-2; Titus 1:7-9; 2:15; Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:23-25.

The reason for mutual encouragement as an integral part of the assembly is simply because the possibility of severe persecution was always on the horizon. When it occurs, the principle demonstration of faith is courage, steadfastness and perseverance in trust and confidence in the Lord. Jesus Himself said to His disciples,

"Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and *yet* I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."
John 16:32-33

Paul found himself needing the encouragement of the brethren many times as he was often alone in a strange place. For example, Acts 28:14-15 notes,

“There we found *some* brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome. And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.”

The fellowship of believers is vital to sustaining strength and courage in difficult times.

1:13-15,

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”.

Comment: Answers the inquiry as to why he has not come to Rome. Verse 14 continues the thought from 13. He had earlier expressed the goal to go to Rome while still in Ephesus on his third missionary journey Acts 19:21 notes this:

“Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

Paul explains why he has been “prevented” from coming to them sooner in 15:15-22

and concludes specifically in 19-22,

19: "...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.'

Then he notes, 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..."

"Obtain some fruit"... bring people to Christ. "...among you..." - first, Jews who are yet to believe. The epistle will show Paul's great concern for this.

"Greeks" are those who live within the empire and write in the common Greek, but live under the Roman/Latin environment.

"Barbarians" ... "βάρβαρος"... (bar-ba-rohs) - foreigners in the city. People who do not speak either Greek or Latin but come from afar. Not a derogatory terms as we would use it today. I Corinthians 14:9-11 where Paul is addressing the "tongues" matter¹⁰ describes these folks,

9: "So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. 10: There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. 11: If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me."

These are likely Gentiles and in this context, perhaps tradesmen, sailors, merchants, etc. from a foreign land. Paul's desire is to reach all peoples and perhaps have them take the gospel home to their place of origin.

Verse 14 presents a probably parallelism with "Greeks and barbarians" corresponding to "the wise and the foolish." The Greeks were the source of philosophers and Paul may be exercising a bit of sarcasm here. However, "wise" might be a reference to Jews who though themselves superior in knowledge and works.

¹⁰ For a discussion on this issue, please see my work entitled, "A Brief Word Study Regarding Gifts of The Holy Spirit," found online at: www.bibleclassroom.org under "studies" - "topical studies."

15: His desire is to, “preach the gospel to you “also” who are in Rome.” It appears that within the community where the church meets there are those yet to be converted. We know he is particularly concerned about the unconverted Jews. Perhaps there are some unconverted within the congregation itself. Gentile visitors may be attending attracted by the faith of those assembling in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. And, as in many churches in the empire, perhaps Jews are among those who are in attendance but causing some disturbance and confusion among the people there. This seems to be the case as we read on in the epistle where Paul attacks Jewish hypocrites in his text.

It is at this point that Paul moves toward thinking and writing about the condition of man, and man’s self- righteousness and self-exaltation. He includes mankind accepting a lie (what he calls “the lie”) rather than the truth and God’s response that demonstrates His righteousness and justice. Then he focuses on the Jew who, though having the Law, still has inward unrighteousness. Then the magnificent solution to man’s dilemma is introduced first in 1:16-17 followed by a lengthy dissertation explaining why this is so critical.

THE INTRODUCTION OF A MAJOR THEME:
"JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH"

1:16-3:20 – Justification by faith. This section underlines the total depravity and condemnation of all mankind. Verses 16-17 are the introduction to Paul’s major theme and these two verses were the first two to catch Martin Luther’s attention and focus. In meditating upon these verses and those to follow, he was completely transformed.

1:16-17,

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.’”

16: Comment: There are several possible answers to why he felt it necessary to say that he was not ashamed of the gospel. The most obvious is the stigma of the crucifixion. Hebrews 6:6 notes this as does 12:2.

6:6: “...since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.”

12:2: "...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The word "ashamed" is "ἐπαισχύνομαι" (ep-ai-skun-oh-my) and means "embarrassed", "disgraced", "mortified", "humiliated." There was nothing more shameful than being crucified. To proclaim that a crucified man was indeed the Son of God and brought salvation to the earth was often scoffed at (Acts 17:30-32). But it was the resurrection that changed shame to victory.

Another possibility is that he is referring to the self-righteousness of many Jews who believed their salvation was based on their works. In denying the tenants of Judaism in this regard, Paul may have suffered ridicule much as he did in Jerusalem. (See Acts 21 and 22) Times were becoming more difficult as Nero's rule began to sour. It was to be at least two years from the writing of this letter before Paul finally gets to Rome. ["power" – δύναμις, (doon- ah-mis), "power", "supernatural power or strength"]

We get our word "dynamite" from this root. This "power" that promises salvation for the believer is grounded in the demonstration of ultimate power in Christ's resurrection.

"salvation" – A jargon term in the church along with "saved". From σωτηρία, (so-tay-ria), "to rescue", "defend from attack", "bring to safety".

"It (the gospel) is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...." This is the most important point Paul makes.¹¹ The very thing that appears as shameful is actually phenomenally powerful. For on the cross, Christ took the sins of the world upon Himself and in His death God counted it as payment for them all - for all mankind – past, present and future. In this one act, all men are forgiven and granted the opportunity, by faith, to share in life eternal based in Christ's resurrection from the dead. This is the "good news." And only faith in it has the power to save men.

Paul makes it clear from the first that faith (belief) in the gospel is the key to salvation, not anything else, including works, lineage, religion, or any other claim anyone might make based on some characteristic in himself. This was what struck Luther. It was not the pious works of man that made a man righteous before God (as the Jews believe even today - as do many "Christian" denominations) but Christ and faith in Him alone.

A KEY POINT! As Paul begins this section, he will also begin to "level the playing field" as it were. Paul will place all mankind in the "boat" of unrighteousness, whether

¹¹ Paul makes this exact same point in I Corinthians 1:17-31ff.

Jew or Gentile and point out why this is so whether one is compliant with the law, has been circumcised and kept the Jewish traditions....or not. This will be very hard for the Jews to accept, so he hammers it home again and again as we will point out. But that boatload of mankind is doomed to sink. However, the life raft provided by god's grace and love is available for all whop would like to board. But top do so, they must leave the comfortable confines of the sinking ship.

Paul begins his argument underlining that no one is exempt from the necessity of being saved through faith, and in particular, faith in the gospel which is the power of God “unto salvation.” This includes Jews and non-Jews.

“...to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Paul’s first goal is to reach Jews who are being impacted by the church in Rome. And so his epistle takes them into consideration as a priority because the Lord commanded that the gospel be preached to the whole world beginning with Jerusalem. The apostles took this to mean that it ought to go to the Jews first before the Gentiles. Paul believed this and says so several times in this epistle (1:16; 2:9, and 2:10). It was his habit in a city he first visited to first go to the local synagogue and preach the gospel before he went to the Gentiles.

Then “Salvation is from the Jews” Jesus proclaims in John’s gospel (4:22). They were, from the beginning to be the conduit through which the righteousness and justice of God and offer salvation by faith in the true God is proclaimed. But they failed. Then God sent Jesus, the Messiah who was a Jew (meaning of the tribe of Judah) to bring the light to the Jews. It was Jesus’ mandate to His disciples that they, “...Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'” (Matthew 10:5-7)

Though many believed in Him, the majority of the religious leadership again rejected the Lord and brought Jesus to be crucified. After His resurrection Jesus commissioned His disciples, “... and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:45-47) And in Acts 1:7-8, “He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

From what is to follow, it appears that 1: Certain Jews are denying that salvation comes through faith in the gospel of Jesus’ alone. Though possibly in the assembly in the congregation in Rome, they are insisting that their “works” are sufficient for them. These would be the works of the Law as Paul notes later in the chapter. 2: Certain

Jews are denying the gentile believers their place in the inheritance of Abraham. Further, they are judging the new gentile believers concerning their heathen background supposing that they, being raised in “the faith”, are more righteous than the gentiles and thus have freedom to look down upon them. Paul proceeds to destroy any hint of the legitimacy of this attitude.

17: Only those of faith are declared righteous, and that faith has to be in the gospel, which is the only power God has ever offered as the sole means of salvation. The bottom line is, “THE JUST(IFIED) SHALL LIVE (BE SAVED)BY FAITH!”¹² The cross, a symbol of shame, now becomes the demonstration of both the righteousness of God and His great love for the world. God, through His Son, paid the price that no man could pay for his sin and be granted entrance into God’s kingdom and in so doing also brought about righteousness for those who believed in what He had said and what He had done. Then the very act itself shows the righteousness of God in that He knew that without this sacrifice His law could never be fulfilled nor could man ever have a hope of life in God’s eternity. So both the Law and the desperate need of mankind were fulfilled in one act and thus God’s righteousness and justice is demonstrated.

God's righteousness is contrasted with man's unrighteousness in the following passages.

**MANKIND IS WITHOUT EXCUSE IN DISREGARDING GOD, BUT UNABLE
BY HIS OWN POWER TO BRING ABOUT HIS OWN
SALVATION.**

1:18-19

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 begins a polemic reflecting on the state of all mankind from the beginning. Sending this epistle to Rome, the center of degradation, corruption, murder and idolatry, he lays out a general truth that fits the culture using the impersonal general indirect object - "them" and "they." He continues leveling the playing field and as Paul speaks about "them" in this passage, he is setting the Jews up so he can pull the rug out from under them as we shall see.

¹² Habakkuk 2:4. It can be argued effectively that the cross of Christ not only offered salvation by grace through faith, but also forgave, justified and redeemed all mankind for all time. Here, though justified, life only comes by faith. The issues is now not sin and its consequences, but live and death – life coming by faith only. All this is from the kindness, patience and mercy of God. (See 2:4)

So, God's wrath is against those who "suppress the truth in unrighteousness." This passage is a direct comparison and contrast to the "righteousness of God" Paul speaks of in verse 17. Let's take special note that Paul is describing "men" (mankind) who have suppressed the truth...

18: "suppress" – κατέχω, (kaht-echo), "hold against" "keep", "restrain" "hold back."

19: Φανερόω (fahn-eh-rah—oh) "made evident, apparent, visible, known" - also "manifested", "revealed" or "disclosed" in them.

In other words, they know down deep that God exists, but refuse to acknowledge it or bring it to the surface because they love unrighteousness, plus, refusing to acknowledge the truth about God is unrighteous as well. This refusal proves they are lost in darkness. Jesus noted in John 3:19, "...and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."¹³ Further, God has revealed the truth of his existence to all.

Paul continues,

1:20, "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..."

A straight forward declaration. Though God is invisible, He has clearly revealed his nature in His creation.¹⁴ Paul has placed the beginnings of this "ungodliness" and "darkness" from the time of the beginning of creation. His focus on "mankind" ("anthropos" in the Greek but "Adam" [plural] in Hebrew) stems from the Garden.

We will see that it matters not whether one has heard the truth first hand because all have no "excuse" for not acknowledging a creator. The word excuse" is "ἀναπολόγητος" (ahn-ap-oh-loh-gee-tohs). We get our word "apologetics" from this word, and it does not refer to being sorry for an action, but to having no argument or defense for their (men's) stand – especially before God Himself.

Perhaps this is why there has been such a concerted effort to try and dismiss the idea of a creator in the past century or more. Even such noted cosmologists as the late Stephen Hawking and Carl Sagan argue evolution to the point where their own logic,

¹³ A study of verses referring to this is enlightening. See: Matthew 4:16; 6:23; 8:12; 22:13; Luke 1:79; 11:34-35; 22:53; John 8:12; 12:35; 12:46; Acts 26:18.

¹⁴ Psalm 19:1 declares, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."

taken one step further, would set a premise for a creator. But they stop short of that admission preferring a lie to the truth. (See study - "Something Must Be Eternal")¹⁵

1:21, "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."

They knew (and know) the truth about God's existence and rather than acknowledge it, they turned to darkness. Sounds like the men I just mentioned above.

If we can deny the existence of God, especially a righteous God, or exchange the truth of His existence into some innocuous form, then we can behave in any manner we so choose without consequence. (See: John 3:17-21 and Jeremiah 5:20-25 reproduced in the footnote below)¹⁶

1:22-23,

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."

22-23: Idolatry and paganism, reflecting the contemporary religious worship of The Romans which is based on The Greek mythology. They exchanged the truth about God into gods and goddesses in the form of man. Now we can worship glorified images ourselves. It's amazing today how most people who believe in "God" see Him as a reflection of themselves. They have created God in their own image rather than see themselves as created and subject to Him. This is easily seen as those who speak about a god they do not know describe him (or her or it) as having the same principles as the person doing the describing.

¹⁵ Online at: www.bibleclassroom.org - topical studies.

¹⁶ John 3:17-21: 17: "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18: "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19: "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20: "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21: "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Jeremiah 5:20-25, 20: "Declare this in the house of Jacob And proclaim it in Judah, saying, 21: 'Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, Who have eyes but do not see; Who have ears but do not hear. 22: 'Do you not fear Me?' declares the LORD. 'Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it. 23: 'But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; They have turned aside and departed. 24: 'They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season, Both the autumn rain and the spring rain, Who keeps for us The appointed weeks of the harvest." 25: "Your iniquities have turned these away, And your sins have withheld good from you."

The creature worship of the Egyptians, Babylonians and other cultures may be reflected here as well. Much of this religious diversity was practiced empire wide.

Even today, many religions hold animals sacred and equal in value to people. Buddhists, Hindus and other lesser known religions are among some who include all life forms as sacred including insects, fish, birds and such. Most of these religions practice vegetarianism as well. Rome tolerated all forms of religious expression as long as they did not counter Roman laws or objectives.

1:24-32,

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 ¹⁷they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 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. 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;...”

24: “gave them over” – παραδίδωμι, “par-ah-did-oh-me,” from δίδωμι, “did-oh-me”, “to give, grant, allow, permit, place, put, and παρα, “para” – a preposition meaning (with the dative) “with”, “near”, “to”, “in the presence of” etc. God did not interfere with or restrict the exercise of their free will. This is in accordance with the dominion God gave men at the creation. Mankind then gave this over to Satan who is now the ruler of this world. God has never rescinded that gift, but watched as men experience the consequence of their rejection of their own creator. This the gospel gives mankind a way to return to God should they choose to do so.

“In the lusts of their hearts” – Note the determination here. “Lusts” is “ἐπιθυμία,” “epi-thu-mia” – “desire”, “longing”, “lust”, “passion” - what drives you.

¹⁷ “because.”

“Impurity” – “ἀκαθαρσία”, “ah-kah-thar-sia” uncleanness, filth, either morally or physically depending on the context. We get our word “catharsis” (to be cleansed) from the root word in the Greek. The “a” before the word, reverses or negates the root.

25: And here is how that transpired. Verse 23 and 25 are parallel. Verse 24 is in parallel with 26-27, and 23 with 28. “The” lie, not, “a” lie.¹⁸ Man exchanged the truth for the lie and chose to believe the lie. What lie? The worship of the creatures rather than their creator as defined in verse 23. Basically, idolatry.

26-27: Because of man’s rejection of the truth of God’s existence and His power as their creator as well as being the creator of the universe, “God gave them over...” This again substantiates the view that God, in giving man free will and dominion over the creation did not rescind His gift, but allowed mankind to not only freely exercise his desires, intent and self-willfulness but experience the consequences of disregarding the creator. Hopefully the kindness, patience and righteousness of God will then lead some to repentance (2:4).

A great denial and rejection of God existence and Gods plan for mankind is homosexuality. It denies the very nature and character of God who, in His loving nature, created mankind in His own image, male and female. Then He set them above all the rest of His creation and gave them to each other to create children of both flesh and, through faith, spirit. But man took the good gift of God and made it filthy and corrupt. The lie here would be that the physiological and biological purpose of male and female to join in marriage and procreate as God designed is not valid. But homosexuality is just one of numerous displays of ungodliness presented in the Scriptures. (See verses 29-31)¹⁹

"... receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." Under the Law, any deviant sexual activity was punishable by death.

28: In addition, because they do not see fit to acknowledge God, they were also given over to a “depraved mind.” This term describes a mind or intellect that is totally worthless, useless, rejected as having value, and one that fails the test for righteousness and cares not about it at all. It is surprising that the result of the rejection of God is first sexual deviancy. One might think of other things first, such as the list Paul makes in verses 29-31. These seem obvious. But the first thing Paul lists is sexual depravity and immorality.

¹⁸ See: Isaiah 44:20; Jeremiah 10:14-15, 13:25, 16:19; Amos 2:4; Habakkuk 2:18

¹⁹ For a full discussion on this topic, see my website at: www.bibleclassroom.org under "Studies," "Controversial Topics," Topic XXV.

Thus, people of this mind set are driven to fulfill all things for themselves since God has been willingly excluded from their lives by their own choice. So, “God gave them over to a depraved mind – to do...” Man’s actions ultimately reflect his motives, heart and intentions. As Jesus said, "For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to..." Mark 4:22-24a

“And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.’” Mark 7:20-23

29-31: Without God in the life of the people, the results are described as people “being **filled** with”: “all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful...” and this is still a reality today.

At this point, the Jews in Rome hearing this are nodding in agreement. Paul has them in his grasp. And then he lowers the boom!

1:32-2:1: “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. Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”

First, how do the heathen “know the ordinance of God?” And that, “those who practice such things are worthy of death...?” Paul seems to answer the question in 2:14-15,

“For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,”

C. S. Lewis in "Mere Christianity," Book 1, speaks at length of the "Moral Law" the sense of right and wrong all people innately have though some would try and deny it. But abuse, steal from, or commit some hateful act against these "deniers" or any people and they will instinctively respond with a statement indicating that this act was "wrong," "unfair," or something of the sort. Lewis asks, "Where does this innate idea

of 'right and wrong' or 'fair and unfair' come from?" He answers it by effectively arguing for it's being placed in people by God. Lewis and Paul seem to be on the same page here.

And though there are those who would argue and philosophize about such things, the fact is that if someone came alongside of them, stole their wallet or did something harmful to them like slapping them in the face for no apparent reason, they would feel a sense of outrage and violation. Thus the idea that the "law" is written on all men's hearts to a lesser or greater degree depending on the environment wherein they were raised.

Thus, these people become judges of themselves in that what they know to be wrong they still do so, and incur God's wrath as well.

Now, as we move to 2:1, Paul just slams the Jews because it these "heathen," - denying the existence of God and not having the Law as a guide are without excuse and subject to God's judgment, how much more will the Jew be held accountable for his unrighteousness having a belief in God as well as the Law. So for the Jew who has the Law, ordinances and traditions taught him from his or her youth and still indulges in ungodly and unrighteousness conduct of all sorts, judgment is sure whether the Jew is circumcised, religious or even keeps the Law.

So, I placed 2:1 in this context because it speaks to 1:32 and Paul takes this argument and soon makes the accusation to the self-righteous Jewish contingency who look down on others, especially Jewish converts to faith in Christ and Gentiles who do not necessarily know the Law. This was also a part of Jesus' condemnation of the religious leaders He confronted. For example, He said to them, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matthew 23:25-28)

This did not endear Him to these folks. But Paul reflects this sentiment as well in 1:32-2:1. Apparently, the list of sins in 1:28-31 was being committed by some in the church to one degree or another. Paul would argue later that the purpose of grace is not to license a continued sinful life. Paul moves from using "they" and "them" to the pronoun "you" in 2:1.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER TWO

Note: As Paul writes, one senses his increasing anger toward those whom he is describing and addressing. Verses three through nine are almost a personal address as he begins to use the second personal pronoun (“you”) in his polemic rather than the general third person (“they”) as he does in verse two. His antagonism becomes pronounced more against hypocritical Jews as the chapter goes on. Gentiles are not excluded, but the Jews are held to a higher responsibility due to their familiarity with the Scriptures and God’s standard for righteousness expressed therein especially in the Law. He is moving from the general to the specific as he describes the general condition of mankind to becoming more specific in terms of the Jewish hypocrisy and the desperate need of repentance and faith in the truth for everyone who has yet to do so. The righteousness, glory and truth of God are contrasted throughout the first three chapters with the unrighteousness, corruption and deceit of man, whether Jew or Gentile. (1:16-17, 23, 25, 2:4) So, he continues to "level the playing field" and a moment ago the Jews were nodding in agreement but now they have had the rug pulled out from under them and are not happy...at all.

2:1-4,

1: “Therefore you have no excuse, every one 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? 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?”

Note: We must be careful not to slice up the dissertation into sections, but rather keep in mind the entire context and historical setting to properly interpret the teachings of the apostle. As one said, “Interpreting the text without the context may be nothing more than a pretext.”

1: See 1:32 above. (“They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die--yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.”) 2:1 is parallel to or corresponds with this verse as Paul uses his previous argument to turn the tables on the self-righteous prejudiced Jews in Rome. That is, if the heathen are without excuse, then the Jews who have the law and believe in God but still engage in the same unrighteous conduct are in even worse shape.

So this verse is revealing, in that Paul accuses any who judge²⁰ others to be guilty of committing the same offenses. In some cases, as we shall see, this points to believers who use being under grace as a license to sin overtly.²¹

2: Continuing, Paul points out that the judgment of God falls upon all the corruptness described in 1:18 and following. In fact, he reiterates 1:18. Here, verse 2 reads, “And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.” 1:18 reads, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...”. The phrase “rightly falls” is actually the Greek words “κατα αληθειαν” translated literally are “according to truth.” The actual verse ought to read, “And we know that the judgment of God, according to truth, is against them that practice these things.” Many versions do translate it like this. This follows the thrust of 1:18; 1:25; and 2:8 (to follow). This also underscores the justice of God based in God’s definition of “righteousness.” “Righteous” is actually close to “innocent,” or “without guilt” and is normally measured against obedience to God’s Law. But Paul extends it further than that and includes the internal corruption of the heart, mind and motive to which we all have all succumbed.

The “same things” or “such things” are those as described in 1:26-32. This theme and proclamation is directed at people who make assumptions about their relationship with God but who are not true believers at all or perhaps false believers acting in corruption because they are “under grace.” (note footnote 21) They may be part of the congregation in Rome. But as in the churches of Galatia, there may be false believers who enter the assembly to persuade true believers to move in a different direction than what the apostles teach.

As Paul continues, it becomes more evident he is addressing both non believing and perhaps corrupt members in the assembly or community who feel that being under grace allows them the freedom to sin without consequence. Regardless, we know he passionately wishes to reach the non-believing Jew with the truth.²²

3: Verse 3 repeats verse one but adds that the judgment of God comes on those who judge others when those who judge do the same things but still deem themselves justified. This reflects the attitude of the Jews, circumcision being their foundation for

²⁰ Many versions correctly translate verse 1 as, “Therefore you have no excuse, O man, whoever you are...” This is a backdoor insult to the Jews in my mind without saying it directly. Other non-Jews may be included but I believe the point is to be made to Jews based on the larger context. Jesus stated the same thing in Matthew 7:1-2.

²¹ See chapter 6, verse 1 for example.

²² See: 9:1-5

their standing with God. Paul will dismiss this altogether to the displeasure of those \ Jews.

In general, most of us have expressed opinions about the conduct of others while at the same time harboring within ourselves those things displeasing to God. This is pure self-righteousness. All have sinned, all are guilty and all stand in a position to be judged were it not for Christ. He makes all the difference and our faith in Him alone is cause for our justification and right standing before God. As the adage goes, "Nothing of myself I bring, only to His cross I cling."

If we are not sure about our hearts and practices, simply envision that your eyes are projectors rather than receptors and your ears speakers rather than receivers and then let's all sit back, dim the lights and display and hear all the hidden thoughts and words you have had over the last few years that violate righteousness. Any takers? I have yet to find one over years of presenting this vision and I would decline the invitation myself. The point is that when we judge others as worthy of condemnation and eternal damnation due to their conduct, we open the door for our own judgment by God who finds all guilty.

4: Considering all this, and the condition man is in before God - worthy of His judgment - the height of arrogance and stupidity would be to disregard and think little of God's kindness, tolerance and patience. To think that an intrinsically unrighteous person could somehow, by his or her own efforts, achieve righteousness would be tantamount to washing one's filthy hands off in a sink of one's own filth and then proclaiming oneself to be clean. The forbearance and kindness of God seen in Christ, patiently allows the opportunity to come to repentance. It is often taken it lightly while indulgence in unrighteousness continues.

2:5-11,

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: 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."

5-6: The description of these individuals tell us that Paul is probably addressing both non believing Jews and non-believers regardless of their religious perspective and

high opinion of themselves – while casting a judgmental eye toward others. The word “stubbornness” is “sklee-roh-tees” and means “hardness.” “Unrepentant” is not a descriptive term for believers in this context. Because of this heart condition, it is the cause of wrath being “stored up” against themselves.

That Paul is likely not speaking to true believers here is also demonstrated by the terms, “The Day of (God’s) Wrath” and “revelation.” Those terms describe a day believers will not experience. Believers have already displayed repentance and humility in coming to faith in Christ. They have already recognized their unrighteousness before God and their need of a savior. “The day of wrath and revelation” points to the return of Christ when He, “. . .shall be revealed from heaven in flames of fire, the sins of men shall be revealed, and the wrath of God against them.”²³

In verse 6, there has been some concern about whether Paul is granting salvation to those who, though never hearing the word, nevertheless by the content of their hearts, seeking for God and acting accordingly with good deeds, can be saved. This question is based on Paul's quotation from Proverbs 24:14, "If you say, 'See, we did not know this,' Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?" Add to that 2:14-16, “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

There are several thoughts about this:

- A. Since God knows the hearts of all men, He can determine whether an individual is deemed worthy of salvation due to a faith that is according to the light that a person has. His ways and thoughts are higher than ours. This is strictly His prerogative and a place we cannot attempt to go or explore. However, recognizing the condition of man, this would seem an unlikely possibility for any save but a few if even that. Nevertheless, it can't be ruled out totally.
- B. The context of these statements is God's lack of favoritism whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile. To move the Jews Paul argues that if Gentiles do good deeds because they instinctively know the rights and wrongs of the Law, then that makes the Jews no better than them just because they have the Law yet violate it. They have no place to judge and fall equally under the judgment of God. This may lead to eternal life or to God's wrath. As John Knox says, “”On the

²³ Quoted from John Gill's Exposition on the Entire Bible, Commentary on Romans, from e-Sword online. See also: I Peter 1:7; II Thessalonians 1:6-9; James 5:3; Hebrews 6:26-31; etc.

one hand, the Jew will not be excused because he has the law; but on the other, the Gentile will not be excused because he lacks it.”²⁴

C. Perseverance in good deeds can be the demonstration of faith and compliance with the truth whether a Jew or a Gentile. The issue is of course the source from which the good deeds occur. That would be the heart. God knows the heart and it is there that His judgment will be determined. Verse 6 is a quote from Jeremiah 17:10 which says, "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.”²⁵

D. We must keep in mind that Paul is using this one epistle to address multiple audiences of both believers and non-believers (Christians), Jews and Gentiles, and various conditions of spiritual life (or lack thereof) in both groups. He often moves from one to the other without letting us know specifically which one he is addressing. We must do our best to figure it out.

Generally we can conclude that those who recognize the truth and act accordingly in faith, emulating the kindness, righteousness, patience and goodness of God shown by their deeds, will receive glory and eternal life. Those who continue to suppress the truth and do evil will also receive their just rewards.²⁶ This does not promote the view that one can be saved apart from faith. We already know that Paul rejects that view from 1:16 and from many more passages in his epistles.²⁷

This is all clarified in the discussion following as he defines who he is talking about. Verses 6-8 are definitely defined by 9-10, as 9-10 repeats and specifies 6-8 (although in reverse order) as we see below:

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: "... 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 is the point. It matters not whether one is a Jew or a Gentile. God will render to each person as He sees fit without prejudice.

²⁴ John Knox, the Interpreters Bible, Abingdon Press, 1954, Volume 9, page 411.

²⁵ Many other passages repeat this theme. For example, I Samuel 16:7; Psalm 62:12; Isaiah 3:10-11; Jeremiah 32:19; Ezekiel 18:30; Matthew 16:27; I Corinthians 4:5; etc.

²⁶ Paul and most Jews would see this is the same light of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 25:31-46.

²⁷ Galatians 2:21; 3:11 (repeats Romans 1:16); 5:4; Romans 3:20, 28.

Paul spends an inordinate amount of time on this point demonstrating that there is a real problem among the people who are meeting or at least arguing over the place of the Gentiles in God's redemptive plan. Without question, both Jews and Gentiles are involved in some way with the fellowship in the church in Rome. Some of these Jews are not true believers it is obvious, but are attempting to persuade the church that, 1. They have superior knowledge or insight because they have been involved in the traditions and laws of God and have over a thousand years of teaching on their side; 2. They are morally and spiritually superior than the uneducated pagan Gentiles, 3. Based in these assumptions, they are in a place where they think they can judge others.

However, Paul is determined to demonstrate that the Jews and Gentiles alike are equally guilty under God's righteous perspective regardless of when they have the Law or not or conduct themselves accordingly or not. He continues to "level the playing field" by using illustration, logic, and scripture.

2:12-16,

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."

12-13: Sin results in perishing whether one has (the) law or not. Already 1:16-17 notes that faith is required for salvation. Hence, Paul is not speaking about or to believers who by faith are justified and saved, but instead condemning the hypocrisy of self-righteousness on the part of the Jews who are depending on their religiosity for salvation. We know from Paul's writing in this epistle (and in other letters²⁸) that he is not saying that people can be saved by keeping the Law. He is "leveling the playing field" once again placing the situation of the Jews in the same place as the Gentiles.

Hence, justification cannot be by Law since no one has ever fulfilled it save Christ. There may be a hint of sarcasm here in Paul. Justification comes by Christ's death on the cross and is made active by faith. Since he is about to say that "all have sinned" (3:23) and that, "a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (3:28) and, writing in Galatians 3:11 "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is

²⁸ Such as in Philippians 3:1-9.

evident; for, ‘THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH,’ and, “...nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified,” (2:16) one has to conclude that his comment that “the doers of the law will be justified” underscores the reality that no one can be justified, whether they have the law or not.

It is also apparent that, as his argument progresses, Paul is calling the Jews up short and pointing to their own foolishness in what they purport is an argument to the superiority of their position. He gets more adamant as he goes on.

2:14-16: The gentiles, not having the law, prove it is an innate reality because their conscience bears witness to right and wrong. The exercising of moral functions imply recognition of a law.²⁹ The issue is intended to focus on matters of the heart. In just a moment Paul will underscore this when he writes, “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.” (2:29)

Judgment of “the secrets of men” is from Ecclesiastes 12:14 and is also implied in Luke 8:17.

2:17-24,

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, 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? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23: You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? 24: For ‘THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,’ just as it is written.”

17-24: Paul is here addressing Jews who are dependent upon the law for their right relationship with God. They may not even be believers in Christ in any way. For sure they are not even “real Jews” as he notes in verses 28-29.

²⁹ As noted by James Denny in *The Expositors Greek Testament*, Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1961, Volume II, Romans, page 598.

“But” indicates a contrast or comparison in conduct between the Gentiles who do not have the law yet live as if it were in their hearts and the Jews who have it, yet live in dishonor to it showing it has not affected their hearts. So Paul now begins to pull the "righteousness rug" out from under the feet of the Jews.

This is expressed in a long sentence using parallelisms and ending in verses 21-23 with several rhetorical questions directed at the Jews who “rely on the Law and boast in God, etc..” yet may live in dishonor to God and His law. They then have no place to judge anyone else. Sarcasm may be evident here especially verses 18-20. Paul obviously knows that all this is just a description of the “puffed up” arrogance of these people and not a compliment. This is a, “Just who do you think you are?” section concluding with, “So what?” For Paul, the Jew makes much of his relationship to God and the knowledge of the law, but when it comes to the practice and condition of the heart, he is no better than the Gentile.

The parallelisms are obvious if one looks carefully.

“...rely upon the Law and boast in God” = “and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law”

“and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind” = “a light to those who are in darkness”

“a corrector of the foolish” = “a teacher of the immature”

“the embodiment of knowledge” = “the truth”

21-24: Rhetorical questions designed to point out the hypocrisy of the position of the Jews. Paul is not looking at this particular generation only in this invective, but at the full history of the Jews during which they violated all the mandates of the law. He expects his questions to be answered truthfully. If so, then the Jews stand as condemned as anyone else because Jews identify fully with their ancestors in a solidarity. For example, Jews in Jesus’ day said to Him, “We have Abraham as our father...”³⁰

The quotation in verse 24 is from Isaiah 52:5 or perhaps Ezekiel 36:23.

2:25-27,

25: “For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a

³⁰ John 8:53; Matthew 3:9.

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?"

25: The reason a Jew's circumcision "has value" if he practices the Law is because he values his identification with God's covenant with Abraham and honors it by abiding with all of God's commandments and ordinances. This shows a heart for God and His Word. Having been circumcised but assuming that is sufficient for righteousness and \ transgressing the Law reveals the truth of his heart.

Paul continues from the argument questioning any Jew's practice of the Law in total. Simply put, circumcision is useless and of no value to anyone as a means of a relationship with God. In Galatians also, Paul also makes this point.

First, Galatians 5:2-6,

2: "Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3: And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4: You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5: For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

Second, in Galatians 6:13-15,

13: "For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. 14: But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15: For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."

Circumcision was a sign of the covenant God made with Abram and his descendants.³¹ The Jews came to view it as both their exclusive relationship with God and thus obtaining God's favor. But since no Jew has ever been able to keep the Law as intended by God (especially in the heart of the inner man as Paul points out in a moment)³² his "circumcision" is of no value in terms of having favor with God.

³¹ Genesis 17:10-12

³² As does Jesus.

26: Again a rhetorical question. The expected answer would be “yes.” But the self-righteous Jew would probably object to this logic. Knowing this Paul answers with verse 27, and additional rhetorical question,

“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?”

Objections might be raised by someone who doesn’t see the point. Gentiles sitting in judgment on Jews? They might object with, “Only God can judge.” “Exactly,” Paul would respond, “So then why do you judge others.”

2:28-29,

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.”³³

28-29: A “Jew” who is in a right relationship with God is not one who does outward acts of compliance with the law, but one who, inwardly has been “circumcised” by the Spirit in one’s heart. This means that the old fleshly works have been discarded and dependence upon Christ but faith has been substituted. This renders fleshly circumcision meaningless.

An example with the purposeful conclusion-the issue is the inner man, not the outer practice or performance. Belief in the truth carries with it a willing heart to do what is right or, that which reflects the true intent of The Law.³⁴

³³ From Deuteronomy 30:6. One would think that this verse, from the book of the "second law", would be of a convincing nature. But Paul proceeds with more.

³⁴ Jesus makes this point as well. See: Matthew 5:8, 12:34-35; 13:15 (quoting Isaiah 6:10), 15:7-20, Mark 12:28-33; Matthew 23:25-28; Luke 11:39; etc.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER THREE

[One could outline the following as: Verses 3:1-20 "On the one hand" and verses 21-31 as "On the other hand." A major contrast and main point is made at the juncture of these two sections.]

3:1-4,

1: "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2: Great in every respect. First of all, (*in fact*)³⁵ they were entrusted with the oracles of God. 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.'"

Paul is continuing his remarks from Chapter 2, especially verses 23-29. This continuation needs to be understood in the light of what has been previously written. So, after his point about the uselessness of circumcision, one has to wonder why he now says it has great benefit in verse 2. One would think that the expected answer would be "none" after his diatribe on the uselessness of it all to achieve righteousness before God. But he surprises us with a valid point.

1-2: Let's see what he is actually doing. First, Let's notice that he only answers the first half of verse one. Second, in so doing he says, "first of all..." and never gets to any other point including the circumcision issue until he begins to speak of Abraham in 4:10.

So he actually only answers, "Then what advantage has the Jew?" His answer now makes sense. The Jews were "entrusted" with the "oracles" of God. "Entrusted" is closer to "believed" so "given the words of God so they could believe" is the thrust of the idea. "Oracles" has the root "words" in the original and includes all the Old Testament, the law, their history, the prophets, the writings, God's promises, covenant and so on.

3: God's word, covenant and promises will not be nullified just because some did not believe what He said. Our beliefs do not establish truth. Truth must establish our beliefs. Yet there are multitudes who believe in something without any foundation, or evidence of truth. For example, millions of Hindus believe in reincarnation and yet

³⁵ My insertion and translation.

there has never been any evidence to support such a belief or for many other things the Hindus believe. Dr. Edward John Carnell³⁶ said quite definitely, “One should believe in something only if there is sufficient evidence to support such a belief”

4: Emphasizing what he just said, Paul makes the point that the lack of belief or ungodly conduct such as lying by people who are seen to be His does not negate God’s faithfulness.

The translation of Psalm 51:4 is flawed in the NASB for some reason. Paul quotes the Septuagint, which translated is, “...You are righteous in your words and victorious in your judgment.”³⁷ In Hebrew it translates, “You are just (or righteous) when You speak, and blameless (or pure) when You judge (or pronounce sentence).”

The point is that in the case between God and man, God will always be true even though every man is found a liar (Psalm 116:11). Our lies do not affect the veracity or faithfulness of God.

This is poignant in today's churches. Many turn away from God and faith because the messages of the preachers, teachers and theologians are so inane, ignorant, false and wrong that people believe that which is not true of God and His word at all and depart.

3:5-8,

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 (*be the result*)?”³⁸ Their condemnation is just.”

5-6: Let’s rephrase these two verses so we can get the point. The NIV and the NLT have a better take on this.³⁹ Paul is arguing, as he continues, that if our

³⁶ Late author and professor of apologetics and prolegomena at Fuller Theological Seminary under who’s instruction I was privileged to sit while attending there.

³⁷ The "Septuagint," abbreviated as "LXX" indicates the seventy scholars that translated the Hebrew Scriptures into the common Greek of the late third century B.C. well beyond the third century A.D.. It is also the Greek of the New Testament. Begun in the third century B.C. in Alexandria Egypt, it was completed a hundred years later and became the Old Testament Bible all the apostles used. All the writers of the New Testament quote from the Septuagint when referencing Old Testament passages. Though often differing from the Hebrew in some ways, we are able to compare the two today and make better sense of the intention of the author and of course, the Lord's Word.

³⁸ Parenthesis and italics mine.

³⁹ N.I.V. Romans 3:6-8, “But if our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, “If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory, why

unrighteousness makes the righteousness of God more evident, then how can He possibly judge us since we have brought Him glory?

The rhetorical question, “The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He?” is easily answered, “Of course not.” And the point of the question is to underscore that even if our unrighteousness makes the righteousness of God even more evident, God cannot be unrighteous in administering judgment or wrath on unrighteousness. The phrase, “I am speaking in human terms” shows that even in the courts of man the argument that my lawlessness makes the righteousness of the law more evident is no reason to acquit me of a crime against it. Such an argument has no merit.

In most civilized societies, the law and its enforcement are highly valued by people who wish to live in peace as good citizens. The value and importance of the laws are demonstrated when contrasted with unrighteous behavior, especially crime. But just because a criminal shows the importance and value of the law doesn't mean that it is out of place for the law to judge the criminal, no matter how good the law may look when contrasted with the criminal's activity. God is not inhibited in judging the world because His righteousness is made evident by man's unrighteousness. The common argument that, "I am not as bad as Hitler" is not a reason to avoid judgment when illegal acts are committed. Bad behavior of one person does not justify bad behavior of another. The excuse of young people that "everyone is doing it" does not fly.

“May it never be!” This is the “absolutely not” answering of the question, “The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He?” Even the most self-righteous Jew would agree with the thought that God not only has the right to judge the world, but the Jews can hardly wait. That's the problem. They have not seen that they themselves are as guilty as those they judge. So we come back to 2:1-3.

7-8: The rhetorical question is excellent here. The point is, “Why should I be judged a sinner if my lie ultimately abounds to God's glory when the truth is revealed?” Because I am a sinner, and the fact that my sin displays the glory of God does not excuse it, but shows I am worthy of judgment.”

Then in verse 8, Paul reveals that his message has been distorted and he is not happy about it. Apparently, it has been reported that he has suggested that doing evil is

am I still condemned as a sinner?” Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—“Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is deserved.” NLT “But,” some might say, “our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair, then, for Him to punish us?” (This is merely a human point of view.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world? “But,” someone might still argue, “how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights His truthfulness and brings Him more glory?” And some people even slander us by claiming that we say, “The more we sin, the better it is!” Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.”

justified because it shows the righteousness of God. This argument is a twist on his actual teaching regarding grace. He is forced to clarify while in a defensive posture. This well may be one occasion for the writing of the letter. Similar accusations are made today of those who teach “grace”. Legalists love to claim that “grace” teachers promote sinful behavior as “okay” because it is covered under grace. So people can do whatever they want and it is covered. The fact is that there are those who do sin because they believe it is covered under grace or some ritual such as confession and so on. But this is not the intention of grace nor of those who understand grace and teach it in a Biblical and proper manner.

Legalists claim that this “teaching” leads to all kinds of unrighteousness and thus they are justified in their teaching of legalism. However, legalists are no less unrighteous than non-legalists. In fact, since they are so aware of the law and its righteous standard, they are held to even a stricter judgment, just as the Jews are in Paul’s argument. This is Paul’s point in its entirety.

Some teach that the grace of God is given so that believers might keep the law. This is as convoluted as it gets. We have received grace because the law cannot be kept especially as Christ applied it to the heart, motive and mind. There is no way, even under grace that a person could keep the law perfectly, and to try and do so will place the thoughts and emotions under condemnation, discouragement and defeat.⁴⁰ This theme leads Paul to soon condemn the behavior that some engage in, namely, overtly sinning because they are under grace. God's grace should be the motive for living a grateful, thankful, godly life, not the other way around.

So Paul draws the conclusion in 5:20-6:1,

“The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?”

The answer is given in 6:2, “May it never be!”

The grace of God is not a forensic act that frees one to sin, but a spiritual act changing the desire of the heart in terms of the choices one makes regarding living a godly life. Condemnation is just for those who do evil so that grace may abound-using God’s grace as an excuse for unrighteousness. He will address this later as well.

⁴⁰ II Corinthians, chapter three clearly makes this argument. Those who insist that believers are obligated to keep the law could be called “joy stealers” not to mention that Romans 6:14 among many other passages is clear that believers are no longer under the law.

3:9-18,

9: "What then? Are we (*the Jews*) better than they (*the Gentiles*)?⁴¹ 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.'"

9: The “we” is Paul’s editorial use of the pronoun and the context tells us he is identifying with the Jews and speaking of them, himself included. Then, the next use of “we” is obviously editorial referring to himself and perhaps those other teachers or apostles who are with him. Though the Jews had all the Law and prophets, that does not make them, better than the Gentiles. In fact, more culpable. So then, does the truthful observation of the Jews regarding those who misuse grace as an excuse for evil make the Jews better? Does their possession of the law and their adherence to it or their circumcision make them better? No! Paul reiterates again the unrighteousness of all mankind, regardless of the reason any may make regarding their “righteousness” or the excuse any may make regarding their “unrighteousness”.

10-18,

To buttress this conclusion, Paul quotes a combination of Psalm 14:1-3 and 53:1-3 (verses 9-12); Psalm 5:9 and 140:3 (verse 13); Psalm 10:7 (verse 14); Isaiah 59:7-8 (verses 15-17); and Psalm 36:1 (verse 18).

The combination of these verses is condemning indeed to all mankind, Jewish or not.

3:19- 20:

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.”

⁴¹ Italics mine in verse 9.

Even if the Jews say that the verses quoted in 10-18 apply to the Gentiles, Paul makes it clear that all are included, because the Law speaks specifically to the Jews while the Gentiles are not excluded due to the word of God regarding all men. This closes every mouth placing everyone in the clear knowledge of their sin. The violation of the Law, even in the attempt to keep it is apparent. This is the whole point of Paul's argument to the Jews (see again 2:22-24).

Therefore, the unrighteous of the Jews is established because they have the law, and the unrighteousness of the gentiles is established because it is known within their hearts as well. The works of the law (note the sacrificial system which all had to comply with because of their sin) does not justify anyone but rather makes their sin that more apparent.

Then, Paul reveals that even through the keeping of the Law no man will be justified - (Making the argument in 2:9-16 not a matter that justifies the doers of the law, but a matter of recognizing that none have, but even if they have, this is not the ground for justification.)

So the law is not the means for justification at all, but the righteous means to spotlight the unrighteousness of all people. If we plug 1:16-17 in here, we know Paul is not supporting justification by works. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."⁴² So we come full circle. And Paul picks up this theme again and carries it forward.

3:21-26,

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, 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."

21-22: "But now"... "on the other hand" – a contrast, inserted by the apostle, with what

⁴² Habakkuk 2:4

he has discussed and nullified as a means of salvation. Chapter 1:18-3:20 establish the total hopelessness of mankind in relying on himself in some way for his salvation. Chapter 3:21 begins the insertion of the true hope that man actually has, that which is provided by God Himself in Christ. This passage shows that Paul is making an effort to both bring true salvation to non-believing Jews as well as teaching his entire audience the basis for salvation and right standing before God.

So it is not only the Law alone that makes the righteousness of God evident, but even without it His righteousness is witnessed by the prophets. So both are witnesses of God's righteousness. Through them it has been proclaimed that a person's righteousness does not occur from within oneself or by any works whatsoever, but is a gift from God due to one placing faith in Him through Christ, denying oneself, that is one's Law keeping, good works and self-righteousness altogether.⁴³

In verse 21 we have the "righteousness of God" meaning the righteousness He possesses. In verse 22 we have the "righteousness of God" meaning the righteousness He imputes to those of faith in Christ. The first use is based in the Greek operation of the genitive case called the "subjective genitive" the second use called the "objective genitive. "There is no distinction" simply means that all believers, without distinction or exception, and regardless of whether Jew or Gentile, are deemed righteous based solely on their faith in Christ Jesus.

23: There is no distinction because, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." And therefore...

24: There is no distinction as all are justified who are of faith in Christ. This is God's gift based on what Jesus did on the cross for all mankind. "Justified" means to be deemed righteousness. The same root exists for the words "righteous" and "justified." But only those of faith receive the benefit.

"Redemption" is the price paid to buy something back that was initially held for ransom. Christ's death redeemed all mankind, but only those of faith are justified (declared righteous) and given the gift of life.

25a: (...Christ Jesus) "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith..." "Propitiation in His blood" is to satisfy the demand of the Law fully and completely so that mercy can be forthcoming from God. This pictures the "Day of Atonement" where the high priest sprinkled the blood of sacrifice on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

⁴³ Some of these references are Habakkuk 2:4; Genesis 15:6; Psalm 106:31; Deuteronomy 24:13; and Paul makes this case in Philippians 3:9; Romans 10:1-3; Titus 3:5; Galatians 2:21, 3:21; etc.

This “propitiation” (or atonement) is of a New Covenant accomplished on one’s behalf and appropriated by faith. Faith includes the belief that Christ’s death is the propitiation for sin and confesses the magnitude of His act as well as His lordship or authority to do so.

25b: “...to demonstrate God’s righteousness.” God’s righteousness is demonstrated because not only does He provide the payment for the penalty He Himself demands, but counts it as applicable to all who believe in His Son.

Paul places a parenthetical sentence next, (“because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.”) The best understanding of this passage could be twofold. And, we have similar statements in Acts 14:16-17 where Paul told the people of Lystra,

"In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

And in Acts 17:30 in Paul’s speech in Athens,

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

However, this does not explain why. First, it could mean that the penalty of death for sin was not enforced upon mankind up until the time of Christ. Instead, a temporary sacrificial system was in place until the Law was fulfilled by Jesus. But what of those not under the Law or having access to this system? Well, second, we can surmise that since Christ’s death was actually accomplished even before creation, it covered those of faith who were both Jews and Gentiles. For example, all the patriarchs before the Law was given and non- Jews such as Ruth, Rahab, and Caleb are counted righteous by their faith.

Verse 26 gives us some help. The reason for this “forbearance” is, “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.”

James Denny⁴⁴ notes about verse 26, “...the last clause, (verse 26) is the most

⁴⁴ James Denny, Expositors Greek Testament, Eerdmans, 1961, Volume 2, page 612

important. It makes explicit the whole intention of God in dealing with sin by means of a propitiation. God's righteousness, compromised as it seemed by His forbearance, might have been vindicated in another way; if He had executed judgment upon sin, it would have been a kind of vindication. He would have secured the first object of verse 26: 'that He might be righteous Himself'. But part of God's object was to justify the ungodly (chap. iv.5), upon certain conditions; and *this* could not be attained by the execution of judgment upon sin."

God was just in that sin was judged. It was Jesus who bore the judgment for all mankind. God is the justifier in that all who believe in Jesus are justified. In all this, God's righteousness is demonstrated.

3:27-31,

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. 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.

27: Those who look down on others with their, "I am holier than thou" attitude have no room to boast because they, in themselves, – regardless of their works, devotion, religious zeal, perceived righteousness, and all the rest are excluded from God. Why? Because righteousness comes from the grace of God based in faith in Christ alone to the exclusion of self. It is not based on law or works of the law. It is based on faith which is the true "law" – the only one God requires to be obeyed.⁴⁵

28: Self-explanatory.

29: Paul asks a rhetorical question, "Is God *the God* of Jews only? "Is he not God of the Gentiles also?" On this rare occasion, Paul supplies the answer to stifle any contrary thinking of the Jews. "Yes", he says, "of the Gentiles also... (continuing in 30...)"

30: God is "One" and only has then, one way through which He has given for people to be justified, faith alone.

31: Paul loves the rhetorical question. Here he asks, "Do we then nullify the Law

⁴⁵ Note John 6:29

through faith?” He again answers so that those who would rebelliously state a resounding “Yes!” will be silenced. “May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law”! What does this mean?

The law is established to demonstrate the righteous standard God has set before man. In reflecting on the Law as a mirror of one’s own righteousness, (especially in the light of Christ’s clear application of the thoughts and intents of the heart), a man ought to be convicted of his sinfulness and need of mercy and grace.⁴⁶ Thus the Law, as Paul says in Galatians 3:24-25, is a tutor to bring us to Christ. Further, as Paul notes in 4:15, if there was no law, there could be no record of a violation of it. But since it does exist, and since it is “holy, righteous and good” (7:12) man stands in violation of it by God’s righteous determination.

Thus, the believer recognizes the righteousness of the law and his desire is to honor it in his heart. He is not under the law, nor subject to the penalty for violating it. But his desires are now changed and the Spirit leads him into righteousness living, not in disobedience to the law or any other teaching of God. At the core, the desire is to love – fearlessly – even one’s enemies and proclaim the light to them as the Spirit leads.

⁴⁶ Note the proper response to the law by the tax collector in Luke 18:10-14.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction: Paul now turns to Abraham to illustrate the point made in 3:28-30 and to level the playing field even more.

4:1-3,

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.'"⁴⁷

1: Abraham our father, "...according to the flesh" – physical lineage of the patriarch. Again showing Paul's emphasis on addressing his Jewish brethren. He wants them to recognize the critical element of faith in their religious tradition. So he uses the highest possible authority to illustrate this. The Jews always go to Abraham as the founder or patriarch of their religion.⁴⁸ Abraham, even more than Moses is respected and the recounting his life and faith would be received with reverence. What did he discover?

2: He discovered that though he might boast of his works before men, his works have no acceptance or admiration before God. Abraham was not necessarily a righteous man based on the conduct of his life. He lied, manipulated, killed people, lusted, coveted, and I'm sure committed the sins of any mortal man.

3: So if his conduct failed to place him as righteous before God, what was it? Well Paul answers it by quoting the passage from Genesis 15:6. It was his belief (or faith) in God and God's word and promises that was the basis of his favor with God.

4:4-8,

4: "Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor⁴⁹, 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, 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

⁴⁷ Genesis 15:6.

⁴⁸ Matthew 1:1-17; Matthew 22:32; Luke 1:55; Luke 13:16; John 8:39; Acts 13:26.

⁴⁹ Or, "considered as gift."

FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 8: "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."⁵⁰

4: "Credited" is better translated "considered." Anyone who works and gets a wage does not consider his wages to be a favor (the same word as "grace") from his employer, but receiving that to which he is due. Adam Clarke puts it this way, "Therefore, if Abraham had been justified by works, the blessings he received would have been given to him as a reward for those works, and consequently his believing could have had no part in his justification, and his faith would have been useless."⁵¹

5: Paul is not referring to a lazy man, but to one who is not depending on his religious works as a means of standing righteous before God. Rather, knowing he is ungodly, he looks to God in faith and his faith is given sufficient credit to deem him righteous. So Paul explains his firm stand that, "...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin." (3:20) and, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law." (3:28)

6-8: Paul adds a second support for his theme, Psalm 32:1-2. This demonstrates that God is the imparter of forgiveness as He determines, not man and his high opinion of himself. It is totally in the sovereignty of God these decisions are based and totally within His power to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart.⁵²

4:9-13,

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; 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. 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."

9: Paul's love of the rhetorical question is again apparent. Based on the previous argument, only one answer is possible. To buttress the argument that this grace, by faith is for all peoples, circumcised or not, he again brings Abraham to stage front.

⁵⁰ Psalm 32:1-2

⁵¹ Adam Clark's Commentary on the Bible, from e-Sword on-line, Romans 4:4-5.

⁵² I Samuel 16:7; Psalm 147:10-11; Luke 16:15.

It was his faith that granted Abraham favor and imputed righteousness from God. He once again quotes Genesis 15:6.

10: Again, the rhetorical question with the correct answer supplied by Paul, “uncircumcised.”⁵³

11: This is an important point Paul makes. Circumcision was enacted as a sign of the faith Abraham expressed while yet uncircumcised. Like baptism, it was to be a sign of one’s faith, not a means of salvation or a religious ritual assuring some sort of grace, even for children.⁵⁴ The sequence of the events described above was so that Abraham might be the father of all the uncircumcised who come to faith so that they too might be imputed righteousness as well.

12: But not only that, Abraham has two lines of descendants, one of the flesh of which he is the physical father, and one of faith of which he is the spiritual father. But since the flesh merits nothing before God, it is the children of faith that are Abraham’s true descendants and the true children of God.⁵⁵

13: The previous conclusion is supported in this verse and in verses 16-17 to follow.

4:14-16,

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, . . .”

14: “...of the Law” are specifically the Jews (or Israelites)⁵⁶ The Greek preposition (“ek”) designates a source, not just those who come under the law by religious choice.

If only these are the heirs, then faith is of no use for anyone, and the righteousness with which God credited Abraham is not based on Abraham’s faith after all (as stated

⁵³ Abraham’s imputed righteousness took place in Genesis 15 while his circumcision took place in chapter 17.

⁵⁴ See my dissertation about the salvation of children entitled, “And What of the children” online at www.bibleclassroom.org. Click to “topical studies.”

⁵⁵ Paul makes this argument again in Galatians 4:22-31.

⁵⁶ The term “Jews” originally applied to those of the tribe of Judah. As the largest tribe and territory it began to be applied to everyone in the southern kingdom of “Judah” after the national division under Rehoboam, son of Solomon and king of Judah. Before the division brought about by Jeroboam the whole united nation was called “Israel.” After the division, the northern kingdom took the national designation of “Israel” and the southern “Judah.” After the two dispersions, the term “Jew” came to designate all the peoples whether of Israel or Judah. The term “Israel” became the formal term to designate the historical people descended from Jacob as well as the land mass bearing the name.

clearly in the scripture), making God a liar and thus nullifying the promise based on faith.

15: The law brings about wrath due to it being broken. All have done so, thus all are subject to wrath. This would not be the case if there were no law or divine standard of righteousness. None would be subject to wrath. Any law designates a penalty when broken. God's law demands death. This is the ultimate and eternal result of God's wrath.⁵⁷ Therefore God, by His grace provided a way apart from the Law for a person to be saved. Otherwise none would ever be saved and the purpose for which God created the universe in the first place, and prepared it for mankind would end up being a futile and foolish exercise. That's why the plan of redemption was put in place even before creation.⁵⁸

16: "For this reason" means that if those of the Law only are heirs then faith is of no consequence as Law brings about wrath. But faith is the real basis for the inheritance of the saints based in grace, not law so that many can be heirs whether Jew or Gentile.

The promise" referred to is that which God made to Abraham. It is defined in Romans 4:13, "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." This is based upon the following passages; Genesis 12:3, 17:4-5, 17:16, 22:17-18, 28:14, 49:10; Psalm 2:8, etc.

"...guaranteed to "all" the descendants, Jew and Gentile alike. "...not only to those who are of the law...," does not mean all Jews but the point is that the promise is not just to those Jews of faith but also to Gentiles of faith. Just because one is a descendant of Abraham by the flesh does not mean they are heirs of the promise. Paul's whole point is that the heirs of the promise are those who, like Abraham, are guaranteed it by their faith, not by an act of the flesh. Abraham is the "father of us all" in that he is the "father of all those of faith." The pronoun "us" here is inclusive of the people of faith. Verses 17-25 spell that out.

4:17-22,

17: "(as it is written, 'A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU'⁵⁹) 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

⁵⁷ Romans 6:23

⁵⁸ Note: Hebrews 11:6

⁵⁹ The Hebrew for "nations" is "goyim," the same word as for "Gentiles."

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. 22: Therefore, 'IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

17: Paul quotes Genesis 17:4-5. Continuing from verse 16, the quote refers to Abraham being made a father of many “nations.” The word “nations” is “goyim” and is the exact same word translated “Gentiles.” Of course, Abraham was technically not a Jew, but an Aramean from Ur of the Chaldees, a Chaldean or even a Babylonian. Technically, if anything, Abraham was to be the father of the Gentiles of which he and his descendants were derived. His very name was changed from Abram (“exalted father”) to Abraham, (“father of a multitude”).

But the key point is that Abraham is noted specifically as the one who believed God and whose faith is the basis for being accounted righteous before God. The focus on God is that he is able to give life to the dead and call into existence that which does not exist. This will be seen as applying to Abraham and Sarah who, as far as being able to bear children were dead and thus Isaac was called into being from that which did not exist or was impossible. (Verse 19) So to be clear, Sarah’s womb was “dead” in that she was unable to bear children and was barren.

Yet Abraham believed God’s word. Now the conclusion is undeniable. Those who are heirs of Abraham are heirs, not due to physical lineage or circumcision (keeping of the Law) but through faith in Christ whether they are Jews or Gentiles. He has argued that all are sinners, and now he is arguing that all, by faith alone, can be reckoned righteous.

18: And he did so “in hope against hope.” Paul explains that this meant he believed so that he would have descendants as God had promised. This was so important to men then, even as it is now. Yet Sarah was unable to have children.⁶⁰ Now, Abram was 99 years old at this time in his life. He was given the first promise from God regarding descendants at the age of 75 (Genesis 12:4). Twenty five years he and Sarah had been waiting on God. The promise had been renewed to Abram (15:1-6) and God reckoned Abram righteous because he believed Him. But after another year had gone by, Abram succumbed to Sarah’s suggestion that he go into Hagar. Ishmael was born (Chapter 16). But this was not in accordance with God’s promise or plan. In 17 the promise of a son was renewed again to Abram. In 18 it was renewed again. Both Abram and Sarah couldn’t help laughing (not in a mocking tone but in light of her and

⁶⁰ Genesis 11:30, 25:31; Romans 4:19.

Abram's great age.) But a year later, Isaac was born. The earlier laughter was now a genuine fun and their son was so named. The point is that Abraham believed in God's promise even though the reality of it coming to pass was impossible in human terms. His faith reckoned him righteous, not his later circumcision. He is the shining, foundational example of how God intends righteousness to be imputed (reckoned).

19-20: Paul lauds Abraham's unwavering faith as the basis for being accounted righteous before God. He took into consideration his own weak body and that of Sarah and yet continue to hope and trust in God's promise. This is important to Christians of all ages that in spite of what circumstances and the many years that have passed, our hope must remain strong in God's promises to us as we await the culmination of the age.

21: It was his assurance in God's promise that convinced Abraham that God would do as He said. The Greek word – er-gah-zoh-my⁶¹ – means to “work,” “accomplish” or “achieve” something. What God promises, He is able to perform.

22: The conclusion is then, “Therefore, IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Paul once again quoting Genesis 15:6.

4:23-25,

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.”

23-24: Paul underscores the importance of this crediting of righteousness based on Abraham's faith as the precedent for all who come to faith in all generations. For we who have believed and all who are yet to believe, are credited with righteousness in so doing. Notice that belief is first in God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – The Creator – who is credited with, “raising Jesus our Lord from the dead.” Faith in God is first which in turn is the cause we believe in who Jesus did and what it means because of His resurrection from the dead...

25: “(He) who” The pronoun “He” is supplied as Paul continues his sentence from verse 24. “Delivered over” is from the verb “to give,” another way of saying that God gave Him over to death on the cross for us. This was God's gift and Jesus willingly became that gift. This was in our place for our sins and He was raised so we who believe might be justified (declared righteous) before God.

⁶¹ We get our word “ergonomics” from this.

The Biblical definition is, “The forensic, judicial, or gracious act of God by which the sinner is declared righteous, or justly free from obligation to penalty, and fully restored to divine favor”.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER FIVE

5:1-2,

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 (*access*) by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God."

1: Paul's conclusion to the matter. He reiterates that justification (being declared righteous before God) is a matter of faith, not works or anything else. Ephesians 2:8-9 comes to mind, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

He moves from speaking to the unconverted Jew to displaying the disposition of the believer, no doubt to persuade the Jews to seriously consider what he is saying. In the last five chapters he has moved from "them" (all mankind), to "you" (the Jews), to "Him" (Abraham), to "Us."

"...we have peace..." ought to be translated, "Let us have peace," "Be at peace," or simply "Have peace" since the word is in the imperative mood. But it is also present active indicative first person plural and so is somewhat awkward. The "we" is all those who have come to faith in the manner of Abraham. The point is, of course, that by faith, we can rest knowing that we have peace with God. Hostility no longer exists between God and the believer, or the law and the "sinner." This peace is given to us because of our faith in God as a result of our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior.

This is an astounding statement here in verse 1. What other religion, philosophy or spiritual teaching has ever made a statement that one can be declared righteous by faith? None. In all of human history, every religious, philosophical and spiritual teaching always requires some type of "good" or holy lifestyle or work in order to have a right standing with the Almighty. This idea that some "work" or devotional lifestyle is strictly a human inclusion into the realm of the spiritual. Verse 1 of Romans five can only be of divine origin. No human would have ever thought of this nor is it acceptable to most people even the so-called "enlightened" ones.

It is scoffed at because so many people look to themselves for the qualifications to receive salvation and eternal life and most find themselves acceptable. Not so with God. The scripture is consistent in describing the human condition. Even in 3:10 Paul

notes, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE.” And Isaiah 64:6 states, “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment...” So the attempt to gain righteousness before God by one’s own efforts is futile. This is like attempting to wash the blood off our hands in a basin of blood. It is by God’s grace alone through faith in Christ that one is declared righteous even though one remains unrighteous in his fleshly state.

2. It is Christ through whom we have had our introduction (*or access*) to God’s grace. Jesus made it clear, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” Through Him alone is the grace we so desperately need. Therefore we can take our stand. It is important to note that we do not believe in or place our faith in things "about" Jesus, but believe and place our faith "in" Jesus.

“Exult” is to be confident, even boast in hope of the glory of God. There are three things Paul proposes we all can “exult” in.

First is “hope” and it is not as not as some see it, namely, “wishful thinking” such as, “I hope I win the lottery” or some such idea. Here, it is intended to describe all the inheritance of the saints promised by God over the past several millenniums. It is a solid reality that has yet to be fully realized. Thus it is called a “hope.” A correlation might be made with our “last will and testament” in which beneficiaries are listed. These are heirs to the estate. It is a legal and guaranteed contract but the inheritance is not distributed until the testator of the will dies. In the meantime, however, the beneficiaries have a sure hope of the inheritance though not in possession of it.

Paul describe the object of our hope as "the glory of God.” Is this the glory God Himself possesses or the glory He grants to others? We discussed the objective and subjective Genitive case in the commentary of 3:21. Here we must do so again. If the first, then it may mean we hope in God who is glorious and will do as He said. The Greek word "doxa" translated "glory" suggests the power, supremacy, sovereignty and all the attributes of God that make Him the Eternal Creator and Almighty above all. The point is that since he has said it, it will come to pass. Nothing in creation can prevent it. He will not fail!

Or it could mean we hope in becoming glorious as God also. This idea can be seen for example in, Romans 8:17 and 8:30.⁶² However, it is this “glory of God” and all that it entails that is our inheritance. This could be why Paul quotes in I Corinthians 2:9, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND

⁶² Romans 8:17, “...and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. Romans 8:30, “and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." "Exult" means "to revel in triumphant joy."

5:3-8,

3: "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations⁶³, 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. 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."

3: The second thing we "exult" in is times of trouble and persecution. Not for the tribulation, but within the tribulation. Unknown to most persecutors, what they do in trying to motivate others to give up actually works to strengthen the resolve of the faithful to accomplish God's work. "Perseverance" is to "remain under" as the literal Greek is translated. Nothing will stop or deter the believer from pressing on in Christ. Paul writes in Philippians 3:7-15,

7: "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8: More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9: and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, 10: that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11: in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12: Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13: Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, 14: I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15: Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;..."

⁶³ All the books I have ever read, whether by Christian authors or not all ask the same stupid question about pain, suffering and evil. "If Godblah, blah, blah." For this discussion, please go to my website: www.bibleclassroom.com, studies, Topical studies, "Understanding The problem of Evil."

4: Perseverance brings about “proven character.” This is one word in the Greek and The word is a term used in the mining industry where the pure metal is produced through the fiery process of the smelter. It is a proof of the deep down strength and faith a believer has. The process that results in a pure metal from rough ore also brings about “hope.” This development in our character reveals the truth of what we believe and thus strengthens our hope. We come full circle. (See comment on verse two.)

5: Our hopes will be fulfilled and we will not be disappointed. As a pledge of this, and demonstration of His love, God has poured out His Holy Spirit as a gift into our hearts.⁶⁴ The Spirit is given to us because we recognize that we have no quality or worth to receive such grace and blessing. So God, knowing our hearts and our wonder or doubt that He will do for us as He has said gives us an added assurance.

6-8: After all, we might reason, God might do all this for a righteous man or even one we would deem good. We could understand that. Paul does too. But makes the marvelous observation that, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

5:9-11,

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

9: Now that the fact has been established that we are justified by His blood through faith and not works, we now can be sure that we will never fall under the wrath of God.

Jesus said as much in John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." And Paul writes in I Thessalonians 1:10, that those who believe in Him and wait for Him will see, "...Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."

⁶⁴ For the idea of the giving of the Holy Spirit as a pledge of our inheritance see II Corinthians 1:21-22, 5:4-5; Ephesians 1:13-14. The word translated “pledge” means a part of the purchase money or property given in advance as *security* for the rest: - earnest money, down payment. It carries with it the promise to pay the rest and exhibits great interest in doing so.

10: Here's why we can be assured of this. After all, "if while enemies we were reconciled to God..." Paul begins his assurance with a startling statement that even the enemies of God were reconciled to Himself through the death of Christ. Can this be true? Well, let's note that "reconciliation" is neither friendship (Albert Barnes) or salvation. This is a forensic and legal term, not a relational one. The price is paid for all mankind. The legal barricade between God and man and between the Jews and Gentiles has been broken down and carted away.

"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.": Ephesians 2:13-16

Let's also note that God has done the work of reconciling us to Him. The word here (only used of God's action) is καταλλάσσω (ka-ta-lahs-soh). God reconciles the world to Himself (II Cor. 5:18). He Himself is not reconciled either to us or to the world. The word denotes a change, transformation or renewal in the state of condition between God and man. God is not the one who changes however but does provide for man's change of status should he accept it in faith. In other words, once enemies, it is man who accepts the provision and changes in his relationship toward God. The word used for this action of man is καταλλαγή (ka-ta-lahg-ghe) a similar term. Paul's ministry is described as this word in II Corinthians 5:18-20.

So if God does this for man in Christ, will he not also provide salvation for man through Christ? Of course.

Verse ten is parallel to verse nine and reiterates it with emphasis.

Nine	Ten
Much more then, having now been <u>justified by His blood,</u>	For if while we were enemies we were <u>reconciled to God through the death of His Son,</u>
<u>we shall be saved</u> from the wrath <i>of God</i> through Him.	much more, having been reconciled, <u>we shall be saved by His life.</u>

We also have a contrast in verse 10. "...reconciled by His death -saved by His life."

What does Paul mean by “saved by His life?” Generally, some apply it to His sinless life prior to the cross. We share in that due to His death. (Colossians 3:1-4.) But specifically, since the comment on His life comes after Paul’s note about His death, we may more accurately conclude that it is His resurrection and the power thereof that actually gives us the assurance of salvation and eternal life. Without the resurrection neither would be guaranteed. In speaking to His disciples concerning His leaving them He also said to them, “...because I live, you will live also.”

11: In addition we have a third thing to exult in. We can “exult” in God who has done this for us in Christ. The enmity is gone (Ephesians 2:15-16 quoted above.) The word “enmity” denotes a hostile force or barricade standing between us and God.

ἐχθρός (ek-thros) is “enemy” and ἔχθρα (ek-thra) is “enmity.” Same root, but the “enmity” is the means the “enemy” uses to accuse us before God - in this case, our sinfulness. He is correct of course, and accuses accurately. But without God’s act of reconciliation in Christ, Satan would hold the power based in God’s own truth and decree, and mankind would be lost and without hope. But now, because of God’s provision in Christ, we can exult in hope and in God - and even in the time of our tribulations - resting secure in the future God has promised to all who believe and trust Him through Christ.

5:12-14,

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—(13: for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.)⁶⁵ 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.”

12: Reflecting on verses 6-11, and mankind being helpless sinners without God sending Christ, Paul anticipates and answers the objection made by many in the question, “What about the Old Testament patriarchs before the Law?” He initiates a new argument to further his point. This is also to put the Jews on notice about their own relationship to God, which they may think favorable, based on the Law and circumcision.

But in these verses Paul points out that sin was in the world even without the Law because it entered the world in Adam. The death penalty was imposed on man’s sin

⁶⁵ Parentheses only are mine to show the additional thought interjected into the narrative. Verses 12-19 are a single unit of thought by Paul.

even prior to the Law. Sin existed, and though the Law had not been formally established, it was clear to the patriarchs what the will of God was concerning their faith and conduct.⁶⁶ Though there was no codified Law, a man could not say he had not sinned. Yet specifics had not been identified, and in the Egyptian season, Israel lost much of its own identity, the identity of their God and much of their own heritage.

13: Though sin was in the world, and death its result, sin was not “imputed” because the Law had not been given. What does “not imputed” mean? It means the offense was not specifically “defined” in terms of what law had been broken, but existed none the less.⁶⁷

So the Law came in to clarify all of this and to “increase the transgression” (verse 20 and Exodus 20:20). Under it "sins" now took definition and they had levels of consequence. Prior to the Law, all died since all sinned. Under the Law, a person knew exactly what the individual sins were and amounted to. There was no excuse. (Romans 1:20)

14: But it didn't matter that the Law had not been given. Death reigned from Adam to Moses proving sin had been committed by all peoples since Adam.⁶⁸ Paul also dealt with the “why” of this in chapter two. The offense of Adam was an informed disobedience of a direct commandment from God. Paul notes in I Corinthians 15:21-22, “For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.”

The Jewish view of mankind is that all were “in Adam” to begin with. That is, in his reproductive organs. This is illustrated in Hebrews 7:9-10, “And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.” That is why death reigned from Adam to Moses, because the death penalty was given to Adam and thus to all mankind.

Yet Adam was a “type” of Him who was to come. What does this mean? Well, first, the word “type” means a stamped out image, such as a coin, a seal or perhaps an image chiseled out in rock. In what way did Christ fulfill this? Several possibilities have been offered as to the intent of this rather enigmatic phrase. I think the best understanding could point out that both Adam and Christ were the first of a special creation - both without sin - both the progenitor of a new chapter in the relationship of

⁶⁶ See: Genesis 4:7, 18:20, 20:9, 31:36, 39:9, 50:17; Exodus 20:20 etc. The Hebrew for "sin" is consistent throughout.

⁶⁷ "Imputed" is not a good translation. It suggests that a person is not counted as having sinned. The term Paul uses is only used twice in the N. T., both times by him. A better understanding would be that the description or detail of the "sin" is not defined where there is no codified law, but the sin is real and recognized by both God and man, codified or not. It is specified, however in each case. This may be a reflection of chapter one, especially verse 32.

⁶⁸ Genesis 2:17, "...you will surely die."

man with God - but with a distinct contrast and result. Paul uses this same idea in I Corinthians 15:45-47 where he writes,

“So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL."⁶⁹ The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.”

We can say from this that the first Adam was of the earth, the second from heaven. Adam then, is a type of Christ in that he was the first of an earthly-temporal reality resulting in death, but Christ the first of a spiritual-heavenly reality resulting in eternal life. This interpretation makes sense and is correct in light of the following comments by Paul as he presents a series of contrasts repeating the point many times verse by verse. The gift he speaks of in the following passage is "righteousness" and "justification."

5:15-19,

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. 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.”

15: “free gift” – brings us back to 3:23-24, which says, “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as *a gift* by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;...”

Beginning here, Paul lists a series of contrasts the gift brought to man by Christ with the transgression brought to man by Adam. It is a “On the one hand...on the other hand” series of contrasts as noted in 16. So, in verse 15 we have “on the one hand” by the one man’s transgression many died⁷⁰ while “on the other hand” by a man’s grace

⁶⁹ "Human being."

⁷⁰ Generally, the term many in a specific context like this intends to mean “all.”

justification came to many. We know the “gift” is justification, not salvation from both 3:24 and 5:18.

"The many" are "all men" (people) as we see in verse 18. It stands in contrast to "the one" in verse 15. It also stands in contrast to just the Jews alone as some might think.

16: On the one hand, Adam (mankind) brought forth judgment and condemnation for sin while on the other hand Christ brought forth justification for sin. So the results are different between the two; the transgression resulted in condemnation, the gift resulted in justification. This may be another subtle way Paul has of underscoring that one's justification before God cannot come from himself any more than a man can wash his hands clean in a bowl of his own filth.

17-18: The contrasts continue. On the one hand, from the transgression of the one, death Resulted. On the other hand, from the gift of justification life resulted. And from one transgression (act of sin) condemnation to all men resulted while from one act of righteousness, justification of life to all men resulted.

19: In other words, by one man's disobedience all were made sinners, while through the obedience of the One man, all will be made righteous.

The beauty of this is that for us believers in Christ who were once “earthy” and heirs of Adam and therefore of death, we are now of “heaven” and heirs of God in Christ. Paul will say this in Romans 8:17, “...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*.” Though still in this earthy environment and body, we give,

“...thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:12-14

Thus we exult in God as well as in hope and tribulation.

5:20-21,

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.”

20: We have the final contrasts in this section. In verse 20 it is, “On the one hand The law caused the transgression (sin) to increase while on the other hand as sin increased, grace abounded all the more due to Christ our Lord.

21: The idea is that as sin rules in the realm or kingdom of death, grace rules in the realm or kingdom of righteousness leading to eternal life because of our Lord Jesus Christ and our faith in Him.

The word “reign” is the Greek word for “king” or “supreme ruler.”⁷¹ So sin is king in the realm of death. But now, we no longer live in that kingdom. We live in the kingdom of righteousness where Christ rules as the supreme monarch. We, by God’s grace have been transferred from the kingdom of sin, darkness and death to the kingdom of righteousness, light and life.⁷² We no longer exist in the old kingdom nor can it have Any power or effect over us ever again.

⁷¹ “Basileuoh”

⁷² Colossians 1:13

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER SIX

6:1-4,

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; 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.”

Note: To underscore the previous point, Paul is about to employ a physical metaphor to illustrate a spiritual reality. The student must be aware of the two as he interprets the following passage. It can be viewed as a story of two kingdoms. The tendency to get confused by the English text, especially at verse 6, stems from losing this concept and missing the frequent use of corresponding parallelisms employed along the way as we saw in chapter five. I will attempt to point these out and keep the narrative on track. Meanwhile, to see what is going on, one could jump from 5:20-21 to 8:1 ff. without skipping a beat or including chapters 6 and 7. So this section is particularly in need of careful interpretation.

1: Paul now addresses a key problem facing the church in Rome. He has touched on this already and now is ready to spend quite a bit of time on it. It is the matter of conduct under the jurisdiction of grace. He continues the “contrast” medium and addresses the point that some might raise and precludes it; “Well then, in that case let us continue in sin⁷³ since we will be covered by grace.” Paul was accused of teaching this as many grace teachers are, and dealt with this accusation in 3:8. The attitude that we can sin because grace will cover it spotlights a serious heart issue and may well reveal that this person is not a true Christian at all (Philippians 3:15-21).

⁷³ The term “sin” would generate the thought of breaking the Law in the mind of the Jew (I John 3:4; I Samuel 15:24; Daniel 9:11; etc.

What the opponents of the teaching of salvation and freedom in Christ by His grace fail to consider is that the heart of the believer is changed and ministered to by the Holy Spirit in all true believers, and that the desires are changed from desiring to walk in opposition to God and His Spirit to desiring to walk in accord with God and His Spirit. As Paul says over and over again throughout his epistles, we are to be led by the Spirit, not by the flesh.⁷⁴ He does not get further into this important matter until chapter eight, (other than a brief comment in 2:29 and 7:6). Until then, some of what he says can be misunderstood as we shall see.

Being led by the flesh also includes the attempt to be righteous by keeping the Law. Not the law's intent according to Paul. Quite the opposite. The law reveals sin and brings condemnation and death to all who rely on their keeping of it for righteousness before God.⁷⁵ Yet, many of those opposing the grace teachers are legalists in this fashion.

His response to the idea that we can thus continue in sin because we are covered by grace is that God forbids such an attitude. Further, he poses another rhetorical question to point out the absurdity of such an idea.

2: "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" The "we" is obviously editorial as he identifies with those who are believers, yet seem to deny this by their conduct. He, of course, does not conduct himself in the manner he is about to describe. This type of use of the editorial "we" is common and yet often misunderstood by the contemporary western reader.⁷⁶

He explains the answer to this question in the following verses using a physical act to illustrate a spiritual reality. But bottom line, the point is that nothing can affect a dead person as we shall see. In Christ we died to sin. Not that we don't sin, but that sin has no effect on us visa-vi our relationship with God because we are dead to its penalty because of Jesus' sacrifice.

Rather than live under the power (or kingdom – 5:21) of sin then, we now live in newness of life – verse 4 coming up. Paul repeats and illustrates this in different ways several times as he progresses. The point is that being dead (to sin) means that one cannot be affected by it again as far as God is concerned. We must also separate the forensic/spiritual reality in which we exist in Christ from the fleshly reality in which we exist on this earth without moving into the heresy noted in verse one, adopted by one branch of Gnosticism in Paul's day.

⁷⁴ Romans 8:4-5, 12-14; Galatians 5:16, 18, 25.

⁷⁵ II Corinthians 3:6-18

⁷⁶ I John 1:9 is a good example of this misunderstanding. Often applied to Christians, this is not John's intent as clear if one were to actually read verses 8 and 10 as well where John is not one of those included in his use of "we" or "us." The same holds true of the Book of Hebrews and many other New Testament passages.

3: “Do you not know?” This question ties chapters six and seven together in a series of three illustrations sandwiched between chapter five and chapter eight. This question occurs again in 6:16; 7:1 and introduces three distinct analogies to the truth that those who place their faith in Christ are then dead to the Law, and severed from its condemnation and death penalty.

Paul could have moved from the end of chapter five to the beginning of chapter eight quite smoothly. But his intense desire to reach his Jewish brethren in Rome, who stand confused and unsure of the provisions of the New Covenant by grace through faith, is paramount. So he takes the time to hammer home the truth that they can indeed leave the Law, its condemnation and death penalty and be saved, have hope and peace with God. It would take courage, faith and submission to the truth of the gospel to do this and many Jews, bound in tradition, will find this a major challenge.

So the question(s) “Do you not know” set his readers/hearers up since they ought to know and realize the spiritual meaning of Baptism. After all, it is a Jewish tradition. Paul appears to be a little exasperated at this point. Being baptized into Christ in the physical act is a portrait of being dead with Christ-to sin and its effect- in our relationship spiritually with God.

When one is dead, nothing of this world can affect them. Thus sin is of no effect, whether past, present or future. In Christ, pictured by baptism, we are dead to the previous state in which we lived, a state of mortal life from Adam, and thus dead to a state of sin and even to its consequence death itself in the spiritual kingdom in which we now reside in Christ (Ephesians 2:1-7). So we begin to see the contrast between the life ruled by sin and death versus the newness of life possessed in Christ pictured in baptism. Two kingdoms, as it were, believers transferred from one to the other through faith in Christ.

4: The power of sin (which is death) is no longer applicable. Now, we must not confuse the power (or kingdom) of sin with the power of the flesh. That’s another matter and a part of the earthly environment we live in now. The first is forensic, legal and spiritual and the gavel has been struck by God. “Not guilty” is the verdict.

We are free and now can leave the judgment that would have been ours to walk in newness of life. Baptism pictures this. However, the power of the flesh is still there, but the walk in newness of life will begin to erode that power as well. We will return to the courtroom illustration in a moment to look at another facet of this matter.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ For a thorough study on "Baptism" see: www.bibleclassroom.org. under "studies", "controversial topics", "Is Baptism Required for Salvation."

6:5-7,

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; 7: for he who has died is freed from sin.”

5: Our faith unites us with Christ. Thus we are united with both His death and burial (to sin) and by reasonable conclusion, also to His resurrection (to life). Baptism pictures this. If united in one then united in both. It is a certainty. Can’t have one without the other.

6: A complex and difficult verse to grasp at first. Verse six repeats verse five as a parallelism having within it another parallelism as well.⁷⁸ Applying verse five to our spiritual lives then, the old self was crucified as well. In other words, it died. The “old self” is literally “our worn out or old man.” The phrase in verse six,

(“τουτο γινωσκοντες οτι ο παλαιος ημων ανθρωπος συνεσταυρωθη ινα καταργηθη το σωμα της αμαρτιας του μηκει δουλευειν ημας τη αμαρτια”)

translates literally, “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with (*him*) in order to render useless (“destroyed” or “powerless”) the body of sin so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”

Though speaking in physical terminology, Paul is actually describing a spiritual reality. This is the point most miss. He is not speaking of the realm of the flesh here. Here’s why. If he were, then when one came to faith in Christ he would drop dead. The phrase “old man” refers to that state of the person prior to faith and newness of life. It corresponds and is parallel with “body of sin.” This is not the flesh. It is what we might understand in using the term of what a person produces called the “body of his work.” In this case it is the “body of sin.” That is all gone and can no longer affect the believer. Albert Barnes says it this way, “It (*the old man crucified*)⁷⁹ refers to the moral destruction of the power of sin in the heart by the gospel, and not to any physical change in the nature of the faculties of the soul.”⁸⁰ He realizes this is a spiritual reality pictured in physical terms.

The believer is no longer under any of that through his spiritual rebirth and new life in

⁷⁸ A parallelism is a style that repeats the previous phrase (or verse) in other terms. However the meaning and intent is the same. A good example of this technique is found throughout the Book of Proverbs. It is a common and frequent technique of Hebrew writers to clarify and emphasize a point. Paul uses it often as he does the rhetorical question as we saw in chapter five for example.

⁷⁹ My clarification.

⁸⁰ “Albert Barne’s Notes on the Bible”, from E-Sword, online.

Christ. He is in a new kingdom and under a new king. The old kingdom and king has passed away and is gone forever along with the old man that once lived there. (II Corinthians 5:14-17). It cannot and will not affect the believer's place in God's kingdom. It is not that we "might" not be slaves to sin, but that we "will" not be slaves to sin. This doesn't mean we never sin. This means we are no longer under the dominance, power and control of the kingdom of sin and its consequences as far as God is concerned and therefore not subject, enslaved or bound to that "ruler" or his kingdom anymore. We have been transferred to the kingdom of His dear Son through faith in Him who paid the penalty for sin for us.

Now, verse six is in parallel with verse five and is stating the same thing. We know this because of the beginning phrase in verse six, "knowing this, that..." and Paul reiterates the point of verse five in different terms.

The point at the end of verse six is that sin no longer holds sway over us because it and its power, kingdom and king are destroyed as far as the spiritual and eternal aspect goes. Verse seven concludes and confirms this.

Another way to understand this is by simply moving from one jurisdiction to another. Let's take the two kingdom idea to illustrate. In one kingdom, due to sin we are now bound in it, enslaved to it and its king with no way out. We are under the condemnation and penalty of death for our sin and this is by God's decree and Law. God created this kingdom for us but we rejected God and broke His holy and righteous Law leaving us in this kingdom and to our own devices.

But God in His grace and mercy also had another kingdom already prepared, not of physical and fleshly stuff, but of the spiritual. By His love and grace, He paid the price Himself for our sin through His Son who left the spiritual kingdom to come into the earthly one. Those who place their faith in Him and His Son for this gracious and loving act are declared righteous and citizens of the spiritual kingdom though still physically in the earthly kingdom and in the flesh.

However, they exist in the flesh here under the authority of the spiritual kingdom, not the earthly in God's eyes. This means that nothing the flesh does can affect their citizenship or benefit given to them by God as citizens of His kingdom. The believer is "dead" to the first kingdom and nothing in it or in the flesh can affect him ever again. Still, as Paul will highlight, this is not freedom to just sin.

Now, all of this does not magically or instantly change the fleshly lives we live. We may "sin" in many different ways and times, but it has no effect on our relationship with God in Christ because we are in Christ and not in the kingdom of sin. It does,

however, affect us in our hearts, minds and spirits and in our lives and relationships...if we allow it to. Paul addresses this beginning in verse eight.

As Scott Davis notes, “This (new life under grace) provides the means for us to be free from the actual fleshly slavery to sin. We have something new in our lives now. We are forensically free from sin’s penalty and now also have a power to offset sin’s control in the flesh.”⁸¹

Sin of the flesh, by the way, is understood in two ways in Paul and John. First, it is the motivation of self and pride that seeks righteousness by living a perfect and obedient life, especially in regard to the Law of God. Second, it is the desire of the flesh to engage in disobedience to righteousness and the law of God. Neither extremes of this pendulum swing are God’s way as Paul will explain shortly.

[Also note: In the NIV the term “flesh” (“sarx” in the Greek) is translated “carnal nature.” This is very misleading and often preached that we battle and are bound in some carnal condition we cannot escape. Not true in any sense or use of the word as Paul will argue that we are to put off the works of the flesh which would be impossible if it were not possible to do]

7: Simple and restated. If one is dead nothing can affect him. Therefore sin has no hold on him nor power over him to bring about the death penalty of the Law.

6:8-11,

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.”

8-10: Again, a restatement of previous thoughts. But Paul now turns to our lives here in the flesh and how we can begin to put away the effects of sin in our fleshy bodies.

First, being in Christ also means being with Christ, both in His death (to sin and its consequences) and in His resurrection life (which is eternal.) Death is defeated and will never occur again for those who are in Him. For example, in I Corinthians 15:54 Paul writes, “But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.”

⁸¹ Scott Davis (parentheses mine).

Second, following verse 9, (“...knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him”) we have the contrast that Jesus died “to sin” but lives “to God.” In other words, it is done. This is bolstered by the phrase that he died “once for all.” The original Greek “eph-ah-pahx” - “once for all”) is used to present the fact that there is no need of any other sacrifice because Christ’s death finishes and completes the provision for all sacrifices, all religious efforts for all people, past, present and future.⁸²

His work in reference to sin (and its consequence - death) is complete and now He lives solely in reference to God (in full righteousness and eternal life). We also will share that reality with Christ one day but even in this life our “sins” are not accounted against us because of who we are in Christ. In other words, the benefit of the world to come applies to us now (I John 4:17; Romans 6:11; Galatians 2:19-20; Colossians 3:3-5). Thus, like Christ, we live our lives in reference to God not in reference to sin and death. For that reason, Paul writes what follows, namely, the putting off of the deeds and dominance of the sins of the flesh.

In addition, we see that Christ “died once for all.” Since Christ died for our sins and became sin for us all – the world (II Corinthians 5:2, John 1:29, I John 2:2), the penalty for sin was done away with and sin no longer held sway over anyone in terms of anyone being subject to death because of it. However, this is not salvation and eternal life. A person still remains in death, but does not have life, not because sin has been dethroned, but because of the failure to receive life through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. (3:23, 6:23) We have more to say about this in the comments on verse seven.

This is illustrated in Hebrews where the writer makes it clear that the reason for not being in the promised land, (though the entrance and victory provided by God was there) was that they didn’t believe.⁸³ And in Hebrews 11:6, we read the without faith it is impossible to please God.

Now, returning to the courtroom and a question stemming from the commentary on verse three, “If the sins of the world are removed in Christ’s death, (verse 10) does verse six apply to the world as well in that they are no longer slaves to sin?” The answer is that it doesn’t fully apply because of the death penalty.

Verse seven says, “...for he who has died is freed from sin.” The Greek word for “freed” is dik-ai-ah-oh, meaning “declared righteous” or even “acquitted” (as the NASB footnote declares). But this declaration is only for those who “have died” – that is placed their faith in Christ (verses 3-4).

⁸² See the: “Theological Dictionary of The New Testament”, Volume I, Pages 3781-384, Eerdmans, 1964 Also see the article entitled, "The finished Work of Christ" at www.bibleclassroom.org under studies, controversial topics.

⁸³ Hebrews 4:1-3

One is declared righteous on the basis of his faith. Though Jesus paid the price for all men, and the sin penalty removed for all people, only those who now come to faith are declared righteous. Further, they are reborn and given the Holy Spirit. They are also transferred to a new kingdom, removed forever from the old and its destiny.

In the courtroom illustration, two men have their fine paid for them. One puts his trust and faith in the judge's mercy and grace. Because of this, he is given a new home, a new status with the judge, an exemption from ever suffering the penalty for sin (crime) ever again, a new life wherein his heart is moved to walk in a new way pleasing to the judge and walks out of the courtroom a new person no longer subject to penalties he once was subject to ...filled with gratitude and hope and joy, etc.

The other, though his fine was paid, ignores the judge's mercy and walks out still the same person he was. Still dead in sin with no power to change that status (though he thinks he is just fine and that it was his good works that got him off). Not alive to God at all. He goes about the same man he was, continues to sin and live in a godless way. Not because he is still under the penalty for sin, but because he hasn't taken the step of faith to be declared righteous and gain the benefits and inheritance of heaven.

11: Paul applies this to us here in the flesh saying, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." In other words, as Christ is finished with the sin issue, so we also may "consider" that we are as well. The word "consider" (or "reckon") is an accounting term. It is also used in Romans 4:3, "'ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

This means that as believers with Abraham and united to Christ by faith, we can zero out the debt and consequences sin has totaled in our ledger – forever. We no longer have that on our record and are free from the debt. Christ paid it and due to our faith in Him it is also paid for us in full – forever.

Now, we also live our lives in reference to God (in full righteousness and eternal life) and never have to live in reference to sin again.

6:12-14,

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."

The point isn't that we will not sin or occasionally succumb to the desires of the flesh in some way. But these are not to control our lives and drive our lives into avenues we

do not wish to travel. We are to keep them under control so our lives, rather than be enslaved to our flesh will be used in service to God.

12-13a: Now, Paul presents the application of the spiritual reality to us who must still live in the flesh on this earth. Though verse 11 is true, it is not a license to indulge in sin. On the contrary, one now has both the motivation and the obligation to put away sinful activity. Bottom line, it is a matter of a choice in one's heart (verse 17).

Verse 12 and verse 13a are in parallel construction, a typical Hebrew form of expression and emphasis as we have already seen. The “do not” is that “sin” and “unrighteousness” are to be kept under control. The mortal body is to be used for God's work and glory, not for sin's work. There is the subtle hint of a change of both identity and purpose for our lives. He use the term “mortal body” to differentiate from other applications of the Greek word for “body” – “soma” which has a wide application to various themes and subjects.

Paul does not list what the “lusts,” “sin” and “unrighteousness” consist of. Perhaps the list is so long he leaves it to the Spirit to tell us personally. I mean the list could include everything from greed, ambition, sexual lust and adultery, profanity, anger, fear, gluttony, drug addiction, theft, lying, and the like to even self-righteousness by obedience to the Law that might include pride, prejudice, looking down on others, and so much more. He makes a list of such things in Galatians 5:19-21, but we can only speculate if that is what he has in mind here.

13b: We are to consider ourselves as “alive from the dead.” Our walk in “newness of life” (verse 4) must include not only refraining from using our bodies for ungodly purposes, but instead using them for the Lord and His purposes.

14: An interesting blend of the two ideas regarding the works of the flesh discussed in the note at 6:1. “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” Sin shall not be your “Lord” is the more accurate rendering. Why? Because you are under grace, not under law. Interestingly, Paul makes a comparison to being under the Law, not just with sin as one's Lord thereby, but also with the unrighteous works of the flesh, as if they were stimulated by the law as well.

Sin is not to be Lord of our lives. The secret of controlling the fleshly lusts is recognizing we are under Grace – with Christ as Lord, not under law – with sin as lord.

Let me add that the goal of the Christian life is not to stop sinning. That would be bondage and discouragement as one would constantly be fighting oneself and focusing on this. However, the goal is not to continuing in sin either. The point is something quite apart from sin at all and that is our goal ought to be to know, serve and love Him.

As Paul noted in Philippians 3:7-21,

7: “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8: More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9: and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, 10: that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11: in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12: Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13: Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, 14: I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15: Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; 16 however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained. 17: Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 18: For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, 19: whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20: For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21: 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.”

6:15-16,

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

15: Paul asks this question again (see: verse 1 of this chapter) addressing this argument once again. He has dealt with this issue twice so far (Romans 3:8, 6:1). He uses the exact same language here and in 6:1. (See the comments at 6:1) It now becomes apparent that this is indeed one of the issues that has been plaguing the little church in Rome. Like in Corinth, there seems to be those who are using the grace and mercy of God as a license to overtly sin. The same problem was occurring in Corinth

from where Paul is writing this letter.⁸⁴

16: Paul continues his discourse begun at verses 11-12 with a second illustration to show his readers how foolish, contradictory and destructive it is to submit to the power and mastery of sin now that one is a believer under grace.

“Do you not know” again helps us know he is tying this to the previous theme and continuing it. It also tells us that his readers did know about slavery in their world. An indentured slave, for example, is one who places himself under such obedience to pay off a debt or to secure a favor. Many poor people who desired to come to this country from Europe centuries ago would seek out a wealthy person and beg for him to pay for their passage submitting to an agreed time of servitude after the voyage in order to repay the debt.

His point is not that Christians will never sin again, but that they must never allow sin to rule their lives, i.e. - be the master or Lord of their lives. We are not to submit to sin so that we will be enslaved by it. Why submit to that which brought death? This includes both the submission to the lusts of the flesh and to the Law.

This recalls the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other." When you present yourself to a master for obedience, you forfeit the presenting of yourself to another master. Since you have presented yourself to Christ unto righteousness, you are no longer free to obey unrighteousness. The slave of Christ reaps righteousness, the slave of sin, death.

This “death” is not the loss of eternal life, otherwise we would all be doomed after one sin or the failure to simply have them all disappear. Paul is using an illustration to point out that our new life in Christ is where our submission must lie, not at sin’s feet. Whether relying on righteousness by submitting to the law, or in contrast submitting to the power of sin and the flesh, the new life in Christ will be less effective and carry the defeat and smell of death.

6:17-19,

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. 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*

⁸⁴ I Corinthians 5:1; 6:15-18;

lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”

6:17-19: These two verses indicate that Paul is addressing people within the congregation in Rome where Prisca and Aquila host the church in their home. From the introduction I copy the following note: “It appears that there is a great struggle consisting of many arenas: 1. Considerable conflict among a number of Jews about the place of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God; 2. The place of the law in the plan of salvation and the life of the believer; 3. The matter of Christian conduct by both Jews and Gentiles; 4. The matter of understanding the entire gospel message and its application to believers. He will also address dietary issues between the Jews and Gentiles including the matter of the “weaker brother” and more.”

Here, he is not thankful that they were slaves of sin, make no mistake. But he is thankful that while in that state they became obedient to the teaching given to them,⁸⁵ and they did so from the heart. Freed from both the penalty and power of sin, (the Law -I Corinthians 15:56) they became “slaves of righteousness.” This means they changed masters. But Paul does not define what this means or how this works. In most cases, we could think he means to become slaves to the obedience of the Law. But we know that is not the case. Freedom from sin certainly does not mean freedom to engage in activities contrary to the Law as some teach and as some accused Paul of teaching. But what it means to be a slave of righteousness will be clarified later in the epistle.

But Paul understands the weakness of the flesh.⁸⁶ This is not the issue in terms of salvation but is one of the issues in living as a slave of Christ. The power to choose still exists, and now with the ability to choose righteous living he is urging that his readers (especially the gentiles here) make the adjustment.

6:20-23,

20: For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 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. 23: For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

20-21: When a slave to sin, there was no power or desire to live righteously without seeking some benefit for self (the flesh). Now there is. But to choose to live sinfully anyway not only is shameful and prohibited by God, but reaps no benefit because those things are the things that led to death, not life.

⁸⁵ The intent of the Greek. The NASB translation here, like others is unclear as to the intent of the passage.

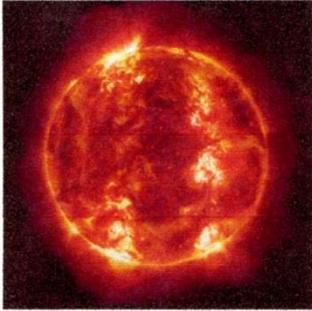
⁸⁶ This is clear in chapter 7.

But the great benefit of serving God is sanctification and life, ultimately eternal life.

22: This is an established and finished fact for those who have put their faith in Christ from the heart. Thus live in “slavery” to Him not in a fashion that once brought you shame. It derives the greatest of benefits. “Sanctification” is holiness, a life separated from the world wherein one existed to a life set apart solely for His service. The end result of being “freed from sin and enslaved to God” is eternal life. Paul urges living in a manner worthy and consistent with this new identity.

23: Self- explanatory. The wages sin always reaps is death. But God’s gift in Christ is life. Paul will now begin to clear up all this in chapters 7-8.

The following page shows a diagram to simplify Paul’s teaching in chapter six. We are to live on this earth accordingly with who we are in Christ and as citizens of His kingdom.



THE EARTHLY KINGDOM

RULER – SATAN

HE RULES THROUGH THE AGENCY OF MAN (CARNALITY)

SPIRITUALLY MANKIND IS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF GOD'S LAW

THIS RESULTS IN SIN AND BONDAGE (SLAVERY)

RESULTING IN DEATH

BY FAITH WE ARE TRANSFERRED FROM THIS JURISDICTION TO THE JURISDICTION OF GRACE. WE ARE CITIZENS OF THIS KINGDOM THOUGH WE STILL LIVE IN THE FLESH ON THE EARTH. (COLOSSIANS 1:13; PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21). IN OTHER WORDS, THOUGH WE LIVE ON THIS EARTH IN THE FLESH,

SPIRITUALLY WE ARE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM NOT THE EARTHLY. WE ARE TO LIVE ON THE EARTH ACCORDINGLY WITH WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST AND AS CITIZENS OF HIS KINGDOM.



THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM

RULER - GOD

HE RULES THROUGH THE AGENCY OF JESUS CHRIST (HOLINESS)

SPIRITUALLY, THOSE OF FAITH ARE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF GRACE

THIS RESULTS IN BEING DECLARED RIGHTEOUS (FREEDOM)

RESULTING IN LIFE

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER SEVEN

7:1-6,

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?”

Comment: This is the third use of this question and ties chapters six and seven together and sandwiches them between five and eight.⁸⁷ The theme is identical, but as is Paul's style, he repeats his point in different ways so hopefully his readers will get it. In so doing, Paul engages in a type of “role play” himself becoming a personification of the typical Jewish man later in the chapter. By this time, one can see the passion Paul has for his Jewish brothers in the assembly to whom he is writing. Chapters 7-9 sees this intensify, and in 9:1-5 he writes,

1: “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2: that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3: For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4: who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, 5: whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”

Paul's concern for these Jews in Rome gives us a hint as to what was in the communique Paul received from the Priscilla and Aquila and the little congregation that met in their home. The message to Paul was clear in its concern for the Jews in the assembly who struggled and fought against fully committing to the intent and meaning of the gospel because it would cut them from their bond to the law. It begged Paul to help explain it to them so that reception and understanding would come to the hearts of these men and that they would come to salvation by grace through faith and not remain in bondage to the law and the works of the flesh. The dependence of the Jew upon the keeping of the law as God's will for his life and the means of salvation was so ingrained and set in stone that to move him from it would take a miracle indeed. So Paul gives it his best shot.

⁸⁷ Chapter and verse divisions were not done by any Biblical writer, but created over a period of 300 years beginning in the 13th century and completed in the 16th century. The reason for the length of time was due to a lack of receptivity for this system as well as the development of the system we have today.

Paul now takes the point of 5:19-6:23 and contrasts it with the alternative condition of trying to exist in a state of peace and security while under the jurisdiction of the law. To get the Jews to whom he is writing to move from their attachment to the law to freedom in Christ is no small task. So he employs four illustrations about sin, condemnation and death (referring to the Law) and freedom, righteousness and life in Christ to aid the Jew in being able to make the transition without fear, guilt or regret.

One could jump from 5:21 to 8:1 without any interruption at all. So we must recognize that the following chapter sandwiched in between is not the condition of the believer who is resting in grace, but of the Jew who is struggling with himself and his relationship with God based on him being under the law. He might well believe in Christ, but his bondage to the law leaves him incomplete in rest and peace as Paul describes in 5:1-2. However, many believers struggle with the same issues Paul brings up but must recognize that there is no condemnation at all for those that are in Christ Jesus as he concludes in 8:1 ff.. We will see later in this chapter that Paul writes of a dilemma and does so in the first person and the present tense even though at the writing he is already free from the matter he writes about.

We know he is particularly addressing Jews in his audience from the very first verse of chapter 7.

1: “or do you not know...” tells us Paul is launching into another re-telling of the point he is trying to make so his hearers will get it. Paul continues, using another illustration beginning with the same phrase as in 6:1 and 6:16, “Do you not know?”

“Brethren” here is inclusive of the Jews in this discussion and illustration as he makes clear. But the gentiles who read or listen will be able to get the point even though they had never fully lived with this understanding.

The law, particularly in the marriage, has “jurisdiction” (“master” or “lord” over) a person (literally, “a man”) but here Paul focuses on the wife in a marriage) as long as he or she is alive. He or she is bound by it and to it in this instance. The following tells us that Paul’s focus is on the wife in the Jewish marriage. Yet the point of the illustration is primarily for the men and we can all learn something from this.

Now, just a note. Paul is not using this analogy to talk about marriage. He is using it to talk about how one is able to be released from the law and be joined to Christ by faith through grace. The following is an illustration specifically to that point.

7:2-4,

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

2: While her husband lives, the wife is bound by The Law to him. When he dies she is no longer bound and may seek another. This illustration is not actually about marriage, but about Law and Grace, Moses and Christ if you will.⁸⁸ The same point was made using the illustration of baptism in chapter six. Death frees one from bondage to that to which he was enslaved while still alive.

3: Restating the same point noting that if the wife joins herself to another man while her husband is living she is an adulteress (violating the Law and subject to death.) But, again, if her husband is dead and she joins herself to another man, she is free of the penalty of the Law since she is no longer an adulteress.

4a: “Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another...”

He leaves the analogy and now applies it to the point he wants to make. The illustration does not exactly correspond with the elements Paul is trying to explain. But the point is clear. In the illustration, the Law takes the role of the husband, who in dying, legally frees his wife to be joined to another man. The Jews are in the role of the wife. The only difference is that it isn't the Law that dies, but the person who dies to the Law still freeing them to join to Christ. If one brings in the baptism portrait, this corresponds in the same way. The law, sin, and its penalty cannot affect a dead person.

In other words, the Law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he is alive. But when he dies, the Law has no jurisdiction. In Christ we are dead as far as the Law is concerned. It no longer has jurisdiction over us. Like in a marriage, then, a wife is free to join herself to another after her husband dies, but not before. The Law is like the husband. He has jurisdiction until he dies (or she does and then the remaining partner is free to remarry). In like manner we are now free to be joined to Christ because we are free from the jurisdiction of the Law.

⁸⁸ However, the actual thought does apply to marriage, and it is repeated in I Corinthians 7:39-40, “A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.”

4b: "... so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." The purpose in joining to the risen Christ is to bear "fruit for God." This would be the fruit of life, not death. Paul makes this point in verses 5-6. Notice he has now moved from the personal pronoun "you" to "we."

The further ramifications would include all the world since the Law was fulfilled and thus done away with in the death of Christ for all mankind. All that remains now is the act of faith for salvation to occur. Many churches still refuse to believe that the work of redemption and forgiveness is finished for all people for all time.

The magnitude of what Christ did is often reduced to "Christ plus my works equals salvation." Too often those "works" are simply acts of the flesh that the church imposes in order for a person to be right with God defeating the intent of Jesus dying words, "It is finished."⁸⁹ Further, "faith" is defined too often by the doing of the works of the flesh rather than walking in the Spirit or being led by the Spirit. Even that is often defined in terms of "works of the flesh." Christianity becomes little more than Old Testament Judaism with a limited or token recognition of the real accomplishment of Jesus death on the cross.

Again, notice the change of pronoun in verse four moving from "you" to "we." Paul is drawing them into becoming a part of that which he and others now enjoy.

7:5-6,

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."

5: We now have an "in other words" segment. Paul now contrasts that which bears fruit for death and that which brings fruit for life as he continues to amplify the discourse. He begins with the Jewish life before conversion by faith in Christ and compares it with bearing fruit for death. So he begins when he and others were "...in the flesh" under the Law outside of the Spirit (i.e. "unsaved") then, our sin was revealed by the law and the fruit of death was imposed. "Aroused" is supplied, but perhaps the idea is better stated as "revealed and convicted" by the Law.

For example, Paul focuses in on "coveting" in verse 7 and until the Law specified this as sinful, who would have had an idea? But when it became revealed by the Law as a

⁸⁹ For more on this, see my work on the Book of Hebrews on my website, www.bibleclassroom.org.

sin, those who found themselves coveting, whether the neighbor's house, wife, servants, donkeys or anything else realized it was a sin and that those desires then were understood as bearing fruit for death. Here he contrasts this with "fruit for God" in verse 4. Being joined to the Law bears fruit for death because the Law reveals one's sinfulness. Dying to the Law and being joined to Christ bears fruit for God and for life.

6: So now we are "released" from the Law. The word "released" is a powerful word. In the Greek it is καταργέω (kaht-ar-geh-oh). It means, "to render inoperative", "to abolish", "bring to an end", "sever" or do away with."

In other words, the Law is dead to us and us to the Law freeing us to be joined to Christ. This is true for all peoples, but the Jews in Paul's audience would need to know this in order to loosen their grip on the Law and all the traditions that go along with it.

Now, joined to Christ by faith, we "serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter."⁹⁰ Essentially, being led by the Spirit is to be open to His presence and allow Him to use us in every part of our lives for the benefit of others. To be led by and motivated by the Spirit's power within us and this means to both bear and offer the fruit of the Spirit as well as truth, grace, mercy, love, and power of God as the Spirit infuses us and to reject being led by legalism, the fleshly lusts and human pride and self-centeredness.

7:7-8,

7: 'What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COVET.' 8: But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin *is* dead."

7: Paul is assuring his readers that he is not condemning the Law. Then, he enters upon a discourse with himself as the subject. In carefully examining this chapter and the larger context, I propose that Paul is engaging in a role play using himself as a personification of the Jews and their honest struggle with the Law versus what is offered in the New Covenant by faith in Christ. We will comment on this as we go along.

⁹⁰ www.bibleclassroom.org hosts a study on "Walking in the Wisdom of God" and discusses what being led by the Spirit entails. See under Bible Study, topical studies, pages 84-90.

As he delineates his struggles, we know that he is actually not in them as he writes. He projects a portrait of a real and true experience opening up his life so that his audience can see that he struggled with the same issues as everyone else. He does this so that his audience can identify with him and he with his audience.

So, in pointing out that the Law - revealing sin and condemning all of us to death – he asks the question, “Is the Law sin.” He answers this rhetorical question with a resounding “May it never be.” He wants to assure his audience that he is not “antinomian.”⁹¹ He does this by pointing out the purpose and value of the Law. Again, the Law specifies what sin is and the consequences. There can be no doubt once one compares one’s life against the Law. Paul uses the 10th commandment (“You shall not covet”) as an example. Paul notes that he would not know that coveting is a sin except for the Law. The commandment covers the coveting of anything. To covet in this context means to have a strong desire or lust of that which it is unlawful or immoral to obtain or possess.

8: The commandment, for example, brings sin to life. Apart from the commandment, sin “is dead”, that is it takes no living form and is not known or acknowledged when it occurs. The law gives us awareness of sin. It makes sin come to life but when it does it also brings the harbinger of death.

7:9-12,

9: “I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; 10: and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11: for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12: So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.”

9-11: This passage has given some scholars trouble when trying to interpret what Paul means when he uses the “alive” and “I died” references. Most agree that this is a personal reference to his past but can’t pin down what he might be referring to. One view is that it could simply refer to the “Bar Mitzvah” when a Jewish young man becomes “a son of the Law” at age thirteen and now is responsible for the fulfillment of all the commandments as a man. Perhaps for Paul, he thought this would be life in the fullest, but it ended up being the cause of spiritual death as, rather than enhance his life. As a man, he was “deceived” in that as the Law made him realize he was a sinner and that the penalty for that was death, he now felt deceived or disappointed.⁹²

⁹¹ A term out of the Reformation meaning, “Against the Law.” A view that Christians see no value or place for the law in their hearts or minds having been saved by grace through faith. This is not totally true as the tenants of the Law are written on the hearts of each believer, and though not under the Law Christians still have a consciousness of righteousness the Law provides though they are to be led by the Spirit in the conduct of their lives and not by the Law.

Perhaps this may reflect Genesis 3, where sin could be substituted for the voice of the Serpent. Violating the clear command of God and ignoring God's declaration of the consequences of disobedience, sin says of the word of God, "You surely shall not die", and believing it, Paul sinned and "died." Regardless, Paul soon realized that the commandments were not for him but against Him.

12: However, Paul came to realize that the Law and commandments were "holy, righteousness and good" because they spotlighted unrighteousness and sin and were in sharp contrast with the nature of men, even that of himself. This moved him to seek a way to please God and regain life. But keeping the Law was not the answer as he states in Philippians, chapter two.

While writing about this, he is moved to launch into a discourse about his own life and struggles under the jurisdiction of the Law (which he is no longer under).

7:13-14,

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. 14: For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin."

13: Paul uses the past tense here. It wasn't the law that was the problem even though he was not under condemnation until the law took effect against his life. The problem, he discovered, was his life.

Without the law, like Paul, we might never realize our need of redemption and grace through faith! With the result of sin being death – forever (6:23), mankind is hopeless without the redemptive plan of God, the faithfulness of Christ all based in God's love for the world.

The gospel lived in Christ, is His life preserver thrown out to us in an ocean and torrent of death. He does so because of His love for us. Faith is us reaching out and grasping the life preserver and holding on for dear life. There will be many who think they can make it on their own. God knows they can't and tells them so – and why (the law). But in pride and foolishness they refuse the preserver. Paul describes this in what follows.

14: Paul moves from an editorial "we" (inclusive of his Jewish audience) to the

⁹² Young Saul may have thought passages like Exodus 20:11; Leviticus 18:5; Nehemiah 9:29 and so on would generate life when in fact they actually did not.

personal “I.” His use of “I” rather than “we” or “you” from this point on is simply because he cannot separate himself from others as he just admitted that the law revealed his own sinfulness. Plus, he does not wish to be viewed as being judgmental or accusing of others since he shares their plight. His use of “I” then aids in identifying himself with them and them with him. One could almost call this a use of an editorial “I” though no such definition or application exists as far as I know.

All agree (especially the Jews) that there is a spiritual implication to the law, a spiritual penalty to breaking it as well as a earthly or social one. Being of flesh however and not of spirit, Paul along with others are “sold” into bondage to sin. This expression brings to mind the slave block auction. Being of flesh he was sold by the spiritual Law off the slave block to sin which became his master.

7:15-25,

15: “For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. 16: But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. 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. 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. 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.”

15: As a slave to sin then, Paul now launches into a portrayal describing the personal struggles he has with his own flesh. And though he moves from the past tense to the present tense, he is actually describing a sincere Jew’s struggle with the righteousness of the spiritual Law as it stands in opposition to the problems of living in the flesh. He is at the time of this writing in full awareness of the solution, and he knows he is not under the law at all,⁹³ yet places himself into the circumstances of the everyday Jew helping them to identify with what he is saying. I propose that he is adopting a “role play” here and personifying the struggle most honest Jews would have. An odd way to go perhaps, but effective in bonding with so many who struggle in the same way.⁹⁴

⁹³ 6:14.

⁹⁴ Another example, perhaps of using the editorial “I.”

Most believers can identify with this as well but can look to the cross and breathe a sigh of relief. Now if only the Jews he is writing to can come to that place as well.

Paul's style here in might be explained by his comments in I Corinthians 9:20 where he writes, "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law." Further, he has already declared in 5:1-2,

"Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God."

So it appears that he is projecting this image to help his readers, especially his Jewish audience that he has been where they are and has found the solution.

In looking at the original Greek of the first phrase of verse 15, it looks like what Paul is trying to say is that the things that come out of his life are unacceptable to him and he wants no part of them, yet there they are. He despises this reality of these fleshly expressions wishing he could consistently practice the things he does like to do and accomplish rather than have the things he despises spring up and out of his life. He attributes this to being in the flesh while in his heart and understanding he is cleared of all wrongdoing by God's grace through faith and a part of the spiritual kingdom.

16: Nevertheless, his own experience demonstrates the goodness of the law as it stands in contrast to his own unrighteousness spotlighting his sinfulness. He continues to confirm the goodness of the law (especially for his Jewish audience), but also points out how the Law condemns for all people by pointing out their sin and thus their condemnation before God. This puts the Jew in a place of misery. He illustrates this by using himself as the example.

17: In these verses, Paul lauds the Law and curses his own condition as it was under the law setting the foundation for why God set forth a way for people to be removed from the condemnation of the righteous and holy law and to be declared righteous without the futile attempt to be so under the Law. He casts blame on the condition of his flesh but does not abdicate responsibility for that condition. He just hates the fact that he is in bondage to it.

In this diatribe, he describes the phenomenal distress one goes through while seeking righteousness under the jurisdiction of the law – a futile effort at best. Since the law places sin at stage front, the reality and power of sin is thereby enhanced, not diminished. Not only is it enhanced, but there is no shelter or defense from the power

of the law to condemn sin. As Hebrews 4:12-13 says,

12: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13: And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

18-19: Paul now clarifies his dilemma and reiterates his point. A common trait with Paul as we have seen. He points out four times that he does what he does not want to do and this is because of his flesh (verses 15, 18, 19, 20).

In stating, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh....” He is not declaring the Gnostic tenant that the flesh is intrinsically evil, but simply that it is not the source of good as he wishes. Quite the opposite. Though he is willing to do good, his flesh interferes and even becomes the agent of things he does not wish to do. Both verses are a parallel structure repeating the same frustrating theme.

In verses 19 and also 21, we see the word “evil.” This translation is of the Greek word “kakos” used in both instances. This is not the malicious, cruel and deliberate “evil” to others intended by the Greek word “poneros” and used of the “Evil One.” It is the loathsome, bad, evil actions that produce, if you will, the “kaka” we produce because we are in a fleshly body (to use a play on words). Paul does not delineate what all this is, so we are left to imagine what it could be. The only specific term he uses in his larger context is “coveting”, the ramifications we listed in the comments on verse 7 of this chapter. The only other place he discusses the things that might apply is in 13:9-14.

20: A repeat of verse 17.

21: The word “principle” is the word “law”, the translators not wishing to be redundant I suppose. But Paul does it deliberately. “A different law...” here he uses the term “law”, not as God’s Law but a recognition of an undeniable truth or fact. This “law” is simply that “evil” is present in Paul (and all people it can be assumed) even though he wishes to do good.

22-23: We have another corresponding parallelism in verses 21-23.

A. 21a: The law that evil is present in me - 23a: 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.

B. 21 b. The one who wants to do good – 22: I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man.

Paul displays the contrast between how his mind and heart wish to live with how the desires and drives of his fleshly body wants to live.

24: He cries out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”

We can accurately deduce that by now he has everyone on board with him. If there are Jews who feel down deep like Paul describes, then he has made progress. His outcry begs the question. “So what is the answer to this terrible conflict in the souls of men?”

25: And Paul is happy to supply the answer, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Then he adds a statement that seems odd. It is not a summary of his present spiritual life, but of the life he has just described. He does not, as a Christian serve the Law of God according to his own words in many places and he totally is opposed to just sinning under grace or serving “the law of sin” with his flesh. This is made crystal clear in 6:11-18 but also in 7:6. 7:6 and 7:25 are in total opposition.

7:6, “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.”

7:25, “...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.”

Both of these can't be true. In 7:6 and in 8:1 we have the declaration “now” referring to the present circumstances for those who are in Christ as opposed to “then.” (My opinion about 7:25 is that he simply is summarizing the dilemma he described prior to the first part of verse 25.) In all he has said, neither serving the Law of God nor the law of sin is an acceptable choice for those who are in Christ.

But it appears that the conflict for Paul the Jew is there none-the-less, or at least was a real part of his experience at one time. The law of God engrained in him stands against the drives of his flesh, and yet the law has no power to deliver him. In fact it makes

matters worse. It is holy, righteous and good, and all it can do is point out that Paul is unholy, unrighteous and evil. He knows he is not under the law but yet wishes not to violate it. Yet, his flesh fights against this and is the challenge against what he wants to be and do. But even in this, Christ has delivered him and now he can say,

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER EIGHT

8:1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

1: In spite of the clash between the Law and its condemnation of the flesh Paul has just described in 7:25, Christ delivers the believer from it all and there is no condemnation at all for those in Christ Jesus (by faith) "now." "Now" as opposed to the scenario he just painted persuading me to believe that his testimony in 7:7-25, though true in substance or theme, was actually a role play with Paul taking on the persona of the typical Jew under the law and seeking a way out. The believer needs to identify more with chapter 8 than chapter 7. Why?

8:2-4,

2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 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."

2: He moves from the first person to the second person because he has already come to this conclusion and wants his readers to come to it also and believe it. The Law is the law of sin and death.⁹⁵ A better understanding of verse three is that "because the acts of the flesh cannot satisfy the demands of the Law, the Law was not able to bring forth righteousness." All the Law could do was highlight one's sin and then condemn the sinner to death for violating the law. So God resolved the matter on our behalf in the person of Christ.

From the Law of sin and death then, the believer in Christ has been set free by another law... "the law of the spirit of life." This is the only place in the Bible where this phrase is used. It may be that Paul is expressing an attribute of the Holy Spirit, but this is not definite. What is definite is that one law has superseded another, life over death. In Christ then, once again we can see how we are moved from one kingdom to another, from death to life, from the jurisdiction of the Law to that of the Spirit.

This is in accordance with Jesus' words to His disciples in John 8:36, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." And, "I came that they may have life,

⁹⁵ Also see II Corinthians 3:5-10.

and have *it* abundantly.” (John 10:10) Then, Paul notes in Galatians 5:1, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”⁹⁶

3-4: The power to deliver from sin is not in the Law because of the flesh. In other words, the weakness of the flesh is why the Law could not do anything to set one free from it. Quite the opposite. One is not even able to keep it let alone be freed from its condemnation of sin and the penalty thereof – death. (Note: verse 9) The use of the term “flesh” normally points to the carnal drive, motivated by the seeking for one’s self. So this is not a defect in the law, but rather demonstrates its purpose in showing up our defects. So God sent His Son in the form of sinful flesh (a physical body) specifically regarding our sin and entrapment under the Law. As such, by His sacrifice, He “judged against” or removed the penalty of death for sin allowing all who come to faith to be declared righteous and heirs of eternal life.

The requirement of the Law is death- for the deeds of the flesh (sin). We have then, in union with Christ, also died to the Law and to the “flesh” and are no longer under its jurisdiction or lordship but under the Spirit’s. We have moved from the kingdom of this world and the useless works of the flesh which are not of a spiritual nature to the kingdom of God.

Walking “according to the Spirit” means conducting our lives (regularly living) with regard to the Spirit’s leading. “According to: is better understood as “to regard” or “regarding” or even “in reference to.” This means excluding the leading pressure or control of the Law as well as that of the flesh. Paul now uses the inclusive “us” in verse 4.

In contrast to “us” who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Paul writes about “those”. We are not “those” because we belong to Christ.

8:5-8,

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

5: The pronoun “those” is used exclusively in verses 5-8. These verses do not apply to

⁹⁶ There are a number of verses proclaiming freedom or liberty for those who are in Christ including: Galatians 2:4, 4:31, 5:13; Romans 6:14, 6:18; II Corinthians 3:17; I Peter 2:16; II Peter 2:19.

or describe “us.” “According to the flesh” is essentially under the control of the flesh. For clarity, a better way to translate the Greek “kata” (“according to”) is “live in regards to.” In other words, those whom Paul describes live their lives in regard to or under the perspective of the world or the religious perspective of achieving righteousness before God by the works of the flesh rather than by the work of the Spirit through faith in Christ alone. It stands to reason then, that under this perspective the mind will be set on “things of the flesh.” Normally this means the mind is set on the self, including the religious and non-religious aspects of the individual. For the Jew this could include both the focus on the Law and trying to be righteous before God on the basis of obedience to it as well as succumbing to the flesh in disobedience to it including the matters of the heart and mind, motive and self-justification for those acts. In contrast, those who live in regard of the Spirit will likewise have their minds set on living by the Spirit, not by the flesh. This description would fit those who are in Christ.

6: The reason Paul is pointing this out is that whether one is working to keep the law by the works of the flesh or just succumbing to the desires of the flesh, it is still of the flesh and the result will not be spiritual life, but death. Remember that this describes the individual who is either outside of Christ or still dependent upon the works of the flesh to maintain a righteousness before God though maybe even giving lip service to Christ as messiah. This is all in contrast to the point in verses 1-4.

So this applies particularly to the Jews who are so bound up, enslaved and yet dependent upon the Law. It was difficult for the Jews to reconcile the death of Christ with their expectations of the role of the Messiah. So they tended to cling to the old ways while giving lip service to Christ.

However, those who are controlled by the Spirit will have their minds set on the things of the Spirit, that is on the true spiritual realities we possess in Christ and are free from the condemnation of the Law and spiritual death. Having the mind set on these things aid in conducting ourselves accordingly.⁹⁷ To be “controlled by the Spirit” means that the believer is now under the authority of God’s Spirit, and not the Law or the flesh.

7-8: Continuing the thought from verse 6, and summarizing. So on the one hand there are those living in regard to the fleshly way of life, and that results in death, not life. On the other hand there are those living in regard to the Spirit and that results in life.

⁹⁷ Scott Davis notes, “Such is not the case for those who attempt to secure righteousness by the works of the flesh. They deceive themselves through pride and religious tradition. Their efforts result in death. Their efforts result in hostility toward God because of their failure to achieve righteousness. They cannot even follow the tenants of the Law. Jesus made this clear when confronting self-righteousness. He pointed to the interior corruption of the heart and spirit of those who kept an external standard. He pointed out how they ignored the true intent and spirit of the Law (Mark 7:1-23). Even the Law spoke of the necessity of the righteousness of the heart and faith (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51; Isaiah 29:13).

8:9-13,

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

9: The point is that though we are made of flesh and think of ourselves as made of flesh, this has nothing to do with Paul’s point. We again speak of two kingdoms. One ruled by the things of the flesh (carnal man) and the other by the Spirit of God. Though made of flesh, we are no longer “in the flesh” (the kingdom of flesh as it were). Paul is saying that there is a manner of life that has to do with how one lives. One can live driven by what Paul calls “the flesh” which is the carnal and non-spiritual drive (even in religious or spiritual pursuits), but that if the Spirit of God dwells in us we are no longer among those “in the flesh” though made of flesh.

It is again, likened to two kingdoms with two lords. Though made of flesh we in Christ are no longer a part of that other kingdom. Bottom line, here is the condition. Believers belong to Christ. The Spirit dwells in those of faith.⁹⁸ As such, the Spirit of God (Christ)⁹⁹ dwells in them. Thus, the believer is not “in the flesh” but “in the Spirit.” For the Jew, the issue is once again life or death. He must determine that his faith is indeed in Christ and not in the works of the flesh.

10-11: Though the physical body is “dead” (most likely “dead” to God in the spiritual sense) due to sin and was in sin, the Spirit of God who now indwells us gives life to our mortal bodies to serve God and not the flesh.¹⁰⁰ The issue is the spiritual life, not the life of the flesh. Paul uses the term “mortal bodies” to differentiate the matter.

⁹⁸ Galatians 3:2, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14.

⁹⁹ Note the use of both designations in verse 9.

¹⁰⁰ Scott Davis: “On the other hand, we could look to something else, like the odd idea that our “mortal bodies” are given “a spiritual life” (or empowerment) as opposed to a “fleshly life” as they now continue on in this world in Christ. It is significant that Paul uses “mortal bodies” rather than “fleshly bodies” here. In verse 12, he reverts back to “fleshly bodies”. “Flesh” normally indicates for Paul, the works driven by carnality, which our bodies carry out (the deeds of the body—verse 13), whereas “mortal bodies” simply refers to the physical body itself. The life now driven through the Spirit gives a new purpose and intention to the mortal body in contrast to the life driven solely by the carnal nature. This idea seems to be borne out by verses 12 and 13.

12-13: “Brethren” again. Paul; is still addressing the Jewish concern. These are those seemingly with one foot in the “grace through faith” gospel of Christ and the other in the dependence on the law and fear of leaving it.

8: 14-17,

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!’ 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*”.

14: The conclusion to the point. He introduces the idea of “the sons of God.” These are those led by the Spirit of God, and those led by the Spirit of God are those with faith in Christ.¹⁰¹ This is the reverse of the declaration in verse 9 that states that, “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

Verses 14-16 are a unit, expressing the same theme in three ways as to who are considered the sons or children of God and why. Further, the idea of “sons of God” introduces the idea of God as a Father to these sons which he mentions in verse 15.

15. Scott Davis notes, “Here, Paul summarizes his argument beginning at verse 1. He notes first that those in Christ have “not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again.” This points to the Law. Contrary to what some others teach, grace does not empower one to “keep the law” or come back under its condemnation which leads to fear of punishment. (See: I John 4:18) These verses build on the preceding and rephrase verse 14. Those led by God’s Spirit reveal by their desire to overthrow and kill the works of the flesh that they are God’s children in that this very desire, coming from God’s Spirit is God’s witness to them that they are indeed His children (by adoption). The benefit is clear. We are heirs with Christ and God is our “father”. In this new relationship with God through adoption, there is nothing to fear.”¹⁰² Fear would have to do with the penalty one would incur from violating the Law and facing the punishment thereby. John puts it this way,

“We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love;

¹⁰¹ This has nothing to do with “the sons of God” mentioned in Genesis 6:2.

¹⁰² Entire paragraph from Scott Davis.

but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” (I John 4:16-18)

“Abba” Father...the Aramaic or Chaldee form of “father.” This is not the diminutive form “papa” or “daddy” as some teach but does express a familial relationship rather than a general one. The idea of God as the “Father” to “Israel” is found in: Isaiah 63:16, 64:8; Deuteronomy 32:6; I Chronicles 29:10; Jeremiah 3:19, 31:9; Malachi 1:6, 2:10 etc. But this does not mean that all people or all of the fleshly descendants of Abraham are God’s children in the spiritual sense. The birth of the nation through Abraham’s descendants is seen as “fathered” by God in a general sense, but God is only the real father of those of faith in the spiritual sense. This is borne out by the following verse.

16: The “Spirit” is rightly the “Holy Spirit” which confirms to our “spirit” that we are the children of God. This statement follows on verses 14 and 15 and the use of the term “spirit” there. We who are in Christ have received a “spirit” of adoption as sons (or children). This “spirit” now cries out in recognition of God as Father and not as judge by the Law. Thus fear fades. Because of this, the Holy Spirit confirms to us that we are God’s children.

What or where our “spirit” is comes down to the mysterious place we can call the core of our being. The idea in both the Old Testament and the New is that of “breath.” But it intends far more. This would entail at least our mind, emotions, understanding, will and our life essence which is beyond the mere physical functions keeping our bodies alive. Jesus said on the cross as He dies, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”¹⁰³ In Matthew 26:41, Jesus said, “...the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” This points to an inner core of what makes us human. So we “know” whether we have a genuine faith in Christ and a spiritual life in Him. How we know is simply called our “spirit.”

Paul, in verses 14-16 expresses this mysterious reality three times in different ways.

17: For those who are indeed God’s children, then they are definitely heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. This last phrase means that to the degree Christ is an heir of God, so are we who are one with Him by faith.

But is there a condition? Yes and no. For those believers under the persecution of the present time in Rome and the many factions in Rome including Jewish opposition, Roman opposition, and the opposition of all other religious worship and practice, courage and perseverance is essential along with exhibiting the grace and forgiveness

¹⁰³ Luke 23:46.

of Christ.¹⁰⁴ This is revealed in verse 18. Plus, there is the ultimate suffering of death all experience and many have suffered this over the ages due to their undying faith in Christ. But this does not mean that all believers must suffer for their faith as Christ did in order to be glorified with Christ. No, but when in suffering for one's faith one must not conclude that God has abandoned him and lose faith, but recognize the truth that Christ Himself was not immune to suffering and our steadfastness in such times will result in glory not abandonment. To be glorified with Christ is to share in His resurrection and all its power and glory. All this is seen in the next passage.

8:18-23,

18: "or 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. 19: For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20: For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21: that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22: For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 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."

18: This helps establish that Paul is thinking of his present time in verse 17. The word "for" at the beginning of the sentence shows us Paul carries the thought of 17 into 18.

Paul's point is easy to grasp here. The glory to be revealed to us is so far greater as to negate the suffering we endure here. The present suffering is of no consequence in comparison. Still, for the Jew turning to Christ, it is considerable. Cut off from family and friends and the Jewish community, loss of all inheritance, ridicule, mocking and personal attack of one's sanity among other things and often physical beatings as well, if not death forced each Jew to consider whether their turning to Christ was absolutely God's plan and was it worth the sacrifice and suffering the loss of all things.

The content or description of that "glory" to be revealed to us is not fully given here. In II Corinthians 4:16-18 Paul writes a similar thing,

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we

¹⁰⁴ See the Excursus by Scott Davis on verse 17 at the end of the study.

look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

But Paul goes on in 19-23 to add some context to the thoughts in his mind.

19: “For” again tying the previous to what follows. The “sufferings of the present time” in verse 18 corresponds with the creation waiting eagerly in 19 and Paul introduces an additional element here. Creation itself as a victim of the corruption caused by man’s disobedience and estrangement from the Creator.

Now we have an anthropomorphism (or personification) of the creation as a woman about to give birth (verse 22). “The anxious longing” of the creation is better translated “intense or earnest expectation.” So, “The creation awaits expectantly, intensely watching for the revealing of the sons of God.” Paul has given the creation emotion and personality. “Sons of God” brings back verse 14, “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” This also corresponds with the end of verse 21 and also reflects the prophecy of Hosea 1:10.

20-21: “subjected to futility...” (uselessness, without purpose, vanity, emptiness). “not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it...” Different commentators attribute the “him” to either God, Satan or man (Adam). The word “subjected” means to be subordinate to one of higher rank or authority. In this case, all qualify. Man was given the complete dominion over creation by God who had dominion before that. Then man gave over his dominion to Satan who is, since then, the ruler of this world.

Of the three, we can eliminate Satan immediately as the “him.” Satan would never hope that, “the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”¹⁰⁵

A case can be made that man is the culprit, but if so the idea of corrupting the creation and doing this with the hope that it would be set free makes little sense even though there are verses that speak of man’s fault in destroying God’s creation.

Hosea 4:1-3 reflects this idea, “1: Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land. 2: *There is* swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed. 3: Therefore the land mourns, And everyone who lives in it languishes Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, And also the fish of the sea disappear.”

¹⁰⁵ I had leaned toward man as the “him” but in discussing this with the study group came to the conclusion with them that “God” was a better fit.

And, Isaiah 24:4-6,

4: "The earth mourns *and* withers, the world fades *and* withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. 5: The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. 6: Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty."

But the preponderance of support for God being the "Him" is strong. Though the word "hope" seems weak to use with God, and the word "intended" might be better, it was God who from before creation established the plan of redemption and the final outcome of all things. But "hope" fits the context and God who established the "hope" for all who are His. Though man is the agent of corruption, this was foreknown by God who subjected the creation to His purpose. A new one awaits in the wings in which righteousness will dwell.¹⁰⁶

22: How do we know about the suffering of the creation? From the statements in the scripture such as quoted above. These would be familiar to the Jew. In addition, we have verses such as the poetry of Jeremiah 12:10-13,

10: "Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard, They have trampled down My field; They have made My pleasant field A desolate wilderness. 11: "It has been made a desolation, Desolate, it mourns before Me; The whole land has been made desolate, Because no man lays it to heart. 12: "On all the bare heights in the wilderness Destroyers have come, For a sword of the LORD is devouring From one end of the land even to the other; There is no peace for anyone. 13: "They have sown wheat and have reaped thorns, They have strained themselves to no profit. But be ashamed of your harvest Because of the fierce anger of the LORD."

Then Jesus used a similar analogy when He told His disciples,

20: "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. 21: "Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world." John 16:20-21

The theme of the suffering of God's people as well as the creation and both looking ahead to a new beginning is frequent in the Old Testament as well as in some non-canonical literature.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ II Peter 3:13.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example: Isaiah 26:16-21, 65:16-17, 66:5-14, 22-23; Micah 4:10-11; II Esdras 7:11-13; 7:75-76 and also Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8.

23a: But not just the creation, but we also. Though the creation awaits a new birth, We await the full adoption as children. It is guaranteed by the present fruits of the Spirit in our lives by grace through faith, but like the baby awaiting to be born into a new life, we await the completion of the adoption process. The “fruits of the Spirit are analogous, I would imagine, to the paper work being completed, the fees paid and so on. Now we await the time our new adoptive parents come for us and take us from the orphanage to our new home.

“The Christian’s possession of the Holy Spirit is not only evidence of his present salvation (vv.14,16) but is also a pledge of his future inheritance-and not only a pledge but also the down payment on that inheritance.”¹⁰⁸ In this scenario, we can understand the “fruits of the Spirit” in this way from what Paul says in II Corinthians 1:22, 5:4-5 and Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30. Note the word “pledge.”

II Corinthians 1:22, “...who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a *pledge*.”

II Corinthians 5:4-5, 4: “For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5: Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a *pledge*.”

Ephesians 1:13-14, 13: “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.”

The word “pledge” is a Hebrew word Paul transliterates into Greek, “Arrabon.” The root is “arab” (ah-ravh) and means to give a security deposit or be a surety (co-signer) for someone or something one wishes to purchase and pay for later. This word is used eighteen times in the Old Testament. However, the form Paul uses is only used once in Genesis 43:9. There, Judah promises his father Israel that he himself will be “surety” for his brother Benjamin because Pharaoh’s chief administrator (Joseph) insisted on seeing the brother before releasing Simeon whom he imprisoned in the meantime. Judah volunteered to become the one upon whom all the blame would fall if he failed to bring his brothers home.

Now, why did Paul use this word instead of the Greek word used in Genesis 43:9 in the Septuagint which is “ek-dek-oh-mai ?” Well, Paul consistently uses the Septuagint

¹⁰⁸ Romans 8:23 footnote comment by Walter W. Wessel in the NASB Study Bible, Zondervan Corp., 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.

for his Old Testament as do all the New Testament writers. However, the word “ek-dek-oh-mai” is a poor substitution for “Arrabon.” But the translators of the Hebrew to Greek chose that word as closest to the meaning because they apparently had no other better word to choose from as the Greek lacks a clear word to describe a “surety.”

The meaning of “Ek-dek-oh-mai” in Paul’s time meant “waiting for” “looking for” or “expecting” from the root “dek-oh-mai” meaning “to receive” and the prepositional prefix “ek” meaning “out” or “out of.” So the closest literal meaning would be “to receive out of.” To receive something undefined is a far cry from “Arrabon.” So Paul inserted the Hebrew transliteration.

Now, he may have done this because of his Jewish audience who would grasp the intent immediately. Plus, since this word in the form Paul chose only occurs in Genesis 43:9 (a story of both “surety” and “redemption”), his point would have been graphically driven home.

The Greek word “hik-an-nohs,” meaning “appropriate amount” could have been chosen, but it is used in such wide applications that Paul’s point may have been lost. It is never translated “surety” or “guarantee.”

However, the Greek word “egg-u-ohs” could have been chosen as it is close to the idea, but actually describes two related ideas. First is the idea of “out of an open hand.” This came to be used in the sense of a pledge or a “handshake” as it were.

The other idea was of a person shackled by his hand and held as “surety” or “bond” until a debt is paid. Today, it could be used of the payment held by a bail bondsman. This word is only used once in Hebrews 7:22 where Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant. The LXX¹⁰⁹ never uses the word except in II Maccabees 10:28 where Maccabeus and his army “pledged” themselves to rely upon the Lord in their battle against the Syrian army.

It is unlikely Paul was unfamiliar with this more appropriate word, but deliberately chose to use “Arrabon” to assure his Jewish readers of exactly what he was talking about. Not only that, but being used only once in Genesis 43:9, it highlights that it was Judah who gives the pledge of his life to bring his brothers home safely. We can’t forget that Jesus is a descendant of Judah and that the “pledge” is based on the giving of His life as well as His resurrection from the dead.

In Ephesians 4:30 Paul notes as well, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” This ties in nicely with 23 b.

¹⁰⁹ Septuagint, see footnote 27.

8:24-27,

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. 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*.”

24-25: Though not seen yet, our salvation contains the assurance (hope) it will one day be a reality. We eagerly wait for the hope to become reality. When times of suffering come we do not lose heart, but persevere onward. We will not be discouraged, we will not grow weary, we will not faint in our trust in God even in our weakness.

26: “In the same way” ... In what same way? Paul is probably referring back to verses 16-25 in which the context begins with the Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are God’s children and then, even in the midst of suffering, bears fruit for hope. Like the creation that “groans and suffers” awaiting new birth, we also “groan within ourselves waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

So even in this weakness, as we pray in ignorance not knowing what lies ahead for us amidst this suffering, those prayers are taken by the Spirit of God to the throne of grace in groanings that words cannot express but which God hears and understands.

27: “...he who searches the hearts” is God. God knows the mind of the Holy Spirit who intercedes for the saints. The term, “according to the will of God” is supplied by the translators. Literally, it should read, “...because, according to God He intercedes on behalf of the saints.” Which means that the intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit on behalf of the saints is God’s plan or will.

INTRODUCTION TO 8:28 AND FOLLOWING.

The purpose of this introduction is to prepare the reader/student for properly interpreting a passage that has caused much unnecessary and useless debate over the centuries regarding predestination and free will.

I. The larger Context

1. Paramount to this is that throughout the larger context Paul is addressing

Jews, many of whom are struggling with fully placing their faith in Christ alone and letting go of their dependence upon the Law, their circumcision and the practice of their religious tradition as the basis for their hope of righteousness before God.

2. One of the major reasons they are reticent – even afraid - to do so is the cost of suffering this will bring upon them. Including:
 - A. Being rejected from their family, friends, and their community. They will be shunned and presumed dead to all whom they love.
 - B. Their inheritance and all they possess will involve as Paul says, “...the loss of all things.” (Philippians 3)
 - C. It will and already has resulted in ridicule, mocking, insult, demeaning and painful curses as well as physical abuse like being spit upon by his former friends and family, beaten severely or even killed.

That is the situation into which Paul must go to convince his brothers in the flesh of the truth of what he says and that it is worth it to believe it and walk in it.

II. The Immediate Context

1. This stems from verse 16-18, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 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*. 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."

And concludes with, 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."

2. This tells us that the immediate context is "suffering," especially the suffering of the Jews whom he is now addressing. Verse 28 is a key theme as this theme continues in the following verses.

3. The word "for" ("hoti" - "for" or "because" in the Greek) beginning verse 29 shows the continuation of verse 28 and what precedes it. The subject is the "good" God works all things for to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Paul goes on to describe the "good."

The Point is that verse 29 is not some isolated idea Paul came up with out of the blue with which we, like most, just lift out of the context and go dancing through the woods

of debate to see what we can make if it. "Predestination" deals with the last things on the menu, not the first. (See the commentary on 10:21 and on through chapter eleven.)

8:28-30,

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. 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."

28: This concludes verse 27 as well as introduces the theme that follows. We now enter what may be one of the finest encouragements for Christians everywhere, especially for those who are suffering, in persecution or dire straits in this world. This is a passage of hope, not "theology." The context for what follows is verse 16 and following, the suffering of the saints, especially those who have come from Judaism.

The "good" is not necessarily earthly circumstances as so many think. The "good" Paul sets forth is; 1: Conformity to the image of His Son (verse 29) and, 2: Glorification (verse 30). This theme is repeated in several other places in Paul. For example, in II Corinthians 4:16-18 he says,

16: "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17: For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."¹¹⁰

In addition, the earthly sentiment, "Everything will work out okay..." is not necessarily true based on this verse. But for those who are His, God has an ultimate good in mind. It is important for the proper interpretation of Paul's point to understand why he put the following passage in here. He placed this here not to stimulate theological discussions on the topic, but to assure his readers that their suffering was not disregarded by God but that God had predetermined that their destiny would be that of glorification.

29-30:¹¹¹ The topic of "foreknowledge," "predestination" or "predetermination" here

¹¹⁰ See also: Ephesians 2:1-7; II Corinthians 5:1(See 4:7-5:8); II Thessalonians 1:5-7, 2:13-14 etc.

¹¹¹ Note also: Ephesians 1:3-6.

and in the Bible has been way overworked and distorted by far too many. Volumes have been written in this subject alone attempting to explain it and the ramifications thereof. Most writers place into Paul's text every thought from the Greek and Roman philosophers (especially Plato and Aristotle), theologians through the ages, all the pagan and godless philosophers as well including Chinese, Japanese, middle Eastern, Indian and all the rest, the thoughts of preachers and scholars, the doctrines of the Catholic and other churches, and everything under the sun to interpret this passage except how the Jews saw it in the days of the apostles and the point that it is here to encourage those persecuted and suffering for and in their faith.

The Jews largely ignored or never even had such discussions and simply felt that man had been given free will to make choices based there on. God knew in advance the choices that would be made and determined the consequences of such choices. This was the role of the prophets, to speak to the leaders of the land (and secondarily the people) regarding the consequences of choices made. Later the view came to be that there were those whom God knew in advance would be those of faith. That is the essence of His foreknowledge regarding people.¹¹² Those He then "foreknew" were those who believed in Him and those he knew as His own. The idea of "those whom He foreknew" indicates a personal and intimate relationship with them that God knew in advance would occur due to their faith and trust in Him and His word. Thus, he predestined these to inherit His kingdom. This is important and addresses the Jew who, dependent on his compliance to the Law by his works, needs to move to faith and trust in God who has a plan for those who do so. Most Christians gratefully under the grace of God confess that what kind of person you are is more important than any deeds you may do that might be considered "good."

Jesus made this a clear prerequisite to salvation when he said in Matthew 7:23 to those who claimed to be faithful by their works, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Quoting Psalm 6:8) And in Matthew 25:10-11, about the five virgins who had not filled their lamps and came late to the banquet because of it we read, "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' "But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' And, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me..." John 10:14.

So He "predestined" (appointed ahead of time) that those who believed He would beckon to Himself and thus "know" them, and so they would be saved and share the

¹¹² He also knows in advance the destiny of the cosmos and the ages in which it exists.

glorification of His resurrected Son. These God also invited or bid them to come to Him and declared them righteous (based on their faith) and glorified them.

Now, verse 29 expands on 28 and defines it in more detail. The word “For” notes this. “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...” Foreknowledge is the basis for God’s plan for the destiny of those who trust in Him and love Him (verse 28). The rest of 29 and 30 defines what this and verse 28 means – the ultimate good for which God works all things together. Jesus became the firstborn – that is the first to be resurrected – among multitudes whom God foreknew and will subsequently join Jesus both in resurrection and in its glory.

Bottom line, the Jewish view is simply this, God predestined that those who believe would inherit His kingdom and He knew ahead of time whom they would be.¹¹³ In other words, His predestination is based on His foreknowledge, not the other way around.¹¹⁴

8:31-39,

31: “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? 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? 33: Who will bring a charge against God's elect?¹¹⁵ God is the one who justifies; 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. 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.’ 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,

¹¹³ The heirs of the kingdom were predetermined to be those of faith, not of law or lineage. God foreknew who those would be (8:29) Also please recall in references to the heirs; Romans 4:13-14 and 8:17. Note also: Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 3:6; Titus 3:7; Hebrews 6:17, 11:9.

¹¹⁴ Scott Davis: “This explains God’s purpose. ‘Foreknew’ – To know ahead of time. God knew ahead of time who would be His. For these who were to be among the redeemed by faith, He predestined (prepared for their eternal existence) that they, like Jesus, would be raised from the dead. This would justify their suffering (in which context all this is proclaimed). Further (30), He called them so they could accept His invitation, fulfilling His foreknowledge. In Christ they were justified and at resurrection, they will be glorified. Predestination is a highly debated topic. But it simply means this: That God has predestined that all who believe in Him should be saved and ultimately glorified. It does not mean He has selected and rejected people ahead of time. But since He is outside the time space continuum, He sees the end from the beginning and knows who will respond to Him in faith and who will not. Note: Ephesians 1:1-14. Foreknowledge is not predetermination of the saved and the lost. It simply notes that God, in perfect Biblical truth, has prepared ahead of time a place for His saints because He already knows who they will be. Note: John 14:1-3. This is why “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us”.

¹¹⁵ Verse 34 ought to begin here.

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.”

31: Paul begins with a rhetorical question. “What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?” This is an appropriate question in the context of suffering. The expected answer is, “Nobody”! And there is no power in heaven or earth who can rescind or reverse this. Even though there are plenty in this world against us, they are powerless when it comes to our relationship with God.

Paul then continues with a series of rhetorical questions all expecting answers by the reader as he goes along. He again uses the pronoun “us” to be inclusive of the Jews who believe but fearfully cling to the tenants of Judaism and the law.

32: The incomparable worth of God’s Son who died for us is greater than anything else He could give us. If God would do this for us, then there is no reason why He would withhold anything else. So the expected answer is, “He would give us all things.”

33: Paul now turns to anything that one would imagine might be a candidate to prevent this from occurring by attempting to bring a charge against those God has declared innocent. The answer is, “There is no one.” This is like a court of law. No indictment can be brought against believers because God, the highest authority, has declared them righteous.

34: This repeats the idea of verse 33 with some elaboration. Paul’s point is that there is no one who can condemn those who trust in Christ because Christ’s death paid everything for which condemnation would be due. He did so on behalf of those who place their faith in Him. (Verse 1) Further, Jesus sits at the right hand of God and this is the place of ultimate power and authority.¹¹⁶ This same power that raised Christ from the dead has been designated for those who are His.

“...intercession for us.” 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.” “Intercession” is the act of an “advocate.”¹¹⁷ An advocate stands beside you and states your case before an adjudicator. The word “intercession” means essentially an “encounter.” Also in I John 2:1 we read, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an *Advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...” (Italics mine)

¹¹⁶ See also: Mark 14:62; Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; I Peter 3:22.

¹¹⁷ I John 2:1

35: The expected answer of course is that nobody can separate us from Christ's love for us. Nor can anything. Though human suffering, terrible poverty, the loss of all earthly possessions may be a part of our journey including, possibly, death at the hand of others, none of those things can detract from God's love for us.

36: Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 here as underlining the attitude often encountered in the world by the believer. But to be considered a sheep worth nothing more than to be killed is our honor as we join the Lamb of God in His death.

37: He who loves us will see to it that we are conquerors in all these things. This is all based on Christ's death for our sins and the power that raised Him from the dead. Paul writes in II Corinthians 2:14, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place." And in I Corinthians 15:55-57 he writes, "... thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

38-39: "Convinced" is the inward certainty with all of one's being. Paul lists "death" first in the list when one might expect it to be last. But Paul has just said many things about the suffering and death of believers and reflects this in putting "death" first in his list. For those who suffer the persecution and threat of death constantly for their faith, this is appropriate. The final, unstoppable and invincible enemy itself has no power at all in comparison to the love and power God employs on our behalf. "Life" and all its mix of circumstances and our weaknesses and struggles during our stay on earth will not dissuade God from keeping His promises to all who are His.

Paul continues to list categories that are general and encompassing of anything anyone could think of in terms of what might be associated with these items. For example, the term "angels" is not specific and would hardly refer to "good angels." Why would "good angels" try to separate us from the love of God? Well they wouldn't, of course.

But, perhaps the reference is to "bad angels." Normally powers like these would be referred to as demons or such, but the term "angels" in reference to "bad angels" is rare. There are a few such items in the scriptures such as in Jude 1:6 ("And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day...") and II Peter 2:4, ("For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment...") and a few passages inferring such powers (Rev. 12:9; I Peter 3:22; Ephesians 1:21 and 6:11-2 etc.)

Second, it could refer to false teachers and prophets as the word "angel" is actually translated "messenger," "angel: being a transliteration of the original Greek. It is

translated as such in Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27; II Corinthians 12:7; and James 2:25.

But this discussion is moot. Paul's point is that there is nothing, not even the power of the mighty angels or any such power one might think of that can separate us from the Love of God. The Jews, in general, had a fascination with angels and their incredible power. This is due to the mighty acts of angels in the Old Testament. Hebrews 1:4 notes that Jesus has been given even more power than the mightiest angels. So Paul's inclusion of them here is more understandable.

The same with the general term “Principalities” (also translated “authorities”, “rulers”). This might indicate first, earthly powers that could attempt to eradicate both the Christian faith and spiritual realities from the face of the earth, and second, spiritual powers attempting to do the same through these earthly rulers. It doesn't matter because whatever one could think of in reference to this term is not able to separate us from the love of God.

The term “Powers” is quite general as well and are both earthly and heavenly in these contexts: 1: Physical cosmic power such as earthquakes, severe weather patterns, meteorite showers and the like. 2: Those who perform deceiving miracles, signs and wonders. 3: Political and military might.

“Height” is general perhaps depicting possibly the so called gods and idols on high Places or anything one could associate with such a general term. “Depth” is the same thing. It could be the far reaches of anything, the sea, the earth, the darkness, the spiritual realms. Here it may even allude to the concepts of Sheol, the grave or the Greek underworld (Hades) or all of his kind of thing. It doesn't matter because nothing we can imagine is capable of separating the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER NINE

Introduction (By Scott Davis)

“Paul comes strikingly to a point where he realizes how lost his brethren, according to the flesh, really are. He spends the next three chapters dealing with it. After his own arguments sink in, Paul is grieved for his own people. He realizes they will not be among the redeemed outside of true faith. This hurts him deeply, but even so, he cannot compromise the truth. Paul has spent 8 chapters delineating the need for faith as the key to understanding and redemption. The Jews, most of whom have relied on the works of the law as the means of redemption, (a distortion of the truth by Jewish teachers) are now found wanting.”

“There is an emotional and thematic break between 8:39 and 9:1. It is as if Paul stopped at the conclusion of 8 and took some time from dictation and began to think about the consequences of what he had just written. He may have had Tertius read it back to him. He discovers that he has covered nearly every aspect of argument that could be raised against the truth he has presented. Only one question remains unanswered. “What about the Jews, then”? “What about the descendants of Abraham”? “Why have so many rejected their Messiah and their salvation”? He experiences the transformation from an exhilarating high to a deep sadness as he contemplates this question. He answers it beginning in chapter 9.”

My introduction. We have come to see the intense passion Paul has as he writes this epistle. We have seen the "Jewishness" of the book both in its content and in the way Paul addresses his target audience - Jews caught between all they have come to believe and the shocking reality that much of it could be wrong. The book, quite unexpectedly, has become an evangelistic campaign to win the hearts and faith of his Jewish readers to Christ.

9:1-5,

1: “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2: that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3: For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4: who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, 5: whose are the fathers, and from

whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”

1-3: After the fulfilling message of chapter 8, this poignant passage shows Paul’s sadness in that not all his brethren according to the flesh will enjoy the benefits of God’s promises due to their lack of faith. In verse one he insists three times that his heart for his brethren’s salvation is sincere even to the point of sacrificing his own salvation on their behalf.¹¹⁸ Of course, that would do no good, but it underscores his feelings on the matter. The word “accursed” is “anathema” meaning delivered over to God for eternal destruction. In Exodus 32:31-32, Moses pleads for the people who had just constructed a golden calf while Moses was on Mount Sinai. Moses entreats the Lord,

"Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin--and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!"

4-5: Paul recounts the glory of Israel’s history (and his own) realizing all that would be sacrificed because they did not believe. Hebrews 3:17-19 repeats this tragic picture.

“And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?¹¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”

“So, though to Israel belongs the “glory” as revealed to them in Exodus (16:7-10; 24:16 etc.), the covenants (the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic), The giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises. Not only that, but to Israel belongs the distinction and glory of bringing forth the Messiah in the person of Christ. For these reasons, it is a tragedy that they do not respond to the very fulfillment of their existence, for God spent 2000 years bringing it to pass.”¹²⁰

9:6-8,

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.’ 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.”

¹¹⁸ He repeats this his heartfelt concern for their salvation again in 10:1.

¹¹⁹ Or "disbelieving."

¹²⁰ Scott Davis

6: God's promises that the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would be as the "stars of the sky and the sand of the sea"¹²¹ has not failed. Though many fail to come to a true faith, Paul is crystal clear that it is not to the fleshly line of Israel that the descendants of Abraham and the children of God are counted, but to the spiritual line of those who are of faith, whether Jew (or Israeli) or Gentile.¹²² We can also recall Romans 2:28-29 that says,

“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.”

One would hope that a Jew might ask, "Well if we, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not all Israel, then who?" In the midst of the long-standing tradition that it is the *physical* descendants of Jacob who constitute Israel, Paul tosses a grenade: not all physical descendants from Israel *are* Israel. Paul contrasts the physical line with a line that is of those of faith in the promises of God - claiming the line is of a spiritual nature, and includes *even Gentiles* who come to faith. This is a hard pill for the Jews to swallow. The remainder of the chapter and beyond is Paul's argument to demonstrate the truth of his bold statement. He makes a nearly identical argument in Galatians 3 and 4.

Scott Davis writes, "Further, those of faith in the Old Testament who were not of the flesh of the Patriarchs are counted among those who are redeemed. Rahab, Ruth, and Caleb, are some notable examples. We must not forget the faithful prior to Abraham as well: Abel, Enoch, Methuselah, Seth, Noah and others. Paul understands that Genesis 21:12 does not refer simply to the fleshly descendants of Isaac, but to the spiritual descendants. Though Abraham had other children after Sarah dies and he remarried, it is only Isaac's descendants who are considered because they are of the promise. Whether of Abraham's loins through Isaac or not, those of faith become God's children. So it is the children of the promise who are regarded as descendants, not the children of flesh. This is consistent with Paul's argument regarding circumcision."¹²³

7-8: Here we have a "sticky wicket" so to speak when it comes to the Jews understanding of what Paul is proposing. Paul proposes that it is not the descendants from Isaac by the flesh that are the heirs of God's promises, but only those who, like Abraham, are people of faith. Isaac is a type of this since he is born of faith, not just

¹²¹ Genesis 13:14-17, 15:5, 17:6-16, 22:17, 28:14-22, etc.

¹²² Galatians 3:26-29 and 4:22-31 also testify to this.

¹²³ Scott Davis, A fine Bible teacher now residing in Colorado Springs.

flesh alone. Paul quotes Genesis 21:12 here to begin his argument and covers three chapters in this discussion.

The Jews would argue that Genesis 21:12 speaks of the physical descendants of Isaac only, and as long as they are circumcised in obedience to God they qualify as heirs of the promises. At first glance, this looks to be the case.¹²⁴ So Paul goes on to use several illustrations in which he buttresses his point so the Jews can see what he is getting at.

9:9-13,

9: "For this is the word of promise: 'AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.'¹²⁵ 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, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, 12: it was said to her, 'THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.' 13: Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.'"

9-10: The following passage has caused a lot of discussion if not consternation for many students over the centuries. The key to understanding what Paul is getting at is: (1) The larger context as Paul is not writing a different narrative out of the blue; (2) his purpose in writing this passage, and (3) Grasping this from the point of view of the Jew who is both writing it and receiving it. The foreknowledge of God, just introduced will help the reader see it more accurately. God predestines the consequence of those who believe and those who don't. Paul's presentation is to demonstrate that just because someone is a descendant of Jacob by the flesh this does not mean they are a descendant and heir of the promises.

So first, Paul underscores the matter of the promise as opposed to the flesh. This is important to getting the rest of the passage. God's promise of Sarah bearing a son (Isaac) when it was physically impossible for a barren, not to mention an elderly woman able to do so was fulfilled. This is because Abram and Sarah believed God. As did Rebecca, Isaac's wife.

11-13: Paul is continuing to build his case begun at verse six. Let's review:

¹²⁴ So much so that modern theologians and many Christian institutes of "higher" learning have plans of salvation for the Jews separately from the Gentiles, prophecy which only applies to the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac, two kingdoms of (God or heaven), two plans of salvation, two comings of Christ and so on.

¹²⁵ Genesis 18:10-14.

[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.’ 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.”]

It is through Isaac that Abraham’s descendants would be named. Isaac is the child of promise based on faith. In God’s foreknowledge, He saw that, though twin boys would be born to Isaac and Rebecca, it would be Jacob the second born that would be a man of faith while Esau would not. So before they were born, God predetermined that it would be through Jacob that the descendants would be named.

Let's be clear. The key phrase in verse 11 is, "...so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand." In other words, His purpose will stand based on His "choice." Well what is His purpose? This was expressed in 8:28-30. God's purpose was to benefit those who loved Him and are the "called." The benefit is to be conformed to the image of His Son and be glorified. The "called" are those whom God foreknew would be such persons and respond to God's summon . The nature of "His choice" could be seen two ways. First His "choice" could refer to people He chose that would benefit from His grace and/or carry on His plan of redemption. The basis of His choice is His foreknowledge according to 8:29. This is the preferred answer from what we see in verse 12. Second, His "choice" could refer to the plan of grace He would grant to those of faith. Or both.

The focus for all this is the contrast between those of faith and those without. The consequences of each has been foreordained. "Works" is not a substitute for faith. "Faith" is a part of the "calling" package.

Now, while Rebecca was pregnant with Jacob and Esau, Genesis 25:21-23 makes it clear that God knew ahead of time the choices each man would make and told Rebecca what was to occur and her part in it.

21: “Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. 21: But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I *this way*?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23: The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger."

God did not "make" Esau just so he could hate him.

Now the phrase, "I hated Esau" needs a good "look see." Over a thousand years later, probably after the Jews had returned from exile in Babylon and began rebuilding the walls and temple, the 5th century prophet Malachi opens his prophetic book to the priests of Israel and says,

1: "The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi. 2: '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.' 4: Though Edom says, 'We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins'; thus says the LORD of hosts, they may build, but I will tear down; and *men* will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the LORD is indignant forever.' 5: Your eyes will see this and you will say, 'The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel!' 6: 'A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' 7: '*You* are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.'"

The fact that the Lord, over a thousand years later says, "I have hated Esau" refers to the manner in which Esau and his descendants conducted their spiritual lives. The point of the illustration is a directive to the current priests of Israel in Malachi's time. It illustrates the consequences of dishonoring the "father" who in this case is representative of first Isaac, and then in like manner, God.

This underscores the critical matter of faith rather than just works. Esau despised his birthright as the heir and patriarch of his descendants. He sold it for a bowl of lentil stew. This is all it meant to him. God knew he would conduct himself like this and preplanned (and "chose" and "called") Jacob as the one to carry on the faith even though he was not the firstborn to whom this was normally given.

So neither the "flesh" aspect of one's heritage nor the works a person does are the basis of a righteous standing before God. This point is made at the end of Paul's argument in 9:30-32. Thus, everything in between has to be arguments and illustrations of this fact.

9:14-18,

14: "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 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 UP¹²⁶, 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."

14: The rhetorical question prompts the answer, "There is no injustice with God." Paul answers it for the reader as well, "May it never be." The next few verses underscore the sovereignty of God and His ultimate authority to determine the destiny of those he has chosen for His purposes as He sees fit based in His foreknowledge. Thus he cannot be charged with being unjust. Quite the opposite.

15-16: This is not some arbitrary action on God's part as some believe. God is not unjust. The reason he has mercy on some and not others is explained in the context of the quote from Exodus 33:19. What is going on, that every Jew would recognize, is that this quote is in the midst of the unpleasant encounter of Moses - after coming down from Mount Sinai (Horeb) with the two tablets of stone upon which God Himself had written the commandments - and then seeing many in Israel dancing and singing around an idolatrous god in the form of a golden calf. Moses had the perpetrators killed and then pled with God to spare the rest and forgive them. Then the Lord told Moses that He would deal with this in His own way and time. It is obvious, I would hope, that God did not will these people to commit idolatry since He commanded them not to do so. Nor did He force them, apart from their free will, to do this so He could destroy them.

Next, God told Moses to take the people up to Canaan but that He would send an angel to accompany them but not Himself as His presence might destroy some of the people. Then Moses said to the Lord,

"For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the *other* people who are upon the face of the earth?" The LORD said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.' Then Moses said, 'I pray You, show me Your glory!' And He said, 'I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.'" Exodus 33:16-19

Now, in this context, it is clear that God's mercy and compassion (or judgment) is

¹²⁶ Quoted from the LXX. The Hebrew says, "...I have allowed you to remain..."

based on what He knows to be the spiritual condition of their hearts and actions. God alone would make those decisions. Not man. Not Moses.

So, verse 16 says, " So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." Neither one's "will" nor his "works" is the issue.

17: This verse about Pharaoh in Exodus 9:16 is quoted from the LXX and not the Hebrew. The Hebrew says, "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." This puts a slightly different nuance on it for us. It shows again, God's foreknowledge about Pharaoh's future responses and resistance so that in spite of it and all his magicians could do, God would prove His supremacy and sovereignty. God did not create Pharaoh just so He could manipulate him into this fulfillment. Further, Paul uses this illustration to show that God is interested in the whole earth, Gentiles included, even as He told Abraham beginning in Genesis 12:1-3. The word "nations" is the same word translated "Gentiles."

18: A repeat of the theme at the beginning of this section with the addition, "and He hardens whom He desires." This is often taken to mean that God "hardens" a person's heart even against the person's will, as if the person is helpless to prevent it. However, this is not necessarily the case at all. In the total context we have discovered that in God's foreknowledge He chooses on whom to have mercy based on whether they are individuals of faith or not. It stands to reason then, that the opposite is true also. How this works is that the presence, power or word of God confronting a person reveals the condition of the heart of that person depending on how he responds to it. God knew what this would be all along. I like to use the example of the Sun. The same Sun that melts butter also hardens concrete. It is the presence of the Sun that reveals the true nature of the material. So it is with God in my opinion.

9:19-24,

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? 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~~ (better "even" as the text says) *He did so*¹²⁷ to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24:

¹²⁷ Based on the Greek "kai" that can be translated "even" as it is at the beginning of verse 24.

even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles."¹²⁸

Verses 19-24 have caused quite a bit of conversation and disagreement among commentators for centuries. Paul, in trying to buttress the case that it is not the descendants by flesh that are the true descendants or heirs of Abraham, but only those of faith by the promise (see comment on verses 7-8) now states something that can only be understood in that context. This passage is simply an additional illustration to support that point. The danger comes in pressing this passage beyond its intent, and being sure of its intent in the first place.

19: The question, or objection is based on the assertion Paul makes in verse 18 (which he inserts as if from an objector) is faulty for several reasons. First, it assumes that God is to blame for decisions made by people because they cannot resist God's will and thus are not responsible. This was Adam's perspective in the garden blaming God when he said, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Second, it questions God's place to "find fault" as if somehow people are not able to keep themselves from screwing up because they are made by God and have no free choice. The idea is that if certain individuals resist God or find their hearts hardened and this is done by God, then how can God find fault with them since it is God's who made them this way.

Well, Paul is not amused by this possible objection. The very question itself shows resistance to God's will. It is, of course, a ridiculous position but taken by far too many people. A case could be made that Paul introduces this question and reproves it to make the point that God doesn't work that way and so cannot be unjust. In other words, God is not as the Calvinists depict Him at all and Paul is directly contradicting this idea. God does not make a person unable to be responsible for his choices thus God cannot be charged with being unjust or unfair. But the issue is that, based on God's foreknowledge of the kind of person they really were and the responses they would make, God used this for His purposes and glory.

20: But Paul reproves the "questioner." God is not accountable to man. Then he quotes from Isaiah 29:16 and 45:9¹²⁹ to point out the sovereignty of God over all He has made. In the instance where Isaiah speaks for God, it is directed to Israel (or Judah as the case may be) and pronounces the dire consequences upon a disobedient people.

¹²⁸ See the Appendix for commentary on this section by Scott Davis.

¹²⁹ Isaiah 29:16, "You turn *things* around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made would say to its maker, "He did not make me"; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding"? Isaiah 45:9, "Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker-- An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, "What are you doing?" Or the thing you are making *say*, "He has no hands"?"

We must remember as we look at these challenges that Paul's purpose is ultimately evangelistic. This would be foolish if there was no way for those in his audience to consider what he is saying and come to repentance and faith. Why would Paul be wasting his time if this was a foregone and predetermined matter. So he is not going to say that a person cannot come to faith because God made him unable to do so. This would contradict II Peter 3:9, "...but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." and we see in verses 30-33 that he is quite clear that the issue is unbelief but that the door is open to any who would come to faith.

21: Verses 21-24 are not easy to comprehend in terms of just exactly how far to press the analogy of the "potter making vessels either for honorable (lit. for honor) use or common use (for dishonor)." Or for mercy or destruction. We have no problem with God determining the destiny of each of these types of vessels. But does he "make" them in the sense that they have no choice as to what kind of vessel they will become or what their destiny will be? If they do not, then why is choice offered so often to His people and those of the world? What would be the point of missions or evangelism except to call those forward who are ready to believe? What of those who might never hear the call? Are they then lost though God "made" them for honorable use and mercy? This makes no sense. So to press the analogy causes more problems than it solves. Yet this seems to be what Paul is saying if we press the analogy to individuals. Therein may lie the solution. Let us remember that Paul is spending the majority of this epistle attempting to persuade the unbelieving Jews or those on the fence to believe. Why do so if they have no power of choice? The analogy breaks down, in my opinion because the vessels cannot make choices regarding faith or not, but men can. The key is, again, the contexts, both of the passage from 8:29-9:33 as well as the context from where the verses Paul quotes originate. Verses 23 and 24 will help us as well as they speak to a plural, human entity, so it is important not to take some of these verses in isolation and try and interpret them. . Also, look at the end of this whole discussion, Romans 11:30-32. It really helps to know where Paul's going.

So in looking at the source of the "potter/clay" example, we are pulled to Jeremiah 18:1-17. There, the vessels are the houses of Israel and Judah. Based on their evil, God changes them from vessels of mercy to vessels of destruction. Their destiny is determined by their choices based on verses 8-10 of Jeremiah 18,¹³⁰ especially verses

¹³⁰ 1: The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying, 2: "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will announce My words to you." 3: Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. 4: But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make. 5: Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 6: "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter *does*?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. 7: "At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; 8: if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. 9: "Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; 10: if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with

7-10:

People often misinterpret this passage. At first glance, it looks as if Paul is simply noting a reference to those of faith whether Jew or Gentile as the vessels of honor, and those of the flesh without faith as the vessels for dishonor. So, God has ordained the identities of the "same lump" made into two separate vessels. Where we go off on a tangent is in not examining the context of the prophet's words quoted and alluded to here by Paul. In both passages, the potter/maker is God, but the pot or the thing made is not necessarily an individual person, but a group or nation.

This is the case in the quoted passages. Could God force a person to do something against his will? Of course. But does He? Or does He have to?

In a similar picture, I suggest that this verse could also be seen in the context as an analogy/metaphor for the births of Esau and Jacob (and their descendants) the "one lump" being the union of Isaac and Rebecca and the two vessels that of the twins - one the progeny of promise and faith (Jacob) and the other the progeny of flesh only (Esau). Combine that with God's foreknowledge of the path of the descendants and we can understand this picture a little more clearly. The "right" of the "potter" has to do with the consequences or destiny of the vessel and that depends on the vessel's use. Do they have a choice? Did Esau have a choice whether to give up his birthright or not? Genesis 25:28-34 indicates that he did. Thus it appears like the vessel determines its own use and God prepares the consequence for it accordingly. So we can only press the statement of Paul so far in my opinion.

22-23: Here we move from the singular (vessel) to the plural (vessels). The point of this is to say that God's desire to make known the riches of His glory upon the vessels of mercy endured with patience the vessels of destruction and did not pour out His wrath upon them. This was apparently, based on the subsequent verses, to give time for all the vessels of mercy to accrue, both from the Jews and Gentiles until all the numbers of His people were complete. Upon these He will bestow the riches of His glory. This is based in His foreknowledge.

which I had promised to bless it. 11: "So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.'" 12: "But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.' 13: "Therefore thus says the LORD, 'Ask now among the nations, Who ever heard the like of this? The virgin of Israel Has done a most appalling thing. 14: 'Does the snow of Lebanon forsake the rock of the open country? Or is the cold flowing water *from* a foreign *land* ever snatched away? 15: 'For My people have forgotten Me, They burn incense to worthless gods And they have stumbled from their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in bypaths, Not on a highway, 16: To make their land a desolation, *An object of* perpetual hissing; Everyone who passes by it will be astonished And shake his head. 17: 'Like an east wind I will scatter them Before the enemy; I will show them My back and not *My* face In the day of their calamity.'"

24: Paul moves from the past and now brings us to his present where both Jew and Gentile believers are the recipients of the riches of God's glory because not all of Israel is really the Israel chosen of God to receive the riches of His glory. Why? We are getting to that.

9:25-26,

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.'"

25-26: Paul uses Hosea 2:23 (LXX) to clarify the point. There are people (Gentiles) who, though not of the lineage of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, that God will call His people. The inference is also that there are those of the lineage of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, that God will deny are His. Jesus said the same thing as we read in Luke 13:23-30,

23: "And someone said to Him, 'Lord, are there *just* a few who are being saved?' And He said to them, 24: 'Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25: 'Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' 26: "Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; 27: and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.' 28: 'In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. 29: 'And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline *at the table* in the kingdom of God. 30: 'And behold, *some* are last who will be first and *some* are first who will be last.'"

And,

"...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. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Matthew 3:9-10

9:27-29,

27: "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, 'THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; 28: FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.' 29: And just as Isaiah foretold, 'UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH.'"¹³¹

27-28: Here Paul uses this verse (Isaiah 10:20) in a slightly different way than the prophet does. Isaiah speaks of the remnant that will return to Jerusalem and be faithful after Israel and Judah suffer massive loss under Assyria and later, Babylon. Paul applies this passage to the spiritual heritage of Israel. Only a remnant will be saved and the implication is that the remainder to fill out all of Israel are Gentiles. 29: Isaiah 1:9 concludes the prophets opening remarks which consists of an indictment against Judah for its godlessness, rebellion against the Lord, abandoning Him and despising Him not to mention its evil deeds. Judgement is imminent unless Judah repents. Isaiah quotes the mercy of God with His offer,

"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. 'Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword.' Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken." 1:16-20

It sounds like they have a choice to me. Nevertheless, Paul applies this passage to his hearers and their history to support the argument that only a remnant of the fleshly descendants of Isaac will remain - be heirs. And they will be the people who believed and had faith apart from their works.

9:30-33,

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. 32: Why? Because *they did not pursue it* by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the

¹³¹ "Sabaoth" from the Hebrew meaning "armies" or "hosts" often referring to angelic forces or even the stars. The English word "hosts" would be better translated "armies."

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.’”

30-31: Though these sentences are without a question mark, (the original writings had no punctuation) they are rhetorical questions. So verse 30 would end with a question mark as would 31. The expected answer to verse 30 is "yes." And the answer to 31, is also "yes."

32: This is the issue, the whole matter. Works had become a substitute for faith early on in the history of Israel and it was still a problem in Paul's day and is still a problem today. There is nothing wrong with works except in the understanding as to the motive for them. What matters is their origin. If performed in an attempt to achieve a righteous standing before God, the “performer” has desperately missed the intent of everything God has said on the matter. It indicates a person trusting in themselves for righteousness rather than God (See 10:1-3). With this longstanding perspective and belief, it is little wonder that the need for faith in Christ was/is thought to be non-essential. So they stumbled over the "stumbling stone" just as God knew many would. Many still stumble today.

33: Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14 to support his conclusion.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER TEN

10:1-3,

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.

1: The subject is how righteousness before God is attained. This now the second chapter Paul is spending on explaining why not all who are descendant from "Israel" are "Israel."¹³² Paul now addresses the church directly regarding the Jews of whom he now speaks of in the third person. He prays for their salvation. This removes any doubt about the meaning behind the potter/clay and the vessels metaphors. It is not a predetermined salvation for individuals. Why pray for anyone if God's already picked the winners and losers? This is simply an attack on those that think so and that God is thereby unjust.

2: The knowledge they lack is that works apart from faith is useless, no matter how intensely or devotedly a person accomplishes them.

3: This is seen in the effort to establish one's own righteousness rather than see one's need of God's mercy. In Luke 18:9-14, the perfect example of this is told by Jesus in a parable. It sums up the intent of the entire ministry of the Old Testament, the law and the intent of the teachings of Jesus.

9: "And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11: 'The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12: 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13: "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14: 'I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

The word "justified" means to be declared righteous or innocent. This parable shows

¹³² The distinction is "Israel" named for the descendants of the flesh (Jacob) and God's "Israel", the people belonging to Him by faith, the spiritual "Israel."

how that is attained. It is what the Jews lacked knowledge of. So Paul is about to instruct them in this matter.

10:4-13,

4: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5: For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. 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), 7: 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; 10: for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11: For the Scripture says, 'WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.' 12: 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.'"

4: This means either that Christ concludes the need for the Law, or fulfills the purpose of the Law. In the first sense, in Him, all the requirements of the Law are met and now the law is of no effect. Another possibility is to see that the intent or final purpose of the law is to point to Christ as Paul notes in Galatians 3:24. Perhaps both are possible; Christ being both the purpose of the Law as well as its fulfillment. But the Greek word "telos" (end or termination) is more likely because the word "pleroma" (fulfillment) is not used.

5: From Leviticus 18:5 (and noted in Nehemiah 9:29; Ezekiel 20:11, 13, and 21; as well as quoted in Galatians 3:12). Some feel that this means that one can be saved by keeping the law. But if Paul is teaching this, it doesn't agree with Romans 3:20, that says, "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin." Paul repeats this dictum in Romans 3:28; 4:13-15; Galatians 2:16; 3:9-10; Philippians 3:9). So he can't be saying that keeping the Law merits eternal life or even righteousness, and it should not be confused with the idea that if one keeps the law he shall be saved. Paul says this right out in Philippians 3:6-11. In fact he states in Galatians 3:12 that the law is not of faith. Then what does it mean?

One thought is that the phrase, "...they shall live by that righteousness..." is normally quoted in contrast to the impact of the heathen and their conduct socially as well as

religiously. This probably directs itself to the earthly life and conduct. If they conform to the ways of the heathen they will not live, literally. The Lord will bring down destruction upon them. If they keep His Law He will not.¹³³

Another is that since Paul spoke of the law as our tutor to point to Christ, that the idea of a person living in the righteousness of the law is actually Paul's way of noting (based on verse 4) that the only way that can be done is by placing one's faith in Christ, recognizing that this is the very thing the law points to.

6-7: To illustrate the concept of faith as opposed to works, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 30:11-14 as an example a Jew can grasp. Simply put, faith says, "You don't have to go to heaven or the abyss to somehow find and bring the Messiah to the throne of Israel in some near or totally impossible feat of works. From verse 6 through verse 18, Paul contrasts those who have heard the gospel in recent times with those (19-21) who had rejected God's mandate for faith prior to the coming of Christ. So faith is not a work of man to accomplish something at all and it never has been. Why not?

8-10: Well because faith is a matter of the heart and simply believing and personally affirming the word of truth brought by God's apostles,

"...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

11: Paul again quotes Isaiah 28:16 (LXX-already quoted in 9:33) to motivate his readers/listeners. The word "whoever" indicates "all" or "everyone", whether Jew or not. Paul alters the LXX some. It translates, "...the one who believes in him (or it) shall not be shamed (or cursed or become odious)." The Hebrew translates, "...he who believes shall not be "hastened." The Hebrew here reflects the context in which the priests and prophets of God now spend their time in a drunken rush to chaos, death and destruction. But those who trust and believe in the cornerstone God will lay will not be a part of this and will find rest. In any case, the invitation to believe is not exclusive.

¹³³ Scott Davis notes: Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5. (Note verses 1-5) does not apply to "spiritual life" but to conduct wherein a man will not be judged and put to death for his sin and corruption as are the nations Israel is passing through. Further, he is stuck within the confines of his own efforts in trying to achieve righteousness by the law. The context makes this clear as does the following verses. Paul is not referring to salvation by the law. Note: Galatians 3:1-14. Paul notes that those under the law are under a curse and those that look for justification under the law are in a losing situation.

12: Thus Paul can include the Gentiles in the invitation . "Abounding in riches" is a spiritual, not necessarily earthly promise. "All who call upon the name of the Lord" includes the idea of "appealing for help" and "invoking His name" in faith.

13: Continuing, Paul quotes Joel 2:32 here to back up his statement in 12. The word "Lord" in the Hebrew is יהוה (Yahweh) the name of God in relationship to His people. In other words, even the Gentiles are included in this company as they come to faith in Christ.

10:14-17

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? 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!" 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.

14-15: "They" is speaking primarily of the Gentiles but does not exclude Jews. Continuing from 12-13, Paul has noted that all are included in the invitation to faith with no distinction between Jew and Gentile. They wouldn't be able to call on the Lord (in whom they have not yet believed) if they have never heard the gospel. And they won't be able to hear the gospel without someone to go and proclaim the truth to them. And no one will go and proclaim the truth to them unless they are sent to do so. But who will be sent to the Gentiles? The Jews are not prone to do so. Yet we shall see that in Paul's time they are hearing.

Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 in verse 15. The message is to Judah, but concludes with,

"Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, *My people*, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle *many nations*, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand." Isaiah 52:13-15 (Bold italics mine)

This prophecy includes the "many nations," thus it must include Gentiles as the term "nations" in the Hebrew is the term for Gentiles.

16: Speaking of the contemporary Jews. Isaiah 52:15 is followed by 53:1, "LORD WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" The rhetorical question and the contexts

where it occurs requires the answer "very few" and refers to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The passage is definitely understood as messianic, even by the Jews, but they attribute it to the nation of Israel's suffering and ignore the messianic implications because the passage is so reflective of Jesus. Speaking of Jesus, John 12:37-41 reads,

37: "But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet* they were not believing in Him. 38: *This was* to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: 'LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?' 39: For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 40: 'HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.' 41: These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him."

So this indicates that many of Judah and Israel did not come to faith. Here Paul begins the task of showing how all "Israel" shall be saved even though not all of Israel believed or even believes the message of the gospel being preached in his day. (Note: 1:13-15) This is important as we approach chapter 11.¹³⁴

17: Faith (or belief) comes after one has "heard" the gospel of Christ. The Greek of verse 17 is a little awkward to translate, but the RSV may have the best one, "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of (or about) Christ." As the Messiah (which the word "Christ" means), Jesus fulfills all the prophecies to which the Word of God points.

10:18-21,

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.' 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.'"

¹³⁴ See footnote 132.

18: So "indeed they have" heard Paul declares. He quotes Psalm 19:4 and adapts it to the voice of the gospel proclaimed by the apostles throughout the empire. This is quite clever and within the bounds of the Hebrew imagery found in the Psalm.¹³⁵

19-20: "But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they?" Literally, "I say, did not Israel know?" This proper translation gives us a better idea of Paul's intent. Another rhetorical question to be sure. Know what? The context is clear that Israel has been aware (or should have been aware) for over a thousand years that God opened the way to Himself to the Gentiles. So then, what is to be the expected answer to this rhetorical question? Two things give this to us. First, this question is likely in parallel to the previous question and an emphasis of it. In this case the answer is, "Yes they did."

Then as Paul continues the argument, he quotes Moses regarding the stubbornness and hard hearted condition of the people even then pointing out that God would receive those not having the understanding Israel was and is supposed to have.

In verse 19, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21 that occurs at the conclusion of a condemnation of Israel by Moses. Here is some of that context,

"They made Him jealous with strange *gods*; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New *gods* who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread. You neglected the Rock who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth. The LORD saw *this*, and spurned *them* Because of the provocation of His sons and daughters. Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*; For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom is no faithfulness. '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 32:16-21

Based on this, Israel did indeed, or should have known the mind of God. But to add more to this, Paul also quotes Isaiah 65:1 making it clear that God invited the Gentiles to Himself. The Hebrew translates thus,

"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."

¹³⁵ Briefly, the Psalm begins with the heavens "declaring" the glory of God pouring forth "speech" and revealing knowledge. But then it goes on to point out that the heavens do so without a voice (sound), speech or words that can be heard. Yet their "line" (Hebrew-probably meaning either a string for a musical instrument or the line of the horizon) or "song" (LXX) and their "utterances" or "discourses" go throughout the entire earth. The word of the Lord is like this also the Psalmist implies. So Paul's use of this Psalm in this manner is very ingenious.

The word "nation" is the same word translated "Gentile." A little later in Isaiah 65, we read a passage that Paul could have used to buttress his argument here and in chapter eleven. Here is Isaiah 65:8-12,

8: "Thus says the LORD, 'As the new wine is found in the cluster, And one says, 'Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,' So I will act on behalf of My servants In order not to destroy all of them. 9: "I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, And an heir of My mountains from Judah; Even My chosen ones shall inherit it, And My servants will dwell there. 10: 'Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks, And the valley of Achor a resting place for herds, For My people who seek Me. 11: 'But you who forsake the LORD, Who forget My holy mountain, Who set a table for Fortune, And who fill *cups* with mixed wine for Destiny, 12: I will destine you for the sword, And all of you will bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight And chose that in which I did not delight."

21: Yet there remains the invitation to the Jews who are yet to believe. For this Paul quotes Isaiah 65:2. Here, God is seen as opening His arms and hands to Israel, inviting them to His bosom. But they are a rebellious and stubborn people. Jesus said much the same thing when while preaching to the hypocrites and ungodly leaders of the people,

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" Matthew 23:37-38

In looking at a sequence of how it all comes together, we can put it as:

"Hearing the word, faith, God's foreknowledge of this, His choice (the chosen, elect or called), grace and predestination to glory."

Predestination deals with the last things, not the first. Yet before time, God predestined that those who heard, believed, (who He foreknew) would be chosen to receive His grace and enjoy glory. Simply put, God predestined that those who believe would be saved.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Introduction:

This is the third chapter continuing Paul's effort to win the unbelieving Jews to faith in Christ. His statement in 9:6-8 is still being explained. ("But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: 'THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED.' 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.) The problem with understanding this chapter comes at verse 11 and onward.

In this section it begins to sound like Paul is saying that all the fleshly descendants of Abraham will ultimately be saved. But this can't be since he has eliminated this possibility several times. Even verse 14 declares this. So we must tread carefully as to get the intent of his message.

Many, if not most commentators, when coming to verse 26, "... and so all Israel will be saved..." either declare that this means that all the descendants of Abraham by the flesh, or the nation itself, or all the Jews in some way will be saved, or they admit they have no idea what this means. This is absurd in light of both the context and the teaching of the Lord.¹³⁶ These kinds of conclusions highlight the error of taking a comment like this out of context. Again, interpreting a text apart from the context is nothing more than a pretext. The other error is attempting to force this into a theological pre-supposition such as one finds in dispensationalism.

11:1-6,

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.¹³⁷ 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

¹³⁶ Jesus teachings and the context will be noted when the commentary there is covered.

¹³⁷ Note 8:29 and that Paul is still explaining all this from that point.

remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. 6: But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

Note by Scott Davis: "Now comes the conclusion of his arguments. Never is it so important to keep the context of the book in mind to this point as it is now. Chapter 11, taken by itself, could easily cause great distress and confusion among the Christian community. Note in verse 2 the word, "foreknew". God's preparation for the glory of his people includes all Israel of the flesh (descendants of Abraham) whom He "foreknew". Israel is not rejected out-of-hand. Those of Israel whom God foreknew are defined in the following verses as a remnant who "have not bowed the knee to Baal."

1: The familiar rhetorical question is answered by Paul, "May it never be!" Supporting his point is his note that he himself is an Israelite and has not been rejected.

2-4: Paul implies that he was one whom God foreknew, and the following suggests that these are a limited number and one is not born into it by fleshly lineage. Quoting I Kings 19:10 (and 14), Paul illustrates this fact. Though Elijah felt he had been isolated as the only faithful servant of God, he is corrected by the Lord in I Kings 19:18. Indeed, though thousands had forsaken the Lord, 7000 had not and these God foreknew and included as His chosen own. Thus the idea of the faithful remnant of Israel by the flesh combined with the faithful Gentiles fills out the totality of God's true Israel. A "vital passage to understanding the chapter. Again, those who belong to God are not all of Israel by the flesh, but those who did not bow the knee to Baal. These are a remnant, whom God "foreknew" and prepared glory for them."¹³⁸

5. "In the same way" means that even as this occurred in the time of Elijah, the same process has and still continues in Paul's day (and still does today). There is also a present and growing remnant. This remnant exists due to "grace", not "works".

6: Following verse 5, Paul aligns "grace" with "choice." So "grace", and "choice" are sister words it appears and the choice (election) has been made to grant salvation and glory to those of faith (who receive grace) in the likeness of the 7000 who refused to bow the knee to Baal. The sequence runs, "faith", "choice/grace." He points out that the remnant of grace is due to His choice. Grace is given in spite of works or, better, works are excluded altogether, good or bad. Otherwise, grace loses all its meaning.

¹³⁸ Scott Davis

11:7-10,

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.' 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.'"

7: This verse and following passage is often misconstrued. Note several points in verse 7. First, the present tense, "Israel has not obtained." Contrast: "...but those who were chosen obtained it."¹³⁹ Throughout the history of Israel, some who had faith obtained the promises of God and these, by God's foreknowledge, were chosen to do so. Those who refuse to believe in God's terms by which righteousness is achieved, but trusted in themselves and their own works, became hardened to the truth.

8: This is a blend of quotes (LXX) from Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10. This is quoted to demonstrate the consequence of self-righteousness, rebellion and discarding faith in God. They have estranged themselves from God and the consequence is that God cuts Himself off from them. On what basis is it that God has not given them a heart to know or ears to hear? Well first, Deuteronomy 9:1-6 reads,

1: "Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, 2: a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard *it said*, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?' 3: Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you. 4: Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is dispossessing them before you. 5: It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and

¹³⁹ Paul has shown repeatedly that God is not constrained by a principle that the first born or any fleshly descendant of Abraham will necessarily inherit the promises. He has used illustration of Jacob and Esau, the potter and clay (vessels for honorable use and those for dishonorable use from the same lump), the wild and natural olive tree and the lump of dough plus stating it directly.

Jacob. 6: Know, then, *it is* not because of your righteousness *that* the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people."

And Isaiah 29:9-10; 13-14 says,

9: "Be delayed and wait, Blind yourselves and be blind; They become drunk, but not with wine, They stagger, but not with strong drink. 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."

13: Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*, 14: Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men will perish, And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed."

It looks like that it is during and after their disregard of God and dependence upon their own works or indulgence in fleshly desires that their hearts are hardened against turning back to God. God calls them to righteousness through His prophets but upon hearing the word their hearts are hardened against it.

9: This view is supported by Paul's quoting of Psalm 69:22-23 (LXX). In verse 9, it is Psalm 69:22 that is quoted. The N.A.S.B. translates the Hebrew as "trap." The LXX uses "skandalia" for the Hebrew and it means a "snare," "trap stick" or "a stick that cause stumbling or entrapment." We get our word "scandal" from this. "Stumbling block" is perfectly acceptable in the context.

Psalm 69 illustrates that it is their own behavior that is the cause of their stumbling and lack of perception. Though the Psalmist applies this scenario to the enemies of Israel, Paul applies it to faithless Israel itself. One suggestion about their 'table being a trap' as Paul applies this to Israel is that perhaps the "table" is a picture of all the "religious" customs and feasts that by celebrating them Israel assumes this is sufficient to present them as righteous before God. Nothing could be further from the truth.

10: Psalm 69:23 continues here. The result of their faithlessness and stubbornness. The phrase in the LXX, "AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER" is "...and make their loins shake continually" in the Hebrew. This indicates "fear."

(Now we come to the controversial section. This is where the overall context and foundation from 8:29 must be held to.)

11:11-15,

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. 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! 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. 15: For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?"

11: They did not fall and still fulfilled the purpose for which they were chosen...to bring forth the redeemer. But not all are the chosen. Paul is still working to get those Jews who are yet to believe to come to faith in Christ, the fulfillment of God's promises and the reason for their existence in the first place. Though stumbling has occurred, there is still the possibility for some to regain their standing .

"May it never be." This reprises verse 1. Is this an exclamation that all of Israel by the flesh will not fall? No, because we must remember the remnant and that remnant still as room for more. All that is necessary is faith.

But the stumbling and transgressions of the Jews have "made room" for Gentiles as it were,¹⁴⁰ to become a part of the remnant by faith. Their keeping the Law, being self-righteous and making Judaism exclusive was actually disobedience not righteousness. So since they failed to follow God's command to be a light to the Gentiles, the rejection by God of those who trusted in their own righteousness was the actual cause of the Gentiles becoming aware of the truth of the Gospel. Using "jealousy" is Paul's way of describing a motivating force that will hopefully persuade some of his Jewish brethren who are on the fence of decision to make one for faith in Christ.

Paul uses the word "para-ze-lah-oh" for "jealous" and it indicates an intensity, an enthusiasm, great interest, and desire to motivate or accomplish. Together, the intent is that the salvation the gentiles now enjoy will motivate Israel or provoke them to the pursuit of the truth about how God's righteousness is to be understood. Again, the term stumble is used. "They did not stumble so as to fall, did they?" "Falling would mean none could get up. But stumbling means that some may fall but others can regain their balance."¹⁴¹

12: This verse is to celebrate that the inclusion of the Gentiles will ultimately be seen as a great blessing to the faithful Jews who will realize that the true intent of their

¹⁴⁰ In verses 16-25, Paul will use the grafting in of the wild branch to the natural branch of the olive tree to illustrate this.

¹⁴¹ Scott Davis

existence has been fulfilled according to what God originally intended for them even though the nation as a whole failed in its purpose. God's eternal intent is that the entire world would come into the blessing (riches) of God brought about by faith in His truth and promise and not by self-righteous works (Genesis 12:1-3). Thus, from 9:6 and 9:14, God's word has not and will not fail and He will not be found to be unjust.

13: Paul clarifies that he is now addressing his Gentile (believing) hearers as up to this point he was addressing his unbelieving Jewish brothers. Albert Barnes rephrases it nicely putting it in Paul's mouth,

"What I am saying respecting the Jews, I say with reference to you who are Gentiles, to show you in what manner you have been admitted to the privileges of the people of God; to excite your gratitude; to warn you against abusing those mercies. etc."

"As Paul also was appointed to preach to them, he had a right to speak to them with authority." "I am the apostle of the Gentiles" - not because other apostles did not preach to Gentiles, for they all did, except perhaps James; nor because Paul did not himself preach occasionally among the Jews; but because he was especially called to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, and that this was his original commission."¹⁴²

This commission is recorded in Acts 9:15 where the Lord says to Ananias,

"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel..."

14-15: Verse 14 parallels verse 11 and verse 15 parallels verse 12. It is important to catch, (in light of what follows) the point that Paul's ministry to the gentiles ultimately reaches his brethren by the flesh because it provokes them to jealousy and thus some are saved. Some, not all. But Paul's ministry is magnified none-the-less.

Note that their acceptance will be "life from the dead". This parallels the idea of "fulfillment" in verse 12. There is no question that Paul views his conversion as a coming to life from the dead and now experiences the fulfillment of what it means to be an Israelite. (Ephesians 2:4-6; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:4 etc.)¹⁴³

The term "some of them" once again clarifies that the phrase in verse 26 is not inclusive of all the fleshly descendants of Abraham nor of those who depend on their circumcision or works of the Law for their righteous standing before God.

¹⁴² Albert Barnes, "Notes on the Bible." From: e-Sword.net.

¹⁴³ Commentary by Scott Davis

11:16-24,

16: "If the first piece of *dough* is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too. 17: But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, 18: do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you. 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. 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?"

16:¹⁴⁴ Continuing to speak to the gentiles, Paul points out the privilege of being grafted into the "tree." Using two metaphors, both illustrating the same thing, Paul is saying that both the "dough" and the "root" are "holy." These point to the patriarchs as the ones "holy" which means set apart especially for the call and commission of God.¹⁴⁵ This doesn't mean something like they were sinless or especially pure or religious. Often the contrary was true. But it was their faith that mattered.

Paul develops the metaphor of the root, tree and branches and departs from the "lump" illustration. The branches coming from the root are also "holy" that is their intent and purpose was God's. The root and branches describe the community or lineage of faith in God's eyes, not just that of the flesh.

17: But some rejected this privilege. So they were "broken off." This does not, as some teach, indicate a loss of salvation. The tree metaphor should not be pressed too hard and may have a dual identity. We will see this possibility later. For now, it represents that the "root" (the calling and acceptance by faith of the patriarchs) and their descendants by the flesh became the fledgling tree. As it grew, those who were in unbelief were broken or cut off (verse 20). So the tree at this point cannot be that of salvation. The reason is, at this point in Paul's discussion, is that the issue *is* belief (faith) as a means to remain attached to the tree. The tree represents God's people (true

¹⁴⁴ Commentary by both Scott Davis and Bob Stewart.

¹⁴⁵ "Holy" is to be set apart exclusively for God's service. Even utensils, vessels and the garments priests wore in the temple were called "holy" because they were to be used for that service and nothing else.

Israel) via the promise and faith, not just the flesh only and those of the flesh only without faith are broken off. This is Jesus' point in John 15 as we will see. He is the true "vine," the true Israel and the vine and the tree are the same image.

Now, Paul shows us the full tree and it is an Olive tree. The olive tree had been a symbol for the people of Israel (the descendants of Abraham) for centuries.¹⁴⁶ Paul's use of this comes from Jeremiah, chapter 11:16. There, the prophet condemns disobedience, idolatry, and stubbornness with these words,

"The LORD called your name, 'A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form'; With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, And its branches are worthless."

Jesus used this picture as well in John 15:1-8 noting,

4: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. 5: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6: "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned."

Again, not to be misinterpreted as a possibility of losing one's salvation. Jesus and Paul are saying the same thing. The "abiding" is a relationship by faith and trust in the vine. It is not a reference to works, sinlessness, or some mistake a believer makes that jeopardizes his or her salvation. The vine is the "true Israel" of God by faith and the fruit produced by His own.

But those "branches" who did not live by faith were "broken off." In their place, a grafting of branches from a "wild olive tree" into the "holy" olive tree. In actuality, an real grafting of this type would not be advisable as the wild olive is smaller and not very fruitful. In verse 24, Paul notes that this grafting is "contrary to nature."

The wild olive is, of course, the Gentiles who by faith are included both in the holy "lump" or "olive tree." This was God's plan from the beginning. (See: Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 28:14; Psalm 72:17; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6, 51:4-5; 60:1-3; etc.) We recall some of the Gentiles in the Old Testament who are included in the list of saints; Ruth, Caleb, Rahab to mention a few right off. One wonders how Israel missed this. Nevertheless, those of faith in Christ from among the Gentiles are "partakers with them of the rich root of the olive tree."

¹⁴⁶ Jeremiah 11:16

18-21: Paul cautions the Gentiles to not misunderstand this. They are not to make the same mistake as the Jews have made. 1. They are not to look down upon the Jews because they have been looked down upon. 2. It is not by their works or goodness that allows them access to the richness of the "root." It is the "root" - grace - that supports them. 3. Arrogance might say, "I am better than the Jews who have been broken off," and pride and conceit could set in. This is not to take place, although in this day there have been multiple times historically where the Jews have been blamed for the crucifixion and persecuted. 4. Some Jews were broken off for their unbelief and the Gentiles must remember that this is the ground for being grafted in, nothing else. Often even today, there are those in the church who believe that their salvation is due to their "good life" and not the grace of God. They are not true believers even though they do all the so-called correct things and practice prescribed rituals. 5. We stand by our faith, not in ourselves, but in Christ alone who graciously gives us a standing solely by our faith in Him. 6. Conceit and arrogance will reveal the truth of whether they are truly of faith or not. 7. And if not, they are not immune to also being broken off.

Of course the metaphor breaks down here as unbelieving people would never be grafted in in the first place. But the warning is accurate in the context in that no one has a standing except by faith. One must be careful not to make assumptions.¹⁴⁷ Scott Davis notes,

"As Paul continues to talk to the gentiles, remember that this epistle is being read to the whole congregation at Rome, comprised of both Jewish and gentile believers as well as those from both groups that may be in an investigative position as skeptics or opponents. Although he addresses the gentiles, Paul knows full well the Jews are listening. What they hear needs to draw them to the truth Paul is presenting. So, in verse 21, Paul makes it clear that the gentiles are not exempt from being cut off from the tree if it is found that they are not believers after all. A warning is given to any who would profess faith but have their hearts far from God."

22-24: Continuing to speak to the Gentiles, Paul contrasts the action of God depending on the action of the person. To the Jews who fell, severity. To the Gentiles, kindness - if the Gentiles believe - then they will continue in God's kindness, if they are

¹⁴⁷ Scott Davis: "But, just because one is a gentile (by the flesh) and grafted into the tree, by no means gives them any special privilege over Israel of the flesh. Fleshly lineage has already been discounted as sufficient to achieve standing in the inheritance of the saints. So arrogance on the part of the gentiles is unacceptable (verse 18). Quite the contrary, the righteousness of God is imputed to both Jew and Gentile because of their faith (3:28-30). In both cases, the issue is nothing else but faith. Because gentiles have the opportunity to be grafted into the tree doesn't mean that they are secure simply because they are given the opportunity. The tree is a tree of promise/faith for both. 'Without faith, it is impossible to please Him'. (Hebrews 11:6) "...The tree is like a 'family tree'. It grows and changes shape but is not yet fully grown and complete."

pretenders, they will not.

In verse 22, what does the conditional clause mean when it says, "If you continue in his kindness...? Does this mean that salvation is conditional? Only in the sense that salvation is based in true faith, not pretense or impulse. (Note the parable of the sower in Luke 8:5-8) The root of the word "kindness" comes from *χραομαι*, (kraw-oh-mai) to furnish what is needed, to act on one's behalf or toward one's best interest. So, we can see this as to "continue in what God furnishes", as opposed to works, self-righteousness, self-effort, etc. This involves faith and trust in God and His Word rather than in lineage, privilege, accomplishments, religion or tradition.

Jews, as well, if they do not continue in their unbelief, may be grafted in again. This is most appropriate since they would be grafted into their own natural olive tree. Again, Paul issues an indirect invitation to those Jews who are yet to believe.

Scott Davis: "These verses clarify the intent of Paul's point. The condition to be attached permanently to the tree is belief. Those cut off can be reattached if they come to genuine faith. This also demonstrates that the "cutting off" does not refer to eternal life, or one's salvation as it relates to eternity. This "cutting off" has to do with the community of faith, the true Israel."

11:25-29,

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; 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.' 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."

(Introductory comment) We are still talking about the olive tree. The olive tree is representative of the true Israel of God. Its branches are either broken or cut off or even grafted in based on whether unbelief or belief is present. No assumption can be made that the quality of one's life is the qualification for being a part of the tree or being grafted in. It is only by God's grace based in faith. The tree, however is God's true Israel and both Jews and Gentiles are a part of its composition. But the nature of the tree as this relates to eternal salvation is in debate. On the one hand, as the tree grows and develops, some branches are cut off and some are grafted in. Thus this tree

cannot be representative of final salvation because the issue is faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. So at this point the tree is like the ground upon which the sower scatters his seed, or like the field with both wheat and weeds in it. The tree metaphor cannot be pressed too far because it doesn't quite work and misses the intent Paul is trying to get across. On the other hand, at the culmination and fulfillment of everything, the tree is comprised only of those of faith and it represents the salvation of those attached to the tree.

25: Continuing to address Gentile hearers/readers, Paul, calling them "brethren."¹⁴⁸ He does not want them to fall into the same error as the Jews have done. He calls this a "mystery" meaning that this entire sequence of the Jewish distortion of God's intent (leading to the inclusion of the Gentiles after all) was not understood (or was shut out) by the Jews. Most often, the "mystery" is the inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God by faith.¹⁴⁹

He warns them against being "wise in their own estimation" as the Jews did who ultimately fell and were cut off the tree. This has been noted four times now and indicates that this was a big problem. It still is today.

"...partial hardening has happened to Israel," is better translated, "hardening has happened to part of Israel."¹⁵⁰ Otherwise an assumption could be made that all of Israel has experienced a partial "hardening" that would be hard to define or explain what that means.

"...until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." Until the total number of Gentiles whom God has foreknown is fulfilled, or, more likely, to fill the vacancy left by those who fell (or were cut off). The hardening of part of Israel means that another part has not been hardened and is the integral structure upon which the entire Israel will be built. In other places Jesus, Paul and Peter uses this particular analogy.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Did you never read in the Scriptures, *THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES*’? ‘Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will

¹⁴⁸ Only the context can determine terms like this and often simple pronouns such as "we" or "us." Paul has called the unbelieving Jews "brethren" meaning those of his countrymen by the flesh as descendants of Abraham, and now "brethren" referring to fellow believers who are Gentiles, and "brethren" referring to all believers without regard to national origin.

¹⁴⁹ Romans 16:25-26; Colossians 1:25-27; Ephesians 3:4-6; and Genesis 17:4-6; 18:8; 26:4; Psalm. 22:27, 46:10, 57:9, 67:4, 72:17, 86:9; Isaiah 2:2, 11:10, 42:1-7, 49:6, 60:1-3; Jeremiah 3:17-18, 4:2 and dozens more.

¹⁵⁰ Such as in: The Bible in Basic English, Contemporary English Version, God's Word, International Standard Version, New International Version, New Living Translation, RSV. New RSV, etc.

be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.' When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them." Matthew 21:42-45

Speaking to Gentiles Paul says in Ephesians 2:17-22,

“AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

And Peter adds, speaking of both Jew and Gentile, where "the shoe fits,"

"For *this* is contained in Scripture: ‘BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.’ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, ‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,’ and, ‘A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE’; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed. But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.’” I Peter 2:6-10

Together, both believing Jew and Gentile are the true Israel of God, God's holy nation, fellow citizens with the saints, God's own household, and the temple of His Spirit, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. This is the core matter.

26-27: Verse 26 continues verse 25. Remember there were no verse divisions in the original. So it must read, "... until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved." This fits the context fully and the tree illustration. The Gentiles are a part of Israel. "All of Israel" is not the Israel of the fleshly line of Abraham, but those of faith whether Jew or Gentile who believe God, His promises and their fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah (The Christ). Remember not all of Israel is "Israel" (9:6-8)

Paul supports this conclusion with a quote from Isaiah 59:20-21. The Hebrew translation is clearer and reads¹⁵¹, "A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the LORD. "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."

Can it be argued from this passage that Paul means that all Jews are going to be saved regardless of faith? No, Paul already has noted in 11:14 that his goal is that some will be saved. (See also: Hebrews 3:17-19) It is clear that the "Redeemer" comes to those who turn from their transgressions. God's covenant is with them alone.

28: In other words, the Gentiles are included because of the rejection of those Jews who have placed themselves as enemies of the gospel. But from God's perspective, they were chosen to fulfill the destiny God gave to the patriarchs and so are beloved.

29: God has not revoked the gifts or calling He assigned to Israel from the time of Abraham. Though many have fallen away from their calling, God used the remnant of the faithful to fulfill His purposes. The faith of the patriarchs was not in vain. God's calling and gifts cannot be revoked. The first and most important "calling" by God is to come to Him.

11:30-36,

30: "For just as you once were disobedient¹⁵² 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. 32: For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. 33: Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34: For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35: Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36: For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen."

30-31: Still speaking to the Gentiles, Paul points out that God's mercy came to them even when they were disobedient and can still come to the disobedient Jews. Paul said in 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet

¹⁵¹ NASB

¹⁵² The Greek word here is ἀπειθέω and in all the sentences where it is translated "disobedient" it could equally be translated "disbelieving."

sinner, Christ died for us." This could be the heart of the mercy of God.¹⁵³

32: "Shut up all in disobedience" - "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Paul uses this same image in Galatians 3:21-23,

21: "Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22: But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23: But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed."

"...all." Both Jews and Gentiles in the context of 30-31. Paul is not suddenly teaching universal salvation. No group of people is excluded because God is merciful to all. All are eligible to receive His mercy, regardless of their background, ethnic character or nationality.¹⁵⁴

With this, Paul concludes his argument, lifts his praise to God and begins a new thought in chapter 12.

33: A rhetorical question from Isaiah 40:13 designed to praise God's wisdom and sovereignty. The answer is of course, "No one."

34: Another rhetorical question from either Job 35:7 or 41:11. The answer is again, "No one."

35: Both Jew and Gentile ought to recognize God's glory and wisdom and raise a united voice to God in praise and thanksgiving. God is everything and to Him alone is everything credited.

¹⁵³ Note: Israel has not excluded itself from mercy by its hardening or unbelief. Mercy comes to anyone who repents and believes. No one is excluded from mercy for any reason as long as they meet the condition of faith. (Review 10:1-10) - Scott Davis

¹⁵⁴ In fact, mercy is shown to all *period*...no qualifiers may be put on God's mercy. All begin life under the aegis of God's mercy...He is already reconciled *to the world*. He did this through the cross. *Life*, not mercy, is offered to those who believe, and repentance is embedded in that decision to believe. It needs referencing only for those who don't understand the seriousness and significance of the decision to believe: it is a complete release of all previous schemes and stratagems for climbing up to God, a complete a total trust in Him (Christ) Who brought God to us.

4PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER TWELVE

Introduction:

Paul now moves from evangelism and explaining the issue of who the true spiritual Israel of God is in contrast of the fleshly Israel and how one becomes a citizen thereof to his urging them to become united in oneness in Christ. He lauds the sovereignty and wisdom of God as he outlines God's plan as well as the miraculous way in which it was carried out. He underscores God's mercy to all of faith, whether Jew or Gentile.

He now addresses the faithful and exhorts them to unity and service as each has been given gifts in accordance with their faith.

12:1-2,

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. 2: And do not be conformed to this world ("age"),¹⁵⁵ 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.

1: "Therefore." Based on all that God has done for mankind Paul previously described, and by His mercies Paul appeals to all his spiritual brethren.

Based on the mercies of God to both the Jews and the Gentiles (demonstrated by His Son's death on the cross for all the world) Paul urges harmony among the brethren. All have been ushered by grace through faith into a new kingdom where all is new and fresh. The past is no longer relevant. The old has gone the new has come. " Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (II Corinthians 5:17) there is no Jew or Gentile, but all are one in Christ Jesus.¹⁵⁶ This new kingdom, the kingdom of God is "...not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."¹⁵⁷

"Brethren" are all believers in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. This conclusion is simple to ascertain considering verses 3-5 and the phrase "the mercies of God" which Paul just applied to both groups. Paul urges them to present their bodies to God for

¹⁵⁵ Parenthesis mine.

¹⁵⁶ Galatians 3:28.

¹⁵⁷ Romans 14:17.

His use as this sacrifice and service is "spiritual" worship. The word "spiritual service" is literally "reasonable worship to God." The word "spiritual" is an invention of the translators. The point is that all of our regular activities in the flesh are to be activities done in a manner that is a worship to God.

Unlike the teachings of so many preachers, this verse is not to be amplified by opinion about what this entails, for Paul explains its intent throughout the chapter.

2: "Conformed to this world" is to have the mental perceptions and principles the world holds. He doesn't list these, but one can ascertain those things mankind holds as important that stand in opposition to what God reveals is really important. In this context, the really important issues are rejecting the destructive perceptions many in the church have about other people with differing religious preferences, nationalities, or cultures. The word "world" is "aion" meaning "age" as in the contemporary culture and its thinking process whether secular or religious. Predominately, this thinking is about "What is best for me" and, "What you think and do is not as important as what I think and do."

"Transformed" is "meta-mor-pha-oh" from which we get metamorphosis. It means a complete transformation from one thing to another much like the caterpillar to the butterfly. This is accomplished by a "renewing" of one's mind, that in turn is caused by the testing, proving and saturation of God's good, acceptable and perfect "will."

Again, God's "will" in Paul's thinking is not explained by some opinion or theological position a preacher or teacher might hold. God's "will" in this case, as the context will define, is the necessity of faith, the oneness of the body of Christ whether Jew or Gentile, humility, and service from the heart, not just as a work, to suggest a few things Paul will speak of in the ensuing verses. Bottom line, God's "will" is defined by Paul as a Christian doing that which builds up the body of Christ, seeing oneself as no more important than another, looking out for the poor and needy, and, by one's actions producing love, peace, and joy in the church.

12:3-8,

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 (since) God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 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. 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.” (Parenthesis mine)

3a: Paul now stresses the unity of the body of Christ, the true Israel of God that is called the "church."¹⁵⁸ He has said this many times and it is one of the facets by which verses 1 & 2 are defined. The first thing is that none of them is to have a superior attitude over anyone else. This admonition is because of the grace given to Paul. He means this literally. He knows of where he came. Who he is now as opposed to who he was prior to his transformation in Christ is by God's grace alone and he knows this. Then to have the privilege of being commissioned to proclaim the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles as an apostle is humbling to Paul. In Ephesians 3:8 he says, "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ ..".

The root of the word "think" (fro-neh-oh) is used four times in the verse. I've noted them in red below. This word means to be predisposed to a position or opinion. Some of the words have prefixes that color the root. We will explain as we go.

“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 (since) God has allotted to each a measure of faith”.

In other words, one ought to think the way one ought to think. About what? Well the first "think" in the passage has a prefix that puts "arrogance" in the thought. So, "not to arrogantly think" more highly of oneself than he ought to "think." This word, as the next, without a prefix holds to the basic definition. So one ought to think about himself in relation to others and about the mercy of God on his behalf that is just as necessary for him as it is for anyone else. There is no place for boasting or holding a superior attitude over anyone else.

If God were to read the "diary" of our secret lives to all, there would be shame, instead of gratitude and rejoicing. So let's bond together and do something in service to His kingdom. The word "sound judgment" based on the same root ("think") has a prefix from the Greek "sozo" meaning to "save", "rescue" "restore" or "make well." So we are to have a "restored", "well", or "rescued mind."

3b: The "measure" of faith is not a certain quantity of faith that one might have and another might not. The "measure" is a category of giftedness as Paul goes on to explain. In other words, it is a certain way faith can be expressed according to one's

¹⁵⁸ To be discussed when we reach chapter 16.

gifts. It also includes, as we shall see in chapter 14, a level of spiritual maturity and understanding that avoids placing stumbling blocks before a "weaker brother."

4: Here Paul explains what he means by the "measure" of faith everyone has. The verse begins literally, "For exactly as in the body we have many members ..." and Paul goes on using the analogy of the human body and the necessity of it having all its limbs and organs to function properly. Each one is different and this defines the "measure" Paul spoke of and relates this to the gifts each one brings to the body of Christ. He does this to underscore that there is no place for judging someone whom we think is less than we are or what we think they ought to be.

5: In like manner to the human body, the body of Christ also has many members all part of the whole and therefore essential to each other though differing from each other.

6: The NASB translation is awkward and therefore forces the supply of "*each of us is to exercise them accordingly*:" as well as "since" at the beginning of the verse. This is unnecessary if translated straight out, "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us; if prophecy ..."

This is an important passage to begin to understand the entire subject of "gifts" in the New Testament.¹⁵⁹ Briefly, there are three different words associated with "gifts" but all are translated "gifts" in the English versions. They are *χαρίσματα* (Charismata), *δοματα* (doe-mata), and *πνευματι* (pneu-mati). The first word is used here in Romans and in I Peter 4:10-11. It has the meaning of a spiritual gift freely given by the graciousness of God and given directly to a person. Paul uses it once where he wishes to impart some spiritual gift from himself to others. They may be "naturally" endowed abilities, talents, or characteristics. But they are usually referred to as being from God's gracious hand and imparted to people in the church. These gifts differ from person to person and are personal gifts, irrevocable, which we are to put to use. They are favors bestowed upon the believer by the grace of God.

We possess them for the benefit of others in the body of Christ and for our own as well as we are blessed in using them. Luther notes that Paul writes all this, "In the interest of unity; for nothing is likely to cause so much division as when people do not stay within the proper bounds of their calling, but neglect their own ministry...."

God does not give every person all gifts, as we learn from I Corinthians 12:4-11, where the Apostle unfolds the meaning of our text to its widest extent. Since it is God who distributes all gifts, but does not bestow all of them on a single person, no one exalts

¹⁵⁹ See my full exposition on this online at: www.bibleclassroom.org; Bible studies, Topical studies, entitled "A Brief Word Study Regarding the Gifts of The Spirit."

himself as though he had all and others none; for by this (arrogance) the unity of the church is destroyed. The Greeks have an excellent saying: "Let everyone practice the art which he has learned."

"If prophecy..." προφητεία - (pro-phe-teia) - the pronouncement of God's Word as it relates to consequences of a chosen act. One has a "gift" of being able to read people, ascertain their disposition and tell them the consequences of any proposed action. The "prophet" is to go further in his pronouncements than his faith (the truth) directs.

7: "Service", "διακονία" - (dia-ko-nia) – Service or ministry. We get the term "deacon" from this root word. In Acts, chapter 6, we have the first mention of deacons. Seven men were selected to help the widows from outside (Hellenistic Jews) share in the common storehouse and food. Due to a prejudice against them by native Jews, they were being neglected. The seven men selected were all Hellenistic Jews and this assured that the widows would be served. Leadership's role is to serve, not to be served.

"Teaching", "διδάσκω" - (di-dahs-ko) – Teaching, instruction. We get the word "didactic" from this root word.

8: "Exhort", "παρακαλέω" -(para-kah-leh-oh) - *to call alongside, to help, to comfort, to admonish, to encourage, to exhort, to beseech, to teach, to counsel, to urge and more.* This word is used by Jesus in John 14:16, 26; 15:26; and 16:7 to describe the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. There "παρακαλέω" is translated "Helper" in the NASB and the NKJV; "Advocate" in the NLT and the NRSV; "Counselor" in the RSV; "Comforter" in the KJV and these translations are the most common in most versions. In fact, they all are true of the person and work of the Spirit.

So here in verse 8 here in Romans, all these and more could apply.

"Giving", "μεταδίδωμι" - (meta-did-oh-mee); To impart, share. Giving is to be with "απλότης" - (ahp-loh-tays), *singleness*, hence *simplicity*. Without giving it a second thought, unreserved, with no regret or reticence.

"Leading", "προίστημι" - (pro-his-tay-mee) - is literally "to stand before." This includes giving direction, leading another to a destination, have charge over, or manage. This is to be done with "σπουδή" - (spoudee) (speed), that is, (by implication) *dispatch, eagerness, earnestness, diligence and without procrastination or an unwilling spirit.*

"Showing mercy", "ελεέω" - (el-ee-eh-oh), to have *compassione* (by word or deed, specifically by divine grace), pity, mercy for someone. This is to be done with

"ἡλαρότης" - (ill-ah-roh-tays) cheerfulness, prompt, willing and happy to do so.

These seven gifts (charismata) are summarized also in I Peter 4:10-11 as "speaking" and "serving."

12:9-13,

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."

These points so far are all part of verse one.

9: Again, the supplied "*let*" and "*be*" are unnecessary but the intent is not changed. "Love without hypocrisy" is the literal and it is fine. The point is that love (agape) must be genuine and not a facade. It needs to reflect the truth of the heart as to not deceive the one receiving the action or message. Note: "Agape" is not exclusive to God but is a word commonly employed and applied to people and relationships rather than to things.

"Abhor" is utterly detest or hate. "Evil" here is not just conduct unbecoming, but malicious, cruel and deliberate "evil" to others intended by the Greek word "poneros" and used of the "Evil One."

"...cling to what is good..." "Good" is what benefits others in kindness and generosity.

10: In other words as Paul says in Philippians 2:3-4,

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

"...brotherly love." Generally, a form of "agape" is used when relational matters are discussed and one is to exercise "love." "Phil-eh-oh" is often used on non-relational matters such as found in Matthew 23:6-7, "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men." But frequently it is used of an affection between two individuals. The word here is "philadelphia" normally translated "brotherly love" only used seven times in the New Testament, two of those of the city in Revelation chapters 1 and 3.

11: In serving others and the Lord, one must not be slothful, indolent or troublesome, but eager, fervent and excited about the opportunity.

12: "Rejoice," "χαίρω"- (Khi-roh), a primary verb; to be full of "cheer", that is, calmly happy or well off; being glad, joyful in... "Hope," "ελπίς" - (el-peeZ), to anticipate, (usually with pleasure); or have an expectation or confidence. This is not "wishful thinking" but an anticipation rooted in a solid base of truth.

"Persevering," "υπομένω" - (hupo-meno), to remain under a burden even a "tribulation" - "θλίψις" - (thlip-sis), or pressure (literally or figuratively), or suffer an affliction, anguish, persecution, or trouble.

"Devoted" is "προσκαρτερέω" - (prohs-kar-te-reh-oh), to be earnest towards - that is, (to a thing) to persevere, be constantly diligent, personally attend to.

13: "Contributing," "κοινωνέω" - (koi-noh-neh-oh) is sharing, having others of faith participate in what you have according to their needs. From the same root as the familiar "koi-noh-nee-ah" meaning to participate with, or have fellowship together in a common goal or purpose.

"Practicing ...," "διωκοντες" - (dio-cone-tehs), also akin to "diakonia" to serve, but here to run to do so, be eager to do so. The same word as "to pursue or even persecute." "Hospitality" - "φιλοξενιαν" - (phil-ox-en-ian) built on "philo" "brotherly love" and means here to love having guests.

12: 14-21,

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. 17: Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18: If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19: Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,' says the Lord. 20: 'BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.' 21: Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

14: Literally bless is "speak well of" those who "persecute" you. This "persecution" does not have to be some terrible suffering. It literally describes "those who are after you." It might be some sort of undeserved and unwarranted gossip, jealousy, or lies about you. Innuendo, insinuation, envy, false rumor might be a part of this clear up to having you removed from a position or even physically harmed. In any case, there is no place for an invective or curse upon such a person from the mouth of someone under grace.

15: Very simply, be sensitive and participate in the feelings of another.

16: Albert Barnes translates it, "“Think of, that is, regard, or seek after the same thing for each other; that is, what you regard or seek for yourself, seek also for your brethren." In the words of Jesus, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Chrysostom saw it as, "enter into each other's circumstances, in order to see how you would yourself feel."

This would agree with what precedes and what follows. It is not a declaration to agree or think exactly alike about all things. But more to care about the other person and what he thinks. As many have been quoted as saying, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

"Associate with the lowly" is weak. "Associate" is "be there to care about" those who are sad, depressed, beaten down, humbled, poor, down-trodden and so on. In other words, don't leave them alone. Literally it is, "to walk the path with them."

"Don't be wise" is even weaker. It is better understood and literally translated as "don't get carried away with your own intelligence or knowledge." In other words, don't hold yourself as superior in knowledge and understanding over others who don't know what you know. Don't be conceited. Others see in this a contrast to being with the lowly in that there is a prohibition against seeking high positions in society (or the church) and leaving the "lowly" behind.

17: Evil here is "kakos" used in both instances. This is not the malicious, cruel and deliberate "evil" to others intended by the Greek word "poneros" and used of the "Evil One." Rather this would be the crude and inappropriate behavior one might display to a believer. Things such as mocking, belittling, deliberately using crude or offensive language to offend or such behavior as to embarrass, mock, ridicule, taunt and so on.

"Respect" is actually better "rehearse." "Right," is better translated "beautiful," "good," "virtuous," or "worthy" in (literally) the face (or presence) of all men.

18: Paul is realistic here. One cannot always bring about peace, but when it depends on your response, behavior or conduct, peace is the desired outcome. Others may exacerbate the conflict and you may or may not be influential in restoring peace.

19: Reflecting on verse 17 and following where a believer is not to repay evil for evil, it follows that he or she is not to take revenge on another person as well. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:35 and Proverbs 25:21-22 underscoring that any retribution needs to be left to God.

20-21: On the contrary, the believer is to care for the needs of his enemy. This, of course, follows the many teachings of Jesus on the same subject. But Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21-22. "Heap burning coals upon his head..." cause your enemy embarrassment, shame, remorse or perhaps even sorrow for the way he has treated you. The "burning coals" could point to the flush of embarrassment.

Thus, if evil (kakos) within personal encounters is to be assuaged, this is the best way to do so.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Introduction.

Before proceeding with this chapter it is important to remember what Paul wishes to achieve in Chapter 12. Remember, there were no chapters and verses when he wrote this epistle. Therefore he is continuing his theme and goal and this chapter is included as a part of his purpose. So that needs to be determined so one can fit this into the context and not run amuck with speculation and controversial questions that have nothing to do with what he is trying to accomplish.

13:1-7,

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. 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. 5: Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6: For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 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."

13:1-4 (For the commentary by Scott Davis on verses 1-2, see the Appendix)

1-2: Paul introduces this subject and we can see both its importance and the difficulties it brings to mind. Verse 1 begs the question, "Is Paul talking about government as an institution or a specific ruling authority at any given time?" My opinion is that it depends on the government and the plan God has or had for His people. When Israel cried out for a king (like the other nations) God, though displeased, established a dynastic rule from which would ultimate come the Messiah. After Saul, David and Solomon, no specific choice was made by God as the dynasty was established. Otherwise, there is little about God "anointing" anyone as a ruler.¹⁶⁰ But the general establishment of human government is noted in footnote 140 below. The general institution of human government is by God's decree. But any

¹⁶⁰ In Isaiah 45:1, God calls Cyrus, King of Persia His "anointed." He was not anointed king over Persia, but fulfilled the will of God by permitting the Jews made captive by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (which Cyrus overthrew) to return to Judah and rebuild their temple and their city. The full account of this is found in the book of Ezra.

selection or anointing of specific rulers is rare and only found in the beginning of Israel's kings.

As far as this teaching of Paul is concerned, my first thought is that he is responding to a segment of those associated with or in the church in Rome who feel like committing open rebellion or obstinate refusal against Roman rule and authority. This attitude against much of what Rome stood for is understandable. The open pagan immoral atmosphere and the effort to impose the Greco-Roman culture on all its citizens as well as the prejudice against Jews who refused to be a part of it was irritating to both the Roman gentile citizenry and Jewish population as well. But the worst was the open idolatry of Roman gods and goddesses and the growing movement to deify the emperor and require homage to him. Statues of the emperors were becoming common place, and Nero's temperament was hardening toward the church.

So many in the Jewish/Christian community advocated open rebellion, especially in Israel. In fact, the anti-Roman movement in Israel was underway and war was just a decade away. Paul's counsel, in light of this was wise. At this point there was no mandate to worship and sacrifice to the gods or goddesses or the emperors. Though the environment was contrary to Christian and Jewish spiritual and moral values, there was still toleration of any religious practice. And Roman law actually aided in the spread of the gospel. The Roman military protected citizens with zeal and was equally zealous against law-breakers. So to be law-abiding was wise and to rebel would actually be harmful to the cause.¹⁶¹

A word about Nero. Nero was Emperor at the time of this writing. He was born December 15, 37 A.D. (C.E.), the adopted son of his grand-uncle Claudius who both preceded him and adopted him to become emperor in his place. Claudius had banned all Jews from Rome in 48-49. Acts records this in 18:2.

At Claudius's death, Nero ascended to the throne at the age of 16. This was in 54 A.D. just three or four years before Paul wrote to the church at Rome. Nero is known mostly for his persecution of Christians and the burning of Rome. But this took place a decade later than our historical context. But at the time of the beginning of his rule, Nero had two powerful tutors, Burrus, prefect of the Praetorian Guard and Seneca, the great Roman playwright. Under their tutelage, a few good things happened and Nero looked, at first, to be a capable leader. The Jews were allowed back into Rome with full privileges within a year and the church assembled and began to grow. It was clear however, that Nero, was a jealous and vicious youth and he began to clear away those he thought opposed him as he gained confidence and power. However these were all political and personal issues. Focus on religious matters was to be some time later.

¹⁶¹ Albert Barnes (Notes on the Bible) has a good discussion on this passage,

The point is, that Paul's comments in this chapter were written during a time of relative peace in the empire and in the city. It was a normal, prosperous and peaceful time - given it was Rome. Major conflicts with the Jews and the Christians were ten years away. Hence, there was no real reason not to be in compliance with Roman governing authorities. All religions were welcome in Rome - and the empire - following the Greek tradition.¹⁶² In fact, if it were not for the unification of the empire and the Roman roads, postal system, and army, the Gospel would not have been able to be spread so far so fast. And personally, Paul was a Roman citizen, and knew how to take advantage of this for the sake of the gospel.¹⁶³

Verses 1 and 2 are based on several passages of scripture.¹⁶⁴ As he continues, my opinion is that Paul wishes the conduct of believers to be exemplary so a positive and inviting witness to unbelievers will have an impact. These instructions are repeated throughout the New Testament both by Paul and other writers.¹⁶⁵

Verse 3 emphasizes this noting, " 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..."

4-5: The role of government is made clear. It is to serve the people for their good. It bears the sword against evil. Christians are not to bear the sword. That is not the role of the church. "Primarily, the Christian is to discharge the obligations of his citizenship (I Peter 2:13-17; 3:13-17). Even if one disagrees with politics or policy, the obligation remains. One's personal aims cannot be pursued at the cost of the well being of society. Citizens tend to lean toward rebellion. Christians are to resist that tendency so often seen and heard in our world."¹⁶⁶

And both Christians and Jews are to place themselves in subjection to the government or face the consequences. But also for "conscience' sake." What does he mean? Well, in opposing the ruling authorities a person would also be opposing the ordinance of God, and both Jew and Christian, knowing this is wrong would be struck with a guilty conscience.¹⁶⁷ They will have failed in presenting Christ through their lives to the world.

6: Taxes. In a similar statement we remember Jesus' counsel to some Jews who

¹⁶² Acts 17:15-34.

¹⁶³ Acts 16:35-40; 22:25-29,

¹⁶⁴ Genesis 9:6; Deuteronomy 16:18-20, 25:1-3; II Chronicles 19:5-11; Proverbs 8:15-16; Daniel 2:21; Ecclesiastes 8:2. Note also: Matthew 22:21; II Peter 2:13; I Timothy 2:1-2; Titus 3:1.

¹⁶⁵ For example, Matthew 10:16; Romans 16:19; Colossians 4:5; I Thessalonians 4;11-12; I Timothy 3:7; Hebrews 13:18; James 3:13; I Peter 2:13-16; II Peter 3:11 etc.

¹⁶⁶ Scott Davis

¹⁶⁷ Hebrews 13:17-18; I Peter 3:8-17.

opposed and hated Roman rule and oversight and the taxes they were forced to pay for it. Jesus was approached about this.

"Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?' But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, 'Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin *used* for the poll-tax.' And they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' Then He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.'" Matthew 22:15-21. (Also Mark 12:13-17 and Luke 20:19-26)

Jesus was well aware of the impending threat against His life and the role of the Roman Procurator in it. Yet He did not counsel rebellion. In fact, He healed the Roman Centurion's servant in Capernaum, called a despised tax collector as a disciple (Matthew) and paid the taxes required.¹⁶⁸

On top of that, He also noted,

"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*." (Luke 6:35)

The reason for this is that as we saw in 12:19-21 in the last chapter, where Paul says,

"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. 'BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."¹⁶⁹

And, a verse from Psalm 110:1, quoted six times in the New Testament,

"The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

We know that our enemies; 1. Could one day come to Christ. We don't know. But it

¹⁶⁸ Matthew 17:24-27

¹⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 32:35; Proverbs 25:21-22

has happened multitudes of times before, and; 2. If not then God has promised to deal with them in due time.

So our role should be fairly clear. This is Paul's point.

There will be a lot of "buts" and "what ifs" to this discussion. And they are worthy of consideration. Many volumes of books on Christian ethics have been composed and deal with these questions. But since Paul does not deal with these questions, this commentary will not spend the time to deal with them either as they would ultimately detract from Paul's primary purpose in writing this epistle.¹⁷⁰

The first question to ask in terms of getting clarity from what Paul has written is not one of all the controversial problems and scenarios we can come up with to object to the problems with this in our thinking or in our situation, but rather, "What is Paul's point and why is he saying this as an extension of his point?" Then we can ask, "Is this applicable for us today of in specific historical or contemporary situations World-wide, and if so how and if not why?" Then, perhaps, "What would be the outcome of overt rebellion?" Of civil disobedience to mandates contrary to Christian beliefs and practices?" "What would God have us do?" And so on.

However, Christian conduct is the issue, even amidst whatever circumstances they may find themselves. He summarizes this in verses 8-10.

13:8-10,

8: "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. 9: For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 10: Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law."

8-10: A believer is not to be obligated or in debt to anyone, especially government authorities as he points out in verse 7. In other words, neither authorities nor anyone else in this world ought not to have a hold on us as to compel our behavior. That role must be God's alone as we allow Him to do so. Therefore, our conduct must not be such that it causes us to come under the disapproval of ruling authorities.

¹⁷⁰ "Most of the evidence from the history of the early church suggests that Christians resisted succumbing to evil behavior even when they were told to do it or die. They fled, were imprisoned or died. They did not lift the sword in defense of their religious 'rights'. There are times when a person must declare that it is his duty to serve God rather than men (Acts 5:27-33 ff.) But this is the exception rather than the rule. Paul does not teach that everything a ruling authority does is of God." - Scott Davis

"Love" here is the relational "agape." You can see Paul's target is still the Jewish segment although his counsel is universal. When he mentions the Law, this becomes apparent. Love "fulfills" the law. That means that when one truly loves, the law has fulfilled its purpose and is no longer necessary or applicable.¹⁷¹ Jesus said the same thing.

Matthew 22:35-40 reads,

“One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ 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.' ‘This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

So in fact, Jesus also declared that the Law is fulfilled by love and if one loves as He and the Law direct, then the Law is moot. He came to fulfill the Law and did so because He loved perfectly. He said, "Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) He fulfilled the Law exercising perfect love, did it for us and in our place because we had no capacity to do so ourselves. Therefore, in Christ, the law is fulfilled for us and we are no longer under it but under the grace and provisions of the New Covenant instead.

13:11-14,

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. 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. 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. 14: But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts."

11-12: Paul's metaphor focuses on the early light of dawn before the Sun is in view. He uses it to illustrate the transition from the time of present "darkness" to the full light of day when Jesus returns to establish His kingdom in righteousness and truth. In

¹⁷¹ This is directed to those who cling to the Law and are afraid not to make it the priority in terms of that which leads their lives. Paul urges them to move to a higher level of leading, that of the Spirit. The Spirit's leading will instill the importance of the first fruit, love. This is higher than the Law, the Law cannot supply it and once a believer moves to the Spirit's leading, the Law is no longer necessary and in fact, detracts from the Believer's ability to grow and be at peace with God. (See Romans 8:1-4)

anticipation of this new day, we should act in accordance with it rather than in accordance with the darkness we have been in for so long.

The "armor of light" is the truth as well as the righteousness of that oncoming day.

13: Not only is there argument, dissension and doubt among the Jews about the validity of the gospel, but questionable conduct taking place among some, perhaps by some Gentiles in the church as well. So using the metaphor of day and night to represent time as well as conduct, Paul urges his hearers to set aside the unprofitable, immoral and futile deeds and behave as people of faith ought to behave. He impresses upon them that time is too short to be dwelling in the darkness, asleep. He anticipates, as did most in that day, a soon return of Christ. The dawn of a new age is approaching and we all need to heed his counsel and be ready at all times and not be caught, as it were - and suggested by verse 13 - with our pants down.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Introductory comment:

This entire chapter is devoted to the several problems the Jews have with the foods the Gentiles are eating and the condemnation they heap on such things and the ensuing backlash. Then there is the observance of special days, such as the Sabbath that the Gentiles do not observe and the Jews still observe and they are judging each other over all these sorts of things. Likely included in the mess is dress, the place of women in the home, society and the church, arguments over what ought to be taught in the church, attitudes about the Roman rule and cultural environment, morals, conduct, manners, work ethic, education of the children, the place of the poor, or the lazy, or the indigent, and all the other things we still judge each other over these days.

Paul's goal is still that of wanting to bring the diverse members of the church at Rome into unity and set aside the petty issues that have nothing to do with matters of the kingdom and life in the Spirit.

So since the entire chapter is devoted to Paul's teaching over how these things ought to be viewed and handled, we can only take a piece at a time. There will be repetition as Paul speaks of one subject, leaves it and returns to it again. But the core of the matter is the same.

1: "Now accept the one who is weak¹⁷² in faith, *but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.*¹⁷³ 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. 4: Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master (*lord*)* he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." *(Italics mine)

1-2: Paul is aware that the dietary restrictions the Jews have been under for over a thousand years are no longer in effect for at least two reasons.¹⁷⁴ 1. Those in Christ are no longer under the Law. 2. Jesus Himself indicated that these dietary stipulations have no bearing on obedience to or righteousness before God. In the gospel of Mark

¹⁷² Those not fully developed spiritually and indicates one bound by the constraints of the Law finding it difficult to adopt the freedom under the provisions of the New Covenant. . This unusual use of the word "faith" does not reflect one's faith in God or Jesus, nor does it reflect a "level" of one's faith.

¹⁷³ "Opinions" is the best translators can do. The context tells us that this actually refers to someone's personal beliefs or convictions about what he should or should not eat based on his conscious.

¹⁷⁴ See verse 14.

we read,

"After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. ["If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."] When he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. And He *said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (*Thus He* declared all foods clean.)" Mark's conclusion is within the parenthesis.

Now let's address the term, "weak in faith" as to what it means and what it does not mean. What it does not mean is that a person of "weak faith" has less faith in God than another person. What it does mean is that the exercise of his or her faith is constricted by the bondage of teachings he or she has received over the years. And, in the case of the Jews, centuries.

Some would call this "tradition." "Tradition" is often the common "glue" that holds a culture together. In this case, some of that "glue"(the teachings and practices) are faulty. I have found multitudes of times that someone's traditions are firmly held to even though they clash with an obvious truth. They will be steadfastly maintained in spite of a clear opposing truth. The crucifixion of Jesus is the perfect example of this. The traditions of the leading Jews caused them to disregard the intent of God's commands. Jesus told them, "You invalidate the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that." Mark 7:13
The cause of this is usually a deep seated fear or a deep seated pride.

So, those who hold to tradition, fearful of letting it go and embracing the truth are the "weak brothers" as Paul puts it in I Corinthians, chapter 6:12-13 and most of chapter 8. There, speaking of buying meat offered first to idols and eating it, he says,

"But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble." I Corinthians 8:8-13 (Underscore mine)

The "weak brother" is to be protected and nurtured to maturity, not attacked (verse 1 here). Nor are those who feel they would violate a dietary Law and then feel guilty to judge those who feel free to eat whatever they choose. (Verse 3) God has accepted all who are in Christ because of faith, not diet. Paul wrote in Galatians 3:26-29,

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

4: In other words, no one is given the authority to judge¹⁷⁵ another master's servant in things pertaining to his own master and not an outsider. Only his master (same word for "lord" in the original) has that authority. In Colossians 2:16-17 Paul notes, "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--things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."

These things are inconsequential in light of the larger picture.

5-9:

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.¹⁷⁶ 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."

5: Second example. For the "strong" believers, being in Christ means being in His rest constantly or keeping the "Sabbath Day" every day. This is taught in Hebrews 4:1-11, (especially 4:10). However, others of His are insistent on keeping the seventh day of the week (Friday evening through Saturday evening) as the Jews do, and others keep to dietary laws, tithing and other matters of the Law. However, the pick and choose method is odd in that, as James says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all." (2:10 - and Galatians 3:10)

So this confusion is justified by dividing the Law into two pieces. The "ceremonial

¹⁷⁵ In other words, evaluate how they are doing in relationship to their own Lord. The Lord is to do that, not anyone else.

¹⁷⁶ His way of serving God in his own mind.

law" and the "moral law." A vast number of Christians teach or believe that Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law but not the moral law. So they teach that Christians are under the moral law, especially the Ten Commandments.

This leaves us with two problems. 1. Paul contradicts this in II Corinthians, chapter 3. 2. "Law keeping" of any sort becomes misunderstood as being led by the Holy Spirit when in fact it prevents being led by the Holy Spirit as Paul makes clear in Galatians 5.

"Law keepers" are the "weaker brothers" or "weak in faith" as they do not or cannot depart from this practice due to fear, pride or some other position. From this comes the judging Paul is trying to dispel. They are "weak" in that they are not convinced of the position of the "strong" and fear disobeying God.

6-8: He wishes the hearer/reader to take the position that those who follow either path are to be seen as doing so as a service to Christ in their hearts. As their master (or Lord) he will make the call as to their heart motive and deeds.

9: This verse taken out of the immediate context could mislead people into thinking that the dead exist somewhere in some sort of intermediate state (such as purgatory or paradise) over whom Christ is Lord. This is not the intent. Paul's point is a conclusion based in verses 7 and 8, that whether a brother is weaker or stronger, and whether he lives or dies, Christ is their Lord.

10-13:

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. 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."

10-12: Paul's emphasis is to instruct all the brothers to stop judging each other over these religious practices and traditions. The word "judge" here is "κρίνεις" (kree-neice) from "κρίνω," (kree'-no) properly "to distinguish", that is, "to decide" (mentally or judicially); by implication to try, condemn, or punish. It parallels the word "contempt" in the next sentence: ἐξουθενέω, (ex-oo-then-eh'-o). This is understood as contemptible, despise, least esteemed, set at naught.

If one has faith in Christ as the gospel teaches, any other matter is of little consequence when done in (or as a) service to Christ in the hearts of the doers.

“We shall stand before the judgment seat of God...(and) give account of himself to God.” This word for judgment seat is: βῆμα , bay'-ma: a step, that is, foot breath; by implication a rostrum, that is, tribunal: - judgment-seat, set [foot] on, throne.

This, unlike the above word for judgment, is not a place of the legal ruling resulting in condemnation or acquittal. Rather is a place where ones performance is evaluated and discussion is held about it. This is the same kind of seat Caesar held at the games from which he awarded the victory wreaths. This is also the place in the public forum where decisions were made regarding all kinds of civil matters and quarrels. When Paul confronted Gallio in Corinth, he was at the Bema, a large richly decorated rostrum, centrally located in the market place (agora) for hearing cases and addressing the populace. This is where the Lord evaluates the performance of His servants.

13: This is the fourth time in this chapter Paul has emphasized that we are not to judge our brother because he has different traditions and practices than we do is living out his Christian faith.¹⁷⁷ In particular, the differences between Jewish and Gentile practices are highlighted. Many Jewish believers do not yet feel free to eat prohibited foods under the law or ignore the Sabbath Day and so on, while Gentile believers have little problem with this. So the Gentiles will eat pork and food sold in the market place that has been offered to idols, ignore the strict keeping of the Jewish Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunrise) and so on. This would stick in the craw of new Jewish converts and reactions against Gentile practices in the mixed fellowship of believers have caused hard feelings and confusion. Still happens today.

The point of this observation is to warn believers against the kind of judging of the brother that places them in danger of rebuke at the Bema seat of God. Instead, one needs to refrain from putting a “stumbling block” in the way of another brother. A stumbling block would be that which causes one’s brother to falter and stumble in their faith in God and in Christ. For example, a Jewish believer might judge his Gentile brother in Christ by saying that he is in disobedience to God's holy law by eating what he does, violating the Sabbath, failing to tithe and so on, and thus stands condemned.

On the other hand, a Gentile believer who knows this is not true, might deliberately offend his Jewish brother by eating pork in his presence, or other foods prohibited under the law and then judge the Jewish brother for his ignorance (see verse 14). In both cases, this would be setting up a "stumbling block." If one brother condemns another in that which Christ does not condemn, a confusion and stumbling can occur in the criticized brother. Besides, it is not one’s place to speak for Christ in such matters.

¹⁷⁷ Romans 14:3,4,10 and 13.

That is God's place in Christ (verse 4ff.).¹⁷⁸

14-18:

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. 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. 18: For he who in this *way* serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men."¹⁷⁹

14-15: Paul sets down the thinking of the stronger brother (himself as the example) and the weaker. He focuses on the dietary matter as this was a big problem for the church. It still is. Some are convinced that Christians are sinning against God if they indulge in any alcoholic beverage, or smoke, or whatever. So rather than ridicule this "immaturity" or "weakness" and hurt one's brother for whom Christ gave His life, Paul counsels one to overlook it and understand the position of the "weaker" brother.

The mature, stronger believer will not, however, engage in these practices if there are those about who are sensitive to them (see verse 21). On the other hand, those opposed to these things have no place to judge those who engage in them. This is walking in love. And still, these issues are alive and well in the 21st century.

16: The "good thing" is that which one deems to be right and in honor to God whether it is the liberty to eat any food or the observance of traditions prohibiting such indulgence.

"Spoken of as evil" or better, "be blasphemed." This is "profaning a sacred thing." Albert Barnes says, "Do not so use your Christian liberty as to give occasion for railing and unkind remarks from your brethren, so as to produce contention and strife, and thus to give rise to evil reports among the wicked about the tendency of the Christian religion, as if it were adapted only to promote controversy. How much strife would

¹⁷⁸ Other issues were style of dress, with whom social interaction took place, drink, celebrations - like birthdays, anniversaries and national holidays, political views, commerce - especially on the Sabbath, relationships between the husband and wife, raising children, conduct and proper place of children, women, and men both in the social and church settings, employment (the Jews would not be employed in certain businesses) and the list goes on.

¹⁷⁹ "Reflecting on verse 5, Paul makes note of the difference between a "mature" or "strong" believer, and an "immature" or "weak" believer. As a mature (strong) believer he knows in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in and of itself (See Mark 7:14-19). But there are those who, in their conscience, have not arrived at that point (particularly the Jews under years of legalistic training). Rather than ridicule this "immaturity" or "weakness" and hurt one's brother for whom Christ gave His life, Paul counsels one to overlook it and understand the position of the "weaker" brother. This is walking in love." Scott Davis

have been avoided if all Christians had regarded this plain rule. In relation to dress, and rites, and ceremonies in the church, we may be conscious that we are right; but an obstinate adherence to them may only give rise to contention and angry discussions, and to evil reports among men, of the tendency of religion. In such a case we should yield our private, unimportant personal indulgence to the good of the cause of religion and of peace."¹⁸⁰

17-18: Paul looks to the bigger picture, the Kingdom of God and its nature. The Kingdom of God does not stoop to petty differences about food and drink but rises to that which unifies all of its citizens. Paul lists three of these attributes.

The first is "righteousness." This may be understood as an environment completely free of sin and corruption, evil and immorality.

The second he notes is "peace." This may be understood as the total absence of conflict or even feelings of resentment between the citizens and between the citizens and God. Paul noted this in 5:1-2,

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 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."

Third, he mentions "joy." This may be understood not as a happiness or joy that comes from a momentary pleasure or gift, but a deep seated lasting joy radiating in thanksgiving and worship. There will be no more sorrow, tears, hurt, pain. Paul reflects John's message in Revelation 21:3-4,

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Finally Paul notes that all of these experiences are "in the Holy Spirit." That is, it is The Holy Spirit who supplies these things and they are available now. Verse 18 confirms this. The suggestion as to where people ought to be focusing their attention is clear.

19: Paul reiterates the point with a summary statement and conclusion, "So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."

¹⁸⁰ Albert Barnes, Notes of the Bible, Romans, from e-Sword.

20. But the argument continues. This is a big issue in the early church, especially where Jewish and Gentile believers have joined to form a church.

19-23:

19: "So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. 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. 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."

19-20a: "So then"... is drawing a conclusion from what has been previously stated. What needs to be pursued is not what is wrong with the other person's practice or understanding about all those things. Tearing down God's work in a person's life or in the body of Christ - the church for dietary concerns of a person without understanding.

20b-21: Paul, once again, notes that all foods are clean. But, they are evil if a man eats them in front of others who would be offended. Not that the food is evil, but the act of deliberately eating a food prohibited under Jewish Law in front of sensitive Jewish brothers would be a stumbling block. This could risk such a person (Paul calls the "weaker brother") being moved to leave the assembly or even abandon his new found faith. This admonition is directed particularly at the Gentiles members of the congregation. But, in verse 20, Paul subtly notes that "all things indeed are clean" forcing those holding on to their dietary rules and criticizing the Gentiles for their indulgence to reconsider their stand and back off as well.

22:¹⁸¹ "The faith which you have..." goes back to verses 1-3. That is in terms of what is okay to eat without conscience problems, and what is not. This is a personal growth matter and one's present conviction before God according to his conscience is the matter all should respect, not attack.

23: On the other hand, if one engages in such eating or any other behavior doubting it is right in the sight of God, will experience condemnation and feel that he has sinned. Therefore no one should ridicule or pressure another to act in a manner contrary to what he or she believes is right for them before God.

¹⁸¹"In private, one may eat or not eat as his conscience or faith directs as long as he has no doubt about the legitimacy of what he does. Otherwise, he will experience condemnation in his conscience." Scott Davis

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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. 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. 7: Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

1: Paul continues his thoughts with instruction to the "strong" as opposed to those who are without strength. Again, the "strong" are those who have come to an understanding regarding temporal things versus the spiritual as well as the New Covenant provisions versus the Old. Thus, food is no longer an issue under the New Covenant. So his instruction to the "strong" is to bear the weaknesses of the "weak" and not just please themselves without consideration of how that might affect the weak. To "bear" the weaknesses is to carry, take up, or endure the weaknesses of others. The same word is used of Jesus "bearing" His cross on behalf of all mankind.

This is done by setting that which might please ourselves aside for the sake of another. This might mean avoiding food or drink, behavior or language another might take offense at or deem inappropriate.

2: So we are not to add to another's burden, but instead please the other for his good, to his edification - building up and strengthening.

3: Jesus is the perfect example of how to do this. He quotes Psalm 69:9 and the intent of Paul's use of Psalm 69:9 is to apply to Christ's death on the cross all the insults, denunciations, contempt, disrespect, hatred, derision, vilification, revilement and anger that mankind throws at God. And any thrown at us as well, for Peter writes,

"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." (I Peter 4:14)

"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO

SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously." I Peter 2:21-23

4. His point is clear. First, we ought to let the reproaches thrown at others fall on us and defend the weaker brother and not attack him. This Psalm, from "earlier times" is "written for our instruction." Second, we should never treat anyone with reproach or contempt in the church, especially in the family, especially our spouse. We should never belittle, insult or demean anyone especially in our homes. This does not mean we are not to correct or rebuke. That is permissible when appropriate, but as always, it is the way we do it and how we do it that matters. Second, if we are treated that way, we should never respond in kind knowing that anyone who treats another that way has severe weaknesses and problems.

Now that is not an easy task. Here is where we cast ourselves into the arms of God Here is where we trust God for the outcome. Now I am talking about normal circumstances that occur in homes from time to time. I am not talking about severe abuse either physically or emotionally. I am not talking about behavior that requires the help of a third party, civil authorities like the police.

Finally, as we persevere and absorb the encouragement of scripture, we will be strengthened in our hope. Why? Because we will see progress and the positive fruit of our perseverance.

5-6: But not the perseverance of the flesh, for God will give us both the inner desire to persevere and will encourage us in due time. The purpose of His giving us this perseverance and encouragement, in Paul's context is so we might, "be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

7: "Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." With all our faults, failings, weaknesses, sins, misery, and distortions, we are welcomed into God's presence by His grace. How then, shall we reject others from ourselves or His grace?

15:8-13,

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.' 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.’ 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."

8-10: Paul now demonstrates that God has included both the Jew and the Gentile in His plan, and that Christ is His servant to both. He begins by quoting Psalm 18:49 (and perhaps II Samuel 22:50). Here the psalmist, a Jew, is giving praises to God in the presence of Gentiles. And in the next quote, Deuteronomy 32:43, One sees the Gentiles rejoicing with the people of Israel.

11-12: This quote is from Psalm 117:1 showing the oneness of all peoples in praise to God for His "lovingkindness" and "truth." The most important verses Paul saves for last, Isaiah 11:1 and 11:10.

The Jews were aware that the descendants of Abraham were to be a blessing to the Gentiles as taught beginning in 12:3 and repeated numerous times, as in Genesis 17:4-6; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 35:11; and so on. Remember, the Hebrew word for "nations" is also the same word for "Gentiles." It is also important that Abraham was not a Jew or an Israelite. They wouldn't exist for three more generations. Abraham was a Gentile, from Chaldea. Only his faith in God and subsequent circumcision would begin the identity of those who would be chosen to bring forth the redeemer.

The verses Paul quotes are familiar to the Jews in Rome. They have no place to argue or show some superiority because of their lineage. All mankind is included in God's redemptive plan. (John 3:16)

13: Paul prays that by this time, the Jews would be persuaded to faith and the recognition of the truth he has presented. As both set aside the non-essential differences and accept each other because of their oneness in Christ, may God fill them with all joy and peace in believing, so that they will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

With this, Paul concludes most of his instruction. (verse 15)¹⁸²

¹⁸² See 16:17-20

Epilogue

In the epilogue, he wants them to know his own role and relationship to each group and especially the Gentiles (a brief apologetic is made in the following verses) as well as to inform them why he has been delayed in coming to them.

15:14-21,

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. 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. 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.'"

14: Paul knows he has said and done all he can and now it is up to them. He cannot, at this time, come to them. He is addressing, principally, the Jews in Rome. Using family terms he tells them he has confidence they can "admonish" each other. "Admonish" here is "new-thay-teh-oh" and means to "set or place into the mind." He trusts that this effort will be based in what he has taught.

15-16: Yes, he recognizes that he has written very boldly, even with passion. Now he will place before them that God had assigned him to be the main minister to the Gentiles and implies that this entire attitude the Jews have toward the Gentiles needs to change. His "offering" of the Gentiles to God as they hear and believe the gospel reflects the Jewish system wherein God requires the best and the unblemished in any sacrifice. The "offering" metaphor Paul uses tells them that his work is a holy work and acceptable to God since God required it of him.

17-19: His "boasting" is not in himself, but in God who has used Paul as His vessel to reach the Gentiles who have responded to the gospel "in word and deed." He gives credit to God and the "power of signs and wonders in the power of the Holy Spirit."

The range of his ministry is from Jerusalem to Illyricum ("Ill-ur-i-kum"), the land mass located directly across the Adriatic from Italy.

20-21: Paul's mission assignment to the Gentiles empire wide has caused him to delay a much desired trip to Rome to visit the church and especially his beloved friends, Priscilla and Aquila. He says this at the beginning of his epistle as well. To refiew, it says,

1:8-13, 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. 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."

His work was not built on a previous work of another, but he went to territories where the gospel had not yet been presented. The church at Rome was built on the work of others. So he, though desirous to see them, went instead to places where the gospel had not yet been preached. Paul quotes Isaiah 52:15 where the prophet speaks of the coming Messiah who will, "sprinkle many nations.* Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand." *(Gentiles)

15:22-27,

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--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."

22-27: Due to his desire to proclaim the gospel where no one had gone before, he had

been delayed in coming to Rome. But first, there are still commitments to fulfill in terms of bringing a collection of funds to Jerusalem for the support of the poor as he had promised to do.

He shows a "longing" to see them noting that this desire has been his for many years along with his desire to go to Spain. (This also tells us the church in Rome was in existence long before Paul became a missionary.) Paul's actual trip to Rome a few years later was at the courtesy of the Roman government.¹⁸³

His plans, though, were to go to Spain passing through Rome and fulfilling his desire to join them there for a season. He also is appealing for financial aid in continuing journey to Spain. At the time of this writing, Paul is in possession of a considerable amount of money that been collected principally from Gentile believers to help the poor and disenfranchised in Jerusalem. His comments demonstrate his honesty in taking every shekel that had been collected directly to Jerusalem.

He then notes that indeed the Gentiles have been the primary supporters of the Jews in Jerusalem. In verse 27, Paul notes that the Gentiles of Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to help and are indebted to the saints in Jerusalem because they received spiritual blessings from them and now can reciprocate with badly needed material blessings.¹⁸⁴

15:28-33,

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. 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."

28: Paul envisions his trip to Jerusalem and joy at delivering to the church there help for the poor. The "fruit" is the love, contributions and trust the Gentiles put in Paul and his "seal" is the safe and complete handing over of the contribution to the church there.

¹⁸³ Acts 25 ff.

¹⁸⁴ See also: Acts 15; Galatians 2:9-10; Acts 11:29-30; I Corinthians 16:1-3; Acts 24:17.

29: The word "blessing" is inadequate and though the Greek is often translated this way. It is not a translation the common Greek word for "blessing" that means "happiness" or "fortunate."¹⁸⁵ Here, the essence of the word translated "blessing" actually is based in the root for good or thankful words. In other words, Paul is saying that he will come to Rome with good and blessed words from the Lord for which they can be thankful!

30-31: Paul covets their prayers that he would be "rescued" from the "disobedient" in Judea. This was not to be. But his offering of the contribution was successfully delivered.¹⁸⁶The "disobedient" he refers to are Jews in Judea. The word "disobedient" also means "disbelieving" or even "unpersuadable." There might be a slight jab at the Jews in Rome hearing this word used.

32-33: "With the positive answer to these prayers, Paul would be able to come to Rome with a great sense of blessing and joy having completed the work to which The Lord had assigned him. At Rome, among all of them, he could rest (not work), the pressure relieved for a time. He was definitely looking forward to that."¹⁸⁷

But it did not happen the way he hoped. He delivered the much needed help to the church and a short time later, though left alone by the local Jews as he went to the temple, completed some Jewish rituals satisfying the locals. But some Jews from Ephesus and the surrounding area there came to Jerusalem and recognized Paul with some Gentile companions and raised a ruckus falsely accusing Paul of bringing Gentiles into the temple . The crowd became incensed and dragged Paul from the temple grounds intending to kill him by beating him to death. But someone alerted the commander of the Roman cohort and he and some soldiers broke up the mob and rescued Paul. From there (Acts 21) the next eight chapters of Acts is the saga of Paul's imprisonment and trials for two years before he appealed his case to Caesar and was transported to Rome.

Chapter 15 closes with Paul's benediction, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." This essentially ends Paul's epistle. He dictated it and Tertius did the actual writing. And now he, along with Tertius, adds greetings and personal notes.

¹⁸⁵ "Makarios" is the normal word translated "blessed" meaning happy or joyful. Here it is "eu-lo-geh-oh" meaning to be spoken well of, or have approval.

¹⁸⁶ Acts 21 ff.

¹⁸⁷ Scott Davis

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

16:1-16,

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. 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 Epaenetus, 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."

1-2: "The final chapter is always interesting to the student of Paul's epistles. He often reveals a lot of personal and historical information at the end of his letters. Here, Phoebe is going to Rome, possibly carrying the letter. Her name is mentioned first in the greetings and this is probably because of the important role she had in carrying this letter to the church. We see that she is a resident of Cenchrea. This leads us to the likelihood that Paul wrote the letter from there. We also see that she assisted both Paul and others in many ways. She is called a servant (διάκονος) of the church. We call these women "deaconesses" from this word. Paul wants her to be treated with honor and respect when she arrives."¹⁸⁸

3-5a: "Prisca" is a Latin name meaning "ancient" and the diminutive of this is "Priscilla." Aquila is also a Latin name meaning "eagle" and is "Ah-ku'-las in the original. This may show them to be from Rome originally. It is quite possible they

¹⁸⁸ Commentary by Scott Davis.

founded the church at Rome along with others from Rome who were converted to Christ on the Day of Pentecost when Peter gave his great speech (See: Acts 2:10)

"This amazing couple are dear friends of Paul. Her name is listed first because of her knowledge and gifts in teaching the gospel. In Paul's mind she finds more importance in the work than does Aquila. Yet Paul joined Aquila in the tent making enterprise years before in Ephesus (Acts 18:18ff.; I Corinthians 16:19). They both put their lives on the line for the ministry to the Gentiles along with Paul. This couple deserves an honored place in the kingdom for all they did in the furtherance of the gospel and for all they suffered because of it. The church in Rome was meeting in their home. This was typical of their hospitality. It was from their hand or message Paul was summoned to write the epistle in lieu of coming immediately, which he was not able to do."¹⁸⁹

5b-15: Notable in the list of those whom Paul greets are: Epaphroditus who was the first to come to faith when Paul reached Asia Minor. He is now in Rome and was likely among the Jews exiled from Rome under Claudius, but allowed to return under Nero. He was no doubt a strong supporter of the church there. Then there is Mary whom Paul gives special mention of for her hard work for Prisca and Aquila. Then we have Andronicus and Junias, Paul's kinsmen and fellow prisoners, as Paul says, "who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."

Junias may be the feminine and possibly Andronicus' wife, but more likely another man as both are called "apostles" by Paul. This would be an unusual designation for a woman. They are possibly a blood relative of Paul as the word "kinsman" suggests and actually indicates, but then he has used this same word of his Jewish brothers by the flesh in Romans 9:3.¹⁹⁰

They were fellow prisoners with Paul at some point, but Luke's account in Acts does not specify where that might have been. Luke lists Philippi as one imprisonment but Paul says in II Corinthians 11:23, "...Are they servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane-- I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number,

¹⁸⁹ Commentary by Scott Davis.

¹⁹⁰ " Further, they appear to be related to Paul in some way. The word "kinsman" is συγγενής, a *relative* (by blood); by extension a fellow *countryman*: - cousin, kin (-sfolk, -sman). Since Paul uses this word in verses 7, 11 and 21, it seems to indicate that these six individuals are not close blood relatives but fellow country men, possibly even from Tarsus. In a broader sense, he could be simply referring to fellow Jews. This is as unlikely as saying he is referring to blood relatives. It would be most odd that six blood relatives would be referred to by Paul, three in Rome and three in Cenchrea. It is just as unlikely that Paul would mention the three in Rome as the only Jews in Rome in light of his "bold" admonitions to "outstanding apostles". So, fellow countrymen fits best with the historical context. His closeness to them in Christ's work and sufferings would add to his honoring them by name in his epistle. It is possible he refers to them as "kinsman" because they suffered persecution as he did for the name of Christ." Scott Davis

often in danger of death."

Then, they are noted as "outstanding among the apostles". Some commentators describe them as noted helpers to the apostles, but not actual apostles as there is no mention of any commissioning of them as such. But Paul does not use this term lightly. He notes that God places "apostles" in the church at large (I Corinthians 12:28-29). In Galatians 1:1 he notes that he is not an apostle by the appointment of men, but by Jesus Christ. This may leave room for other "apostles." The word itself simply means to "send away" or "send out." However, the word "apostle" is nearly always used of the twelve and of Paul, but also of James, not of the twelve, but the "Lord's brother." In Galatians 1:19, Paul writes, "But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother." Well, James was not one of the twelve, and in fact was a skeptic until a personal visit from the resurrected Jesus. So using the terms "apostles" of these two is not to be looked at as an error and neither should an attempt be made to find a way around this term as Paul has applied it to them. Finally, they "were in Christ before me." This had to be sometime at or soon after the Day of Pentecost. Since they are now in Rome, perhaps they were also among the visitors to Jerusalem on that Day.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ For more detail on the rest of the names, see the following for a commentary by Scott Davis.

16:8-9, Ampliatus, Urbanus and Stachys are mentioned as Paul's "beloved". (*ἀγαπητός, beloved*: - (dearly, well) beloved, dear.) This is a term of close affection, usually mutual, and could reflect that these men worked close with Paul at one time, helped him or supported him in a crucial time of need (such as when he was stoned at Lystra), or were converted to Christ under Paul's ministry.

16:10-11, The note regarding Apelles as "approved in Christ", likely means that he suffered some personal persecution, but stood firm in his faith. Paul greets all those "of Aristobulus" meaning those in his house hold, both family and servants. Again, Paul references the word "kinsman" regarding Herodian (See comment on verse 7 above).

16:12 There is some amusement in Paul's greeting of Tryphaena and Tryphosa. These are obviously sisters, probably twins. Their names mean "Dainty" and "Delicate". Paul notes they are "workers" in the Lord. In spite of their names or size, they are honored as carrying their share of the ministry. Persis, even more. He is a "hard worker" and among Paul's (or the church's) "beloved".

16:13 Rufus is singled out for as a man with a commendable Christian character likely due to his unwavering faith under trial. Paul is so close to Rufus that he names Rufus' mother as his own. An interesting note about Rufus is that this name shows up in Mark 15:21. There we find that Mark makes a note about a "Rufus" known, at the time of Mark's writing, to his readers. In his gospel, Mark notes that Simon from Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross, was the "father of Rufus and Alexander". Simon is identified by reference to his sons, with whom the church was familiar. Add that to the supposition that Mark wrote his gospel to a Roman audience or congregation and we could be talking about the same man. The only references to an "Alexander" are found in Acts 19:33-34, I Timothy 1:18-19, and II Timothy 4:14-15. Whether this individual Paul despises is Rufus' brother or not is highly questionable. On the other hand, if the "Rufus" in this verse is indeed the same as in Mark, the fact that Alexander is not mentioned here could lead one to believe it is because of Paul's view of him. Further, all of Paul's (and Luke's) references to this "Alexander" are at Ephesus. Luke notes that Simon carried Jesus' cross (23:26) but makes no mention of Rufus and Alexander. Matthew does the same, and John makes no mention of Simon or his sons. It is plausible that if these are the same people mentioned in Paul's writings that Mark's early gospel was written before Alexander went astray and thus a part of Paul's commendation of Rufus might be because he stuck strongly to the faith in spite of his brother's conduct. All this, of course, is only guesswork.

16: "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you." What is this exactly? The greeting with "a holy kiss" is mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 16:20; II Corinthians 13:12 and I Thessalonians 5:26 as Paul closes those epistles. Peter mentions it in his first letter, 5:14.

Even today, in the mid-east, it is customary to greet another with a kiss on one or both cheeks or on the forehead. Albert Barnes notes, "The use of the word "holy" here serves to denote that Paul intended it as an expression of "Christian" affection; and to guard against all improper familiarity and scandal. It was common, according to Justin Martyr (*Apology*), for the early Christians to practice it in their religious assemblies."

We are familiar with the "kiss" Judas gave to Christ in his betrayal. And it was a shock even to Jesus who said, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48) This "holy kiss" was to convey the recognition and blessings of brotherhood in Christ.

Adam Clarke notes, "In those early times the kiss, as a token of peace, friendship, and brotherly love, was frequent among all people; and the Christians used it in their public assemblies, as well as in their occasional meetings. This was at last laid aside, not because it was abused, but because, the Church becoming very numerous, the thing was impossible. In some countries the kiss of friendship is still common; and in such countries it is scarcely ever abused, nor is it an incentive to evil, because it is customary and common. Shaking of hands is now substituted for it in almost all Christian congregations."

It is important to note in any case that this greeting was men to men and women to women as it is yet today in many Mediterranean and near east countries.

16:17-20,

17: "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.
18: For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.
19: For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. 20: The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

16:17-20,

17-19: The epistle looks to be complete at verse 16. Perhaps after a night's sleep, Paul felt he had to add this emphasis before send the letter off. He needs to remind them of the subtle danger to the gospel truth that is in their midst. It looks like he is talking from one Jew to another about yet other Jews. He had this same problem as one sees in his epistles to the churches in Galatia, Corinth, Thessalonica, Colossae and others where learned Jews tried to persuade both Jewish and Gentile believers that Paul was not accurate, let alone an "apostle" and that all who would believe and be righteous before God must obey His Law. He knows it will be some time before he can confront these dissenters personally. And so adds the caution.

Verse 18 talks of the motive of these "smooth" talkers, yet they are dissenters and deceivers. It is because they are slaves to their own "appetites" - What they want for themselves at all costs. Verse 17 says to turn away from them. They deceive the hearts of the "unsuspecting" to accomplish it. These are the innocent, harmless and naïve. Good people but not as wise as they need to be. In 19, Paul wants them to be wise to what is good and innocent in what is evil. He indicated earlier that the "unsuspecting need to know the solid truth about the gospel as not to be misled and deceived by a "different gospel" as he says in Galatians.

In 20, he notes that the "God of Peace" will soon crush "Satan" under their feet. This is a great promise and obviously comes from the hope of Genesis three. "Satan" is personified by these deceivers, dissenters - those who would hinder the developing believers. Paul's words recall II Corinthians 11:10-15 and I John 2:18-24.

16:21-27,

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.] 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."

16:21: (Much of the remaining commentary courtesy of Scott Davis) As Paul continues his greetings, some of his associates wanted to greet their friends and fellow

workers in Rome also. He mentions Timothy who wanted to get a greeting in as well as three he calls his “kinsmen”, Lucius, Jason and Sosipater. Timothy is well known to anyone with a passing acquaintance with Paul and his companions. Two epistles are addressed to Timothy at Ephesus as Paul was in prison in Rome. He calls Timothy “my true child in the faith”. Acts 16:1-3 tells us how this association began.

Little is known about the other men except that Lucius could be the same as Lucius in Acts 13:1, Jason’s name is found again in Acts 17:5-9, and Sosipater could be the same as Sopater in Acts 20:4. These associations are probable since Paul held all three of these men in high regard and they all had a part of the ministry and sufferings Paul experienced.

16:22: Tertius, Paul’s amanuensis, also greets the church. Paul often used a scribe or secretary called an amanuensis due to his visual difficulties. His name appears nowhere else and he may have been a permanent resident of Corinth. He takes the opportunity to greet the church himself.

16:23-24: It is probably Paul, not Tertius who writes this greeting. Gaius, Paul notes, was the host to him and the whole church. It well may have met in his home. A man of the same name is mentioned in I Corinthians 1:14, and again in Acts 20:4. The probability that the reference to him in I Corinthians is of the same man is high because the epistle to the church at Rome is from Corinth (or nearby Cenchrea). In Acts 20, this Gaius is from Derbe in Galatia. Since this is near the end of Paul’s journeys, the mention of Gaius being from Derbe probably shows he is not the same man. Erastus’ name is found in Acts 19:22 (again along with Timothy) and also in II Timothy 4:20. It appears that this is the same man in both cases. The name Quartus is not found anywhere else. He was obviously a local man who came to Christ under Paul’s ministry. Verse 24 is probably spurious. It is not found in any of the significant earlier manuscripts.

16:25-27: The Pauline doxology and benediction. “Now to Him...be glory forever”. Between these phrases, Paul attributes to God the ultimate power and responsibility to establish them in Christ by virtue of the gospel Paul preaches. This gospel, which Paul calls “my gospel”, is substantiated by the scriptures, the prophets, and, though hidden from many (the mystery of it-see the comment on chapter 11:25-31) has now been made known to the nations to God’s glory.

Paul end his epistle with a firm stamp of authority. First of God's and then of his own. He notes God's ability to establish them (stand fast and firm) but not according to just any teaching about Christ, but based on Paul's gospel. The preaching of Jesus Christ he has and is accomplishing is by revelation of the mystery "kept secret" (better-kept

silent)¹⁹² but now is manifested (make visible or disclose). The revelation of these truths were made to Paul himself by the Lord as he notes here and in Galatians 1:11-17.

Paul states firmly that the Scriptures of the prophets relating to all of this has now been made known to the nations (Gentiles) according to the commandment of the Eternal God.¹⁹³ There is no mistaking that Paul is firm in his determination to make the gospel he preaches the only authoritative one.¹⁹⁴

Thus Paul sends the epistle off to Rome, likely by the hand of Phoebe who is mentioned in the first verse of this chapter. The letter was well received and treasured. Copies were made so others could benefit from the important truths Paul penned here. We know this is true because we have an excellent transmission and clear authenticity down to this day. The letter probably arrived in Rome sometime in 58-59 A.D., some two to three years before Paul's arrival in Rome. Paul had appealed to Caesar regarding the arrest and charges made against him in Jerusalem. This was his right as a Roman citizen. Little did he know that he would be stepping into the court of Nero. But he did hint that the greater part of his work was done. Within six or seven years of the writing of this epistle, Paul would find himself sentenced to death by the madman.

¹⁹² Due to the Jews failure to believe in and teach the things the prophets said about the coming Messiah.

¹⁹³ This began, as Paul states in Galatians 3:8, with God's word to Abraham.

¹⁹⁴ These last two paragraphs by Bob Stewart

APPENDIX

The Author and Contributors

Bob Stewart is a graduate of Azusa Pacific University with honors majoring in New Testament History and New Testament Greek and holds a B.A. from there. His graduate work at Fuller Theological Seminary earned him a Masters of Divinity Degree. His post graduate work was at the American Baptist Seminary of the West in hermeneutics.

Bob served in pastoral ministry with youth for eight years and as a senior pastor for nine years. His ministry continued in teaching and counseling after leaving pastoral ministry for health reasons. He is presently the chairman of the board of directors for the Possibility Place Christian Mission with missionaries serving in Africa. Now living in Phoenix, Arizona, he continues in his great love of the Scriptures, teaching and working with a study group each week.

He is married to his wife Donna and has two children and two grandchildren.

Scott Davis is a business executive and an ardent Bible student and teacher. A graduate of Arizona State University in business and has received awards for excellence in his business endeavors. Having been assaulted by a strict legalistic approach to the Christian Life, Scott turned to the scriptures, a new church and sound Bible teachers where he came to the understanding of the grace of God and the real meaning of the Gospel.

Over the next sixteen years Scott and his wife Cathy pursued study and soon began to host a group study in their home. Now living in Colorado Springs, Scott has continued to study and teach those who want a Biblical understanding of their faith.

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PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS
(A general and approximate overview)

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY – Acts 13:1-14:28	c. 47-48 A.D.
Lengthy ministry at Antioch of Syria	c. 48-49
Jews expelled from Rome by Claudius	c. 49
COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM – Acts 15:1-29	c. 49-50
Aquila and Priscilla move to Corinth. (Acts 18:1-2)	c. 49
Paul writes the book of Galatians (?) [Most likely time]	c. 50
PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY – Acts 15:36-18:22	c. 50-51
Paul reaches Corinth, meets Priscilla and Aquila. (Acts 18:1-18)	c. 50-51
Paul leaves Corinth for Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila. (Acts 18:18-1)	c. 52-53
Apollos arrives at Ephesus and is taught by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:24-28) Apollos journeys to Corinth. (Acts 19:1)	c. 53-54
PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY – Acts 18:23-20:38*	c. 54-58
Paul arrives in Ephesus – stays three years or so (Acts 19:1-10), enjoys Reunion with Prisca and Aquila) (I Cor. 16:19.)	c. 54
Apollos returns to Ephesus. Paul teaches in school of Tyrannus two years. Paul receives information about church members in Corinth associating with immoral people and responds with a letter mentioned in I Corinthians 5:9-13. (II Corinthians 6:14 -7:1ff. may be a portion of this letter.)	c.54-55
Then Paul receives information from “Chloe’s people” about divisions in the church and other matters. (I Corinthians 1:10-11), (I Corinthians 5:1) There was also a letter from the leaders of the Church. (I Corinthians 7:1) This letter may have been brought to Paul by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. (I Corinthians 16:17-18)	c. 55
The church is meeting in home of Aquila and Priscilla. Paul writes I Corinthians possibly sending it by the hand of Timothy (and Erastus) who also is to remind them of the truth of the Gospel and bring correction. (I Corinthians 4:17-21, 16:10-11)	c. 55
Aquila and Priscilla return to Rome after the death of Claudius and the lifting of the ban on the Jews by Nero. **Timothy’s return apparently does not bring good news - or - Paul goes to Corinth. (note: II Corinthians 2:1,13:1 where Paul notes that he is coming for a third time)	c. 56
After returning to Ephesus (?), Paul writes sorrowful letter (noted in II Corinthians 2:1-13 and is possibly II Corinthians 10-13). There also may be problems at Athens, (II Cor. 1:1) He sends it by the hand of Titus and an unnamed “brother” (II Cor. 12:18). He leaves for Macedonia with his companions. (Acts 20:1)*** Sometime later, Titus returns to Paul in Macedonia with good, comforting news. II Corinthians 7:2-ff.)	c. Early 57
Paul writes letter of reconciliation by the hand of Titus prior to going to Corinth. (Probably the remainder of II Corinthians) Titus does a good job of preparing the way for Paul. He remains in Corinth three months. (Acts 20:2-3)	c. Mid 57
He writes the book of Romans.	c. Autumn 57
He then leaves for Macedonia where he stays for Passover before continuing on. (Acts 20:3-6)	c. Late 57 –Early 58
	c. Spring 58 or 59

*This outline of events and correspondence is but one of several possibilities for the exact nature and number of these letters and visits cannot be determined with certainty. All dates are educated estimates and could be off by as much as a year or two. This reconstruction is approximate at best. ** At this point we must work from conjecture and educated guesses. *** There is a possibility Paul was able to travel on to Illyricum before coming to Greece. See Romans 15:19. Acts 20:2 may provide for this possibility. A likely fourth journey is not included in this outline.

EXCURSUS ON 8:17
BY SCOTT DAVIS

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.**

There is a condition of suffering with Christ mentioned that qualifies one for glorification with Him. To what does Paul refer?

Surely we can eliminate the idea that the sufferings we experience are a sign God is displeased with us or that we are not truly His children. This is the argument of Job's friends, which both he and God rejected. Paul does not specify the sufferings but we can draw some valid conclusions as we discuss the sufferings. His readers knew.

First, Paul refers to "the sufferings of this present time". They lived in Rome under the rule of an increasingly disturbed emperor in Nero. The general population was uneasy with both Judaism and Christianity (see introduction). Though allowed back into the city, Claudius had already expelled them all from Rome in 48 A.D. because they refused to conform to his social mandates. Times were tenuous for these folks. Paul could also have used the term "present time" in contrast to the "time to come". He may have simply concluded that all believers, regardless of the age in which they live, will experience sufferings due to their faith. He mentions no degree of suffering but does (in verse 19) point to the clash of the righteous with the corruption of the creation in which they live. Throughout history, at different times and places, Christians (as well as Jews) have been seriously persecuted simply for their beliefs. This century has seen severe suffering of God's people in Germany, The Middle East, The USSR, Africa, and China to name a few. In these cases, we are talking of suffering due to persecution.

Second, suffering can be seen as the "natural" outcome of the believer who, like the Jews and Christians in Rome, do not align themselves up with the practices and beliefs of the world in which they live. They then incur the general disgust and rejection of the society around them. In the worst case, they may be disenfranchised from the rights most citizens enjoy, as well as from their family.

Third, believers are a part of a world which, since the curse in Genesis 3:17-19, endures the suffering due to the curse. (See notes on verse 20)

Fourth, there are the sufferings of the Christian spirit and heart as the believer sees the suffering of others or watches a loved one go into eternity without Christ. Seeing the

cruelty of the world, the rejection of Christ by those he is praying for, etc. are some of the unique ways a Christian suffers while the world spins on.

Fifth, in succeeding verses, suffering is directly related to waiting for the final redemption, in pain like “childbirth”. This coincides with the idea of the battle going on inside the Christian between the flesh (law) and the spirit as discussed in chapter 7 and earlier in this chapter. See especially 8:22-23. This suffering itself is a witness or evidence of God’s Spirit at work in the believer’s heart.

In contrast to this corruption is the glory that will be revealed one day. Paul makes a comparison between the sufferings experienced by believers of any age and the glory that is to be revealed to us. There is really no comparison, in that the sufferings of this age are not worthy of comparison. See II Corinthians 4:16-5:9.

END OF EXCURSUS

DISCUSSION AND ARGUMENT BY SCOTT DAVIS ***The vessels prepared for destruction or mercy, 9:19-24***

An important passage, and the beginning of a challenging one. Someone might raise the argument that since God imposes his will on everything, how can he find fault with people? This would be a good question if the mercy of God and salvation were based on predetermination rather than on foreknowledge. But is that the case? Paul uses the terms “Molder”, “make”, “vessels prepared beforehand”, to describe God’s activity regarding mankind whether they are recipients of mercy or recipients of wrath. What is Paul saying here? Perhaps the best question is to ask, on what basis does God make these decisions? Commentators disagree. Some say that God is simply arbitrary. Others say that God has predetermined who will be saved and lost from before creation and only beckons those who will be saved. (I reject both of these views) Some others believe Paul has stumbled in his argument and become obscure. This is nonsense.

Rather than answer the question posed by the imaginary antagonist, Paul attacks he who would ask the question. The reason he does this reveals the answer to this whole dilemma. Why? Because the question attacks the righteousness, omnipotence and plan of God for His creation. God is God. He is the creator. Paul reflects Isaiah 45:1-13, 18-25 in his argument for a reason. In the Isaiah passage, God calls and uses a Gentile, Cyrus to deliver His people from the captivity and allow them to return home.

The point of this argument is that God will use any vessel, whether Jew or Gentile to accomplish His eternal purpose, and man need not question God’s purpose, His nature or His decisions regarding how to bring about the greatest blessings to the greatest number of people. He is not bound by the limited understanding of anyone, regardless of one’s lineage or heritage. Further, the question, “Who resists His will?” may be

faulty. The Calvinist as well as those who teach the strict sovereignty of God, conclude that since God's will cannot be frustrated, He must have pre-chosen who would be saved and lost. But if it is His Will that none perish, how is it that some do? Why would He allow this to happen?

The Unitarian/Universalists conclude that none will perish. Thus they have to diminish scripture that speaks to the contrary. And they readily have done so. The fact is, that God's Will is not frustrated in the strict sense. He has willed from the beginning that Man would be free to chose His destiny, whether it is to believe and trust God or not, and thus be glorified or destroyed. Based on his foreknowledge, He has Willed the "frustration" of His Will by giving man such power of choice.

Verses 22-24 make this clear. Paul is speaking historically. God has not poured out His wrath on all the vessels of destruction so that He might make known the riches of His glory upon those yet to come to faith. It is the very vessels of destruction through whom He brings forth the anointed One. But does He pre-select those who will be saved or lost? The answer is no. "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9) As much as God has prepared glory for those He knew would believe in Him, so he has prepared destruction for those who would not.

End of Davis discussion

DISCUSSION AND ARGUMENT BY SCOTT DAVIS
Romans 13:1-2

A Christian's relationship to governing authorities is introduced here as Paul leaves the interpersonal field momentarily. The insertion of this topic here gives one pause. Why does Paul do it? In no other place does he refer to the state. Jesus' mention of it is scarce. Is Paul referring to a rebellious segment of believers in Rome, the capital and the seat of government of the empire? Is this in response to the previous instruction to avoid private vengeance and seek to overcome evil with good?

In any case, his context is important as one tries to interpret the extent of what Paul is thinking and what is included therein and what might be excluded. Personally, Paul was a Roman citizen and historically, if it were not for the unification of the empire and the Roman roads, postal system, and army, the Gospel would not have been able to be spread so far so fast. On the other hand, Rome was to become a heavy persecutor of both Jew and Christian and, under Nero, Paul would lose his life and later, many Christians would be executed.

Nevertheless, the Christian was not to take up the sword in rebellion against the government nor against any enemy whatsoever. Note: Matthew 26:51-56; Luke 20:19-26. It was also against the law for civilians to inflict capital punishment under Roman rule. The case attaching 13:1-7 to 12:19-21 is persuasive especially when we remember that chapter and verse divisions did not exist in the original letter. Verses 1 and 2 state that government authority is established by God and to resist it would be tantamount to resisting God. Every person, without exception, is included in Paul's instructions. Note what is written in Wisdom of Solomon 6:1-5:

“Listen therefore, kings and understand:
Learn this, judges of the ends of the Earth:

For you dominion was given you from the Lord,
And your sovereignty from The Most High.

He will examine your works and inquire into your plans;
For though you are servants of His kingdom, you have not judged rightly,
or kept the law, or followed the will of God.

He will come upon you terribly and swiftly,
For a stern judgment overtakes those in high places”.

This passage, written around the time of Christ's birth, finds agreement with Paul in that it states the establishment of government by God. It warns rulers regarding their judgment however, whereas Paul warns citizens regarding rebellion to such authorities.

The verses beg the question, “Is Paul talking about government as an institution or a specific ruling authority at any given time?” Likely he is talking about both not excluding the specific. For example, even Paul, though terribly offended and hit on the mouth, apologized when he, in turn, reviled the high priest in Acts 23:1-5.

Let's look at the word “established” - τάσσω, tasso A prolonged form of a primary verb (which latter appears only in certain tenses); to *arrange* in an orderly manner, that is, *assign* or *dispose* (to a certain position or lot): - adduct, appoint, determine, ordain, set.

This is not the idea of immovable, but can be transitory or temporary. “Ordinance” - διαταγή, diatage: *arrangement*, that is, *institution*: - instrumentality. “Condemnation” - κρίμα, krima, *kree'-mah*; a *decision* (the function or the effect, for or against [“crime”]): - avenge, condemned, condemnation, damnation, + go to law, judgment. Legal judgment commensurate with the offense as prescribed by civil law.

(End of Davis commentary)

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