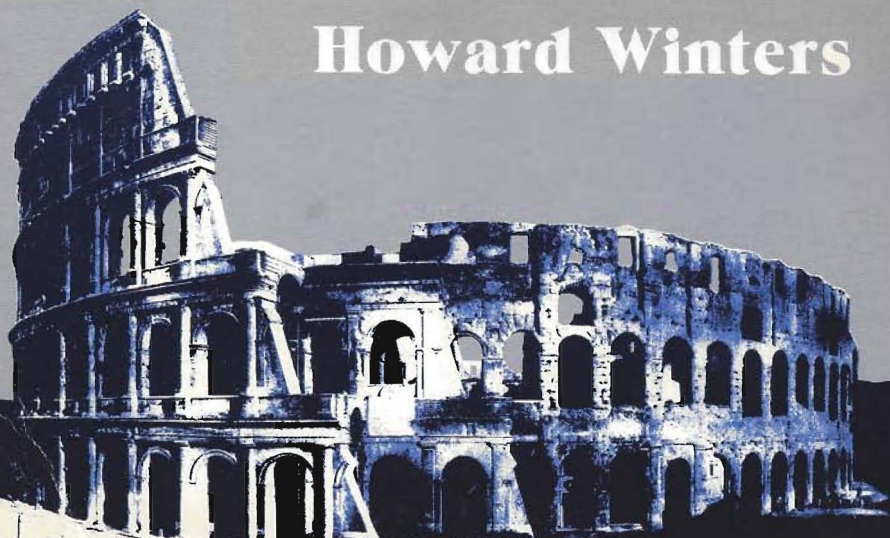


**COMMENTARY ON**  
**Romans**

**Practical and Explanatory**

**Howard Winters**





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# COMMENTARY ON Romans

**Practical and Explanatory**

**Howard Winters**

*A critic on the sacred text should be  
Candid and learn'd, dispassionate and free;  
Free from the wayward bias bigots feel,  
From fancy's influence and intemperate zeal;  
For of all arts sagacious dupes invent,  
To cheat themselves and gain the world's assent,  
The worst is — Scripture warped from its intent."*

— Cowper

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN  
P.O. Box 5423, Station B  
Greenville, S.C. 29606

**DEDICATED  
TO**

Dennis Conner,  
a brilliant young preacher of the gospel  
whose suggestion, "You need to write  
a commentary on Romans,"  
set my will aflame.

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## PREFACE

Originally I had not planned to write a preface to this work (for some reason I have an aversion to prefaces in commentaries), but after months of indecision I have decided that three questions need to be answered:

1. What is the nature of these comments?

The first thing that one will observe in the reading of these notes is that they are neither critical nor scholarly. They were not meant to be. My purpose was to state as simply and as concisely as possible what I believe each text means — that is, to give the meaning of what the author had in mind as he wrote the words under the direction of the Holy Spirit. In most cases I have not given the alternative possibilities; I have simply stated my own conclusions. And to make the whole work as brief as possible, I have, rather than quoting the Scriptures that substantiate my conclusions, simply given the reference. Those who wish to may look up the references and read them; those who do not will not be detained by lengthy quotations. Another thing, little or no reference is made to the original language. Having neither the capability nor the desire to deal critically with questions of Greek construction and grammar, I set out to write notes on the English text. This I have done to the best of my ability without getting involved in the critical aspects of construction and grammar, either in Greek or English. One final thing, there are very few quotations given from other commentators and writers. This by no means should be construed to mean that I did not use them, or do not appreciate the marvelous work they have done, or that they have said nothing worth quoting. To refrain from quoting has, perhaps, been the most difficult part of my task. By design I set out to state my conclusions, not theirs. So in no sense of the word are these notes meant to be critical. They are designed to be practical and explanatory.

2. How are the quotations from the different translations to be taken?

While the KJV is the basic text, I have made extensive use of other translations and paraphrases. As I prepared the notes, I kept constantly before me approximately 30 different versions, making use of the vocabulary of each when I thought it would be helpful in understanding the divine message. Often at the end of a statement from the KJV, where my comments ordinarily appear, I cite the same word, phrase, clause, or sentence from another version. This is done,



not because I believe it is a better translation of that section (that would enter the critical sphere and thus go beyond my purpose), but because I was convinced that it would give insight to the meaning. The quotations from the different versions should thus be considered explanatory, not more correct translations. Undoubtedly, in some cases they may prove to be more correct; in others, perhaps not so; but it was my judgment in every case that they gave some valuable insight to the meaning of the passage under consideration (in fact, I am convinced that a useful commentary could be built from the translations alone).

3. Why write a commentary of such simple nature? Perhaps the reason can best be told by a little personal history.

I was reared under the influence of denominationalism in the poverty-stricken mountains of East Tennessee. But worse than the poverty was the isolation. Until a few weeks before I obeyed the gospel, I had never heard of the churches of Christ as I now know them. But I loved the Lord, believed the Bible to be the inspired word of God, the only source of religious truth, and I desired with my whole heart to do that which was right in the sight of God. As I studied the Bible (the only religious book I possessed) I preached and put into practice everything I learned from it. This created some problems in the church for which I preached, problems which eventually led to division. About the time the division took place, my oldest brother heard some preachers on the radio in a distant city. He identified them with our needs and desires — the desire to go back to the Bible and follow it in every act of faith and practice. He contacted them and asked them to come and help us.

In a few weeks one of the radio preachers, Oswald D. Wilson, who had a short time previous to this renounced the digression of the “Christian church,” came to our community and scheduled a five-night’s meeting with the small rural church for which I was preaching. On the second night of the meeting, every member of the church which was present, except one (my mother, and she maintained until the day of her death that she had been Scripturally baptized in her youth), including me, went forward to make the good confession and to be baptized (the following day) for the remission of our sins, as Peter had instructed penitent believers to do on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-38). The next day (there was no prepared place to baptize that night) when we assembled to obey our Lord, seven more members, not present the night before, came to make the confession and thus the whole congregation were baptized together.

After the meeting was over, and because of our remote location, we were largely isolated from other members of the church, except for an occasional visit by someone or an annual event when some distant preacher came for a week’s meeting. It was a considerable time before I had the benefit of a single paper or book published by our brethren. I had no helps in my study, teaching, and preaching, and no one to guide me in the study of the divine word. How my

heart longed for some help in studying the Scriptures, in teaching classes, and in preparing sermons can never be told. Then one day, in the providence of God, a preacher who had come for a Saturday night's preaching engagement told me about a set of books that I ought to have. He said that he had a dealership with some bookstore and that he would get them for me at his exact cost. I ordered them. The next time he came he reached to me one of the most precious possessions of a lifetime, *The People's New Testament With Notes*, by B.W. Johnson. When I got home and began to explore them, a whole new world suddenly opened to me. Here was a storehouse of Bible knowledge, such as I had never dreamed existed, condensed and ready for my use. I learned therefore that I could drink freely from the labors of another's study. There was help available! And I could learn from books. What a giant step that was for an illiterate mountain preacher. (Incidentally, as I write this, I am in my library, surrounded by hundreds of books, reaching from floor to ceiling, all of them dearly loved — each has a marvelous story all its own as to how it entered my affections, but no human book has ever opened up so many fresh new insights, or approaches, or instilled in me so many new ambitions, hopes, and dreams as did my first examination of Johnson's notes. I still treasure that set as a part of my permanent library, and thank God for the man who introduced me to them and indirectly to the world of Biblical literature.)

As I continued to use Johnson's notes, and as I added other great books to my collection, I had instilled in me a burning desire to help others by means of the printed page just as others had helped me. I am not presumptuous enough to think that I could produce anything as valuable as Johnson's notes, but it is my prayer that I can make some kind of a contribution to the study of the holy Scriptures — that I might be able to make the task of understanding the divine message a little easier . . . and vastly more exciting. It is because of that burning desire, flaming now more strongly than ever, that I set my hands to prepare these notes.

If they can be useful, if they can help in the study of the Bible and thus enrich the lives of those who use them, I will be eternally grateful; if they cannot be useful, they will go the way of all the earth — they will die a deserved death. May the will of God, whose I am and whom I serve, be done.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Clayton Winters

## THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The prophet Daniel had predicted the rise and fall of four great world empires (Dn. 2:44): the Babylonian, represented by the golden head of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw, and as a lion with eagle's wings (Dn. 2:31-32, 37-38; 7:4); the Medo-Persian, represented by the breast and arms of silver, a bear with three ribs in its mouth, and a ram with two horns (Dn. 2:32, 39; 7:5; 8:3-4); the Grecian, depicted by the belly and thighs of brass, a leopard with four wings, and a he-goat (Dn. 2:34, 39; 7:6; 8:5); and the Roman, fitly symbolized by the legs and feet mingled with iron and clay, and as a strong and terrible beast with iron teeth (Dn. 2:32, 40; 7:7).

By around 200 B.C. history had recorded the rise and fall of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires; and the Grecian kingdom, founded by Alexander the Great, had been divided among his generals, and had fallen into a state of disarray. In this weakened condition the Greek states had become a ready prey for a formidable war machine, rolling speedily out of Rome, and crushing everything in its path. Antiochus the Great marched in desperation against these Roman legions with an immense force, but was quickly defeated and laid under tribute (1 Macc. 8:5-16). The kingdom of iron and clay was becoming a reality, soon to exercise absolute control over 120,000,000 people: half of them slaves, half free. By B.C. 63 the Roman General Pompey had stood on the Mount of Olives, looked down over the city of Jerusalem, and claimed the land of the Bible for his emperor.

But shortly thereafter, the mighty Roman armies would be called upon to confront an entirely different kind of force — a Stone hewn from the mountain-side without human intervention; and that in the kind of battle never before witnessed by the human families of the earth: a battle for the souls of men. For while Augustus Ceasar (27 B.C.-14 A.D.) sat in regal splendor as the emperor of the greatest kingdom the earth had ever known, a virgin gave birth to a child in faraway Bethlehem of Judea, and could afford Him nothing better than a manger for His bed (Lk. 2:7). Yet, in just over thirty-three years that offspring of David would publish principles of a kingdom not of this world (Jn. 18:36); die on a cross at the hands of both the Jews and the Romans (Mt. 27:19-38); resur-

rect despite a sealed and guarded tomb (Mt. 27:62-28:6); and establish a kingdom after His resurrection that would break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and would stand forever (Dn. 2:44; Heb. 12:28). Acting as leaven, it would permeate every aspect of society, even the great Roman Empire, changing the hearts of men with a power hitherto unknown in any empire.

## ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH AT ROME

At just what point in time this leaven was inconspicuously placed in the heart of the "eternal city" cannot be definitely known; but we would certainly assign to it a date not far removed from the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. Proof of this may be gleaned from the following facts: (1) When Paul visited Corinth in the year 58 A.D., the church had already been established (Rom. 1:1-7). (2) The church had been established for a time sufficient for their faith and obedience to be widely known (Rom. 1:8; 16:19). (3) Paul had often planned to visit the faithful brethren in Rome; but because of other pressing matters, he had not had opportunity to do so (Rom. 1:10-13). (4) This desire to visit them had extended over a period of "many years" before 58 A.D. (Rom. 15:23). (5) In 52 A.D. Paul came to Corinth and found certain Jews, Aquila and Priscilla, who had been driven from Rome by Claudius Caesar (41-54 A.D.). Since this decree was issued by Claudius due to certain tumults instigated by one named Chrestus (whom many scholars believe to be simply a misspelling of the Greek **Christos**), it stands as presumptive evidence that a very active and militant church had existed in Rome previous to this date. (6) Among the "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven," who heard the gospel on Pentecost, were "strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes" (Acts 2:10). Again the presumption is strong that these, having heard that the Messiah had come, would return to their homes and synagogues with the saving message of the gospel. In this way, and if not, certainly in some similar one, the church of Christ was early implanted in the heart of the Roman Empire.

## AUTHOR OF THE ROMAN EPISTLE

About the same time the babe was laid in a manger in Bethlehem, another child was born to unnamed parents in Tarsus. He was named Saul. His parents remain nameless; however, we do know that his father had somehow obtained Roman citizenship, enabling Saul to be free born (Acts 22:28). We further know that by religion he was identified as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6; 2 Tm. 1:3), and that he was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5). Of the rest of his family we know only that he had a sister, a nephew, and other kinsmen (Acts 23:15-16; Rom. 16:7). On the eighth day from his birth Saul was circumcised, and his early childhood years were spent in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia (Acts 21:39; 22:3). His youthful years were spent at Jerusalem, being educated in the Pharisaic school of Hillel, at the feet of a famous Jewish instructor, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3;

5:34-40). There is little room for doubt that Saul became a member of the prestigious Sanhedrin Court (Acts 26:9-11).

The first revealed instance of his contact with Christianity is at the martyrdom of Stephen; witnesses of this tragic event laid their clothing at his feet as he stood in consent of that cruel act (Acts 7:58; 22:20). Subsequent divine history reveals him as an angry and vicious opponent of Christianity, scourging Christians in synagogues (Acts 26:10-11); shutting them in prison (Acts 26:10; 22:4; 8:3); compelling them to blaspheme (Acts 26:11); persecuting and wasting them (Gal. 1:13); even putting them to death (Acts 22:4; 26:9; 9:1). His havoc against the church carried him even to strange cities with a determination to clear the world of this hated new religion (Acts 26:11).

It was on such a mission that Saul came face-to-face with Jesus on the Damascus road. This confrontation led to his conversion, and to his becoming as devoted in the propagation of the cause of Christ as he had been in its destruction. He became the great Apostle Paul — the hated, the scourged, the persecuted — preaching the faith which he once destroyed (Gal. 1:23).

After his conversion, Paul preached the gospel in the synagogue at Damascus (Acts 9:20). He then spent three years in Arabia, but returned to Damascus to continue spreading the precious message of salvation. But due to opposition, he was forced to escape the city in a basket let down over the city wall (Gal. 1:17; Acts 9:23-25; 2 Cor. 11:32-33). Leaving there, he came to Jerusalem and spent some time with Peter, James, and Barnabas; but was warned in a vision to get out of Jerusalem (Acts 9:24, 30; Gal. 1:17-19, 21). He then returned to spread the word in his native Tarsus (Acts 9:30; Gal. 1:21), and it was here that Barnabas found him and took him to Antioch for a full year (Acts 11:22-26).

In 44 A.D., one of the first sure dates in the life of Paul, he and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem with relief for the needy saints (Acts 11:17-30; 12:25). By 48 A.D. Paul and Barnabas had left a fruitful work at Antioch to begin his ever-expanding mission among the Gentiles (Acts 13:2-3). His face was to become a familiar sight, and his name a household word as he carried the gospel to Cyprus, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Antioch of Pisidia, Galatia, Ephesus, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Rome, and perhaps even as far away as Spain.

Paul had two main passions in life: to spread the gospel in virgin territory, and to build and strengthen the churches already planted. In pursuit of this latter purpose, many churches were recipients of letters from the dedicated and inspired apostle: Galatia (Gal. 1:1-2); Thessalonica (1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1); Corinth (1 Cor. 1:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:1); Rome (Rom. 1:1, 7). Even while in prison, the word of God was not bound nor his pen stilled, for from these damp dungeons came the epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.

That Paul was the author of the Roman epistle we have already assumed, because the evidence of his authorship is simply incontestable. It bears his

signature: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God. . . . To all that be in Rome . . ." (Rom. 1:1, 7). It is punctuated with personal references identifying himself as the author (see Rom. 1:13; 7:8-25; 11:1-2; 15:26-28). It has numerous references to his friends and associates (see Rom. 16, especially vv. 1-4, 11 and 21). In fact, the internal evidence is so strong that few have ever dared question Paul as its author; and certainly none who accept it as an inspired work would even think to do so.

## **TIME AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION**

Paul left Corinth in 54 A.D. (Acts 18:18). He then came to Jerusalem and spent some time (Acts 18:19-23). From there he journeyed through Phrygia and Galatia strengthening the churches (Acts 18:23). He next spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41; 20:31); then passing through Macedonia, he came to Corinth for three months (Acts 20:1-3). This would bring us to A.D. 58 as the date for the composition of the Roman epistle.

That this is the time and place of composition is further seen from the following facts: On his third missionary journey Paul had passed through Macedonia on his way to Corinth to collect for the needy saints at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 9:1-5). But as he was writing the Romans he already had the contribution, and was ready to deliver it to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-29). Also he mentions the fact that Gaius, who was a resident of Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14) was his host (Rom. 16:23). This all combines to leave no room for questioning the date of Romans as 58 A.D., and the place of composition as Corinth.

## **CONTENT OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS**

Paul states very clearly the theme of the book of Romans: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). This power, so evident in the apostle's own life, was the hope — the only hope — of the world.

The need of a saving gospel for the whole world was apparent — all stood under the condemnation of sin. The Gentile, while living under a law of conscience, had committed the most reprehensible and abominable acts of sin (Rom. 2:14; 1:20-32). But the Jew, living under a revealed system of religion, did very little better: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same thing" (Rom. 2:1, 17-29). Paul's conclusion, then, is but logical and reasonable: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). So with all under the condemnation of sin, man stood in need of a scheme of redemption more powerful than sin itself. That power was

in the gospel.

But with God's immutable law demanding death for sin (Ez. 18:20; Rom. 6:23), how could God be just and still justify the ungodly? The answer to that, Paul points out, makes the good news of the gospel: Christ died for us. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-26). His death became a substitute for mine, and by my imitation of that death (Rom. 6:3-4) I became a new creation, freed from the clutches of sin (Rom. 6:6-7, 17-18). But Paul is careful to point out that while Jesus' death is substitutive, it is not unconditional; it compensates for the weaknesses of man, but it does not give license to sin (see Rom. 6:1-8; 7).

Having established the sinfulness of all humanity, and a grace that is extended equally to all, Paul passes to the place occupied by the nation of Israel in the introduction of the scheme of redemption to the world. To him were committed the oracles of God (Rom. 3:1-2). To him pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4). But this calling was introductory, not redemptive. Once the gospel system was in force, there would be neither Jew nor Gentile (Rom. 10:12); both would stand by faith or fall in unbelief (Rom. 11:20-23). The gospel was destined to be God's *power* unto salvation; Jew and Gentile would be saved by that plan; neither Jew nor Gentile could be saved by any other means (Rom. 10:1-5).

Paul concludes the Roman epistle with the Christian's obligation under the gospel system, whether religious, social, moral, or political. And as one concludes the epistle, he must stand in awe at this profound exposition of God's marvelous scheme of redemption.

# ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

ASV — **American Standard Version**

Barnes, Albert — **Notes on the New Testament**

BV — **The Berkeley Version**

Conybeare, W.J., and Howson, J.S. — **The Life and Epistles of St. Paul**

Goodspeed, Edgar J. — **The Complete Bible, An American Translation**

Hendriksen, William — **New Testament Commentaries**

Hodge, Charles — **Commentary on Romans**

HS — Holy Spirit

Lard, Moses E. — **A Commentary on Romans**

Lightfoot, J.B. — **Notes on the Epistles of Paul**

**Living Bible, The** — Paraphrased by Kenneth Taylor

**Living Oracles, The** — The sacred writing of the apostles and evangelists of Jesus Christ (a translation of the New Testament by George Campbell, James MacKnight, and Philip Doddridge).

MacKnight, James — **Notes on the Apostolic Epistles**

NT — New Testament

NASV — **New American Standard Bible**, "From The New American Standard Bible" ©, Lockman Foundation, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975.

NEB — **New English Bible**

NIV — Taken from the Holy Bible, **New International Version**, 1973, 1978 by the International Bible Society, used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

OT — Old Testament

Robertson, A.T. (WP) — **Word Pictures in the New Testament**

RSV — **Revised Standard Version**

TAB — **The Amplified Bible**

v. — verse

vv. — verses

v. 16 or vv. 16-18 — This chapter, verse 16 or verses 16-18 (2:16 means Romans 2:16).

Vincent, M.R. (WS) — **Word Studies in the New Testament**

Vine, W.E. — **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**

Williams, Charles B. — **The New Testament, a Translation in the Language of the People**



## ROMANS 1

# INTRODUCTION

1:1-7 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

---

1:1 **Paul**, — Formerly Saul of Tarsus, now Paul the Christian, author of this book. He probably made a greater impact on the world than any man who ever lived, except Christ. Those who wish to know him better should consider his birthplace, citizenship, and training (Acts 21:39; 22:3, 28); his introduction to NT readers (Acts 7:58-8:3); his persecution of the church (Acts 9:1-2; 1 Tm. 1:13); his conversion (Acts 9, 22, 26); his commission (Acts 22:14-15); his devotion (Phil. 3:3-16); his concern (9:1-3; 10:1-3); his suffering for Christ (2 Cor. 11:22-33); his preaching (1 Cor. 2:1-8; 9:16); his writings — 13 or 14 NT books; his hope and reward (2 Tm. 4:6-8). Jeremiah's search through the streets of Jerusalem to see if a man could be found would have ended with him (Jer. 5:1): for here is a man of the rarest kind (Ez. 22:30). **a servant of Jesus Christ**, — A purchased servant or slave. Christ had bought him, and all Christians, with the sacrifice of His own precious blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). He belonged to Christ by choice. **called to be** — The words "to be" are supplied by the translators. Paul was a called apostle — called not by man but by God (Gal. 1:1, 11-12). **an apostle**, — The call set him apart as an apostle; one sent on a special mission by the Lord. **separated** — Set apart by the call. **unto the gospel of God**, — To preach the gospel (Acts 22:14-15), especially to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:16; 2:7).

1:2 (**Which he had promised** — The gospel, the consummation of God's promises through the ages (Gn. 3:15; Jer. 31:31; Jl. 2:28; Is. 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9-10). **afore** — Beforehand, before it came to pass. **by his prophets** — All inspired men who spoke or wrote the OT (2 Pt. 2:19-21). **in the holy scriptures**.) — God's inspired word. From the time of the fall (Gn. 3), God promised redemption, and that promise is fully realized in the gospel. Hence the gospel is that which God planned and promised throughout the OT. The coming

Redeemer is the theme of the OT; the redemption He brought is the theme of the NT.

1:3 **Concerning his Son** — The virgin born Son of God (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:21-23), the only begotten of the Father (Jn. 1:14; 3:16). **Jesus Christ** — The Savior anointed. **our Lord**, — Master (Acts 2:36), the owner and ruler of Paul's life . . . and ours (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). **which was made of the seed of David** — Descendant of David (Jn. 7:42) through Mary (Lk. 1:27). God had promised David that his seed would reign forever on Israel's throne (2 Sm. 7:12-29). Christ, reigning over His spiritual kingdom, which is now the kingdom of God, was the consummation of that promise (Mt. 1:1-23; Acts 13:23). Christ now reigns at the right hand of God as the seed of David (Acts 2:25-36), over the new Israel of God, the church (Gal. 6:16). **according to the flesh**; — He had both a divine and a human nature; the divine came from God; the human from Mary, His fleshly mother (Phil. 2:5-11). He was equally God and man — God in the flesh (Mt. 1:23). God was His Father and Mary was His mother (Lk. 1:30-35).

1:4 **And declared to be the Son of God with power**, — Determined, declared, designated, instated, or proclaimed deity. Not that He had become deity but that His deity was put beyond question. This also displayed His divine power (Jn. 10:17-18). **according to the spirit of holiness**, — May refer either to the dispositional spirit of Christ, which is holy in all respects, or the HS, in which case it means according to the revelation of the Spirit. The former is preferred by many; I prefer the latter. **by the resurrection from the dead**: — His Sonship is proven by the resurrection and His resurrection is proven by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3), a summary of which are: the empty tomb and missing body (Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:3; Mt. 28:11-15); the change in Christ's body: before the resurrection (during His lifetime) He was limited, but afterwards He appeared and disappeared seemingly at will (Jn. 20:26); the change in the apostles from a fearful group not willing to stand with Jesus (Mt. 26:56) to powerful confident proclaimers (Acts 2; 4:18-31); eyewitnesses (Jn. 20:18, 25-31; 21:14; 1 Cor. 15:1-9); the conversion of Paul (Acts 9, 22, 26); the basic structure of the gospel and the faith of the early Christians — the resurrection is fundamental to both (1 Cor. 15:1-4); and the Lord's day (Rv. 1:10); the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2); the resurrection day (Mt. 28:1-4).

1:5 **By whom** — Christ. **we have received grace and apostleship**, — Both favor and his call were heavenly (Acts 26:19); not from the other apostles, the church, or any man (Gal. 1:10-12). **for obedience to the faith** — "The obedience which springs from faith." Robertson (WP). Our faith comes from hearing the faith which was once delivered to the saints (10:17; Jude 3; Jn. 20:30-31.) Obedience to the faith is therefore obedience to the gospel (6:16-18). Obedience is an integral part of the gospel (Heb. 5:8-9), perfects faith (Jas. 2:22), and is necessitated by love (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24). Any faith that accepts

Christ as Lord is a faith that submits to all His requirements. Paul both begins and ends (16:26) this book with the obedience of faith, thus using it as parentheses to enclose everything therein. **among all nations**, — The Gentiles or every creature (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15). **For his name:** — For his name's sake (ASV). The name of Christ, by which we are saved (Acts 4:12), which is above all names (Phil. 2:9-11), and in which we do all things (Col. 3:17), is the motivation for obedience. In obedience to the faith we magnify and glorify His name. Disobedience or a failure to obey will result in the exact opposite.

1:6 **Among whom** — The nations. The called remain in the world even though they are not of the world (Jn. 15:19; 17:14-16). **are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:** — Called by the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14) to the obedience of faith. By virtue of this call, they belonged to Christ.

1:7 **To all that be in Rome**, — Christians in the imperial city. **beloved of God, called to be saints:** — God loves all (5:8; Jn. 3:16) but He loves His saints in a special way — they are His adopted children (8:15-17; Gal. 4:4-6). **Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.** — A salutation of grace and peace from both the Father and the Son.

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## DESIRE TO VISIT ROME

1:8-13 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

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1:8 **First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all**, — He was thankful for the church in Rome, the capital of the empire. And his thanks were expressed in the name of (by His permission, direction, and authority) Christ, as are all acceptable prayers in the Christian age (Jn. 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-26; Col. 3:17). **that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.** — Because of their location their influence was felt and spoken of from one end of the empire to the other. Christians in central locations and in high places can wield tremendous influence for good or evil, depending on their faith, character, and conduct.

1:9 **For God is my witness**, — In a form of judicial oath he calls God to witness to the truthfulness of that which he says. He speaks the truth with solemnity. **whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son**, — Service was rendered with his whole inner being by standing for, living by, and preaching the gospel. **that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;** — He earnestly desired them to know of his gratitude and prayers for them.

1:10 **Making request**, — Praying. **If by any means now at length — After so long a time. I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.** — His lifelong ambition as a Christian had been to preach the gospel in Rome. He had often prayed that God would open the door and prosper him to that end. His prayers were eventually answered but not as he had expected. He went as a prisoner . . . at the expense of Rome (Acts 26-28).

1:11 **For I long to see you**, — The Roman Christians. He gives three reasons for this longing: (1) that he might impart some spiritual gift unto them; (2) that they be comforted together in their mutual faith (v. 12); and (3) that he might get some fruit from among them (v. 13). **that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift**, — Miraculous gift (1 Cor. 12:6-11), imparted only by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:14-20; 19:6; 2 Tm. 1:6). Although others, by the laying on of apostolic hands, were enabled to work miracles, no one but an apostle could impart the gifts. Had these gifts been given in answer to prayer or by some other means, Paul's longing to go to Rome for the purpose of imparting them would have been pointless. **to the end ye may be established**; — The purpose of miracles was to reveal, confirm, and deliver the saving truth of the gospel (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4), and to establish the primitive church until the whole of revelation was delivered, at which time they were to end (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-13). Miracles aided in erecting the structure of divine revelation; when the structure was completed (the Scriptures confirmed and the Christian system fully established) they had served their purpose and ceased to be. God now works through His established laws.

1:12 **That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.** — When they were established in the faith, Paul would be comforted in them and they in Paul. There is no greater joy for a Christian than to see other Christians rooted and grounded in faith (Eph. 4:14-16; 3 Jn. 4).

1:13 **Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren**, — Uninformed as to his intentions and desires. **that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you**, — His failure to go had not been a lack of plans and purposes on his part. **(but was let hitherto)**, — Hindered (ASV) or prevented so that his plans had never materialized. **that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.** — The salvation of souls, the results for which he always labored and suffered.

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## THEME

# THE GOSPEL, GOD'S POWER TO SAVE

1:14-17 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

1:14 **I am debtor** — Under divine obligation to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16) to the whole world (Mk. 16:15), to every nation (Mt. 28:19), and to every responsible individual in every nation, both Jew and Gentile (although the Jews are not mentioned in this verse, his first obligation was to them, v. 16). The Gentiles, however, were Paul's special mission, and he could not be satisfied or rest until he had paid his debt to them. He, unlike so many of us today, was willing to pay his debt, that is, he was willing to make whatever sacrifice necessary, to go any distance or to pay any price, so that the gospel might be sounded out to the remotest corners of the world. **both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.** — That is, to everyone. None were exempted, regardless of their nationality or status in life.

1:15 **So, as much as in me is,** — His whole being, heart, mind, body, soul, and spirit. **I am ready** — Ready to discharge his duty to his debtors. **to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.** — He was a debtor to the Romans; he was ready to pay his debt to them.

1:16 **For I am not ashamed** — To preach the gospel even among those who rule the Roman empire, considered by some to be the wise of the world, many of whom would ridicule the messenger and blaspheme the high and holy name of Christ. **of the gospel of Christ:** — The good news pertaining to Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection and what He accomplished by them. The sin problem is man's greatest (and in the final analysis, his only) problem. To be saved from it is man's greatest blessing . . . and his greatest need. The gospel is the glad tidings which announces that Christ, by His death on the cross, has provided the means of salvation. But it is more: it not only proclaims redemption provided, it also reveals how the blood of Christ can be appropriated to the sins of each individual by obedience to the gospel plan (6:1-4, 16-18). The sin debt has been paid. Man can now be set free. **for it** — The gospel. **is the power of God unto salvation** — The theme of the whole book: the gospel, God's power to save from sin! God's power inheres in the system, the system by which God can be just and still justify the sinner (3:26). Just as God has put His power into a seed to reproduce after its kind (Gn. 1:11-12), He has put His power to save in the gospel (Lk. 8:11; 1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pt. 1:23). It is God's power to root out the love of sin, the power of sin, the practice of sin, the guilt of sin, and the penalty of sin. It is not God's power to save politically, socially, financially, physically, or mentally, even though all of these are strongly influenced by it, but God's power to save from sin. By obedience to the gospel one dies to sin, is buried with the Lord in baptism, and arises a new creature in Christ (6:1-7; 2 Cor. 5:17). Thus before one can be saved by the gospel he must follow its instructions. The gospel has no power to save those who will not accept it and the remedy it offers. The gospel is, therefore, God's: (1) convincing power (10:17; Jn. 20:30-31; Acts 18:8); (2) convicting power (Acts 2:37; Heb. 4:12); (3) converting power (Ps. 19:7; Jas. 5:19-20); (4) enlightening power (Ps. 119:130; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; 2 Pt.

1:5-8); (5) restraining power (Gal. 6:7-8; Rv. 21:8); (6) constraining power (2:4; 2 Cor. 2:14); (7) cleansing power (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:26; 1 Pt. 1:22); and (8) exalting power (1 Thes. 4:16-18). **to every one that believeth**; — No responsible soul is excluded from God's plan. All believers may come to Him (Mt. 11:28-30; Rv. 22:17). The gospel has no power to save unbelievers; its power is released only in faith. **to the Jew first**, — The gospel was first preached to the Jews. Christ's personal ministry was to the Jews (Mt. 7:24-30); the limited commission included them only (Mt. 10:5-6); Peter preached to them on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2); and Paul went first to the Jews (Acts 18:5-6). But this priority was in time only. **and also to the Greek**. — All people other than Jews. Hence God's salvation was offered to all alike and on precisely the same terms (11:26, see note there). God is no respecter of persons (2:11).

1:17 **For therein** — In the gospel. **is the righteousness of God** — The means of right relationship with God. Man had sinned (3:9, 23; 5:12), and the penalty of sin is death (6:23). Because of sin, man's right relationship with God was broken (Is. 59:1-2) and he was condemned to eternal death. To restore that broken relationship is righteousness — righteousness as a result of justification (righteousness and justification are from the same root word). It is called the righteousness of God because it is made possible by Him without any help or merit from man. **revealed** — Manifested or made known (Eph. 3:1-7). The gospel therefore reveals God's plan to make man righteous, to restore the sinner back to a proper relationship with God. **from faith to faith**: — A difficult expression but probably means from the beginning of faith to the end of faith. The gospel meets every need of man from faith's inception to faith's fruition. The NIV renders it, "A righteousness which is by faith from first to last." **as it is written**, — In the Scriptures. This refers to the following quotation, not to what has just been said, as in the ASV, "As it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." **The just shall live by faith**. — Quoted from Habakkuk 2:4. Justification (or righteousness, ASV) is not by law but by the system of faith. Every act of the Christian religion must be rendered by faith. Faith is the Christian's guiding principle from inception to its final reward. To live by faith is to live by the directions given in the gospel. This implies the ability to think (Prv. 23:7); to reason (Is. 1:18; Mk. 8:16; Lk. 5:21); to understand (Acts 8:30, Col. 1:9); to believe (Jn. 8:24; Heb. 11:6); and to obey (6:16-18; Heb. 5:8-9). Living by faith brings many rewards, such as the remission of sins (Acts 2:38); the gift of the HS (Acts 5:32; Rom. 8:9); adoption into the family of God (8:13-17; Gal. 4:4-6); peace of mind (Mt. 5:9; Phil. 4:7); all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3); and in the end, heaven itself (Jn. 14:1-6; Rv. 13:14).

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## GOD'S WRATH

1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

1:18 **For the wrath of God** — The anger of God. His law has been disrespected and violated, and the very purpose for which He made man has been disregarded. **is revealed from heaven** — In the gospel. God's wrath did not cause Him to respond in man's destruction, but in the provision of his salvation, that is, if he would believe and obey His plan to save (v. 16). **against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,** — The gospel offers salvation to all, but when it is rejected, it also reveals God's wrath (11:22; 2 Thes. 1:5-9) or the eternal fate of the ungodly and unrighteous (Mt. 25:46; Rv. 20:12-15). The gospel is like fire: it can either save or destroy, depending on one's response. **who hold the truth in unrighteousness;** — Who hold down, back, or hinder the truth, that is, prevent its aim and spread, by their wrong relationship with God and by the wicked way they live.

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## GOD MANIFESTED IN NATURE

1:19-20 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head; so that they are without excuse:

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1:19 **Because that which may be known** — Is known (ASV), not all that might be known. They knew enough pertaining to God so that their prevention of truth was inexcusable (v. 20). **is manifest in them;** — In their minds, hearts, and/or conscience. **for God hath shewed it unto them.** In them (ASV). What they knew about God had been made plain to them. This verse does not deal with the manner in which that knowledge had been attained. The existence of a power superior to and transcending the material universe can be arrived at by the mind using its own power of reason and logic (Ps. 19:1-6). Creation is an effect and there must be a cause back of it adequate to explain it (Acts 17:27-28; Heb. 3:4; Col. 1:16-17). But the will of God cannot be known apart from divine revelation (1 Cor. 2:9-12). So the extent of their knowledge is predicated upon the manner of its manifestation. Was it all by nature or did they have access to some revelation, such as the OT or some prophet similar to Balaam (Nm. 22-24)? I do not know, but it seems to me that Paul implies that they had access to at least some revelation (cf. vv. 21-28). But at any rate, whether their knowledge had come by nature or revelation, they had rejected it and the consequences of their rejection of the truth was enough to show any reasonable person that man was not made to sin. It goes contrary to his very nature. Man without God proves conclusively man's need for God.

1:20 **For** — Connects the following with the preceding verse. **the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,** — Plainly understood. The invisible things are stated by Paul himself and rendered by the ASV as His everlasting power and divinity. **being understood by the things that are made,** — The Creator is observable in

His work of creation. In fact, there is no logical way the human mind can reason around a Creator: for there can be no creation without a Creator. **even his eternal power and Godhead**; — This much at least can be known by the observation of creation. **so that they are without excuse**: — Their rejection of the truth was inexcusable. So it is with all unbelievers. One simply cannot be intellectually honest with the facts and with the structure of his own mind and reasoning process and reject the necessary implication of creation. Every effect must have an adequate cause; every law must have a lawgiver; life must come from life; everything produces after its kind (Gn. 1). No mind and no process of reason know an exception to these. Creation is therefore the only explanation of origin. But creation (an undeniable fact to the intellectually honest) necessitates a Creator. Thus to believe in creation is to believe in God, His power and divinity.

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## KNOWLEDGE REJECTED

1:21-27 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

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1:21 **Because that, when they knew God**, — Either as the cause of a vast effect (creation) or by some incomplete form of revelation or both. **they glorified him not as God**, — They acted contrary to the knowledge they possessed. They thus sinned against knowledge. They knowingly rejected right for wrong. **neither were thankful**; — They were ingrates in that they did not acknowledge God as the giver of all blessings (Jas. 1:17; Lk. 17:12-17). And their ingratitude led them to vain imaginations, darkened hearts, deception, and idolatry (vv. 21-23). **but became vain in their imaginations**, — Became vain in their reasonings (ASV); their thinking became futile (NIV). Sound reason led them to a knowledge of the Creator, but they had turned from this knowledge. And in order to do so they had to corrupt their reasoning process — they chose their own vain imaginations instead of sound reason. Such dishonest handling of truth is not limited to the ancient Gentiles. A modern example is that of Charles Darwin. According to Mayo W. Hazeltine, Darwin expressed the inward conviction that the universe is not the result of chance. But when his mind so reasoned, he then questioned the validity of the mind's reasoning power. He said, "But, then, with me the harried doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the



mind of the lower animals, are of any value, or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust the convictions in a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?" (*Beacon Lights of History*, Vol. XIV, p. 171). Reason thus led Darwin to creation (and creation inevitably leads to the Creator) but he did not want to believe it; he wanted instead to believe in chance development. He therefore rejected his own process of reasoning as trustworthy. He became vain in his reasoning. **and their foolish heart was darkened.** — They closed out the light of truth by their foolish reasonings and God gave them the darkness of falsehood — a strong delusion (2 Thes. 2:10-12).

1:22 **Professing themselves to be wise,** — Their own vain and foolish reasoning became their standard of wisdom. They considered themselves superior in wisdom because they had rejected the true wisdom of God, the knowledge of His eternal power and Godhead (Prv. 1:7; 9:10). **they became fools,** — They abandoned sound reason for their own foolish imaginations. What could be more foolish than to deny the trustworthiness of the human mind to correctly reason to a proper conclusion? If the mind's power to reason cannot be trusted, then how can it be thought trustworthy when it reasons to its own untrustworthiness? How can it be untrustworthy when it reasons back to a Creator but trustworthy when it reasons to deny the power of reason (especially the reason which concludes that God is the Author and Creator of all things).

1:23 **And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.** — They had exchanged the knowledge and glory of God for the foolishness and dishonor of idols made in the likeness of man, birds, beasts, and creeping things. For the folly of idolatry (see Is. 41:21-24; 44:9-20).

1:24 **Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness** — They had abandoned God and God abandoned them to reap the rewards of their own ruin (Gal. 6:7-8). **through the lusts of their own hearts,** — Through their own corruption. **to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:** — To bring them to a knowledge of their corrupt state. But how did they dishonor their own bodies between themselves? See vv. 26-27.

1:25 **Who changed the truth of God into a lie,** — Exchanged the truth of God for a lie (ASV). The reference is to their rejecting the truth and turning to idolatry. God is. This is the most profound truth in the universe. Idols are nothing (1 Cor. 8:4) and as gods they are a lie (Jer. 10:14). To exchange the former for the latter is to reach the depths of folly. This is true any time the divine is exchanged for the human, whether it be in faith, doctrine, or practice. **and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator,** — They had transferred the devotion and service which belonged to God alone to the work of His hands. They gave to the creature that which was by right of creation the Creator's. Or as Lard renders it, "And worshiped and served the creature instead of him that made it." **who is blessed for ever.** —

Who is forever praised (NIV). God is due the praise; His creatures are not (Acts 10:25-26; 14:13-18; Rv. 22:9-10). He is worthy (Rv. 4:11); no created thing is. And this fact will never be changed. His works praise Him. **Amen.** — A solemn exclamation in which Paul assents to the eternal praise of God. It means, "So let it be." Amen!

1:26 **For this cause** — Because they had exchanged the truth of God for the lie of idolatry. **God gave them up** — Turned them over to or surrendered them. **unto vile affections:** — Shameful lust (NIV) or their passionate desires and false beliefs. When one rejects the love of God, he subjects himself to all kinds of degrading and dishonorable passions, as is illustrated here by the fact that both men and women turn from their natural state to that which is against nature. **for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:** — Turned from the God-ordained relationship between male and female (Gn. 2:21-25; Mt. 19:3-9), within marriage, to lesbianism or female homosexuality. Lower than this men and women cannot go. It is the most disgusting sin imaginable. It renounces the whole purpose God had in view when He made them male and female.

1:27 **And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.** — The men, too, abandoned God's sexual design and turned to homosexuality, a sin condemned by both God and all right thinking people (Lv. 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tm. 1:10). No stronger words than these have ever been written against any sinful practice, and they say in no uncertain terms that homosexuality is against nature — against God's sexual design. Because of it, God gave them up to receive the suitable reward of their despicable lust — the due penalty for their perversion (NIV). Sin has its undesirable rewards (Ps. 91:8; Mt. 6:2, 5, 16; Jude 11) and thus carries its own punishment so that those who reject truth for error, purity for lust, receive a just recompence for their evil. My mother used to tell me, when I wanted to do something against her will and to my own hurt, "When you burn a blister, you'll set on it." The warning was so stern I would usually heed it. But these Gentiles were not wise enough to do so, nor are many today who engage in promiscuous sex, drug abuse, alcohol, etc., defying the consequences. But sin always leaves its ugly scars, and when one sows sin he must reap corruption (Gal. 6:7-8).

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## SINS OF THE GENTILES

1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

1:28 **And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;** — God gave them over to a depraved mind because they had refused to retain the knowledge of God — they rejected the truth and God permitted their minds and hearts to be filled with all kinds of evil. Their depraved minds led them to do many shameful and disgraceful things. The contents or condition of the heart controls the life (Prv. 23:7; Mt. 12:34; 15:19). Because they had turned from the knowledge they had of God to their own foolish reasonings, Paul said: (1) God gave them up to uncleanness (v. 24) to dishonor themselves in their own lusts; (2) God gave them up to vile affections (v. 26) to reap the rewards of their unnatural love; and (3) God gave them over to a reprobate mind (v. 28) to do unbecoming things. No darker picture has ever been drawn of sinful man. And no further proof is needed that he stands in need of salvation.

1:29 **Being filled with all unrighteousness,** — All kinds of wrongdoing (which leads to a wrong relationship with God). The expression is inclusive, comprehending not only all the sins which follow but all committed by accountable men. **fornication,** — Illicit sexual intercourse (usually between the unmarried, though not limited to that). Omitted by ASV and most modern translations. **wickedness,** — Malicious evil or criminal disposition toward others. **covetousness,** — Avaricious and unlawful desire. **maliciousness;** — Deepseated hatred or ill-will causing the disposition to do harm to its object. **full of** — Not every individual, but as a whole they had reached the point beyond which they could not go in the following sins. This statement is designed to show how widespread and common evil was among them and their degraded attitude toward it. **envy** — The feeling of hurt at the excellence or success of another. It is usually caused by another receiving what one desires for himself, such as success, recognition, appreciation, etc. **murder,** — Taking human life purposefully and with malice aforethought. **debate,** — Strife (ASV), contentious. **deceit,** — Deception or practices designed to mislead. **malignity;** — Malevolence, bitterness, or corrupt disposition. **whisperers,** — Secret inuendoes.

1:30 **Backbiters,** — Slanderers (NIV) or revilers — verbally stabbing one in the back behind his back. **haters of God,** — God haters (NIV). This explains why they had rejected the truth of God and turned to their own foolish reasonings (vv. 18-28). **despiteful,** — Insolent (ASV) expressing itself in violence. **proud** — Haughty (ASV). One who thinks too highly of himself (cf. 12:3) and looks down with contempt upon his inferiors. **boasters,** — Displaying themselves as more than they are. Vainglorious esteem verbalized. **inventors of evil things,** — Always searching out new or different ways to practice evil; different ways to gratify the passions of the flesh. **disobedient to parents,** — The exact opposite of the fifth command (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3).

1:31 **Without understanding,** — Senseless (NIV). The same word as

rendered foolish in v. 21. Hence without sense (or stupid) in moral and spiritual matters. **covenant-breakers**, — Faithless (NIV) in keeping contracts, whether with God or man. **without natural affection**, — Without love (*storge*) of kindred, parents, or children — emotionless toward those bound by nature's ties. **implacable**, — Omitted by many MSS and by ASV. An unforgiving or unyielding disposition; too stubborn to accept reconciliation on reasonable grounds. **unmerciful**: — Ruthless (NIV) or pitiless. Having no mercy toward the shortcomings of others.

1:32 **Who** — Those described in vv. 18-31. **knowing** — Either by nature or limited revelation. It seems to me the latter. If judgment means ordinance (ASV) or His righteous decree (NIV) then it must be by revelation. How could the judgment, ordinance, or decree of God be made known without Him pronouncing it? (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-16.) **the judgment of God**, — They knew God had condemned the low level of morality to which they had descended (Eph. 5:3-7; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). **that they which commit such things are worthy of death**, — Worthy of the penalty of sin that had passed upon them (Gn. 2:16-17; 3:1-7; Rom. 5:12; 6:23), and the guilt, suffering, sorrow, pain, and anguish it brings. **not only do the same**, — Practice the disgraceful vices themselves. **but have pleasure in them that do them**. — They find pleasure in and give their approval to the degradation of others.

Concluding note to Chapter 1: The last half of this chapter proves conclusively that the Gentiles were great sinners because they had sinned willfully against the light of truth and had turned to their own senseless reasonings — they tried to direct their own steps in divine things (cf. Jer. 10:23). But their foolish imaginations and rejection of the knowledge of God led them to this dark, dreary, gloomy state of vice and corruption. Cut loose from God, their degradation became a bottomless pit in which they were plunging deeper and deeper toward eternal ruin. No one of average intelligence could read this chapter and fail to see Paul's point, namely, the gospel, God's power to save, is absolutely indispensable for the salvation of such depraved hearts and lives. The gospel is therefore the only hope for the Gentiles.

## ROMANS 2

# GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE JEWS

2:1-11 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.

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2:1 **Therefore** — (*Dio*) on this account. It was easy from Paul's description of the shameful degraded state of the Gentiles to conclude that they were deservedly lost — that their sins merited their punishment. **thou art inexcusable**, — Without excuse (ASV). The depths of Gentile degradation did not make the sins of the Jews less shallow. If anything, theirs may have been worse for two fundamental reason: (1) God had entrusted to them His fuller revelation (3:1-4); and (2) they could observe the results which followed the Gentiles abandoning the truth of God for falsehood. They thus had less excuse than the pagans. **O man, whosoever thou art that judgest**: — Condemns. They freely and frequently expressed their condemnation. **for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things**. — They were sinners condemning sinners! But if a sinner condemns sinners (of which he is one) he condemns himself — condemns the very state he is in. Paul's design in Romans 1, 2, and 3 is to show that the gospel is God's power to save from sin and that every soul on earth stands in need of that power. He does this by showing that the Gentiles have sinned; he then shows that the Jews are guilty of the same things as the Gentiles; thus, he concludes, that all have sinned — all accountable people (3:9, 23). All, therefore, stand in need of the salvation offered in the gospel.

2:2 **But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things**. — The truth is, God looks upon all as sinners, both Jew and Gentile. All have violated His divine law

(5:12; 1 Jn. 3:4; Ti. 3:3). This means that all were in bondage to sin (Jn. 8:34; 2 Pt. 2:19). All stood in need of the Savior.

**2:3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?** — Do you think you can condemn others for doing precisely what you are doing and still not be called to account by God? One of two things seemed certain of them: (1) they thought they were exempt from God's judgment (as in this v.), or (2) they had contempt for the goodness of God which should have led them to repentance (as in v. 4).

**2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness** — God is good (Ezr. 3:11; Ps. 135:3; 145:9); the works of God are good (Gn. 1:31); the word of God is good (Dt. 1:14; Prv. 30:5-6); and His goodness is seen in what He has done for all of us (Gn. 1:26-28; 3:15; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8). But what was the Jews' response to His goodness? They either thought they were exemptions to God's judgment (v.3) or else they had contempt for His goodness. Paul proves (in this chapter) that they were not exempted from the penalty of sin. They were thus guilty of despising God's goodness. **and forbearance and longsuffering;** — their contempt was due God's wrath but His goodness was further demonstrated by His delaying punishment (2 Pt. 3:9). **not knowing** — not realizing (NIV). **that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?** — There are two words in the NT for repentance, *metamelomai* and *metanoeo*. The former means to regret, feel remorse, or be sorry for; the latter means such a change of will or purpose as to lead to a change of life and conduct. Judas is an example of the former (Mt. 27:3) and the prodigal son of the latter (Lk. 15:12-21). The former is never commanded; the latter is. It is the latter (in its noun form) that is here used. It is not something to be received, to be known, or to be felt, but something to be done — a command to be obeyed (Acts 17:30). The goodness of God, when it is contrasted with the corruption and hardness of sin in man, is one of the strongest motivations for repentance. The Jew had before him God's goodness and he could see the depths of degradation to which sin had led the Gentiles (1:18-32). He had a choice to make between the two. And so does every other man to whom the gospel is preached.

**2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart** — Instead of permitting the goodness of God and the corruption of sinful man to soften their hearts and thus lead them to repentance, they had remained unchanged by their stiff resistance. **treasurest up unto thyself wrath** — Storing up wrath against yourself (NIV). That is, they were storing up works of condemnation for which they would have to give an account in that great and dreadful day of reckoning for all men. **against the day of wrath** — The day of judgment when all men will be rewarded according to their work, whether it be good or bad (v. 6; Jn. 5:28-29; Rv. 20:12-13). **and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;** — The revelation of the rightness of God's judgment (cf. Gn. 18:25). The judgment will not be according to race, social status, or intellectual

achievement, but by the righteous standard of God (Acts 17:30). The standard will be the word of God (vv. 12-16; Jn. 12:48).

**2:6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: —** Reward each according to his work (14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). Two classes will appear in judgment (Mt. 25:31-46): (1) those in right relationship with God who continue in well doing (v. 7), and (2) those who reject the truth and obey unrighteousness (vv. 8-9). The former will receive eternal life; the latter tribulation and anguish (vv. 7-9).

**2:7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: —** The righteous (those whose attitude and actions place them in right relationship with God) will receive eternal life (Mt. 25:34-40; 2 Thes. 1:7-9).

**2:8-9 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; —** The wicked and disobedient, those whose attitude and actions place them in the wrong relationship with God, whether they be Jew or Gentile, shall receive indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish. The Jew first because he had the first opportunity (1:16) and therefore the greater obligation.

**2:10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: —** This returns to the subject of v. 7 and to the reward of the righteous.

**2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God. —** God recognizes no class, caste, rank, profession, or occupation in His dealings with man. He does not see men as Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:14-16); as rich and poor (Jas. 2:1-4); as bond and free (Gal. 3:28); as learned and unlearned (1 Cor. 1:19-31). Nor does He see them as black and white, weak and strong, good and bad (except as good may refer to His saints). He sees everyone as a soul in need of salvation, a soul for which Christ died, a soul who stands in need of the gospel message. That He deals with all in identically the same way can be seen from the following facts: all have sinned (3:9, 23; 5:12; 11:32). Christ died for all (5:6-8; 1 Jn. 2:2). He gave one plan of salvation which must be obeyed by all (1:16; 11:26 — see notes there; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-39). All the saved are added to the same church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 2:13-16). All have the same standard by which to live (ch. 12; Jn. 12:47-50). All worship in precisely the same manner (Jn. 4:23-24; Acts 2:42). And all who obey the gospel will go to the same heaven (Jn. 14:1-6; Rv. 21:1-5; 22:1-5). All this simply means that God does not favor one person over another in His plan to save. All are alike and precious in His sight.

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## ALL WILL BE JUDGED BY THE LAW UNDER WHICH THEY LIVE

2:12-16 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

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**2:12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;** — Whether one sins outside the law of Moses, as did the Gentiles, or under the law, as did the Jews, he is still a condemned sinner. We do not know a great deal about the law under which the Gentiles lived, but we do know that they had sinned (1:18-32); that sin is a transgression of the law (1 Jn. 3:4), and that they were condemned as a result of their sins, but they will not be judged by the law of Moses. All will be judged by the law under which they lived and to which they are accountable to God. We should learn from this that those under the OT law will not be judged by the gospel, nor will NT Christians be judged by the law of Moses.

**2:13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.** — This has reference to those who live under the law and are judged by it. A failure to do what the law demands (just to hear the law) is a violation and all law violators are condemned by the violated law — if for no other sin, then the sin of omission (Jas. 4:17; Gal. 3:10). Only those who keep the law (in contrast to those who only have the law in their possession) are declared righteous by God. The contrast in 13-15 is between those who have the law and do not obey it and those who do not have the law and yet keep its moral precepts. To use this passage to prove that Paul is arguing that one might be justified under the law is to miss his point absolutely. No one can be justified by law *per se* (3:20; Gal. 2:16). Once one violates the law, it knows nothing but condemnation (7:9-25). But we should learn from it, and from many other passages teaching the same principle, whether we are considering the law of Moses or the law of Christ, that one cannot be declared right when he stands in violation of the law. That would be contrary to all laws known to both God and man. The law of Christ, God's revealed will to man in this age, demands obedience (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46; Acts 5:32; 1 Pt. 1:22), and only those who appropriate His divine scheme of justification through the blood of Christ by means of obedience can be saved (Jas. 1:18-25). To fail to obey the will of Christ is to reject His divine scheme of justification, and without that divine scheme (the substitutionary death of Christ on our behalf) we would all



stand as law violators, and no law violator can be justified without the penalty being paid.

2:14 **For when the Gentiles, which have not the law,** — The contrast here continues to be between the Jews having the law by revelation and the Gentiles not having a written law from God. It is not as to whether they had received or learned precepts indirectly from the law given to the Jews but that God had not entrusted revelation to the Gentiles as He had to the Jews (see 3:1-4). **do by nature** — In contrast with revelation. Some things are naturally right and some are naturally wrong, and it is natural, that is, in keeping with his nature, for man to do right. Morality can be determined always by Scripture, and often by reason and common sense. Take murder for example. All three, Scripture, reason and common sense, teach that it is wrong for one person to maliciously and without just cause take the life of another. Cain killed Abel (Gn. 4:8). He knew that he had done wrong (Gn. 4:9-16). But as far as we know no law had been given at this time prohibiting murder. **the things contained in the law,** — Things revealed in the written law. **these,** — The Gentiles. **having not the law,** — The written revelation. **are a law unto themselves:** — Their own reason (and perhaps a limited and indirect access to revelation) was their law. Their reason was correct only insofar as it coincided with revelation. Paul's point here is that they had violated their own sense of right. They were therefore justly condemned as sinners — violators of reason. But the Jews had the advantage of revelation and they had not lived up to that either. The conclusion is inevitable: the Jews are also sinners — violators of revelation.

2:15 **Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts,** — Not the law of the heart, but the law written or imbedded in their hearts, that which they had learned either by reason or by limited indirect revelation. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts (NIV) rather than on tables of stone. This does not refer in any way to some universal intangible law that is innate to the mind and revealed only by intuition. **their conscience also bearing witness,** — They knew right, and they knew that the moral precepts of the law were written in their minds and hearts. To this their consciences testified. **and their thoughts** — Reasonings. **the mean while** — Coinciding with their conscience. **accusing or else excusing one another;)** — Condemning or justifying each other.

2:16 **In that day** — The judgment day. **when God shall judge the secrets of men** — Everything will be brought out into the open. Nothing shall be hid (Lk. 8:17) from Him (Heb. 4:13). Every closet will be opened and the hidden skeletons of passion, dishonesty, insincerity, lusts, ill-motives, and character shall be manifest (Mt. 10:26). Judgment will be according to man's works (2 Cor. 5:10), but it does not end here. Each shall be judged by every idle word (Mt. 12:36) and by every secret thing (Eccl. 12:14). Each will be judged as he is, not as he pretends to be. **by Jesus Christ** — All judgment has been committed to Him (Jn. 5:22; Acts 17:31; 2 Tm. 4:1). **according to my**

**gospel.** — According to the gospel Paul preached, all men will be judged (14:10) by the law under which they live (v. 12) and only those obedient to the law (under which they live) shall be justified (v. 13). This principle is as true of the law of Christ as it is the law of Moses.

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## TEACHERS OF THE LAW

2:17-24 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

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2:17-20 **Behold, thou art called a Jew,** — Because they were the physical seed of Abraham they laid claim to all the following: **and retest in the law,** — Relied on the written law entrusted to them by God through Moses. **and makest thy boast of God,** — Gloried in their relationship with God as keepers of the law. **And knowest his will,** — As revealed in the law. **and approvest the things that are more excellent,** — The superior way taught in the law had their endorsement, not only in the good it demanded but also in the debauchery it condemned. **being instructed out of the law;** — The law was their teacher; they had been taught it from childhood (Dt. 6:6-9; 11:18-20). **And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind,** — Not only had they been taught the law, they were teachers of it, living examples to those who foolishly worshiped and served idols. **a light of them which are in darkness,** — A light to lead the Gentiles out of their darkness of evil. **An instructor of the foolish,** — Corrector (ASV) of those void of understanding. **a teacher of babes,** — Teachers of the unlearned. **which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.** — They were possessors of truth, the embodiment of knowledge (NIV), revealed in the law, but they were content to be preservers rather than practitioners of it. They were Jews and were proud of it; they had the advantage of being entrusted with the law; the law revealed to them a superior way of life; they were therefore teachers and instructors of the more excellent way. This was their claim. And in theory they were absolutely right, but in practice they had totally failed and in their failure they were causing the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of God (v. 24). Paul now leads them to the conclusion that they too are sinners.

2:21 **Thou therefore which teachest another,** — Their claims were nothing but empty sounds, and Paul rebukes them for their inconsistency in having the law, knowing that it was a superior system, and claiming to be teachers of it (vv. 17-20) but yet living examples of law violators. How could

they teach others to live by a law they themselves did not keep? **teachest thou not thyself?** — A teacher should be an example of the message. That is, he himself should learn and practice the lesson before attempting to instruct another in it. One often teaches more by the way he lives and by what he is than by what he says. Every teacher should be acutely aware of this. **thou that preachest a man should not steal,** — Preaches what the law of God says about stealing (Ex. 20:15). To steal is to take the property of another without his knowledge or consent — to appropriate to oneself that which by right belongs to another and to which one has no right. **dost thou steal?** — To preach against stealing while committing the very act would be gross hypocrisy. But this is precisely the conclusion to which the writer was leading the Jews. They were law violators trying to teach respect and obedience to the law. We are not exempt from this principle today. How could one teach on the evils of drug abuse and imbibe alcohol? Or against gossip while gossiping? How could an immoral person teach morality? How could a stingy person teach liberal giving? How could a non-Christian teach another to be a Christian? How could an unfaithful Christian teach faithfulness to Christ?

2:22 **Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery,** — Adultery was prohibited by the seventh commandment (Ex. 20:14) and one could not teach the law without saying, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Adultery is the sex act between a married person and someone (anyone) not his mate. Vine says the Greek word “Denotes one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another.” It has always been considered a very grievous sin, in fact, so grievous that it carried the death penalty under the law (Lv. 20:10; Dt. 22:23-26). It is a sin against God, against God’s design of sexuality, against marriage, against one’s marital mate, and against one’s own body (1 Cor. 6:18). It destroys the sanctity of the home and thus corrupts the basic unit of society. Married partners belong exclusively to each other (1 Cor. 7:1-5), so exclusively in fact that one has control over the other’s body (1 Cor. 7:3-4). They are to fill each other’s needs, and when one turns to another to have these needs filled, either partially or completely, sin is involved and the home is endangered (cf. Mt. 19:3-9). For this reason no married person should ever touch one of the opposite sex when sexual connotations are involved. Here the principle would extend to any kind of sexual immorality, whether overtly or in the heart (Mt. 5:28). One simply cannot teach purity while living impure. **dost thou commit adultery?** — As with the other questions in this section (vv. 21-23) this one requires a positive answer: yes, we do. **thou that abhorrest idols,** — This horror of idols was embedded in the first two of the ten commandments (Ex. 20:3-5). Idols were nothing (1 Cor. 8:4); a lie (Jer. 10:14); an abomination (Ez. 8:9-10); the work of man’s hand (Is. 2:8; Jer. 1:16; 10:3-9). **dost thou commit sacrilege?** — Yes. This is to profane the holy (Ez. 22:26) or appropriate for selfish use (hence the ASV has rob temples, the thought probably being that they rob God to use for self) that which has been devoted to the service of God

(cf. Mal. 1:12-14; 3:8-9). The Jews were not guilty of overt idolatry (and had not been since their return from captivity), but what profit is there in rejecting an idol if one does not render to God the glory, honor, and service due Him (cf. Mt. 4:10)?

2:23 **Thou that makest thy boast of the law,** — They boasted in the fact that they had the law, loved the law, and were teachers of the law. But Paul shows them that the missing link in their chain was the practice of the law. **through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?** — Yes, we do, is the only possible answer. They transgressed the law (stepped outside its bounds) and failed to practice what it had enjoined. In this they dishonored God. And they would readily recognize this as a sin.

2:24 **For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles** — When the Gentiles saw the inconsistency of the Jews (as shown in vv. 21-23) it led them to speak evil of or reproach the holy name of God and despise the law revealed by Him. If such inconsistency was the true product of the law, who would want to honor and serve its Giver? **through you,** — Because of you (ASV). **as it is written.** — Probably referring either to Is. 52:5 or Ez. 36:22, or both, though neither passage addresses the subject precisely as Paul does.

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## THE TRUE JEW

2:25-29 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

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2:25 **For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law:** — Circumcision was first given to Abraham as a token or a sign of the covenant established between God and himself (Gn. 17:11-14) and was later made a part of the law of Moses (Ex. 12:48-49; Jn. 7:12) but the token was worthless without the keeping of the covenant. It was therefore not circumcision *per se* that was valid; it was the keeping of the law. There was nothing in it inherently righteous. Its value was in the fact that God had commanded it. This is a good place to observe that no act standing alone, without the disposition to obey, has merit in God's sight. That is to say, God knows no sacraments in the sense the term is used by Roman Catholicism. In Catholic theology a sacrament is an act through which grace (the end result for which the act was commanded) is imparted by virtue of the act itself. But Paul here, using the subject of circumcision (which would come as close to a "sacrament" for the Jews as anything in the Bible), shows that the act *per se* is not righteousness, but obedience to the law which results in the act. **but if thou be a breaker of the law,** — be a transgressor (ASV). This is more than a single transgression; it is a way of life

— living outside the bounds of law. **thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.** — One could not keep the law without being circumcised, but he could be circumcised without that circumcision signifying covenant relationship, in which case circumcision would be no better than uncircumcision (which was precisely the case with these law breakers).

**2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?** — None but Jews had been commanded to be circumcised; none but Jews, then, violated the law or omitted a duty when they were not circumcised. The Jews were circumcised (they could not omit it without breaking the covenant) but did not live by the law; on the other hand Paul supposes a case in which one is not circumcised (one not a Jew) because he has no covenant relationship with God and consequently has no command from God to be circumcised, but yet he keeps the moral precepts of the law. And just as there were no advantages to the Jew who was circumcised but did not keep the law, so there were no disadvantages in uncircumcision for those who did keep it. Now which is better, him who is circumcised without keeping the law or him who keeps the law without being circumcised? It is not as much Paul's purpose to justify the latter as it is to condemn the former.

**2:27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?** — Continuing his hypothetical case, Paul concludes that the uncircumcised (Gentiles), who keep the law — live as the law directs and fills the purpose for which it was given — condemns the circumcised (Jews), who have both the law and circumcision, but are transgressors of the law. The conduct of the former condemns the latter in the same sense Noah's faith and obedience condemned the antediluvians (Heb. 11:7), that is, by showing their conduct inexcusable.

**2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly;** — One is not true to God simply because he is the physical seed of Abraham. Not a Jew means not a true Jew — not the Jew God promised to bless, but rather a Jew who had not kept covenant with God. **neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:** — Not the true circumcision, not circumcision as God designed it to be. Circumcision was a token of the covenant (Gn. 17:8-14) or a sign of covenant relationship. When the covenant was broken, circumcision served no purpose. Hence it was no circumcision.

**2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly;** — A true Jew, one who sincerely keeps the covenant with God. **and circumcision is that of the heart,** — A sign of one's dedication to the covenant. Circumcision of the heart has reference to the removing of everything from the heart that is contrary to the will of God, to the devoting of it to God, and to the rendering of obedience (to the law) from the heart (Dt. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4). In the NT, it refers to the process by which one is cut off from sins (in becoming a Christian) and thereby

becomes a new creature in Christ (Col. 2:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:17). **in the spirit, and not in the letter;** — Another way of speaking of a Jew which is one inwardly. It is one who is right in disposition (spirit) as well as his overt practice (letter). Some have the wrong attitude with the right practice; others have the right attitude but the wrong practice; but the only way to please God is to combine both — the right attitude with the right practice. **whose praise is not of men, but of God.** — A further description of the true Jew. He acts to please God, not man. And because both his disposition and practice are right, God is pleased with him . . . and praised by him.

Concluding note to Chapter 2: Here Paul has prove that, while the Jews had the advantage of the law, a superior way of life, and circumcision, the token of their covenant relationship with God, they had not lived up to the revelation they had received. They professed themselves to be teachers, guides, and leaders, but yet they were guilty of the very things the law condemned . . . and the things they condemned in the Gentiles. They had the law and boasted in that fact, but they did not keep it. They therefore stood condemned by the very law which they taught. Thus their circumcision had become useless — it was no longer a sign of their covenant relationship with God because they had broken the covenant. The conclusion is inevitable: the Jews have sinned and stand equally in need with the Gentiles of the gospel of Christ. The Gentiles had sinned against reason (1:18-32); the Jews had sinned against revelation — against the covenant God had made with them. If either is worse, it is the latter.

## ROMANS 3

# ADVANTAGES OF THE JEWS

3:1-4 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

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**3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?** — Paul now anticipates and answers three objections (vv. 1, 3, 5) to his line of reasoning. This is the first of the three. If the Jews were in the same sinful and lost state as the Gentiles, and if they stood in need of the gospel before they could be saved, what had been their advantage, if any, in having the law and in being circumcised? The question is rhetorical and designed to elicit the negative reply, none. But Paul answers it positively (v. 2).

**3:2 Much every way:** — Rather than answering negatively, the designed reply to the question of v. 1, Paul answers positively. There were many advantages in being a Jew, such as the provisions for a better way of life, freedom from the superstition of idolatry, God's protective care, etc. **chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.** — Primarily, and by far the greatest advantage, the Jews had been entrusted with God's word, the divine revelation. They were the custodians of the law.

**3:3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?** — This is the second anticipated objection to his reasoning that the Jews were equally sinful with the Gentiles. All understood that the ways and truth of God do not depend upon the beliefs and actions of men. Truth is truth, and it will remain truth, even though all the world is in unbelief. God's covenant included promises to the Jewish people, promises that He must keep if He remained true to His word. But if it were true that the Jews were now in the same sinful and lost condition as the Gentiles, would this not mean that their unbelief had frustrated the promises of God? Would this not be saying that their unbelief forced God to be unfaithful (because He would be unable to keep His promises)?

**3:4 God forbid:** — A strong negative meaning by no means or, according to Vincent (WS), may it not have come to pass. Paul uses it ten times in Rom.

(four more in 1 Cor. and Gal.) to express his strongest dissent to concepts contrary to the gospel. It is absolutely impossible that the unbelief of men could prevent God from keeping His promises (some of which were conditional and others unconditional; God always kept His unconditional promises and the conditional ones were not effective — not a promise — until the conditions were met; and since the Jews had broken the covenant, that is they had not met the conditions, they themselves, not God, had nullified the promises). **yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;** — God will be true to His promises even if everyone else proves false. He does not change His mind (11:29) and it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb. 6:18). **as it is written,** — In Ps. 51:4, a part of David's pitiful cry for mercy when he acknowledged his grievous sin with Bathsheba. He confessed his sin and acknowledged that God was right in condemning it. **That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.** — Thou and thy are pronouns for God. Thus God is here depicted as being judged by men. When the words and actions of God are thus judged, He always stands justified. The Judge of all the earth does right (Gn. 18:25), and to this all who judge Him justly must consent. Barnes says: "The meaning of the expression, in the connection in which Paul uses it, is, that it is to be held as a fixed, unwavering principle, that God is right and true, whatever consequences it may involve, whatever doctrine it may overthrow, or whatever man it may prove to be a liar." So God will keep His promises!

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## GOD'S FAITHFUL JUDGMENT

3:5-8 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

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3:5 **But if our unrighteousness** — The fact that we have broken the covenant and are living in disobedience. **commend the righteousness of God,** — This is the third anticipated objection to Paul's reasoning. If our sins magnify the faithfulness of God in keeping His promises. **what shall we say?** — What should be our conclusion? **Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?** — If God's faithfulness is displayed by the Jews' disobedience, thus giving Him the opportunity to reveal His plan to save all through the gospel, would not God be unjust to punish their disobedience, seeing their sin ultimately resulted in great good? (**I speak as a man.**) — As it appears from a human vantage point.

3:6 **God forbid:** — See note on v. 4. **for then how shall God judge the world?** — If God could not condemn the Jews for their disobedience, then how could He judge the world? How could He punish the Gentiles (which the Jews



gladly condemned) without also judging the Jews, since both are guilty of the same sins?

**3:7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?** — In my judgment, Paul here restates the third objection (from v. 5) in his own words and perhaps from his own experience in order to more soundly refute it. According to the Jews, Paul had abandoned the truth, his national religion, for falsehood, but by their own reason (v. 5) they could not condemn him. If through his falsehood God's fidelity to His promises had abounded to God's glory, how could Paul be condemned as a sinner? If good came out of his falsehood, and God had been glorified in the good, how could he be condemned for evil? This would have been too much for the Jews: to justify themselves (with their argument) they would at the same time justify Paul.

**3:8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.** — If it is the case, as argued in v. 7, why not do more evil so that more good will result? And while some had falsely accused Paul of preaching this, to all right thinking people it reduces the argument to an absurdity. To all such, their condemnation will be rendered in justice.

3:5-8 Special note: The argument here is difficult and my inadequacy to offer much help is obvious. The clearest treatment of it that I have seen is the paraphrase found in *The Living Bible*, by Kenneth Taylor. And while I do not recommend it as a whole (it should always be used as paraphrase rather than a translation), I commend its treatment of these verses for your serious consideration. "But," some say, "our breaking faith with God is good, our sins serve a good purpose, for people will notice how good God is when they see how bad we are. Is it fair, then, for Him to punish us when our sins are helping Him? (That is the way some people talk.) God forbid! Then what kind of God would He be, to overlook sin? How could He ever condemn anyone? For He could not judge and condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty brought Him glory by pointing up His honesty in contrast to my lies. If you follow through with that idea, you come to this: the worse we are, the better God likes it! But the damnation of those who say such things is just. Yet some claim that this is what I preach."

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## ALL HAVE SINNED

3:9-18 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

3:9 **What then?** — What is the conclusion to be reached from this? **are we better than they?** — Do the advantages of the Jews (vv. 1-2) make them better (less sinful and thus in less need of redemption) than the Gentiles? How could they have received all the blessing of God without becoming better morally? **No, in no wise:** — Not at all! (NIV). That the Jews were better is not the conclusion to be reached. Quite to the contrary. **for we have before proved** — Laid to the charge (ASV). **both Jews and Gentiles,** — (1:18-32-2:1-29). **that they are all under sin;** — No one is exempted (5:12; 11:32; Gal. 3:22; 1 Kgs. 8:46). All are sinners, both Jews and Gentiles. And all are lost because of sin. Thus all stand equally in need of the gospel. Working on the assumption (which was granted by all his readers) that there are only two classes of people, Paul here reaches his conclusion. His argument can be thought of as an extended syllogism: the Gentiles have sinned (1:18-32); the Jews have sinned (2:1-29); therefore all have sinned (vv. 1-18). Given the truthfulness of the two premises, the conclusion is inevitable.

3:10-18 Paul has just concluded that all, both Jews and Gentiles, are under the penalty of sin and therefore all stand in need of the salvation offered only in the gospel. Here he turns to the Scriptures and from a miscellaneous selection from Ps., Is., and Eccl., shows that they teach exactly the same conclusion. All conceded that the Gentiles were under sin. Thus the barbs of this section are directed to the Jews, who would not question the teaching of their sacred writings.

3:10 **As it is written,** — In the OT Scriptures. **There is none righteous,** — Probably from Eccl. 7:20. None (who do not have the blood of Christ to cover their sins) stand in right relationship with God. None could be justified by law; hence there were none righteous. Righteousness as used here is the results of justification. It is thus a right relationship with God — a relationship which none possessed then nor now without the benefits of the death of Christ. **no, not one:** — Ps. 14:3; 53:3. Not a single exception to this rule (of course this has in view responsible people; the thrust of the whole argument is that none could be saved by the law; hence the universal need of the gospel, vv. 20-21).

3:11 **There is none that understandeth** — Ps. 14:2; 53:2. In the context of the quotation, the fool denies God. Then God looks among the children of men to see if any understands. He found none, as the statement here concludes. That is, He found none with a perfect knowledge of His will. **there is none that seeketh after God.** — Ps. 14:2; 53:2. None seek after Him to know Him and do His will. They seek the ways and means of evil (Eccl. 7:29), but not God — they want to know God only if He fits into their plans and devises.

3:12 **They have all gone out of the way,** — Ps. 14:3; 53:3. They have turned aside or gone back from the way of righteousness. **they are together become unprofitable;** — Ps. 14:3; 53:3. Worthless (NIV). The word in Ps. is filthy (KJV) or corrupt (NIV). It means that they had gone bad. Man was made

for a purpose in the plan of God. He is worthwhile only when he fills that purpose. But these were not filling their purpose. Hence they were unprofitable in the service of God. **there is none that doeth good, no, not one.** — Ps. 14:3; 53:3. This does not imply that no one ever did any good whatsoever. Rather it states that none does good unmixed with sin (Eccl. 7:20). Only God is absolutely good (Mt. 19:16-17). Thus no one, no, not one, is free from sin.

3:13-14 One of the ways all sin is with the tongue (Ps. 39:1; Prv. 10:19; Mt. 5:22; Jas. 3:2-18; 1 Pt. 3:10; Rv. 21:8). **Their throat is an open sepulchre;** — Ps. 5:9. As an open grave waiting to devour its victim. Or as an open tomb emitting its stench. **with their tongues they have used deceit;** — Ps. 5:9. They have led others astray by deceitful words. **the poison of asps is under their lips:** — Ps. 140:3. Their words are like poison released through the fangs of a serpent. **Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:** — Ps. 10:7. Their corrupt and profane speech showed the bitterness in their hearts. The mouth was made to praise God (this is the proper function of speech), but they had used it instead to blaspheme His holy name (they had put speech to the wrong use and it thereby became sinful).

3:15 **Their feet are swift to shed blood:** — Is. 59:7. Quick to murder, to shed innocent blood (Ex. 20:13; 1 Jn. 3:12, 15). It shows a low regard for human life.

3:16 **Destruction and misery are in their ways:** — Is. 59:7. When a people, any people, lose reverence for human life, there remains nothing for them but destruction and misery. They are treated with the same treatment they give (cf. Mt. 7:1-2). Their path is a path of ruin.

3:17 **And the way of peace have they not known:** — Is. 59:8. They know no peace, neither with themselves, with others, nor with God. Peace is a by-product of doing right. One might know peace to some degree while living in sin, but its highest expression is reserved only for those who love God and do His will (cf. Phil. 4:7).

3:18 **There is no fear of God before their eyes.** — Ps. 36:1. This is the heart of their problem: they had lost their reverence for God and therefore had no desire to do His will. And when this is the case, there are no restraints to moral corruption. Frank Harris, in his sordid autobiography, called *My Life and Love*, tells of the day he lost faith in God and the cold feeling that came over him as a result. He said, "I felt as though I had been stripped naked in the cold." What gloom, what despair must cloud the mind that suddenly recognizes that it has been stripped of belief in a Creator! It would be a living mind made by dead matter. But Harris then adds: "Suddenly a joy came to me: if Christianity was all lies and fairy tales like Mohammedanism, then the prohibitions of it were ridiculous and I could kiss and have any girl who would yield to me. At once I was partially reconciled to my spiritual nakedness: there was compensation." If there is no God, then there is no evil; every vile thing is permissible. But a fear of God causes one to depart from and hate evil (Prv. 16:6; 8:13). It is

the beginning of wisdom and knowledge (Ps. 111:10; Prv. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33). It prolongs life (Prv. 10:27; 14:27); gives confidence (Prv. 14:26); brings satisfaction (Prv. 19:23); and produces wealth, honor, and life (Prv. 22:4).

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## JUSTIFICATION CANNOT BE BY LAW

3:19-20 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

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3:19 **Now we know** — By the things that have been said in chapters 1:18-3:18. **that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:** — Probably the law of Moses is under consideration, but this principle would apply with equal force to any law. All laws are directed only to those who live under them. So was the law of Moses (cf. 2:12-16). But all are under a law of some sort. Hence all have sinned, either by commission (1 Jn. 3:4) or by omission (Jas. 4:17). **that every mouth may be stopped,** — Fenced up (Vincent). All are put to silence. None have a defense to offer against the conclusion that all have sinned. **and all the world may become guilty before God.** Every responsible being, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned (vv. 9, 23) and is thus liable to God — under the judgment of God (ASV). Paul thus states his conclusion again: all have sinned; all stand in need of salvation; and God's power to save is the gospel. Thus all, both Jews and Gentiles, must obey the gospel in order to be saved. He now (3:20-11:36) turns his attention to explore the ways and means by which the gospel saves from sin.

3:20 **Therefore** — Because (ASV). The ASV is preferable here. V. 20 does not give a conclusion drawn from v. 19, but the reason for all being guilty before God. **by the deeds of the law** — The works of the law (ASV). Rather by works of law — the article is missing in the original. It would be the law of Moses for the Jews, but some other for the Gentiles. **there shall be no flesh justified in his sight:** — Under law, any law, without the benefits of the death of Christ to pay the sin debt, lost man is utterly hopeless. There are only two ways by which one can be justified by law: (1) Never violate the law. For responsible persons, this would mean sinless perfection, a thing impossible to attain (Eccl. 7:20). (2) Having violated the law, pay the penalty in full. But the penalty of sin is death, eternal death. No one could pay the penalty and live. Thus the absolute impossibility of justification by law. **for by the law is the knowledge of sin.** — Through the law we become conscious of sin (NIV). The law reveals sin as sin — that is, sin is brought to light (7:8-13).

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

3:21-24 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

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3:21 **But now** — In the gospel, God's eternal plan to save. **the righteousness of God** — God's plan for making men righteous; the means by which a right relationship with Him is both established and maintained. **without the law** — By the gospel. The law knows nothing but condemnation for the guilty — it has no provision for pardon. But the gospel offers salvation, not by law keeping *per se*, but by the substitutionary death of Christ — man's sin debt is paid by Him. **is manifested**, — Made known (NIV) or revealed. **witnessed by the law and the prophets**; God's plan to save, as is revealed in the gospel, was foreseen, foreshadowed, and foretold by OT promises (Gn. 3:15; 12:1-3); prophecies (Is. 53); and types (Heb. 9:8-9). The whole scheme was according to the OT Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The OT thus testifies to the Christian system, that it is God's eternal plan (Eph. 3:10-11) by which all men can be saved (Is. 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9-12; Lk. 24:44). The forthcoming means of salvation is the very heart of the OT. It points forward to the coming Redeemer and the redemption which He would bring (cf. Dt. 18:18-19; Is. 2:2-4; 9:6; Dn. 2:44). The message of the OT: Redemption is coming! The message of the NT: Redemption has come! That redemption is the means by which man is made righteous — the means by which he is brought into right relationship with God. Hence, the OT bears witness to redemption through the gospel, to righteousness without the law.

3:22 **Even the righteousness of God** — The righteousness (which results from justification) provided for by God (in the gospel and made possible by the death of Christ) for all who will accept it upon His terms. **which is by faith of Jesus Christ** — Through faith in Jesus Christ (ASV). Righteousness (a right relationship with God) is on the basis of faith in Christ as God's Son and submission to Him as Lord (Jn. 8:24; Acts 2:37-39). **unto all and upon all who believe**: — Whether Jew or Gentile. The salvation offered through the gospel is conditioned upon faith — the gospel is a system of faith, but not in the sense that belief merits (or earns) salvation. There is no merit or power in faith *per se* to save. Nor is it in the sense of solely by faith, with no additional conditions. Salvation is predicated on other conditions (e.g., Acts 2:38). But what is true of faith is equally true of them. The gospel reveals God's plan to save (1:16-17), but before that plan can be effective it must be appropriated by faith and obedience, man's response to God's plan. Salvation is conditional, but the conditions are not meritorious. **for there is no difference**: — No distinction in Jews and Gentiles or any other class or race. All stand on equal grounds

with God. This means that there is no difference in man (Gal. 3:26-28); in sin (1 Jn. 3:4); in the penalty of sin (Ez. 18:4-20; Rom. 6:23); in the need of salvation (vv. 9-18); in the extension of God's grace (Ti. 2:11-12); in the sacrifice for sin (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pt. 1:18-19); in the revelation of God's plan, the gospel (1 Cor. 2:9-11; Rom. 1:16); or in the plan itself (Mk. 16:15-16).

3:23 **For all have sinned**, — No exceptions and no exemptions (see v. 9; 5:12; 11:32). **and come short of the glory of God**; — Fail to glorify God. Man glorifies God by being what he was made to be; when he fails to be what God made him to be, he dishonors God, his Maker and Sustainer. Hence, when one sins (and the essence of sin is to put to wrong use created things) he falls short of God's glory, that is, he fails of the purpose for which he was made — fails to give God that which is due Him.

3:24 **Being justified** — Brought into a right relationship with God. Man's sin had separated him from God (Is. 59:1-2). The gaping chasm could not be forged by man on his own. He had no way (under the law) to right his wrong. He therefore stood forever condemned. But God in His infinite love, wisdom, mercy, and grace sent Christ to bridge the gap and by His death make possible reconciliation. When the gap is bridged, the separated reconciled, man can then stand as just (righteous) before God, not on his own merits but by the merits of Christ's shed blood. **freely** — God's free gift (Eph. 2:8-9) — a gift without merit. **by his grace** — His unmerited favor. **through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**: — Redemption is in Christ (Eph. 1:7), made possible by His sacrificial death on the cross. To redeem is to buy back. Vincent (WS) says the word here means "to redeem by paying the price." Hence, the death of Christ pays man's sin debt and makes possible his justification.

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## THE JUSTICE OF GOD

3:25-26 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

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3:25 **Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation** — A sacrifice of atonement (NIV) or covering for sins. His blood is the ransom price (Mt. 20:28). **through faith in his blood**, — Blood represents life (Gn. 9:4; Lv. 17:11) and the blood of Christ (the sacrifice of His life) pays man's sin debt. His life was given so that we might live. The benefits of His blood is appropriated to our sins through faith. **to declare his righteousness** — He did this to demonstrate His justice (NIV). **for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God**; — Because of His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished (NIV) — because of the passing over of sins done beforehand (ASV). This irrefutably shows that without the shedding of Christ's blood, no one, past, present, or future, could be saved from sin. Those

under the OT system offered animal sacrifice, typical of the death of Christ, as a partial or temporary measure until the promised seed should come to make the ultimate sacrifice, which would finally and completely purge from sin. The blood of animals could not take away sins (Heb. 9:11-22; 10:1-4), then, nor, or ever. It only pointed forward to the sacrifice which would be truly efficacious. If sins could have been forgiven without the death of Christ, then Christ died in vain — His death was unnecessary. But the fact is, no sins were finally or absolutely forgiven until Christ died. His blood flowed backward (to all those who had obeyed God's plan) as well as forward. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can atone for sins, nothing can pay man's sin debt, but the blood of Christ. Of course those who trusted God and did His will under the OT had the promise of forgiveness — it was in promise rather than in fact. Forgiveness was therefore as sure as God's promise. This can be illustrated by the following incident: once when I lived in a distant city (about 400 miles away) I paid a visit to my parents. While there, two tires bursted on my car. There was no way to fix them. I would therefore have to purchase two new tires. But I neither had the money with me to do so nor did I have it in the bank back home. I revealed my dilemma to a nearby service station manager. He showed some sympathy with me. I then told him that if he would trust me I would write him a check and the first thing on Monday after I got home I would deposit enough in the bank to cover it. He agreed to this. I got my tires, gave him the check, and went on my way. He held my check until the next Monday, at which time I made the deposit. Now he had a check with no money in the bank to cover it, but he knew that it was just as good as my promise. If I kept my word he would get his money, though he would not actually get it until the specified time. So it was with God and His people in the OT. He promised them that if they would obey His laws, He would eventually provide them the ultimate means of forgiveness. This verse shows that those who believed Him were rewarded with the remission of their sins.

**3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness:** — His justice (NIV). **that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.** — Here Paul comes face-to-face with the problem in salvation in order to give the divine solution. How can God be just (true to His word) and save the sinner (whom He has said must die as the penalty of sins)? Sometimes it is asked, "How can a loving and good God send a lost sinner to hell?" From the Biblical perspective, this has the question in reverse. It does not take into consideration the profound problem in sin and its salvation. The question should be, "How can a loving and good God prevent a sinner (who has violated His law and as a result is under the penalty of death) from having to pay the penalty of eternal death for his sin? When God made man He said, in essence, the day you sin is the day you die (Gn. 2:17-18). Therefore the penalty of death passed upon him. But since all have sinned (vv. 9, 23; 5:12), this is as true of all men as it was of Adam. The penalty of death is therefore passed upon all. This

brings the problem into sharp focus: how can God be true to His word (just) or maintain the honor of His law and release the sinner from the penalty? The solution to this problem is found only in Christ. Christ died for man's sins (Heb. 9:26-28; 2 Cor. 5:21), that is, He died in man's stead. Thus when the sinner through faith accepts Christ, God accepts the death of Christ as the sinner's death, and the sinner is freed from the penalty. In this arrangement, death is paid for sin but the sinner does not have to die. God remains just and the sinner is set free. The death of Christ satisfied the demands so that God can be just and still justify the sinner who accepts Christ's death as a substitute for his own.

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## BOASTING EXCLUDED

3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

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**3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.** — In the marvelous scheme which God has provided to save man (see notes on v. 26), is there room for boasting on man's part? None whatsoever! God, and God alone, is responsible for the scheme of redemption. Man had no part in devising or delivering it and he certainly had nothing to offer in order to merit it. There is therefore no room for boasting. It is excluded because salvation is by God's grace (on the basis of faith rather than on the basis of law or merit) and not by man's work, that is, works of law or merit. This has reference to the provision of salvation or the giving of the gospel with its power to save, and not to any conditions which the gospel may contain.

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## FAITH AND LAW

3:28-31 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

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**3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith** — Man is brought into right relationship with God on the basis of faith rather than on the basis of law. This has no reference to faith as the sole condition of salvation, as is erroneously concluded by many and supposedly based upon Luther's addition to the word "only" here in his German translation. Faith and all other acts of obedience are works in some sense (Jn. 6:28-29; Jas. 2:24) but they are not works by which salvation is earned. God alone, without any obligation to man whatsoever, provided the gospel, His plan to save, but the gospel (provided solely by the grace of God) predicates salvation upon certain specified conditions (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 16:22; Rom. 6:3-4, 16-18). To comply with



the conditions is not salvation by works but salvation by faith at work (Jas. 2:17-22). **without the deeds of the law.** — If one is ever justified, he must be justified by means other than law. The law (actually any law standing alone) once violated knows nothing but penalty. It makes no provisions for pardon. Pardon belongs to another realm. It is a remedial act — an act to correct some injustice that has occurred in the process of trying to carry out the law and administer the penalty justly. When no injustice has occurred, pardon outrages the law. Thus pardon is an act to rectify an injustice, not an act of mercy. When the law was violated, there was no lawful way to escape the penalty. This is why the death of Christ was a necessity. His death paid the penalty — provided for man what man could not provide for himself. The benefits of His death is applied to sins by means of the gospel — the system of faith in contrast to a system of law.

3:29 **Is he the God of the Jews only?** — A rhetorical question demanding a negative reply. God is the God of the whole world, not just a national or tribal God. **is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:** — God is the God of all. All have sinned. All are equal in His sight. And all are offered salvation on precisely the same terms (Acts 2:38-39; 10:47-48). All who obey the gospel are added to the church, the one body of Christ (Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6).

3:30 **Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.** — If salvation had been by the law, then there would have been no hope for the Gentiles because the law had not been given to them. It was a covenant made between God and Israel alone (Dt. 5). But God now justifies all, both the circumcised and the uncircumcised, by the same faith. Paul may have had a distinction in mind, but I am unable to see the difference in by faith and through faith. If there is a difference, it does not effect the one faith by which both are saved.

3:31 **Do we make void the law through faith?** — Another rhetorical question demanding a negative reply, which Paul himself supplies. Faith does not nullify the law (or any law — the article is omitted here in the original but the context is discussing the law of Moses and I see no reason to think that the subject matter has changed; rather, if my view of the next expression is correct, then the law of Moses is mandated). **God forbid:** — See note on v. 4. **yea, we establish the law.** — We reach the purpose for which the law was given, the very end toward which it pointed. The keeping of the law *per se* was not the ultimate end it had in view; it was only the means to an end. The end of the law was justification by faith made possible by the death of Christ. The law bore witness to the righteousness which was to come (v. 21). Its design was to bring the Jews to that righteousness — to Christ (Gal. 3:19-27). When Christ came, the law had served its purpose and was therefore fulfilled (Mt. 5:17-18). The righteousness which was made possible by Christ is the end or purpose of the law (10:4). When one becomes righteous in Christ, by means of the

gospel, he does not nullify the law; rather he confirms its purpose — he has reached the end to which the law was designed to bring him, namely, the righteousness of God without the law (v. 21). Or to state it differently, righteousness was the end toward which the law pointed. We become righteous in Christ (v. 24). Therefore when we are made righteous in Christ, we have attained the end of the law, that is, we have established or confirmed its purpose.

## ROMANS 4

# ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

4:1-3 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

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4:1 **What shall we say then that Abraham our father,** — God separated Abraham to become the father of the Hebrew nation (Gn. 11:29-31; 12:1-4; Jn. 8:33) and in a spiritual sense all those even today who are in a right relationship with God (Gal. 3:26-29). He is called the father of the faithful (v. 16). **as pertaining to the flesh,** — Our father according to the flesh (RSV) — our human ancestor (BV). This expression has been subjected to numerous interpretations, but I believe these two versions have caught its real meaning. **hath found?** — What did Abraham, our ancestor, find pertaining to justification? Another rhetorical question. Paul's point here is to show that Abraham was not justified by works of law or merit (that is, his relationship with God was not on the basis of meritorious works). And if Abraham could not be so justified, it would be presumptuous for anyone else to make such a claim.

4:2 **For if Abraham were justified by works,** — Of course he was not, but if he had been it would have meant that he never sinned. **he hath whereof to glory;** — He would have something for which to praise himself. Or as the NIV renders it, he had something to boast about. Indeed! **but not before God.** — Not in God's sight. And since justification must be before God, not man, he was not and could not have been justified by works.

4:3 **For what saith the scripture?** — The OT Scriptures. The question is, what does God's word have to say about Abraham's justification, as to whether it was by works or by faith? He cites Gn. 15:6 to give the answer. **Abraham believed God,** — He took God at His word. God had promised to make a great nation of his seed (Gn. 12:1-3), but Abraham was now getting old and he was seedless (as far as Sarah was concerned). God told him that "he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels" will produce seed that will be as numberless as the stars of heaven (Gn. 15:1-5). This was seemingly an incredible promise, but Abraham believed it even against the odds — he believed that

God was able to keep His word. **and it** — His faith. **was counted unto him for righteousness.** — His faith was credited to him as righteousness. This concept is often used to show that Abraham was saved by faith alone, but how anyone could study the context of Gn. 12-15 and so conclude is beyond my power to conceive. Abraham had been called from the Ur of the Chaldees many years before this incident and he had long been a servant of the true God (see Gn. 12-14). Now God promises him a son through which all His promises will be fulfilled. Although Abraham is old and Sarah is past the age of childbearing, he believes God's promise. And God counted that belief as righteousness. It should be understood that belief *per se* is not righteousness. It is righteousness only when and if God counts or reckons it as such. Or as Luther said (according to a note I have made on a card but for which I have given no reference), in his lectures on Romans, "All works have only as much worth as God reckons them to have." And this includes faith as well as other acts of obedience. Thus Abraham's faith was righteousness only because God so reckoned it. So it is with our faith . . . and our obedience. Any attitude or act in service to God is useless unless He counts it as righteousness. In fact, no act or belief is righteousness unless and until it is so counted by God.

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## FAITH RECKONED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

4:4-8 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

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**4:4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.** — If one works out or earns his salvation, by works of merit or by perfectly keeping the law, God would be under obligation to give it unto him — it would be the reward of one's labor, something due him because of his own goodness. But salvation is not on such grounds. It is a gift of God's grace — unmerited favor. God gave it without any obligations to man whatsoever. Thus it is of grace, not of debt.

**4:5 But to him that worketh not,** — One who does not work expecting salvation as a payment of his labor. This certainly does not mean one who ignores or sets aside God's will. Abraham worked (Jas. 2:21), but his works were not meritorious. Thus no reference whatsoever is here meant in regards to obedience, which is required by a living active faith (Jas. 2:22). **but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,** — Christ, the Son of God, Savior of the world, and the sacrifice for sins. **his faith is counted for righteousness.** — As was Abraham's (v. 4), faith is credited as righteousness to the believer's account. Keep in mind that man cannot be righteous by law or works of merit.

The only way he can stand in right relationship with God is by having his sins forgiven through the shed blood of Christ. Righteousness is thus not on the basis of meritorious works but on the basis of faith — a faith which takes God at His word and follows His instructions, as did Abraham. If one could earn his salvation by works, he would have no need for the sacrificial death of Christ. This does not mean that we have no obligation in our salvation. The death of Christ substitutes for the sinner's death only when the sinner accepts Him as Savior and obeys Him as Lord (6:16-18; Heb. 5:8-9). While salvation cannot be on the basis of a debt paid for perfect service rendered, this in no way changes the fact that gospel obedience is mandatory in God's scheme of redemption. Works of obedience are therefore not under consideration here. It is works of merit (or law). Salvation is always viewed as a matter of favor, never as a matter of debt.

**4:6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, —** Abraham's faith had been counted to him as righteousness, but he had lived before the giving of the law. What about those who lived under the law? Paul now shows that the very same things is true of those described by David who had lived under the law. Thus even those under the law, who were counted righteous, were righteous on some basis other than law keeping. **unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, —** To impute is to count or credit. God counted them righteous, not on the basis of meritorious works, but because of their faith. By faith, in contrast to works of merit, they were in right relationship with God. There has been a tremendous amount of discussion on imputed righteousness, and many concepts have grown up around it. But every student should have a firm grasp of what Paul had in mind. He is not saying that God imputes actual righteousness to a believer — that is, infuse righteousness into the soul or count the person as doing right when he is not doing right. To do so, God would be forced to ignore man's free will, the exercise of which results either in evil or good. Righteousness, in this sense, cannot be forced upon man. The Bible says, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 Jn. 3:7). But Paul is saying that by faith in Christ (complete submission to His will) we can reap the benefits of the death of Christ. When we believe in Christ (meeting all the conditions this term involves), the death of Christ is applied to our account — that is, His death pays our sin debt. Because of His death we can therefore stand justified (be in right relationship with God). This justification is not by our own righteousness (works), but by the death of Christ. His death counts for our death and we are righteous because of what He did for us and not because of what we have done for ourselves. We are therefore counted righteous because of His death. This is what I understand by imputed righteousness — the right standing with God which is made possible by the sacrificial death of the Son of God.

**4:7-8 Saying, —** The words of David from Ps. 32:1-2. **blessed are they**

**whose iniquities are forgiven,** — Forgiveness means that one's sin debt has been completely cancelled; he has been released from the penalty. **and whose sins are covered.** — Covered by the blood of Christ, sins for which atonement has been made. **Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.** — They are not imputed or counted because they are forgiven. God counts sin, all sin, as sin. But once sins are covered, forgiven, they are no longer credited to one's account.

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS DOES NOT DEPEND ON CIRCUMCISION

4:9-12 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

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**4:9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?** — This introduces an argument (vv. 9-12) designed to show that the blessing of justification (by faith) was not limited to the circumcised (Jews) alone, but extended to the uncircumcised (Gentiles) also. **for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.** — See note on v. 3.

**4:10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?** — In what period of his life was his faith counted to him for righteousness? Was it before or after circumcision? **Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.** — It was before circumcision (Gn. 15:6; 17:9-14). Thus Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness before circumcision. But if this is true of Abraham, the father of the faithful, by what reason could a Jew conclude that the Gentiles must be circumcised before their faith could be counted to them as righteousness? None whatsoever.

**4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision,** — Circumcision was a sign, a mark, or a token of the covenant (Gn. 17:11). **a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised:** — A seal of the faith (which was counted to him for righteousness) which he possessed before he was circumcised. **that he might be the father of all them that believe,** — The father of all the faithful, whether Jew or Gentile (Gal. 3:26-29). **though they be not circumcised;** — The Gentile believers. **that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:** — Just as it had been counted to Abraham in uncircumcision. Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness before he was circumcised. This is Paul's point here. But this was before the command to circumcise himself, his household, and the

strangers in his house was given. Once the command was given, he could not have maintained his state of right relationship with God without circumcision. Thus Paul is not arguing that Abraham was not obliged to obey God in order to be counted righteous; he is simply pointing out to the Judaizers that God counted his faith as righteousness before circumcision was given. If Abraham could be counted righteous without circumcision (before it was commanded), so could the Gentiles (to whom it was never commanded). As a religious rite, under Christ, circumcision has no value or significances (1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 5:6; 6:15; Col. 3:11).

4:12 **And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.** — While there is some difficulty in the verse, I think it simply says that Abraham is the spiritual father of all who walk by the faith of Abraham, whether circumcised (Jews) or uncircumcised (Gentiles). Lightfoot says the meaning is, "Though himself belonging to the circumcision, yet his fatherhood extends beyond the circumcision to all who imitate his faith."

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## THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM WAS RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH, INDEPENDENT OF THE LAW

4:13-15 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

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4:13 **The promise** — Gn. 12:1-3; 15:8-21; 17:1-8. The promise to Abraham was twofold, physical and spiritual. The physical promise consisted in Abraham becoming a great nation and that nation being given the land of Canaan. This was fulfilled in ancient Israel (Jos. 21:43-45; 23:14). The spiritual promise included all that pertains to the Christian system (Gal. 3:13-16, 26-29). Ultimately this promise was of justification by faith, not by law. **that he should be the heir of the world,** — This has reference to the spiritual part of the promise. Abraham and his seed became heir of the world through Jesus Christ (Ps. 2:7-8; Heb. 1:1-4). **was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law,** — No article is before law in the original, which may indicate that the promise came neither by the law of Moses (which is most certainly included) or any other law. **but through the righteousness of faith.** — The faith which is counted as righteousness. That is, the faith of the Son of God, the faith delivered in the gospel (Jude 3).

4:14 **For if they which are of the law** — Those who live by the law (NIV). **be heirs,** — The Jews thought that all the promises and blessings of

God would come by the law or that those who kept the law would be the heirs of the promise. But the promise was made before the law was given and pointed to something beyond the law. The law was added because of transgressions until the promised seed should come (Gal. 3:19). The law was not the promise nor was it a part of the fulfillment (Gal. 3:17-18). **faith is made void**, — Has no value (NIV). **and the promise made of none effect**: — Worthless (NIV). This is another way of saying that if the blessing of justification comes by law, then faith (which is counted as righteousness) would be both void and worthless. Justification cannot be by law and by faith at one and the same time (see vv. 3-4).

4:15 **Because the law worketh wrath**: — The law is a system which condemns a sinner rather than saves him. Once the law is violated, it knows nothing but penalty. Pardon is a remedial act — one designed to correct some injustice that has occurred in the process of trying to administer the penalty justly. Where no injustice has occurred, pardon outrages the law. Paul describes his condition as a sinner under law in 7:9-23 and thereby shows how the law works wrath or brings condemnation. **for where no law is, there is no transgression**. — One cannot transgress a law before it is given or before it goes into effect. Abraham did not live under the law of Moses. Thus he could not transgress that law and consequently could not be under its wrath. The argument seems to be: where there is no law there is no transgression; where there is no transgression there is no wrath (no condemnation for violating the law). The converse would also be true: where there is law there is transgression; and where there is transgression there is wrath or condemnation. All men are now amenable to the law of God as it is revealed in the NT system and one reasons falsely when he ignores this fact and argues as if there were no law. For example, in my debate with Fred Waggoner on the music question, he reasoned: (1) Where there is no law there is no transgression. (2) But there is no law against the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. (3) Therefore, there is no transgression (and thus no sin or wrath) in using instrumental music in Christian worship. This reasoning completely ignores the context. The thought is that Abraham could not be judged for not observing the law of Moses, because that law had not yet been given. I replied to Waggoner by pointing out the fact that his whole argument was fallacious because we *do* have a law, the NT. But furthermore, the law we do have teaches that anything not in harmony with it is sinful in service to God. Hence, we have a law and that law prohibits all that it does not authorize. And since it does not authorize the use of instrumental music in Christian worship, we violate the law (the NT) by its use. And since we have a law, and since the law is violated by the use of instrumental music in Christian worship, those who use it are under the wrath of the law — that is, they are under its condemnation.



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## ABRAHAM, AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH

4:16-22 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

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4:16 **Therefore it** — The promise, the end of which is justification. **is of faith,** — The system of faith, not by the system of law. **that it might be by grace;** — By divine favor rather than by human merit. **to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed;** — To all those who are of the faith of Abraham. **not to that only which is of the law,** — not only to those who are of the law (NIV). The Jews. The fact is, if the promise (justification) had come by law, no one could have attained it because no one could keep the law perfectly. And once the law was violated, it had no means of bringing one back into right relationship with God. Thus it was impossible for the promise (of justification) to be by law. **but to that also which is of faith of Abraham;** — but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham (NIV). The faith of Abraham is the faith that is counted to one for righteousness. It is the faith that takes God at His word and follows the instructions given. **who is the father of us all,** — The father of all whose faith is counted to them for righteousness because he is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Gal. 3:26-29) and in whom we have received the blessing of justification (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11), the promise made to Abraham.

4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) — Gn. 17:5. The many nations are the people of all nations who have the faith of Abraham. He is their father because they are in Christ and Christ is the promised seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). **before him whom he believed, even God,** — God made the promise and Abraham believed it, even though it seemed incredible (Gn. 15:1-6). **who quickeneth the dead,** — The dead womb of Sarah. Although Sarah was well past the age of childbearing, and in this sense both she and Abraham were dead — dead to the possibility of a natural birth, God quickened (or made alive) her body so that it conceived and the promised child was born (Gn. 21:1-3). **and calleth those things which be not as though they were.** — Reference is here made as to the way God spoke of the fulfillment of the promise, which was then yet to be. Before Isaac was born, before a single nation from his seed existed, God said to Abraham, "A father of many nations have I made thee" (Gn. 17:5). The NIV renders this more forcefully, "For I have made you a father of many nations." He thus

spoke as if Abraham was already the father of nations. He called things which were not as though they were. He could do so because they were certain to be.

4:18 **Who against hope** — Who in hope (ASV), against all hope (NIV). God promised that through Abraham's seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gn. 12:1-3; 15:1-6). But at this time Sarah was both barren and far past the age of childbearing, which removed all natural hope for the fulfillment of the promise. Thus the promise was against all human expectation. **believed in hope**, — believed against hope (ASV), in hope believed (NIV). He believed God when the promise seemed impossible. He rested his case on God's promises, believing that God was able to keep His word (vv. 20-21). **that he might become the father of many nations**, — Through the promised child, Isaac. **according to that which was spoken**, — By God to Abraham (Gn. 15:5). **So shall thy seed be**. — As numberless as the stars of heaven (Gn. 15:5).

4:19 **And being not weak in faith**, — Strong in faith. His confidence in God's integrity to keep His promises was stronger than the apparent difficulties which stood in the way. **he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old**, — The fact that he was at this advanced age and that nature was against the promise was not permitted to weaken his faith. His power of reproduction was still active — he fathered children many years after this (Gn. 25:1-4), but it was as good as dead as it related to Sarah, who was barren. The promise did not pertain to Abraham's children by other women; it pertained to Sarah alone. Hence he could rightly consider his body as dead as it related to children by Sarah — that is, the promised child. **neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb**: — She was both barren and "past age" (Heb. 11:11). The point here is that Abraham's faith was strong enough to overcome the obstacles placed in its path. He believed God, even when the word of God seemed to be against nature, reason, and knowledge. When God spoke, that settled the matter with him. He did not permit the difficulties to weaken his faith. And it was this kind of strong, active faith that was counted to him for righteousness (vv. 4, 22). So it will be with us.

4:20 **He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God**; — He believed God when God's promise seemed incredible. He thus honored God as one worthy to be believed and trusted, even when what He said seemed to go contrary to nature, reason, and knowledge. In short, Abraham believed God rather than his own human judgments and conclusions, and in so doing he glorified God.

4:21 **And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform**. — He believed God's promise because he believed in the omnipotent power of God — he believed that God was able!

4:22 **And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness**. — See note on v. 3. While the promise pertained to Isaac, v. 3 refers to a time before the birth of Ishmael. Now the same thing is said of Abraham's faith just

before the conception of Isaac, approximately 15 years later (Gn. 17:1-2). By no stretch of the imagination therefore can one conclude that Paul meant that the righteousness imputed on account of faith means justification from alien sins — that is, he could not have had reference to the new birth, to conversion, to the establishment of covenant relationship, or to the time when God recognizes one as His adopted child. Rather he has reference to how a believer's service is counted as righteousness — his service is counted as righteousness on the basis of his faith. We can now stand in right relationship with God by the death of Christ, not by our own merit (which is called our own righteousness or right doing in Phil. 3:9). Because we have accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior, God has accepted His death as the full atonement for our sins. This makes it possible for us to be justified (made righteous or stand in right relationship with God) by faith. And when a believer follows God's instructions, his acts or services (done by faith) are credited to him for righteousness (right doing). The word righteousness is used in two senses, meaning right relationship and right doing. Right relationship (justification) is made possible by the death of Christ; right doing is possible only because of right relationship. There is nothing in baptism, the Lord's Supper, fellowship, etc., to commend one to God. But because they are done by faith, done because God requires them, they are counted as righteousness.

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## FAITH IN CHRIST

4:23-25 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

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4:23-24 **Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him: But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;** — Abraham was used as an example of how righteousness will be counted to the believer in Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead. See notes on vv. 3, 22.

4:25 **Who was delivered** — Delivered over to death (NIV). He died on the cross. **for our offences,** — Our sins. The death of Christ paid the sin debt in full and thus made it possible for all to be justified — counted righteous before God. **and was raised again** — Raised to life (NIV). Raised from the dead (Mt. 28:1-6; 1 Cor. 15:1-4, 12-20). **for our justification.** — To accomplish or complete our justification.

## ROMANS 5

# JUSTIFICATION BRINGS PEACE, HOPE, AND LOVE

5:1-5 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope; And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

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5:1 **Therefore** — Introduces a conclusion drawn from what had previously been said, probably from the first four chapters, but especially from 3:20-4:25. Paul had shown (1) that the gospel is the power of God to save (1:16); (2) that all have sinned (3:9, 23); (3) that it is impossible to be saved by law (3:20); (4) that Abraham was justified by faith (4:3); and (5) that all the Scriptures say about Abraham was not said for his sake alone but for ours to show us that we too are justified by faith (4:23-25). **being justified** — To justify is to set right or to regard as innocent with respect to law — to pronounce one free from the guilt and penalty of violation. **by faith**, — Justification is by faith in contrast to law. One should not conclude that this means faith only (apart from any further acts of obedience). Faith covers all that is required in the plan given by the grace of God. For example: by faith Abel offered a sacrifice (Heb. 11:4). The offering was included in his faith. By faith Noah built an ark (Heb. 11:7). The labor of many years is included in his faith. By faith the walls of Jericho fell (Heb. 11:30). The word faith covers marching around the city thirteen times in seven days (Jos. 6). Thus when Paul says we are justified by faith, he includes submission to every command that is obeyed by faith, such as repentance (Acts 17:30); baptism (Acts 2:38); living a faithful Christian life (6:4; Rv. 2:10). Every act of obedience that is rendered by faith is counted as righteousness. Faith is thus put for the whole plan because it is the foundation on which the structure of justification is built (on man's part). **we have peace with God** — As sinners we were estranged (at enmity), but we are now reconciled (at peace) with God (2 Cor. 5:19-21). The sin which separated us (Is. 59:1-2) has been forgiven (Eph. 1:7). We are therefore no longer enemies, but friends — no longer separated but reconciled. Both Robertson (WP) and Vincent (WS), along with an impressive number of translations (based on substantial textual evidence), say this should read, "Let us have peace with God." Without professing to set-

tle the difficulty, I prefer the KJV, ASV, and NIV, which say in essence that because we have been justified all our differences with God have been settled and as a consequence we are now at peace with Him. Peace is the result of justification, not something the justified are urged to appropriate. **through our Lord Jesus Christ:** — The grounds of our justification. Christ bridged the gap between God and man and made peace possible (Eph. 2:14-16). His death paid our sin debt, thus making it possible for us to be justified.

5:2 **By whom** — The Lord Jesus Christ. **we have access** — Introduction or entrance made possible by Christ. Has reference to what Christ has done for us. He paid our sin debt and thus cleared the way for our entrance (access) into God's favor. **by faith** — Access is made possible by Christ; faith is man's part in the entrance into grace. He must believe in Christ, the efficacy of God's scheme, and that God will save him (keep His word) when he does what is required in the gospel plan. **into this grace** — God's favor. **wherein we stand,** — Into which we have already been brought by faith in Christ. **and rejoice** — Exult, boast, or glory. **in hope of the glory of God.** — Rejoice in the hope that our restoration to His favor will bring the glory to God which is due Him. Our fall brought dishonor to Him . . . and to us. It prevented us from filling the purpose for which He made us. Now, in Christ, we can fill that purpose. Thus we rejoice in the hope that our redemption not only brings salvation to us but also glory to God.

5:3 **And not only so,** — In addition to rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God (v. 2). **but we glory** — Rejoice (NIV), the same word that is so translated in v. 2. **in tribulations also:** — Sufferings (NIV). Tribulation usually refers to afflictions imposed from without, either from persons or circumstances, often resulting from persecution (Mt. 5:10-12). **knowing that tribulation worketh patience;** — Affliction or suffering is a great teacher of patience. Or as the NIV says, suffering produces perseverance. Suffering, whether from persecution or any other source, can result in good advantages for the sufferer. God can and does work good from it (8:28-30), as this and the following vv. show. Paul's point is that suffering starts a chain reaction that ends with the love of God being poured into our hearts by the HS. Thus in suffering one should look for and rejoice in the ultimate results rather than becoming bogged down in and discouraged by the present discomforts. Paul will later (8:18-39) give some reasons why one should endure suffering. For further Scriptural teaching on suffering, see 2 Cor. 1:4-10; 12:7-10; Heb. 12:5-11; 1 Pt. 1:6-8.

5:4 **And patience, experience; and experience, hope:** — Experience and hope are two more links in the chain between tribulation and the heart filled with the love of God (see v. 3).

5:5 **And hope maketh not ashamed;** — Does not disappoint us (NIV). The cycle is here completed. He started with the hope of the glory of God (v. 2), turned to show that we should rejoice in tribulations because they work patience or endurance (v. 3), and patience works experience or soundness of

character, and experience works hope or expectation (v. 4), and hope makes unshamed because the heart is filled with the love of God — and that love is the motive for the hope of His glory. **because the love of God** — Love toward God, the love which is from God but which is in us. This must be the case because it is the love that is poured out (NIV) into our hearts and is the basis of our hope. It is thus the love that is within the heart — the love that has God as its source and the individual as the lover. **is shed abroad** — Poured out (NIV) or abundantly produced. **in our hearts by the Holy Ghost** — Not directly or miraculously but indirectly, through the teaching of the HS. In the gospel He reveals a loving God (Jn. 3:16) and a loving Savior (v. 8) and gives us all possible reasons to love in return (1 Jn. 4:7-21). The Spirit gives the motivation for the love, but, in the final analysis, love is the action of the individual himself. The HS teaches us to love, and when we follow His instructions, He fills our hearts with love through the gospel of God's dear Son. **which is given unto us.** — The HS, the giver of love, is Himself a gift (8:9; Acts 2:38; 5:32).

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## RECONCILIATION THROUGH CHRIST

5:6-11 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

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5:6 **For when we were yet without strength,** — Weak (ASV); powerless (NIV); or hopeless. We were separated from God (Is. 59:1-2); lost, and under the penalty of eternal death (6:23). We had absolutely no power to save ourselves (Eph. 2:9; Ti. 3:5); no merit to commend us to God (Is. 64:6); and we could not be saved by law (3:20). Thus as far as our own strength was concerned, we were utterly hopeless (Eph. 2:12). This forcefully points up again the fact that we are totally dependent upon God for the means (the scheme or plan) of salvation. Of course sinful man can and must obey the plan when it is given (and it is given in the gospel) but he is totally dependent upon the grace of God to give the plan. **in due time** — The fulness of time (Gal. 4:4-5; Eph. 1:10; Ti. 1:3), according to God's timetable, and as foretold by the prophets. **Christ died** — Sacrificed Himself on the cruel cross of Calvary to pay man's sin debt — He died on behalf of and in man's stead (Is. 53). Where we were weak and powerless, He supplied our needs. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves. **for the ungodly.** — For sinners (v. 8), which means everyone (3:9, 23; 5:12).

5:7 **For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.** — If Paul had a distinction in mind between a righteous and good person, it lies in the fact that

the just person abides strictly by the letter of the law (that is, he is merely righteous) while the good person is both just and kind (involved emotionally), but I am unable to discern that distinction here. To my mind, a good person would be righteous and a righteous person would be good. Very rarely (NIV) one might be found who would sacrifice his life for a just or kind person, but never for an enemy. Yet Paul's purpose is to sharply contrast what one would rarely do in the case of good men and what Christ has done for us. While we were His enemies, neither righteous nor good, He died in our stead (v. 8).

5:8 **But God commendeth his love toward us,** — Demonstrated His own love for us (NIV). He did not just love in heart, thought, or word, but in deed. His love, as all love must, showed itself in action (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:9-10; Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24; 1 Jn. 4:11-12). **in that,** — The manner in which God's love is demonstrated is hereby introduced. **while we were yet sinners,** — While we were still enemies of God, rebellious against His will, lost in sin, and with absolutely nothing to commend us to Him. **Christ died for us.** — In our behalf or in our stead. He died for us, not because we merited it, not because we were friends, but because we were sinners, lost, and hopeless — because it was an absolute necessity for our salvation (v. 6).

5:9 **Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.** — Salvation is here seen both as a present reality and as a future hope. Justification by His blood means that we are saved from the penalty of sin; salvation from wrath means that we will not suffer its due punishment, everlasting destruction (2 Thes. 1:7-9). Since we have now been justified (made to stand in right relationship with God) by the death of Christ, how much more certainly will we escape the wrath to come by remaining in Him (2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 15:1-10), where there is no condemnation (8:1). Here the more difficult, salvation from sins, is used to argue for the lesser difficult, salvation eternally. This is further emphasized in v. 10.

5:10 **For if,** — Introducing a further contrast between what has been done for us (salvation from past sins by the death of Christ) and what is yet to be done (eternal salvation by or through His resurrected life). **when we were enemies,** — We were sinners, rebellious, and had, by sin, removed ourselves from the rule of God (Eph. 2:12). Rejecting His way for our own, assuming the role of God by trying to rule our own lives apart from and contrary to His will, was tantamount to being the enemies of God. **we were reconciled to God** — Saved or brought back into union and communion with God (2 Cor. 5:19-21). **by the death of his Son,** — His death substituted for our death, our sin penalty. It is the means by which reconciliation with God is possible. **much more, being reconciled,** — As in v. 9 the argument is made from the more difficult truth already proven (that is, the greater, the reconciliation of His enemies by the death of Christ) to prove the less difficult (the lesser, eternal life for the reconciled). **we shall be saved by his life.** — Through His life (NIV). The death of Christ made possible reconciliation; His resurrection, His new life,

gives certain hope that the union will continue throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

5:11 **And not only so**, — Two grand blessings are in the context, that salvation which now is (by the death of Christ) and the salvation which shall be (by the life of Christ), vv. 9-10. These words introduce a third, rejoicing in Christ — rejoicing because of what is and in what is yet to be (1 Pt. 1:6, 8). **but we also joy** — Rejoice (ASV). The same Greek word as in vv. 2-3. **in God through our Lord Jesus Christ**, — By whose sacrificial death all these blessings are possible, to whom belongs all the honor and glory (1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17; Rv. 5:13; 1 Tm. 6:15-16). **by whom we have now received the atonement**. — Reconciliation (ASV). The reconciliation is a present reality, made possible not by law or merit but by the death of Christ, the only means by which sinful men can be reconciled to God. Our past sins have been forgiven; we stand justified in Christ; and we shall be saved from the wrath to come. There is, therefore, good reason to rejoice.

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## DEATH CAME BY ADAM, LIFE BY CHRIST

5:12-21 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

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5:12-21 This section admittedly offers some difficulties, so much so in fact that some consider it the most difficult section in the whole book of Romans, if indeed not in the entire NT. One thing should be kept in mind: the whole section is a contrast between Adam's sin and the benefits of Christ's death. It is therefore imperative that we determine the kind of death (spiritual or physical) Paul had in mind. Although many great, learned, and noble men have concluded that physical death is meant (since all die physically), the context forces me to the conclusion that it is spiritual death (and by spiritual death I mean the penalty of sin or separation from God). Following are some of the internal reasons which have led me to this conclusion: (1) Death is mentioned as the result of each one's sin (v. 12), but all die physically, whether they sin or not (e.g., infants, mentally retarded, etc.). (2) That which is produced by sin (death) is op-



posite that which is given through Christ (vv. 15-17). (3) That which was lost by Adam's sin can be regained in Christ (vv. 15-18). (4) The one is condemnation and the other is justification (vv. 16, 18). (5) Death (which comes by sin) is contrasted with the life given by Christ (v. 17). (6) In one we are made sinners, but in the other we are made righteous (v. 19). (7) Death is contrasted with eternal life (v. 19). (8) The offence (resulting in death) is contrasted with grace (life or salvation) (v. 20). (9) Sin, which reigned unto death, is contrasted with righteousness, which is to eternal life (v. 21). Thus I am forced to the conclusion that death in this section means spiritual death or separation from God, although this does not exclude the possibility (which is undoubtedly a fact) that physical death is a consequence of sin. To further see the force of my conclusion I suggest that you read the whole section substituting "sin's penalty" for the word "death." Now read it again and substitute "physical death." From this it should clearly be seen that for the passage to mean physical death then physical death must be the penalty of sin. But physical death is not the penalty of sin. The penalty of sin is separation from God or spiritual death. The section cannot, therefore, mean physical death.

5:12 **Wherefore**, — Because of this (Young's Literal Translation), connecting vv. 6-11 with what follows. **as by one man** — Adam, the first to sin (Adam and Eve are seen as a unit, hence only Adam is mentioned). **sin** — The violation of God's will (1 Jn. 3:4) or the removal of one's thoughts, actions, and life from under the direction of God. God is man's rightful ruler. When he is ruled by anything or anyone else, that is sin. **entered into the world**, — Sin had its origin in Adam as far as man himself and the present order of the world are concerned (it is obvious that the serpent or devil had sinned previous to this, but his rebellion goes back to another order). By his disobedience Adam brought sin into the world and it thereby brought everyone, for all time to come, under its potential. All did not sin in Adam (except in the sense that Adam brought sin into the world), but all did become potential sinners because of him (and all sin in actuality at the time of accountability). **and death by sin**; — The death which is the penalty of sin (6:23). Death here means the death which is caused by sin, that is, its penalty, not physical death (all die physically whether they sin or not), although physical death is unquestionably a consequence. **and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned**: — Death is coextensive with sin, and sin is universal (among all responsible people). Hence all who sin die (Gn. 2:17; 3:2-3).

5:13 (**For until the law** — The article is missing in the Greek but this undoubtedly refers to the law of Moses, which was given centuries after Adam had sinned. **sin was in the world**: — All sinned before the law of Moses was given as well as under the law. We must not be guilty of thinking that the law of Moses was the only law God had before the coming of Christ. God has always had a moral law in force. **but sin** — The violation of law. **is not imputed where there is no law**. — Cf. note on 4:15. Since sin is not counted to one

where there is no law, and since sin was counted to those who lived from Adam to Moses (because as v. 14 shows, they suffered its penalty), this proves conclusively that there was a law in force then (not the law of Moses and perhaps no other written law, but the moral law, which has always and at all times been in effect for all people the world over). During this period Cain killed his brother Abel (Gn. 4:1-16; 1 Jn. 3:12). He sinned. Thus there was law. The violation of that law was sin. And sin brought death.

5:14 **Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses,** — The point in this, and in the following vv., seems to be that Adam violated a positive law and that violation produced death. But after Adam, and before the giving of the law, man had violated moral law, and that too resulted in death. Thus the violation of law is sin, whether it be a positive or moral law of God. Sin brings death. Therefore death (spiritual death or separation from God) reigned from Adam to Moses just as it has in all other periods of time. **even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,** — This does not mean that they had not sinned at all; they had, as he had just shown. Their sin differed from Adam's in that he violated a positive law while they violated moral law. This must be the case because they died as a result of sin and v. 12 shows that death results from sins personally committed. **who — Adam. is the figure — Type. of him that was to come. — Christ.**

5:15 **But not as the offence,** — Adam's sin which resulted in the fall (Gn. 3:1-24). **so also the free gift.** — God's gracious scheme to redeem. The sin and the gift are contrasted as opposites. Adam brought sin; Christ the free gift. Because of Adam we are born into a world of sin; because of Christ we can escape the sinful world. **For if through the offence of one many be dead,** — Dead in sin (Eph. 2:1-5). Adam brought sin into the world and its consequences (not its guilt) passed upon all. All became potential sinners. And all responsible people do sin (3:9, 23; Gal. 3:22). Thus we do not die (spiritually) because of Adam's sins but because of our own (6:23). Sin, and death by sin, entered the world through Adam, but each man is responsible only for his own sins. **much more the grace of God,** — The gift goes far beyond the offence of Adam. It offers a remedy for all sins (v. 20), saving even to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). **and the gift by grace,** — The scheme of redemption is given by God's merciful favor (Eph. 2:8-9). **which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.** — Redemption is unlimited. Salvation is offered to all upon identical terms (Mt. 11:28-30; Mk. 16:15-16; Rv. 22:17). The many who died in Adam can now be made alive in Christ! The two vital words here are offence and gift. The offence came through Adam; the free gift through Christ. But neither the offence nor the free gift is applied to one apart from his own actions and involvement. One dies (is lost) only when he violates the will of God; he is saved only when he accepts and appropriates (through obedience to the divine will) the free gift. We no more suffer the penalty of Adam's sin unconditionally than we receive the benefits of the gift uncondi-

tionally. Both are predicated upon our volitional response.

5:16 **And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.** — The contrast of v. 15 is here continued. It is condemnation (spiritual death or the death penalty) in the one and justification (salvation or the free gift) in the other. The former was brought upon us by Adam; the latter is made possible by the death of Christ.

5:17 **For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)** — If we know that by the sin of Adam death reigns over all (because all have sinned, v. 12), how much more certain is it that by the grace of God, His gift that makes right standing with Him possible, life (redemption from death) reigns through Christ.

5:18 **Therefore** — Informs us that a conclusion follows — the conclusion drawn from v. 12. **as by the offence of one** — Adam's sin. **judgment came** — Words supplied by the translators. **upon all men** — All who sin. Paul's theme is the gospel, God's power to save sinners. Thus the context of the book is all sinners, not all in the absolute sense. The all men condemned (in Adam) must be coextensive with the all men made righteous (in Christ). If the former meant absolutely all, so would the latter. But the latter is limited to those who comply with the stipulated conditions (Mk. 16:16); so with the former — all who commit sin. **to condemnation;** — Spiritual death. Those who make death in this section physical ought to lose a lot of sleep over the contrast here — condemnation and justification, synonyms for death (the penalty of sin) and life (the gift of God) (6:23). It should be kept in mind that death (that which comes through Adam) is no more unconditional than life (that which comes through Christ). All are potential sinners in Adam just as all are potentially righteous in Christ. Neither are all guilty because of Adam's sin. One is guilty only of his own sins. While all were made potential sinners in Adam, condemnation comes only by one's own disobedience. For example, Charles Darwin made evolutionists, but this does not mean that the theory of evolution is an inherited trait. Just so, Adam made sinners, but he made them by introducing sin into the world and not by passing his guilt on to posterity. Thus while it was brought into the world by Adam's sin, condemnation is the result of each man's own disobedience. **even so by the righteousness of one** — The death of Christ. **the free gift came** — Supplied words. **upon all men** — All who have sinned are offered the free gift. **unto justification to life.** — Justification from condemnation, life from death, righteousness from disobedience.

5:19 **For as by one man's disobedience** — Adam's violation when he ate of the forbidden tree (Gn. 2:16-17; 3:1-23). **many** — The many (ASV). The many who have sinned. The same as the all of v. 18. **were made sinners,** — Potential sinners. See notes on vv. 12-18. **so by the obedience** — The culmination of a life of obedience in His death (Phil. 2:5-11). **of one** — Jesus

Christ (Heb. 5:8-9). **shall many** — The many (ASV). Potentially, all who have sinned; actually, all who have chosen redemption. **be made righteous.** — Made to stand in right relationship with God. What was lost in Adam's sin is restored by the obedience (death) of Christ. We were made sinners (potentially) by the former; we are made righteous (potentially) by the latter. Neither is unconditional: we sin (thus die) when we follow in Adam's transgression; we are made righteous (thus live) when we follow Christ in obedience.

5:20 Paul here may be anticipating an objection from the Jews, which would reason, "Was not the purpose of the law to do precisely what you have said Christ came to do, namely, to deliver from sin and death?" He responds, "No. Rather than delivering from sin, the law caused it to abound, increase, or multiply." **Moreover the law** — The article is missing in the Greek, but this undoubtedly has reference to the law of Moses. **entered.** — Came in alongside the offence (sin) which had existed before the law. **that the offence might abound.** — Increase (NIV) or multiply. The law revealed the sinfulness of sin (7:7-11). **But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:** — The two instances of abound here are translated from two different Greek words, the former meaning to fill and the latter to superabound or overflow. Hence grace extends beyond measure, far surpassing sin. Sin abounds but grace reaches beyond its deepest and most depraved limits (Heb. 7:25). This the law could not do (8:1-4).

5:21 **That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.** — Sin reigns in death (ASV) but grace reigns through righteousness (deliverance from sin) through Christ. The reign of death and eternal life stand here as exact opposite, thus showing that death through this whole section (vv. 12-21) means eternal or spiritual death. When Christ saves from sin, death's reign is banished. This seems so obvious to me that I marvel that nearly all commentators believe Paul meant physical death, with spiritual death, if related at all, only secondarily. The truth, however, is that Paul means spiritual death and if physical death is referred to in any way it is only as a consequence indirectly implied.

Concluding note to Chapter 5: Paul emphasizes four aspects of justification in this chapter. (1) Justification is by faith (v. 1). (2) Justification results in glory to God (vv. 2-5). (3) Justification has as its grounds the sacrificial and vicarious death of Christ (vv. 6-11). (4) Justification (the blessing which comes by the death of Christ) is deliverance from death — the death that results from sin (vv. 12-21). The exciting conclusion: Jesus Christ the Savior is our victory over sin!

## ROMANS 6

### DEAD TO SIN

6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

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6:1 **What shall we say then?** — What consequences follow the fact that where sin abounds grace abounds more exceedingly? (5:20). Some might use this to reject Paul's doctrine of justification by faith (e.g., they might say that without the law there could be no moral restraints); others might gleefully receive it as an excuse to keep on sinning. But neither conclusion follows. **Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?** — This probably anticipates an argument based upon a misunderstanding of the grace of God by which justification by faith is made possible. They would reason, "If sin causes grace to abound or to reach beyond its farthest limits (5:20), then we should sin all the more: for the more we sin the more God's grace is multiplied. Thus the more we sin the greater our blessing."

6:2 **God forbid.** — A strong emphatic negative reply. See note on 3:4. There is absolutely no way by which God would encourage sin by blessing the committing of it. **How shall we, that are dead to sin,** — Four types of death can be clearly distinguished in the NT. They are: (1) Dead in sin — dead to God or separated from Him spiritually (5:12-21; Eph. 2:1-4). (2) Dead to sin — alive to God or reconciled to Him by the death of Christ (vv. 1-4). (3) Physical death — the separation of the body and spirit (Jas. 2:26). (4) The second death — eternal separation from God (Rv. 20:11-15). **live any longer therein?** — Just as the Christian was formerly dead in sin, he is now dead to sin. And having died to sin, it is not possible for him to live in it (Gal. 2:20). He is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17).

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### BURIED WITH CHRIST IN BAPTISM

6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

6:3 **Know ye not**, — Or are ye ignorant (ASV), Surely you know (Moffett). A strong expression showing that it would be absurd if they did not know that they had died to sin when they were baptized into the death of Christ. To be in Christ, to receive the benefits of His death, is to be dead to sin. **that so many of us** — All Christians, including Paul himself. **as were baptized** — Immersed, for so is the meaning of the Greek word (v. 4; Col. 2:12). Men have rejected, distorted, and changed what the Bible says about baptism, but the Scriptures teach that it is a command of Jesus Christ (Mk. 16:16; Acts 10:48) in which penitent believers in Christ as God's Son (Acts 2:38; 16:31; Mk. 16:16) are buried with Him (v. 4) in water (Acts 8:35-38) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:18-20) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), which puts them into Christ (Gal. 3:27) in whom they arise to walk in newness of life (vv. 4-5). **into Jesus Christ** — Into is from the Greek preposition *eis*, which here shows transition and thus the manner by which union is formed with Christ. The Israelites were baptized into (RSV) Moses (1 Cor. 10:2), at which time they passed from under the rule of Egypt to the rule of Moses — they entered into the sphere of his rule, law, and authority. Just so, when one is baptized into Christ he passes from the world into union with Christ. He becomes an integral part of the body of Christ, the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:12-27). Robertson (WP) lets his theology replace his scholarship here by saying, "The translation 'into' makes Paul say that the union was brought to pass by baptism [indeed it does! HW], which is not the idea, for Paul was not a sacramentarian." But establishing union with Christ is precisely Paul's idea, sacramentarian or not. He says the transition out of the world into Christ is made in baptism, and no juggling of words can change his meaning. **were baptized into his death?** — Into the benefits of His death.

6:4 **Therefore** — Conclusion from vv. 1-3: because we were baptized into Christ, thereby receiving the benefits of His death (salvation or the new life), we are dead to sin and those dead to sin cannot continue to live in it (v. 2). **we are buried** — The only action known to the ancient church, or to the Scriptures, as baptism, namely, immersion. Nothing else fills the demands. Or as Conybeare and Howson state, "This passage cannot be understood unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion." Even the venerable John Wesley, in his *Notes on the New Testament*, candidly admits that this is "Alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion." **with him** — With Christ. **by baptism** — By immersion in water. That the action in baptism is immersion can be proven by the following lines of argument: (1) The English word is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*, which in its primary sense never means anything but to dip or immerse. See any standard Greek lexicon. (2) History reveals that the apostolic church (the first century church) practiced immersion exclusively. The practice was not changed on a wide scale basis for hundreds of years after the Bible was written. (3) No one in Bible times ever had water sprinkled or poured upon him and called that ac-

tion baptism. The action in sprinkle (*vantizo*), pour (*ekcheo*), and baptize (*baptizo*) is absolutely different. In sprinkling the water (not the object) is sprinkled — scattered in drops. The same is true with pouring — the water is poured. But with baptism an object is dipped in the water. The action is so entirely different that there is no way the two former can ever substitute for the latter any more than *falling* can substitute for *running*. All three words are used in the Septuagint Version in Lv. 14:15-16. Their proper action is correctly translated by the KJV as pour, sprinkle, and dip. (4) The circumstance surrounding the recorded cases of baptism in the Bible demand immersion. There was much water (Jn. 3:23); coming unto the water (Acts 8:36); going down into the water (Acts 8:38); both the one baptizing and the one being baptized down in the water (Acts 8:38); the baptizing taking place while down in the water (Acts 8:38); and a coming up out of the water after the act was performed (Acts 8:39; Mt. 3:16). (5) The Bible plainly calls it a burial (here and Col. 2:12). (6) All passages alluding to baptism imply immersion (Jn. 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:25-26; Ti. 3:5; Heb. 10:22). **into death:** — One of two views must be chosen: (1) baptized into one's own death to sin. Standing alone this seems to be Paul's thought. (2) The death of Christ, as in v. 3. The context favors this. In v. 3, we are baptized into the death of Christ — into the benefits of His death. Here we are baptized into death, from which we arise to walk in a new life (made possible by His death). In v. 5, we are united with Him in the likeness of His death that we may also be united in the likeness of His resurrection (new life). All three seem to be emphasizing union with Christ by the benefits of His death, and that we receive the benefits by being baptized into Him. **that like as Christ was raised up from the dead** (1:4) — Christ literally raised from the dead. Our resurrection with Him is spiritual — to a new life. **by the glory of the Father,** — The power of God (1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 13:4). God is glorified when His will is done. **even so we also should walk in newness of life.** — Not in sin but in that new life which is given to those who die to sin (its love and practice) and are baptized into the benefits of the death of Christ. They have put off the old man of sin and put on the new man of righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:20-24).

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## RAISED TO A NEW LIFE

6:5-14 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

6:5 **For** — Connects this with vv. 3-4 and shows that it is an extension of the same concept. **if we have been planted together** — United with Him (ASV). **in the likeness of his death,** — We died to sin by being baptized into His death. Our death was to sin; His death was for sin. This proves beyond any doubt whatsoever that Paul taught that one is united with Christ when he is baptized into Him. **we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:** — We will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection (NIV). Thus our life is just as certain as our death — if we died to sin then we certainly have life. The union with Christ does not end at being baptized into His death; it continues into the new life with Him. But if one is united with Christ in both death and life, how could he continue to sin (the questions of vv. 1-2)? Sin brings death (v. 23). But we have died to sin (been separated from the death that sin brings) and are united with Christ in His new life. Thus we cannot continue to sin so that grace may abound.

6:6 **Knowing this,** — We know (RSV) because we have exercised our reason (vv. 1-5) and thereby arrived at this knowledge (cf. Heb. 5:12-14). **that our old man** — The sinner or the life of sin and corruption (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:8-10). **is crucified with him,** — With Christ (Gal. 2:20). Put to death. The old man dies to or is separated from sin. **that the body of sin** — The same as the old man. **might be destroyed,** — Put to death in relation to sin. Since the body is dead to sin, it would be impossible to continue in sin without a resurrection of the old man. **that henceforth** — From the time of the old man's death and his burial with Christ in baptism. **we should not serve sin.** — Continue to sin or be sin's servant (vv. 12-16). One must die to sin before he can be baptized into or receive the benefits of Christ's death. Thus to be in Christ is to be dead to or separated from sin. And to be dead to sin is to live apart from it (that is, it cannot be one's way of life). If sin rules the life, one is dead to righteousness; if he is dead to sin, he is alive to righteousness. But he cannot serve (be alive to) both. He must choose one or the other because our blessed Lord said, "No man can serve two masters" (Mt. 6:24). The righteous are dead to sin, but if they should continue to sin they would die to righteousness and this would result in the same lost condition as they were in before redemption.

6:7 **For he that is dead** — Dead to sin. **is freed from sin.** — Freed from its penalty, justified, or released from its bondage. Just as a slave was freed from his master at death, we are freed from the slavery of sin when we die to it and are baptized into the death of Christ (which pays our sin penalty). We must die to sin (repent or turn from it). But this alone does not put one into right standing with God. After our death to sin, we must be baptized into the benefits of the death of Christ. We thus die to sin; His death pays our sin debt; we are thereby freed from sin, justified, or made righteous. But no one can be in right relationship with God (be counted righteous) while continuing in sin. Thus the question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound," is answered with a resounding and absolute negative, leaving no room for doubt or exceptions.



6:8 **Now if we be dead** — But if we died (ASV). Died to sin or had the old man of sin crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). **with Christ**, — By being baptized into His death (vv. 3-4). **we believe that we shall also live with him:** — As new men with new lives (v. 4; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10). While it is true that Christians have hope of living with Christ eternally, and in a sense that life has already begun (Jn. 17:3; 1 Jn. 1:1-3), this has reference to the new life that is achieved by dying to sin, by being baptized into the benefits of Christ's death, and by raising to walk in a new relationship with Him — a life of reconciliation with God and free from the power, guilt, and penalty of sin (vv. 11-14). The new life is in contrast with being dead in sin.

6:9 **Knowing** — A fact already established; a common belief from which to reason. **that Christ being raised from the dead** — See notes on 1:4; also 1 Cor. 15:12-20. **dieth no more;** — He rose never to die again. His death was planned by God for a divine purpose (to free man from the penalty of sin). He is coming again but not to die or make another sin offering (Heb. 9:28). His dominion over death is our assurance that we shall live with Him, as stated in v. 8. **death hath no more dominion over him.** — Death no longer has mastery over him (NIV). While He was in the flesh, He was, with all human beings, mortal and subject to die, but only by His own consent (Jn. 10:17-18). While He was in the grave, death apparently had dominion (or mastery) over Him. But in His resurrection He broke its power forever — He conquered it and now lives to die no more (Rv. 1:18).

6:10 **For in that he died,** — The death He died is in contrast with the life He now lives. **he died unto sin** — He died to the state or sphere of sin, that is, death put Him beyond sin's power or reach. Or as Lightfoot, in his notes on Romans, says, "Christ died to a sinful world, died to a life in which He was every moment bearing the consequences of sin." Many commentators feel that this is an atonement passage, setting forth the purpose of His death and meaning that Christ died for sins. Thus Moffett translates it, "The death he died was for sin, once for all." While this is true and abundantly taught elsewhere, in my judgment it is not Paul's point here. **once:** — Once for all (NIV), an act never to be repeated (cf. Heb. 7:27; 9:28; 10:10). This is why death no longer has dominion over Him (v. 9). **but in that he liveth,** — In that He rose from the dead to die no more. **he liveth unto God.** — To the praise, honor, and glory of God (1:4).

6:11 **Likewise** — In the same way (NIV) or similarly (BV). **reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,** — Dead to the guilt of sin, its penalty, its power, its sphere, and its relationship. This death is completed when one is baptized into Christ (vv. 3-4), where His death makes valid our turning from sin. **but alive unto God** — Having been buried with Christ in baptism and arose therefrom to walk in a new life (v. 4), we are now alive to God's will and purpose. Sin should have no more dominion over us (who are dead to it but alive to God) than death has over Christ (v. 9). We must therefore

live in such a manner as to reflect the new life which we possess (Col. 3:1-4; 2 Cor. 3:18). **through Jesus Christ our Lord.** — In Christ (ASV) where all spiritual blessings are for those who are saved from their sins (Eph. 1:3), which salvation is made possible by the death of Christ and is appropriated when we are baptized into Him (Gal. 3:26-27).

6:12 **let not sin therefore reign** — Rule as king. **in your mortal body,** — That which is temporal, earthly, and physical (subject to death and decay) in contrast to that which is eternal, heavenly, and spiritual (not subject to death) (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47-54; 2 Cor. 4:11; 5:4). We are dead to sin and therefore must not permit it to reign as master through the body. **that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.** — To have you yield to its passions (BV). Let not sin control the body through its evil desires. To obey sin is to be its slave (v. 16). But we are dead to sin. We must not, therefore, submit to its rule in any part of the body.

6:13 **Neither yield** — Greek present tense, do not keep on presenting the members of your body to sin as its instruments. **ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin:** — Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness (NIV). Sin comes from the heart (Mt. 15:10-20; Mk. 7:14-23) but its overt expression must be through the body. But since we are dead to sin, no part of the body should be permitted to be used as the tool of sin. The body is dead to sin and thus sin should have no means of expressing itself in any of its parts. **but yield** — Same word as above but in the aorist tense, which means a once-for-all or a complete yielding. As physical death is final, so should be the act of presenting one's body to God as an instrument in His service (12:1-3). **yourselves unto God,** — To obey His will as revealed in the gospel. Or as Jesus put it, seek God and His kingdom first (Mt. 6:33). **as those that are alive from the dead,** — Those who possess a new life because they are risen with Christ (v. 4). **and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.** — As with sin, service to God originates in the heart but is expressed through bodily activity. Those who are alive to God must use their bodies as tools of righteousness rather than instruments of sin. Sin has no place in the system of grace . . . nor in the life of a Christian.

6:14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you:** — Sin shall not be your master (NIV). Sin's dominion, its power to rule over man, is its penalty. But forgiveness remits the penalty and thereby brakes sin's hold. When one is alive to sin, it rules over him — he is its servant (v. 16); when he dies to sin he removes himself from its dominion and becomes subject to another, Jesus Christ. He is thus freed from sin to be ruled by righteousness. **for ye are not under the law,** — Law as a system in contrast with grace as a system. This may not be limited to the law of Moses but it would certainly include it. Those under law are under sin's dominion — that is, they are under its penalty (7:9-23). **but under grace.** — Under the system of grace (the gospel) which

provides the means of forgiveness (through the death of Christ). Herein lies the vast difference between the law and the gospel. The law (no law *per se*) provides no means of forgiveness. Thus no one can be justified by law (3:20). But the gospel does provide for forgiveness — the means by which one can be saved from sin. We can therefore be saved by grace, which means that we can be saved by the gospel system, the divine scheme of redemption. It would be a grave and fatal error to conclude that to be under grace exempts from obedience to the revealed will of God, the gospel of Christ (vv. 16-18). Grace provides the divine scheme; the scheme includes obedience (Heb. 5:8-9; Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46; Jn. 14:15, 23). We are justified by grace without works of law but not without obedience to the gospel of God's dear Son, the system of grace.

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## OBEDIENCE

6:15-18 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

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6:15 **What then?** — What follows then if we are under grace rather than law? **shall we sin,** — Commit occasional acts of sin in contrast with a life of sin as in v. 1. In v. 1 the question is, "Shall we live a life of sin?" Here it is, "Shall we commit single acts of sin?" **because we are not under the law, but under grace?** — See v. 14 for notes on law and grace. Does being under grace mean there are no rules of life, standards of morality, or restraints on conduct? Sin (a violation of the law, 1 Jn. 3:4), every act of sin, is prohibited under the gospel (the system of grace) as well as under the law (Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Pt. 2:20-22; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). Freedom from the law means freedom from sin, its rule or dominion, not freedom to indulge in sin, not freedom from rules, standards, and restraints. **God forbid.** — A strong negative (see note on 3:4) emphatically denying that one can commit sin because he is under grace rather than under law. To sin under grace is to turn it into an occasion of lasciviousness (Jude 4).

6:16 **Know ye not,** — See note on v. 3. **that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey;** — When you submit to being someone's slaves, and obeying him, you are the slave of the one whom you obey (Goodspeed). One has no choice but to be in bondage. He does have a choice, however, as to whom he serves, whether sin or obedience. The former is a cruel, degradative, destructive taskmaster working only ruin, who offers no rewards but death — eternal condemnation (v. 23). The latter is a kind, considerate, elevating, sustaining master who blesses with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3) in this world and in the world to come eternal life (Mt. 26:46). So choose you this day whom you will serve (Jos. 24:15).

**whether of sin unto death,** — Whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death (NIV). The inevitable results of presenting oneself to sin is spiritual bondage and that bondage is death or separation from God (Is. 59:1-2), both in time and in eternity (2 Thes. 1:7-9). One cannot commit sin without becoming the servant of sin (Jn. 8:34). This is what it means for sin to have dominion over one (v. 14). **or of obedience unto righteousness?** — or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (NIV). Obedience (doing the will of God as it is revealed in the gospel) brings one into right relationship with God and binds him as a slave to right rather than wrong. Christ rules the life through obedience, making the obedient right because he serves right — he is righteous because he does right (1 Jn. 3:7).

6:17 **But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin,** — But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin (ASV). He is not expressing gratitude for the fact that they were in sin's bondage but that, even though this had been their former condition, they had now obeyed the gospel and thereby became servants of righteousness. **but ye have obeyed from the heart** — In the Christian age all acceptable obedience must come from the heart. It must spring out of the human will as a sincere submission to the will of God. It must therefore be more than overt actions alone. It takes both the right motive (the proper attitude of the heart) and the right act (submission to that which the Lord commands) to constitute obedience. The right act alone is not enough. Neither is the right motive. The right act plus the right motive equals obedience. **that form of doctrine which was delivered you.** — The form is best understood as a pattern or mold, the means by which one ceases to be the servant of sin and becomes the servant of righteousness. The doctrine is the teaching (ASV) they had received, which had been delivered unto them, the gospel, God's power to save (1:16). Paul defined the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It should be obvious that one cannot obey the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as such — that is, he cannot literally die, be literally buried, and then be literally raised from the dead. But he can obey a form or mold of that doctrine. He can die to the love and practice of sin; he can be buried with Christ in baptism; and he can arise from the watery grave to walk in newness of life. And this is precisely what the context shows that Paul had in mind. Or to summarize: the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; the form of that doctrine which we obey is death to sin, burial with Him in baptism, and a resurrection to a new life in Christ. The former is the doctrine or teaching; the latter is the form of the doctrine which we obey.

6:18 **Being then made free from sin,** — They were free from sin because they had died to it (vv. 1-2, 11) and that death to sin had occurred when they had obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered unto them. In short, they were free from sin because they had changed masters. **ye became the servants of righteousness.** — Their submission in obedience had made

them righteous — that is, God had counted their obedience as righteousness and this brought them into right relationship with Him. Formerly they were in bondage to sin, but now, by their obedience, they are in bondage to righteousness. To be in bondage to righteousness is the true freedom (Jn. 8:36).

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## FROM SERVANTS OF SIN TO SERVANTS OF GOD

6:19-23 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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6:19 **I speak after the manner of men** — Common or familiar terms by which all men communicate, especially in using the known (the servant-master relationship) to express more clearly the unknown (man's servitude to God). **because of the infirmity of your flesh:** — The flesh's natural weakness or limitations. This refers to intellectual, not moral, weaknesses, their slowness to grasp spiritual truths. **for as ye have yielded your members** — Members of the fleshly body but these members are directed by the heart, the real source of disobedience and corruption (v. 17; Mt. 15:17-20). **servants to uncleanness** — To do the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). **and to iniquity unto iniquity;** — greater and greater iniquity (RSV) or in one lawlessness after another (BV). They had been in time past bondservants of uncleanness and lawlessness. **even so now** — As Christians. **yield your members servants to righteousness** — Submit yourself to the bondage of right doing. **unto holiness.** — Sanctification (ASV). Purity of life (Heb. 12:14), the exact opposite of uncleanness and lawlessness.

6:20 **For when ye were the servants of sin,** — They were the slaves of sin before they had obeyed from the heart the form of teaching delivered unto them (v. 17). **ye were free from righteousness.** — Ye were free in regard of righteousness (ASV), or you were free from the control of righteousness (NIV). They were not in bondage to righteousness while they were sin's slave. This does not mean that they were not amenable to righteousness or accountable to God for their sinful ways. It obviously teaches, as is taught throughout this chapter, that one cannot serve two masters because he is the slave of the one he serves (v. 16). They had chosen to serve sin. Thus they were not in bondage to righteousness. Or as Robertson (WP) notes, "Ye wore no collar of righteousness, but freely did as ye pleased."

6:21 **What fruit** — What resulted from the life of sin? **had ye then in those things** — The sinful deeds which had brought them under sin's ser-

vitude. **whereof ye are now ashamed?** — They were ashamed of their former conduct and the results which they had attained by it. They could now see the beauty of holiness and the disgracefulness of sin (cf. 1 Pt. 4:1-5). The results of slavery to sin is of such nature that one should always be ashamed of it; the results of serving obedience is always a source of justifiable pride, the reward of doing and being what we were made to do and be.

6:22 **But now** — As Christians, in contrast with the then of v. 21. **being made free from sin**, — Having died to it (v. 7) and thus no longer in its bondage. **and become servants to God**, — Through obedience (vv. 16-18). They had changed masters, having formerly been slaves of sin, they had been freed from it, and was now in service to righteousness. **ye have your fruit** — The results of righteous living. **unto holiness**, — sanctification (ASV). Sanctification is similar in nature to becoming a Christian. There is a definite time when one becomes a child of God (vv. 3-4; Jn. 3:5), but as a child one should grow daily in the likeness of his Father (2 Pt. 1:3-4). Christian growth is therefore a process. So is sanctification. One is sanctified at the time of his new birth, but the process continues as long as he grows in grace and knowledge (2 Pt. 3:18). **and the end everlasting life**. — Eternal life (ASV), now in promise (1 Jn. 2:25) and in the end a full possession (Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30).

6:23 **For the wages** — Provisions paid for a service rendered. **of sin is death**; — Spiritual or eternal death, the death from which Christ died to redeem. Death is thus the wages paid those who serve sin. **but the gift of God** — The free gift of God (ASV). The free gift is in contrast with the wages paid. Life is a free gift; death is wages earned. **is eternal life** — Spiritual life or redemption from death. Life stands in contrast with death, the one meaning salvation and the other condemnation. Eternal life seems to be presented in three dimensions: (1) A new relationship (Jn. 17:3) enjoyed by new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) who have put off the old man and put on the new (Eph. 4:21-24). This new relationship is with the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15). (2) A new quality of life (Jn. 6:54; 1 Jn. 5:13), the abundant life (Jn. 10:10), which begins at the new birth (Jn. 3:5) and is consummated in the world to come (Mk. 10:30). (3) Endless or timeless life — life in eternity (2 Tm. 1:10; Mt. 25:46; Jn. 3:16). **through Jesus Christ our Lord**. — The provisions for life were made, not by ourselves, as in the case of sin, but by Jesus Christ whose death on the cross paid our sin debt. One cannot earn salvation; it is a free gift, offered to all who have earned the wages of sin.

## ROMANS 7

### DEAD TO THE LAW

7:1-6 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

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7:1 **Know ye not,** — Or are ye ignorant (ASV). See note on 6:3. **brethren,** — Those who had died to the law and sin and was thus alive to God; Christians, whether Jew or Gentile. **(for I speak to them that know the law,)** — They were not ignorant of the law of Moses, as revealed in the OT. The principle here stated would be true of any law. **how that the law hath dominion** — Authority (NIV). **over a man as long as he liveth?** — The law is bound only on the living. The point here is that they were not under the law because they were dead to it (vv. 4, 6). This is illustrated and stated in vv. 2-4.

7:2-3 These verses are primarily an illustration. Their design is not to teach a lesson on marriage, even though what they say about marriage is certainly true. They illustrate the fact that, being dead to the law or the law being dead to them, their relationship (called marriage) with Christ is legitimate. Because they were dead to the law by the body of Christ they were free to be married to another, that is, establish a new spiritual relationship. An illustration is usually designed to illuminate one point and one point only. To press it beyond that one point is to press it beyond its design and thus to force into it something the writer never intended to teach.

7:2 **For the woman which hath an husband** — For example, by law a married woman (NIV). **is bound by the law** — The law of marriage, called also the law of her husband later in the verse. Just as the Jews were bound by the law of Moses, a wife is bound to her husband by the law of marriage. The principle would be just as true of a man, especially under the new covenant.

This probably has primary reference to the original law of marriage as given in Gn. 2:22-24 and reinstated by Christ in Mt. 19:3-9 rather than the laws pertaining to marriage given through Moses. **to her husband so long as he liveth**; — While there were exceptions to this rule under the law of Moses (Dt. 24:1-4) and one exception under the law of Christ (Mt. 19:9), this was understood to be the general rule. And because it was so understood, it illustrates Paul's point that they were dead to the law and thus had legitimately established a new relationship with Christ. **but if the husband be dead, she is loosed** — Released from the marriage bond. She thus has no more marital responsibilities to him. She is free to marry another. **from the law of her husband.** — From the law of marriage (NIV).

7:3 **So then if, while her husband liveth,** — If while the marriage vows are still bound. **she be married to another man,** — Any man other than her lawful mate. **she shall be called** — Divinely called, or so it seems from the use of the word in its other occurrences in the NT (Mt. 2:12, 22; Lk. 2:26; Acts 10:22; 11:26; Heb. 8:5; 11:7; 12:25). **an adulteress:** — One who has committed adultery. One is called a murderer when he murders, a liar when he lies, a thief when he steals. So a woman is called an adulteress when she commits adultery. **but if her husband be dead,** — Death dissolves the marital bond. **she is free from that law;** — The law of marriage. **so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.** — The death of a mate frees one to marry again.

7:4 **Wherefore,** — So (NIV). He now makes application of the illustration given in vv. 2-3. **my brethren,** — Christians to whom he was writing, but especially Jewish Christians. **ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ;** — The death of Christ brought the law to an end (Eph. 2:13-17; Col. 2:14-17; 2 Cor. 3:5-18). Christians were not under the law and was therefore not accountable to it (Gal. 5:4). It was replaced by the NT (Heb. 8:6-13). They were therefore released from all the law's binding force. Paul does not say that the law was dead, but rather that they were dead to the law. But the end result is the same. **that ye should be married to another,** — That their relationship with Christ should be legitimate. One cannot live under two covenants, testaments, or wills. The new annuls the old. The relationship between Christ and Christians is here viewed as marriage, as was the relationship between God and Israel (Hos. 1-2). Paul also uses marriage to illustrate the intimate relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-30). **even to him who is raised from the dead,** — Christ, their Lord and Savior . . . and ours. **that we should bring forth fruit unto God.** — Righteousness, the fruit of a Christian (Jn. 15:1-5; Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pt. 1:5-11).

7:5 **For when we were in the flesh,** — When they were under the law and controlled by the flesh. To be in the flesh is to live for fleshly desires and lusts (Gal. 5:16-25). It is opposite to being spiritual. **the motions of sins,** — Sinful passions. **which were by the law,** — Revealed by the law (vv. 7-8).



**did work in our members** — Sin expresses itself overtly through members of the body. **bring forth fruit unto death.** — The wages of sin (6:23) or the opposite of fruit unto God (v. 4).

7:6 **But now we are delivered from the law,** — Discharged (ASV) or released from its bondage. **that being dead wherein we were held;** — Being now dead to the law (vv. 2-4) to which they (including Paul himself) were formerly bound. **that we should serve in newness of spirit,** — The new way or system revealed by the Spirit, the gospel way, described at length in chapter 8. **and not in the oldness of the letter.** — Not by the law (the condition of a sinner under law is discussed fully in vv. 9-25). The newness of the Spirit and the oldness of the letter here mean the gospel (made known by the HS) and the law (given through Moses). Because of this contrast I believe the HS is meant, not human or dispositional spirit as the KJV translators indicate by the lower case.

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## LAW AND SIN

7:7-8 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

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7:7 **What shall we say then?** — What conclusion is to be drawn from what is said in vv. 5-6? **Is the law sin?** — Did the law cause (or create) sin? **God forbid.** — Certainly not! (Goodspeed). A strong negative. The purpose of the law was not to make men sinners. Its purpose was to reveal right and wrong. But when it was violated, sin was the inevitable results (1 Jn. 3:4). Thus sin is not in the law but in the transgressor. **Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law:** — I would not have known what sin was except through the law (NIV). The law revealed both right and wrong, and by its revelation was the only way man could know either. In short, the law revealed right as right and sin as sin. **for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.** — An example, using the tenth commandment (Ex. 20:17), of how the law revealed sin as sin. The law did not cause lust, but he would not have known that lust was sinful had the law not prohibited it.

7:8 **But sin,** — The transgression of God's law, whether by commission or omission, is here personified. **taking occasion by the commandment,** — The law made an opening or an opportunity for transgression to manifest itself — to show its sinfulness. It is not that the law is sin or that it results in sin (v. 6), but that sin uses the law as an occasion to reveal itself. The law makes known the true nature of sin. **wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.** — Covetousness (RSV) or forbidden desires. The law did not cause the perverted desires; nor did it make them sinful; it brought the light of truth upon them and thus revealed them as sin. **For without the law** — Undoubtedly the law of

Moses, but in principle any law. For without law there can be no violation. **sin was dead.** — Lifeless, powerless, and unable to manifest itself as it was (see note on 4:15).

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## A SINNER UNDER LAW

7:9-23 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

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7:9-23 By many, this section is considered most difficult to comprehend. This is true, for the most part, because they try to force the section to say something that is not there, namely, an internal conflict within the mind, heart, and life of a Christian. But Paul is not considering his state of mind as a Christian. Rather he is describing his state of mind as a sinner under the law. His description is of a man (himself or any other man who sincerely seeks to serve God under law) living under a law when he knows that he has violated that law. He has sinned and stands condemned by the very law he loves and longs to keep. His sin has produced alienation from the law, the vehicle by which he serves God. To be justified by the law, and thus to be able to enjoy full fellowship with God, he must either pay the penalty (which is death) or be forgiven. But the law, which condemned him as a sinner, provided no means of forgiveness (no means of justification apart from the penalty), except to promise that a redeemer was coming. He longs to be just in the sight of the law but there was no way he could be except to pay the penalty in full. This is thus a description of one who lived under the law after he had violated it. He desired to do right but the law, because he had violated it, bound the penalty upon him. On one hand he yearned to serve God by obeying the law, but on the other he was condemned by the very law he yearned to serve. How could one be delivered from such a wretched conflict of mind? He could not under the law (and this is precisely Paul's point), but he could be (and Paul was) by Christ. When he asked, vv. 24-25, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" he replied, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The conflict here described is the very thing from which Christ delivers. I conclude then that this section in no way describes the internal conflicts of a Christian. It is a description of a sinner under the law.

7:9 **For I** — This was something that personally happened to Paul. It was he who was alive once and it was he who died. **was alive** — Not condemned by the law. This refers to his childhood, before he was accountable to the law; he was then innocent, free from the guilt of sin, and uncondemned as a law violator. **without the law once:** — Before he was accountable to it. **but when the commandment** — In context, the tenth (v. 8) but it is used to express in principle the whole law. **came,** — When he became accountable to it. **sin revived,** — Sin sprang to life (NIV). That is it woke up or came alive. Sin brought him under the penalty of violated law. **and I died.** — Died spiritually, as in 5:12ff. The law condemned him because of sin. The order here is: (1) He was alive (innocent and not under the death penalty); (2) the commandment came (he reached the age when he became accountable to the law); (3) he sinned (violated the law); and (4) he died (the penalty of his violation was spiritual death or condemnation by the law). This verse once and for all refutes the absurd doctrine of total hereditary depravity — the doctrine which says that one is born dead in sin. If Paul was born a sinner, when was he alive without the law?

7:10 **And the commandment,** — In context the tenth, but it is here used to mean the whole law. **which was ordained unto life,** — Life (or salvation) was the end the law had in view, which could be reached only in Christ and the gospel (8:4; 10:4). Thus its primary intention was to reveal the way of life, not to produce condemnation. **I found** — Was found or discovered. **to be unto death.** — When the law was disobeyed, even though its primary purpose was to reveal the way of life, the result was condemnation. Life or death does not lie within the law itself but with the individual's response to the law. Whether it proves to be a blessing or a curse depends on one's obedience or disobedience to it (Dt. 11:26-28). Life came by keeping the law (10:5; Lv. 18:5), but a violated law knows nothing but condemnation. If one does not see this point, the meaning of this whole section will elude him.

7:11 **For sin,** — Transgression personified. **taking occasion by the commandment,** — Seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment (NIV). See note on v. 8. **deceived me,** — Beguiled me (ASV). Eve is an example of how sin deceives (Gn. 3:1ff). She was not deceived by the commandment (v. 12), but the devil used the opportunity afforded by the commandment to lead her astray. The very nature of sin is deceptive (Heb. 3:13). It appears to offer freedom but gives bondage (2 Pt. 2:19), happiness but brings misery, etc. **and by it** — The law. **slew me.** — Brought him under its penalty. He is now a condemned transgressor.

7:12 **Wherefore** — The conclusion is now reached — the answer to the question raised in v. 7. The law is not sin! **the law is holy,** — The whole law is holy. **and the commandment holy,** — Each part of the law is also holy. It is holy because it is given by God and therefore partakes of His divine nature. **and just,** — Right in its demands. **and good.** — Good for the end to which it

was given (Is. 55:10-11). The law is holy in its origin and authority, just and right in its requirements, and good in its aims and results. The fault then was not in the law — it is not the cause of sin (v. 13). Sin is the transgression of the law (1 Jn. 3:4). Sin then is not in the law but in the sinner.

7:13 **Was then that which is good** — The law. **made death unto me?** — The law was not responsible for him being condemned as a sinner. The law was good (vv. 7-12), but he had violated it. Now as a transgressor he stands condemned by it. Sin, not the law, was responsible for his death — separation from his state of innocences (v. 9). **God forbid.** — A strong negative meaning certainly not (Goodspeed) or by no means (NIV). **But sin,** — The transgression of the law (1 Jn. 3:4). The sin is in the sinner, not in the law. Let me illustrate: in the county where I live two men were cruelly murdered. They were pushed down an old abandoned mine shaft and, if they were not killed by the fall, left there to die. The guilty party was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to life in prison. Is the law against murder responsible for him being in prison? No. The law is good. But he violated the law and he is imprisoned because of that violation. It is his crime, not the law, that is responsible. The penalty of the law shows the seriousness of the crime. Thus it is with the law of God. **that it might appear sin,** — That it might be shown to be sin (ASV). The law revealed sin as sin. **working death in me by that which is good;** — The law (that which is good) presented the occasion for sin to work in him and the sin in turn produced death. **that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.** — The law does not cause sin but it does reveal its depths and hatefulness in the eyes of God. Or as Goodspeed translates it, "So that through the command it might appear how immeasurably sinful sin was."

7:14 **For we know** — A point now accepted by all. **that the law is spiritual:** — The law is good (vv. 7-12). It is called spiritual because of its divine nature — because it was revealed by the Spirit. Spirituality (in the law) here is opposite carnality (in man). **but I am** — He uses the present tense because he transposes himself back to the time when he was a sinner under the law. **carnal,** — His transgression made him a sinner, unspiritual, fleshly, physical. This state is called death in vv. 9, 13. **sold under sin.** — Sold as a slave to sin (NIV). His violation of the law brought him under the possession, power, and penalty of sin (6:16). He was now a slave, in sin's possession. And herein is the great conflict described in vv. 14-25. He was a slave of sin but he loved the law and desired with his whole being to be its slave (to have a spiritual master rather than a carnal one). But he now (as he had been under the law, not as he was in Christ) had sinned and the law had no provisions by which he could be justified (except to pay the penalty in full or accept Christ, when He came, as a substitute for his penalty). Thus his heart and love was with the law, but his transgression had brought him under the reign of sin. By no stretch of the imagination (except by the imagination of those who have a theory to defend at any cost) could this describe one forgiven of his sins by the blood of Christ, who

stands justified by faith, and who has Christ as the constant propitiation for his sins (1 Jn. 2:2; vv. 24-25; 8:1). No faithful Christian can truthfully say that he is sold under sin — that is, that sin is his master. He has been redeemed! He is owned by Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20). As N.B. Hardeman was known to say, “That’s not nearly it; that’s it.”

7:15 **For that which I do** — Work or perform, that is, serve sin. **I allow not:** — Know not (ASV). His love for the law, and his desire to be its servant, would not permit him to approve his service to sin or to recognize and render joyful service to it as his master. **for what I would,** — Serve the law. **that do I not;** — In actual practice. He could not be a servant of the law because he was in servitude to sin — sold under sin (v. 14). **but what I hate,** — The loathsome service of sin. **that do I.** — Serve sin. He had no choice: for his violation of the law brought him under the condemnation (slavery) of sin. The law he loved and wanted to serve offered no means of justification. And while he hated sin, he was still its slave.

7:16 **If then I do that which I would not,** — Serve under sin rather than the law. **I consent unto the law that it is good.** — His great desire was to serve the law, and that desire proved that he concurred with and acknowledged its goodness. Or as the NEB puts it, “I agree with the law and hold it to be admirable.”

7:17 **Now then** — This being so (Moffett) — the things stated in vv. 15-16 and probably contrasting it to the time when it was otherwise (v. 9). **it is no more I that do it,** — It was not by choice he remained in bondage to sin. His transgression had plunged him into this undesirable state and he had no way to escape it. **but sin that dwelleth in me.** — Sin controlled his life. It was his master because he was condemned by the law and sold to sin as a slave (v. 14). This further proves that Paul is not describing the conflict within a Christian. How could a Christian say that sin dwelled in him (that is, controls his life) when the blood of Christ keeps on cleansing him from sin (1 Jn. 1:7)? Paul is not saying that he is not responsible for his sins, but rather that he is not a slave of sin by choice. His sin had brought him under the death penalty (5:12; 6:23), but with his whole heart he wished to be free from it and stand again approved by the law as in a former time (v. 9).

7:18 **For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,)** — In him as a carnal (v. 14) condemned violator — subject to the flesh rather than the law. He has reference to the part of him that was subject to sin. One must keep in mind that he was alienated from the law, which he loved and wanted to obey, by sin, which had made him subject to the flesh. **dwelleth no good thing:** — He was sold under sin (v. 14) and there was nothing in the law that could redeem him from the penalty of his transgression. He was therefore forced to submit to the flesh (which was not good) rather than to the law (which was good). **for to will is present with me;** — The good (in the law) was always before him and it was his constant desire to practice it. He longed to be free from sin. Thus his

desire was right. He wanted to obey the law in all its parts but he had broken one or more of its commandments (vv. 7-9) and therefore stood condemned by the whole law (Jas. 2:10). **but how** — “How” is added by the translators, but omitted by the ASV. The omission is better. It is not how to perform but the performance that is under consideration. **to perform that which is good** — To practice the law in its fullness and without its condemnation. Or to stand justified by the law and let it be his master instead of sin (both sin and the law are personified in this section). **I find not.** — He had the will to perform, “but,” as the NIV puts it, “I cannot carry it out.” His status as a sinner prevented him from fulfilling his desire. He could not carry out his will because the law made no provisions for justification except to pay the penalty (6:23), which he could not do and still live to serve the law.

7:19 See note on v. 15. **For the good that I would I do not:** — What he wished to do, to obey the law as his master without being condemned by it, to stand justified by the law he had violated, he was unable to do. **but the evil which I would not, that I do.** — What he wished not to do, serve sin (though he was unwilling to be a sinner he was condemned by and sold under sin, v. 14), he did.

7:20 **Now if I do that I would not,** — Serve sin. His service to sin was forced upon him because he had become a transgressor — a transgressor without the gospel or the means of Christ’s blood to take away his sins. **it is no more I that do it,** — Not his will to sin. The contrast is between the part of him who longed to be justified and his state of sin, into which he had fallen, and not as to who was ultimately accountable for his sin. He willed to do right (v. 18) but he was sold under sin (v. 14). He was thus torn between two masters: the law, which he loved and wanted to serve, and sin, which he loathed and hated to serve. The former was his love but the latter was his master. **but sin that dwelleth in me.** — Sin controlled his life. See note on v. 17.

7:21 **I find then** — So I find (RSV). Based on what he has said in vv. 14-20. **a law,** — Literally, the law. Law appears here with the article, and invariably, when this is the case, Paul means the law of Moses. But, as unusual as it may be, I do not believe that it can be so understood here. It is a course of life or rule of action that he has learned by experience. That rule or law is expressed in the remainder of the verse and contrasted as “another law” in v. 23 with the law of God of v. 22. **that, when I would do good,** — Obey the law. **evil is present with me.** — He could never absent himself from the fact that he was a sinner, condemned as a law violator. Regardless of what good he might seek to do, he was still condemned by the law as a transgressor. His guilt was always before him (cf. Ps. 51:1-3).

7:22 **For I delight** — For I take pleasure in (The Living Oracles). In v. 16 he consents to the law intellectually; here he delights in it emotionally. **the law of God** — The law of Moses, the law which he knew was good (vv. 12, 16), the law which he had transgressed, and the law by which he stood condemned

because of his sin. The law of God is in contrast with “another law” and “the law of sin” of v. 23. **after the inward man:** — The inter rational moral part of him that loved the law and longed to be in servitude to it. The inward man is not to be confused with the new man (Eph. 4:21-24; 2 Cor. 5:17), the Christian. Paul is describing the conflict between what he wanted to be (a servant of God approved by the law) and what he was (a sinner condemned by the law). He could not be what he wanted to be because he was sold under sin (v. 14), a condition that by no means can describe the new man.

7:23 **But I see** — He depicts himself as an observer of the conflict that is going on within him. **another law** — The law or rule of v. 21, that when he would do good, evil was present. Also called the law of sin later in the v. **in my members,** — Members of his body through which sin expressed itself. **warring against** — Waging war against (NIV). **the law of my mind,** — The law of God as loved and approved by his mind. His mind consented that the law was good and its precepts right (v. 16) but the law of sin held him as a slave (v. 14, NIV) so that he was helpless. **and bringing me into captivity** — Making me a prisoner (NIV). **to the law of sin** — The law which wars against the law of his mind. **which is in my members.** — The other law of the first part of the v. This simply draws tighter the contrast between what he desired to be and what he was because of sin. A sinner under law (without the benefits of Christ’s death) is utterly hopeless, and this is precisely Paul’s point. He was showing the Jews (or anyone else concerned) their miserable state outside the gospel and how utterly impossible it was to be saved by the law.

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## DELIVERANCE FROM SIN

7:24-25 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

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7:24 **O wretched man** — Distressed, miserable, and hopeless. **that I am!** — He was dead in sin (v. 9; Eph. 2:1), sold under sin (v. 14), and held captive by sin (v. 23). He sees his woeful condition (a man condemned by the law for his sin without the benefits of Christ’s blood), agonizes over it, and cries out from the depth of his soul, “What a wretched man I am!” (NIV). It appears to me that one would have to be blinded by the god of this world to think that a Christian, one who believes in the efficacy of the shed blood of Christ to free from all sin, could find himself in such a hopeless state of despair. **who shall deliver me** — There was and is no deliverance apart from the sacrificial death of Christ. **from this body of death?** — The penalty of sin.

7:25 **I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.** — Deliverance from the wretched condemned state he saw himself in (vv. 9-24) comes through Christ, the Redeemer. What could not be done by the law is now done by Christ

(8:1-4). This is further proof that he was not speaking of himself as a Christian: for the very condition he describes is that from which Christ delivers. See also 8:1, where he brings himself back to the present and says that there is *now* no condemnation in Christ. There was condemnation under the law but not in Christ. **So then** — He reverts back to his condition of v. 24, not of deliverance in Christ but of condemnation under the law. **with the mind** — The reason or intellect, the part of him that loved and approved the law. **I myself serve** — Bondservice or as the NIV renders it, “A slave to God’s law.” **the law of God;** — See note on v. 22. **but with the flesh the law of sin.** — Or, when personified, sin itself. Paul is not speaking of an occasional sin, but a life of sin — a slave to the law of sin (NIV). Every Christian sins occasionally, but there is no proper way that he can say he is a slave of sin (6:7, 11-14). I thus see no possible way to be honest with Paul’s words and interpret them to mean that a Christian can, at one and the same time, under the Christian system, serve (be a slave of) the law of God with the mind and the law of sin (be a slave of) with the flesh. This would be to make man a servant of two masters, which Jesus said could not be (Mt. 6:24). We must, therefore, conclude that Paul was not describing himself as a Christian, but projecting himself (as the representative of all) back under the law and seeing himself as a sinner, condemned by the law, without Christ or the benefits of His sacrificial death to pay his sin penalty. As a Christian, saved by grace divine, washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rv. 7:14), we can joyfully sing, in the words of a familiar old song:

*My sin — O the bliss of the glorious tho’t —  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more:  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul.*



## ROMANS 8

Chapter 8: This chapter is an exclamation of deliverance — deliverance from the condemnation described in chapter 7. The theme of chapter 7 centered around the condition of a sinner under law; the theme of this chapter is deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord. The law was holy. But man was a sinner, condemned by the law. The penalty of sin was death. The law provided no means of justification. Thus the status of a sinner under law (as described in 7:9-25) was condemnation. But one should not despair of hope. Deliverance is possible. Paul, in anguish of soul, cried out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of death?” He immediately replied, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (7:24-25). The present chapter builds upon that exclamation by revealing the means of deliverance — deliverance from condemnation to justification. “There is therefore *now* no condemnation . . . in Christ Jesus” (8:1).

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### THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

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8:1 **There is therefore** — Introducing the conclusion which follows from the statement of 7:25 that deliverance comes through Christ. **now** — In contrast with the time of 7:9-25 where he had projected himself back under the law. He now returns to his present condition in Christ. Then he was condemned; now he is justified. **no condemnation** — Freedom from the guilt, penalty, and power of sin imposed by the law. Unlike the law, the gospel, under which he is now living, provides the means of forgiveness (through the shed blood of God’s sinless Son). The sentence of death has been removed; he is no longer condemned (as in 7:9-25); he is now justified; his sins are covered by the blood of the Lamb (Rv. 7:14; 1 Jn. 1:7; 2:1-2). **to them which are in Christ Jesus**, — In union with Christ (Jn. 14:19-20), that is, married to Him (7:4), or in

covenant relationship with Him. They had died to sin (6:1-8), been buried with Him in baptism (6:3-4); and arisen to walk with Him in a new life (6:4; Eph. 4:22-24). They were therefore born again (Jn. 3:5; 1 Pt. 1:23) and made new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The contrast here is between justification in Christ (deliverance from sin) and condemnation under the law (being a slave to sin, 7:14). **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** — Omitted by most translations on textual grounds. It was probably transcribed at an early date from v. 4, where it is unquestionably genuine. See note there.

**8:2 For the law** — Three laws are distinguished in this and the following verse. Here it means the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21), the gospel, the principle of human redemption. **of the Spirit of life** — The Holy Spirit, by whom the gospel is inspired. He gives life (the new life) through the gospel, which is here called His law. It is the law of life because it is the principle or rule by which spiritual life is received — the means by which salvation is given. **in Christ Jesus** — By means of His sacrificial death Christ paid our sin debt. **hath made me free** — Liberated us from the bondage of sin. **from the law of sin** — Sin itself (7:21, 23). **and death.** — The condemnation or penalty of sin. The thrust of this verse is the fact that the gospel delivers from sin (the penalty of which is death). Sin brings death (7:11) but the Spirit, through the gospel, gives life (2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:8). In 7:14, 23, Paul depicts himself as in bondage to sin; now (v. 1) he is freed from that bondage. The bondage meant death; liberty means life.

**8:3 For what the law** — The law of Moses (and in principle any law). **could not do** — Provide forgiveness or pardon — deliverance from condemnation. **in that it was weak** — Imperfect (Heb. 8:6-8) in the sense that it condemned but could not pardon. **through the flesh,** — Sinful flesh. Sin expresses itself through the flesh (7:5; cf. 7:18). The law was powerless to deliver one from the penalty of violation. **God sending his own Son** — Jesus Christ. **in the likeness of sinful flesh,** — Christ came in the flesh (Mt. 1:23; Phil. 2:5-12) but He did not sin through the flesh (Jn. 8:46; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pt. 2:22; 1 Jn. 3:5), as all other men have done (3:9, 23; 5:12). Because He was innocent, He could give Himself as a sacrifice to pay the penalty of the guilty. **and for sin,** — As an offering for sin (ASV margin). What the law could not provide, Christ by His death freely gave to man, namely, the means of pardon. **condemned sin in the flesh:** — Condemned it by providing deliverance or pardon. The aim of this whole verse is to tell us that what the law could not do (deliver from the condemnation described in 7:9-25) God sent His Son to do (Heb. 10:10-14) . . . and He did it (Heb. 9:26). Christ suffered in the flesh that man might be delivered from sins committed in the flesh.

**8:4 That the righteousness of the law** — The righteousness (justification) which was the aim and end of the law, which would have been had man remained innocent, never having violated its precepts. While righteousness was the aim of the law, it could not be attained by it. But now we are justified in

Christ; thus the aim of the law is fulfilled in us. **might be fulfilled** — Reach its purpose, aim, or goal. **in us**, — Christians or those who live under the gospel and are delivered from the law's condemnation. **who walk not after the flesh**, — Who live and move not in the ways of the flesh (*The Amplified Bible*). Whose life is not governed by fleshly dictates and appetites (Gal. 5:19-21). **but after the Spirit**. — The Holy Spirit. Life is governed by the Spirit through His divine revelation (Gal. 5:22-23), the scheme of redemption as revealed in the gospel. Same as the spiritually minded (v. 6) and led by the Spirit (v. 14). Flesh and Spirit here stand opposite each other as the two directors (or philosophies) of life. We must follow one or the other. Only those whose lives are controlled and regulated by the Spirit, those who have accepted deliverance by obedience to the divine plan and continue to walk as He leads (v. 14), are fulfilling the righteousness of the law. All others (those who walk after the flesh) are still under condemnation.

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## FLESH AND SPIRIT

8:5-8 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

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8:5 **For they that are after the flesh** — Those who have the flesh as the ruling principle of their life. **do mind the things of the flesh**; — They are controlled by the flesh, having it as their director. **but they that are after the Spirit** — Those whose lives are controlled by the direction of the Spirit. **the things of the Spirit**. — Their lives are governed by the teaching of the Spirit. Those after the flesh gratify the flesh — that is, they are worldly minded; those directed by the Spirit do the will of the Spirit — that is, they are spiritually minded. (See v. 6.)

8:6 **For to be carnally minded** — Fleshly minded — having the mind controlled or ruled by the flesh (vv. 4-5). **is death**; — The penalty of sin (6:23) or condemnation. **but to be spiritually minded** — To walk after the Spirit — having the mind governed by the Spirit (vv. 4-5). **is life** — The opposite of death. Hence freedom from sin's penalty. **and peace**. — The tranquility of heart and mind (as opposed to the turmoil described in 7:9-25) which comes when one knows he is in right relationship with God (5:1; Phil. 4:7).

8:7 **Because** — Points to the reason for that which is stated in v. 6. **the carnal minded** — The fleshly mind — the mind ruled by the flesh. **is enmity against God**: — Is hostile to God (NIV). The hostility is caused by its carnality. The fleshly is opposed to the spiritual. **for it is not subject** — Does not obey. **to the law of God**, — The gospel, that which is delivered by the Spirit. The carnal mind is not obedient to the will of God (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46) because it is governed by the dictates of the flesh. **neither indeed can be**. — It cannot

submit to or obey God's law and remain carnal. This does not mean that the carnally minded cannot choose to obey God (6:16-18; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Pt. 1:22) but rather that they have not chosen to do so. When the carnal mind submits to God's law, it ceases to be fleshly and becomes spiritual. Thus it cannot be subject to God's will while it is fleshly. One cannot submit to both the flesh and the Spirit at the same time (Mt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13).

**8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.** — They cannot please God because they do not do His will (obey His law). They are controlled by the flesh rather than by the Spirit.

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## THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

8:9-11 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

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**8:9 But ye** — Roman Christians or anyone else who is in Christ. **are not in the flesh,** — Not controlled by the flesh or the carnal mind. **but in the Spirit,** — The HS. This indicates an established relationship — a relationship that is regulated by the Spirit. To be in the Spirit is opposite of being in the flesh. Hence, it means to be controlled by the Spirit — to be subject to the law of God (v. 6). **if so be that the Spirit of God** — Same as the HS. **dwell in you.** — Governs your faith and conduct through the gospel, God's law for all men living today. The way of the flesh and the way of the Spirit stands in contrast here as in vv. 5-8. It leaves no doubt about the fact that the Spirit indwells every Christian. Indwelling is a fact too plainly taught to be denied (v. 15; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Gal. 3:2; 4:6-7; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Jn. 4:13). Thus little or no difference exist among professed Christians as to the fact of indwelling. There is, however, a vital and fundamental difference over the method, whether He indwells directly or indirectly. The direct view says that He indwells each Christian personally, separate and apart from and in addition to the word of God or any other means. That is, the Spirit in person takes up His abode in the Christian and dwells there immediately — naked Spirit in naked spirit. Many passages are quoted to sustain this view, but in my judgment they are all simply stating the fact, not the method, of indwelling. The method must be learned elsewhere. The second view says that in whatever sense the Spirit dwells in the Christian, He does so through the word of God, the truth. The truth is the mediate or indirect means through which He indwells. No Scripture can be quoted that specifically states this, but I believe that this is precisely what all of them taken together teach. I therefore subscribe to the view that the HS dwells in Christians through, and only through, the truth, the eternal word of God. **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ,** — Same as the Spirit of

God. **he is none of his.** — He is not a Christian. Without the Spirit of Christ one cannot belong to, be a part of, or be in union with Christ (1 Cor. 12:3). To deny that one has the Spirit dwelling in him is to deny that he is a Christian.

8:10 **And if Christ be in you,** — Indwells you by faith (Eph. 3:17). Notice how this connects to the last statement in v. 9. To have the Spirit of Christ and to have Christ dwell in one expresses the same concept in two different ways. It should be observed: (1) Christians dwell in God (1 Jn. 3:4; 4:13) and God dwells in them (1 Jn. 4:12, 16). Christians are in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and Christ is in them (Col. 1:27). Christians dwell (walk in) in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and the Spirit dwells in them (v. 9). All this expresses a relationship or union one with another. **the body** — The body ruled by flesh. **is dead** — Not will die but is already dead. **because of sin;** — The body is the instrument of sin (7:5, 23) and because of sin the body ruled by the flesh had to die when Christ entered into it (through the Spirit) and became its Ruler. This must be the case because Christ dwelling in them resulted in the body being dead because of sin. I know of no sense in which the physical body is doomed to death because Christ indwells it. **but the Spirit is life** — That is, the HS gives life (through the gospel system) to those indwelt by Christ. I believe the HS is meant here because the contrast between the rule of the flesh and the rule of the Spirit (as in vv. 5-9) is continued. **because of righteousness.** — Because righteousness (or justification) results from the indwelling Christ. The view here advanced is simple and in complete harmony with the context but it is a departure from most commentators. They usually hold that the body means the literal physical body rather than the body ruled by the flesh and that the Spirit is the human spirit rather than the HS. However, I believe I have given the true sense of the passage. The body which is dead is the body ruled by the flesh and the Spirit is the Spirit which gives life — the life which results from justification in Christ. And while it is granted that the wording is somewhat difficult, I think the whole verse is simply saying that if one is in Christ he is dead to sin and alive to God (cf. 6:11) — dead to the rule of the flesh and alive to the rule of the Spirit.

8:11 **But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you,** — The Spirit of God (v. 9), the HS. **he** — God. **that raised up Christ from the dead** — See 1 Cor. 15:12-20. **shall also quicken** — Make alive or activate. The future tense is used, not because it looks forward to the bodily resurrection, but because it is conditional: if the Spirit of God dwells in you, then you shall be quickened. **your mortal bodies** — Bodies subject to death. Their bodies had died to fleshly rule (v. 10) but God gives them new life by His Spirit who dwells in them. That is, He makes them alive to righteousness (v. 10; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 4:11). **by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.** — The Spirit (acting through the truth of the gospel) is the life giving principle by which their bodies would be made alive or activated. As the notes indicate, I do not believe that the resurrection of the body is here contemplated.

The whole context (vv. 5-17) shows that the meaning is a contrast between being alive to the rule of the Spirit when dead to the rule of the flesh. Bodily resurrection is treated in v. 23.

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## THE SPIRIT AND SONSHIP

8:12-17 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

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8:12 **Therefore**, — So, then (ASV). Introducing an exhortation drawn from what has been said. **brethren**, — Christians to whom his words are addressed. **we are debtors**, — We owe our service to the Spirit, not to the flesh (cf. 1:14; Gal. 5:3). We are now obligated to the Spirit because He rules our lives. The Spirit is not specifically mentioned in this sentence but He is clearly implied from both the preceding and the following. **not to the flesh, to live after the flesh**. — The rule of the flesh. Since we are not in the flesh (v. 9), and since we are dead to it (v. 10), we owe absolutely no allegiance to the flesh. We are free from fleshly rule. We are debtors to submit to the Spirit but owe absolutely nothing to the rule of the flesh.

8:13 **For if you live after the flesh**, — If you make the flesh your standard of conduct, that is, if sin is the rule of your life. **ye shall die**: — You must pay the consequence of sin, which is eternal death (6:23). This is true of anyone, even a child of God, who permits the flesh to control his life (cf. Gal. 5:19-21). One must either die to sin, and remain dead to it, or else he himself must pay the penalty, which is death. Christ did not come to save man in his sins, but from them. Christians are not exempted from the penalty (as the false doctrine of eternal security teaches). Thus everyone has a choice. He can live after the flesh and die (eternally) or he can live by the directions of the Spirit and have everlasting life. The choice is his. But it is a choice of such serious nature that his eternal destiny depends upon it. **but if you through the Spirit** — By the HS (by His work in you through the divine gospel). **do mortify** — Put to death or destroy. **the deeds of the body**, — The activities and appetites of the body which have their source in and are controlled by the flesh. **ye shall live**. — You shall stand in right relationship with God and as a result receive eternal life.

8:14 **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God**, — Guided or controlled by the Spirit. To be led by the Spirit is the same as to walk by Him (Gal. 5:18). This states a fact (as with indwelling, see notes on v. 9) but the fact does not necessarily imply the method. Men too often jump to the conclusion that because the fact is stated it means a direct leading — the Spirit directly impress-

ing or nudging the mind. But the method, whether direct or indirect, must be learned elsewhere. How does the Spirit lead? He does so through His divine revelation of truth, the only means by which we can know the will of God (1 Cor. 1:18-2:16). When one knows and does the will of God, as it is revealed in the NT, he is being led or ruled by the Spirit. **they are the sons of God.** — The children of God by the new birth (Jn. 3:3-5); by adoption (v. 15; Gal. 4:4-6); by regeneration (Ti. 3:5); and, to express it in the theme of this chapter, by deliverance from condemnation by being in Christ (v. 1). God has no greater blessing for His creatures than to bestow upon them sonship (Gal. 3:26-28). God has three kinds of sons: (1) sons by creation — as was Adam (Lk. 3:38), so are we; (2) a begotten son, Jesus Christ our blessed Lord (Jn. 3:16); (3) sons by adoption (vv. 15-17), His spiritual family (1 Tm. 3:15).

**8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;** — The Spirit you have received (v. 9) and by which you are led (v. 14) is not the spirit of bondage — not the spirit which brings you into condemnation. Hence not the spirit (the rule of the flesh) that enslaves to fear. **but ye have received the Spirit of adoption,** — The Spirit who revealed the process of adoption — the means by which you become the sons of God (see note on v. 14) or the Spirit by which you were delivered from condemnation (v. 1). **whereby** — Because we have received the Spirit of adoption. **we cry, Abba, Father.** — We gratefully cry to God as our Father (Mt. 6:9; 2 Cor. 6:17-18). Abba is the Aramaic word for father, to which is also added the Greek word here and in Mk. 14:36 and Gal. 4:6. Why the repetition? There are two answers, either of which provides a sound solution: (1) the Aramaic is added to the Greek to express an affection too deep for words — an affection that is felt because of our deliverance from the bondage of condemnation. (2) The Greek is a translation of the Aramaic, as expressed by The Amplified Bible, Goodspeed, and Williams, “Abba, that is, Father.” While a good case can be made for the latter, the former seems more probable to me.

**8:16 The Spirit itself** — The HS, the first of two witnesses, whose function it is to make known the revelation of God (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). Without that revelation, made known through chosen men, we could not know the will of God (1 Cor. 1:18-2:16). The Spirit’s function is thus to make known God’s plan to save. **beareth witness** — Testifies (through the word of truth). **with** — With, not to, as many are accustomed to believe. Two witnesses are involved, both bearing testimony to the same fact, namely, that we are the children of God. **our spirit** — The human spirit, the part that reasons, thinks, and arrives at conclusions, the part that receives and obeys the revelation delivered by the Spirit. The human spirit knows what is in man (1 Cor. 2:11). One thus knows whether he has received and obeyed the revelation of God’s will through the Spirit. **that we are the children of God:** — One can know that he is a child of God when he has the testimony of both spirits — the HS telling him what he must do to be saved and his spirit telling him that he has done

that. When the Spirit reveals the plan (in the gospel) and our spirit obeys the plan delivered, both spirits are testifying that we are God's children. It is the function of the Spirit to reveal the kind of character that constitutes a child of God and it is the function of our spirit to determine what kind of character we are. When the Spirit testifies to the kind of character that constitutes a child of God and our spirit can reply that we are that kind of character, both are bearing witness to the fact that we are children of God.

**8:17 And if children,** — Adopted into His family (v. 15) and proven to be so by the witness of two spirits (v. 16). **then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;** — If children, then the inheritance is ours, all spiritual blessings here (Eph. 1:3) and indescribable blessings yet to come (1 Pt. 1:3-4). **if so be that we suffer with him,** — Suffer the consequences of living for Him, regardless of what they may be (Rv. 2:10). As long as suffering, pain, sorrow, and difficulties are with Him, they have a purpose: they point to the victory which lies ahead. As long as we see a divine purpose in it, no suffering is too hard to endure. **that we may be also glorified together.** — Glorified with Christ by receiving the eternal inheritance with Him. If we suffer with Him in this life then we shall receive with Him the glories of eternity.

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## SUFFERING

**8:18** For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

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**8:18 For I reckon** — I consider (NIV). A firm conclusion deduced from the facts in the case. **that the sufferings** — All suffering but especially that brought on by one's relationship with Christ (v. 17). Suffering may be mental, emotional, or physical. It may be brought on by nature or imposed by self or others. Unbelievers see it as an evil and conclude that if God is good and all-powerful, He would not permit it. But to say that suffering is an evil, in all who suffer and under all circumstance, is to view it differently than the Scriptures present it. The Scriptures recognize it as a fact of life to be dealt with (2 Tm. 3:12), but one that can be precious and rewarding (1 Pt. 1:6-7). It can be used for a higher purpose (2 Cor. 4:17), to make one more effective in the Lord's service (2 Cor. 12:7-9); to deepen his trust in the Lord (1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 2:18); to chasten him toward maturity (1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:5-11); to establish and strengthen him (1 Pt. 5:10); to give him patience (Jas. 5:10); to give him experience so as to enable him to comfort others (2 Cor. 1:4-6); and to make him worthy of the kingdom (2 Thes. 1:4-5). Suffering for the sake of Christ (Mt. 5:10-12) should be thought of as suffering with Him (v. 17; 2 Cor. 1:7; 2 Tm. 2:12; 1 Pt. 4:17). Some think that Christians should escape all suffering. But this God has not promised. The difference in the believer and the unbeliever is, not that the believer shall be spared suffering and sorrow, but that God will help



him overcome it and use it for good (v. 28; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 3:10; 1 Cor. 10:13). **of this present time** — The present age, the time in which we now live, in contrast to that which is yet to come. **are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.** — Present suffering is as nothing when compared with the rewards awaiting the faithful (Rv. 2:10) when they share with Christ the eternal glory (v. 17). The remainder of this chapter may be viewed as five reasons why Christians should endure suffering: (1) the body will be redeemed (vv. 19-23); (2) we are saved by hope (vv. 24-25); (3) the Spirit helps our infirmities (vv. 26-27); (4) all things are made to work for our good (vv. 28-30); (5) God is for us (vv. 31-39).

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## REDEMPTION OF THE BODY

8:19-23 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

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8:19-23 This section is admittedly difficult. Bible students have differed radically on the meaning of “creature,” “the whole creation,” and “we ourselves.” And where great and good men differ widely it is wise to tread lightly. But I accept the view that “creature” and the “whole creation” refer to humanity and “we ourselves” refers to Christians. More is said on this in the notes. But, however difficult the language may be, and whether our view is the correct one or not, the message is clear and plain. It gives the first of five reasons designed to encourage Christians to endure sufferings and trials (v. 18). Suffering is temporal, but man is eternal. In view of this fact, the sufferer will soon be delivered from his present state to a state of glory. In short, Paul reasons that we should endure suffering because the body, in which suffering is endured, will be redeemed (v. 23). Thus the message is clear and simple (even though the language may be difficult) — the body will be redeemed from the grave, incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:35-54) and free from all pain, sorrow, and trials (Rv. 21:4). The sufferings of the present are as nothing when compared with the joys of the future (v. 18).

8:19 **For the earnest expectation** — Eagerly watching with suspense. **of the creature** — The creation (ASV). Same as the whole creation of v. 22. In my judgment, this has no reference to angels, to the inanimate part of creation, nor to animals or any other lower form of life. It refers to man — humanity (Mk. 16:15; Col. 1:23). **waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.** — The NIV renders it, “Waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.” That is, they wait for the resurrection. Without contextual consideration this could mean that all mankind waited in great expectation for God

to reveal His scheme to redeem, by which the means of sonship was made known. But in context it refers to that glory which is yet to be revealed, namely, the resurrection of the body and the eternal rewards of the sons of God (v. 23; 1 Jn. 3:1-2). The emphasis is on all men's hope of immortality. James MacKnight's paraphrase summarizes this view: "What a blessing a resurrection to immortality is, may be understood by this, That the earnest desire of mankind hath ever been to obtain that glorious endless life in the body, by which the sons of God shall be made known."

8:20 **For the creature** — Humankind. **was made subject to vanity**, — Futility (RSV). All the decaying conditions, with its sorrow and frustrations, which came upon man as a result of the fall (Gn. 3). **not willingly**, — Not of its own will (ASV) but by the sentence of God. **but by reason of him** — God (though Satan had a part by introducing sin and Adam by committing it), who did so because of Adam's sin. **who hath subjected the same in hope**, — Even as God pronounced the curses upon Satan, woman, and the man for their role in the fall, and thus brought them under the rule of futility, He gave man hope by promising him a Redeemer (Gn. 3:15). Man was thus subjected in hope.

8:21 **Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.** — Many translators (including the NIV) and commentators (e.g., MacKnight) connect "in hope" of v. 20 with this verse, giving it the sense of the ASV: "For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered. . . ." From the very first, sinful man was given hope that God would provide deliverance from the bondage of corruption (mortality) to a glorious liberty (immortality). God has kept His promise and the means of deliverance is now available through Christ and His gospel (2 Tm. 1:10) to all who choose to accept it (2:7).

8:22 **For we know that the whole creation** — All of mankind. **groaneth and travaileth in pain** — As a woman giving birth to a child. **together until now.** — The whole human family has suffered together the results (sickness, pain, sorrow, death, etc.) of the fall up to this very moment of time.

8:23 **And not only they**, — All humankind. **but ourselves also**, — Christians. While they are a part of the whole human family, they are here made a distinct group within it. **which have the firstfruits of the Spirit**, — A foretaste of the good things to come. The first fruit was the first of the harvest gathered. It promised more yet to come. So with becoming and being a Christian. We have received the first fruit (or an earnest of both the Spirit and our inheritance, 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14), but the grand prize is yet to come (Phil. 2:14; 2 Tm. 4:6-8). **even we ourselves groan within ourselves**, — Christians suffer along with others as they wait for deliverance from corruption

(v. 21). They are not exempt from the groanings and travail in pain that characterize the whole of humanity. They have many advantages, not the least of which is the help of God needed to endure suffering, but they do not escape the consequences resulting from the fall. They suffer, but they suffer in hope . . . and that makes all the difference in the world now and in eternity to come. **waiting for the adoption**, — The change from the mortal to the immortal (1 Cor. 15:51-54). Adoption here refers to the resurrection, the putting on of immortality, and not sonship as in v. 15. It looks forward to the time when the full harvest will be gathered. **to wit**, — Namely, placing adoption in apposition to the redemption of the body. **the redemption of our body**. — The resurrection or the body being brought back from the grave (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15; Phil. 3:21; 1 Thes. 4:16-18). In view of the resurrection and the full rewards of the sons of God, “The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us” (v. 18).

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## HOPE

8:24-25 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doeth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

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8:24-25 Paul's second reason why Christians should endure suffering is the hope of immortality. By that hope we can preserve until the mortal puts on the immortal.

8:24 **For we are saved** — Kept or preserved by hope. By hope we anticipate the rewards of the future and are thus sustained in our trials. We are saved by hope in the sense that it keeps us from despairing in suffering. Here we must decide whether Paul is looking back to the time of salvation from sins and thus saying that in hope we were saved (as in the ASV) or forward to a future salvation (as in the KJV). I have accepted the KJV as presenting the correct view. To be saved here means to preserve until the time of deliverance from mortality. Hope helps us endure suffering patiently. **by hope**: Hope is made up of desire, anticipation, and expectation. It is the anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:18-19). As Christians we have a better hope (Heb. 7:19); a good hope (2 Thes. 2:16); a living hope (1 Pt. 1:3); a blessed hope (Ti. 2:13); and one that has a purifying effect (1 Jn. 3:3). Here it encourages the endurance of trials until the victory is won. **but hope that is seen** — Realized or attained its object. **is not hope**: — Does not have the basic components of hope. How could one desire, anticipate, or expect that he has already attained? Realized hope ceases to be hope. **for what a man seeth**, — Realizes or already possesses. **why doeth ye yet hope for?** — Who hopes for what he already has (NIV).

8:25 **But if we hope** — Desire, anticipate, expect. **for that we see not**, — For that which is yet to come, immortality (the resurrection of the body), or a new body which will know no suffering (Rv. 21:4). **then do we with pa-**

**tience wait for it.** — We patiently endure whatever hardship that may be imposed upon us until the day of deliverance.

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## THE SPIRIT'S HELP

8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

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8:26 **Likewise** — In the same way (NIV). Connects vv. 26-27 to vv. 19-25 and compares the help given by the Spirit with that of the resurrection and hope. Thus what follows is the third encouragement to Christians to patiently endure suffering until the crown is won. **the Spirit** — The HS. This is certain because the work done (making intercession) is a divine work. **also helpeth our infirmities:** — Our weakness and inability, specifically the one which follows. **for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:** — This does not mean that we do not know how to pray for anything (1 Thes. 5:17; 1 Tm. 2:1-8; Jas. 1:5; 5:13-17; Heb. 4:15-16). But there are longings, gratitudes, and needs of the heart which cannot be spoken. We can only express them with unutterable groanings. The HS takes these groanings and makes intercession to God with them. It is not the function of the Spirit (as many believe) to help us pray — that is, give us direct guidance to express the inexpressible. The point here is not that He gives us the words with which to pray but that He takes our inexpressible groanings and uses them to intercede with God on our behalf. **but the Spirit itself** — Himself (ASV). Indicates a personal involvement; not a task delegated to another. **maketh intercession for us** — He goes before God and pleads on our behalf. This clearly states the work He does for us (in the presence of God) and not what He does in us (as a result of indwelling, [v. 9]). **with groanings** — Not the groanings of the Spirit but our own inner needs and longings which we cannot express in words. **which cannot be uttered.** — Which we are unable to verbalize or express. In this v. we see: (1) The fact stated — “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” (2) The weakness revealed — “We know not what we should pray for as we ought.” (3) The help given — “The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.” (4) The means used — “Groanings which cannot be uttered.”

8:27 **And he that searcheth the hearts** — God. **knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,** — He knows what the Spirit knows — that is, He knows the hearts of men (1 Sm. 16:7). While this may be a difficult expression, its design is to give the reason why the Spirit makes intercession for us, why He appears before God in our behalf. **because he maketh intercession** — The usual word for intercession (the same as in v. 26 minus *huper*). It means to go into the presence of another for the purpose of supplication. It expresses a different function than that of a mediator (cf. 1 Tm. 2:5). **for the saints** — All

who are sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2) and adopted into the family of God (vv. 14-15). **according to the will of God.** — According to the plan and purpose of God.

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## GOD RULES

8:28-30 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

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8:28 **And we know** — This is the fourth reason given for enduring suffering, namely, God is in control and will work all things, even suffering and pain, to the good of those who love Him. They could know this by experience and by the whole thrust of Scriptural teaching on the providence of God. **that all things** — Limited by the context to suffering, sorrow, pain, persecution, tribulations, and trials (v. 18) — whatever cross one must bear in order to follow Christ (cf. Mt. 16:24). The principle however is often expanded, and without doing much injustice to the text, to include the concept of God controlling all occurrences in such a way as to finally benefit man in his quest for salvation. **work together for good** — God directs suffering, sorrow, pain, etc., so as to make it ultimately result in good for the sufferer. How does He do it? That is not our department. Our department is to love Him. When we love Him, then we trust Him to keep His word. It is His department to control events so as to bring the world and man to the consummation of His purpose. **to them that love God,** — His children (v. 17; Gal. 4:4-6), those who obey His will (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24). **to them who are the called** — Who have been called (NIV). The called and those who love God are the same. They are called by the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14) according to His own purpose and grace (2 Tm. 1:9). **according to his purpose.** — In His design for him, God made man for a purpose. According to Solomon, this purpose can be summed up in the words, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). The word duty is not in the Hebrew. It was added by the translators to help express the meaning of the verse. But in this case, the added word may do more harm than good. The author’s meaning seems to be fear God and keep His commandment for this is the whole of man — the whole purpose of his being. To do God’s will then is the purpose for which men exist. The call is the call which brings man into God’s purpose — the call which brings man to fill the purpose for which he was made. God’s purpose here then is His purpose to redeem man through His Son — to save those who do His will. Those who answer God’s call through the gospel become the called according to His purpose.

8:29 **For** — Greek *oti*, because, tying vv. 28 and 29 together. Thus the called are those whom God foreknew. **whom he did foreknow,** — He

foreknew those who were the called according to His purpose, not as individuals but as the called. Foreknowledge is a most difficult subject for the human mind to comprehend. It, like eternity, is infinite, and the infinite staggers the finite. I do not believe that the term foreknew can any more mean that God foreknew each individual who would be saved or lost than the term predestinate means that He predestinated each one to be saved or lost. God foreknew the called, and each individual must determine for himself whether he will be a part of the called, the people of God, the foreknown. **he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**, — God did not predestinate individuals, but the kind of character each individual must possess in order to be saved. He foreknew the called and He predetermined that the called would be conformed to the image of His Son. Scriptural predestination thus consist in the called being conformed to the likeness of Christ. This means that it is the system, the scheme, the plan, that is predetermined, not the individual who may of his own free will choose to either accept or reject the means of salvation (Mt. 11:28-30; Mk. 16:15-16; Rv. 22:17). For additional study, see Eph. 1:4-5, 12; 1 Pt. 1:1-2; 2 Pt. 1:10. **that he might be the firstborn among many brethren**. — Christ. To be first born is to have the pre-eminence. Christ was pre-eminent in creation (Col. 1:15), in His resurrection (Col. 1:18), in authority (Mt. 28:18), in honor (Phil. 1:5-11), etc.

8:30 **Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called:** — See note on v. 28. **and whom he called, them he also justified:** — Made right with Him by the death of Christ. There are three ways one might be justified: (1) having never sinned or violated the law; (2) having sinned or violated the law and paying the penalty in full; (3) having sinned or violated the law but having the penalty paid by another. The third is the means, and the only means, by which one can be justified in the eyes of God. The death of Christ has paid the sin debt of those who are conformed to His image. They are therefore free from sin and as a result stand in a right relationship with God. **and whom he justified, them he also glorified.** — Glorified by Him giving them all the blessing He bestows upon His people, such as the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38); the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32); adoption of sons (v. 15-17); members of His family (1 Tm. 3:15); justified (Rom. 5:1); sanctified (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26); and filled with the hope that saves (vv. 24-25). By God's scheme of human redemption, man is saved from the shame and disgrace of sin and by this reconciliation man is glorified — his purpose of being has been restored. God is glorified in the process (5:2) and salvation is a state of glory for man. The present state of glory prepares him for the ultimate glory, which is yet to come.

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## GOD IS FOR US

8:31-34 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that

condemnth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

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**8:31 What shall we say to these things?** — What conclusion should be drawn from the encouragements given to Christians to overcome suffering (vv. 19-30)? This section (vv. 31-34) can be viewed as the fifth encouragement to endure suffering patiently. **If God be for us**, — God is for us, glory awaits us, and therefore nothing can successfully work against us, not even suffering. If He gives us deliverance, who or what can object? If He justifies, who or what can condemn? If He unites us with Himself, who or what can separate? If we conquer in Him, who or what can defeat us? The grand climax is (vv. 38-39) that nothing can separate us from the love of God. **who can be against us?** — None or nothing. Who or what would go against the power, the wisdom, the benevolence, the goodness, and the mercy of God? Who would try to defeat His plans and purposes? None. Thus we are safe from the storms and trials of life, not in the sense that we can escape them but that we have the power on our side by which we can overcome. To be against us (since God is with us) would be to be against God (Lk. 10:16; Mt. 12:30; 25:44-45).

**8:32 He** — God. **that spared not his own Son**, — Jesus Christ, who left the riches of heaven to ransom the souls of men (2 Cor. 8:9). God did not withhold Him as the sacrificial offering for sins. As Abraham proposed to do (Gn. 22:1-18) but whose intent was cut short by the voice of an angel, God did. He did not spare Him the humiliation, the suffering, or the death (Phil. 2:5-12; Heb. 5:8-9). **but delivered him up** — To die on the cruel cross of Calvary. **for us all**, — Christ died to pay the sin debt of every man (1 Jn. 2:2). The penalty has thus been paid in full. But all will not be saved because they will not accept by faith Christ as their sin offering and appropriate His shed blood to their sins by obedience to the gospel (1:16-17; 6:3-4, 16-18). The saddest part of being lost is the fact that one is lost for sins for which the penalty is already paid. **how shall he not with him** — With Christ. **also freely give us all things**. — God gave us the greatest possible gift, His only Son; surely then He will without restraint give us the lesser gift of all things of v. 28.

**8:33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?** — Who can impeach or bring charges (as in a court of law) against God's chosen people so as to condemn them? None, absolutely none! The elect are the people of God, the same as the called in vv. 28-30. God always elects for a purpose, never at random or arbitrarily. The reason for His selection or rejection is that some choose to obey His plan to save while others refuse to do so. God thus elects to save those who have elected to become His children by the new birth (Jn. 3:5) or adoption (vv. 14-15). **It is God that justifieth**. That is, God provides the means of justification through the death of His Son (as is set forth in chapters 4 and 5).

8:34 **Who is he that condemneth?** — None. When God justifies, no one has the right to condemn. Why? **It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.** — Four things are said about Christ that one should have to remove or deny in order to condemn one God justifies: (1) He died — to pay man's sin debt (1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Tm. 2:6; Heb. 1:3; 1 Pt. 2:24; 1 Jn. 2:2). (2) He rose from the dead — for our justification (4:25). (3) He is now at the right hand of God — ruling from His throne (Mk. 16:19; Heb. 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). (4) He makes intercession for us — He pleads our case before the Father (same word as in v. 27).

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## MORE THAN CONQUERORS

8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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8:35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?** — None can lay anything to our charge, none can condemn, and none can separate from the love Christ has for us. And nothing, including tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword, should be permitted to separate us from the love we have for Him. Our love for Him should be intensified in time of trial so that His love for us will not be in vain. We endure sufferings for His sake (Phil. 1:29-30).

8:36 **As it is written,** — Ps. 44:22, where the writer enumerates the many afflictions of Israel. **For thy sake** — For God's sake or cause. The whole chapter seems to be a plea for God's deliverance because of the things they had suffered for Him. Paul applies it to Christ and uses it as a means to encourage us in the endurance of afflictions. **we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.** — Additional forms of suffering to those given in v. 35. All this makes the suffering we endure a service for Christ — it is a stewardship. And if it is for Him, something He has committed to our trust, we can endure for the present because of the anticipation of future rewards (v. 18).

8:37 **Nay,** — No! We will not be defeated by afflictions. **in all these things** — Sufferings (cf. vv. 28, 31-32). **we are more than conquerors** — We overwhelmingly conquer (NASV) or win the victory. **through him that loved us.** — Through Christ or for His sake or cause we can overcome the trials of life with surprising ease. Paul himself is an example of such a victory (2 Cor. 11:21-30).



8:38-39 **For I am persuaded**, — Totally convinced by both experience (2 Cor. 11:20-30) and revelation (2 Cor. 12:7-10) that nothing in heaven or on earth can separate us from divine love. **that neither death, nor life**, — The two fundamental facts of our being. We can serve God in both (14:7-8; Phil. 1:20); neither should be permitted to separate us from Him. **angels, nor principalities**, — Spirit beings both good and bad (2 Pt. 2:11; Eph. 6:12). **nor powers**, — Neither earthly nor infernal. **nor things present, nor things to come**, — Neither present afflictions (such as mentioned in vv. 35-36) nor future forebodings. **Nor height, nor depth**, — Nothing within the dimensions of time and space. May have reference to heaven above and hell beneath. **nor any other creature**, — Any other created thing beyond what is here mentioned. **shall be able to separate us from the love of God**, — Same as the love of Christ in v. 35. **which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**. — To separate us from the love of Christ, in this context, is to separate us from Christ Himself — to break our union with Him. Thus as long as we are in Christ we are secure (Jn. 10:28-29). The design of this passage is to show that no existing power in heaven, on earth, or in the infernal regions can change or modify the love Christ has for us. Our relationship with Him cannot be changed by external forces. Whether we live or die, whether we suffer or not, whether we are weak or strong, etc., does not and cannot change His love. He loves us through it all . . . and in that love we can conquer. This does not mean, however, that the union cannot be broken by us (by internal forces). The heart may become corrupt, unbelieving, and turn back to serving the devil (2 Pt. 2:20-22; 2 Tm. 4:10; 1 Tm. 1:19). This is a change of masters — not by external forces but by internal departures (Heb. 10:39; 1 Cor. 9:27). One can therefore separate himself from Christ or fall from grace (Gal. 5:4). But even worse, one can fall so far away that it is impossible to renew him again to repentance (Heb. 6:1-6; 10:26).

## ROMANS 9

### PAUL'S CONCERN FOR ISRAEL

9:1-5 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

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9:1 **I say the truth in Christ, I lie not,** — I speak the truth in Christ — I am not lying (NIV). A solemn assertion that what he is about to say is the truth. **my conscience** — Moral consciousness, the inner being, the faculty of the mind which warns when one does that which he has been taught is wrong and approves when he does that which he has been taught is right. When the conscience is trained right, it leads right; when it is trained wrong, it invariably leads wrong. Its function is not to determine what is right and what is wrong (that is done by God and is revealed to us in the Bible) but to help us unerringly to follow that which we have been taught is right. Thus the conscience is designed to help us follow the guide, the word of God. **also bearing me witness** — His conscience had been trained to always tell the truth; hence it was a reliable witness to the truthfulness of what follows. **in the Holy Ghost,** — Under the direction, insight, enlightenment, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But why such a strong statement to confirm the fact that he was telling the truth? Probably he wanted to leave no doubt in the mind of any Jew that he loved his people and nation and to thus prove that when he had before concluded that they were equal sinners with the Gentiles (2:5-24) he had not done so with hate in his heart for them.

9:2 **That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.** — Here he states his burden and concern for the lost state of his people, the Israelites (see v. 3).

9:3 Just a casual look at the commentaries quickly reveal that this passage is understood in various ways. But regardless of how it is interpreted, one should remember Paul's purpose for writing it, namely, to prove his deep love and concern for the lost state of his brethren according to the flesh. **For I could wish** — Not that he actually does so wish but that he could do so if such

a wish were permissible. Charles Hodge probably captured the truth here when he said, " 'I could wish it, were it not wrong; or, did it not involve my being unholy as well as miserable, but as such is the case, the desire cannot be entertained.' This is the proper force of the imperfect indicative when thus used; it implies the presence of a condition which is known to be impossible." **that myself were accursed** — Cut off without hope. The Greek word from which accursed is translated appears only here and in Acts 13:14; 1 Cor. 12:3; 14:22; and Gal. 1:8-9. **from Christ** — Separated from Him with all the blessings and consequences. Was Paul willing to be eternally lost if that would save the Jews? Was he willing to give his life (sacrifice himself physically) for them? Or was he willing to renounce Christ, with all the spiritual blessings he had enjoyed in Him (Eph. 1:3-5), if that would mean the salvation of the Jews? I think the third is the true one. Paul could have wished himself separated from Christ if that would have meant the salvation of the Jews. But such a separation would not have helped them. Paul's destruction would have been added to theirs. Christ is Lord! This fact could not be changed by his wish. Paul's love for Christ was unlimited, but he would have been willing to renounce that love for the Jews, providing it would have made them right. But such a wish could not possibly change their state . . . nor the truth. What it does do is show Paul's profound love for his brethren. And that is its design. **for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:** — The Jews. Paul had two sets of brethren: brethren in the Lord (10:1-4; Phil. 1:14) and brethren in the flesh (the Jews).

9:4-5 A nine-point description of the Israelites, Paul's brethren or kinsmen according to the flesh, is now given. **Who are Israelites;** — The descendants of Abraham through Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gn. 35:10). **to whom pertaineth the adoption,** — Sonship. God adopted them as His own peculiar people (cf. Ex. 4:22; Ps. 89:27; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1). **and the glory,** — The glory of God's presence and protection, such as in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night (Ex. 13:21-22). God is glorified when man does right — does what he was made to do; man's glory is to do the will of God — to be all that God meant him to be (see note on 1:21). **and the covenants,** — The covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12); entered into with Abraham (Gn. 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:4-14); Isaac (Gn. 26:2-5, 23-25); Jacob (Gn. 35:9-12); and Israel (Ex. 20:18-26). **and the giving of the law,** — The whole law, beginning with the giving of the ten commandments by the hand of God on Mount Sinai (Ex. 20) and extending to the whole OT. **and the service of God,** — All divine services, temple or otherwise, rendered to God. Israel's worship as the only one revealed by God in the OT. **and the promises;** — All the promises made to Adam (Gn. 1:15); Abraham (Gn. 12:1-3); Isaac (Gn. 26:5); Jacob (Gn. 35:11-12); David (2 Sm. 7:12-13); etc., which found their fulfillment and consummation in Christ (Gal. 3:16; 4:4-6). **Whose are the fathers,** — The patriarchs (NIV). They had the distinction of being the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came,** — And

from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ (NIV). They had the distinction of not only being the seed of Abraham but also the nation through whom the world's Savior came. **God blessed for ever.** — Who is God over all, forever praised (NIV). Jesus Christ is God in the flesh (Mt. 1:23; Jn. 1:1-3, 14; Phil. 2:5-11) who is blessed forever! **Amen.** — So let it be (see note on 1:25) — let Jesus Christ be praised as God both now and forever more!

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## **GOD'S RIGHT OF SELECTION**

### **A. PROVEN BY ISAAC**

9:6-9 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

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9:6 **Not as though the word of God** — The promise of God to Abraham (v. 7). **hath taken none effect.** — Come to nought (ASV), had failed (NIV). The promise was given (Gn. 12:3); the law was added later (Gal. 3:19); the law was abolished or removed by the death of Christ (Eph. 2:13-17; Col. 2:13-16); and then the promise was fulfilled in the gospel (Gal. 3:16, 21-29). Thus the promise had not failed; Israel after the flesh had failed the promise. **For they are not all Israel** — As pertaining to the promise. **which are of Israel:** — After the flesh. To be of Israel according to the promise (after the Pentecost of Acts 2) was to be a Christian, a child of God. But all Israelites were not children according to the promise — they had not accepted Christ as the consummation of the promise. Some had. They were heirs of the promise. Some had not. They remained Israel after the flesh and was therefore lost (cf. 2:28-29 with the notes; Gal. 4:21-31).

9:7 **Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children:** — Nor is one proven to be an heir of the promise simply because he is the descendant of Abraham. **but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called** (Gn. 21:12). Here it is vital to keep Paul's purpose in view, namely, to show that salvation is by the Lord's choice. He may limit it, or extend it, to anyone He chooses, that is, He and He alone decides the grounds and means of salvation. This principle was illustrated by God's choice of Isaac. Abraham was the father of several children (Gn. 16:4, 11; 25:1-2) but the promise was through Isaac alone. The point is, God's promise has not failed because some of the Jews have been rejected. God has now chosen to save those who obey the gospel (1:16-17) and He has thereby chosen to reject all those who do not. The gospel system is the fulfillment of the promise and its heirs are the children of the promise. The rejected Jews had rejected the gospel and had thereby rejected the promise.

9:8 **That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.** — Abraham's children were divided into two groups

(Gal. 4:22-31): (1) Children of the flesh — those born to him naturally; (2) children of promise — Isaac, who was born by God's plans, promise, and intervention. The former, while they were the seed of Abraham physically, had nothing to do with the fulfillment of the promise; the latter was Abraham's link in the seed line to Jesus Christ. Hence, the child of promise — the child through which the promise would reach its fulfillment in Christ. Thus to prove that one is the seed of Abraham (physically) proves absolutely nothing concerning salvation. The blessing pertains to those who are his seed according to the promise. This is a death blow to the whole system of premillennialism.

9:9 **For this is the word of promise**, — Made to Abraham. **At this time** — At the appointed time (NIV) (Gn. 18:10; 21:1-2). **will I come, and Sarah shall have a son** (Gn. 18:10-14; 21:1-3). Isaac, the child of promise, the child through whom the promise would be realized. The point is that God chose to limit His promise to Isaac. Who can object then if God chooses to limit His salvation to those who accept Christ by obeying His will? None, because salvation is by God's choice. This though is expanded upon in the remainder of the chapter.

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## B. PROVEN BY JACOB

9:10-13 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

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9:10 **And not only this**; — Not only was Isaac alone chosen from Abraham's seed, God's limitations (election) goes even further. **but when Rebecca also had conceived by one**, — Rebecca's children had one and the same father (NIV). **even by our father Isaac**; — Isaac was the promised child, but when he became the father of twins, Jacob and Esau, a choice (as to the seed line, the one through whom the blessing was to come) had to be made between them. The choice had nothing to do with their personal salvation. However, it does illustrate the principle of God's right to choose or select some and reject others — to choose whom He will save . . . and upon what terms.

9:11 **(For the children being not yet born**, — Jacob and Esau. God's choice of Jacob as the seed line, and His rejection of Esau, the firstborn, was made before the birth of the children. **neither having done any good or evil**, — The selection was therefore not made on the basis of their birthright or worth. **that the purpose of God according to election might stand**, — the plans God had formulated in His own mind and the end He had in view, namely, the fulfillment of the promise of human redemption (cf. 8:28 and the note there). Jacob was chosen that the election (or selection), God's predetermination to save the world through the seed of Abraham, might remain totally an act of His choice, rather than on the basis of birthright or merit. **not of**

**works**, — Neither by the merit of Jacob or the demerits of Esau. Merit was neither the basis nor the cause of God's choice. **but of him that calleth;**) — The choice was therefore God's alone. Man had no voice in the matter. So it is now with salvation. The means of salvation (not the salvation or damnation of specific individuals), the gospel of Christ (1:16-17), are determined by God's choice alone. He sets the bounds and states the conditions. Man had nothing to do with that. But this has reference to providing the plan, and giving the conditions imposed therein, that is, the ones God has chosen to save, not to one's obedience to the conditions stipulated in the plan. God chose to save some (all if they would meet His conditions); He revealed the plan and conditions by which He would save; He gave in no uncertain terms what each one is required to do in order to be saved (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38); and He saves all those who comply with the conditions of His plan. Hence salvation is by the Lord's choice because He alone provides the grounds and the conditions.

9:12 **It was said unto her**, — Rebecca, when she was pregnant with twins. **The elder shall serve the younger** (Gn. 25:23). To look for a time when Esau served Jacob personally would be to miss Paul's point completely. The sons would become the fathers of two nations (Edom and Israel) and God was simply foretelling their place, or lack of it, in His plan to redeem His promise (Gn. 25:23). It is thus their respective positions in the messianic promise with which Paul is concerned. The promise was to be kept through the younger, not the older. (Edom, Esau's descendants, did serve Israel in the time of David [2 Sm. 8:14]).

9:13 **As it is written**, (Mal. 1:2-4). **Jacob have I loved**, — Favored by selecting him as the seed line. **but Esau have I hated**. — Rejected or favored less, as pertaining to the seed line. The words loved and hated are set as opposites, and mean, as Jesus used the expression, to love or favor one more than the other (Lk. 14:26-27; Mt. 10:37-38), not to hate as we usually think of the term. It should be remembered that the expression has to do with the selection of Jacob as the seed line and not with God's love for the children *per se*. There are those who try to get individual predestination (something absolutely unknown to Scripture) out of vv. 10-13, but this is to read into the text rather than to draw out of it (eisegesis rather than exegesis). As the context shows (and Paul's purpose for writing it proves), the promise, not the sons as individuals, is under consideration. Since the promise (of the coming seed, Christ) could not be fulfilled in both, a choice had to be made between the two sons. Jacob was chosen; Esau was rejected. Thus the election (selection) concerns itself with the nations that came from the two sons and the part they were to play in the fulfillment of the promises and not with the sons themselves *per se*. Paul is continuing to demonstrate by the selection of Jacob over Esau the principle by which God has chosen to save. It is not by man's merit but by God's gracious choice — He choose to save only those who accept and obey His divine plan as revealed in the gospel (1:16).

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## C. PROVEN BY PHARAOH

9:14-18 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

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9:14 **What shall we say then?** — Does it follow that God's selection of Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau is to be objected to on the grounds that it would make God partial? Certainly not. It only establishes the principle of His divine right to choose. **Is there unrighteousness with God?** — Is God unjust (NIV) because He made a selection in order to bring about the consummation of His promise? And is there injustice in the fact that His plan includes believing Gentiles and excludes unbelieving Jews? A negative answer is both expected and given. God's right of selecting to save believers (including Gentiles) and rejecting unbelievers (including Jews) has been established by Scriptural example (and there are more to follow). **God forbid.** — A strong negative meaning not at all. Selection does not prove God unjust. Choice is His by divine right, as the Scriptures show. And the Scriptures cannot be broken (Jn. 10:35), that is, the Scriptures cannot be wrong.

9:15 **For he saith to Moses,** — God said to Moses (Ex. 33:19). **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.** — The two statements are parallel, mercy and compassion meaning the same, or nearly so. Man's merit or demerit does not control God's favor. It is an act of His own will. But the question must be raised, upon whom does He now have mercy? Who has he selected to save? God does not just arbitrarily save some and reject others. He has chosen to save those who meet the conditions of His plan and He has chosen to refuse those who do not. The gospel reveals that He has chosen to save one who believes in Christ as His Son (Jn. 3:16; 8:24; 7:38; 20:30-31); turns from his sins (Prv. 18:13; Is. 55:7; Lk. 13:5; Acts 17:30); and submits his life to Him in implicit and explicit obedience (Mt. 7:21; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4, 16-18; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Pt. 1:22). God thus exercises His divine right of selection through the gospel.

9:16 **So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.** — The grounds, means, and conditions of salvation is not by man's will or effort, but by the grace and mercy of God (Eph. 2:8-9). Paul thus concludes that the scheme of redemption, with whatever conditions it might include, is wholly the act of God's choice. He conceived and gave the plan and His plan reveals that He has chosen to save obedient believers and reject the disobedient and unbelieving. God alone had the right to stipulate the conditions and thus determine who would be saved and who would

be lost. In short, God chose the plan and the plan requires man to choose his own course. He can choose to accept the gospel (which is given by God's grace and includes God's conditions) and be saved or reject it and be refused. God chose to give man this choice.

9:17 **For the scripture saith** — What God said, as revealed in the Scriptures (Ex. 9:16). When the Scriptures speak, it is God speaking (cf. Heb. 1:1-4; 2 Pt. 1:19-21). They are here and everywhere recognized as the word of God (Mt. 4:4; 2 Tm. 3:14-17; 4:2). **unto Pharaoh**, — The Pharaoh with whom Moses was dealing when the ten plagues were sent. He was determined not to let Israel go as God had demanded (Ex. 5:1-2). Thus the conflict between God and Pharaoh was set. God said go; Pharaoh said no. As the conflict intensified (at the point of the quotation God had endured him through six plagues and would endure him through four more before cutting him off), rather than the words and acts of God softening Pharaoh's heart, as it should have done because he could clearly see that the hand of God was with Moses and Israel, it hardened it. Three facts are stated in this case: (1) Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Ex. 7:14, 22; 8:19; 9:7, 35); (2) God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 7:13; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8); (3) Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:32). One should not conclude then that God directly or immediately hardened Pharaoh's heart, thus violating his free will, but that he did so through means — means in which Pharaoh himself had a part. The fact and the means should be kept distinct. God sent His word to Pharaoh; Pharaoh rejected that word. God hardened his heart by giving him the truth; Pharaoh hardened his own heart by rejecting the truth. Truth is therefore the method or means by which his heart was hardened. **Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up**, — The cause for which He raised up, appointed, or selected Pharaoh at that time and place. God raised him up not to make him what he was but because of what he was. To make this act (raising up, appointing, or selecting) apply to the personal salvation of Pharaoh or anyone else is to miss Paul's point absolutely. It relates to the deliverance of Israel and to the keeping of the promise, just as did the selection of Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau. **that I might shew my power in thee**, — That the power of God might be manifest through the refusal of Pharaoh to do His will. Each time Pharaoh refused to let Israel go, the power of God was more clearly demonstrated in another plague, reaching its climax in the death of the first born in every Egyptian home. **and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth**. — That the whole earth might hear of and quake at His mighty power, demonstrated in the deliverance of the Israelites (cf. Jos. 2:9-10; 9:9; Ps. 44:1-3). This verse continues to illustrate the fact that salvation is by the Lord's choice. The gospel is offered to all. Those who accept it are blessed; those who reject it are hardened. God chooses to save them that believe (1:16-17); unbelievers are rejected (vv. 30-33).

9:18 **Therefore** — Paul now reaches his conclusion from what God had



said to Pharaoh. **hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy**, — He shows favor to whom He will, just as He favored Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. **and whom he will he hardeneth**. — He rejects all to whom He does not show favor, just as He did Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh. Two facts are stated here: (1) God shows mercy on whom He wills to show mercy — that is, He offers salvation to anyone He wills to offer it; (2) He hardens whom He wills — that is, He excludes anyone He wills. As in v. 17, the facts are stated: how His mercy is extended or the process by which He hardens must be learned elsewhere. The facts and the methods or means must be kept distinct. God now extends His offer of mercy through the gospel. Those who accept the offer and obey its requirements are saved, selected, favored (Ti. 2:11-12); those who reject it are lost, hardened, rejected (2 Thes. 1:7-9). God gives the plan to save to all, but he leaves each man free as to whether he will accept the plan. God wills to have mercy on those who do and He hardens (by means of the rejected gospel) those who do not. God hardens people only after they give Him up — only after they reject His offer of salvation (cf. 1:24, 26, 28).

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## D. PROVEN BY THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

9:19-24 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the samp lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

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9:19 **Thou wilt say then unto me**, — In view of the fact that God has mercy on and hardens whom He wills (v. 18), the question will be raised: **Why doth he yet find fault?** — Why does God still blame us? (NIV). This is in essence asking, Why does God condemn one for sin if He alone decides who to save and who to reject? **For who hath resisted his will?** — Who can resist His decrees if He saves whom He wills and hardens the rest? Is His will not irresistible? Paul's reply in v. 20 shows that these questions miss the point (as do all Calvinistic concepts concerning God's choice). He chooses but He chooses through and by His plan, the gospel. He chooses to save those who obey and He chooses to reject those who do not obey.

9:20 **Nay** — On the contrary (Goodspeed). **but, O man**, — Any man. **who art thou that repliest against God?** — This is not so much designed to specifically answer the questions of v. 19 as to show that those raising them are engaged in a business in which they have no business, namely, that of passing judgment upon God's decisions and actions. The NIV renders it, "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God." The RSV, "But who are you, a man, to

answer back to God?" God's actions are not subject to man's questions (11:33-36). If God chooses to save both Jew and Gentile upon obedience to the gospel (which He does), who has the right to question Him — who has the right to say that God cannot set the grounds and the limits of salvation? God makes the choices and we have no alternative but to accept them (if we are to be pleasing to Him). I studied with a man who had attended services of the church for the first time. I told him, in the course of the study, that he had a choice: he could either submit to and live for Christ and be saved or he could continue in sin and be lost. He replied, "I do not like the choices. It seems to me that for God to so limit us is terribly unfair. In fact, if I must choose one of the two, I really do not have a choice. I reject the choices. But I also reject God's choice for saying I will be lost for rejecting the choices. What then?" I could but reply: We are the creatures of God. He made us. We are His by right of creation. It is His divine right to establish the limits. It is our obligation to accept them. The choice belongs to God, whether we accept it or not. In accepting or rejecting God's choice, we decide our own destiny. God's choice is for us to choose — and He chooses to save all those who choose to accept His scheme to redeem. **Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?** — Of course not. This question is based on Is. 29:16 and is answered by an illustration in v. 21.

9:21 **Hath not the potter** — In this illustration, the potter represents God. **power over the clay**, — From Jer. 18:1-10. The potter, not the clay, determines the design of his work. So it is with God: He has mercy on and hardens whom He will (v. 18). Salvation, its grounds and means, is by the Lord's choice and man has no more right to question His acts, purpose, or design than clay has to say to the potter, "Why have you made me thus?" **of the same lump** — Out of the same mass of material. **to make one vessel unto honour**, — An instrument of beauty and noble purpose. **and another unto dishonour?** — An instrument of common or ignoble use. Keep in mind that this is an illustration designed to answer the question raised in v. 20. To press it to the point where man's free will is destroyed is to woefully abuse it. Paul never intended it to be so used. While God makes all men as they are (and men have no right to question the wisdom and justice of God), and while He determines who will be saved and who will be rejected (on the basis of belief or unbelief, vv. 30-33), He has chosen to let man determine for himself the kind of vessel he will be — one of honor or one of dishonor. Even the vilest sinner can purge himself (obtain forgiveness by obedience to the gospel [Acts 2:38]) and thereby become a vessel of honor, suitable for the Master's use (2 Tm. 2:20-21).

9:22 **What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known**, — Determined to show His wrath and power in the destruction of the vessels of dishonor. **endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath** — bore with great patience the objects of his wrath (NIV). Pharaoh, because of his hardened condition (see note, v. 17), was an object of

God's wrath and therefore a vessel prepared for destruction. But God was patient with him, sending 10 plagues to persuade him to let Israel go rather than destroying him immediately. God does not abandon men until they abandon Him (1:24, 26, 28). His longsuffering is toward everyone, not willing that any should perish (2 Pt. 3:9). But, just as with Pharaoh, there comes a time when God will cease to extend His mercy and show His wrath (11:22). **fitted for destruction:** — Prepared for destruction (NIV). Who prepared them? Just as with Pharaoh, that depends upon what sense one has in mind. In this context, it is clear that Paul meant that they had prepared themselves. Pharaoh by his evil rejection of God's word was the active agent in the hardening of his heart and thus prepared himself as a vessel of wrath. In the same manner, by accepting and following God's revealed will, man now prepares himself as a vessel of mercy (v. 23).

9:23 **And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy,** — As He showed His wrath to Pharaoh (because he resisted His will), He showed the riches of His blessings on Israel (because they obeyed His voice). This principle is just as true under the Christian system. Man's decisions, his action or reaction to the will of God, is the basis of God's election (see notes on 8:29-30). In short, God makes known the riches of His glory to those who do His will (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). **which he had afore prepared unto glory,** — Whom He prepared in advance for glory (NIV). This has nothing to do with predestination (the kind that makes man something less than a free moral agent). Just as with Pharaoh, God gave them His will and they themselves were the active agents in the preparation (Eph. 2:10). Fortunately, Paul tells us in the next verse just who they are.

9:24 **Even us,** — Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pt. 4:16), the objects of God's mercy (v. 23), and vessels of honor. **whom he hath called,** — By the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14). He calls all (Rv. 22:17), but only those who accept the call by explicit and implicit obedience (Acts 22:16) can know the riches of His glory. **not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?** — God's offer of salvation knows no limits — the gospel is for all! All now stand in the same relationship to God, that is both Jew and Gentile (11:32). Those who come to the fount and drink freely are the selected; those who refuse are rejected.

Additional note on 9:6-24: At first reading, this section may seem difficult, but it will not be to him who does not try to read into it something that is not there — something that Paul never had in mind, namely, that God in His own sovereign will, without anything on man's part, determined the salvation or damnation of each individual soul and that man's only role is to acknowledge this predetermination as just and impartial (an absolute contradiction). Such is not Paul's point at all. He is simply affirming that God has a right to save whom He will — the right to give the plan of salvation and stipulate in that plan who will and who will not be saved. God elects (wills or selects) to save those who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). Those who do not obey Him are rejected (6:16-18;

2 Thes. 2:7-9). God makes the choice as to whom He will save, not by the selection or rejection of each individual, but by giving the plan and letting each individual choose for himself as to whether he will accept and follow the plan. Those who accept (obey) the plan of salvation, God chooses to save; those who reject His plan are thereby refused. Salvation is therefore by God's choice because He gave the plan and the plan reveals who can be saved and who will be lost (Mk. 16:15-16).

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## E. PROVEN BY THE SCRIPTURES

9:25-29 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

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9:25 **As he saith also in Osee, —** As God said through the prophet Hosea (Hos. 2:23). Paul had used Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Pharaoh, and the potter and the clay as examples of God's right to select in matters pertaining to salvation. Now he turns to show that the prophets (whom they accepted as the spokesmen of God) foretold precisely the same thing by foreseeing the salvation of the Gentiles. **I will call them my people, which were not my people; —** The Gentiles. **and her beloved, which was not beloved. —** Hosea's words were directed toward the 10 tribes of Israel, which had been absorbed into the Gentiles among whom they had been taken captive. Paul's application shows that their condition was exactly the same as that of the Gentiles and that their salvation would be upon the same principles as theirs. God's choice would be to call them His beloved because of their faith in Christ; all others would be rejected for a lack of it (vv. 30-33).

9:26 Quoted from Hosea 1:10. See note on v. 25. **And it shall come to pass, —** It will happen (NIV). Paul applies the whole prophecy to the salvation of the Gentiles. **that in the place where it was said unto them, —** In the captivity. Hosea thus shows that Israel (the 10 tribes) will never return as a nation, but that the place of their captivity will become the place of their salvation — that is, they would be saved just as the Gentiles among whom they were scattered. **Ye are not my people; —** They would not be restored nationally as His people. **there —** In captivity or in the nations of their dispersion, the place where this was said. **shall they be called the children of the living God. —** Called children upon the same grounds and means as the Gentiles (by the gospel), not as a nation but as individuals.

9:27 **Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: —** From Is. 10:22-23. Just in case the Jews should conclude from v. 26

that all the scattered Jews would be saved, Paul hastens to quote Isaiah to show that it meant only a remnant or a small part of the physical seed of Abraham through Jacob will be a part of the children of the living God. Thus the principle of selecting and limiting those He saves (that salvation is of the Lord's choice) was foretold by Isaiah as well as Hosea and all the other prophets. Keep in mind that God has chosen to save all those, both Jews and Gentiles, who accept the promised Redeemer and His system. Thus when God chose to save all those who obey the gospel, He had no choice but to reject those who spurned its divine message.

9:28 **For he will finish the work,** — For the Lord will execute His word upon the earth (ASV). The Lord had spoken and it would be done. God's word always accomplishes, and that with finality, the purpose for which it is sent (Is. 55:10-11). **and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.** — The NIV renders the whole verse: "For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality." Lard translates it: "Now the Lord will execute this saying upon the land, fulfilling it and ending it quickly." God will execute His work speedily.

9:29 From Is. 1:9. **And as Esaias** — Isaiah. **said before** — Foretold. **Except the Lord of Sabaoth** — The Lord Almighty (NIV) or the Lord of hosts (Is. 1:9). **had left us a seed,** — The remnant, those of Israel He had selected as His children. **we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.** — Unless the Lord had chosen to save the remnant all Israel would have been lost, as were Sodom and Gomorrha (see Gn. 18:19-20). This shows that all Jews who were or who will be saved are saved, not because they are Israelites, Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh, but because they have obeyed the gospel. The hope of the Jews is thus not a restoration of national Israel, but the gospel of Christ, God's grounds, means, and method of selecting the saved.

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## FAITH, THE BASIS OF SELECTION

9:30-33 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

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9:30 **What shall we say then?** — What shall we conclude from all this? Upon what grounds or by what means does God make His selection as to whom He will save or reject? The conclusion is certain; the answer is clear: the principle of belief or unbelief. **That the Gentiles,** — All non-Jews whom God had chosen to save — chosen because they believed (v. 32). **which followed not after righteousness,** — Did not pursue righteousness (NIV). They had made

no effort at righteousness by keeping the law, called the law of righteousness in v. 31. **have attained to righteousness**, — Have become righteous by obedience to the gospel of Christ (6:16-18). **even the righteousness which is of faith**. — For a discussion of the righteousness of faith, see chapters 3 and 4. It is the righteousness of Christ — the righteousness that results from the forgiveness of sins. It is that toward which the law pointed (10:1-4) and in which the law is established (3:31).

9:31 **But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness**. — Israel had pursued righteousness by keeping the law (at least theoretically) but they had not attained it because, as the RSV renders it, they “did not succeed in fulfilling that law.” To be righteous by law means that one must never violate it in any way. This no Jew had ever done. Hence they had not attained the righteousness which they pursued. They had sought righteousness but in the wrong place and upon the wrong grounds. It can be attained only by faith (the gospel system in contrast to a system of law). The conclusion of vv. 30-31 is that the Gentiles who did not keep the law had attained justification (they had been chosen by God for salvation) while the Jews who had kept the law had not attained it (they had been rejected). Why was this? The answer is given in v. 32.

9:32 **Wherefore?** — Why? (RSV). What reason can there be for the Gentiles, who had not kept the law, being justified while the Jews, who had kept the law, were not — why are the Gentiles selected and the Jews rejected? **Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law**. — Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works (NIV). The Jews had sought righteousness, not by faith, the only way it can be attained (cps. 3 and 4), but by law, by which it is impossible to obtain (ch. 7). This shows that God chose the Gentiles because of their faith; He rejected the Jews for lack of it. God thus chooses to save believers in Christ and no one else. That is His choice. Paul’s conclusion then is that since salvation is the Lord’s choice, and since He has chosen to save only believers — believers whose faith is strong enough to lead them to a total commitment to His Lordship, He is therefore just in selecting the believing Gentiles and rejecting the unbelieving Jews. **For they stumbled at the stumblingstone**; — At Christ and His system of salvation by faith (1 Cor. 1:23; Mt. 11:6). By His death Christ removed the law (Mt. 5:17-18; Eph. 2:13-17; Col. 2:13-16; 2 Cor. 3) and became the only grounds of salvation. This the Jews rejected — they stumbled at the stumblingstone.

9:33 **As it is written**, — From Is. 8:14; 28:16. **Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed**. — Both passages (from Is.) are messianic and point forward to Christ as the stumblingstone for unbelievers and the deliverer for the believers. Consequently the believers have no cause for shame — that is, they have no need to fear for their deliverance; they will not be disappointed,

and they will have no need to seek justification elsewhere. Christ was placed in Sion for a Savior, but whether He becomes a Savior or a stumblingstone depends on whether one believes in Him or rejects Him (vv. 30-32). God has elected to save the believer but the unbeliever stumbles (is rejected). God's blessings are not predicated upon nationality but upon faith (and a faith that is strong enough to save is a faith that obeys [Jas. 2:14-16]) in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Savior of the world (Jn. 3:16). This is clearly stated by Peter (1 Pt. 2:6-8) where he quotes the same verses and makes identically the same application of them. These verses from Peter are the best possible commentary on Paul.

## ROMANS 10

### PRAYER FOR ISRAEL

10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

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10:1 **Brethren**, — An affectionate expression toward the Christians at Rome, many of whom were Jews. **my heart's desire** — The pleasure, intent, and good will of the heart. **and prayer** — Supplication (ASV). **for Israel** — Them (ASV). **is**, — By stating the good will of his heart and the fact that he made supplication for them to God, he shows them again his deep love for them, his kinsmen according to the flesh (9:3). The fact that he preached the gospel, which showed them to be under sin or cut off because of unbelief, did not mean that he was condemning them out of hatred or disrespect. **that they might be saved**. — Brought to the salvation which is in Christ (2 Tm. 2:10). He had just shown (9:30-33) that the Gentiles had obtained righteousness through faith and that the Jews had failed to attain it because of unbelief. The inevitable conclusion from this is that the Jews were lost because of their unbelief. But not utterly and hopeless so. There was a lingering hope burning in Paul's heart that they might still throw off the shackles of unbelief and turn to Christ as Lord and Savior. To this end he offered his fervent prayer.

10:2 **For I bear them record** — From his own personal knowledge and experience (Acts 7:58-8:3; 9:1-2; 23:1; Gal. 1:14; 1 Tm. 1:23). **that they have a zeal for God**, — They had a passion for and a sincere devotion to the will of God as it had been expressed through the law of Moses (Acts 21:20; 22:3) and interpreted by their own traditions (Mt. 15:1-9). **but not according to knowledge**. — Not according to the true knowledge as revealed in the gospel. Like many today, they had a zeal for God's will as long as it fit their own conception of what it should be, but when God sent His Son and revealed His plan through Him, contrary to what they had expected, they rejected His plan. Their zeal was thus not for the true knowledge of God. The Jews had a zeal without knowledge; many today have a knowledge with zeal. Neither can measure up to the truth. The proper balance is a knowledge with zeal.

10:3 **For they being ignorant of God's righteousness**, — God's law



or His plan to make men righteous, the gospel (1:16-17). **and going about to establish their own righteousness**, — Righteousness by their own design, by the law, or by human merit (Phil. 3:9). **have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.** — Have not obeyed from the heart (6:16-18) the gospel plan, God's means of making man righteous.

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS — THE END OF THE LAW

10:4-10 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

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10:4 **For Christ is the end of the law** — Christ brought the law to an end when He died on the cross (Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14). This was absolutely necessary before a new system could come into effect — two testaments (or wills) cannot be in force at the same time (Heb. 8:6-13; 9:16-17). But here the end of the law means the end toward which the whole Mosaic system pointed, the object toward which it looked, the end it had in view, the purpose for which it was given. The law was given because of transgressions until the seed, God's plan to make men righteous, came (Gal. 3:19-25). Christ, and the righteousness which is in Him, is the end toward which the law pointed. The end of discipline is obedience. The end of study is learning. The end of the law is Christ. **for righteousness** — The righteousness (the results of justification) which is in Christ. When righteousness is attained, one has reached the end toward which the law was designed to carry him. **to every one that believeth.** — Whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, rich or poor, black or white. Salvation is for all. The law had thus served its purpose when one attained the righteousness of God by faith (Gal. 3:21-29). Faith (as opposed to law or works) is now the principle by which men are justified before God.

10:5 **For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law**, — Moses does indeed practice law-righteousness (BV) (Lev. 18:5). **That the man which doeth** — Obeys (Jas. 1:22-25). **those things** — Perfectly keeps all the law prescribes (Dt. 27:26; Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10), which is a practical impossibility. **shall live by them.** — Shall live by that righteousness (NASV). He shall be judged righteous by the law and thus receive all its promised blessings. But since all have sinned or violated the law (3:9, 23) and since the law has no means of pardon for the violator (7:9-23), it is impossible to be justified (judged righteous) by the law (3:20). Justification was not the purpose of the

law; its design was to bring men to Christ where they could be justified by faith (v. 4).

10:6-8 These vv. are largely quoted from Dt. 30:11-14, where it is the aim of Moses to show that the law is not hard to find, unreasonable to obtain, or impossible to obey. The commandment (in principle the whole law) is not a secret thing (something hidden), not unattainable (something in heaven), nor so distant that it could not be known (something over the sea) but was with them, even in their mouth, that they might do all it required. That is, the law was near them, with them, and they could know and do it. Paul appropriates the words of Moses and puts them into the mouth of personified righteousness. **But the righteousness which is of faith** — In contrast to law righteousness (v. 5). Righteousness here means the right relationship with God which is made possible by the gospel. **speaketh on this wise,** — Speaks in behalf of the word of faith. **Say not in thine heart,** — Do not think or use such reason of the heart. **Who shall ascend into heaven?** — To find the saving message of truth. **(that is, to bring Christ down from above:)** — To ascend into heaven now would deny that Christ came from heaven — came in the flesh to make truth known (Jn. 3:13; Phil. 2:6-11; 2 Cor. 8:9). To ascend to heaven in search for truth would be to deny that it had been once and for all delivered (Jude 3). **Or, Who shall descend into the deep?** — The abyss (ASV). Go into the unseen region of the spirit world searching for the word of faith. **(that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)** — To descend into the deep now in search of truth would be to by-pass and deny the resurrection of Christ. **But what saith it?** — What does the righteousness of faith say? It has told us what not to say (vv. 6-7); now it tells us what to say. **The word** — The correct or true word, the saving message of the gospel. **is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is,** — That is, the saving truth is not afar off, in heaven above or in the depths below, but it is as close as the belief of the heart or the word of the mouth (vv. 9-10). **the word of faith, which we preach;** — The gospel, which is built around the death, burial, and resurrection of the sinless Son of God (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Thus there is no need to ascend into heaven or descend into the deep to learn the truth; all that is required is to hear, believe, and obey the word that is proclaimed by the apostles, namely, that Jesus Christ is the risen Son of God. John Greenleaf Whittier expressed it well:

*We search the world for truth; we cull  
The good, the pure, the beautiful,  
From graven stone and written scroll,  
And all old flower-fields of the soul;  
And, weary seekers of the best,  
We come back laden from the quest,  
To find that all the sages said  
Is in the Book our mothers read.*

10:9 **That** — Because (ASV). Proof that the word of faith is near. **if thou shalt confess with thy mouth** — To confess is to acknowledge openly or express agreement with that which is mentioned. One might believe something without an acknowledgement of it — that is, he might be a secret believer (Jn. 12:45). But to be saved, one must acknowledge his faith in or his agreement with the fact that Jesus is Lord, that He is the Son of the living God (Jn. 6:66-69; Mt. 16:16; 10:32-33; Phil. 2:6-11). **the Lord Jesus,** — Jesus as Lord (ASV). This is a confession that every tongue will make, either in time or in eternity (Phil. 2:11). To confess Christ is to acknowledge Him as God's Son, the Savior of sinners, and the Lord of life (Acts 2:36; Jn. 6:68). **and shalt believe in thine heart** — To believe with the heart is to believe with the whole being — to sincerely make faith the foundation of life. The heart is the seat of the personality, from which all acceptable services to God must come (6:16-18; Acts 8:21-23). Here it is that by which one is brought into right relationship with God (v. 10). The gospel is preached, the evidences (testimony) is believed, the mouth confesses that faith, and the results (when all other conditions are met) is salvation. **that God raised him from the dead,** — The resurrection of Christ is fundamental to the Christian system (1:4; 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:1-20). It is at the heart of that which we must believe. If Christ raised from the dead, He is, beyond the possibility of a doubt, the Son of God; if He is not risen, then our faith is vain. A dead Christ (and He is dead if He did not break the bars of death and come out of the grave as the Bible teaches) could not be the Lord of the living. **thou shalt be saved.** — Justified or placed in right standing with God. The death of Christ would be credited to their account as payment for their sin debt. Consequently their sins would be remitted (Acts 2:38).

10:10 **For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;** — For in their hearts people exercise the faith that leads to right standing (Williams). This is the righteousness which is of faith (v. 6). There are many things one might believe or disbelieve which would have no bearing on his salvation, but to be saved, one must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 8:24). **and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.** — The mouth confesses what the heart believes and that leads to salvation of past sins and a new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Tm. 6:12). MacKnight brings out the force of this passage in his paraphrase: "For with the heart we believe, so as to attain righteousness, and with the mouth we confess our belief in Christ, so as to have in ourselves a strong assurance of salvation." Two requirements, belief and confession, are here given for salvation. Each (by a figure of speech called synecdoche) is made to stand for the whole — a part of God's plan to save stands for the whole plan. To know all that an alien sinner must do to be saved one must find all the NT has to say on the subject. Following are the conditions (not works of merit but the conditions stipulated by the Lord upon which He predicated His offer of salvation) that each must comply with in order to have his sins remitted: (1) Hear the word of truth (vv. 14-17; Jn.

17:20); (2) believe in Jesus as God's Son (Jn. 8:24; 20:30-31; Heb. 11:6); (3) repent of all sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10); (4) confess faith in Christ (v. 9; Mt. 10:32-33; 16:16); and (5) be buried with Christ in baptism (6:3-4; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pt. 3:21). Those who promise salvation before and without any of these are promising more than the Lord promised. They are engaged in dangerous business. It is safe to say and do only that which the Lord said to say and do (2 Tm. 4:2; Mk. 16:16).

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS IS AVAILABLE TO ALL WHO BELIEVE

10:11-17 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and brings glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

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10:11 **For the scripture saith**, — Is. 28:16, quoted also in 9:33. **Whosoever** — Anyone, whether Jew or Greek. **believeth on him** — On Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord. **shall not be ashamed**. — Shall not be put to shame (ASV). He will have no cause to be ashamed of the word of faith which he has believed and confessed. Christ will never forsake us, never disappoint us, never fail us, and never embarrass us by proving untrustworthy. Hence one who believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth Jesus as Lord will never have to retreat in shame.

10:12 **For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek**: — In His dealing with man, God recognizes no national or racial distinction. This was not the case under the law. The Jews were then His chosen people — His nation. But all such distinctions were obliterated at the cross (Eph. 2:13-17), and He now sees everyone, not as a Jew or Gentile, not as rich or poor, not as black or white, but as a soul that needs salvation (see note on 2:11). **for the same Lord over all** — Christ, the one Lord (Acts 2:36; Eph. 4:4-6). Some think this has reference to God the Father. But the context favors Christ. He is the one we believe in and confess (vv. 9-11). Hence He is the Lord over all. But in the final analysis it makes little or no difference because what is said here is true of both. **is rich unto all that call upon him**. — And bestows his riches upon all who call upon him (RSV). His unsearchable riches (Eph. 3:8) are given to all who call upon Him as Lord (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). He abounds in compassion, mercy, and forgiveness for those who do His will. He knows only two classes of people: those who are saved (whom He has saved with His own precious blood) and those who are unsaved (those He will save if they will accept and apply His plan).

10:13 Quoted from Jl. 2:32. **For whosoever** — Everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. This makes the offer of salvation universal (Mk. 16:15; Acts 10:34-35). **shall call** — This means more than merely to call Him Lord (Mt. 7:21) or pray to Him for salvation (Prv. 28:9; Jn. 9:31; 1 Pt. 3:12). It means to invoke Him as Lord — to make Him Lord by submitting to His will (Acts 22:16), or to call upon Him in His own appointed way. For example, Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16). Here the Lord promises to save the baptized believer. How then are we to call on Him for that salvation? By believing and being baptized. There is no other way. **upon the name of the Lord** — Christ, the highest name in the universe (Phil. 2:9-11), the one in which we are to do all things, including work, worship, and service (Col. 3:17), and the one by which we are saved (Acts 4:12). **shall be saved.** — Shall be forgiven of all sins and thus placed in right standing with God.

10:14-15 The question of calling upon the name of the Lord (v. 13) brought up the following rhetorical questions. **How then shall they call on him** — Invoke Him as Lord by submitting to Him in humble obedience (see note on v. 13). **in whom they have not believed?** — The answer is implied in the question: they cannot. Just as calling comes before salvation, faith comes before calling. **and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?** — They cannot. Faith comes by hearing (v. 17; Jn. 17:8, 20; 20:30-31). **and how shall they hear without a preacher?** — Again, they cannot. The will of God must be communicated to man before it can be heard, believed, and obeyed. The function of the HS in the Christian system is to reveal the truth (Jn. 16:13-15), confirm it by miracles (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4), and deliver it (through the apostles) by divine inspiration (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Tm. 3:16-17; 2 Pt. 2:21). The message was first preached orally by chosen men; later it was written down in the NT for all ages to come. Thus the message is now in the Book. And before one can hear, believe, and obey, it is imperative that the message be brought to him. The preaching here is primarily the original revelation and proclamation by chosen and Spirit guided men. Thus the word has been preached, and when applied to us, the question is, How shall they hear without the preached word (the word revealed, confirmed, and delivered by the HS through the apostles) being communicated to them? **And how shall they preach, except they be sent?** — How shall they preach without a commission? They cannot. Just as preaching primarily means the original preaching of the word, the sending here has reference to the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-49). The apostles were sent to deliver the gospel. The messages were delivered to us in the written word. We now have it and we have a charge to preach it (2 Tm. 4:2). In this sense every Christian is sent to preach — that is, he is commissioned to preach the word. Paul here forges an unbreakable chain in God’s plan to save, each link depending upon the previous one, but he does so in reverse order: salvation, calling, believing, hearing, preaching, sending. Restoring the natural

order, the links are sending, preaching, hearing, believing, calling, and salvation. **as it is written**, — Is. 52:7. **How beautiful** — How timely, welcome, or appropriate. **are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace**, — How eagerly one should receive the messenger who brings the gospel, the means by which peace is made with God. Primarily this means the original heralds of truth, but in principle it applies to all preachers and preaching of the gospel. Preaching is the grandest, highest, noblest, holiest, most needed, and most vital work known to this old sinful world (1 Cor. 1:21; 9:16). This is true, not because of some exalted status of the preacher, but because of the nature of the message he brings, the good news of salvation through Christ. His message (when it is the true gospel) has power to shape the course of the world. I have known many delightful things, but the greatest joy of my life has been to be a minister of the word, a proclaimer of the ancient gospel, God's power to save (1:16). **and bring glad tidings of good things!** — The tidings of God's love, the vicarious death of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, an abundant life, and the hope of heaven.

10:16 **But they** — The Jews nationally as distinguished from the Gentiles. Of course everyone would understand that not all Jews had rejected the gospel and not all Gentiles had accepted it. The principle stated here would apply to anyone who hears but does not obey the gospel as delivered by the apostles (cf. 1 Thes. 2:13). **have not all obeyed the gospel.** — They had not all heeded it in the sense of submitting to its requirements. To receive the rewards promised by the gospel (including the remission of sins) one must obey its commands (6:16-18; Heb. 5:8-9; Acts 2:38). **For Esaias** — Isaiah. **saith** — Is. 53:1. **Lord, who hath believed our report?** — Lord, who has put faith in what we told? (Williams). That is, who believed the glad tidings of the gospel when it was proclaimed?

10:17 **So then** — Consequently (NIV). A failure to believe that which was reported (v. 16) resulted in the lack of faith. Some did believe, some did not, but without the hearing of the message there could have been no faith. Hence, faith comes by hearing. **faith** — Belief of that which was reported or preached. Faith is not something mysteriously given by a direct act of God. It is the firm convictions of the truthfulness of that which was preached by the apostles — a belief of their testimony. **cometh by hearing**, — Faith is the results of that which is heard. Hearing is the cause; faith is the effect (v. 14; Jn. 17:20; 20:30-31). God speaks. We hear His word proclaimed. We believe that word. The result is faith. **and hearing by the word of God.** — And hearing by the word of Christ (ASV). The word preached to us about Christ (1 Cor. 2:2), His plan to save, the word of truth is the only source for our faith in and knowledge of God, Christ, the church, the Christian life, heaven, or any other means by which we worship or serve God. It is impossible for the mind to believe in that of which it has never heard. But God has revealed His will to us in the gospel proclaimed by the apostles. When we believe and obey that message, we are walking by faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6).

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## ALL DO NOT BELIEVE

10:18-21 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

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10:18 **But I say**, — But I ask (NIV). **Have they not heard? Yes verily**, — Since faith comes by hearing, and since Israel is still in unbelief, does this mean that the message has not been preached to the Jews? Indeed not. They have heard, but hearing, they did not heed (v. 16). **their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.** — Quoted from Ps. 19:4, where it has reference to the heavens (sun, moon, and stars) proclaiming the glory of God. Paul does not quote this to prove that they had heard by nature, but rather to show that as nature proclaimed the glory of God to the end of the earth, the gospel had been preached to all the inhabitants of Israel (as well as to the Gentiles). Keep in mind that he is viewing Israel nationally as unbelievers (even though a few did believe) and the question pertains to whether the Jews' unbelief resulted from a failure to have the gospel preached to them or to their rejection of it when it was proclaimed. It was the latter, not the former. The apostles had faithfully delivered the revelation to them, but they had rejected it. Thus their unbelief does not disprove the fact that faith comes by hearing the gospel (v. 17).

10:19 **But I say**, — Again I ask (NIV). **did not Israel know?** — Did Israel not know? (ASV) or did Israel fail to know? (Robertson, WP). Had Israel failed to know that God's plan was to include believers from all nations? Had they not been told of a new law or covenant (Jer. 31:31ff) and that this new covenant would embrace both Jew and Gentiles? They had not failed to know. Or to put it positively, they did know. Or at least they could have known. If they were ignorant, it was their own fault. **First** — To begin with (BV) or first in order. **Moses saith**, — Dt. 32:21. **I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.** — That is, He would provoke them to jealousy and anger by inviting the Gentiles to share equally with them in the blessings of the gospel.

10:20 **But Esaias** — Isaiah. **is very bold**, — Openly, plainly, or boldly expressed the same concept as Moses (v. 19). **and saith**, — Is. 65:1. **I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.** — The people or nation of v. 19. It is not that they had not asked or sought after Him in any sense, but that God took the initiative in making His will known to them. They had not come seeking God; God had gone seeking them. They could not have found Him if He had not chosen to

reveal His will to them (through the preaching of the gospel). The thought here is that God had chosen to save the Gentiles (and as chapter nine shows, such a choice is His prerogative) before and without their seeking to be saved. Rather than them trying to seek God (and thereby exclude the Jews from His favor), God Himself had sent His messengers to them saying, "Behold me, behold me" (Is. 65:1, ASV). It was thus God's choice to bring the nations into His new covenant.

10:21 **But to Israel** — The Jews, His chosen people under the OT system. **he saith**, — Is. 65:2. **All day long I have stretched forth my hands** — Held out His hands in a loving gesture pleading for them to come to Him. He had pleaded with them until He had become exasperated. He then turned to the Gentiles so as to stir their jealousy. As Jesus had wept over Jerusalem, inviting it to come to Him (Mt. 23:37-39), God had pleaded with Israel. But there came a time when Jesus said, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Mt. 23:38). So it had been with unbelieving Israel. God had turned to the Gentiles. Israel ceased to be His special nation. Thus with the call of the Gentiles to salvation, national Israel is no longer considered the chosen people of God. **unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.** — A people who had refused to submit to God's offer of salvation (through the gospel) and had even contradicted God and argued against Him (cf. Mt. 7:21-23).



## ROMANS 11

### A REMNANT REMAINS

11:1-6 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

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11:1 **I say then**, — I ask then (NIV). In view of what was said in 10:18-21: **Hath God cast away his people?** — He had pleaded with them but they had remained disobedient and gainsaying. He had then extended His offer of salvation to the Gentiles in order to provoke them to jealousy and anger (10:20-21). But the acceptance of the Gentiles does not mean that Israel has been rejected beyond the possibility of salvation. God had rejected Israel as a nation because of their unbelief, but this does not mean that individual Israelites could not believe and obey the gospel and thus be saved. National Israel was rejected (v. 32) so that all, including both Jew and Gentile, could be invited to Christ upon the same terms. **God forbid.** — A strong negative, meaning it cannot be. (See note on 3:4.) God had not rejected His ancient people finally and absolutely. He had rejected them as a nation but now invites each individual to choose for himself the way of salvation. **For I also am an Israelite**, — A descendant of Abraham through Jacob. If God had rejected all His people then Paul himself would have been lost. He thus uses himself as an example to show that God has not cast away His people beyond the possibility of return. There is still a remnant (v. 5) **of the seed of Abraham**, — To whom the promise was originally made (Gn. 12:1-3). The promise was twofold: (1) the national promise. The seed of Abraham was to become a great nation and that nation was to have a homeland of its own. This aspect of the promise was fulfilled in the conquest of Canaan under Joshua (Jos. 21:43-45; 24:14). (2) The spiritual promise: through Abraham's seed all nations would be blessed. This was fulfilled in Christ (Gal. 3:16, 26-29). **of the tribe of Benjamin.** — One of the 12 sons of Jacob.

11:2-3 **God hath not cast away his people** — That is, He has not finally, and with no hope of recovery, cast them off. As in former days, there was a

remnant, of which Paul was one (v. 1). National Israel had been rejected but each individual Israelite is now invited to be a part of spiritual Israel, on his own faith and by his own choice (v. 32; Gal. 6:16). A few had accepted, but the vast majority had refused God's offer. **which he foreknew.** — The people whom He had formerly recognized and accepted as His own. (See note on 8:29.) The remainder of this v. and on through v. 5 shows that even then all were not faithful. God had a remnant then and (Paul's point here) He has a remnant now. He rejected the unfaithful then and He rejects the unbelieving now. **Wot ye not** — Or know ye not (ASV). **what the scripture saith about Elias?** — Elijah (ASV). **how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,** — At a time when he was discouraged and in despair because he had been forced to flee for his life. He was alone in the wilderness and he supposed that all Israel had abandoned God for idols. He thus appealed to God against Israel: **Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.** — He was convinced that he was the only faithful Israelite left, and if Ahab and Jezebel had their way, he too would be killed. As he conceived it, if this happened, God would have no chosen people left. But Elijah's vision was too limited: God had seven thousand reserved unto Himself (v. 4) of which Elijah did not know. V. 3 is quoted from 1 Kgs. 19:10, 14. For the whole story read 1 Kgs. 18 and 19.

11:4 **But what saith the answer of God unto him?** — What was God's response to Elijah's charge against Israel (vv. 2-3)? What did God communicate to him? **I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.** — 1 Kgs. 19:18. Elijah was mistaken. All Israel had not turned to the worship of idols. There was a faithful remnant of seven thousand unknown to him. This is to illustrate Paul's point here: God has not utterly and hopelessly cast away His people now just because a large majority of them are unbelieving and lost. As v. 5 shows, some (including Paul himself, v. 1) have chosen the salvation offered to all by the grace of God. They are the election according to grace (v. 5).

11:5 **Even so then at this present time** — At the time Paul wrote — that is, in the Christian age, after the law had been fulfilled (Mt. 5:17-18; Gal. 3:19-25; 2 Cor. 3:6-18). God, because of their rejection of Christ, no longer recognized national Israel as His chosen people, but individual believers from all nations. **also there is a remnant** — A small minority who have believed and obeyed the gospel and who are thus faithful to God, just as were the seven thousand in Elijah's time (v. 4). The remnant is positive proof that God has not totally cast off His ancient people without hope. They can be saved, but only if they come to Christ (v. 26 and the note there). **according to the election of grace.** — The election (or salvation) which proceeds out of grace — that is, the election made possible by grace. God's means of salvation is provided by His grace. In His plan (the gospel) God has chosen (elected) to save all those who obey Him, who conform to the image of His Son (6:16-18; 8:29; Acts 10:34-35;

Jas. 1:21-25; 1 Pt. 1:22). God elected to make salvation possible through the death of His Son; man must now elect to appropriate the means if he expects to be saved. To give the plan was God's choice; to obey the plan is man's choice (2 Pt. 1:5-11). When man chooses to obey God's plan (and his obedience must be by faith), his election (salvation) is of grace (see notes on 8:29-30). Only by grace, as v. 6 shows, can one be saved (Eph. 2:8-9).

11:6 **And if by grace,** — The election (v. 5) or salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). See notes on 4:4-5. It is never offered to man on the grounds of his own merit, but always by the unmerited favor of God. **then is it no more of works:** — Not by works of merit (Ti. 3:5) or not on the grounds of works but on the grounds of favor. Salvation cannot be on the basis of both grace and works at the same time. It must be by one or the other. **otherwise** — If it were on the grounds of work rather than by grace. **grace is no more grace.** — That is, grace would not mean grace. The fundamental nature of grace is unmerited favor. Thus works of merit (as the basis of salvation) makes unmerited favor meaningless — favor would not be favor at all. **But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.** — Omitted by most critical texts. But whether a part of Paul's words or not, it presents the truth just stated in opposite terms: if salvation is by works it cannot be by grace. If so, then work would lose its fundamental meaning — that is, work would no longer be the basis of reward. Just as salvation by works makes grace meaningless, salvation by grace makes work (work of merit) meaningless. It should be remembered, however, that unmerited favor does not exclude, but rather includes, the conditions by which the favor is bestowed. The gift of God's grace is conditioned upon man willingly accepting (by faith and obedience) the gift. Unmerited favor provided the plan; man himself must make the choice as to whether he will do what the plan requires in order for him to receive the blessings it promises. To follow (obey) God's plan is not a work of merit. It is simply accepting (upon God's terms) that which is offered by grace.

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## NATIONAL ISRAEL REJECTED

11:7-10 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back away.

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11:7 **What then? Israel** — National Israel. The hardened in contrast with the chosen. **hath not obtained that which he seeketh for;** — Justification or right standing before God. That is, Israel was not now the chosen people of God, not the election according to grace, v. 5. This is the status it loved and sought; this is the status it lost in rejecting Christ. And because of this, Israel nationally is the rejected rather than the chosen. **but the election** — The elect

(NIV), the chosen (see note on v. 5) or remnant. The individual Israelites who had believed in Christ and obeyed His gospel. **hath obtained it**, — Acceptance with God, righteousness, or justification. Where national Israel had failed because of unbelief, some individual Israelites had succeeded through faith. National Israel was rejected but some individuals were chosen (that is, they had believed and obeyed the gospel and had thereby become the elect). The chosen (those who believe from all nations) are now the nation of God (1 Pt. 2:5, 9). **and the rest were blinded** — Hardened (ASV) or rejected. God offered salvation to all, both Jew and Gentile, upon the same terms (1:16). Those who accept are called the elect; those who reject the offer are said to be hardened. As in the case of Pharaoh (see note on 9:17), they had hardened their own hearts by rejecting the truth (Mt. 13:14-15) and God had hardened them by presenting them the truth. As the election was the result of some individuals accepting the offer of salvation, the hardening for the many (the nation) was the effects resulting from their rejecting God's scheme to redeem by the blood of Christ. God did not (He never has, does not now, and never will) directly harden them against their will. He hardened them through the means of truth — He gave the revelation and they rejected it (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4; 2 Thes. 2:11-12).

11:8 (**According as it is written**, — That is, the hardening of v. 7 is in keeping with that which is written in the Scriptures (Dt. 29:4; Is. 29:10). **God hath given them the spirit of slumber**, — The spirit of a deep sleep (Is. 29:10) or a stupor. Their dullness of preception resulted from their rejection of Christ and His gospel. **eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;**) — The stupor was so dense that even though they had eyes and ears, they could not or would not see and hear. They could see and hear but because of their mental dullness they did not preceive what they saw and heard (Is. 6:9-10; Mt. 13:14-15). **unto this day**. — Originally unto the day Moses wrote (Dt. 29:4), but in Paul's application right up to his time. The translators have constructed this so that these words connect to v. 7, which makes it read, "The rest were blinded unto this day." This makes perfectly good sense and is the point Paul is making. But since it is a part of the quotation I think it should be inside the parentheses with the remainder of the quote. Or better still, omit the parentheses altogether.

11:9-10 **And David saith**, — Ps. 69:22-23. **Let their table** — Their spiritual food or the law. **be a snare, and a trap**, — They had thus been snared or trapped by the very thing (the law) which was designed to lead them to Christ (Gal. 3:19-29). **and a stumblingblock**, — That over which one stumbles or falls. While the law was designed to bring them to Christ, when they chose it over Him it became the cause of their fall. **and a recompence unto them:** — A retribution to them (NASV). **Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see**, — Blinded or made insensible to sight (truth). **and bow down their back alway**. — Under a heavy burden. This is further proof (in addition to that given in v. 8) from the OT that God never planned to

make the law or the Jewish nation the basis of His new covenant (Jer. 31:31ff; Heb. 8:6-13). This necessitated the casting off of national Israel, the curse pronounced upon it by David in this quotation. National Israel had rejected Christ and was now lost (9:1-3; 10:1-4). But all is not hopeless: each individual is invited to accept Him and be saved.

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## SALVATION OFFERED TO ISRAEL INDIVIDUALLY

11:11-16 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

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11:11 **I say then,** — Basically the same question as in v. 1. **Have they stumbled that they should fall?** — Was it God's purpose (or will) for them to stumble so as to fall? Was it God's way of rejecting them, causing them to be lost? That is, did God change the covenant so that their fall would be necessary, complete, and irretrievable? (See note on v. 1.) **God forbid:** A strong negative as in v. 1. In God's design, salvation was offered to the Gentiles by the gospel and without the law (3:21-22). This became the stumblingstone for the Jews. They rejected Christ in order to retain the law and their national status. But when they rejected Christ, God rejected them. **but rather through their fall** — Through the thing that caused their fall (the scheme of redemption). Under the OT a Gentile could not be in covenant relationship with God without becoming a proselyted Jew; under the NT Jews (nor Gentiles either for that matter) cannot be in covenant relationship without being a Christian. **salvation is come unto the Gentiles,** — Through the thing that caused their transgression. Salvation was offered to all through the gospel (1:16) rather than by the law (3:21-22). This caused the Jews to stumble but it made salvation possible for the Gentiles (and to all Jews who would accept it individually). **for to provoke them to jealousy.** — See note on 10:19. This shows that the thing that caused them to stumble, as stated earlier in the v., was not designed for their ultimate destruction, but rather for the salvation of all who would believe (v. 12). The change of systems was necessary before the Gentiles could be brought to salvation. But it was this very change that provoked the Jews and caused them to stumble. Rather than turning them to Christ (as it should have done), it made them more zealous for the law. They stumbled and fell over the very thing that was designed for their salvation (9:32).

11:12 **Now if the fall of them** — National Israel. Their fall resulted from that over which they stumbled (the scheme of redemption). This has reference

to their national status as God's peculiar people. Salvation was offered to them first (1:16), but when they rejected it, Paul turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). **be the riches of the world**, — The means by which all could be saved. **and the diminishing of them** — Their loss (ASV), fall, or rejection nationally. **the riches of the Gentiles**; — Redemption or salvation, as in v. 11. The fall and loss of the Jews (the removal of their national status and the abrogation of the law), that is, the thing which caused their fall and loss, did bring riches to the whole world — it made possible salvation to all who fear God and work righteousness (Acts 10:34-35). **how much more their fulness?** — How much greater the blessing would be by their (individual) conversion to Christ. Their diminishing (loss) was caused by their rejecting the gospel plan of salvation; their fulness will thus result from accepting that which they rejected. While this is generally considered a difficult v., most concede that its primary thrust is that if the loss of the Jews had brought such a great blessing to the world, what might be expected from their salvation (cf. v. 15). As the notes indicate, I accept this as its true meaning.

11:13-14 **For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles**, — His special mission was to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 13:46-48; Gal. 1:15-16; 2:7-9). This does not mean that he did not preach to the Jews. He did. In fact, he practiced preaching to them first when there was a choice (1:16; Acts 13:46). But his special or peculiar mission was to the Gentiles. **I magnify mine office**: — He glorified the ministry. He did so, not by honoring himself (Eph. 3:8; 1 Cor. 15:9), but by glorifying Christ (1 Cor. 2:2) and the apostolic ministry. He gave himself wholly to it, made it the purpose of his life, never turned aside to other matters, and finished his course with joy (Acts 20:24; 2 Tm. 4:6-8). What a difference it would make to the world if all Christians would glorify their ministry as Paul did his (cf. Acts 20:20-26). **If by any means I may provoke to emulation** — Provoke to jealousy (ASV) or arouse them to action (the same as 10:19 and v. 11). His hope was that by his faithfulness to his mission he would be able to provoke the Jews to investigate the claims of the gospel and ultimately to obey it. **them which are my flesh**, — The Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh (9:3). **and might save some of them**. — That by provocation to jealousy he might be an instrument to lead them to salvation (cf. 1 Tm. 4:16), not nationally but individually. The salvation of lost souls was the burning desire of his life, especially his brethren in the flesh (9:3).

11:15 **For if the casting away of them** — The cause of their rejection nationally, that is, the giving of the gospel. **be the reconciling of the world**, — It is not that the world is saved because the Jews are lost, but the cause over which the Jews fell, namely, the means by which all are saved, or the means by which sinful men are brought back into covenant relationship with God (2 Cor. 5:19-21). Thus Paul has in mind the thing which led to their rejection rather than the rejection *per se*. **what shall the receiving of them be**, — The

bringing of the Jews back into God's favor by their acceptance of Christ and His plan to save. **but life from the dead?** — Salvation from the penalty of death. The conversion of any sinner is life from death (Eph. 2:1; Jas. 5:20). It is no different with Jews. But this was hard for them to accept.

11:16 **For if the firstfruit** — The firstfruit harvested. It was to be offered to God before the rest could be consumed (Ex. 23:19; Lev. 23:9-14). Here it has reference to the first portion taken from the dough made from the firstfruit. **be holy,** — Devoted to God. **the lump is also holy:** — The remainder is devoted to man (Num. 15:18-21). If the first was holy to God, then the remainder was holy to man — that is, if the first was devoted to God then the remainder was devoted to the people. In this sense both the firstfruit and the mass that remained was holy. **and if the root be holy, so are the branches.** — The metaphor is changed but the same principle is illustrated, namely, that if the firstfruits from the Jews (the first converts to Christianity) were acceptable, so would be the whole nation. This is simply another way of saying that all Jews who are saved must be saved in exactly the same way as were the first converts, that is by obedience to the gospel of Christ. God has no other plan to save, either Jew or Gentile. All who are saved must be saved by the gospel, not by the law or by a restoration of national Israel.

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## SALVATION IS BY INGRAFTING

11:17-24 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

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11:17 **And if some of the branches be broken off,** — Paul continues his figure of speech from v. 16. The discarded branches are the Jews who could have been accepted as were the first converts to Christianity (e.g., Acts 2) had they believed the gospel and followed its contents. But they rejected God's offer of salvation and were therefore broken off or rejected. **and thou,** — Believing Gentiles. **being a wild olive tree,** — Not of Israel — not of the lump or the branches of v. 16. **wert grafted in among them,** — Grafted in with those who had accepted the gospel. Hence the Gentiles were grafted, along with the Jewish converts, into God's covenant people as a shoot from one tree into the stock of another. **and with them** — The believing Jews. **partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;** — Partake with them of the rich root of the olive tree (NASV). All the new branches, made up of believing Jews

and Gentiles, are now holy — that is, they are partakers together of the fatness of the root, the blessing of the gospel. We need not quibble over the root and the tree or the fact that it was contrary to common practice to graft the wild into the cultivated. The normal order is the other way around. This Paul knew (v. 24). When rightly understood, this unusual procedure adds force to the illustration. That which the Jews could not accept (the coming in of the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews), that which was unnatural to their mind, was the very thing God had done. For the natural branches (the Jews) to remain branches they would have to apply the scheme of redemption to themselves (be grafted in) as well as to the Gentiles. Only then would all, both the wild and the natural branches, become partakers of the root. This is simply to say that both would have to be saved in precisely the same way. This is an illustration, and the point illustrated is clear, namely, the rejection of the unbelieving Jews. The illustration should not be pressed beyond that point.

**11:18 Boast not against the branches.** — Glory not over the branches (ASV). This obviously has reference to the unbelieving Jews — those cut off because of unbelief. The believing branches (the Gentiles) were not to gloat over the loss of the Jews. It was by God's grace and mercy that they were branches, and not because they were of greater worth than the lost Jews. Boasting over one's gain of salvation, or over another's lost condition, has no place in the Christian system. **But if thou boast,** — Gloriest (ASV) or permit yourselves to feel superior, then consider: **thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.** — The root was the source of the blessings — it supplied the branches and not the other way around. This leaves absolutely no room for boasting among the branches (3:27; 4:16). Covenant relationship was not by their merit, but by the grace of God (Eph. 2:8-9).

**11:19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.** — One of the ways the Gentiles might boast (see v. 18) or show contempt for the casting off of Israel. But this would miss the point: Gentiles were not accepted because of their personal worth or the Jews rejected for lack of it. Nor was it for the Gentiles *per se* that the Jews were rejected. It was because Israel had rejected the new system (the gospel) that made salvation possible to all. They were cut off because of their unbelief (v. 20) and not arbitrarily for the purpose of being replaced by the Gentiles. The rejecting of the Jews was only incidental to the bringing in of the Gentiles. They would have been accepted under the new system even if all Israel had remained true to God as did the firstfruit (v. 16).

**11:20 Well;** — Granted (NIV) or admitting the fact (Vincent, WS). It was true that the cultivated branches (Jews) had been broken off that the wild ones (Gentiles) could be grafted in, but not in the sense that the Gentiles were arbitrarily chosen and the Jews rejected (see notes on vv. 11-12, 19). The system had been changed (from law to gospel), making possible salvation to both Jew and Gentile. But the Jews, all except the small remnant (v. 5), had rejected the



new system — that is, they had rejected the very thing that made salvation possible. And it is in this sense that Paul here grants the truthfulness of the statement. **because of unbelief** — Because they had not believed in Jesus as the Messiah or accepted His plan to save. **they were broken off**, — Rejected. **and thou standest by faith**. — The Gentiles were brought in because they believed and not because they were Gentiles or were more worthy than the Jews. **be not highminded**, — This high and noble privilege had been granted to them by God's grace upon the basis of faith (Eph. 2:8-9). They thus had no reason to be arrogant, proud, or boastful (v. 18). **but fear**: — Stay on guard against unbelief. That is, be afraid that you too might be broken off as were the Jews because of a failure to remain in God's goodness (vv. 21-22). The fear here is the type that would motivate them to be faithful to God's plan.

11:21 **For if God spared not the natural branches**, — The original branches (the Jews) which were natural to the root (v. 17). **take heed** — Words supplied by the translators. **lest he also spare not thee**. — He will not spare you either (NIV). That is, if the natural branches were broken off because of unbelief, the wild one which had been grafted in should be all the more cautious to continue in God's goodness lest they too be cut off (v. 22). There is no place for an unfaithful or fruitless branch in the true vine (Jn. 15:1-10). This offers positive proof (or else the warning is totally meaningless) that a Christian can so sin as to be cut off from Christ and therefore be in the same lost state as the unbelieving Israelites.

11:22 **Behold therefore** — In view of what has been said (v. 21), consider both sides of God — both His goodness and His severity as revealed in accepting the Gentiles and rejecting the Jews. **the goodness** — kindness (NIV); love, grace (favor), mercy, compassion, and concern. This was shown to the Gentiles by God's plan to bring them into covenant relationship with Him. God's goodness is seen in His many acts in making provision for man's salvation. From the very moment of the fall (Gn. 3) God began preparing for man's redemption from sin. He chose the nation of Israel, the seed of Abraham through Isaac, through which to send His Son into the world (Gal. 3:16; 4:4-6). When Christ came, He lived a perfect life and died a sacrificial death in order to make salvation possible (5:8-9). After His resurrection, which proved His Sonship beyond question (1:4), He gave the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16), in which He offered salvation to all who would accept Him as Savior and obey Him as Lord (Acts 2:36-38). His goodness is therefore shown to all who follow Him in complete submission to His will (Mt. 7:21). **and severity of God**: — The word from which severity comes appears only here in the NT. It means to cut off. Just as goodness refers, in this context, to the salvation of the Gentiles, severity refers to the cutting off of the Jews. They had rejected God's terms of pardon and were therefore cut off. But the principle of severity is true for all of us today. When one turns his back on the gospel, when he rejects God's offer of salvation, when he tramples underfoot the blood of Christ

(Heb. 10:26-29), when he refuses to acknowledge the goodness of God, the sacrifice of Christ, the revelation of the Spirit through the divine word (Mt. 12:31-32; Jn. 16:13), and the pleading of the bride (Rv. 22:17), the church (7:4), there is no alternative but for him to suffer the eternal consequences of his rejection. He who shows no mercy shall be rejected without mercy. There is a point beyond which the rejected mercy of God does not extend. And when one passes that point, he is lost without hope. **on them which fell**, — The unbelieving Jews, the branches that had been cut off. **severity**; — They were cut off. **but toward thee**, — The believing Gentiles who had been grafted in. **goodness**, — Kindness, favor, mercy. **if thou continue in his goodness**: — Continue in the favor they had been granted. **otherwise thou also shalt be cut off**. — Their remaining in favor is conditional — that is, providing they continue in His kindness or do what was necessary to remain in His favor (Col. 1:23). In the absence of this condition, they too would be cut off (see notes on v. 21).

11:23 **And they also**, — The Israelites who had been broken off because of unbelief. **if they abide not still in unbelief**, — If they do not cling to their unbelief (Goodspeed). That is, if they give up their unbelief and become believers. **shall be grafted in**: — Shall be restored to covenant relationship, not as a nation but as Christian individuals. Their unbelief was the thing that stood between them and God. Although they had been rejected, they were not excluded merely because they were Jews, but because they were not believers. **But now all**, both Jews and Gentiles, are standing in the same relationship to God (v. 32); they are all invited to covenant relationship on identically the same terms (v. 24). Continuing the figure of speech, God now saves all by the process of ingrafting. **for God is able to graff them in again**. — God has the power and the might to bring the Jews (the natural branches) back in just as He has the power to bring the Gentiles (the wild branches) in. Both are now saved by the same power and plan (1:16). The cause of the Israelites lost condition was not in God, but in them, in their own unbelief.

11:24 **For if thou** — Gentiles. **wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree**: — See notes on v. 17. **how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?** — If God saved the believing Gentiles, how much easier and naturally would He save the believing Jews (graft them into their native stock), who had been His chosen people since the call of Abraham (Gn. 12:1-3).

Special note on 15-24: Paul's illustration in this passage is often stretched all out of shape in an effort to make it teach something at which it does not even hint. It is interpreted somewhat as follows: The natural branches were cut off from the tree and the wild ones were grafted in. This means that the OT church and the NT church is the same — the new is just an extension of the old. Consequently, since the old had infant membership, the new must have them also. To get this interpretation, one must see the cultivated olive tree as the church and

the natural branches its original members. But this totally and absolutely misses Paul's point. He is not discussing Old and New Testament institutions. He is discussing covenant relationship under the old and new covenants. Thus the olive tree represents covenant relationship with God, as my notes indicate throughout the passage. Covenant relationship with the Jews was broken off (that is, a new covenant was established [Jer. 31:31ff; Heb. 8:6-13]; which left the Jews outside) so that God could invite both Jews and Gentiles to establish covenant relationship with Him on the same terms (under the new covenant). This is seen in vv. 15, 32. This is simply to say that God cut everyone off from covenant relationship (the Gentiles were not then in covenant relationship with Him) so that He might invite all into a new covenant relationship with Him on identically the same basis. To call the olive tree the church is to utterly distort Paul's figure of speech. It is covenant relationship.

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## SALVATION OFFERED TO ALL UPON THE SAME TERMS

11:25-32 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

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11:25 **For I would not, brethren,** — This seems to be addressed to all the Christians who made up the Roman church, both Jew and Gentile, but it would apply especially to the Gentiles. **that ye should be ignorant of this mystery,** — To be uninformed of this mystery (NASV). A mystery, in the NT sense, is an event or truth hidden or not yet known. But when the event or truth is revealed, it is no longer a mystery; it is a revelation. And when revealed, there is no reason to be uninformed or misinformed on it (Eph. 1:9; 3:4). **lest ye should be wise in your own conceits;** — Wise in your own estimation (NASV) or in your own wisdom (see vv. 18-20). He wanted them to know the mystery, but only by revelation. **that blindness** — That a hardening (ASV). **in part** — Not universal. Only a part were blinded. There was a remnant who believed (v. 5). **is happened to Israel,** — See vv. 7-10. **until** — Up to the time of. The hardening in part of Israel will continue through the whole time of the Gentiles, that is, some of Israel will be hardened until the end of the Christian system, the second coming of Christ, and the end of the world. **the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.** — Probably the same period Jesus called the time of the Gentiles (Lk. 21:24). At any rate, here it has reference to the time when the Gentiles are being grafted into the olive tree; hence, the

Christian age. When the whole context is considered, this becomes obvious. The old Jewish system had to be removed before the Gentiles could come in. When God replaced the old with the new, this put the Jews in the same state with the Gentiles — all were in unbelief (v. 32). The Jews were cut off because of their unbelief. Now to be saved they would have to change from the belief of the old system to that of the new. That is to say, both Jew and Gentile would have to believe in Christ. This change of systems made salvation possible for the Gentiles. The hardening of Israel resulted from the change in the system. When the Gentiles came in (received the blessing of salvation or the fulness) the Jews were not totally cut off without hope — they were cut off nationally but all were invited as individuals to restore covenant relationship with God. Thus their salvation was made to depend upon the same conditions as that of the Gentiles. The blindness of Israel and the fulness of the Gentiles have resulted from the establishment of the Christian system. The fulness of the Gentiles, as is pointed out in v. 26, does not mean that the Jews must be lost. They can be saved in the same manner as the Gentiles. All who are saved must be saved by God's one plan. This is the emphasis of the whole chapter.

11:26-27 **And so** — So is an adverb of manner and translates a Greek word which means in this way. It does not mean “and so then” as the premillennialists would like for it to read but in this manner or in this way. All Jews will be saved in the same way as the Gentiles. **all Israel** — The seed of Abraham through Jacob. The context will not permit this to be understood as spiritual Israel. **shall be saved:** — That is, all Israelites who are saved will be saved in precisely the same manner as the Gentiles (by being grafted into covenant relationship, v. 23). Paul has just shown how Israel had been cut off because of unbelief. The Gentiles had been grafted in through faith. The thing that must be believed, namely, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, had caused the Jews to stumble. But this very faith was necessary in order to obtain salvation. This is simply affirming that Israel must be saved in exactly the same way as the Gentiles, that is, by believing in Christ as the Son of God, Israel's prophetic Messiah. God had but one plan to save, and so (by that one plan) all Israel (as well as everyone else) shall be saved. This verse is concerned with the manner of salvation, not the fact of it. **as it is written:** — Summarized from Is. 59:20-21. **There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer,** — Jesus Christ, the Messiah of OT expectation, the Redeemer of Israel. This has reference to the first coming of Christ, not His second coming. **and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:** — That is, He will provide the means (the scheme of redemption) by which ungodliness can be banished from Israel. The means (the gospel) was provided, but the Jews rejected it. God kept His end of the bargain but the Jews turned away from Him. **For this is my covenant unto them,** — Referring to the promise made to Abraham (Gn. 12:1-3) but restated in different words by the prophets. The promise was twofold. The first part was fulfilled in physical Israel; the second part in spiritual Israel (see notes on

v. 1). Since the promise here has to do with the forgiveness of sins, it refers to the second part. **when I shall take away their sins.** — This statement, probably based on Is. 27:9, means that God would make provisions by which sins could be forgiven (Eph. 1:7; Acts 2:38). The promise here is not something that is yet to be fulfilled, but something that was fulfilled when God offered forgiveness to all through the gospel. The salvation of Israel is predicated on two things: (1) they shall be turned from ungodliness; (2) their sins shall be forgiven. No one can be saved apart from godliness and forgiveness. But both are offered through and only through the gospel (1:16-17). Thus Paul's point is that Israel's salvation depends upon God's provisions for godliness and forgiveness, the same provisions which are also made for the salvation of the Gentiles.

11:28 **As concerning the gospel,** — From the standpoint of the gospel (NASV). The gospel system, God's plan to save. **they are enemies** — The Jews were enemies, from the standpoint of the gospel, because they had rejected the scheme of redemption as it was revealed in the gospel. **for your sakes:** — For the advantage of the Gentiles. The gospel had made salvation possible for them, but because the Jews rejected it, they were enemies — lost! They did not even consider Paul fit to live when he preached the gospel to them (Acts 22:17-22). **but as touching the election,** — From the standpoint of God's choice (NASV). The salvation which made Abraham and his seed the chosen people of God under the OT. **they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.** — They are beloved for the sake of their forefathers (RSV). They had not been cast off because God had ceased to love them but because they had rejected His offer of salvation through the gospel. They were enemies (as far as covenant relationship was concerned) but they were still loved for the sake of their fathers and the covenant God had made with them.

11:29 **For the gifts and calling of God** — Primarily this refers to the selection of Abraham and his seed as His chosen people (v. 28). But in principle it is true of anything God purposes, promises, or does. Unlike man, God never changes His mind about what He gives — He never takes back a gift nor reneges on a promise. **are without repentance.** — He does not regret an action or change His mind about His gifts and His callings are irrevocable. He has not, and He cannot, change His mind about His choice of the seed of Abraham as His peculiar people under the OT. This, however, should not be interpreted to mean that God's choice of national Israel was eternal — that is, that the Jews would always be His chosen people regardless of what they did — for two reasons: (1) God's gifts and calling were conditioned upon their continued obedience to His will (Ex. 19:5; 24:7; Lv. 26:3-13; Dt. 27). When they rejected Christ, they repudiated God's gifts and calling. They thus removed themselves from the blessings. God had not changed; they had. (2) The covenant with them (a necessary part of their gifts and calling) made provision for a change of covenants (Dt. 18:18-19; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13). Hence for them to accept

the change that was necessary for the salvation of the whole world was a part of the agreement. When they refused to accept this change, they violated the conditions and God, who loved them still and could not regret His selection of them, had no choice but to reject them. They could still be saved, could still receive the blessings God promised, if they would accept Christ and the Christian system, His scheme to redeem. It is God's will that all be saved (2 Pt. 3:9), and this includes the Jews, but it is not His purpose, promise, or plan to save anyone apart from Christ.

11:30-31 **For as ye — Gentiles. in times past —** Before the coming of Christ and the Christian system. **have not believed God,** — Disobedient to God (NIV). **yet have now —** By means of the gospel. **obtained mercy through their unbelief:** — Received mercy as a result of their disobedience (NIV). The Gentiles, though disobedient in former times (1:18-32), had received mercy (salvation) as a result of the change of systems (from the old to the new) — that is, the thing which resulted in the unbelief of the Jews was the means by which the Gentiles were saved. **Even so have these —** The unbelieving Jews. **also now not believed,** — Have now become disobedient (NIV). **that through your mercy —** Through the same source of mercy shown to you. **they also may obtain mercy.** — As a result of God's mercy to you (NIV). That is, the same source of mercy (the gospel) which provided salvation to the Gentiles can now result in the salvation of the Jews also. The same mercy, by means of the same system, now provides salvation to both on the same grounds. As v. 32 points out, all, both Jew and Gentile, were brought into the same relationship with God by the giving of the gospel (both were placed in a lost state) so that God might invite all to Him on the same terms.

11:32 **For God hath concluded —** For God has consigned (RSV) or shut them up together (cf. Gal. 3:22). **them all —** The Jews primarily but the same is true of the Gentiles also, since they were already in the state to which the Jews are now reduced. **in unbelief,** — Unto disobedience (ASV). The Gentiles were already in unbelief and disobedience (1:18-32) — they had no written law from God, were not in covenant relationship with Him, and were thus lost and without hope (Eph. 2:12). The Jews, under the OT system, believed in God and at least pretended to keep the law (2:17-20). This would seem to give them an advantage over the Gentiles, now that a new system has been given. But not so. In order to bring all into equal relations with Him, God sent His Son into the world (Jn. 3:16), made of woman (Gal. 4:4-5), in the fashion of a man (Phil. 2:6-8), and required all to believe on Him as His Son (Jn. 8:24). This divine act, the incarnation of God into flesh, shut the whole world up together in an equal status before God. One man could believe as easily as the next — the Gentile as easily as the Jew and *vice versa*. No one had an advantage over another. All had the same evidence (1:4), the same invitation (Acts 2:39), and the same plan (1:16; Acts 2:38). Thus God shut all up (or out) in unbelief. He did this by giving a whole new system which excluded all so that all could be invited on equal

terms. This the Jews rejected and in doing so refused God's offer of redemption. Their refusal only added to this disobedience. **that he might have mercy upon all.** — That He might offer salvation to all on precisely the same grounds — belief in Jesus Christ as His Son and our Savior. The picture here is that of a prison. God shut all up in prison (sin), both Jew and Gentile, that He might invite them all to freedom (by the gospel). All are equally bound; all are offered salvation; and all who are saved must be saved on identically the same terms.

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## **RICHERS OF GOD'S WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE**

11:33-36 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

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11:33 **O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!** — These beautiful and sublime exclamations refer to the profound riches of God's wisdom and knowledge in providing the plan of salvation — a plan which shut all up together in unbelief (v. 32) that He could invite all to come to Him upon the same terms — namely, by the blood of His crucified Son. His judgments (decisions or proceedings) and ways (paths or His manner of going) are beyond the unaided mind of men to trace out (Is. 55:8-9). We can know His will, plan, and purpose only as He has revealed them to us in His divine word (Is. 64:4; 2 Cor. 2:9-10). With John Newton we too can exclaim:

*Amazing grace!  
How sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!*

Paul confirms his profound and sublime exclamations in vv. 34-36.

11:34 **For who hath known the mind of the Lord?** — No one. And no one can know the contents of His mind except as He reveals it (1 Cor. 2:1-13), by His Spirit (Jn. 16:13), through His word (2 Pt. 1:21). **or who hath been his counsellor?** — Again the answer is no one. He consulted with no one in forming His decisions about the scheme of redemption. He had no teacher. He took no one into His confidence. He had no advisors. No one instructed Him (1 Cor. 2:16).

11:35 **Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?** — Quoted in essence from Job 41:11. No one has given to God (in making provision for salvation); consequently God is under no obligations to repay anyone. He is not obligated to the Jews any more than to the Gentiles. His offer of salvation is free and unfettered — by grace through

faith (Eph. 2:8-9). All the gifts of God to men are of favor, not of debt. And since everything man has is a gift from God (1 Cor. 4:7), what could man give to God?

11:36 **For of him,** — God is the source (Gn. 1:1; Rv. 4:11) — all things come from Him. He is indebted to no one for His plan and work. **and through him,** — By His power all things are preserved (Heb. 1:1-4) — all things are sustained by Him. **and to him,** — He is the ultimate goal toward which all things move (1 Cor. 15:24-28) — all things are going to Him. **are all things:** — The means and method of His plan to save. God is literally the source of all things, that is, all things were made by Him, the power behind all things, and the goal of all things, but in this context the reference is to redemption (the gospel plan of salvation). He is the source of, the power behind, and the goal of the gospel message. **to whom be glory for ever.** — Since all things are of God, to Him belongs the glory, the honor, the praise, and the power forever, worlds without end. **Amen.** — May it be so. Amen! For almost identical statements see 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6. Consider also similar statements about Christ (Col. 1:16; Heb. 2:10).



## ROMANS 12

12:12-16 It is obvious that a change of subject matter occurs here. The remainder of the book offers practical exhortations for those who have been saved from sin by obedience to the gospel. The theme of the book is stated in 1:16 — the gospel, God's power to save. Chapters 1:18-3:19 show that the gospel is the power to save from sin (and since all have sinned, all, both Jew and Gentile, stand in need of the gospel). Chapters 3:20-11:36 explores how the gospel saves from sin — how God provided a substitute death (the death of Christ) to pay man's sin debt. Chapters 12-16 deal with the practical results of salvation from sin — how those saved by the gospel should continue to live. Chapter 12 gives the Christian's ethical responsibility; chapter 13, the Christian's civil responsibility; chapter 14, the Christian's attitude toward things indifferent; and chapters 15 and 16 give some final exhortation, consolations, salutations, and commendations. Thus the first 11 chapters deal with God's scheme to redeem and the last five with the practical results of redemption.

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## TRANSFORMED LIVES

12:1-3 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

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12:1 **I beseech you** — I urge you (NIV). Not a command (which he could have given) but a tender appeal. **therefore**, — Recalling his whole argument of chapters 1-11. **brethren**, — All the Christians at Rome. **by the mercies of God**, — The tender compassions which have been shown to us by God in giving His scheme of redemption [cf. Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12]. **that ye present** — Offer as a sacrifice. As Robertson (WP) observes, "Used of presenting the child Jesus in the Temple [Lk. 2:22], of the Christian presenting himself [Rom. 6:13], of God presenting the saved [Eph. 5:27], of Christ presenting the church [Col. 1:28]." **your bodies** — The whole being. In rendering service to God,

one cannot make a dichotomy between the body, soul, and spirit — the whole must act as a unit (1 Thes. 5:23; 1 Cor. 6:20). **a living sacrifice**, — Under the OT the sacrifice had to be slain — the blood shed (Lv. 4:4; 5:7-8). We are required to give our bodies as a living sacrifice. This means a full self-surrender to God (Mt. 16:24; Gal. 2:20). **holy**, — Set apart to God's service; consecrated; without blemish or defect; hence, with the characteristics of godliness. Nothing less than this should be offered to God (1 Pt. 1:15-16). **acceptable unto God**, — Well-pleasing to God (Williams). All acceptable service (sacrifice, devotion, worship) must be by divine appointment, authorized by God in His revealed will (cf. 1 Thes. 5:22; Eph. 5:10). It is a strange quirk of the sensual mind to think that it can obey God (do His will and thus be acceptable to Him) by doing things He has not commanded (Dt. 29:29). God has prescribed His will in His word. Do that, from a holy heart, and it will be an acceptable or well-pleasing service to him. **which is your reasonable service**. — Devotion that is rational, intelligent, volitional, or as the ASV margin says, "belonging to the reason." It is a service (devotion or worship) authorized by God and determined and executed by the reason of man. The ASV renders it "spiritual service" and the BV "your worship with understanding." The word rendered reasonable appears only here and in one other place in the NT (1 Pt. 2:2), where it is translated "of the word" in the KJV but "pure spiritual" by Williams and others. The only pure, rational, or spiritual service that can be rendered to God is that which is authorized in His word. Anything not authorized is a stench in His nostrils — a rejected sacrifice (Gn. 4:5; Heb. 11:4). Service to God is more than external pomp or entertainment; it is a rational devotion of the mind or heart (6:17-18) expressed in divinely appointed acts.

**12:2 And be not conformed** — And be not fashioned (ASV). That is, do not copy, pattern after, or shape your lives and habits after the world (1 Pt. 1:14-15) or the society in which you live. The fashion of our lives is to be determined by Christ the Lord, through His divinely revealed will, and not after the age culture in which we live. **to this world**: — The evils of the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17), such as drinking, dancing, filthy speech, immodest attire, lustful books and music, or any questionable or unchristian practice (Gal. 5:19-21). **but be ye transformed** — Be changed into another form by putting off the old man of sin and putting on the new man of righteousness (Eph. 4:22-24; 2 Cor. 5:17). This word is rendered transfigured in Mt. 17:2 and changed in 2 Cor. 3:18. **by the renewing of your mind**, — By a changed attitude and understanding. As one thinks, so is he (Prv. 23:7). The mind which dwells on worldly things will produce conformity to the world. The mind which thinks right (Phil. 2:5) will lead to a transformed life. **that ye may prove** — That you may test and approve, as one would test metal for strength and purity. The will of God is revealed in the gospel (1:17). The renewed mind, when it ascertains that will, sees that it contains the riches, the wisdom, and the knowledge of God (11:33). Rather than rejecting it, as would the mind which has the disposition to

conform to the world, it approves and accepts it. **what is that good**, — The will of God is good, absolutely good, because it is of God — it contains God's plan to save. **and acceptable**, — The will of God, when tested, proves acceptable to man (and well-pleasing to God). **and perfect**, — It is pure (Prv. 30:5), contains no error (Ps. 19:7; 119:140), is complete (2 Tm. 3:14-17), and is final (Gal. 1:6-8; Jude 3). **will of God**. — That which God desires to be done.

12:3 **For I say, through the grace given unto me**, — He says so by the authority of his apostleship (Gal. 2:7-9; 2 Cor. 5:19-20), into which the favor of God had placed him (1 Tm. 1:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:10). **to every man that is among you**, — To every one of you (NIV). **not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think**; — Not be conceited or have an exaggerated opinion of his value in relation to others. Christians are to be humble (Lk. 14:11; Jas. 4:10; Eph. 4:1-2; Phil. 2:5-11), the opposite of conceit. It is a very easy matter for most of us to think too highly of ourselves (and too lowly of others) — that is, we become too sold on our own importance. But when we do we distort our sense of value and that distorted sense of value leads to some very serious consequences, such as improper attitudes, social snobbery, racial prejudice, or religious bigotry. **but to think soberly**, — Soundly or sensible. **according as God hath dealt to every man** — No man made himself or gave to himself what he has. Each is a responsible creature of God (Gn. 2:15-16; Eccl. 12:13) and each stands as God made him (1 Cor. 4:7). There is therefore no reason for a man boasting of what he is, nor is there any excuse for him thinking that God made him better than others. What is true of one man is true of all men — all are made a little lower than the angels (Heb. 2:7), God loves all (5:8-9; Jn. 3:16), Jesus died for all (Heb. 9:12; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Jn. 2:2), and all are invited to Him on the same terms (Mt. 11:28-30), to be His children (Gal. 3:26-29), brethren in Christ, and heirs of heaven (8:14-17). **the measure of faith**. — Faith by which to measure what he is and what he is not; faith to judge what one should be. This statement is an exegetical perplexity, susceptible to at least three different understandings. Faith may be either subjective, objective, or miraculous. If subjective (or saving) faith is meant, then it is the belief of testimony — the faith which comes by hearing the word of God (10:17). This kind of faith is an act of one's own heart. So it is highly unlikely that this is meant here because it is said to be dealt (given) to every man by God. If Paul has in mind objective faith, then it means *the* faith, that which has been once and for all delivered (Jude 3), that is, the system of faith or the gospel. If miraculous faith is meant, then it is an immediate gift of God. If miraculous here, it probably stands for any or all supernatural gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7-11). But since it is said to be dealt to every man (and certainly not all Roman Christians possessed miraculous gifts), this seems equally as unlikely as the first alternative, even though miraculous gifts are discussed in vv. 6-8. While there is a good deal of difficulty (e.g., the miraculous gifts of vv. 6-8) with objective faith, it seems to me that the verse's internal contents forces us to the conclusion that

that is what Paul had in mind — *the* faith which is the basis of saving faith and the standard of truth and right which God has given to every man.

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## MEMBERS OF ONE BODY

12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

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12:4-5 **For as we have many members in one body,** — The human body is one, even though it is made up of many different members. **and all members have not the same office:** — Each organ of the body has its own function within the body, the eye to see, the ear to hear, the tongue to speak, etc. (1 Cor. 12:14-26). **So we,** — Christians, both Jew and Gentile. **being many,** — Who are many (ASV). The vast multitude of Christians scattered throughout the world. **are one body** — The church (1 Cor. 10:17; 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; Col. 1:18). The body, the church, is composed of its members. There could be no body (church) without the members and there can be no functioning members outside the body. **in Christ,** — All Christians are in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:7), in whom they receive and enjoy all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), and to be in Christ is to be a member of His body, the church (1 Cor. 12:12-13). **and every one** — Individually (NASV). **members one of another.** — Each member belongs to all the others (NIV). All members of the body together make up a single unit, thus making them all interdependent, each serving the other. Just as the body cannot function apart from its members, no member works apart from the body. Christians are thus to mutually serve each other in the church of Christ.

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## DIFFERENT GIFTS

12:6-8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

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12:6-8 This section lists a number of various gifts or functions that are exercised within the framework of the one body (vv. 4-5). The problem here is to ascertain whether they are intended to illustrate natural functions of all the members or supernatural gifts supplied to certain chosen ones. It is certain that prophecy is supernatural (it is used in no other way in the Scriptures) but it is equally as certain that giving and showing mercy are natural (it is hard to conceive of a miraculous gift of giving or compassion), but the remainder of the list could fall into either category, depending on the manner by which it was received and the context in which it appears. Since the Roman church did not have all the miraculous gifts it needed (1:11), the likelihood is that this list was

intended by Paul to represent both classes. If this is the case (and I see no other reasonable way to approach it), then prophecy represents the miraculous gifts (which were given to the early church until the full revelation was received [1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-14] and the remainder the natural gifts or abilities possessed by members of the body. This then is an illustration of how the body, being one but with many members, functions. Each member serves the purpose for which he was placed in the body — that is, each one uses what God has given to him, whether it be natural or supernatural.

**12:6 Having then gifts** — Both natural and miraculous. The miraculous ended when the revelation was completed (1 Cor. 13:8-12; Eph. 4:11-14). Only the natural remains in the body now. **differing according to the grace that is given to us**, — All gifts are by the favor of God and not by man's own power or doings. We did not make ourselves and therefore did not determine our gifts. **whether prophecy**, — The gift of inspired utterance (NEB). Prophecy was a supernatural gift given directly by God or through the laying on of the hands of the apostles (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1; Acts 8:15-19; 2 Tm. 1:6). In the Scriptures a prophet is always one who speaks for another (cf. Ex. 7:1-2) — the true prophet speaks for God (Dt. 18:20-22). As Hendriksen observes, “. . . the message of the true prophet was the product not of his own intuition or even of his own study and research but of special revelation. The prophet received his message directly from the Holy Spirit. . . .” It was not the function of the prophet to teach that which had already been revealed, but to speak directly from God. Of course he might serve as a teacher as well as a prophet but the two functions were different. The function of a prophet is to deliver God's message; the function of a teacher is to impart to another the message which has already been delivered. Foretelling future events is only incidental to prophecy. Only God knows the future and when one foretells the future, as the prophets did, he must be speaking for God. But it is the speaking for God that makes him a prophet and not the foretelling of future events. **let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith**; — Let him speak for God according to the revelation given to him — that is, let him prophesy as God has given him the gift (metaphorically faith is put for the gift). As with the other gifts, the proportion of faith gives the manner in which the gift of prophecy is to be exercised. One ministers by ministering, teaches by teaching, etc. Just so, one prophesies according to the proportion of faith (gift)\*. As in v. 3, it is difficult to determine whether faith is subjective, objective, or miraculous. Here, as the note indicates, I believe it is miraculous.

**12:7 Or ministry**, — The rendering of any practical or active service, whether ministering the word (Acts 6:1-4; 2 Cor. 4:1; 2 Tm. 4:11) or serving the needs of humanity (Lk. 10:40). **let us wait on our ministering**: — The words “let us wait” and “our” are supplied. Omitting them, the KJV reads, “Or ministry . . . on . . . ministering.” The thrust seems to be that one is to minister according to his gift — the ability God has given unto him (1 Pt. 4:11).

That is, let him fulfill his ministry by ministering. **or he that teacheth**, — Teaching is the impartation of knowledge. **on teaching**; — If he has knowledge (derived from his own study in contrast with the prophet, v. 6, who received his by revelation) and is able to impart it (pass it from his own mind to that of another), let him do so. Let him teach by teaching. Ministering and teaching are vital functions of the body, the church (vv. 4-5).

**12:8 Or he that exhorteth**, — To exhort is to entreat, admonish, or make an appeal to. Teaching is directed to the intellect, to impart knowledge; exhortation is directed to the heart or will, to solicit response. **on exhortation**: — That is, let him admonish or solicit according to his talent or ability. **he that giveth**, — Shares with or contributes to the needs of others or to the cause of Christ (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:12-14). But before a person can give, God must first give to him (cf. Eccl. 5:19; 6:2). This could be one reason why it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). **let him do it** — Supplied words. **with simplicity**; — With liberality (ASV), generously (NIV), or with singleness of aim and purpose and with a cheerful disposition (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6-7). **he that ruleth**, — Leads, probably referring to the work of elders (1 Tm. 3:1-7; 5:17; 1 Pt. 4:1-3). **with diligence**; — That is, let him exercise his leadership earnestly — lead by leading. **he that sheweth mercy**, — Shows sincere and concerned sympathy in times of death, disappointment, or misfortune. **with cheerfulness**. With an eager disposition. Let him show compassion by his eagerness to help (cf. Prv. 17:22).

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## ATTITUDES AND OBLIGATIONS

12:9-21 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

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**12:9 Let love** — Pure love — good will, affection, and deep concern for the welfare of all Men (Mt. 5:44; 22:35-40). **be without dissimulation**. — Without hypocrisy (ASV). Or stated positively, “Love in all sincerity” (NEB); “Let love be genuine” (RSV); or “Love must be sincere” (NIV). Not love in pretense (1 Jn. 3:18) or a faked love. **Abhor** — Intense hate, loathing, or viewing with horror. If more Christians had this sentiment towards sin, fewer would become entrapped by it (cf. Ps. 119:104). **that which is evil**; — Everything that is wrong. Evil is the opposite of good and right. To love righteousness is to hate evil (cf. Heb. 1:9; Amos 5:14-15), to stand for right is to oppose wrong.

**cleave** — To be joined to (Young) as by gluing. The same word is used in Mt. 19:5 (where a man is to cleave to his wife) and in Lk. 10:11 (where the dust cleaved on the disciples). The thought is to stick to as adhesive or hold fast (1 Thes. 5:22). **to that which is good.** — Right (and right can be proved by the word of God, v. 2).

12:10 **Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;** — There is a sense in which Christians are to love everyone (Mt. 5:44; 22:39), but there is a special, deeper, natural bond, tenderly affectionate, existing between brethren, members of the body of Christ (vv. 4-5; Gal. 6:10). BV renders this, "Joined together in a brotherhood of mutual love." Perhaps we could paraphrase the thought, "Love one another with brotherly love" (Heb. 13:1). **in honour preferring one another;** — Lead the way in honoring others — that is, be a leader in bringing honor to brethren, putting their honor ahead of your own. Affection, love, and honor is the birthright of every Christian from every other Christian (Jn. 13:35). What a difference it would make in the church and to the world if all recognized and practiced this.

12:11 **Not slothful** — Not shrinking from or flagging for lack of interest (Mt. 25:26, where it is used of a servant who made no effort to increase his master's talents). **in business;** — The same word as is translated diligence in v. 8. Hence, be not lacking in diligence, that is, do not have a flagging zeal for God and His work. **fervent in spirit;** — Fervency of mind or the interbeing — the opposite of slothful in business. This is the human spirit, not the HS as many suppose. **serving the Lord;** — The business in which we are to be engaged. Thus whatever the Lord requires, we are to do it with diligence, zest, and enthusiasm (Eccl. 9:10). The thrust of the v. is to instruct us to be diligent and enthusiastic in doing God's will. The NEB renders it, "With unflagging energy, in ardour of spirit, serve the Lord."

12:12 **Rejoicing in hope;** — Cheerful in the anticipation and expectation of redemption of the body from the grave and the glories to follow. Hope is the ground of joy because it is a sustaining factor in Christian living (Heb. 6:11), anchoring the soul (Heb. 6:19), making afflictions meaningful and more easily borne (8:24-25), and looks beyond the present to an inheritance incorruptible (1 Pt. 1:3-4). This blessed hope belongs to none but the children of God (Eph. 2:12). **patient in tribulation;** — Forbearing in times of persecution, sorrow, suffering, or pain. Hope helps one endure all the afflictions of life (Jas. 1:2-3). **continuing instant in prayer;** — Continuing steadfast in prayer (ASV). This means perseverance (or persistence) in prayer (Lk. 11:5-8; 18:1-7; 1 Thes. 5:17). This v. gives three more characteristics of a Christian, namely, cheerfulness, forbearance, and perseverance — cheerfulness in hope, forbearance in tribulation, and perseverance in prayer.

12:13 **Distributing** — Communicate, contribute, or share. **to the necessity of saints;** — Supply from your storehouse of goods (whether wealth or service) that which will fill the needs of others, especially needy saints

(1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7, 13; Gal. 6:10). God does not forget such gifts (Heb. 6:10). **given to hospitality.** — Hospitality literally means the love of strangers. Thus to receive or entertain travelers as guests and provide for them food, a place to sleep, and protection (Heb. 13:2; 1 Pt. 4:9). Here the thought is to pursue or actively seek opportunities to practice hospitality. It is a Christian duty (1 Tm. 5:10), a qualification of elders (1 Tm. 3:6), and a basis of judgment (Mt. 25:31-46). This is almost a lost art in the modern world. We entertain friends in our homes infrequently, but strangers never. But God has been gracious to give us beautiful commodious homes, and we ought to use them in His service. But instead of doing so, we often make them havens of selfishness.

12:14 **Bless** — To speak or wish well of; thus to invoke a blessing upon. **them which persecute you:** — The righteous can expect to be persecuted (2 Tm. 3:12). The persecutors are those who do harm, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually — they pursue the righteous for the purpose of doing them evil. This is reminiscent of the Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:10-12, 43-44). **bless, and curse not.** — To curse is the opposite of blessing, hence to wish evil of, to imprecate, or to invoke God to send misfortune or destruction. But rather than wish misfortune on others, even their enemies, Christians are to wish all well or return good for evil (v. 21). The evil attitude and actions of others are not to be the controlling factor in their attitude and actions. They follow Christ and leave others for God to judge (v. 19).

12:15 **Rejoice with them that do rejoice,** — Enter into the joy of those who have a cause to rejoice. We are not to envy them, in their good fortune, but to rejoice in their rejoicing (1 Cor. 12:26). **and weep with them that weep.** — Grieve with those who have cause to mourn — mourn because of their mourning. Our hearts are not to rejoice over the misfortunes of others, but to be touched with their grief. We are to sympathize with them — that is, we are to feel with them their pain, sadness, or discomfort.

12:16 This v., in all four of its statements, is concerned with right attitude of mind or proper thinking. **Be of the same mind one toward another.** — Harmonize with others in your thinking (BV). This probably connects with v. 15 and thus gives the manner by which we are to rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep, namely, by being of one mind, sentiment, disposition, or attitude. **Mind not high things,** — Do not aspire to eminence (BV) or be ambitious to attain places of honor and power, or as the ASV renders it, "Set not your mind on high things." **but condescend to men of low estate.** — The original for condescend does not mean what we usually mean by this word (that would imply that the condescender was superior to the ones to whom he condescended, a totally false concept among Christians), but, as the margin of the ASV reveals, to "be carried along with." It is translated carried away with in Gal. 2:13 and led away with in 2 Pt. 3:17. Hence it means to be conducted or carried along with the lowly, to be humble, to have the attitude of and be able to adjust to humble people. **Be not wise in your own conceits.**



— Do not be wise before yourself or in your own opinion. Do not be self-conceited — that is, do not be deceived about your own wisdom.

12:17 **Recompense** — Render, give back, or repay. **to no man evil for evil.** — Do not practice vindictiveness or retaliation against those who do you wrong. Such was the practice under the law (Ex. 21:22-25; Lv. 24:19-20; Dt. 19:19-21), but Jesus reversed it (Mt. 5:38-42) by giving His rule of good for evil (Mt. 5:44; 1 Thes. 5:15). Vengeance belongs only to God (v. 19). **Provide things honest** — Take thought for things honorable (ASV). That is, use forethought to determine noble conduct or fix beforehand the principles by which you are to live. **in the sight of all men.** — This is not to say that we are to do only that which all men consider right. Their concept of right or honorable is not the standard by which actions are to be measured. We are to do the noble thing (as determined from the revealed will of God) before and to all men. While all will not agree on what is right, all will approve doing right. Thus when a Christian does right, neither he nor the church will suffer reproach from those around him. He is to do good in such an honorable way and with such forethought that no one can rightly speak evil of his good (14:16).

12:18 **If it be possible,** — It is possible on our part (14:17; Mt. 5:9; Jas. 3:17) because we follow things that make for peace (14:19), but others may not allow it. Peace is not a one-way tract (Lk. 12:51-53) and some men will not live in peace themselves nor will they permit others to live in peace with them. Paul's own life is an example of this (Acts 14:19; 17:5-14). **as much as lieth in you,** — As far as it depends on you (NIV). **live peaceably with all men.** — Be at peace with all men (ASV). If one is at peace with God (5:1; Phil. 4:7), by having obeyed the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15), and by continuing to follow the Prince of peace (Is. 9:6; Acts 3:15; 5:31), he is likely to be able to live peacefully with all men (that is, all who will allow him to be at peace with them).

12:19 **Dearly beloved,** — The tenderly loved in the Lord. **avenge not yourselves,** — To avenge is to afflict punishment on an offender. But to repay the wrong that has been done one is not the personal right of a Christian. He is to suffer the wrong (cf. 1 Cor. 6:7) and leave vengeance in the hands of an all-wise God. In this, as well as in all things, Jesus is our example (1 Pt. 2:21-23). The instructions here are similar to that given in vv. 14, 17, and 21. **but rather give place unto wrath:** This does not mean not to resist evil (as in Mt. 5:39) but rather as the RSV renders it, "leave it to the wrath of God." Here wrath means divine wrath, as the remainder of the verse shows. Thus we are to give way (step aside so as not to presume the divine prerogative) so that God can exercise His wrath. **for it is written,** — Dt. 32:35. **Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.** — God has reserved to Himself the right to avenge wrongs against His people and we should gladly leave to Him what belongs to Him. When a Christian avenges himself, he presumes to act for God. He thus oversteps his bounds, gives place to the devil (Eph. 4:27), and shows a lack of faith and trust in God to do what He has promised to do.

12:20 **Therefore** — Since vengeance is not yours to give. **if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink:** — Not only are you to refrain from taking vengeance (v. 19) but you are also to take positive actions in the constructive welfare of your enemy. If the one who has wronged you be hungry or thirsty, supply his needs. Or to put it negatively, do not try to avenge him by withholding from him the necessities of life. Food and water here represent any need he might have (Mt. 5:44). **for in so doing** — In supplying his needs one must have a benevolent (not a malevolent) spirit toward his enemy; his motivation must be the expression of kindness, not for the purpose of heaping coals of fire on his head (which would be getting vengeance indirectly). That is, he is to return good for evil (cf. 1 Pt. 2:15). **thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.** — You shall bring down upon him the greater judgment of God. The vast majority of commentators see this as bringing shame on the enemy, thus melting his heart by the contrast of good against his evil, and bringing him around to repentance and friendship. While there is merit in this view, the context is the vengeance of God and I see no adequate reason for departing from that. However, it is not necessary to refer it to the final day of judgment. God has many ways by which to avenge evil, such as its own shameful rewards (see note on 1:27; Gal. 6:7-8), a violated conscience (Jn. 8:9; Ti. 1:15), and by means of civil authorities, which are discussed in chapter 13. The v. is quoted from Prv. 21:22, where the closing statement, not repeated by Paul, reads, “And the Lord shall reward thee.” Thus the Lord will reward you for your goodness and take the necessary vengeance on your enemy. As Christians we must always do right, not permitting the actions of others to determine our own actions. We are to be concerned with the welfare of all people (that is the real meaning of love), and if there is vengeance to be taken, we are to leave that in the hands of God. This is the principle by which we are to live — the principle basic to following Christ (1 Pt. 2:21-24). By doing good for evil we are doing our part, doing what God wills for us to do, and trusting Him to do what He has promised to do, namely, to repay. Thus this v. simply teaches that we are to do right, everywhere, to everyone, all the time and leave judgment (avenging the wicked) in the hands of God.

12:21 **Be not overcome of evil,** — Do not let evil so overpower you that you will permit yourself to return evil for evil. One cannot overcome evil by doing evil. **but overcome evil with good.** — As is illustrated in v. 20.

## ROMANS 13

### CIVIL AUTHORITIES

13:1-7 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

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13:1 **Let every soul** — Every human being, that is, every accountable person. **be subject** — Be obedient to (Ti. 3:1). We must obey the authorities because their power is derived from God. And since God has commanded us to obey them, we obey God by obeying them. **unto the higher powers.** — The authorities or those who rule in civil affairs. As the context of vv. 1-7 shows, this means civil authorities — the government, local, state, and national, under which one lives (1 Pt. 2:13-14). **For there is no power** — No authority (RSV). **but of God:** — No authority except that which is delegated, given, ordained, or established by God. **the powers that be** — The governments that exist. **are ordained of God.** — Have been established (NIV) or instituted by God (RSV). That is, they exist by God's permission. Civil government is therefore by the appointment of God. He did not, however, ordain the particular form it may take. His appointment was that civil states be established for the purpose of maintaining order — for the protection of good and the punishment of evil (vv. 3-4; 1 Pt. 1:14-15; 1 Tm. 2:2). It is left to man to choose whatever form (republican, monarchical, democratic, or oligarical) may best serve the divine purpose at a given time and under the circumstances. The fact or principle of civil government is of God; the form or method of executing it is of man. But not all authorities (and perhaps none in every instance) serve the purpose for which they were ordained. The Christian may therefore find himself being commanded by the ruling officials to do that which is contrary to the will of God. In such cases, he must resist the human and obey the divine (Acts 5:29). A government is to be obeyed only when it does right — only when it serves its God-given function. When it tries to force its citizens to do wrong, or when it per-

mits and encourages that which is evil and destructive to the good, it has transgressed its divine right. A government has a right to demand that its citizens do right and, when this is the case, the Christian is under obligation to obey. Whatever the government has a right to do, the Christian has the right (and often the obligation) to do for his government. No government, however, has the right to do wrong nor to command a Christian to obey its dictates in doing wrong; and no Christian has the right to do wrong by official commission. In short, the government is designed by God to encourage and protect good and to punish evil. When it abuses right or encourages wrong, it ceases to fill the function for which it was appointed. I therefore conclude that whatever is right for the government to do is right for a Christian to do for his government. It is always right for a Christian to do right, but it is never right for him to do wrong. The same is true of governments.

**13:2 Whosoever** — Broad enough to cover everyone, even Christians. **therefore** — Introduces the consequence of the facts stated in v. 1. **resisteth the power,** — Refuse to obey it, rebel against it, or set himself in opposition to it. It is assumed that the rulers here are acting within their proper sphere. No one is commanded to obey a charge, from any source, to do wrong. This, therefore, must not be interpreted to mean that all revolutions are wrong. If so, it would be all but impossible to form new governments and the vast majority of those now existing would be illegitimate. When a government becomes corrupt and oppressive; when it fails to serve the divine purpose for which it was appointed; when it favors the evil over the good; when it crushes and defeats the will and welfare of the people; when it sacrifices its citizens for a theory; when its burdens outweigh its benefits, when its policy is to torture and imprison the innocent; when its official stance is toward wickedness and destruction; when it is hell-bent against Scripture, reason, and common sense; when it is more concerned with its own preservation than with the good of the people, surely it would be wrong not to replace it with a form that would serve the divine purpose. **resisteth the ordinance of God:** — Resist what God has appointed (RSV). That is, he sets himself against that which is divinely instituted. **and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.** — Judgment (ASV). Those who resist orderly authority will be judged by the authority they resist — the resister will be resisted by the resisted. But the authority resisted is both that of God and the civil state. This means that the resister will be judged by both God and the government.

**13:3 For rulers** — The officials in power — same as authorities in vv. 1-2. **are not a terror to good works,** — For rulers hold no terror for those who do right (NIV). Their appointment is for the purpose of praising, promoting, and protecting right by preventing, suppressing, and punishing wrong. This is a general rule, but one that is always true when a government is filling its divine function. But there are exceptions to the rule. As men often depart from God's purpose for them, so do governments, some even to the point of terrorizing and

persecuting the righteous. And when this is the case, such states may justly be called to account by their citizens. If they are beyond reform, then it is surely legitimate to replace them with forms more in keeping with the real purpose of civil states. **but to the evil.** — That is, rulers should be a terror to lawbreakers. There can be no government without laws; there can be no law without penalty; and there can be no terror of law without the enforcement of the penalty. Thus it is the duty of governments to bring criminals to trial swiftly and punish them justly. **Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?** — If, then, you want to live in freedom from fear of the rulers. **do that which is good,** — That which is lawful and right. **and thou shalt have praise of the same:** — The government, if it is functioning properly, will approve, commend, protect, and encourage you in doing right. This is simply to say that if you obey the civil laws you have nothing to fear from the rulers — you can live in peace (1 Tm. 2:2), but if you violate them you will be called to account.

13:4 **For he is the minister of God** — The servant of God to carry out His appointments. Keep in mind that God designed that government to serve two primary purposes: (1) to protect and encourage good; (2) to restrain and punish wickedness. God authorized men to form governments for these two purposes. But when He authorized the civil state, He thereby authorized all that was necessary to carry out its function. Thus the means necessary to the function of government is authorized by God and that which has the authority of God behind it is right, even though it may involve that which would be wrong for the individual, saint or sinner, acting on his own, to enforce. Individuals acting as an agent of the government (and the government can act only through agents) may rightly perform acts which would be wrong for them to perform acting on their own. This distinction must be kept in mind if one is to understand and appreciate the Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount or the Christian's obligation to the civil state. The action, however, must be a legitimate function of the government. No one, man or government, is authorized by God to do wrong. **to thee for good.** — To do you good (NIV). This shows that governments were designed to serve the people — serve those who do right (see note on v. 3). **But if thou do that which is evil,** — Be a wrong doer or a law violator. **be afraid;** — Stand in fear: for it is the divine function of government to punish the wicked. **for he beareth not the sword in vain:** — It is God's minister to bear the sword — and it is not borne just for pomp or show. The sword is the symbol of its power to inflict punishment — to enforce its laws by a police department, by a court system (which includes the right of both corporeal and capital punishment), and by a national armed force (which includes the right to go to war when it must do so to serve its purpose). **for he** — The ruler, civil state, or government. **is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath** — An agent of wrath to bring punishment (NIV). That is, the government is God's institution to avenge the wicked in this world. This God commissioned it to do and what God has commissioned for it to do cannot

be wrong for it to do. That is to say it is not wrong for the government to inflict just punishment on evil doers. It is, in fact, what God has ordered. And what God has ordered cannot be wrong to do. But some say that it is right (even a command) for the government to practice capital punishment, but that it would be wrong for a Christian, acting as an agent of the state, to help carry out the execution. In this they are in grave error. They confuse what is illegitimate for one (saint or sinner) to do on his own with that which it is perfectly legitimate for the government to do. Anyone can do right; no one, man or government, can do wrong with God's approval. Capital punishment (along with all that goes with it, including the right of civil states to protect themselves in time of war) is either right or wrong. If it is wrong, then it is a sin for anyone to carry out the law in this matter; if it is right, then no one can do wrong in doing right. If it is right for the government (or one acting for the government), how can it be wrong for a Christian when he is duly acting as a servant of the state? To my mind, it borders on the ridiculous to say that such an act is right for a sinner, but wrong for a Christian. If it is right, how can a Christian be wrong in doing right? If it is wrong, how can the government (or anyone acting for the government) be right in doing wrong? **upon him that doeth evil.** — The wicked, the lawless, the rebellious. The government has an obligation to enforce its laws, which are designed to protect the innocent. To fail to inflict just punishment upon the wicked would be to fail in the very purpose for which God appointed it.

## THE WAR QUESTION

A young Christian who was serving in the armed forces of our country laid before me this question: "Can a Christian fight for his country?" This is a complex subject because war is so cruel, so destructive, and so inhumane — so seemingly contrary to everything Christianity stands for. Yet there must be an answer, and I believe that the answer must depend on whether it is right for one's country to be in war or not. If his country is doing right in fighting then certainly a Christian can do right. But if his country has no right to fight, no right to protect her citizens, then it seems obvious to me that a Christian cannot fight. A Christian can always do right but it is never right for him to do wrong. A war is either wrong for everyone or else it is wrong for no one. It cannot be right for the government and wrong for the Christian; nor can it be wrong for the Christian and right for the government. It is either right or wrong . . . for everybody. Thus back of the war question are some other vital questions:

First, does a country (or government) have a divine right to exist? Certainly so (13:1-7). Paul made this crystal clear when he wrote, "Let ever soul be subject unto the higher power. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (13:1; see also 1 Pt. 2:13-14).

Second, does a government have a right to maintain its existence — that is,

does it have a right to make and enforce laws? The very fact that a government has a divine right to exist necessarily implies that it has the right to maintain its existence; otherwise absolute chaos would rule in the kingdoms of men. No one would be safe from power hungry, blood thirsty, ambitious, self-serving men who would become dictators at any price. There is no logical escape from the conclusion that a government does have the right to maintain its existence.

Third, does a government have the right to use force (such as a police department, armed forces, capital punishment, etc.) to maintain its existence or in carrying out its purpose? If not, then it does not have the right to maintain its existence. There are times when a nation has absolutely no recourse but force to protect itself and its citizens, and then protection demands force. Thus if it has the right to maintain its existence, it also has the right to use force. If it has a divine right to use force, then going to war is not wrong *per se*. But if it is not wrong to go to war (when war is the only recourse the government has to maintain itself and protect its citizens), how could it be wrong for a Christian to participate in that which is not wrong within itself? As I see it, the only possible way it could be wrong for a Christian to participate in his country's defense is that under the circumstance it would be wrong for the country to defend itself. If a country has no right to defend itself, then its defense is wrong; if it has a right to defend itself, then its defense is right. Thus it is wrong for a Christian to participate in war only when it is wrong for his country to be in war.

Fourth, and going a step further, does a government have a divine obligation to maintain itself and thus to protect its citizens? Indeed it does. That is its fundamental purpose for being. This Paul clearly established in 13:3-4. Upon the principle set forth in these verses one is forced to the conclusion that the government has a divine obligation to protect its people — to protect the right and punish the wrong, even if that protection means war. What else could the expression "for he beareth not the sword in vain" mean? But how could it be wrong for a Christian to do for the government what it is not wrong for the government to do — actually what the government has a divine obligation to do? For a government to fail to protect its good citizens from evil, even the evils of war, would be to fail in the very purpose for which God ordained it.

Fifth, and perhaps the most serious of all, do Christians have the divine right to resist or refuse to participate in the government when the government is serving as a minister of God by doing what He obligated it to do? While the answer is a very sensitive one, and must always depend upon whether the government is acting properly, I do not believe the Christian has the right to refuse to serve the government when it is doing right. Turn the question around: do Christians have the right to refuse to serve their government when it is doing what God has divinely commissioned it to do?

Sixth, and this is the heart of the whole matter, do Christians have a right to do right? Or is it wrong for them to do what it would be right for sinners to do (in acting as an agent of the government)? My judgment is that Christians

always have a right to do right; they never have a right to do wrong.

Thus it seems obvious to me that if a government has a right or an obligation to go to war, then it is right for a Christian to fight for his country — it is right for him to do right. On the other hand, if the government has no right to go to war, then a Christian has no right to participate. And if the government has no right to go to war, then the Christian must oppose its total participation in it (he must oppose all sin). He cannot just oppose Christians going; he must oppose everyone going. Going to war for one's country is either right or wrong. It is not right for some and wrong for others. What is right is not wrong for Christians and what is wrong is not right for anyone. I conclude therefore that when a country goes to war it is either right for all its citizens to participate or else it is wrong for all. If it is right, Christians have no right to refuse; if it is wrong, no one has a right to fight.

13:5 **Wherefore** — A conclusion from what is said in vv. 3-4. **ye must needs** — It is necessary (NIV). **be subject** — Be in support of and in obedience to civil authorities. Two reasons are given to show the necessity of obedience: **not only for wrath**, — Not merely to avoid punishment, which the government divinely afflicts on lawbreakers. **but also for conscience sake**. — In addition to escaping punishment, it is the right thing to do — right because God has commanded it. To fail to obey properly constituted authority violates both the law and the conscience.

13:6 **For this cause** — The necessity to obey the government for both wrath and conscience sake (v. 5). **pay ye tribute also**: — You pay taxes to escape wrath and to keep a good conscience — it is the right thing to do and you will be punished if you do not. The government must be supported in order to render the service God appointed for it. Hence, the authority for Christians paying tax. **for they are God's ministers**, — Ministers of God's service (ASV). Here ministers are from a different Greek word than in v. 4, probably because a public servant is meant. Vincent (WS) brings out the emphasis by observing, "The word here brings out more fully the fact that the ruler, like the priest, discharges a divinely ordained service." **attending continually upon this very thing**. — That is, rulers, or those in authority, spend their full time in public service, attending to the duties of government.

13:7 **Render therefore to all their dues**: — The principle here stated would apply to everyone, God, man, or government, to which one is indebted, whether praise, service, or money, but it is probably limited here by the context to civil rulers (Mt. 22:21). **tribute to whom tribute is due**; — Personal and property tax (Mt. 17:24-27; 22:17-22; Lk. 2:1-5). **custom to whom custom**; — Import and export tax. **fear to whom fear**; — This may mean to be afraid of the consequence of disobedience (v. 4), but more probably a reverential fear or respect (e.g., Eccl. 12:13; Acts 10:34-35), that is, a respectful fear because of their position in a God-appointed institution. **honour to whom honour**. — Praise and commendation. A government is praiseworthy when it is filling its



divine function of protecting the good and punishing the evil — that is, it is worthy of the full support of every citizen.

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## LOVE FULFILLS THE LAW

13:8-10 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

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13:8 **Owe no man any thing**, — Let no debt go unpaid. This may look back to v. 7 and the thought be to pay all you owe whether it be tribute, custom, fear, or honor, but I think the principle is broader here than there. This is obviously not a prohibition of a credit system (Mt. 5:42; Lk. 6:35), but rather an admonition to be honest in the payment of all debts due. I was reared in a poverty-stricken family in the mountains of East Tennessee. I distinctly remember when I was a teenager my older brother came home driving a fine looking used car (I thought it was one of the finest looking machines I had ever seen). I knew he had no money with which to purchase anything, much less a car. So I asked him, "How much do you owe on it?" He replied, "Not a penny!" My next inquiry was, "Where did you get the money?" "I borrowed it," he said. "And I don't owe a penny until the first of next month." He was right. He owed for the car, but not a penny was due on it until the first of the next month, at which time his first payment was due. But when it was due, he was obligated to pay or else he would be in violation of this divine injunction. In the final analysis, this is not a prohibition against making obligations; it is an injunction to meet them. **but to love one another**: — Love is a debt we owe everyone (Mt. 7:44; 22:37-40; Jas. 2:8; 1 Cor. 13), one that can never be paid in full. We must continue to love as long as we live. **for he that loveth another** — The ASV says, "He that loveth his neighbor" (cf. Lk. 10:25-37), but this might put a limit on the obligation in the minds of some. The NIV renders it, "For he who loves his fellow man." **hath fulfilled the law**. — He has reached an end for which the law was given. When one perpetually pays his debt of love, he will do to and for others what the law prescribes. This is illustrated in v. 9.

13:9 **For this**, — The commandments (RSV) are summed up in this one thing, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." **Thou shalt not commit adultery**, — The seventh command (Ex. 20:14). It is the violation of marital purity. **Thou shalt not kill**, — The sixth command (Ex. 20:13). This is murder, the taking of human life with malice aforethought. **Thou shalt not steal**, — The eighth commandment (Ex. 20:15). The unlawfully taking of that which belongs to another. **Thou shalt not bear false witness**, — the ninth command (Ex. 20:16), but omitted in ASV and most critics on textual grounds. It means to testify falsely. In principle, it prohibits all lying. **Thou shalt not**

**covet**; — The tenth command (Ex. 20:17). An illegitimate desire for that which belongs to another. **and if there be any other commandment**, — Any other law pertaining to man's relationship with his neighbor that is not named here specifically. **it is briefly comprehended** — Summed up (NIV). **in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**. — Quoted from Lv. 19:18. The law, while it has other functions, is designed to regulate the relationship between man and man — to protect all from harm as well as preventing all from doing wrong. When one loves his neighbor he will not sin against him by violating his marriage, by destroying his life, by taking his property, by misrepresenting him falsely, or by desiring his property or possessions. In this sense love fulfills the law (cf. v. 10; Mt. 22:37-40). Love establishes the very kind of relationship the law demands. It motivates one to practice the golden rule (Mt. 7:12).

13:10 **Love worketh no ill to his neighbour**: — Love is here personified. This means that the person who loves another (his neighbor) will not only not do him harm (sin against him by adultery, murder, theft, false witness, or desiring his possessions) but will rather work for his good. Thus love works for the benefit of one's neighbor just as does the law when it is obeyed. (For some great passages on love, see 1 Cor. 13; 1 Jn. 4:7-21; Jn. 13:34. The good Samaritan is an example of love in action, Lk. 10:25-37.) **therefore love is the fulfilling of the law**. — Love brings the law (pertaining to man's relationship with man) to full fruition. See note on v. 8.

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## PUT ON CHRIST

13:11-14 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

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13:11 **And that**, Besides this (RSV) or this in addition to loving your neighbor (v. 10). **knowing the time**, — Being aware of the critical nature of the season in which they lived. What critical aspect of the time Paul had in mind is not revealed and it would be useless to speculate. It could not, however, be the second coming of Christ *per se*, because of that time no one knew (Mt. 24:36; 1 Thes. 5:1-3). In one sense or another everyone lives in critical times. Thus the admonition here can apply with equal force to all, regardless of when or where they live. **that now it is high time to awake out of sleep**: — The day had dawned when they had become Christians; the time for sleep was over. The hour had approached for them to arouse from their slumber (their indifference, inactivity, insensitivity, and unconcern) and prepare themselves and others for eternity (Am. 4:5; Mt. 25:13). This made it mandatory for them to act in more than an ordinary way (cf. Eph. 5:14; Mt. 25:1-13). **for now is our**

**salvation** — The final or eternal salvation. They had been saved from their past sins when they obeyed the gospel (6:3-4, 16-18) but they were living in hope of eternal life in the world to come (1 Jn. 2:25; Mk. 10:30). Each day brought them nearer to their ultimate goal. And this was true regardless of whether it was death or the second coming of Christ which brought them to this final consummation. **nearer than when we believed.** — Closer to that eternal home than when they first entered Christ (Gal. 3:26-27), became new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24), and started the Christian journey. This is simply to say that they were nearer heaven now than they were then.

13:12 **The night is far spent,** — The night is nearly over (Goodspeed). The time of slumber (v. 11) is past. Night is used here in the sense of the works of darkness. This is simply to say that the time of living in sin is over (cf. 1 Pt. 4:1-5). **the day is at hand:** — Day is contrasted with night. Hence it means that the full light of the gospel is dawning and the time has come to put on the armor of light — that is, the time to live in harmony with the gospel or to live as God designed man to live. **let us therefore cast off the works of darkness,** — The works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). **and let us put on the armour of light.** — The Christian armor (Eph. 6:10-17) or the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pt. 1:5-11). The contrast here is between a life of wickedness and the life of righteousness as revealed in the gospel (1:17), not between the present state of a Christian on earth and his future state in heaven. Thus, contrary to most interpreters, this is not a passage teaching the soon coming of Jesus. Paul did not teach that; in fact, he taught the exact opposite (1 Thes. 5:1-3; 2 Thes. 2:1-4). Those who see a difficulty in the sense I have given the passage may ask, "How could Paul urge Christians to put off the works of sin and put on the armor of righteousness when they should have already done this in becoming Christians?" While it may not explain it to everyone's satisfaction, this is not an unusual way for Paul to urge Christians to leave the old way of life and live the new. For example, he urged the putting off of the old man and the putting on the new (Eph. 4:21-24). Yet as Christians they were already new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The Corinthians were told to come out from among the worldly things and be separated (1 Cor. 6:17-18); yet they were already saints (1 Cor. 1:1) or separated ones. In v. 14 he tells them to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, but they had already done this in baptism (6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27).

13:13 This verse contrast two ways of life — the honorable or becoming and the shameful. The former is commended and the latter prohibited. (1) The honorable: **Let us walk honestly,** — Let us walk becomingly (ASV). The conduct of every Christian should be that which would bring honor to Christ and respect to His gospel and people. **as in the day;** — As in the light of day, doing everything honorably and openly. Shameful deeds are done under cover — they are the works of darkness (v. 12); honorable deeds are done openly — they are the deeds of light. (2) The shameful, which consist of three pairs, the

first two (four words) are plural, the last one (two words) are singular: **not in rioting** — Not in revelling (ASV). Carousing, merrymaking, orgies, or drinking parties (Gal. 5:21; 1 Pt. 4:3). **and drunkenness**, — Drinking (BV). Being intoxicated by strong drink. There is no drunkenness without drinking and there can be no drinking (of beverage alcohol) without drunkenness to one degree or another. Drunkenness is one of the most shameful evils to invade any society — an individual evil, a social evil, and a national evil. All Christians must throw all their influence against it, whether in word, act, or ballot (cf. Gn. 9:20-25; Prv. 20:1; 23:29-32; Is. 28:7-8; Gal. 3:21). **not in chambering** — Illicit sexual activity (drawing its name from the place where such lewd sins are committed). **and wantonness** — Lasciviousness or unbridled lust; sexual debauchery. **not in strife** — Contention or quarrelings (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3; Gal. 3:20; cf. Jas. 3:16). **and envying**. — Zeal degenerated into jealousy; selfish hostility. The two words in each of the three pairs go together in practice: rioting (revellings) is tied to drunkenness; chambering (illicit sexual activity) goes hand-in-hand with wantonness (lust or licentiousness), and strife (contention) is a product of envying (jealousy).

13:14 **But put ye on the Lord Jesus**, — Put on the characteristics which belong to Christ and follow Him in every attitude and conduct (Phil. 2:5; 1 Pt. 2:21; see note on v. 12). Christ fills man's every need (Col. 2:9-15). **and make no provisions for** — Give no forethought to gratifying the flesh. You are dead to it (6:1-13). **the flesh** — Carnal or sinful desires. **to fulfil the lusts thereof**. — To gratify the sins of the flesh (1 Jn. 2:15-17). The thought here is that when one becomes a Christian he should learn no retreat, make no plans to return to sin, burn the bridges between him and the world, and break all ties with the past. In short, no provisions should be made for turning back (cf. Mt. 16:24-26; Lk. 9:62). That which is behind is to be forgotten and the prize toward which one is pressing is to be all absorbing (Phil. 3:13-14). Unlike the Israelites, who turned back in heart and mind, because they longed for the onions and garlic of Egypt (Nm. 11:3-6; Acts 7:38-39), a true Christian must move onward and upward, never backward to the world.

## ROMANS 14

Chapter 14: This chapter deals with things indifferent — things neither right nor wrong within themselves. For example, it is neither right nor wrong to eat meat or to refrain from eating it. This is a matter of individual choice and one can go to heaven either way. While this is true of indifferent things, the principle must not be applied to things right or wrong or to a situation where an indifferent thing might become wrong. This chapter has been used to try to justify everything from sprinkling for baptism to drinking alcoholic beverages to instrumental music in Christian worship. But such misses Paul's point absolutely. He is discussing indifferent things, things neither right nor wrong in the situation. But there is another side to this coin: some things are indifferent in one situation and wrong in another (e.g., the eating of meat in this chapter and the washing of hands, pots, and pans in Mt. 15:1-9). An indifferent thing can therefore become wrong when it is taken out of its place and put into another category. It is not wrong to eat meat, but when one eats meat in honor of idols (not an indifferent situation) the eating of it becomes wrong (1 Cor. 8:10-13). Alcohol may be an indifferent thing in some situations, but its use as a medicine is right (1 Tm. 5:23) and its use for the purpose of intoxication is wrong (Prv. 20:1). Instrumental music is an indifferent matter, but its use is right when used for entertainment and wrong when used in Christian worship (in which every act must be authorized by God) because it violates certain Scriptural principles, one of which is that a thing must be proven (Scriptural) before practiced (1 Thes. 5:21). Some things are therefore indifferent in one category and a violation of Scriptural principles (sinful) in another. This chapter deals only with things indifferent in situations in which they are indifferent.

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### THE WEAK IN FAITH

14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

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14:1 **Him that is weak in the faith** — He is weak because his opinions of former laws and habits have bound his faith in Christ as Savior and the gospel as God's power to save to the extent that he cannot practice the liberties

permitted by the faith. His opinions are bound on his conscience as a matter of faith, and they are so strong that he cannot or will not accept the freedom provided for in the gospel. Or else he is not mature enough in the faith to distinguish between that which is essential (fundamental) and that which is indifferent (cf. Heb. 5:12-14). **receive ye**, — Accept him as a brother, one bought with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pt. 1:18-19), into your fellowship. **but not to doubtful disputations**. — But not for disputes over opinion (RSV). Or as Vincent (WS) says, “Not for the purpose of passing judgment upon his scruples.” Or not just to argue with him over his opinion. It is not wrong to have an opinion (that does not conflict with the plain teaching of the Scriptures), but it is wrong to force opinions on others as terms of fellowship, to force others to change their opinion against their conviction before fellowship can be extended, and to be bound by opinion over and above the word of God. Thus no one has the right to judge another over opinions pertaining to indifferent matters.

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## MEATS AND SPECIAL DAYS

14:2-6 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

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14:2-3 **For one believeth** — The strong. He is strong because he is not so bound by his opinions that he cannot enjoy the freedom allowed by the gospel. He believes and practices NT teaching on the cleanness of all meats (v. 14; 1 Tm. 4:1-5) without compunction of conscience. **that he may eat all things**: — All meats. He has no scruples about eating that which was forbidden by the law but approved by the gospel. He knows that it is not that which goes into one but rather that which comes from the heart which defiles him (Mt. 15:16-20). **another, who is weak**, — See note on v. 1. **eateth herbs**. — Vegetables only. His opinion binds him to abstain from things forbidden by the law. Hence he deprives himself of gospel liberties. **Let not him that eateth** — The strong in faith. **despise** — Set at naught (ASV) or look down upon with contempt and condemnation. **him that eateth not**; — The eating of meat, however desirable to the meat eater, is not essential to salvation. **and let not him which eateth not** — The weak, who is restrained from eating by his scruples. **judge** — Condemn. **him that eateth**: — Abstention from meat is not necessary for one to be a Christian or go to heaven. This simply says that neither the eater nor the non-eater is to bind his opinion on the other. **for God hath received him**. — God has accepted the eater and granted unto him this

freedom. Whom God approves, no one has the right to disapprove. On the other hand, the strong must be careful not to cause the weak to stumble by the exercise of his freedom (1 Cor. 8:9).

14:4 **Who art thou that judgest** — That is, how dare you to presume the right to condemn him whom God approves. **another man's servant?** — The servant of another. This is directed to the weak who might judge (condemn) the strong who had been received by God. Just as it was not the business of one household servant to judge another's household servant, it is not the business of the weak to condemn the strong in the performance of indifferent matters. **to his own master he standeth** — Is received or approved. **or falleth.** — Is rejected or condemned. The only judge of a household servant is his own master; the only judge of a Christian is Christ. One may stand or fall, but it will be by the judgment of Christ and not by the judgment of others. In the case of the strong here, Christ had received them (v. 3). It was therefore out of place for the weak to reject or condemn them. **Yea, he shall be holden up:** — He shall be made to stand (ASV). **for God is able** — Mighty, and thus has the power. **to make him stand.** — Stand accepted and in full fellowship with God. The weak should therefore receive the strong in full confidence and fellowship. **Keep in mind** that the strong are the ones who understand that they are no longer bound by the law in things pertaining to meat and special days (vv. 5-6) — they practice all the gospel allows (1 Cor. 2:14). The weak, on the other hand, are those who either do not have a full gospel knowledge or else their faith is too weak to permit them to practice things formerly prohibited and to leave off practices formerly bound — they had scruples about gospel liberties in indifferent matters.

14:5 **One man esteemeth one day above another:** — He considers some days or seasons as holy or sacred, such as the sabbath or other days set apart by the law. It is permissible for him to use that time in service to God. The perspective is different here than in Gal. 4:10-11. Here the special day is observed as a matter of opinion; there it is made a matter of faith — a matter of law to be bound upon all. **another esteemeth every day alike.** — He considers all time the same — every day is devoted to the glory of God (cf. Col. 2:16-17). Matters of faith and matters of indifference should never be confused. What God has commanded is a matter of faith — it must be done without addition, subtraction, or change (Gal. 1:6-9; Rv. 22:18-19). Matters of indifference are things permissible either way. Neither the doing nor the failure to do makes any difference in one's relationship with God. Thus this v. has no reference whatsoever to the Lord's day worship. While it should not be considered as a holy day, as was the OT sabbath, it was appointed by God (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). It is therefore not optional. To disregard it would be to disregard, not an indifferent matter, but an appointment of God. **Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.** — Be fully convinced about observing or not observing special days. One must conduct himself in keeping with his opinion

— that is, he must believe that what he is doing or not doing is permissible.

14:6 **He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.** — Both the regarnder and the non-regarnder of days and the eater and non-eater of meat are persuaded (v. 5) that what they are doing is by permission of the Lord and the conduct of both is designed to glorify God and honor His cause. (The clause “and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it” is omitted by the ASV and others on substantial textual grounds.) Neither is practicing his opinion selfishly; both are honestly trying to serve and honor God. While one or the other is mistaken in his opinion (in this case, it is the weak because the gospel approves the eating of meat, 1 Tm. 4:1-5), both are doing that which, in the final analysis, is indifferent, that which is permitted either way, and neither is led into sin or disobedience to God by his actions. Rather both have as their motive to honor God in both purpose and practice. And both give thanks to God (that is, both recognize God as the giver of all things, Jas. 1:17), one as the giver of his vegetables and the other as the giver of his meat. We can learn from this that one may not always be right in his opinion about indifferent matters, but he can always be honest and sincere in his desire to please God in all things (cf. Col. 3:17).

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## ALL ARE THE LORD'S

14:7-9 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

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14:7 **For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.** — No one of us, neither strong nor weak, lives or dies to serve self alone; rather he lives or dies in service to the Lord (v. 8). Each one belongs to the Lord and whatever he does, whether to live or to die, should be done to honor Him (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). Christians have no purpose in life or death but to please God. It is not the aim of this v. to teach man's social responsibility. Of course we must all live in the world (and especially in the church) together and the action of each one should be designed to benefit all, the strong the weak and the weak the strong. But here the thought is that we do not live to do our own will but the will of Him who is the giver of all things (Phil. 1:21). Both life and death are to be to the glory of God.

14:8 **For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.** — Both the strong and the weak are the Lord's. And whatever they do in life or in death is done to His honor. See note on v. 7.



14:9 **For to this end** — The purpose in view, namely, that He might be Lord of both the living and the dead — be Lord in all circumstances (vv. 7-8). All, whether living or dead, are in His hands. And since God is the God of the living, not God of the dead (Mt. 22:29-33), this means that the dead are living unto God. We can therefore trust our dead into His care and keeping and when our time comes to die, we can with great confidence surrender our spirit unto Him. **Christ both died, and rose, and revived,** — He died on the cross, arose from the dead, and is now living at the right hand of God (Mk. 16:19; Acts 7:56; Heb. 1:3). The ASV gives the shorter reading, “Christ died and lives again,” which is better attested textually. The natural order for us to think of is that He lived and died, but that is not the point here. He died as a sacrifice for sins and then rose to live again — He first died and then came His resurrection. **that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.** — That He might rule supreme in both life and death. His Lordship is over all (Acts 2:36), both the dead and the living. For this reason He is due all the honor that accrues to Him from both death and life.

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## CHRIST JUDGES ALL

14:10-13 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

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14:10 **But why dost thou** — The weak (v. 1) who would tend to condemn the strong for practicing his liberty in eating meat and refraining from keeping special days. **judge thy brother?** — If Christ is Lord of all (v. 9), and if one does not judge another's servant (v. 4), why then do you condemn your brother in Christ (over indifferent things)? **or why dost thou** — The strong who would have a tendency to despise the weak for his scruples and lack of maturity. **set at nought thy brother?** — Why do you look down upon him as someone less than a brother? God received (or accepted) him (v. 2). So should you. **for we shall all** — Both weak and strong. **stand before the judgment seat of Christ.** — Of God (ASV). All will be judged by Christ, their divine Master in that great and final day (Jn. 5:22; Mt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10). For one to judge (condemn) his brother in indifferent matters is to reject the judgment of Christ and exercise himself the prerogative which belongs only to Him.

14:11 **For it is written,** — (Is. 49:18; 45:23). **As I live, saith the Lord,** — As surely as I live, says the Lord (NIV). Thus as certain as God is alive: **every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.** — Everyone will acknowledge His majesty by confessing Him as Lord (Mt. 10:32-33; 16:16; Jn. 6:68-69), either now (10:9-10) or at the judgment (cf. Phil. 2:5-11).

14:12 **So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.** — In the judgment, each one will account for his own practices, not for another's. That is, the strong will not have to account for the weak nor will the weak have to account for the strong.

14:13 **Let us** — The weak. **not therefore judge one another any more:** — Leave all judgment to Christ (vv. 10-12) by ceasing to pass judgment on those who practice gospel liberties (in matters indifferent). **but judge this rather,** — but let us rather decide this (BV). Let the strong make this judgment or decision: **that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.** — The strong are not to parade their freedoms before the weak in such a way as to cause them to sin, either by abandoning the faith or by violating their conscience. If the practice of liberties causes someone to stumble or fall (sin), then, since they are not essential matters, it is better not to practice them at all (1 Cor. 8:9-13). It would be better to surrender one's liberties than to cause a soul to sin and thus put his salvation in jeopardy. Here the old slogan, used widely in the early days of the Restoration Movement, can be brought into full play: in matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion (indifference), freedom; in all things, love.

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## INDIFFERENT THINGS ARE NOT UNCLEAN

14:14-15 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

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14:14 **I know,** — Not by intuition, experience, or a logical process, but by faith — a faith which had come from the teachings of Christ. His knowledge was therefore as certain as his faith. **and am persuaded** — He could have had this conviction by three sources: (1) The teaching of Christ (Mt. 15:10-20; Mk. 7:14-23); (2) Peter had been shown it by a miracle (Acts 10:9-16); and (3) the law, which contained the restrictions, had been abolished (Mt. 5:17-18; Eph. 2:13-16; Col. 2:14-16). **by the Lord Jesus,** — In the Lord Jesus (ASV), that is, in relationship with Him. **that there is nothing** — In context, no meat; hence there is no food that is unclean in and of itself (1 Tm. 4:4; cf., Ti. 1:5). **unclean of itself:** — Unclean *per se* (Acts 10:9-16; 11:4-10). He thus shows that the laws pertaining to clean and unclean animals (Lv. 10:10; 11:47) were no longer in effect. While the context here is limited to the eating of meat, there is a broader sense in which all things are pure, namely, when used for the purpose for which God made them (or in keeping with His legislation for them). Nothing is impure when it is properly used — that is, used for its divine purpose. **but he that esteemeth any thing to be unclean,** — He regards it as being impure, something that cannot be used to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31). **to**

**him it is unclean.** — Not unclean *per se* but unclean in the eyes of him who so regards it. If he eats, he violates his conscience, does that which he believes is wrong, and thus condemns himself (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:25-33). We should all be open to learn truth and be willing to practice right but no one should be induced to do what he believes is wrong. One may be in error, but to be true to himself and to God, he must practice what he believes is right.

14:15 **But** — For (ASV). **if thy brother** — The weak in faith (v. 1). **be grieved with thy meat,** — He is injured by your eating because he sees you doing that which he thinks is wrong. **now walkest thou not charitably.** — Your behavior is not regulated by love. **Destroy not him with thy meat,** — Do not, by the practice of your freedom, bring such a grief to him as to cause a destruction of brotherly relations — do not so injure his conscience as to force him into a breach of fellowship. This would cause him to sin and ultimately be lost. It would also be a sin against him. And to so sin against a weak brother is to sin against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12; cf. Mt. 25:41-45). The fellowship of a brother is worth far more than a stomach full of meat (1 Cor. 8:13). **for whom Christ died.** — Christ died to save him. Would you then nullify the death of Christ and destroy a brother over non-essential matters?

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## ALL SHOULD SEEK PEACE

14:16-21 Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

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14:16 **Let not then your good be evil spoken of:** — The strong are not to practice liberties in such a way or under such circumstances as to cause the weak (or anyone else for that matter) to conclude that they are indulging in sinful practices. In this case (the eating of meat) the action is not wrong (in fact, Paul here calls it good), but if others believe it to be wrong then they could speak of it as an evil. It would thus destroy the influence of the strong and be an occasion of reproach and blasphemy both to them and to the cause of truth (1 Cor. 8:13).

14:17 **For the kingdom of God** — The reign or rule of God in their lives through the gospel. The kingdom and church are synonymous (not synonymous words but synonymous in the sense of both words applying to the same institution, Mt. 16:18-19). All Christians are citizens of the kingdom, members of the church, and are thus under the rule of God. **is not meat and drink;** — Food is not the essence of the kingdom. Rather it is spiritual in nature (Jn. 18:36). What one eats or does not eat, except in circumstances where the eating is wrong (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:28), does not effect his stand with or

his relationship to God (1 Cor. 8:8). Whether one eats or not is an indifferent matter. But not so with righteousness, peace, and joy. **but righteousness**, — Righteousness is primarily justification or right standing with God, but here the practical side is meant, namely, doing right, especially to the weak brother (Ti. 2:11-12; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:7), or discharging all duties toward one's fellowman. One should do right to others because he is right with God. **and peace**, — Peacefulness. Not subjective peace as in Phil. 4:7, but the end of strife among brethren; the strong and the weak living together in harmony. **and joy** — The delightful fruit of doing right and living in peace (1 Pt. 1:8). **in the Holy Ghost**. — Produced by the HS through the gospel. The function of the Spirit is to reveal the truth (Jn. 16:13), confirm the truth revealed (Heb. 2:1-4), and deliver (to the world in written form) the truth confirmed. When the truth is known, believed, and obeyed the results are righteousness, peace, and joy.

14:18 **For he that in these things serveth Christ** — For he that herein serveth Christ (ASV), that is, in righteousness, peace, and joy (v. 17). **is acceptable to God**, — Is pleasing to God (NIV) whether he eats meat or refrains from it. **and approved of men**. — Respected among all men who approve right attitudes and conduct. While this may be limited by context to all men in the church, is there anyone in the whole wicked world who would not approve of righteousness (justice), peace (peacefulness), and joy?

14:19 **Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another**. — Because in righteousness, peace, and joy they were accepted by God and approved by men (v. 18), they are now to pursue two other goals: (1) the things which make for peace. They were thus to avoid strife (which results from doubtful disputation over indifferent things) and do things which lead to peace and harmony (Eph. 4:3). (2) The things which would edify one another. To edify is to build up or improve, morally or spiritually (15:2; 1 Cor. 10:23; 14:26; 1 Thes. 5:11; 2 Cor. 12:19). They were to be constructive, not destructive, in their attitudes and practices and thus work toward mutual upbuilding. By following these two divine principles they would be focusing on the vital nature of the kingdom (righteousness, peace, and joy, v. 17) rather than on non-essential, unimportant, and indifferent matters.

14:20 **For meat** — For your right to eat meat. **destroy not** — A different word than in v. 15. Here it means "loosen down" or overthrow. Hence, do not, for the sake of meat, tear down, the opposite of edify (v. 19). **the work of God**. — That which God has built up. Ultimately the salvation provided by God, purchased by Christ, revealed by the HS in the Bible, and received in obedience to the gospel. **All things indeed are pure**; — All food is morally clean. See v. 14 with the note. **but it is evil for the man who eateth with offence**. — Evil to the strong when he eats it in a way to cause the weak to stumble or fall (v. 13). But it is also evil to the weak when he eats in violation of his conscience. Thus an indifferent matter, a thing neither right nor wrong in

and of itself, ceases to so be when expressed in practice. There are indifferent things but there are no indifferent acts. The eating of meat *per se* is neither right nor wrong (1 Cor. 8:8), but the person who eats it must be doing one or the other when he eats it. It is right if he eats it with thanksgiving (1 Tm. 4:1-5) and if it does not present a stumblingblock to a weak brother (v. 13), but it is wrong if by eating it he causes a weak brother to fall or if idols are recognized or worshipped in the process (1 Cor. 10:27-28). Thus the act is right if one has the right to eat it (under the circumstances) and it is wrong if he does not have the right to eat it (because of the situation). While the eating itself may be indifferent, one is either doing right or wrong when he eats. Every act is therefore right or wrong as far as the individual doing it is concerned. It is right if one has the right to do it at that time and in that situation or it is wrong if he has no right to do it. I conclude then that there are indifferent things but there are no indifferent acts.

14:21 **It is good** — The right thing to do under the circumstance. **neither to eat flesh**, — Meat. One has a divine right to eat meat (1 Tm. 4:1-5) except when it is eaten as a sacrifice to idols (1 Cor. 10:28), violates conscience, or causes offence to a weak brother (v. 20). Under any of these conditions the practice of an indifferent thing becomes wrong. That is, when an indifferent thing is used illegitimately (as in eating meat in honor of idols) it ceases to be indifferent and becomes sinful. Just because a thing is indifferent *per se* does not mean that the doing of it is indifferent. As is pointed out under v. 20, every act is either right or wrong. Under all circumstances when one eats meat, he either has a right to do so or else he has no right to do so. Every act is therefore either right or wrong. **nor to drink wine**, — Wine in the Bible may be anything from the juice in the grape (unfermented) to intoxicating (fermented) drink (Jgs. 9:13; Is. 16:10; 65:8; Jl. 1:10; 2:24; Nm. 18:12; Jer. 10:40; Prv. 20:1; 21:17; 23:29-32; Is. 28:7). The word itself does not tell us whether it is fermented or unfermented. This must be determined, if determined at all, by the context. Here it could mean either one or both because there is a proper as well as an improper use of both. The unfermented juice of the grape is properly used for food and improperly used when drunk to gluttony; fermented wine is properly used for medical purposes (1 Tm. 5:23; Lk. 10:30-37); its improper use is for intoxication (Prv. 20:1; 23:29-32). Thus wine in any form may be properly or improperly used. But just as it is with the eating of meat, Paul approves its legitimate, not its illegitimate use. What he is saying here is that if there is danger that the proper use of wine should lead a weak brother to its improper use, then it would be good (right) not to use the unfermented juice for food, lest it cause the weak to become a glutton, or to use the fermented for medicine, lest it cause someone to drink for the purpose of intoxication. Paul is discussing matters of indifference, but the use of alcoholic beverages (especially the modern distilled kind) for the purpose of intoxication is not now, never has been, and never will be a matter of indifference. It is sinful (13:12-13; Gal.

5:19-21). While wine itself is neither good nor evil, when one drinks it, the act must of necessity become either right or wrong: right if properly used (for food or medicine), wrong if improperly used (for the purpose of intoxication). With wine, as well as with everything else, there are no indifferent acts. Paul's concern here is that one will not so use his liberty to properly use a thing that it will cause a brother to use it improperly. Thus if there is a danger that the right use of wine (no one has a right to use it otherwise), that is, Biblical wine, not modern distilled beverages, will lead someone to its wrong use (gluttony or intoxication) the Christian should surrender his liberty and abstain. This is the extent of Paul's teaching. To use this passage to justify drinking in moderation (social drinking) is to totally misuse it and woefully abuse it. The sober old book of God has never approved the use of wine for drunkenness . . . to any degree. **nor any thing** — Anything in the same category as meat and drink. Anything indifferent that ceases to be indifferent under the circumstance. **whereby thy brother stumbleth**, — Caused to fall. **or is offended**, — Caused to sin. **or is made weak**. — Caused to disregard his faith or act contrary to conscience. The last two expressions are omitted by the ASV because of considerable textual doubt. I have given the probable sense for those who wish to retain them as a part of the text.

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## ALL THINGS MUST BE DONE IN FAITH

14:22-23 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

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14:22 **Hast thou faith?** — Not saving faith, the faith that comes by hearing the word of God (10:17), but whatever one believes about the matter of eating or not eating meat (v. 2). **have it to thyself before God**. — Let it be a matter between you and God not between you and your brother — not something that leads the weak to condemn the strong for eating or the strong to look down upon the weak for not eating. No one should try to force his opinion upon another. **Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth**. — Blessed is the man who does not sin or bring condemnation upon himself by doing what he believes he has the right to do. There are several ways this might be done: (1) By insisting on his right to practice all the liberties the Lord allows, even when his practices lead a weak brother to sin. This is wrong and he thus condemns himself by a practice he allows — a practice which is right under the proper circumstances. (2) By resenting the fact that he allows the weak to restrain his freedom. The resentment may be so strong that it will condemn him. (3) By practicing his liberties when he knows it will give offence to the weak. He causes his brother to sin and thereby condemns himself in what he allows. On the other hand, the weak need not con-

demn himself for allowing the strong the liberty to eat. A man is blessed indeed if he does not bring condemnation upon himself (or others) in the things he allows.

14:23 **And he that doubteth** — One who does not believe in the correctness of his conduct. **is damned** — Is condemned (ASV). **if he eat**, — This is addressed to the weak. If he tries to follow the strong by allowing himself to eat contrary to his convictions, he condemns himself. He eats when he believes it is wrong to eat — he allows himself to do that which he condemns. **because he eateth not of faith**: — He eats contrary to his belief. His belief (opinion) may be wrong (and in this case it is), and the eating *per se* will not effect his standing with God, but he violates his own sense of right and wrong and thus places himself in the opposite state of the happy man in v. 22. **for whatsoever is not of faith is sin**. — Every act that does not spring from faith is sin (BV). In context, faith is one's convictions or persuasion on the eating of meat (or the doing of any other indifferent matter). If one eats contrary to what he believes, he sins — he violates his own conscience and thereby condemns himself as a sinner (1 Jn. 3:20). No one is ever justified in doing what he believes is wrong. To live in peace with God and himself, one must always do what he believes is right and lawful. To be perfectly frank, we have often used this verse erroneously to show that unauthorized things, such as sprinkling for baptism and instrumental music in Christian worship, are sinful because they are not of faith — not taught in the word of God. Our arguments are sound, if based upon the right Scriptures, but this v. does not prove them. Faith here is used in the sense of belief in or the acceptance of indifferent matters and is based upon one's own reason rather than upon the word of God (10:17). If God's word either taught or prohibited the matters, they could not be indifferent. Indifferent things are things which make no difference as far as the word of God is concerned. Anything that violates the word of God (and sprinkling for baptism and instrumental music in Christian worship do) cannot be an indifferent thing. Paul is simply saying that if you do not believe an indifferent thing is right, and you still do it, contrary to your own persuasion, you sin.

## ROMANS 15

### THE STRONG IN FAITH

15:1-3 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

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15:1 **We then** — Connects what follows to chapter 14. **that are strong** — Those who can without scruples enjoy the liberties provided for in the gospel. Their faith is strong enough to permit them to currently eat things which were formerly prohibited by the law (cf. 14:1). **ought** — Imposes a moral obligation. **to bear the infirmities of the weak**, — To bear the failings of the weak (RSV). The infirmities are the baseless and unnecessary (hence failings) scruples of the weak. To bear these infirmities seems to mean more than to merely bear with or to tolerate. It probably means to help in the sense of shouldering the burden along with them. The BV renders, “To put on ourselves the weakness of those who lack strength.” We should thus use our strength to help the weak bear (overcome) their weakness (cf. Gal. 6:2). **and not to please ourselves.** — Not to live for the purpose of pleasing self alone; not to eat, or to drink, or to disregard special days without respect for what it might do to the weak brother’s conscience (v. 2). This is not to please others in the sense of winning their partisan loyalty, as did Absalom (2 Sm. 15:2-7), but in the sense of Paul, who became all things to all men that he might win some (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

15:2 **Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.** — Please the weak (v. 1) to make him strong, to build up his faith, and to benefit him spiritually (1 Cor. 10:33).

15:3 **For even Christ pleased not himself;** — He did not come to live for His own pleasure or to die for Himself alone; He lived and died for the benefit of all mankind (Mt. 20:28). And since Christ is our example in all things (1 Pt. 2:21-25), this should settle the matter as to whom we should live to please (v. 2; Phil. 2:4-11). **but, as it is written,** — Ps. 69:9. **The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.** — The abuses of those who abused you fell on me (BV). Paul puts this quotation into the mouth of Christ and the abuses which he bore are those heaped upon God. How was it then that



Jesus pleased not Himself? By bearing the reproaches (the insults, calumnies, etc.) that sinful man brought against the God of heaven. The redemptive sacrifice of Christ (His living and dying for the benefit of man by bearing in His own body the reproaches against God) to show us how to live, not for ourselves, but for the benefit of our weak brothers.

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## THINGS WRITTEN BEFORE

15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

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15:4 **For whatsoever things** — For everything (NIV). He had just cited Ps. 69:9 as an example. And what was true of it was true of all Scripture. **were written aforetime were written for our learning**, — For our instructions (2 Tm. 3:14-17). Everything in the OT is there, not just for the people who lived under it, but to teach us about God and how He deals with man — how He blesses those who obey Him and pours out His wrath on those who do not. The OT Scriptures teach us by example, principle, promise, prophecy, type, etc. (cf. 1 Cor. 10:6, 11). **that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — So that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures (NIV). The patience and comfort is derived from the teaching of the Scriptures. **might have hope**. — Everything in the Scriptures is designed to keep our aspirations aflame (5:4-5; 8:24-25). If one's spirit begins to flag, if his faith begins to waver, if his heart feels faint in the battle for truth and right, if his hope dims, the Scriptures have the solution. They are more than just a theory to be believed; they are God's instructions for proper or practical living. This is true of every Scripture inspired of God.

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## GLORIFY GOD TOGETHER

15:5-13 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

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15:5 **Now the God of patience and consolation** — The God of heaven, who Himself is full of patience and consolation, gives both to us through the gospel. **grant you to be likeminded one toward another** — Grant you to be of the same mind one with another (ASV); give you a spirit of unity (NIV), harmony (RSV), or the same disposition as you live and work

together. **according to Christ Jesus:** — In conformity to the will of Christ (Phil. 2:2-5). In short, may God, the great giver of patience and consolation, grant to you to be of one mind as you follow Christ.

15:6 **That ye may with one mind** — With one accord. **and one mouth** — With one voice. That you, both strong and weak, be perfectly united in your praise and honor of God. **glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** — Both the inward feeling and the outward expression are to be unanimous in praising God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 1:17), by whom we are redeemed and have the hope of eternal glory. God thus prohibits division over indifferent matters.

15:7 **Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.** — In 14:1, the exhortation is for the strong to accept the weak, but here the weak and the strong (vv. 8-12, shows that they are respectively Jews and Gentiles) are to mutually accept one another (with all their strength and weaknesses) as brothers, children of God (Gal. 3:26-27), members of the same body (1 Cor. 12:13), heirs of heaven (8:17), just as Christ had accepted both of them, with all their strength and weaknesses, to God's glory. We should keep in mind that we are all weak when we consider our absolute inability to offer anything of merit toward our redemption. It is therefore ill-advised for weak ones such as we all are to reject a brother because of his weaknesses. Thus just as Christ accepted us to the praise of God, we ought to accept one another also to His praise and honor. No higher incentive could be given for saints to be of one accord (v. 6).

15:8 **Now I say** — This is what I mean. **that Jesus Christ was a minister** — That Christ hath been made a minister (ASV). **of the circumcision** — Christ is our example (1 Pt. 2:21) and He became a servant to the circumcised (Jews, or the weak) during His public ministry (Gal. 4:4-6). That is, He came to them by (or to confirm) God's promises (made in the OT) that they and the Gentiles might receive the full fruition of the promises made to the forefathers. But the Jews had rejected Him outright as their Lord and Savior (e.g., Dt. 18:18-19; Jn. 1:11-12) because the promise was to the whole world, not to Jews only. Thus Christ came to them but they rejected him. You should follow Christ, not His rejecters. **for the truth of God,** — For the sake of the truth spoken afore by God, or as Goodspeed has it, "To show God's truthfulness in carrying out the promises made to the forefathers." **to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:** — The basic promise, the one upon which all the others hinge, was that all nations would be blessed through Him. This promise was first made to Abraham (Gn. 12:1-3; 22:18), renewed to Isaac (Gn. 26:4), and then to Jacob (Gn. 28:14). Christ came to establish this promise and thus to confirm the truthfulness of God in making it.

15:9-12 **And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy;** — This further explains why Christ came as a minister to the seed of Abraham (v. 8). The salvation of the Gentiles was an integral part of the promises made to

the fathers and fulfilled in Christ (Gal. 3:16). **as it is written**, — In the OT Scriptures. To prevent the Jews from rejecting his conclusion, Paul now quotes from the OT (which the Jews believed intensely) to prove that it was God's plan all along to make the Gentiles equal heirs with the Jews. **For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.** — From 2 Sm. 22:50; Ps. 18:49. The writer spoke in the first person but he stood for all the Jews: they would confess and sing among the Gentiles. **And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.** — From Dt. 32:43. **And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.** — From Ps. 117:1. The Gentiles are to rejoice and praise the Lord along with the Jews. **And again, Esaias — Isaias (ASV). saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.** — From Is. 11:10. The root of Jesus (Christ) will rule over the Gentiles who trust in Him as well as over the Jews. All these quotations (interestingly enough taken from every part of the OT, the law, the prophets, and the Psalms), have one end in view, namely, to show that God had promised and planned all along for the Gentiles to be heirs of salvation alongside of and upon equal terms with the Jews. Since God had promised and planned it, and since Christ had come to confirm it, and since the Scriptures teach it, who can deny it? It should be utterly unthinkable then for the Jews to reject the Gentiles or for the Gentiles to look down upon the Jews over indifferent matters. They should receive each other into union, fellowship, and brotherhood, regardless of the attitude toward non-essential things. This is something Christians need to learn in every generation. If God promises it (anything), if Christ confirms it, and if the Scriptures teach it, no one has the right to reject it . . . or him who believes and practices it. There must now be no distinction between Jew and Gentile. They are both united in one body (Eph. 2:15-16) to the glory of God. We must therefore accept one another, oddities and all.

15:13 **Now the God of hope** — God (who is called the God of patience and consolation in v. 5 and the God of peace in v. 33) is the author, source, or fountain of all true hope — the hope of the Gentiles as well as the Jews (v. 12; 8:24-25; Eph. 2:12; Heb. 6:19). **fill** — Fill to overflow or to complete satisfaction. **you with all joy and peace in believing**, — Joy (1 Pt. 1:8) and peace (Phil. 4:7) are among the fruits of faith (Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pt. 1:5-11), produced by the strong and weak living together in harmony. **that ye may abound in hope**, — So that you may enjoy overflowing hope (BV). **through the power of the Holy Ghost.** — By means of the HS working through the gospel (Eph. 1:13-14).

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## MISSION TO THE GENTILES

15:14-21 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God,

that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore where of I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

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15:14 **And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren,** — He himself, in brotherly love, was convinced: **that ye also are full of goodness,** — Rich in goodness, wholesomeness, and kindness. He was convinced that they possessed the right disposition toward others. This commendation comes after he had instructed them to receive others, regardless of their opinion on indifferent matters (14:1-15:13). Their differences did not keep them from being basically good. **filled with all knowledge,** — Not intended to be taken literally as all knowledge (no man has ever possessed that), but all knowledge necessary to their faith and practice. They had added an ample supple of knowledge (2 Pt. 1:5-7). **able also to admonish one another.** — Well qualified to instruct one another (Goodspeed). They had matured to the point where they were able to teach one another on essential things as well as to put one another in mind of the proper actions pertaining to indifferent matters. Unlike the Hebrews (Heb. 5:12-14), they had grown in the faith and could therefore mutually admonish one another.

15:15-16 **Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you** — I have written to you quite boldly (NIV). Because of their goodness, his concern for them, and his position as an apostle ("the grace that was given to me of God") he, though he did not know them personally, had written to them very boldly on some sensitive matters. **in some sort,** — In some measure (ASV), on some points (NIV), or perhaps better, in some places. Vincent (WS) thinks he refers to such passages as 6:12, 19; 8:9; 11:17; 14:3-4, 10, 13, 15, 20, etc. **as putting you in mind,** — By way of reminder (RSV). That is, he was calling it to their memory. They already possessed the knowledge (v. 14) but needed to have it called to their mind. **because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles,** — Although a stranger to them personally, he had written the more boldly unto them because God's grace had called him into the apostleship of Jesus Christ (1:1; 12:3; 1 Cor. 3:10; 15:9; Eph. 3:7). **ministering the gospel of God,** — Preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (1:16; Acts 13:46-49). **that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable,** — So that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God (NIV). That is, by his preaching the Gentiles were converted, and by their conversion they became an acceptable offering to God. He thus saw his apostolic function as a sacred duty (ministering in the fashion of a priest) which resulted in the Gentiles being offered as an acceptable sacrifice (cf. Is. 66:20). **being**

**sanctified by the Holy Ghost.** — The Gentiles were an acceptable offering because they had been sanctified (saved or made holy) by the HS working through the truth Paul had preached to them (Jn. 17:17; Heb. 10:29; 2 Thes. 2:13; Eph. 5:26).

15:17 **I have therefore** — Connects this verse to vv. 15-16. **whereof I may glory** — He was able (had abundant reason) to boast because by God's grace he had been made an apostle to the Gentiles, and because of his apostleship (the function of which was preaching) the Gentiles had been, through their conversion, made an acceptable offering to God (vv. 15-16). **through Jesus Christ** — The cause of boasting was not in himself (vv. 18-19), nor in the law or Judaism, but in Christ (cf. Phil. 3:3). **in those things which pertain to God.** — The things which he had done (as an apostle) to the glory, honor, and praise of God.

15:18 **For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me,** — He was bold to put them in mind of the fact that God's grace, through His apostolic function, had made it possible for him to present the Gentiles as an acceptable offering (vv. 15-16), but now he says he will not venture to speak of the labors of others (perhaps the vast number of disciples which he had made) or the doing of a single thing that Christ had not done through him personally. Thus, as in v. 17, he would boast only in what Christ had worked through him. **to make the Gentiles obedient,** — To bring the Gentiles to the obedience of the faith (1:5; 16:26). **by word and deed,** — The word preached by him (Gal. 1:6-11) and the signs by which it was confirmed (v. 19).

15:19 **Through mighty signs and wonders,** — The miracles by which the word of God was confirmed (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4). **by the power of the Spirit of God;** — The miracles were worked, the word confirmed, by or through the power of the Spirit. The Spirit thus bore witness to the gospel Paul preached. The miracles worked proved that it was of God, not of man. **so that from Jerusalem,** — The starting point or the place from which the gospel was to spread (Is. 2:2-4; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:1-47). **and round about** — The regions around Jerusalem or perhaps the regions from Jerusalem to Illyricum. (For the extent of Paul's travels, see Acts 13-28.) **unto Illyricum,** — A province northwest of Macedonia. There is no record of Paul having gone there to preach, but a look at a map showing his first and second missionary journeys will indicate the possibility. He was in Macedonia and Illyricum borders on it, and he may have gone there in the journey mentioned in Acts 20:1-3. If he had not actually gone into the country he at least had reached its borders. However, the expression from Jerusalem to Illyricum is designed to emphasize the wide area covered by his preaching tours. **I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.** — Wherever Paul went he preached the same soul-saving message, the gospel, God's power to save (1:16). But here he probably means that he has fulfilled his mission by preaching the gospel in all these regions. He is now

ready for new territory (v. 20).

15:20 **Yea**, — And so because of what was said in v. 19. **so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named**, — Not where Christ was already named (ASV). It was his aim and ambition (the thing he most desired) to preach in places where the gospel had not before been preached, to lay the foundation himself, or in his own words, to plant and let others water (1 Cor. 3:6). He had covered the regions from Jerusalem to Illyricum (v. 19). Now he was ready to go to Rome and Spain (vv. 23-24), regions beyond the outer limits to which he had gone before. This does not mean that he never preached to established churches or that he neglected to edify them through his writing. Rather his main thrust was to preach in barren regions and establish congregations where none had existed before. Thus for the most part his work consisted in planting churches; he left the watering to other hands. While there is a divine place for watering, Paul was a planter, an indispensable function in carrying out the great commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). When there are no planters, there soon comes the time when there will be no need for further watering. Planters are the vanguard of the church. Without them, the growth of the church will stop dead in its tracks. Thus if the church is to survive, if it is to carry out its mission in the world, someone must be pioneers in spreading the gospel. There is no substitute for this. But in the church today we are training men to water, not to plant. When student preachers graduate, whether from college or a school of preaching, the first thing they do is to start a search for an established congregation, paying an adequate salary and all the fringe benefits, where they can settle down in relative ease in a program of work already underway. Rare indeed is the preacher who looks at a map of the world and decides to go where the gospel of Christ has not been preached before. Perhaps we need to change our emphasis and urge more to return to the attitude of Paul. **lest I should build upon another man's foundation**: — Lest he should build upon the groundwork laid by another (cf.

II Cor. 10:13-16).

15:21 **But as it is written**, — Is. 52:15. **To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand**. — This messianic prophecy reveals the reason for his desire to preach where Christ had not been named (v. 20), namely, so that the Gentiles, who had not previously been addressed, could hear and understand the truth of the gospel. Here again Paul sustains his practice by the Scriptures.

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## READY TO GO TO ROME

15:22-24 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

15:22 **For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.** — The fact that his preaching had been so extensive (from Jerusalem to Illyricum), so demanding, so time consuming, he had not yet been able to go to Rome. But the tide had now turned. He had discharged his duty to these parts and was consequently ready to go to Rome, stopping there on his way to Spain (vv. 23-24).

15:23-24 **But now having no more place in these parts,** — No further opportunities to preach where Christ had not been named (v. 20) in the regions of Jerusalem to Illyricum. **and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;** — He had had a deep longing for many years to come to Rome (1:8-13). **Whosoever I take my journey into Spain,** — He had plans to go westward to Spain, the western limits of the Roman empire. Whether Paul ever carried out his plans or not is uncertain. The book of Acts ends with him as a prisoner in Rome. However, tradition has it that he was released from prison, preached in Spain and other places, arrested again, and taken to Rome, where he was executed. **I will come to you:** — The evidence indicates that these words have been added to the text to complete the broken sentence. The ASV puts the remainder of the v. in parenthesis. **for I trust to see you in my journey,** — He planned to pass through Rome, and spend some time there, on his way to Spain. **and to be brought on my way thitherward by you,** — Although he longed to go to Rome, it was not his primary goal. His wish was to make it a base for further missionary operations. He thus expected them to assist or escort him (by commendation, information, guides, supplies, and money) on his journey to Spain. **if first I be somewhat filled with your company.** — Before he went on to Spain he wanted to enjoy for a while the richness of their fellowship.

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## **BUT FIRST HE MUST GO TO JERUSALEM**

15:25-33 **But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.** For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

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15:25 **But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.** — Before he started his journey to Spain, he had one more mission to perform: he was going to Jerusalem to deliver a contribution from the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia (v. 26; Acts 19:21). He had been urging this contribution on the Gentiles for a considerable time (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9). Now that it

had been collected, he was going to be on his way to Jerusalem to deliver it. As is known from Acts, he took the collection (Acts 24:17) but while he was at Jerusalem he was arrested and was never free again as far as the inspired record goes.

15:26 **For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia** — For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia (ASV). The Gentile Christians were delighted to be able to share benevolently with the poor saints among the Jews at Jerusalem. **to make a certain contribution** — To make some contribution (ASV). It was the joy of the Gentile Christians to have fellowship (for so the word for contribution here is often translated) with the Jewish Christians in their poverty. **for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.** — Jewish Christians who were in need, probably because of persecution against their faith.

15:27 **It has pleased them verily;** — It gave the Gentiles great pleasure to make this contribution to the poor saints at Jerusalem. **and their debtors they are.** — The Gentiles were debtors to the Jews for their part in the development and proclamation of the gospel of Christ. **For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things,** — Partakers of the blessings promised through Abraham and his seed — the blessings of the gospel. **their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.** Since the Jews had shared with the Gentiles the blessings of the gospel, it was only natural that the Gentiles owed it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings (the things which belong to the fleshly life). This would balance out their obligation one to the other (cf. 2 Cor. 8:12-14).

15:28 **When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.** — His plan was to accomplish this mission by delivering the contribution to Jerusalem and then be on his way to Spain, with a stopover in Rome.

15:29 **And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.** — He knew that his coming to Rome would be in the fulness (a full measure) of the blessing of Christ. He had nothing to offer them but Christ (1 Cor. 2:2) and the blessings which obedience to the gospel would impart. As Luke informs us (Acts 27 and 28), Paul went to Rome, not as he had planned, but rather as a prisoner. However the fact that he was in chains did not prevent him from preaching the gospel (Acts 28:30-31). His mission was accomplished, even though differently than he had expected.

15:30 **Now I beseech you, brethren,** — But I plead with you, brothers (BV). **for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake,** — By our Lord Jesus Christ (ASV). By all that Christ is, by all that He means to you and this world, and by His cause which I am coming to promote. **and for the love of the Spirit,** — And by the love of the Spirit (ASV). The love shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit (5:5). **that ye strive together with me** — That you exert all your



strength with me so our prayers will prevail. Williams translates it, "To wrestle with me in prayer." **in your prayers to God for me;** — He was confident that through their intense and united effort, God would grant their request (Mt. 18:19).

15:31-32 Paul here asked the Roman Christians to make four requests for him in their earnest prayers (v. 30): (1) **That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea;** — That he might not fall into the hands of the unbelieving or disobedient Jews. They hated him, and would seek to destroy him, for many reasons, perhaps the three most powerful being: first, he had been converted to Christianity while in a high station in the Jews' religion (Acts 9) and had thus been teaching that their beloved law was not the means by which righteousness was either attained or maintained (3:21). Second, he had been successful in converting many of his own countrymen to the Christian faith (e.g., Acts 16:12-15). Third, he had gone to the Gentiles and preached to them that they were equally acceptable with the Jews upon their obedience to the gospel (9 and 11). This and much more made him in the eyes of the unbelieving Jews a man unfit to live. (2) **and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;** — That the collection taken from Gentile Christians in Macedonia and Achaia (vv. 25-26) might be received by the Jewish saints and thereby serve the purpose of reducing prejudice between them. The contribution was the extending of the right hand of fellowship by the Gentiles; the accepting of the gift would be the reception of that hand by the Jews. (3) **That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God,** — That he would have a safe and joyful trip to them. (4) **and may with you be refreshed.** — And together with you find rest (ASV). That he might find relief with them (cf. Mt. 11:28) upon his arrival.

15:33 **Now the God of peace be with you all.** — The God who gives peace through His Son, Jesus Christ (2 Thes. 3:16). Paul thus closes his request for prayer with a prayer for them. **Amen.** — May it be so. This was not intended, as some believe, to end the epistle, but rather to emphasize his petition that the God of peace be with them.

## ROMANS 16

### PHEBE COMMENDED

16:1-2 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

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16:1-2 **I commend unto you Phebe our sister**, — Although mentioned only here in the NT, she immediately gains our respect and admiration. Paul commends her as a sister (a Christian), a servant of the church, and as a helper of many (himself included). She is thought to be the one who carried this epistle to Rome. **which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea**: — One who was in service of the church. Many see Phebe as a deaconess (a technical use of the word or an officer in the church) because the word is translated elsewhere as deacon (e.g., 1 Tm. 3:8; Phil. 1:1). But this is highly unlikely for the following reasons: (1) the NT nowhere (unless it is here) mentions an office or function of a deaconess. (2) The word itself means to minister or serve. It describes one who serves, such as the work of Christ (15:8), the work of ministers (1 Cor. 3:5), or the minister himself (Col. 1:23). (3) Deacons in the early church did not hold an office in the strict sense of the term. They were simply appointed servants of the church to render a special service or to be on call at all times to serve the church when needs arose (cf. 1 Tm. 3:8ff). (4) Anyone who is sent by the church, or is entrusted with an assignment of the church is its servant. Thus in my judgment Phebe was not an “official” deaconess but one who served the church in whatever capacity she was most fitted for (and that seems to have been, at least in part, helping others or hospitality). She was therefore a servant of the church in the same sense that every active faithful Christian should be. **That ye receive her in the Lord**, — Receive her as a child of God, which she has proven herself to be. **as becometh saints**, — Extend to her the worthy welcome which should characterize Christians, or as the NIV has it, “In a way worthy of saints.” **and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you**: — Help her in any matter wherein she needs help. They were to thus serve (assist) her as she had served (assisted) others. **for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also**. — She had been a benefactor to (ministered to or helped) many, including Paul.

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## GREET ONE ANOTHER

16:3-16 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute the which are of Aristobulus household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

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**16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: —** A Christian couple from Rome (Acts 18:2) who became fast friends, staunch supporters, and beloved helpers of Paul. On Paul's first visit to Corinth they were all drawn together because they were of the same trade, tentmakers (Acts 18:1-3). After a year and a half (or more) in Corinth Paul sailed to Ephesus with them, where he left them while he went on to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-19). While at Ephesus they were able to teach Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:24-28). They continued as companions of Paul for the remainder of his life (1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tm. 4:19). Business had probably taken them back to Rome at this time.

**16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: —** Who risked their necks to save my life (BV). Just when this was done, or the occasion that threatened Paul's life and caused them to risk their own lives for his, we are not informed. It may have been during the uproar recorded in Acts 19:23-41 or the severe difficulties (if different from the uproar) mentioned in 2 Cor. 1:8-10. **unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.** — Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them (NIV).

**16:5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. —** The church which met in their house. The early Christians had no church buildings and so they met anywhere they could: in homes, halls, or caves. There were probably many such small groups meeting over the city of Rome (cf. vv. 14-15), as there were elsewhere (1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phlm. 2; and probably Acts 12:12). **Salute** — Or greet. The same word is used throughout this chapter. **my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.** — While nothing more is known of Epaenetus, the two things that are here recorded are quite revealing: he had endeared himself to Paul, and he was among the first (if not the very first) converts in Achaia (cf. 1 Cor. 16:15). However, textually Achaia is on a very shaky foundation. The true reading is probably that found in the ASV and most modern translations, namely, Asia.

16:6 **Greet Mary**, — Nothing more is known of her, but the name is very common in the NT (e.g., Mt. 1:16; 27:61; Lk. 8:2; 10:47; Acts 12:12). There is some question as to whether the name indicates a Jewish or Roman Christian, but probably the former. **who bestowed much labour on us**. — Who bestowed much labor on you (ASV). Whether she had labored for Paul, or labored with him on their behalf, or whether she had labored for the church in Rome I cannot certainly ascertain, but more likely the latter. At any rate, her faithful work had earned her special recognition.

16:7 **Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me**. — While nothing else is known of Andronicus and Junia (Junias), four revealing statements are made about them: (1) They were Paul's kinsmen (countrymen); (2) They were (or had been) in prison with him; (3) They were of note among the apostles (that is, they had distinguished themselves in the eyes of the apostles); and (4) They had obeyed the gospel before Paul. Three statements in the v. are susceptible of different meanings: Should Junia be translated feminine (as in the KJV) or masculine (as in the ASV)? The weight of the evidence is in favor of the ASV. Were they Paul's relatives or his fellow countrymen? In 9:3 he speaks of his kinsmen according to the flesh (the Jews). It seems to me that this is the most likely meaning here, especially since several others are mentioned (11, 21) and since Acts does not indicate that any of his relatives had obeyed the gospel before him. Were they outstanding as apostles or were they well known and highly respected by the apostles. While the former would not be out of harmony with the use of the word in the NT — the twelve and Paul were apostles of Christ and others were apostles or messengers of the church (cf. Heb. 3:1; Acts 14:4, 14; Phil. 2:25; 1 Thes. 2:6; 2 Cor. 8:23). The latter is, in my judgment, the true sense.

16:8 **Greet Amplias** — Ampliatus (ASV). This was a common name among slaves in Rome. It may indicate that Ampliatus was a famous slave (or former slave) or that his work was such as to deeply impress slaves. **my beloved in the Lord**. — What association Paul may have had with him is unknown, but he had come to love him very much. They were, obviously, the best of friends because of their relationship with Christ (cf. Jonathan and David, 1 Sm. 20, especially 41-42).

16:9 **Salute Urbane**, — Salute Urbanus (ASV). **our helper in Christ**, — "Our" helper may be in contrast to "my" helpers in the case of Priscilla and Aquila (v. 3). If so, this could indicate that he was at one time an assistant of Paul's but was then in Rome assisting the church there. But more probably, it means that he is in Rome serving in the same cause as Paul. **and Stachys my beloved**. — Another affectionate friend who was close to Paul's heart.

16:10 **Salute Apelles approved in Christ**. — Nothing more is known of this approved Christian. But this tells us that he was true, faithful, and dependable. This indicates that he had come through some very trying cir-

cumstances but his faith had not wavered (cf. 2 Tm. 2:15). **Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.** — Was Aristobulus not a Christian? Was he dead? Was he absent from home? We do not know. But those of his household (which may refer to his family or his slaves or both) had distinguished themselves as Christians.

16:11 **Salute Herodion my kinsman.** — Remember me to my fellow countryman, Herodion (Goodspeed). See v. 7. **Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.** — Narcissus and part of his household were obviously not believers, but there were some of his household (see note on v. 10) who were worthy Christians. To them Paul asked that his high regards be conveyed.

16:12 **Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.** — Tryphena and Tryphosa were probably sisters (maybe twin sisters). Their names (meaning dainty or luxurious) may imply that they were wealthy or had the potential to live in ease. But if so, this did not prevent them from laboring in the cause of Christ. Persis, another Christian lady, was the beloved of the whole Roman church (loved by more than just Paul alone — contrast with v. 8) because of the grand scale upon which she had worked in the past. Tryphena and Tryphosa were still laboring; Persis had labored. This may indicate that she had become disabled or grown old and feeble. At any rate, whether one is laboring or has labored, his labors in Christ are not to be forgotten.

16:13 **Salute Rufus** — Could this have been the son of Simon the Cyrenian who was forced to bear the cross of Christ? (Mk. 16:21). Possibly, but there is no way of knowing for certain. **chosen in the Lord,** — Not in the sense that all believers are chosen (8:28-30; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pt. 2:9; Rv. 17:14) but as an eminent, excellent, or choice Christian. **and his mother** — His literal mother (and the wife of Simon the Cyrenian if Rufus was his son). **and mine.** — Not literally but in the sense that she had served as a mother to him some time in his ministry. Just when is not known.

16:14-15 **Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.** — Two separate groups (probably two families), each of which was likely the family where the church met, but no special merit or description is ascribed to any of them.

16:16 **Salute one another** — They were to salute one another; the churches of Christ saluted them. **with an holy kiss.** — See also 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26. For nearly all the oriental people at that time, and even today, the kiss was the customary form of greeting. Thus Paul's design was not to reveal, command, or bind the custom but to regulate the manner of its practice. It was to be, not just a kiss, but a holy kiss. In the Scriptures we can see the following types of kisses: (1) the idolatrous kiss (Hosea 13:2); (2) the

deceitful kiss (Prv. 27:6); (3) the betrayal kiss (Lk. 22:48; Mt. 26:48; Mk. 14:44); (4) the passionate kiss (Sol. 1:2); (5) the penitent kiss (Lk. 7:45); (6) the parental kiss (Lk. 15:20); (7) the sorrowful kiss (Acts 20:37); (8) the affectionate kiss (1 Pt. 5:14). The first three of these could be called unholy kisses; the fourth could be either holy or unholy (depending on whether it is within marriage or not); the last four are holy. Greetings among Christians ought to be of the latter, not the former, sort. That is, a salutation should be an act of love unfeigned. This principle is as true now as it was then. That is to say that all greetings should be pure and holy, whether expressed by kiss, curtsy, or handshake. **The churches of Christ salute you.** — The churches which are in Christ or which belong to Him. Paul probably had in mind the congregations of God's people scattered over Macedonia and Achaia (he wrote from Corinth). At any rate they were the individual congregations (of Christ's church) which were sending greetings to the brethren in Rome through Paul. They were called churches of Christ because they were local congregations (not denominations — such were unknown in NT times) of the church Christ promised to build (Mt. 16:18); and one which He purchased with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28); to which He adds all the saved (Acts 2:47); the one of which He is the Savior (Eph. 5:23-25); the one He rules over as head and directs through His word (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18); and the one for which He is coming again (Eph. 5:26-27). Had the will and word of Christ been followed, no other church would have ever been known to His people.

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## DIVISION AND OFFENCES

16:17-20 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

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16:17 **Now I beseech you, brethren,** — A fraternal appeal designed to call attention to the seriousness of the matter here introduced, namely, false teachers and how to deal with them. **mark them** — Keep an eye on them (BV) or “keep on the lookout” for them (Williams). This is not to mark in the sense of brand but to take note of in order to avoid. In Phil. 3:17, it is to mark with a view to follow as an example. In one case one is to take note of to avoid; in the other to follow. While Paul does not use the term, in vv. 1-16 he has been urging them to take note of many brethren and give them greetings. But all are not worthy of the Christian salutation. There were those who did not teach the truth. Rather than to be greeted (with approval and fellowship), they were to be watched and avoided because their purpose was to divide and plunder, not to build up through selfless service. **which cause divisions** — Dissentions,

disharmony, and factions within the church, a thing that is contrary to the teaching of Christ and would result in the loss of effectiveness in the proclamation of the gospel. Unity is always and everywhere commanded (e.g., Jn. 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:1-6); division is always condemned (1 Cor. 1:10; 3:3; 11:18); Jas. 3:16). **and offences** — Obstacles or occasions to stumble. **contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned;** — That is, the division and occasions of stumbling were contrary to the teaching of Christ, which was delivered to them in the gospel, the good news of redemption. Such divisions and offences are still contrary to the gospel. The religious world, divided and splintered over matters not revealed in the divine message, needs to learn this today, even more than the Christians in ancient Rome. The only remedy for division is for all to follow that, and only that, which we have learned from the apostle (2 Thes. 3:6, 11), that which is revealed in the gospel (1:16-17). **and avoid them.** — Turn away from or refuse to follow (Mt. 15:14). That is, have no fellowship with them in their false and destructive teaching (2 Jn. 9-11; Gal. 1:6-9).

16:18 **For they that are such** — The imposters who cause division and offences contrary to the teaching of the gospel (v. 17). **serve not our Lord Jesus Christ,** — Christ is not their master — they do not obey Him. In the final analysis one must either serve Christ or self. He cannot serve both (Mt. 6:24). Since they do not serve Christ, the conclusion is obvious: **but their own belly;** — They are self-servers, slaves to their own appetite and interest. **and by good words and fair speeches** — by fair and flattery words (RSV). They deceive with smooth words and flattery speech. **deceive the hearts of the simple.** — They beguile the innocent and unsuspecting, those not on their guard against the alleged sincerity and deceptive speech of false teachers.

16:19 **For your obedience is come abroad unto all men.** — The report of your obedience to Christ has reached everyone (BV). What was said about the false teachers serving their own appetite (vv. 17-18) does not apply to them. They had been true to their calling and their good reputation was known abroad. **I am glad therefore on your behalf:** — The fact that their faith and obedience were spoken of throughout the whole empire (1:8), that they were letting their lights shine, as a city set on a hill which could not be hid (Mt. 5:14-16), was the cause of great rejoicing in Paul. **but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good,** — Wise enough to know and be able to follow the truth, that which is right. This may contain a hint that they were not completely wise in the good nor totally free from the bad. One mark of a mature Christian is to be able to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14). Another is to be able to overcome evil with good (12:21). He wanted to be sure that this is what they would do. **and simple concerning evil.** — Pure, innocent, or harmless in things pertaining to wrong. That is, he did not want them stained by or involved with evil.

16:20 **And the God of peace** — See note on 15:33. If they would be wise

to the good and innocent concerning evil (v. 19) the God who gives peace would be with them. He is not the God of division (1 Cor. 14:33), as the practice of the false teachers might imply (vv. 16-19), but of peace and harmony. **shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.** — Satan, your archenemy, will soon be crushed (Gn. 3:15) and the victory will be yours. Satan and the works of evil were doomed; victory in their battle for truth and right was certain. In the crushing of Satan, Paul probably has no particular historical event in mind, but simply the defeat of wickedness by their faithful living. Satan was crushed at the crucifixion of Christ; he was crushed at the resurrection; he is being crushed by the preaching of the gospel; every time a Christian overcomes a temptation or escapes a snare of the devil, Satan is crushed under his feet; the final crushing will take place when Christ comes again. **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.** — An earnest wish for the favor of Christ to continue with them. **Amen.** — Omitted by the ASV and others on textual grounds.

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## GREETINGS FROM THOSE WITH PAUL

16:21-24 Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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16:21-23 As he brings the epistle to a close, some of Paul's friends and co-workers join him in sending greetings to the Christians at Rome. **Timotheus my workfellow,** — Timothy was perhaps Paul's longest, closest, and most trusted co-worker (Phil. 2:19-20). Paul calls him his own son in the faith (1 Tm. 1:2, 18). He was most likely converted by Paul on his first missionary journey as he passed through Derbe and Lystra (Acts 14:20-21). At any rate he had been a Christian long enough to prove himself by the time of the second journey (Acts 16:1). Their friendship continued to the very end (2 Tm. 4). **and Lucius,** — May have been the prophet or teacher by that name mentioned in Acts 13:1. **and Jason,** — A Jason of Thessalonica is mentioned in Acts 17:5-9. He could be the same as this one, but there is no way to know for certain. **and Sosipater,** — Thought by some to be the Sopater of Berea mentioned in Acts 20:4, but I know no reason to think so. **my kinsmen, salute you.** — His countrymen (v. 7). **I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you** — Paul's amanuensis (or secretary) joins in to send his personal greetings. **in the Lord.** — Those who are in proper relationship with the Lord and consequently in fellowship with all His saints (1 Jn. 1:6-7). **Gaius mine host,** — Probably the Gaius of 1 Cor. 1:14, whom Paul had personally baptized at Corinth. He could have served Paul hospitably in a number of ways, but since Priscilla and Aquila were in Rome at this time (vv. 3-4), Paul likely made his home with Gaius. **and of the whole church,** — His home was always open to the



believers. **saluteth you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city saluteth you,** — There is an Erastus mentioned in Acts 19:22 and another in 2 Tm. 4:20, but neither (if they are different men) is likely to be the same as this one. The ASV translates his function as “the treasurer of the city.” **and Quartus a brother.** — Nothing more is known of him but he was a brother to all those who were in the Lord.

16:24 **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.** — Omitted by the ASV and others because it is not found in the best manuscripts. It seems likely that some scribe may have repeated it from v. 20.

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## CONCLUSION

16:25-27 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

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16:25-27 As a fitting conclusion to this profound epistle, these verses contain a doxology of deep feeling and of beauty unsurpassed.

16:25-26 **Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel,** — Unto God the eternal Father who is powerful enough to establish and keep those committed to Him as taught by the gospel which Paul preached. **and the preaching of Jesus Christ,** — The preaching concerning Jesus Christ, the gospel, the proclamation about Him, His birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and His promise to come again, along with His plan to save, which He sent His apostles into all the world to announce. **according to the revelation of the mystery,** — The divine disclosure of the gospel, probably referring especially to that aspect of it that made salvation possible for the Gentiles. The gospel which Paul preached was the revelation of the mystery (Eph. 3:1-7), a revelation made to all men through the gospel. **which was kept secret** — Held in silence or kept unrevealed. It was a mystery (something unknown) until it was revealed by the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:9-14). **since the world began,** — During all the long ages past or time reaching back to eternity. **But now is made manifest,** — It is now revealed in the gospel. **and by the scriptures of the prophets,** — The prophetic writings (NIV). After God’s plan was fully revealed in the gospel, it was obvious that it had been foretold by the prophets in the Scriptures. **according to the commandment of the everlasting God,** — The revelation of the mystery was proclaimed by the commandment of God (cf. Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:44-49). **made known to all nations** — That is, the gospel was to be preached to all nations by the commandment of God, to both Jews and Gentiles. **for the obedience of faith:** — So that all who believed could obey from the heart and thus be saved (1:5; 6:16-18).

16:27 **To God only wise**, — To the only wise God (1 Tm. 1:17; Jude 25). To the God whose wisdom provided the scheme of redemption (11:33-36), the marvel and wonder of ages and all beings, both in time and in eternity. **be glory** — Honor and praise. **through Jesus Christ for ever**. — Through Him who made it possible for man to glorify God in the forgiveness of his sins, Jesus Christ the Savior. **Amen**. — So may it be, now and forever!



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- A New Commentary on Romans** . . . . . R.L. Whiteside  
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J.W. Shepherd  
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