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Paul's Epistle to the Romans

Romans 1:1–2:29

I. Introduction (Romans 1:1–15)

A. Greeting (1:1–7)

1. The Author (Romans 1:1)

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

This epistle begins with the name of the author, Paul. Before he was called Paul, the author's name was Saul. Saul was a Pharisee and very active in defending the Old Testament Law. In fact, there was no stronger opponent to the Church than he. He persecuted the early Christians and was a supporter of putting the first Christian martyr, Stephen, to death. This man, who so hated the Christians, was on his way to Damascus with orders from the rulers at Jerusalem to find and bring back those who were followers of Christ in order that they might suffer a similar fate as did Stephen. Christ, in a miraculous and supernatural way, appeared to Paul. It was this encounter with the living Christ that changed Paul from a persecutor of the Church into a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 9). Paul, in persecuting the followers of Christ, was persecuting Christ Himself since every believer is a member and a part of the body of Christ, the Church. Paul truly became a servant or bondsman of Jesus Christ.

2. The Call

The Lord told Ananias, a godly man living at Damascus, to go to Paul. At this time the Lord revealed the fact that Paul was a chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15–16). After receiving his sight and being filled with the Spirit, Paul was baptized. The account tells us that he immediately began to preach Christ in the synagogues. Here we have Paul called to be an apostle. He was no longer an enemy, but now a follower and slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Set Apart

Paul was “set apart for the gospel of God.” Paul was converted, called, and separated by divine authority. Certain of this call, the whole course of his Christian life was under divine guidance. When a person is “set apart for the gospel of God,” that individual has a mission entrusted to him or her. The gospel Paul now preached was the gospel given by God, the gospel to be spread, the gospel whose author is God, the gospel whose theme is Christ, and him crucified. This was a specific thing Paul was given to do, and he was always anxious to please God by having His Son fully revealed in him. It is still true today that those who represent the work of God should be separated, or set apart, unto the gospel of God. If they are truly separated to the gospel of God, then they will be pleasing God in their message and conduct.

4. The Message (Romans 1:2–4)

which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

This gospel was promised by God, and that promise was given to the prophets in the Old Testament. Since the first sin in the Garden of Eden, man has always been under a death penalty for sin and needed a Savior in order to escape it. From Genesis 3:15, the “first gospel”, the protoevangelium, to the prophet Malachi we find promises and predictions of the gospel. He was going to offer a perfect sacrifice to take away all our sins (See Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 53). The death of Christ was not a second thought. It had been in the heart and mind of God before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

What God had promised He had now fulfilled. **“When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son.”** (Gal 4:4). Paul was not claiming that the gospel was a departure from Scriptures, but instead he was declaring that it was the fulfillment of Scriptures. The gospel of God is centered in His Son Jesus Christ, and this was Paul’s message. Christ was rejected by the Jewish nation as their Messiah, the fulfillment of the promise given in the Old Testament Scriptures. The apostle, by referring to the promise of the Holy Scriptures, gives full support and acknowledgment to the Old Testament as being Scripture. Paul knew his readers would know of whom he was referring when he wrote, **“who was descended from David according to the flesh.”** The genealogy of Christ was important to the Jews of that day. Christ, because He was a descendant from David, was in line to become the promised King to sit on the throne of David.

By Christ’s birth, we learn that He became David’s Son, but before His birth He was already the Son of God. This relation to God could only be known by divine revelation to Paul. By the divine power through the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ was to be recognized as the Son of God, namely, the Messiah. It was demonstrated with power by the fact of the raising from the dead that Christ had a holy, resurrected body. When Christ died on the cross, He was laid in a tomb. The guards kept watch

over that tomb, but God demonstrated by vindicating Him through the resurrection that the prophecies in the Old Testament had been fulfilled. So in these first verses of Romans we have all the great facts of Jesus Christ. He is “Son of God.” He is “Son of Man.” His incarnation, His death, His resurrection, and His Lordship. What a message Paul had to impart to a world that was spiritually dead and desperately in need of a Savior!

5. Paul’s Commission (Romans 1:5-7)

through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

**7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Here Paul takes the opportunity to describe more fully what he said in the first verse of this epistle. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ according to God’s command, then mentions the grace or unmerited favor he had received, and finally the apostleship. This was all done in view of the obedient faith God had given to him, namely, that of preaching the gospel among all nations. This faith and obedience experienced constant growth and strengthening as Paul listened to the voice of God and was obedient to His Word.

Paul is careful to include in his commission those at Rome, and to express to them that they also are called by the same voice with which he received his call. The gospel is God’s voice calling all men to Christ, and it is vital for us to respond to that call in faith and obedience to God’s Word and the work He reveals to us through it.

After Paul’s introduction, he writes directly to the people at Rome. Every Christian is really a saint. The word means “one set apart.” All Christians are “set apart” to a new life under God’s authority. He expresses the common bond of God’s love between them, and it is this common bond that gave him great desire to have fellowship with them. How important it was then and now that we long to have fellowship with other believers! If we lack this desire for Christian fellowship, we need to examine the content of the bond we pretend to cling to. God’s love expressed in Jesus Christ changes our desire to godliness and to an association with His people.

One easy-to-remember definition of grace is “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” When we receive the gift of salvation—the gift of God’s grace—we can also expect His peace to follow. God made it possible to have His peace through faith in His Son. Paul was thankful to God for the faith of the believers at Rome which he had heard about. Faith in God and His Word is always cause for thanksgiving and praise for those who know its great value. These local churches in Rome made it known that they were Christians. It was openly declared and others heard about it. Their faith was an inspiration to Paul and to others, and was spoken of throughout the whole known world!

B. Paul's Desire to Go to Rome (Romans 1:8–15)

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 I want you to know, brothers,³ that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians,⁴ both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Paul establishes a connection with his readers by giving them a compliment. He thanks God that their "faith is proclaimed in all the world." However, Paul did more for the church at Rome than just write to them; he was also in prayer for them. Although Paul's will was to go to Rome, at the time of the writing of this letter it was God's will he was concerned with. He was trusting God to open the way and to make his journey a prosperous one. Through his ministry, Paul desired that the believers in Rome might be more fully established. Blessing imparted to others strengthens our faith as well. Blessing and stability in our own Christian lives comes more from sharing with others God's goodness and love to us. Through fellowship Christian faith is increased.

Paul, entrusted with the gospel of God, was anxious to repay the debt to all classes of people. The wise needed the gospel and the foolish were also capable of receiving it. Paul was determined, and willing to pay this debt to all people as an ambassador fulfilling his commission.

II. Salvation (Romans 1:16–2:29)

A. The Righteous Shall Live by Faith (Romans 1:16–17)

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 for faith,⁵ as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

1. Not Ashamed

Righteousness and faith are the two great words of the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Romans. Paul says he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. This means Paul had the greatest confidence in the gospel. He knew that God's wisdom was embodied in the gospel, that God Himself was its author, and that it came from God and takes men to God. As a result of the preaching of the gospel, mankind could be saved from a terrible situation and could become children of God.

2. Power of God

God cannot and does not save people apart from the gospel of Christ. There is a gospel today that makes light of the cross of Christ and the blood; and which substitutes character, good works, or many other things for faith in the work of Christ. This gospel has no power to save men and women from sin. Faith is the means, the instrument, for obtaining salvation. God's Word is the instrument through which God's power can be manifested. Our responsibility is to use this instrument and make His Word known, to proclaim the good news -- and then God will, through the power of His Word, perform the miracle of changing people's lives. Believe and have obedient faith in God, and He will regenerate and bring you into the fellowship of believers!

3. God's Righteousness

Defining, defending, and demonstrating the righteousness of God will be the main theme of Paul's letter to the Romans. What exactly is the righteousness of God? The Hebrew word means the quality of being right or just or the conformity to a standard. Applied to God, righteousness means that everything God does is in perfect harmony with who He is; likewise, every quality of His character will be demonstrated in His actions. He is "right" all the time, inside and out, with never an exception. Since He is truth, He will never lie. Since He is faithful, He will never fail. Whenever He promises something, He keeps His word. What He does will always match up to who He is. His righteousness is the reason we can trust Him absolutely.

As seen in an earlier paragraph, the gospel is the good news about Jesus coming into our world to offer Himself on the cross in our place (1 Corinthians 15:1-9). After He did that, He also rose from the dead with enough power to make us alive forever, too, when we believe and receive what He has done for us (John 1:12). Through the cross, then, as described in the gospel, God's righteousness was maintained. God kept His word and judged all our sin with the death penalty, while in His great love, He took the punishment for us. That is exactly how a righteous God can forgive sin. He did not break His word about the penalty; He endured that penalty in our place.

4. Faith

Faith is a very common word in the Bible and especially in the book of Romans. The noun faith is often paired with its verb form believe. The faith described here in Romans is not a mere belief in just anything or anyone. It is adhering to, trusting in, and relying on Jesus and all that He has accomplished for us. Faith is only as solid as the foundation on which it stands.

We will read later in Romans 10:17 that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So our faith can grow as it is exposed to the careful study of Scripture. Paul says that the wonderful righteousness of God is "revealed from faith to faith." With his faith on the solid foundation of Christ, Paul will offer very powerful help for the growth of the faith of his readers.

5. Habakkuk

The quotation from Habakkuk “The righteous shall live by faith” is something we need to unpack. This is true on two levels. First, and most importantly, we receive the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ. When we believe the gospel, God gives us His righteousness as a gift. Our sins are taken away, and in their place we receive God’s righteousness. Our faith allows us to “live” eternally with God.

On a practical everyday level, however, we live by faith as well. Filled with the Spirit of God, we should live our everyday lives by relying on God. We should make it our aim to demonstrate the righteousness of God in our actions. We have the power to do this by faith. We can receive the help we need to speak words of truth, to love others consistently, to keep our promises, and to seek ways to offer service. When a person lives by faith in a consistently righteous way, he or she is said to be righteous. When a person chooses not to yield to the Holy Spirit’s direction or not to call on God for power to obey, he or she is said to be unrighteous. We long for godly consistency in word and deed. We have eternal life by faith, but we should also endeavor to bring the eternal qualities of our faith into our everyday lives. Real life, both eternally and presently, is accomplished by faith in Jesus Christ.

B. Universal Need of Salvation (Romans 1:18–32)

1. Mankind’s Ungodliness (Romans 1:18)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

In the preceding verse, v 17, we had a revelation of the righteousness of God, and in this verse we have a revelation of the wrath of God. God made provision for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, therefore all unrighteousness and ungodliness must suffer punishment from a righteous and just God. There is only one way by which fallen humanity may obtain justification (“just as if I’d never sinned”) from God. The wrath of God is His holy displeasure and judicial vengeance on sin. Matthew 3:7 says of John, **“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’ ”** We should take admonition from what God’s Word says about the wrath of God against sin.

There is a tendency to explain such texts as a mere accommodation of human feelings about divine nature. Others ignore this teaching because they do not believe the Bible to be the Word of God. Many go so far as to teach that God’s wrath is actually an impersonal force in nature, some “law of cause and effect”, rather than a personal hatred and punishment from God against sin. God reveals Himself in righteousness to those who are obedient, and clothes them in His own righteousness. God’s displeasure concerning ungodliness and unrighteousness is personal and against all who reject His Word. All who have come to Christ for cleansing from sin through Him stand before God justified.

In the following verses, Paul will describe something of the degree of ungodliness and unrighteousness of the entire fallen world.

2. The Progressive Degeneracy of the Fallen World (Romans 1:19–23)

a. They did not glorify God and became vain in their imaginations and their hearts were darkened.
(vv 19-21)

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Their imagination or reasoning became speculation. Instead of listening to God through that which was revealed, His Word, they chose to turn away from Him. They began to reason God out of the equation. When darkness begins to overtake the mind, and the God-given powers are used to fight against the truth of God, the voice of conscience and reason is made insensitive to the truth of God.

b. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (v 22)

Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

As they boasted in their human, man-centered wisdom, they became unaware of their ignorance. Self-deceit and foolishness go hand in hand.

c. They put God aside (v 23)

and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

They did just what fallen humanity is doing today -- they turned to idolatry. They exchanged the glory of the Creator for the image of the creature. As has been said, "In the beginning, God created mankind in His image, and ever since mankind has been returning the favor by recreating God in our image."

There can be no one bigger, smarter, or more powerful than the one who created everything. To accept the truth that God is Creator is to put our faith on the foundation of truth. There is no one greater than the God who made it all! If we will accept this, we will not be fooled by any lesser gods that may present themselves. But many have failed to accept this and have been foolish enough to worship the sun, moon, animals, or other created objects. Such created things cannot hear prayer,

send help, offer love, and let alone offer salvation. How foolish to turn from the obvious truth that God offers about Himself and follow after something less!

3. The Result of Apostasy (Romans 1:24–32)

a. The sin of idolatry (vv 24-25)

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Although most would not admit it, the worst thing that could possibly happen to a person would be for God to leave us alone, to allow us to do whatever we wanted to do without stopping us. The reason that this possibility should terrify us is that without God, a person can never live a life that will bring blessing, satisfaction, or real benefit to anyone. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This means that apart from God, all we can ever earn on our own is death.

In judgment on this deliberate ignorance about His existence, God expressed His wrath. The form it takes here is that of just letting go of the sinner and letting him or her experience the full consequences of their choices. God “gave them up” to their own evil (v 24).

We now have the degrees of divine abandonment in three downward stages. Each is marked by the phrase, “gave them up” or “gave them over.” The sin of idolatry is followed by shameless immorality. This surrender took place in the desires of their own hearts. Because they left honoring God and listening to His voice, God gave them up to their own desires and shameful dishonor.

b. Shameless passions (vv26-27)

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

The second abandonment is a result of exchanging the truth of God for a lie, and God gave them up to vile, shameless passions. Romans 1:26 shows the degradation of the female sex. The most likely reason Paul began discussing female homosexuality is that women throughout history have always been a very reliable gauge as to the level of sinfulness and shamelessness in a society. Let us observe the degradation of womanhood through pornography, prostitution, rape, and abuse in our own society, in spite of our exposure to what God’s Word teaches.

In Romans 1:27, we have the terrible results of men and women who accept the lie instead of the truth of God. He let go of them. Men and women fall into the very depths of immorality when they

abandon the truth of God. Homosexuality should never be looked on as anything less than a degradation of mankind and a shameful sin. The fact that our society excuses it makes it no less sinful before God. It is a mark that God gave them up to vile affections. However, that being said, let us always remember that we are to reach out to these people in love and attempt to lead them to the cross of Jesus so that they can turn away from their life of sin and become believers and obedient followers, with Christ Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

c. The reprobate mind (vv 28-32)

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a reprobate mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

The third and last stage of divine abandonment is found in here. The result of ungodliness against others, because of a deliberate choice on the part of humanity not to retain the knowledge of God, brought condemnation against their method of living. God gave them up to a reprobate mind — a mind condemned and rejected and worthless. Their rejection of God was deliberate and determined. If they had improved and increased their knowledge of God, it would have led to righteousness and the pleasure of God. Instead their reasoning faculties, intellectual and moral, were used for that which was not fitting. Following this, we have the moral condition of those whom God has given over to a reprobate mind -- “filled with all unrighteousness,” manifestation of the forceful power of evil. Wicked passions lead to wicked acts, and ultimately to wicked character. The proverb, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7) is illustrated here. Wrong thinking results in every imaginable sin, from gossip to murder. We have in this passage the revelation of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ, and at the same time we have the revelation of God’s wrath against sin.

C. God’s Righteous Judgment Against Sin Is Without Respect of Persons (Romans 2:1–29)

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. 2 We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. 3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.

6 He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking

and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality.

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 righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God 18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; 19 and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. 24 For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. 28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Chapter two begins with “Therefore.” A good rule in Bible study is always to pause at a “therefore” and find out what it is there for! It is a connecting word that introduces the logical or expected result of what was described just before it. So, a brief review of the first chapter is needed here before we can understand the “therefore” of the second chapter. In Romans 1, after Paul had introduced himself to his readers, he launched into a discussion of the power of the gospel and introduced the truth about God’s righteousness. We learned that in keeping with God’s righteousness, namely, the perfect conformity to a perfect standard, God must punish sin that has not been brought to Him for forgiveness. His wrath on ungodliness and unrighteousness will fall on anyone who ignores the truth about Himself, which He has revealed in creation. No person is without some witness as to who God is and what He is like. However, many have chosen to suppress or push down such knowledge so that they can do what they want instead of what God wants. When this happens, God gives them up to

reap the consequences of their sins. We saw in Romans 1:24–31 that the consequences were not pretty! With their choices they are literally storing up wrath for themselves (Romans 2:5).

So, realizing that the wrath of God will fall on anyone who ignores God’s truth about Himself and fails to repent and come to Him, Paul begins chapter two with “Therefore...” He is going to show in his following comments that even religious and moral people need to look closely at themselves to see if their actions actually follow what they know to be true, namely, to see if they are conforming to God’s righteous standard.

Now the Jew looked down upon those who were not included in the covenant given to the Jews. The Jews considered themselves chosen people, no matter how inconsistent their own lives might be. Paul is pointing out now that both Jew and Gentile alike are without excuse — the Gentile in his ungodliness as well as the religious person who feels he is favored by God and under the protection of a religious covenant. Knowing the truth but measuring and judging himself against the ungodliness of the Gentiles rather than the righteousness of the Law of God, the Jew, too, stands condemned.

The Gentiles had treated with contempt the means of knowing God, and God gave them over to vulgar sins. Now Paul deals with the state of the Jew to whom God had given advantages, yet who were guilty of the greater ingratitude and shameful sin. They certainly were not in a position to stand in judgment against the Gentiles. They were committing the same sins against a greater knowledge. In the very act of judging the Gentiles, the Jews condemned themselves, for they were doing essentially the same thing -- breaking the Law of God. Despising the riches of God’s goodness, they were treasuring up wrath for themselves. God’s judgment is based on strict justice.

The Jews had many spiritual privileges; unfortunately this made them proud, conceited, and Pharisaical. The contrast between their profession and their conduct caused the Gentiles to blaspheme God as one who could not keep His chosen people from sin. The privileges of the Jews actually increased their responsibility. How many there are who want to be identified with the privileges of being a Christian, but who fail to stand by the principles and practices, and whose conduct doesn’t match their profession.

We often become so concerned with God’s justice to the unregenerate, when our concerns should be focused upon the choices we have made toward God. Today the name of Christ has been severely tarnished because of the inconsistencies in the lifestyles of professing Christians. The true child of God is not one who makes an outward profession by religious practices only, but one whose activities truly represent an inward reality of being “in Christ.”

Romans 3:1–5:21

I. The Righteousness of God in Relation to Sin (Romans 3:1–20)

A. The Jews Under the Condemnation of God (Romans 3:1–8)

What advantage is it to have the name and the outward symbol of Christ, without the internal transformation? People today boast of church membership, ritual, sacraments, as well as many other externals, but these are certainly meaningless apart from truly being in Christ. Righteousness is not a matter of the outside which people can see, but it is the internal work of Christ in the heart.

1. First Objection and Answer (Romans 3:1–4)

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? 4 By no means! Let God be true though everyone were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”

The Jews had great advantages, and one was that to them were committed the oracles of God. It was through this people that God saw fit to give divine revelation to humanity. The possession of these oracles, in Paul’s day, was the great distinction between the Jew and the Gentile. But this great advantage was nullified for those who were not in harmony with them.

This first argument or objection Paul raised is a natural one, since in Romans 2 he said the Jew was on the same level as the Gentile before God. This is important, for in Romans 9:4 Paul brings out the fact that the Jews were God’s chosen people. To them belonged “the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.” But some of the Jews did not believe, and they proved this in rejecting Jesus Christ. They were no better than the Gentiles, for both were in unbelief. Paul teaches that whoever sins, no matter what his or her position may be, that person cannot escape the judgment of God. It is never right to do wrong, and there is no excuse for disobeying God’s commands.

What part of the Jewish nation believed and what part disbelieved, we have no way of knowing. Disbelief in no way nullifies the promises of God. To “nullify” means to rob something of its results. Disbelief of the promises of God in no way affects the faithfulness of God. David’s gross sin did not affect the validity of God’s covenant with him. Through the promises of God, His character is at stake! This can never be changed by mankind’s conduct. David’s sin and confession were a divine announcement that in the dealings with faithless humans, God is righteous. That God is righteous in His treatment of sinners is proven by the Old Testament illustration. Mankind’s sin, instead of making God unrighteous, brings into perfect focus His righteousness, even though we may treat lightly the promises of God or perhaps even trample them under foot. Can we expect God to fulfill His promises to us? Our unbelief can never make God unfaithful to His promises!

2. Second Objection and Answer (Romans 3:5–8)

But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) 6 By no means! For then how could God judge the world? 7 But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? 8 And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

“But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us?” If it were true that God needs our sins for the praise of His righteousness “how could God judge the world?” God cannot be unfair. He can do only what is right.

Paul had been accused of teaching that we should do evil that good may come, but this he emphatically denies as completely false. Those who sin on such a principle will only receive God's judgment, which is just.

B. No One Is Righteous (Romans 3:9–20)

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” 13 “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” 14 “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known.” 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” 19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

This is a summary of the three divisions of the second chapter of Romans. The person who claimed to escape the universal sentence in Romans 2:3 has failed to make good on his or her claim. First, we cannot hide in the mercies of God (Romans 2:3–11). Second, we cannot escape through the possession of the Law of God (Romans 2:12–14). Third, nor can circumcision save us (Romans 2:25–29). Gentiles and Jews are proven to be absolutely unrighteous and therefore guilty and lost.

The wrath of a righteous God is on them who had no law and on them who possessed the Law, yet disobeyed. The verdict of the oracles of God is given, and Paul quotes the following Old Testament references to prove his point -- Psalm 14:1–3; Psalm 53:1–3; Isaiah 1:2–6; Psalm 5:9; Psalm 140:3; Psalm 10:7; Isaiah 59:7–8; Proverbs 1:16; Psalm 36:1; Psalm 143:2. All are under sin — “there is none righteous; no, not one” (v 10). Men need redemption, for “their throat is an open tomb; ...their feet are swift to shed blood...and there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

We are living in a day when there is immense unbelief in the lost condition of humanity. People are constantly being taught about self-improvement, about the divine spark in all of us, the “I’m O.K. and so are you” philosophy, which leads to us comparing ourselves against other men rather than by the Word of God. After all, it is in God’s Word that we get a true picture of ourselves.

Thousands follow the unbiblical teaching of a fatherhood of God apart from the true and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to know what the Bible has to say about the condition of natural fallen humanity, apart from God. He knows all the depths of sin into which we have fallen. “By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” We try to do something to meet God’s requirements, but all human efforts in doing good are worthless.

This ends the revelation concerning humanity guilty before God and completely lost. The entire world is under sin and we cannot save ourselves. Our salvation must come from God. So it is in this darkness that a righteous and holy God brings forth the wonderful message of His redeeming love.

II. The Power and Righteousness of God Revealed (Romans 3:21–4:25)

A. Justification Through Faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21–31)

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one 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 God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Paul moves from the terrible picture of fallen mankind’s condition under the Law, to that by which sin may be cancelled, allowing mankind to be made righteous. Paul declares how this transaction takes place. After we realize our condition before God, the gospel can bring us to salvation from sin through faith in Jesus Christ. It is this righteousness which cannot be obtained by law or works, but through faith in a person, the Son of God. Being “justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Christ has met all; He paid for all our sins. If we believe in Jesus Christ, we are justified freely by His grace. This is the gift of God.

Justification is the pardon from the charge of sin against us as we receive Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior — the One who in our place by taking the penalty for our sins. God’s divine righteousness acts in justifying us, becoming our shelter from the coming storm of judgment. Jesus Christ, through His work of redemption, has satisfied every claim against our account that should have been judged toward us by a righteous God who hates sin. Christ, in other words, paid the penalty we deserve, and all who believe in Him are fully pardoned from every charge and penalty.

In the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, which was overlooked by the cherubim. Now the better blood, that which alone can take away sin, is upon the mercy seat. God is faithful and, because of the perfect blood of his son Jesus Christ, He justifies the believer. All sinners are not pardoned. The benefit of being justified is limited to those who have faith in Jesus Christ and faith is the means by which the benefits are applied.

Paul also declares that God’s way of justification through faith in Jesus Christ excludes all human boasting. In no way can we work for our justification, nor can we purchase it. It is solely God’s work and it is ours only through faith in Jesus Christ — “Not of works lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

B. Abraham and David Witness to Justification by Faith (Romans 4:1–25)

In this fourth chapter of Romans Paul sets out through Old Testament witnesses that justification by faith is independent of works, of circumcision and of Law.

1. Abraham was Justified by Faith (Romans 4:1–5)

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 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 counted to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

Paul is guarding against the supposition that he is teaching something absolutely new and distinct from Old Testament teaching by using a familiar illustration. Justification by faith was taught in the Old Testament. The Jews boasted of Abraham, as the father of their nation.

Who was he? Beginning in Genesis 12, the history of Abram (his name was later changed to Abraham) is given. He was an ordinary man living in the advanced culture of Babylon. God spoke to him and called him out of that country, culture, and even from his family roots to follow Him. To Abram he gave seven great promises. Abram did not ask for them or work for them. Abram merely received them. They were as follows from Genesis 12:2–3: “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you; and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Later, in Genesis 15 God was more specific in detailing how Abram would be involved in blessing the whole earth. God promised Abram a son through whom a multitude of others would come, and out of them a “seed” would be born to bless the world. Such a seed had been promised in Genesis 3:15 to reverse the curse caused by the sin of Adam and Eve. Through Abram, God was setting up the family and later the nation that would bring this promise to pass.

A few years later, in Genesis 17, God specifically said that the son of Abram would come miraculously through his married union with Sarai, later changed to Sarah, even though Abram was already ninety-nine and Sarai was nearly ninety! This son would be a miracle child; Creator-God would bring life from their seemingly “dead” bodies.

In Genesis 22 God called on Abraham to offer back to Him the miracle son Isaac, who was then at least a teenager. The writer of Hebrews tells us, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense” (Hebrews 11:17–19). It was a test of Abraham’s faith, but he passed! God stopped the test before Isaac was killed. Abraham had proved that he believed that God could raise Isaac even from the dead, since through Isaac God had promised many more descendants.

At that time, God announced to Abraham that the blessings to the world would come through his family line, specifically through a single seed of that line. “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:16–18).

How was Abraham counted righteous before God? Was he justified by keeping the Law? No, since the Law was given 430 years after Abraham that was impossible. Abraham was not justified by works because he had no works in order to justify him. When the original passage in Genesis 15 is examined, it reveals exactly what Abraham believed.

Up to this point in Abraham’s life he had believed many things. He believed in the faithfulness and power of God enough to leave everything familiar and follow Him to a place he had never been (Genesis 12). He believed God would help him fight several kings to rescue his nephew Lot (Genesis 14). But the specific faith that brought this gift of righteousness was a belief that God would give him a son from his own body and would bring through that son the promised blessing and salvation to the whole world. Abraham believed that God would keep His promise through a real descendant of his to bless the world. It was that faith that God blessed by proclaiming Abraham to be righteous in His sight.

Paul explained that Jesus was being spoken of here when in his letter to the Galatians he says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

Abraham was made righteous, received God’s salvation, by believing that God would bring a Savior for the world. Old Testament saints shared that belief from the time the promise was first given in Genesis 3:15 when God spoke to Satan, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Satan was being told that one day God would set things right again by bringing a specific human being, the Seed, forward to bruise Satan’s head. Head injuries are far more serious than heel injuries. Satan would do some damage to the Savior, Jesus was crucified, but the victory was Christ’s as He rose from the dead, having paid the full penalty for sin, having borne the full weight of the curse, and having fully ended the power of Satan over all who would come to Christ in faith!

We are imputed, reckoned, or accounted righteous the same way. In the Old Testament, people were saved by believing the Messiah would come. On this side of the cross, we are saved by believing the Savior has come. There is only one way to God. God’s righteousness would never allow any other way, since it is solely by way of faith in Jesus Christ.

2. David: Second Witness of Justification by Faith (Romans 4:6–8)

just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

Abraham had no Law, but David was under the Law. Psalm 32 is quoted by Paul. David describes the blessedness of the man (whosoever he may be) to whom God imputes the righteousness without works -- iniquities forgiven, sins covered, sin no longer imputed. God removes our sin, and imputes His righteousness. Forgiveness takes the place of sin and everlasting righteousness has covered the believer’s iniquity. This is the way to be godly, namely, by confessing our sin and believing God who justifies the ungodly.

3. Obedience to God’s Promise (Romans 4:9–25)

Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. 10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. 20 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” 23 But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

When Abraham was declared righteous, he was still uncircumcised. The Genesis narrative shows that circumcision followed the declaration that Abraham “believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” Circumcision was a sign and a seal of his faith in God’s promise. It involved obedience to God, and in this action of obedience we have the seal of the righteousness of faith. Hence, in the wisdom of God, Abraham could be the father of all who believe, both of the circumcision and the uncircumcision, Jew and Gentile. Regulations and sacraments cannot grant salvation. We need to come to Christ first, and then follow with obedience to God’s Word by fulfilling the responsibility God has for us.

When the promise was given that Abraham should have a son (Genesis 15:4–5), he believed God. He and Sarah were way beyond the normal age for becoming parents. Their case was humanly impossible, but Abraham believed that God could bring life from the dead, “No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.” (Romans 4:20–21).

The application of all this is in the last verses of this chapter (vv 23–25). The promised Seed ultimately was Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the blessed and positive proof that our sins are completely put away. The resurrection of Christ shows the vindication and acceptance by God of His perfect substitutionary sacrifice, which is the justification of the believer. We are justified by His blood. He bore our guilt and penalty and we are justified by His death and resurrection because this is the assurance that the work is complete and we are accepted. We are justified by faith; and this is reckoned to us for righteousness.

III. The Results of Justification: What it Includes (Romans 5:1–21)

A. The Fruits of Justification (Romans 5:1–11)

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

1. Peace with God Through Faith

There is no longer hostility from God. He is at peace with us because we have received His justification brought about through faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. In this we have the description of the blessedness of the development of faith in the crucified Christ.

2. Access by Faith into His Grace

We have a perfect standing before God in Christ Jesus. We stand in grace, accepted, and this grace keeps us and sustains us. We are the children of God through the blood of Christ; therefore we can draw near with a true heart in full assurance by faith.

3. Joy in the Hope of the Glory of God

The Christian is held unwavering because of the blessed hope of the glory of God.

4. Triumph in Tribulation

Those who have faith in Jesus Christ will be given endurance that will be sufficient to sustain us under trial. This is the teaching of the Word of God. Tribulation, if accepted as presented, will result in endurance and patience. Very little of this is obvious today. There are, rather, expressions of impatience and signs of weakness in Christian service. Through the faithful study of the Word of God,

the followers of Christ are made aware of opposition and how to meet it, and there find encouragement to make us steadfast and prepared for the storms, trials, and persecutions. Hope always grows and does not disappoint us; and is increased by our faith. This hope is also a gift from God mediated by the Spirit, and glorifies Christ in us.

Every believer's present condition has been gained for us by the death of Christ, and is therefore a proof of God's love. The blessings we receive are fourfold: peace from God; access by faith into His grace; joy in the hope of the glory of God; and triumph in tribulation.

B. Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ (Romans 5:12-21)

12Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

13To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. **14**Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

15But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! **16**Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. **17**For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

18Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all. **19**For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

20The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, **21**so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In this section Paul introduces another important Christian doctrine, namely, identification. Up to now the emphasis has been on substitution, the idea that Jesus took our place in judgment so that we could have a life with God instead of one apart from Him forever. However, in this section we are shown that by natural birth we share an identity with Adam.

1. The Headship of Adam

Paul now begins by showing that death has affected all people as a result of the sin of one man, Adam. The last part of Romans 5:12 is quite explicit in that “all sinned.” The word all shows that sin is universal. The word “sinned” denotes completed action in past time. In other words, all were in Adam sinning when he sinned.

There is an illustration of this principle in Hebrews 7. According to this passage, Levi, who lived many years after Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek. It was Abraham who paid tithes to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). But the Scripture says that Levi, the great grandson of Abraham, also paid tithes to Melchizedek in that he “paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor” (Hebrews 7:9–10). In the same way, all were in Adam sinning when he sinned and are therefore we are sinners both by nature and by participation.

This is further illustrated by the fact that men died before the Mosaic Law was given. Death is therefore not the result of the Law, but rather the result of Adam’s sin. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all died because they were sinners. Men die because sin entered the race through Adam’s sin.

2. The Contrasts of Adam’s and Christ’s Headships

Adam was the head of humanity, and through him sin permanently entered human life. Christ is the head of another race, the race that is justified through Him. There is similarity in that what each did affects many. But the headships of Adam and Christ are headships of contrast. Christ did just the opposite of what Adam did.

Although death came on all men through Adam’s sin, the grace of God came on many through Jesus Christ (v 15). Condemnation came to all men through Adam, but justification came to many by Jesus Christ (v 16). Through the sin of Adam, death reigned over all. But the gift of divine righteousness is given by Jesus Christ (v 17).

Through Adam came condemnation; through Christ, justification. Through Adam many were made sinners; through Christ many were made righteous. Through Adam sin abounded; through Christ grace did much more abound. Through Adam sin reigned leading to death; through Christ grace reigned through righteousness.

There is no question that Christ has done much more for believers than for unbelievers. In fact, this is what the apostle has taught throughout this chapter. Five times here he uses the phrase “much more,” and an enumeration of these makes a good summary of this chapter. They are the “much more” of justification (v 9); of reconciliation (v 10); of the gift (v 15); of the reign in life (v 17); and of abounding grace (v 20).

Romans 6:1–8:39

I. The Believer is Not in Sin Because We Died with Christ (Romans 6:1–23)

A. Dead with Christ to Sin (Romans 6:1–7)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.

In the fifth chapter of Romans, we learned that the believer is in Christ and fully identified with Him, being justified through faith in Jesus Christ. God sees the believer no longer in Adam, but in Christ. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The believer is therefore dead to sin, the old man crucified by put to death in the death of Christ; and the believer is alive to God in Christ. This must become a reality in the life and experience of the believer and must also be lived out. We are not able to do this in our own strength, but it is possible only through the power of the Spirit. Paul deals with this now in the sixth through eighth chapters of Romans.

The deliverance from sin and its dominion must be manifested in our lives since we have died to sin in the death of Christ. We soon discover, however, that the old nature, that which is of the flesh, is still present with us; but there is now also another nature, another life. The believer is enabled in that new life, in identification with Christ and His power working in us, to continue no longer in sin.

This truth is illustrated by Paul in the first verses of Romans 6 by Christian baptism, which symbolizes death and burial in Christ. Baptism does not save. It has no power to place a sinner in Christ, nor can it forgive sin or impart new life. Faith alone is needed for regeneration to occur. We are saved from sin through the grace of God, and this gives us identification with Christ, which means being crucified to self. We are dead and buried with Christ.

“Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (v 4). We share in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What God did to the Lord Jesus Christ, by raising Him from the dead, He does for all of us who are dead in trespasses and sins. “He made us alive together” (Ephesians 2:5). We possess His life, the resurrected life, and therefore we should walk in newness of life and in the power of this new life in Christ Jesus. The old man, what we were in Adam, was crucified with Christ in order that our body of sin might be made void, and we are no longer slaves to sin. The operation of the law of sin which operates in our mortal bodies through its

members is cancelled for the believer, who in faith considers him or herself to be dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ. The believer is no longer a slave to sin.

B. The Believer, Risen with Christ and Alive to God (Romans 6:8–14)

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

If we have died with Christ we will also live with Him. This is true of anyone who is a believer. Now we come to the important part of this chapter which answers the questions Paul proposed in the opening verse. “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” Paul’s answer is emphatically given, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” We are to consider that which is already accomplished through the work of Christ on the cross. This involves an act of faith on our part, believing and appropriating in faith what God has for us through Jesus Christ.

Salvation is not based on feelings and emotions, but on the fact of what Christ has done for us and our acceptance of this through an act of faith. To determine to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation is an act of faith; we believe in the fruit of the work that is already done for us. Christ accomplished redemption for us when He died on the cross and rose again. Our part is to believe and accept this work of grace and provision for salvation from sin.

The believer is not dominated any longer by sin nor should the believer yield to the desires of the old nature. If a believer obeys the old nature in its lusts, he or she walks not in the Spirit but in the flesh. When temptation comes to the believer, we must take refuge in prayer, self-judgment, self-surrender, and must by a deliberate act yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God.

As long as we are in this earthly body, we will know temptation and there will be conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Paul speaks of this conflict between or sinful flesh and the Spirit in Galatians chapter five when he tells us, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-

control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." (Galatians 5:17–25). If we are living and walking in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The grace which has saved us teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live sober, righteous, and godly lives; appropriating by faith what God has promised us.

C. Slaves to Righteousness (Romans 6:15–23)

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul now asks another question, "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?" He again emphatically answers, "By no means!" The question seems to ask, "Since the penalty has already been paid, can't we just keep on sinning?" Paul answers this by using an illustration from the world of slavery. "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey?" We do not normally think of slaves as having a choice as to whom they will obey.

In Paul's day slaves generally were bought in a marketplace or brought home as prisoners of war, but there also was a practice called voluntary slavery. This occurred when a person who was terribly poor offered himself as a slave to a wealthier person in order to be guaranteed food and housing. Paul uses this circumstance of slavery to describe the situation of a Christian. Before salvation we were slaves to sin which inevitably leads to death. However, when we "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which [we] were delivered", namely, when we responded in faith to the gospel, we were freed from that evil slavery. Voluntarily now we can present ourselves to God as His slaves. In service to Him we reap the fruit of righteousness, holiness, and eternal life.

If we yield to sin we become slaves of sin. Paul follows this question with words of praise and thanksgiving for the fact that believers are free from sin and its dominion. He then contrasts the former state in sin and the place of deliverance into which grace has brought the believer. The fruit of being a sinner had its dreadful end, death. But the fruit of holiness is eternal life. Sin has its wages in death; the great gift of God, eternal life, is given through Jesus Christ our Lord. In chapters seven and eight we will learn how the fruit of the believer is produced in our lives.

II. The Relation of the Justified Believer to God (Romans 7:1–25)

A. Illustrated Through the Law of Marriage (Romans 7:1–6)

Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. 4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Paul brings out in these verses the fact that the authority of the Law is limited and it comes to its end through death. The Law has dominion over a person only as long as he or she lives. However, when death occurs, the power of that Law is broken. It cannot touch a person who is dead. The penalty of the broken Law is death.

The illustration from the marriage law as instituted by God is given here to make this clear. A man and a woman united in the marriage union become husband and wife until it is cancelled by death. The married woman is bound by that Law to her husband for as long as he lives. When he dies she is free to marry another. It makes no difference about the moral condition of the husband. He may be a tyrant, drunkard, murderer, and it might seem better if she would become the wife of another man; but the Law comes in and forbids such a course. The Law really holds her from the person who would come in to save her, yet she can be released only by death of the former husband. She ceases to be his wife, and according to Law the way is then opened for the second marriage.

The wife has been set free by the death, not of herself, but of her husband. Just as the widowed wife was freed from the Law through the death of her husband, so we as believers have been made free from the Law through death. Our husband, to whom we were bound by the Law, was a tyrant. He was corrupt and a murderer, but being bound by the law of marriage, we had really chosen him as our master, and the Law recognized the marriage.

B. Our New Relationship to Christ

We have now become dead to the Law by the body of Christ. The body of Christ means the death of Christ on the cross. There He bore our judgment and penalty of the Law and the Law is vindicated through Him. The old union is dissolved. Death has done its work and it is now possible, after being freed from the Law, to be married to another. Being then dead to the Law by the death of Christ, we are married to another; therefore, the justified believer is in living union with a risen Christ. He lives in us and we live in Him. As believers we stand in the same position as if we ourselves had died; therefore, we are legally free from the Law which stood in the way of our being married to Christ. If by the death of Christ we are united to Him and living a life devoted to God, Christ is now our husband and our life is spent for God as a result of our marriage with Him.

C. The Effectiveness of the Law (Romans 7:7–13)

7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. 10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

13 Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

"The Law is sin?" This is a logical question following Paul's statements about sin and the sinful heart, and that by the Law we were bringing forth fruit leading to death. Paul says, "By no means!" The Law in itself is not sin. The Law was given that we might have knowledge of sin through it. "Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin." The Law forbids and the commandment brings out what is in the heart of man. No blame can be put on the Law. Sin must be blamed. Sin is lawlessness and rebellion against God; and the Law makes obvious that rebellion. Man through the Law is exposed as a sinner and transgressor.

In these verses, Paul changes the pronoun "we" to "I." Brought into focus is the fact of personal experience, and a description is given of how a believer learns the lesson about the Law; how the Law cannot help a justified believer but makes of him, or her, a wretched person. Paul in his experience tried to obtain life by the Law, but he found it led only to death. He talks about sin and his evil nature as one who had deceived him into all this, so that the Law could manifest its power even to killing him. Paul declares it is not the Law that is sinful. The Law is holy, just, and good; and because the Law

is holy, it gives the knowledge of sin and brings to light all of its ugliness, and then pronounces the death sentence. "It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure." (v 13).

D. Paul's Conclusion as to the Bondage of the Law and Deliverance (Romans 7:14–25)

1. The Manifestation of the Law in the Conscience (Romans 7:14–16)

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.

Paul cries out in grief over the fact that he is still carnal, fleshly, compared with the spirituality of the Law. He is the slave to sin, bound in captivity to the law of sin which is in the flesh. A distinction is made by Paul. In the first part of his discussion he talks about the old nature which is sin, and the fact that the fruits of the old nature are sins. Sin, the old nature, is the man himself. The thing produced while in the old nature is corrupt. Now he is teaching that we no longer have to do with sins or the fruits of the old nature, but with the old nature itself, namely, sin. We speak about conquering it or destroying it through death that the great purpose of God might be appropriated.

2. The Conflict of the Law with the New Nature (Romans 7:17–25)

17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

A person in Christ can experience the turmoil of the two natures warring, not being aware of the delivering power of the Spirit from the dominion of Law and sin. The sin principle in the renewed man is the focal point of consideration here. Paul was concerned with conforming fully to the new nature he had in Christ through faith. He shows that even though there are two opposing natures in an individual, the person who has accepted the new nature, honoring from his or her inmost soul the Law of God, condemns and renounces his or her corrupt nature with its affections and lusts. We must depend absolutely upon grace, because our victory and triumph come through our yielding to Christ allowing the power of the Spirit to work through us to the praise of the glory of God.

III. No Condemnation to Those Who Are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1–39)

A. The Reason for This (Romans 8:1–4)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Chapter 8 begins with this glorious summary of Paul’s teaching so far. Because of what Christ has done in His death, burial, and resurrection to satisfy the holy righteousness of God which requires judgment on sin, we as Christians are forever free from being condemned for our sins. We never have to be afraid of being thrown out of God’s family. When we do sin by failing to obey the Spirit’s regular direction to us, we will feel conviction so that we might repent and be forgiven and return to holy living, but we will not be condemned forever for that new sin. With this profound statement, Paul introduces a rich explanation of how God’s Spirit in us, who we receive at salvation, makes it possible for us to live powerful and productive lives as believers.

A human being has a body that relates to the world through five senses and a personality or soul that decides what to do with the information gathered from the five senses. Without the Spirit, the non-Christian cannot always properly process the information which the body brings to the mind. He or she will lack the eternal, divine perspective that the Spirit of Truth can offer and so will decide how to think or act based only on his or her own desires, which can be short-sighted and self-serving. These self-centered decisions result ultimately in spiritual death (v 6).

However, when we ask Jesus to come into our lives at the moment of salvation, He comes as the Spirit and brings an eternal perspective and power to our lives that enables us to live above self and sin. The “law of the Spirit of life ... in Christ Jesus” frees us from the old life that was under the control of the “law of sin and death (v 2).” The law of sin and death remains real but can be overcome by the power of the Spirit in the believer.

Jesus did not ignore God’s righteous requirement that sin must be punished with death. He accepted that as true and satisfied it by coming in the “likeness of sinful flesh” and paying the penalty in our place. He was completely human as well as completely God, except that unlike every other human being, He being God did not share Adam’s sinful nature and never sinned in thought, word, or deed. (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:20–22; 1 John 3:5.) Just as the only acceptable sacrifices in the Old Testament were without spot or blemish, so His sinless perfection made Him the only perfect sacrifice to be offered in our place (1 Peter 1:18, 19). When we accept His sacrifice in our place and for our sin

by faith, the “righteous requirement of the law” is fulfilled in us, too. We are free from condemnation (v 1) but also free to live by the life-giving power of the Spirit.

B. The Spiritual Life Now Leading Us (Romans 8:5–14)

1. A New Way of Thinking (Romans 8:5–8)

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Although humans have a body and a personality to gather and process the information around them, the Christian has the Spirit to bring God’s perspective to his or her life. The Spirit brings the person reliable information from the spiritual world. The mind then has to decide what to do with what it has received. This is what we know as free will. The Christian should set his or her mind to be more sensitive to the direction given by the Spirit than to that given by one’s physical senses, emotions, or common sense. Since God is perfect, His wisdom given through the Spirit will yield “life and peace” while the carnal influence brings death.

How is this done? How can a Christian set his or her mind on the Spirit? First, we must realize that we have the Spirit dwelling in us as believers. Every Christian receives the Spirit into our body when we ask Jesus to save us (v 9). Next, a spiritually-minded person must begin to read, study, and meditate on the Scriptures to become familiar with the way God thinks and what He requires. This helps us recognize the voice of the Spirit speaking to our minds.

The Spirit will not give direction that contradicts the revealed will of God in Scripture. Also, a Christian needs to invite the Spirit to “inspire” our thinking and decisions by praying for His help. Just as talking and listening to a person make the distinctions of the other’s voice more familiar, so time spent with God in study and prayer makes His voice more easily identified by His child. Finally, a Christian needs to practice obedience when we think we are being directed by the Spirit. The positive results of obedience will encourage further obedience. Obedience to the Spirit brings blessing to the believer and to those we serve. If in doubt about whether or not the thoughts of the mind are coming from the Spirit, a person should seek the counsel of more mature Christians. “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Proverbs 15:22). Following these steps—recognition of the indwelling Spirit, study of Scripture, prayer, obedience, and seeking godly counsel—will enable the Christian to “set his or her mind” on the Spirit. This pleases God and gives us a life with power and purpose.

2. The Holy Spirit Indwells (Romans 8:9)

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Jesus in a regular body as He had had when He was on earth could not fit inside believers, and so God sent His Spirit to live in us when we had prayed. The Spirit does not have a body. He can be in all of us at the same time. The Bible teaches that the Spirit dwells or lives in the Christian. Actually, the body of every believer is the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19). If you are a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit in you. If you do not have the Holy Spirit, you do not even belong to God (Romans 8:9).

3. The Spirit Gives Life (Romans 8:10–13)

10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 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, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

We were not only saved by Jesus’ death from the penalty and power of sin, but we were also made alive with Him eternally when He rose from the dead. We are identified with Him in both death and life when we believe and are saved. His Spirit empowers us to live life on a completely different level. Our present bodies will continue to decay and one day die (unless we are among those alive at His return), but the Spirit enables our souls and spirits to live forever and will even give us brand new physical bodies to enjoy in eternity (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; John 5:28, 29; John 11:24–26; Romans 6:5).

The Spirit Leads Us (Romans 8:14)

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

A wonderful truth is in this verse. We are not left alone to figure out what we should do to please God. His Spirit leads us. Leading implies going first, knowing the way, and having a concern for those who follow. God does not just send us out into the world. No, He goes before us to lead the way. How can we fail when we follow God?

C. The Holy Spirit and the New Nature Witness Together (Romans 8:16–25)

1. The Spirit Adopts Us (Romans 8:15–17)

15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Paul describes another work of the Spirit by contrasting it with a negative, “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” In a letter to Timothy years later, Paul would explain, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Apart from God and on our own, we have much to fear, but with the indwelling Spirit, we are made aware that we are children of God, with no need to fear. We can call on Him freely with the familiarity of a little child saying, “Abba” or in English, “Papa.” The Spirit assures us in our minds that we have been so fully adopted into God’s family that we have been made “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.”

Adoption was commonly practiced among the Romans. Several of the Roman emperors were the adopted sons of their predecessors. A Roman man could deliberately choose for a son a child or grown man he thought worthy to continue his name and administer his estate. This adopted son was in no way inferior to one born to the father and enjoyed full rights of inheritance and family affection.

So having been adopted into the family of God, we not only share now in many blessings and look forward to a future glory with Christ, but we must also be prepared to share in His suffering while we live on this earth. God does not hide this truth from us. Even as His children, empowered by His Spirit, we must still face testing, hardship, rejection, and pain in this world just as Jesus did. However, like Jesus, we are promised the ultimate victory over everything that opposes the will of God and an eternal place in our Father’s home!

2. Suffering (Romans 8:18)

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

When Paul wrote these words, he wrote as a man who was very familiar with extreme suffering. In 2 Corinthians 11:24–28 he listed some of his past experiences in suffering as a minister of the gospel. “Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.” However, even all these painful experiences would one day fade out in importance in his memory as he received the glory God promised to give His faithful followers at Christ’s return. What a motivation for us to keep living the godly life even when it brings us suffering!

2. Groaners (Romans 8:19–25)

Creation groans (Romans 8:19–22)

19 For the creation waits with eager longing 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 will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Creation was damaged when Adam and Eve were cursed for their deliberate sin against God in Genesis 3. Creation had been “very good” at its beginning so that it could offer a blessed environment for mankind (Genesis 1:31). However, God changed it to reflect and emphasize the spiritual decline set in motion by mankind’s sin (Genesis 3:17–19). Ever since then, creation has groaned in expectation of a better day, the day when God promised to return it to its first glory.

Christians groan (Romans 8:23–25)

23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

In the Old Testament there were two harvest festivals (First Fruits and Pentecost) in which the men of Israel were required to offer to God the first things to grow from the crops they planted (Leviticus 2 and 23). These first sheaves of grain were called “firstfruits” and were symbols of hope that the harvest would continue abundantly.

In this passage, believers are said to have the “firstfruits of the Spirit” which implies that there is more the Spirit has to give us than we have right now. We know from the Scriptures that we have not yet received all God has planned for us. Much waits for us when Jesus returns in power at the end of this world. So while faced with the limitation of this present life with its temptations to sin, troubling problems, and steady decay, we “groan within ourselves,” impatient for future relief. We look forward to enjoying the full benefits of our Spiritual adoption and to the changing of these old deteriorating bodies into new, powerful, spiritual, and glorified bodies—fully redeemed (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). The Spirit’s “firstfruits” give us confidence that the best is yet to come!

D. The Holy Spirit’s Power in Us as to Our Walk (Romans 8:26–27)

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches

hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

In the same way that a Christian groans inwardly, longing for the better things ahead, the Spirit groans within the Christian, not only longing but praying for the blessings to come. He “intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” God the Father knows what the Spirit is expressing on our behalf and works everything that happens to the Christian for our ultimate good. What a double comfort! The Spirit helps us pray effectively, and the Father always hears Him and works on our behalf to make everything come out for our good! There is nothing that can happen to a Christian that cannot be made to benefit us or further God’s will if we will just allow God to handle it for us.

E. No Separation from Christ (Romans 8:28–39)

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

To those who love God all things work together for good, to those who are called according to His purpose. We can rest in God and commit everything to Him, knowing that He will work things out in our lives. God has a plan and purpose for His children. From His foreknowledge of us in the past to the blessed glory of the future, His purpose is that Christ His Son should be a first-born among many brethren. The chain of blessing from this is in the foreknowledge of God -- predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

God has not predestinated a part of the human race to be lost, for He would have “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (I Timothy 2:4). All are not saved because they do

not believe. God, as all-knowing, chose those who would believe, and the believer is predestinated, called, justified, and will be glorified. God’s eternal purpose will not fail, and all who are in Christ will be conformed to the image of His Son. This is the hope of the calling of God. He never violates His Word. God never robs a person of the responsibility of free-will and choice. God wants him or her to love and serve Him by choosing to love and serve Him.

The ending of the doctrinal section of this great epistle is very glorious. “What then shall we say to these things?” Our response must be in worship and adoration of the God who loved us so in giving His only begotten Son, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16). God reached down to us in our misery and shame, and has lifted us so high that the believer sits with Christ in heavenly places. Since God is for us, who can be against us? The proof — “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” With Christ He has freely given us all things. Christ died, He rose again, He is at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ and the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. God’s provision is no condemnation; no separation; no more wrath, but eternal glory. This is the salvation of God. How can one who claims to be a Christian live a deceitful, careless, unfaithful life? Because of God’s great love and provision, you just want to get closer and closer and closer to the One who loves you so much.

God’s Dealing with Israel

Romans 9:1–11:36

With chapter nine of Romans we begin the second division of the book. This division places emphasis on Israel and explains that the gospel and its principles are in complete harmony with God’s ways with the nation. In the first eight chapters Paul has dealt with the fact that both Jew and Gentile (those with the Law and those without), are guilty sinners before God. There is no difference whether circumcised or uncircumcised. The grace of God must be applied to both who believe. In the next three chapters of Romans, Paul deals with a very important question. Can all this be reconciled with the promises made to the Jews? What about the principle of God’s faithfulness to His Word and to His covenants? Had He cast away His people?

I. Israel and God’s Sovereignty (Romans 9:1–33)

A. Paul’s Concern for Israel - Past Condition of Israel (Romans 9:1–5)

9 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. 4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the

giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. 5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

In Romans 9, Paul speaks of knowing that Israel had rejected the salvation of God. In Romans 10, he said his heart's desire and prayer to God was that Israel might be saved, and in the eleventh chapter Paul mentions that he is evidence God has not cast away all His people forever. Because Paul preached salvation through Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, the Jews treated him as an enemy and as a traitor to their nation. Although they hated him, he loved them; they were his brothers and his kinsmen according to the flesh. When Paul came to Christ he did not cease to be a Jew as far as his nationality was concerned. The intensity of his love for them was expressed in the words, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers." Nothing would be too great a sacrifice if he could but see his kinsmen come to the knowledge of Christ and be saved.

Paul then reviews the many and great advantages with which God had favored the Jews. Out of all the nations God chose the Jews to stand in a special relationship to Him as His children. The name Israel was not used for God's covenant people until after Jacob wrestled with God. "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, 'the deceiver', but Israel" (Genesis 32:28). In Genesis 15:18 and 17:2–14, God made a covenant with Abraham. Another covenant was made with Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 19:5). God had delivered them out of the land of Egypt, and as they traveled through the wilderness they experienced the glory of God in His protection and provision for them. The giving of the Law reminds us of Sinai. The promises would remind us of the tabernacle and their entrance into the Promised Land. All were shadows of what God had in store for them, but they failed to understand the deep significance of God and His Word in preparing them for their Messiah. Christ was the greatest of all blessings imparted to the people of Israel! He was the One to whom all the other blessings pointed!

B. God's Unconditional Election of Israel — His Faithfulness Vindicated (Romans 9:6–13)

6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. 9 For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." 10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— 12 she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

1. God's Promises Have Not Failed

The fact that the nation of Israel had failed because of unbelief and was rejected does not mean the Word of God failed. The fact that God called the Gentiles and they received the blessing of

righteousness does not in any way abolish the authenticity of God's promises made to Israel. God's purposes concerning Israel and His promise to them cannot fail. But how proud they were in their boasting that they were of the seed of Abraham and that they had the exclusive rights to the promises of God! Jesus said to them on one occasion, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham." (John 8:39). In their blind hostility to the gospel, they had forgotten that the Scriptures reveal that blessing had its source in God. Blessing is the result of elective mercy, and it must be of faith. Paul said, "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham."

2. Divine Election — Only Ground of Blessing

Israel's many children and their descendants have their father's name by natural birth alone, and they lay claim to Abraham's covenant with God. From the three patriarchal families, Jacob and his descendants are different from the first and second families. Paul, from the verse quoted above, says that not all the sons of Israel can claim their father's name and right. If this can be proven, it is very clear that the promises have not failed even though some are excluded from the kingdom because of their unbelief. Not all who are Abraham's seed are Abraham's children. Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael, was not the son of promise. Isaac was the son of promise. Genesis 17:19 states, "Then God said: 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.'" God's choice of Isaac was not on the basis of natural birth but of divine election.

Paul in setting forth this principle is showing that the unbelieving Jews were children of the flesh, for the only identification they had to Abraham was an outward one. They had no right to expect divine blessings simply because of natural descent. Only those who are believers are Abraham's children according to the gospel of promise; and the right of the covenant was not given by God in the case of Abraham's children after the flesh, making the claim of the Jew invalid. The claim of the unbelieving Jew is on the same basis as that of Ishmael and believers stand in the same position as that of Isaac. Believers alone are heirs to the covenant.

3. God's Divine Election Shown with Jacob and Esau

In the next generation following Abraham, another example is given of God's divine election showing that not only did Sarah receive a promise from God which limited the true seed to Abraham, but Rebecca also received a promise in which the same divine principle of election is even more remarkable. Isaac was the only son of Abraham by his wife the free-woman (Galatians 4:22), thus making him the only proper heir. Esau and Jacob were twins by one father, the patriarch of the chosen race, and even in this case, one of them was excluded. Rebecca, as Sarah, also received a revelation from God. This meets with the objection with the Jews, that Ishmael was a bondwoman's child and therefore rejected.

Paul tells the Jews very carefully that the promise did not rest upon Isaac, the promised natural seed of Abraham, but on the daughter-in-law who had become Isaac's wife. "Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac." Election was even before birth. In each case given here the selection had no reference at all to the conduct of the children. Merit or works cannot be the condition of salvation. Genesis 25:23 states, "And the Lord said to her (Rebecca): 'Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.'" Included in God's choice of the nation was the choice of its founder, and in the original statement it refers to God's election of Jacob and his descendants to be the channel of His grace and the means of giving His truth.

The fulfillment of Genesis 25:23 did not take place until long after the death of Jacob and Esau when David conquered the Edomites (descendants of Esau). We are reminded in these illustrations given by Paul that God does exercise a prerogative of choice, independent of all human consideration. The objections of the Jews to the blessing of the Gentiles through the gospel, and God dealing with them in His grace, were disproven by the history of their own Jewish nation.

C. The Vindication of God's Justice and Mercy (Romans 9:14–33)

14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 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 depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? 25 As indeed he says in Hosea,

**"Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"**

**26 "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'
there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"**

27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, 28 for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay." 29 And as Isaiah predicted,

**, "If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom**

and become like Gomorrah.”

30 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; **31** but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. **32** Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, **33** as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

1. God’s Divine Sovereignty

God can choose whom He will. Paul gives two examples of God’s sovereignty in mercy and in judgment. If God had dealt with Israel according to His righteousness, they would have been cut off, but God in mercy spared them. Pharaoh illustrates God’s Sovereignty in judgment. Pharaoh of Egypt was a wicked, God-hating man. God had shown him mercy, but he hardened his heart and defied the Lord. He said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” “I do not know the Lord” (Exodus 5:2). Then the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart and made him a demonstration of His wrath.

Both Israel and Pharaoh were wicked. God’s righteousness would have condemned both, yet He had mercy on one and hardened the other. He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens. In His righteousness He could have condemned both! This is God’s divine Sovereignty. He proves Himself not only righteous, but proves Himself God. The blessings of the gospel are the result, not of mankind’s desire, purpose, or effort; but only of God’s mercy.

Keep in mind that the Scripture does not teach that God made Pharaoh wicked. The text says, “For this purpose have I raised you up.” God needed a strong man through whose opposition He might illustrate His own power to show God’s righteous displeasure against those who hate His authority. Pharaoh was an exact parallel of the Jewish people to whom God granted blessings, not on the ground of merit, but of mercy. We have much to comfort us in the fact that when we ask blessings of God, we do not look at our efforts to obtain them, but at our helplessness and God’s compassion. His gifts are gifts of mercy, and He gives to all who ask in faith.

2. God’s Absolute Power

God has the power to do all things, with no one having the right to question His judgments. No one has any right to find fault with God! He is like a potter; He fashions one vessel one way, another vessel another way. The clay cannot dictate to the potter. The vessels of mercy include both Jew and Gentile; His grace and mercy goes forth to both. The distinguishing factor between both Jew and Gentile is faith in Jesus Christ. The Jews, trusting in their own works, found Christ to be a stumbling-block and a rock of offense. The Sovereignty of God and the free will of man lie very much beyond the

understanding of the human mind. It is wise to accept what God says in His Word and know that He alone is righteous and just toward us.

II. Israel's Failure and Unbelief-Present Condition of Israel (Romans 10:1–21)

A. Fruitless Zeal (Romans 10:1–5)

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

Continuing in his defense of God's righteousness as it relates to the treatment of Israel, Paul assures his readers that he cares deeply about his fellow Jews and grieves that so many have not received salvation through Jesus Christ. He recognizes that they have great zeal for God but grieves that it is misguided and therefore ineffective. Paul contrasts the Jewish way of thinking with God's truth. Actually, all the religious thinking in the world can be divided between these two categories -- first, the false idea that a person can gain righteousness or right-standing with God through works or actions; and, second, the Biblical belief that a person can never earn his or her way to God and so must receive righteousness from God as a gift. All non-Christian religions and philosophies of our day are works-oriented and belong in the first category; while true Christianity alone offers a right relationship to God as an unearned gift.

The purpose or "end" of the law was to show people how far off they were from God's standard of righteousness and to make them long for a Savior to bring them near to God. The law is good, true, and powerful to convict people of their sin, but it cannot save anyone. Jesus was the only one to keep it perfectly, and yet His perfection did not save us. His perfect life had to be sacrificed; it was His paying the penalty for our sins with His death on the cross that saved us. Yet Paul grieves that many Jews "have not submitted to the righteousness of God" which teaches that we must admit our helplessness and receive righteousness solely as a gift from God. Sadly, they continue in their useless efforts to earn their salvation through obedience to the law.

B. No Waiting (Romans 10:6–10)

6 But the righteousness based on faith says, "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 that we proclaim); 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that

Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Paul quotes the Old Testament eight times in this chapter to give his Jewish readers the necessary proof that what he is teaching is in agreement with what God has already revealed. As Moses reassured the children of Israel that the Word of God would be in them even after his death, so Paul assures his listeners that the availability of the information needed for salvation was very near them as well.

Christ already brought it down from heaven and up from the grave. They simply needed to believe and agree with what they had heard about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They were to agree with God's assessment of what Jesus had done and to openly confess Him as Lord while believing in their hearts that He was no less than God, with power to rise from the dead.

C. Whoever Will (Romans 10:11–13)

11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Receiving the righteousness of God does not require perfect obedience to the Old Testament law. If it did, none could be saved. Instead, it requires believing the gospel and calling on God for salvation. This is the pattern for everyone, whether Jew or Greek. Paul quoted Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32 to back up the idea that all were welcome to receive salvation. Yet this inclusion of the non-Jews in salvation was a source of grief for the Jews in Paul's day. They thought that their privileges as God's unique nation set them above everyone else, so like the elder brother (Luke 15:27–32) and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14) in Jesus' stories, their pride kept them from entering the only path to salvation offered to everyone.

D. Jewish Excuses (Romans 10:14–21)

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

**18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for
"Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world."**

19 But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,

**“I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;
with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”**

20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

**“I have been found by those who did not seek me;
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”**

21 But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

Paul answers questions that he imagines his readers would be asking in defense of the Jews who had not come to Christ. One by one, Paul will respond to and eliminate each excuse. Did the Jews fail to believe the gospel because no one had preached it to them?

While it is true that a person must hear the gospel presented to have the opportunity to believe it, the Jews had heard it. Preachers like Paul were going out all over the known world. Also, God had earlier prepared Israel to receive the gospel through the teachings of His Old Testament prophets. Isaiah had remarked that the very feet of those bringing the gospel were beautiful, implying that such persons should be fully accepted and believed. Yet many Jews refused to obey the gospel just as Isaiah had lamented centuries before, “Lord, who has believed our report?”

Faith in Christ comes as a result of hearing the Word of God presented (v 17), and yet just listening to the Word does not guarantee that a person will move on to salvation (Matthew 13). There must be a willingness to submit to God’s plans and purposes. Hearing the Word of God with a humble heart does indeed produce faith, while hearing with a hardened heart will not permit faith to grow.

Did they really hear it? Yes, Paul quotes Psalm 19:4 to reveal that the gospel has gone out to the “ends of the world.” As stated in Romans 1, no one has an excuse for claiming not to have heard the truth about the power of God. God reveals Himself even through creation, which glorifies its Creator and draws all men to be thankful to Him. Those who come near with the truth they have will receive the truth necessary for salvation.

Is the gospel message too difficult for the Jews to understand? No. To make his point, Paul quotes two Old Testament prophecies which his Jewish readers would recognize as already being fulfilled. The first is in verse 19. This prophecy was about Israel being jealous about the inclusion of non-Jewish people in God’s offer of salvation. This jealousy was already very evident among the Jews Paul tried to reach.

With the addition of the second prophecy in verse 20 from Isaiah 65:1, Paul makes his point. Even though the Gentiles had not been seeking God, they responded in faith when He did make Himself known to them. Paul was showing that if the gospel was simple enough for the Gentiles to understand, though they did not have the advantage of knowing the Old Testament Scriptures or realizing that they needed to seek God, how much easier it should be for the Jews to understand and believe as well.

The first Christian martyr, Stephen, gave an articulate summary of God's involvement in Israel's history in Acts 7. He concluded it by emphasizing Israel's long record of stubbornness and rebellion against the revealed will of God (Acts 7:51–53). Paul does the same thing here when he quotes Isaiah 65:2 to emphasize the great compassionate appeal God keeps making to Israel and her typically ungrateful and sinful response. "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." In Romans 10, Paul has eliminated each of the excuses for Israel's unbelief. The people have preached the gospel to the Jews; the Jews have had the opportunity to hear it; and it has not been too difficult to understand. The only reason that the entire nation of Israel is not saved is her deliberately stubborn rebellion against God's clearly offered plan of salvation. God has maintained His absolute righteousness in His every dealing with Israel.

Paul makes clear in Romans 10 that earning righteousness through human effort has never worked. Such efforts by the Jews produced a sense of competition and jealousy with one another, a desire for exclusion of all those who were not Jewish, and a glorifying of their own self-effort instead of a glorifying of God.

When we believe that the righteousness of God is a gift, then we can take no credit for it. And if we can take no credit for it, we do not have to be jealous that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." If it is given to us freely, why not to everyone who "confesses" the Lordship of Jesus and believes in His resurrection? Pride and jealousy will lead to spiritual blindness and deafness that will keep us, just as they have kept the majority of Israel so far, from believing and calling on God through Jesus.

III. Israel's Restoration Promise Future of Israel (Romans 11)

A. Israel's Rejection Not Total (Romans 11:1–6)

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." 4 But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

Paul uses himself as an Israelite, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, to prove that God has not completely rejected Israel. Paul, the disciples, and the whole early church were Jewish. God had preserved for Himself a believing remnant to whom and through whom He would keep His covenants and promises. Paul noted that even Elijah, in a greatly depraved time in the history of Israel, thought

himself to be the very last righteous Israelite, but God comforted and corrected him with the fact that there were seven thousand more just like him “who have not bowed their knee to Baal.” And so in Paul’s day, God had a believing remnant “chosen by grace.”

Election means “choosing.” The elected are those chosen by God not because of their own merit but simply because of His great grace. Grace here means God’s gracious kindness to the undeserving. Remember Paul’s teaching about the Sovereignty of God in Chapter 9 where he described the right of the potter to do whatever he wanted with his own clay? God has chosen a believing remnant of Israel to be included in His plans. However, according to Romans 10, each member of this believing remnant had to individually choose to accept God’s offer of grace. The balancing of God’s Sovereignty with the gift human responsibility is not completely explainable, but it is nevertheless true. The good news is that God promised many specific things to Israel, and through this “elected-by-grace” remnant, He will maintain His righteousness and fulfill every promise.

B. The Fate of the Rest of Israel (Romans 11:7–11)

7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, 8 as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.” 9 And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; 10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.”

11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

Historically, Israel as a whole thought she could earn or cause her own righteousness by obeying the laws and doing certain religious works. As individuals, they failed to listen to the many prophets sent to them, who called them to change their hearts, to humble themselves before a holy God, and to ask for His righteousness in His way. Their persistent refusal to listen resulted in their being judged for their stubbornness. The judgment was a spiritual blindness, deafness, and deadened receptivity to any further truth about God. When they continually refused to obey what was given, they lost even the ability to see, hear, or understand what had been originally offered.

Paul showed that this condition fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah about them. “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.” When King David was unjustly persecuted by his enemies, he cried out to God to stop them and to punish them. Since Psalm 69 is prophetic of what happened to Jesus by His enemies. Paul appropriately uses it to describe the judgment on his contemporary Jews, who have opposed their own Messiah and His followers. “Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their backs always.” Most of the nation of Israel is still spiritually blind to the truth revealed in their Scriptures.

C. Israel’s Rejection Is Not Final (Romans 11:12–16)

12 Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry 14 in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. 15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? 16 If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Continuing, Paul asks if Israel's rejection or stumbling over the truth is final and permanent. His answer is definite, "Certainly not!" In fact, there are even some benefits associated with their temporary fall. First, when they refused to believe the gospel, it was immediately offered to the Gentiles. In the Gospels and in the book of Acts this was the case. Jesus, the disciples, and later Paul and the early church leaders consistently took the gospel to the Jews first. Only when it was rejected by the leaders and in the synagogues was it offered to the Gentiles. However, the blessings, healings, and life-changes that resulted when the Gentiles believed sometimes made the Jews jealous to receive these things for themselves. Paul enjoyed pointing out the interdependence of the experiences of Jews and Gentiles through Christ. They needed each other.

If the failure of Israel to believe accelerated the inclusion of the Gentiles, how much more will the Gentiles benefit when Israel actually believes and begins to live out and teach the full truth of God (v 12)! If the rejection of the unbelieving majority in Israel brought Christ's reconciliation to the world, what will their salvation bring? No less than life from the dead (v 15)!

Paul encourages his readers further in verse 16. If the people at the beginning of Israel's history became righteous God's way, there is hope for the rest of the nation to turn to God for salvation: "If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches."

D. The Olive Tree (Romans 11:17–24)

17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. 19 Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. 23 And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted,

contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

God had used the olive tree in the prophecies of Jeremiah (11:1–17) and Hosea (14:1–7) to represent the Israel that was rightly related to Him through faith and obedience. In that day, as in Paul's, God had broken off the disobedient and unbelieving branches. Using this imagery, Paul describes the grafting of the Gentiles into this tree which grew out of the original covenant promises for salvation to the Patriarchs. Truly through Israel all the families of the world were being blessed (Genesis 12:3)! In verse 13 Paul says that he is now speaking primarily to the Gentiles. He calls them the "wild olive tree" because they were not the chosen and original plant that was to bring the fruit of God's truth to the rest of the world. However, when the naturally occurring branches were unproductive, representing the majority of Israel who had not believed the Gospel, those natural branches were cut off, allowing room for the "wild" branches to be grafted in their place. The Gentiles then had access to the "nourishing root of the olive tree" (v 17).

Paul cautioned the Gentiles not to become proud as if the blessings they now experienced as Christians were due to their own efforts. All they enjoyed had come through the covenant promises God had originally made to the "root" of the olive tree, namely, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons. The Gentiles owed their salvation to the remnant of believing Jews who had believed and obeyed God, preserved the Scriptures, and risked their very lives to promote God's truth. Just as God took down the nation of Israel when it became proud and disobedient, so He could also remove the Gentile world from its place of present blessing if they became prideful and independent in their blessed position. The church age will someday come to an end. We need not be too harsh on Israel until we honestly evaluate what we have done with the opportunities we have been given.

Paul ends his olive tree illustration with a thought-provoking truth. If the wild branches, the Gentiles, were successfully grafted in, God could just as easily re-graft in the natural branches, the nation of Israel, which had been removed. In fact, in verse 23, Paul suggests that this very thing could happen. So Jew and Gentile should not be at odds with one another. They are not in competition; there is room for both in the family of God. God has ordained that theirs should be an existence of interdependence and mutual assistance, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you" (Psalm 122:6).

E. The Mystery of Israel's Salvation (Romans 11:25–28)

25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; 27 "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

Paul had already quoted the Old Testament prophecies about Israel's spiritual blindness due to her persistent unbelief, so that blindness was not the mystery. Verse 25 reveals that her blindness was partial, but that was already known. The new information here is that the judicial blindness is temporary! The fact that her blindness will have a definite ending date is the mystery revealed here.

One day in the future, when God has decided that the Gentiles have had full opportunity to respond to the gospel, He is mercifully going to remove the blindness He placed on Israel as judgment for their rebellion against Him. Paul combines the essence of Psalm 14:7 and Isaiah 59:20, 21 to describe this prophetic event when Israel's Deliverer returns to Zion as Lord and Conqueror. The nation of Israel, with her spiritual blindness removed, will then recognize Him, acknowledge Him, and call on Him for salvation. (Zechariah 12:1–10; 14:1–4.) At that time, according to Romans 11:26, all living Jews will have the opportunity for salvation. They will each individually have to acknowledge and believe in Him, but the good news is that as a nation they will (verse 26)!

F. Israel in Perspective (Romans 11:28–32)

28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. 32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

Paul tells his listeners that at the present time it is true that many Jews oppose the gospel and are actually enemies of Christ, and yet in the heart and plans of God, they are still chosen and beloved because of the promises He made to their fathers. God does not take back the gifts or callings He has already issued. God called and equipped them to be convincing teachers and promoters of His truth. When they failed to use their gifts for His purposes, they began to employ their talents to promote other endeavors. Their successes should not make them proud or make the Gentiles jealous. No, they are simply proof of the hand of God in their lives. He empowered them with effective abilities to carry out His work for the blessing of the whole world, and He intends to see those abilities rightly directed once more.

G. God Can Be Trusted (Romans 11:33–36)

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

The ending to this three-chapter defense of God’s treatment of Israel is an outburst of praise for the God who has everything figured out. We cannot even begin to understand His wisdom, goodness, truth, and mercy. He is in charge of everything and He can be trusted to do right, for us as well as for Israel! His righteousness makes Him absolutely reliable. Our only response is to praise, thank, and give Him glory!

The Christian’s Life and Service

Romans 12:1–16:27

I. The Christian’s Life as a Living Sacrifice (Romans 12:1–2)

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

A. What We Should Present to the Lord

The Christian is no longer his or her own, but is a slave of Jesus Christ. The price has been paid for his or her redemption through the death of Christ on the cross, so there must be a consecration of the entire person to God. Before we came to Christ, we were under the dominion of sin and were dead because of sin; having been made alive by the Spirit, receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior, we become a living sacrifice. Both body and mind given to obedience to the Word of God results in holy living. Those who represent Christ must be moved into action and endurance. Paul uses the phrase, “I appeal to you therefore ... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.” As believers, we ought to be at God’s disposal to carry the mission of the One who purchased us.

B. Living Sacrifice as Compared to the Dead Sacrifice

In the Old Testament, the animals were brought to the brazen altar to be slain as a sacrifice for the sin of the people. It was a dead sacrifice. “Living” suggests a contrast between the Mosaic sacrifices and what Paul is talking about here. We are to be a living sacrifice by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul says in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” The sacrifices in the Jewish Temple were offered because of sins, for consecration, and fellowship with God, and were not to be presented with the wrong motives but were to be pleasing and acceptable to Him. Paul not only tells us that the believer is to be a living sacrifice, but also points out that this sacrifice is reasonable because of what God has done for us.

Paul also instructs us that the believer is not to be conformed or influenced by those who do not know Christ. If the mind is renewed by an inward transformation, the outward actions will be holy. This is then the one true defense against conformity to the world. Although living in this world, we must act in agreement with the renewed life in Christ. The Christian is always being tried and tested by the people and the things of the world. We must be able to prove by our conduct that we are serving God with our hearts, minds, and bodies and are concerned with pleasing Him. Make the will of God the supreme authority in our life. The Spirit gives us the strength day by day to live the Christ-centered life. Being consistent with both our walk and our talk will testify to the world of the power of Christ working in us; and will also be the means of reaching those who do not know Christ. Inconsistencies in Christians' lives are the greatest stumbling blocks to people who do not know Christ. Many people do not even set foot in our churches because we believers don't look and act any different than the lost and fallen world.

II. Gifts of Grace for Christian Service (Romans 12:3–8)

3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

We are now confronted with the proper conduct of Christians toward the community. We are given these gifts by God who is the Master-builder. Paul cautions those in possession of these gifts to recognize the fact that they are given to us, and that we must use them as gifts and not as something that we earned. Humility is essential to God's gifts of grace. Whatever good is in us is the gift of God in undeserved favor. Being one body in Christ and consisting of many members with different functions to perform; how beautiful it is to function in humility and faith, fulfilling the purpose of God in exercising the gifts of grace in the community of believers.

The ministry of the Word is mentioned in regard to the first gifts. Prophesying, teaching and exhorting have to do with the Word of God and must always be done in the spirit of the truth of God's revealed Word. In the sixteenth chapter of Romans, Paul warns against those who teach contrary to the doctrine they had learned. The gift of giving, Paul says, is to be done with simplicity or liberality. The position of ruling is to be diligent and we are to show mercy in joyfulness.

III. Christian Responsibilities to Those within the Church (Romans 12:9–16)

A. Manifesting Brotherly Love (Romans 12:9–10)

9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

This is an exhortation to let our love be real and active. We talk much about Christian love, yet apart from its being operative in our daily living; our talk about it is worthless. We know God loves us, but God hates all sin. Some of the tests of a person's standing before God have to do with faithfulness in discipleship. Paul says to abhor evil, hold fast to, and pursue that which is good. Abstain from one and do the other. By brotherly love, we should be able to more fully express our relationship in the body of Christ. We love all people because of the love of Christ, but should have a special love for our family in Christ.

B. Personal Responsibilities as a Christian (Romans 12:11–12)

11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Here are six personal responsibilities. Diligence means zeal and purpose in action. Fervent means to do in earnest that which God has given us to do. Serving the Lord is being mindful of the mission that Christ has given us, that of reaching the lost for Christ. Hope is an anchor to the soul, and is both sure and unfaltering. This hope that we have brings us to patience and to have patience requires that we continue in prayer.

C. Responsibilities that Unify and Increase the Body of Christ (Romans 12:13–16)

13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Looking after the needs of the saints includes showing hospitality or the entertaining of others; concerned with being a blessing rather than a barrier to those who are against us; rejoicing with the joyful and weeping with the sorrowful. It is always easier to empathize with another's sorrow than with their joy, because in sorrow he or she has need of you and in the other he she does not. Each member of the body of Christ should enter into the feelings and desires of the other, to be of one mind toward another, not acting on that which comes from selfish purposes and for our own interests. In these things we must be guided by the presence and wisdom of the Spirit of God. Apart from this, all human wisdom is foolishness.

IV. The Christian's Responsibility to Those Outside the Church (Romans 12:17–21)

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves,

but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20 To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Hostility or revenge is one of the world’s prevailing attitudes. This should not be part of a Christian’s life, since the believer has been granted a new nature in Christ. To live at peace with all people (if it be possible) is the Lord’s instruction. There may be circumstances in which one cannot be at peace with all people. We must be true to Christ’s Spirit and His message no matter what effect it may have on the enemies of the cross. Then Paul says we are not to avenge ourselves. By avenging ourselves we give place to the devil. The thought that God will punish all those who injure us should keep us from revenge. We should treat our enemies with kindness. This will do more to combat their evil, and has the potential of winning them to Christ.

V. The Political and Social Responsibilities of a Christian (Romans 13:1–14)

A. Obedience to Authorities (Romans 13:1–7)

13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

The Christian’s real citizenship is in heaven. We are aliens and strangers in this world. What is our responsibility to earthly government? The Jews at Rome were notorious for their disturbances (Acts 18:2), and the Christians, regarded as a Jewish sect, were likely to be suspected of revolutionary tendencies. This did happen a few years later in Nero’s persecutions.

Paul teaches that the Christian must be in subjection to the existing powers because they are ordained of God for the good of the people. Penalties for disobedience to law and the collections of taxes were the two main functions of the government. However, Peter in Acts 5:29 said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” The midwives of Egypt and Moses’ parents disobeyed Pharaoh (Exodus 1:17 and 2:3).

However, it is true that Christians should be the best citizens of our countries. Jesus said as He took the coin with the government seal on it, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:16–21). If Christians had always obeyed the instructions as far as God’s Word is concerned on this issue, it would have been much better for them. But how often the words are forgotten, and an attempt is made to control political issues.

B. Exhortation to Love (Romans 13:8–10)

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

We are instructed to free ourselves from all debts by paying them, and yet there is a debt from which we can never release ourselves, and that is the debt of love. The more we pay, the more we owe. Paul previously proved that we owe submission to the civil rulers, and insisted that we are to be subject to them by paying to all what we owe. “For he who loves another has fulfilled the law.” Paying our debt and paying on time shows good stewardship on the part of a Christian.

The law is but a command to manifest love in all relationships in all circumstances. Paul deals with the commandment “You shall not” in a negative way and instructs us as to what the law of love does not do. The believer will not wrong his or her neighbor by adultery, theft, murder, or covetousness.

C. Exhortation to Holiness Based on Putting on Christ (Romans 13:11–14)

11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Paul emphasizes the fact that the coming of Christ should motivate us to holy living. We as Christians are conscious of something that is to happen. God’s predictions have been made through His Word. Knowing that the last days are here, those who are asleep should awaken to the realization that the second coming of Christ is fast approaching. Due to the uncertainty of the hour, our hope and our watchfulness should be aroused. The night is far advanced, and if the night is almost gone then we should lay aside the night clothes and prepare ourselves for the morning and beginning of a new day, that of the coming of the Lord. We need to cast off the used up garments. Some of our past acts were in harmony with the darkness in which we walked, and the exhortation is to put on the armor of light,

to behave decently and abstain from the things of the flesh, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to walk in the paths of God's people and in the path of separation.

VI. Christian Forbearance (Romans 14:1–15:7)

A. Freedom and Tolerance in Matters of Opinion (Romans 14:1–12)

14 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. 4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we 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.

10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? 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 confess to God." 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

The person who is weak in faith is the one who has not had sufficient knowledge of Jesus to be strong and firm, breaking down the barriers set up by traditional training and circumstances. The person stronger in faith is to receive the weaker one into Christian fellowship, and not to reject him or her because of lack of knowledge of the gospel. We are to have compassion for and fellowship with the weaker believer. Each individual is responsible to the Lord, and we are not qualified to judge any man. There is a day coming when we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and He will be our judge. We should so live with a sense of personal responsibility rather than judging others.

B. Christian Should Be an Example of Right Living not Giving Offense (Romans 14:13–23)

13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as

evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. 21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. 22 The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Eating and drinking is not the purpose of the Christian church. The Christian should be in such possession of the Spirit as to be able to meet any temptation. Christianity is doing that which God approves, influenced and controlled by the Spirit, with concerns centered on Christ and His work. Paul concludes with the statement that what is not of faith is sin. Our conduct very definitely is a determining factor of all Paul has been talking about, with love being the controlling quality of the believer. Love of God and love for others sums up the matter of Christian conduct.

C. Example of Christ (Romans 15:1–7)

15 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For 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 former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Christ did not please Himself, but pleased God, willing to bear the reproaches of mankind in meekness and patience. We are to be like-minded one to another. We are to walk in love and manifest that love by our concern for those who are weak, receiving one another as Christ received us to the glory of God.

D. The Ministry of Christ (Romans 15:8–13)

8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” 10 And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” 11 And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” 12 And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.”

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Paul returns at this point to the question concerning the Jew and the Gentile. Christ was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises to the fathers. He appeared among His people, but the Gentiles were also to receive mercy through Him. They too would rejoice in salvation and trust in Christ. Our most blessed inheritance is the God of hope filling us with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Spirit.

E. The Ministry of Paul (Romans 15:14–33)

14 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. 15 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. 18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, 19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; 20 and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, 21 but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”

22 This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. 23 But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, 24 I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. 25 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. 27 For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. 28 When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. 29 I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, 31 that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. 33 May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Paul followed Christ's pattern and went first to the Jews in every city he entered, but when rejected by them, he quickly turned to the Gentiles. He recognizes that many of his readers would already have much of the knowledge he was attempting to give them and were already able to teach others (v 14). However, he took the opportunity of this letter to explain boldly some major points of God's truth so that the Gentiles who read the letter might be saved, accepted by God, and "sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (verse 16). Paul considered himself primarily to be a minister to the Gentiles. He praised God for the things God had done through him to win many to Christ. Miraculous signs and wonders had occurred as the Spirit confirmed the truth of Paul's teaching. Paul aimed to preach the gospel where it had never been preached so that "those who have not heard shall understand" (v 21).

Paul had many friends in Rome and had wanted to visit there for a long time; however, because of his strong call to minister to the Gentiles where the gospel had not been heard, he had had to delay his trip. He states that his present work is at an end and that he would like to visit Rome on his way to evangelize Spain. He humbly expresses his desire to receive their help and enjoy their company. Without Christ, the very best we have to offer is no better than filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Many of the Christians in Jerusalem, the majority of whom were Jews, were enduring terrible persecution for their faith at the time Paul was writing this epistle. They lacked money to pay for their most basic needs. Paul had initiated a program to help with this crisis by appealing to the Gentile churches which he had planted to send money as their gift to the needy saints in Jerusalem. He hoped to help provide for the physical needs of the suffering saints; to soften the hearts of some of the Jewish Christians who had been hesitant to take the gospel to the Gentiles; and to teach his churches that it is the responsibility of those to whom the gospel is preached to meet the physical needs of their preachers (2 Corinthians 8, 9). The church at Jerusalem had sent out missionaries to the Gentiles, and so the Gentiles who had been blessed needed to return the blessing in the form of practical help for the Jerusalem saints' needs.

Even though Paul was so constantly serving others with his teaching and acts of compassion, he was aware of his own need for help. He begged his Roman friends to be passionate in their prayers to God for him so that he might actually get to Jerusalem, deliver the offering to the saints, and have it accepted in the spirit in which it was being offered.

Did Paul ever get to go to Rome as a free man and then on to Spain? Such a trip is not documented in Scripture, but there is some traditional history that supports the view that shortly after this letter he did. He definitely did go to Rome as a prisoner, as recorded in Acts. Paul continued to preach with an effective passion. Paul knew that God could be trusted and understood the powerful effectiveness of praying for God's help as he planned for and faced the future. We, too, only have this present moment, but we can pray like Paul for grace to meet our future, comforted by the truth that God is in control!

In every present moment we need the God of peace with us. All of us need Him; not just a few, but all of us, weak or strong. Only with His peace can we live life fully and meaningfully until we die or He comes to take us home.

VII. Greeting the Saints in Romans (Romans 16:1–16)

16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, 2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. 5 Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. 6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. 10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. 11 Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. 12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. 15 Greet Philologus, 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.

Phoebe (16:1, 2): Many believe that this Christian woman was listed first because she was the one who took this epistle to the church in Rome. She is described as a servant of the church of Cenchrea, a seaport of Corinth. It appears that Phoebe was a deaconess of the early church. Paul acknowledges her service by stating, “she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.”

Priscilla and Aquila (16:3–5a; Acts 18:1, 2, 18, 19, 26; 1 Corinthians 16:19; and 2 Timothy 4:19): This couple left Italy when the Emperor Claudius banned all Jews from his empire in AD 49. They were tentmakers who worked and traveled with Paul. He remarks gratefully that they “who risked their necks for my life”. They evidently had returned to Rome after Claudius died in AD 54 when the ban was lifted, and so to them Paul sends his fondest greetings.

Epaphroditus (16:5b): This man is one of four people whom Paul calls “beloved.” He was the first convert Paul had in Achaia.

Mary (16:6): She was a hard worker on Paul’s behalf.

Andronicus and Junia (16:7): These were two “countrymen” of Paul’s. That could mean they were close relatives or perhaps just Jewish members of the same tribe of Paul, the tribe of Benjamin. Junia could be a woman’s name or a shortened version of a man’s. Andronicus and Junia had shared imprisonment with Paul and were approved and admired by the apostles. Paul noted that they had been Christians longer than he.

Amplias (16:8): This was a common name for a slave, but Paul calls him “beloved.”

Urbanus (16:9a): This was a common Roman name; he was called a “fellow-worker” with Paul.

Stachys (16:9b): This name was found listed in the royal household of Rome at that time. Paul only tells us that he, too, was “beloved.”

Apelles (16:10a): A person fulfilling 2 Timothy 2:15, Apelles was “approved in Christ.”

Aristobulus and his household (16:10b): A man named Aristobulus is listed as a grandson of King Herod. We do not know if this is the same one, however. Faith in Jesus Christ is often tested most fiercely in relationships with those closest to us. However, when Christ’s love is consistently seen at home, it is most difficult to resist.

Herodion (16:11a): Here is another kinsman of Paul’s who shared his faith.

Narcissus and his household (16:11b): This man had the joy of having some in his home to share his faith.

Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (16:12): These are all names of women. Their names translate “delicate” and “dainty.” Although Persis is called “beloved,” all three are credited with laboring for the Lord.

Rufus and his mother (16:13): Rufus was a common name meaning “red,” but this name is mentioned in Mark 15:21 as being the name of one of the sons of Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled to carry Christ’s cross. Perhaps it was the same family. It is so encouraging that this man’s mother loved Paul so much that he felt adopted by her! This unnamed woman should remind us of the lasting effects of loving actions.

Asyncretus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, his sister, and **Olympas** (16:14, 15): These people were all saints whom Paul loved. We as Christians should make a continual effort to know by name the people with whom we interact.

VIII. Paul’s Warning Against Division Caused by False Teachers (Romans 16:17–20)

17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. 19 For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Paul has just taken sixteen verses to express his affection and appreciation to the believers in Rome, and now he quickly includes some words of warning. "I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them." Paul now makes them aware that what they know will be tested. He does not want them to be caught by surprise. He wants them to be ready when people come with "smooth talk and flattery," teaching things contrary to Scriptural truth. The advice is very good for us today. We are to be "wise as to what is good" because we study and obey the Scriptures. We should also be "innocent as to what is evil".

Paul ends his words of warning with a confident statement about the final victory over evil that is ours through Christ. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." To maintain His righteousness, because He is the God of peace, He must make peace. To do so, God must finally and permanently crush our enemy. Paul assures us that when that time comes, it will happen very quickly. As a merely created being, Satan is no match for our Creator God!

IX. Acknowledging His Helpers (Romans 16:21–24)

21 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

22 I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.

23 Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

Paul now introduces eight more brothers who join him in sending greetings to Rome. Timothy was a well-known fellow worker with Paul. Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater were kinsmen with Paul who were with him in Corinth at the time he was writing this epistle. Tertius was the man who actually wrote the letter as Paul dictated it to him. Gaius was Paul's host and allowed a church to meet in his home. He was probably the same man Paul mentioned as having been one of the few he had personally baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14). A city official named Erastus, possibly the same one who accompanied Timothy to Macedonia in Acts 19:22, is mentioned, showing that the gospel had made an impact even on local leaders. Quartus was the final name given with the simple description that he, too, was "a brother." Gaius gave him a place to live; Tertius acted as his secretary; and the others served as missionaries, personal helpers, or supporters of the gospel work.

X. Final Benediction (Romans 16:25–27)

25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages 26 but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— 27 to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

This is another of Paul's wonderful benedictions to the church. As usual the benediction gives attention and credit to God alone while encouraging the saints in the knowledge of what God has provided for them through Jesus Christ. "The only wise God" deserves our glory.

Soli Deo Gloria!