
THE BOOK OF ROMANS

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INTRODUCTION

‘I keep six honest serving-men (They taught me all I knew); their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who’. Rudyard Kipling.

In approaching any book in the Bible, it is good to remember this little rhyme, because it will impress upon us the importance of first taking the basic questions.

AUTHOR

In the case of Romans, we need not spend much time on the question of who the writer was, because we are well enough acquainted with him; we know him as Paul the Apostle, Romans 1:1. However, Paul, the inspired author, dictated this epistle to a scribe, Tertius, Romans 16:22, which ensures accuracy in the writing.

Of course, it is always possible that someone else used the name of Paul to gain acceptance of a letter that Paul did not write, but in this case, we may dismiss such a suggestion immediately, because the letter carries internal evidence of its genuineness as a letter from the apostle.

Without spending time on this point, it is enough to say that the style of writing, the language, the vocabulary, the personal references, and the doctrines it teaches.

Indeed, the very atmosphere and feel of the letter declare it to be a genuine letter from Paul himself. So much so that there has seldom, if ever, been a serious attempt to deny the Pauline authorship.

THE RECIPIENTS

The title says, ‘to the Romans’, at least, in all the versions available today. And I do not doubt that this is absolutely accurate. However, it is a curious fact that there are a few ancient manuscripts in which the word ‘Rome’ is found in Romans 1:7 and Romans 1:15, but the word is omitted.

These are the only two places in the letter where the destination of the letter is actually named. However, there has never been any doubt that it was written by Paul to the brethren in Rome.

DATE

There is a strong indication that the letter was written in Corinth on the third missionary tour, which was about 57 or 58 A.D. Paul was taking the contribution of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia to the poor saints in Jerusalem, Romans 15:25-26.

Paul and certain other brethren were in Corinth on the third missionary tour at this time and were on their way to Jerusalem with the offering for the poor saints, Acts 19:22 / Acts 20:3-4 / Acts 20:16 / Acts 24:17-18.

It was probably written at Corinth because the names of two people associated with the city are mentioned as being present with Paul at the time of writing, [Romans 16:23](#) / [1 Corinthians 1:14](#) / [Acts 19:22](#) / [2 Timothy 4:20](#).

WHO ESTABLISHED THE CHURCH IN ROME?

The church had existed for many years, [Romans 15:23](#); however, it certainly wasn't Paul himself who established the church, because he makes that clear for us in [Romans 1:11-15](#), and [Romans 15:22-24](#), and it is unlikely to have been any other apostle, [Romans 1:11](#).

The Gospel was most probably carried to Rome by some of those who had been present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached the Gospel to its fullness for the first time, and three thousand responded to the message. [Acts 2:10](#) records that there were present 'visitors from Rome'.

THE CHURCH IN ROME

Rome was the greatest centre of the world at this time, the capital of the Empire, and that being the case, all roads led both from and to Rome, so it is not difficult to believe that the Gospel would very quickly find its way there. This is why, when Paul eventually reached Rome, he was met by the brethren, in all probability, some of those who read this very letter.

In [Romans 16](#), we see that many of those who were members of the church in Rome were people who had been associated with Paul, at one time or another, as he had gone about his work in other parts of the empire.

We notice, for example, his old travelling companions in [Romans 16:3](#). Epenetus in [Romans 16:5](#). He had been converted in Asia, in Ephesus, but, like Aquila and Priscilla, had found his way to Rome. And so had certain of Paul's own relatives, mentioned in [Romans 16:7](#).

Indeed, he mentions several others who had worked hard for the faith and who had been his fellow workers. And, since he has never been to Rome himself, they must have associated with him elsewhere.

The church in Rome had great faith; in fact, their faith was known throughout the world, [Romans 1:8](#). The Roman church became a strong church, [Romans 1:18](#) / [Romans 15:1](#), and was known for its excellent reputation throughout the Roman world, [Romans 16:19](#).

They were a mature church, [Romans 15:14](#), and within it there were relatives of Paul who became Christians before he did, [Romans 16:7](#). The church also had members who were serving in Caesar's household, [Romans 16:8](#) / [Philippians 4:22](#).

In [Romans 16](#), Paul mentions at least twenty-six friends, relatives, and co-workers. It is interesting to note that in [Romans 16](#), no fewer than ten women are mentioned. This indicates the effect that Christianity was having on the status of women in New Testament times.

PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH

The church needed to be instructed on how to live as Christians in the pagan culture of Rome. They also had to be taught the meaning of Christian liberty, and what it meant to be ‘free in Christ’, [Romans 5](#) / [Romans 8](#). Because of the differing cultures of the Jews and Gentiles in the church, several doctrinal issues needed to be addressed. The first issue that needed to be addressed concerned the Jewish attitude towards Gentiles. Paul pointed out that in God’s eyes, there is no difference because both were under sin and in need of God’s righteousness.

This righteousness comes only through faith, not by ‘law-keeping’, i.e., observing the Mosaic Law and that God accepts the Gentiles and has extended the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles.

The obstacle to Gentile salvation was that Jewish believers insisted that Gentile converts needed to become Jewish proselytes first, before accepting the Gospel of Jesus.

Common Jewish belief was that the Mosaic Law was the expression of God’s Will, and binding on all those who desired to become righteous in His eyes; the first step involved circumcision. Because Christianity was seen by all as a Jewish religion, certain Jewish leaders were determined that it should remain so.

WHY WAS THE LETTER WRITTEN?

There are several reasons which we may assign for writing the letter. Notice that, unlike other letters, such as the Corinthian letters or the letter to the Galatians, it was not written to correct doctrinal error or improper behaviour.

It was written to inform the Roman Christians that Paul planned to come to Rome and to establish the fact that the Gospel of Christ is God’s saving power to all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile.

He also wanted to emphasise that the Gospel is God’s only plan for man’s salvation and to establish the fact that justification comes by grace, through faith, apart from the Mosaic Law, and that Grace is not based on the merit system, i.e. not by works.

Paul wished to fulfil a long-standing ambition of preaching in Rome, [Acts 19:21](#). In the letter itself, he reminds his readers that he has not, as yet, been able to fulfil this ambition, [Romans 1:11](#) / [Romans 15:22-24](#).

He wanted to go to Rome because, at this time, there was a church in Rome, and he could see the potential of the possibilities in Rome, [Romans 1:15](#). He saw Rome as the gathering place of all the nations and races of the ancient world, and therefore, he saw it as a prime centre for missionary activity.

He did not go off and hide himself in little villages or in obscure places where there were few people. He sought to sow the Gospel in places where the impact would be the greatest and where it would have the greatest impact.

Remember that the Roman Christians did not know him personally, at least the majority did not know him. And they had obviously heard something about his teaching, as [Romans 3:7-8](#) reveals.

Paul’s critics were claiming they could continue sinning because God’s grace is so great, [Romans 6:1](#), and some of them claimed that he was preaching and teaching something which was either contrary to, or opposed to, the Old Testament scriptures, [Romans 16:25-27](#).

PAUL’S MAIN ARGUMENT

Paul's main argument is clear throughout his letter to the church in Rome. Man's justification before God rests solely on the merits of Christ, not on the Law of Moses, since no one ever succeeded in keeping the Law which revealed the holiness which God's Own Nature demands. Christ, who shares the nature of God, and is merciful and obedient to the Father, provided justification and redemption from sin through His atoning sacrifice.

OUTLINE

What Sin Is And Who Is A Sinner? Romans 1-4
 What Grace Is, And How It Is Received? Romans 5-6
 How To Maintain The State Of Grace. Romans 7
 How To Demonstrate And Share Grace With Others. Romans 8-15
 Conclusion. Romans 16

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

'Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.' Romans 1:1

Notice how the letter begins; it begins in what might be called the traditional manner, at least traditional and usual in those days. Whereas we commence a letter by addressing the one to whom we are writing, for instance, 'Dear John', and we sign our name at the end of the letter, for instance, 'yours sincerely', this was completely reversed in New Testament times.

The one receiving the letter did not read to the end of it to find the identity of the writer because it was there, in the beginning, because the writer identified himself immediately. And that is what we see here, 'Paul', [Romans 1:1](#). After naming himself, if the writer was not known to the people to whom he was writing, he might lay out his credentials and his references. Here we have, 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, a called apostle', [Romans 1:1](#). Of course, we all know this man, but did you realise that the name he uses, Paul or Paulus, as it would be in its original form, means 'Little'? And some scholars have suggested that it may have referred to his physical size. Of course, [2 Corinthians 10:1](#) / [2 Corinthians 10:10](#) might lead some to think that way, I suppose.

Bearing in mind that he was brought up a very orthodox and strict Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he calls himself in [Philippians 3:5](#), so we should bear in mind that Hebrews usually gave their children two names.

There would be a Jewish name, and naturally, along with that, there would be a Gentile name, so that, when he was associating with non-Jews, it would not be necessary for Gentiles to speak his Jewish name.

That name would be kept for use by members of his immediate family or his close Jewish friends. The first time we find Saul of Tarsus, as he was originally called, using his Gentile name Paul, is on the island of Cyprus, when he is dealing with the Roman Governor, [Acts 13:4-12](#).

The word 'servant' in Greek is 'doulos', [Romans 1:1](#). It was used by the Greeks to indicate the lowest kind of servant, a slave, a bondsman. Of course, we know what the word slave means, but it is important to realise that the word 'doulos' indicates someone who has been born into slavery and who is bound to his master, his owner, as long as he lives.

In other words, it indicates a condition of bondage that can only be broken by death. The *doulos* was completely submissive to his master's will, and the interests of his master had to be placed first in his life. Indeed, the interests of his master were paramount; they were the only concerns that mattered to him.

If we go back to the Old Testament to [Joshua 1:1](#), we are told that Joshua was Moses' minister. Of course, the word in Hebrew is the word 'sharath'. Then, in the last chapter of the book, [Joshua 24:29](#), Joshua is called the servant of the Lord.

The same word is used, and they both mean slave. It was the greatest joy of the life of Joshua to be the minister, or servant, or slave of Moses, and to be the minister, servant, or slave of God.

In the same way, then, it was the joy of the life of Paul, to be able to say that he was the slave of Jesus Christ, [Romans 1:1](#). We need to emphasise this slave of Jesus Christ because he states that proudly. He wants everyone to know that he belongs to Jesus.

History records that during the time of the Roman Empire, there were people who were known as slaves of the emperor. Although they were still slaves, there was an honour and a distinction attached to that title that made them proud to wear it. This quite clearly is how Paul felt about his bondage to the Lord Jesus. The thing that leads me to think this is the fact that it is the first thing that he mentions.

He does not say, 'Paul, an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ', but rather, 'Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, and a called apostle,' [Romans 1:1](#). He places his slavery before his apostleship, and that is a fact which tells us a great deal about the man himself.

Many people placed in positions of authority or responsibility insist on others giving recognition to which they think they are entitled because of that position. They wear their honours proudly and become vain.

With Paul, it was not so; he accepted his position with thankfulness and gratitude, and he exercised his authority as an apostle only when it was absolutely necessary, [Philemon 8-9](#).

One of my complaints against the R.S.V. is that the translators have abandoned the use of italics. You may be using a version that still has italics, and I think that is good because when the translators used italics, they did so to indicate that those words italicised are not in the original Greek, but have been supplied to give what the translator thinks is the sense of the passage.

But, if you have the R.S.V., there is nothing there to tell you that those two words 'to be', [Romans 1:1](#), are not in the original text. The Greek text says 'kletos apostolos', which means called apostle. You could say a called apostle because 'kletos' is an adjective and 'apostolos' is a noun.

For instance, take the phrase 'an elected representative'. The word 'representative' is a noun, and the word 'elected' is an adjective. And so, Paul is not saying that he is 'called an apostle', but rather he is a called apostle, [Romans 1:1](#). This emphasises that he did not decide to become an apostle, but rather that he was summoned, called to take up this position, this responsibility, this office.

Paul was called, and he responded to that call. You might even say that he was elected to this task, set apart, chosen, [Romans 1:1](#) / [Galatians 1:15](#). Now that is predestination because God had already predetermined what this man should be even before he was born.

But, do not make this say more than it does. All that this tells us is that, when Paul, of his own free will, accepted Jesus as the Christ and obeyed the Gospel, God had already planned the work that he should do.

This is one of the big mistakes made by those people who hold Calvin's doctrine of predestination. The words predestination, election and foreordination, in the true Biblical sense, relate to work, tasks, and not to salvation.

God has predestined, not the salvation of Paul, but the work that he should undertake once he had chosen to be saved, [Romans 1:1](#). This again underlines the way that Paul felt about his apostleship. He did not regard it so much as a position to occupy proudly, as a task, but a work to be undertaken with gratitude and humility.

In other words, he felt he had been given a task, not a title! This is something that every Christian should think about, especially those of us who are either involved in or contemplating becoming involved in what we often call full-time work for the Lord.

Notice that Paul tells us that he had been set apart for the Gospel of God, [Romans 1:1](#). We cannot make any mistake about what he considered to be the Gospel of God.

Remember, there were all sorts of rumours going around about what Paul was preaching; they thought he was preaching law-keeping, and so, Paul is going to tell them exactly what it is he preaches in [Romans 1-3](#).

The word 'Gospel', [Romans 1:1](#), is evangelical, the reward for giving the message, and it is used seventy-five times in the New Testament. Apart from the four Gospels, Paul is the only one who uses this word.

The Gospel begins in [Genesis 3:15](#), and Abraham was the first to hear the Gospel, [Genesis 18:18](#) / [Genesis 22:18](#) / [Galatians 3:7-8](#).

‘The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who, as to his earthly life, was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.’ [Romans 1:2-4](#)

In the book of Romans alone, there are sixty references to the Old Testament. This was an important point to the Jews to remind them that the Gospel was divinely promised in their own Scriptures, [Romans 1:2](#) / [Psalm 2:7](#). This is the first time the text alludes to Jesus being the Son, [Romans 1:3](#) / [Psalm 110:1](#).

LINEAGE OF DAVID

The human side of the seed of David was fulfilled in Jesus, [Romans 1:3](#). The words, ‘according to the flesh,’ are contrasted with ‘according to the Spirit of holiness,’ [Romans 1:3-4](#), the spirit or inner part of Christ, the divine side of Christ.

The miracles Jesus performed were performed through the Holy Spirit to reveal that Jesus was the Son of God, [John 20:30-31](#). The Messiah, the Christ, was the Son of God, [Romans 1:4](#). Note what the following footnote for [Romans 1:4](#) says, ‘Or was declared with power to be the Son of God’.

The word ‘appointed’ or declared, [Romans 1:3](#), means revealed. Not how Jesus became such, but how He is shown to us to be such with power. The ‘resurrection of the dead’, [Romans 1:4](#), is very important because there would be no Christianity if He didn’t rise from the grave, [John 2:19](#) / [1 Corinthians 15](#). Rome didn’t know Jesus existed until after His resurrection.

In the Book of Acts, the early preachers didn’t emphasise Jesus’ miracles but Jesus’ resurrection, [Acts 13:29-33](#). The priesthood was Sadduceean; they didn’t believe in the resurrection, [Acts 23:8](#). The words, ‘our Lord’, [Romans 1:4](#), imply He is the owner and ruler of Paul’s life and ours.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following concerning the word ‘Lord’.

‘This term could be no more than a polite form of address like our ‘Sir.’ But it could also be used of the deity one worships. The really significant background, though, is its use in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to render the divine name, Yahweh. Christians who used this as their Bible would be familiar with the term as equivalent to deity.’

‘Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.’ Romans 1:5-6

The apostle’s authority, both his favour and office, was not from any man or the church, Romans 1:5 / Galatians 1:10-11. The words, ‘obedience that comes from faith,’ tell us that obedience is based on faith or springs from faith. The words, ‘for His name’, mean for His glory and honour.

Paul begins the book by emphasising the importance of believing and obeying, Romans 1:5, and Paul ends the book with its importance, Romans 16:26. Those who do not obey the truth will receive indignation and wrath, Romans 2:8. And so to avoid God’s wrath and anger, we must walk in the steps of our father Abraham, Romans 4:12. Obedience comes through faith; in other words, faith shows itself. You cannot believe without obedience.

The terms ‘called,’ ‘chosen,’ and ‘elect,’ Romans 1:6, are similar and are brought about by the same means, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. By virtue of being called of Christ, we belong to Christ.

‘To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.’ Romans 1:7

Here we see the people to whom Paul is writing, the Roman Christians, Acts 2:10. And he reminds them of God’s love for them, 1 John 3:1, and their calling, 1 Peter 2:9.

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

‘You notice that the words ‘to be’ are put in by the translators; but though they are supplied, they are not really necessary to the sense. These believers in Rome were ‘called saints.’ They were not called because they were saints, but they became saints through that calling.’

And what is our calling? To be His holy people, Romans 1:7. To be holy ones, people set apart to God. We shouldn’t be ashamed to let the world know this as we live this out every day of our lives. There can be no greater blessing to be prayed for or granted to the faithful than ‘grace and peace,’ Romans 1:7.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Without the GRACE, favour, and peculiar help of God, he could not have been an apostle.’

PAUL’S LONGING TO VISIT ROME

‘First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you.’
Romans 1:8-10

Notice how Paul always wants to thank God for his brethren, Romans 1:8. How often do we thank God for our spiritual family, not just here but throughout the world? Ephesians 6:18.

Notice also how personal his relationship is, ‘my God’, Romans 1:8. Their reputation was excellent, their strong faith was making itself known around the world, Romans 1:8 / 1 Thessalonians 1:8. I wonder what people say about us? The words, ‘with my spirit’, Romans 1:9, mean with all my heart, in all sincerity. The words, ‘in the gospel of His Son,’ Romans 1:9, include all the things of Christianity.

Paul tells them he ‘constantly’ remembers them in his prayers, Luke 18:1 / Thessalonians 5:17-18. He earnestly wanted them to know of his gratitude and prayers for them.

He says, ‘God is my witness,’ Romans 1:9, in other words, God will give testimony and will bear it out. This is not a formal, judicial oath. Paul could only do what God’s will permitted him to do, Romans 1:10 / James 4:13-15.

God often answers our prayers in ways we don't expect. Paul finally arrived in Rome, but after being slapped in the face, [Acts 23:2](#), shipwrecked, [Acts 27:27-28:5](#) / [2 Corinthians 11:25](#), bitten by a poisonous snake, [Acts 23:8](#). He went to Rome at the government's expense, [Romans 1:10](#). God will answer our prayers, although at times with timing and ways we might not expect.

'I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.' [Romans 1:11-13](#)

Here we read of one of the reasons why Paul wanted to visit Rome. He wanted to impart some 'spiritual gift', but the miraculous is not inherent in the phrase. Some say this refers to any of the virtues resulting from Paul's ministry as shown by the 'that is' in [Romans 1:12](#).

However, it probably refers to those gifts given only by the laying on of the apostle's hands, [Acts 8:14-20](#) / [Acts 19:6](#) / [2 Timothy 1:6](#). This would increase Paul's purpose for going to Rome, to make them strong. The virtues are not something bestowed but developed. If he meant only to refer to the virtues, it seems he would have used the normal words for them.

He is showing us that he was not coming to Rome only for their benefit but for his as well, [Romans 1:12](#). A person misses the comfort and encouragement afforded by assembling and associating with fellow saints.

He had planned many times to come to see them, not just once or twice but many; his interest and love for them were not born yesterday, [Romans 1:13](#). But he was 'prevented', which shows that he was not guided by the Holy Spirit in making plans.

He wanted to come to reap a harvest, [Romans 1:13](#). In other words, he not only wanted to convert people, but he wanted to help them grow spiritually. Remember that most of the Roman church was made up of Gentiles.

'I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.' [Romans 1:14](#)

Paul was under divine obligation. He was called for that purpose, [Acts 26:16-17](#). Paul had the responsibility, [1 Corinthians 9:16](#), a special duty to the Gentiles, [Romans 1:14](#) / [Galatians 1:16](#) / [Galatians 2:9](#) / [Romans 15:16](#).

The word 'Greeks' means Greek-speaking people, and the 'Barbarians' were non-Greek-speaking people. The 'wise and unwise' means he was speaking to both the learned and unlearned, educated and uneducated. None were exempted, regardless of their nationality or status in life.

'That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.' [Romans 1:15-17](#)

Paul was ready and willing to go the distance, pay the price, and make whatever sacrifices necessary to preach to them, [Romans 1:15](#). And he was not ashamed because his message was God's power to save, [Romans 1:16](#).

When we are tempted to be ashamed regarding our teaching, remember to focus on what God is doing through His Gospel, rather than on our own inadequacy. Perhaps this way, we will never be ashamed or embarrassed.

Just as God has put His power into a seed to reproduce after its kind, He has put His power in the Gospel, [Romans 1:16](#). It is God's power to root out the love, practice, guilt, and penalty of sin.

It is not God's power to save politically, socially, financially, physically, or mentally, though all are influenced by it. It is God's power to salvation, both now and in eternity.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The gospel is certainly news, but it is more than information; it has an inherent power. “The gospel is not advice to people, suggesting that they lift themselves. It is power. It lifts them up. Paul does not say that the gospel brings power, but that it is power, and God’s power at that.’

‘To the Jew first,’ Romans 1:16, was God’s plan, Acts 3:25-26. They should have been the first to accept it, Acts 13:46, then to the Gentiles, Acts 13:44-14:7. The KJV uses the word Greek.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘At this time, the word Greek had lost its racial sense altogether. It did not mean a native of the country of Greece (a Greek) was one who knew the culture and the mind of Greece.’

In the Gospel, we find, ‘the righteousness of God,’ Romans 1:17, refers to the righteous acts which God ordained, Acts 10:34-35. The plan of salvation by which men are made righteous before God, 1 John 3:6.

Because of sin, man’s right relationship with God was broken, Isaiah 59:1-2. To restore that broken relationship is 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 of man.

It is ‘revealed’ in the Gospel, Romans 1:17, which means that the Gospel reveals God’s plan to make man righteous, to restore the sinner back to a proper relationship with God.

It is God’s system by which He could be just and still justify the sinner. Most translations have the words, ‘first to last’, but the footnote has the words, ‘from faith to faith’, Romans 1:17. Perhaps it means, ‘from the beginning of faith to the end of faith.’

From the Gospel system of faith to faith in the hearts of men. The Gospel meets all of the people’s needs from faith’s inception to faith’s fruition, Galatians 3:1-3. Paul says, ‘the righteous shall live by faith,’ Romans 1:17, which is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. He is telling them that faith is the motivating force in every endeavour in the Christian’s life, 2 Corinthians 5:7.

GOD’S WRATH AGAINST SINFUL HUMANITY

‘The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.’ Romans 1:18-20

Notice Paul speaks about the ‘wrath of God,’ but what is the wrath of God? It’s a subject that a lot of preachers stay clear of, and a lot of Christians don’t want to even think about. But whatever our views are concerning the subject, we can’t escape the fact that it’s mentioned throughout the Bible.

It all has to do with evil and sin and God’s reaction towards it, Leviticus 26:14-21. God cannot pretend He doesn’t see sin; He must move against evil, and this Holy reaction is called ‘His wrath’.

But we must never avoid or water down the subject of the wrath of God because it’s serious business to God and therefore, should be taken seriously by us, Romans 2:5 / Ephesians 5:6.

I don’t know about you, but many people today will be offended if we preach or teach on Scriptures like that, but the reality is that God will be even more offended if we don’t, 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

God’s wrath is coming, and because God is holy, He must give full vent to His anger against sin and against evil. If He didn’t, He wouldn’t be the one the Seraphs call ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ Isaiah 6:3.

That's why we have the cross. When God searched for a way to save sinners, He couldn't pretend He couldn't see sin. He can't say, 'It doesn't matter; I'm just going to forget about it!'

He's got to react in His holiness against sin, and that's called wrath. On the cross, God poured out His wrath, His just wrath against all of our sins, by placing them on His sinless Son, our substitute.

But the truth is this: God really is that holy and sin really is that big of a problem, and we cannot mute that truth to find favour with unregenerate sinners. God's wrath is His way of moving and acting against evil and sin.

How can one be spared from the wrath of God at the judgment? In one word, the answer is Jesus, [Romans 5:9](#).

Through Jesus, Christians have the best life in this world, [John 10:10](#). Through Him we can escape the horrors of hell, and, yes, it's through our Lord that we live in hope of heaven.

While we recognise God's wrath, we don't live our lives in trembling fear. Why? Because Christ paid the ransom that sets us free from sin and delivers us from the wrath to come.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'Unless there is something to be saved from, there is no point in talking about salvation.'

God's wrath is being 'revealed from heaven,' [Romans 1:18](#). This means it has been revealed through His providence and His revealed Word by the prophets and inspired writings, [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) / [Hebrews 1:1-2](#) / [2 Peter 1:21](#).

The words, 'against all ungodliness and unrighteousness,' [Romans 1:18](#), mean the wickedness and injustice of men.

The men 'suppress the truth in unrighteousness,' [Romans 1:18](#).

In other words, they hold down, suppress, or hinder the spread of truth by their opposition to truth and by the wicked lives they live, even though God has made it plain to them, [Romans 1:19](#).

Notice the words, 'invisible things...are clearly seen', [Romans 1:20](#). This almost sounds like a paradox, but it means 'are clearly understood.' In what way? 'By the things that are made', [Romans 1:20](#). Man understands that there is a God by looking at the things which He created, [Romans 1:20](#).

Experience and observation clearly tell us that every made thing has a maker. Every effect demands a cause. The thing made demands a maker. Design demands a designer. Every law demands a lawgiver. Writings demand an author. Life comes from life.

Lenski, in his commentary, says the following.

'Men cannot charge God with hiding himself from them and thus excuse their irreligion and their immorality.'

The words, 'eternal power', [Romans 1:20](#), mean that mankind is coming to know more and more of the power of God. In the old days, he could look at what a seed could do. Now, with modern research tools, he looks at the genetic code of all living things.

The words 'divine nature' or 'Godhead' mean divinity, deity, [Acts 17:29](#) / [Colossians 2:9](#). There are three different words in the original Greek, but all are from the root word, 'Theous.'

Paul says that they were 'without excuse', [Romans 1:20](#). God can declare they are without excuse because they don't accept the evidence. Their rejection of the evidence is inexcusable in God's sight.

In these verses, Paul answers a common objection, 'how could a loving God send anyone to hell, especially someone who has never heard about Christ?' God has revealed Himself plainly in the creation to all people, [Romans 1:20](#).

'For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being, birds, animals and reptiles.'

Romans 1:21-23

Paul writes, ‘when they knew God’, [Romans 1:21](#), but how did they know God? God revealed Himself by the things which He made, [Romans 1:20](#). They ‘did not glorify Him as God’, [Romans 1:21](#), means they didn’t like to retain God in their knowledge, [Malachi 1:6](#) / [Romans 1:8](#).

‘Nor were thankful’ [Romans 1:20](#), means they did not acknowledge God as the giver of all blessings. The words, ‘futile in their thoughts,’ mean they chose their own vain imaginations instead of sound reasoning.

Notice their ‘foolish hearts were darkened’, this means they cut themselves off from the source of light. God will send strong delusion to those who do not love the truth, [2 Thessalonians 2:10-12](#).

To claim superior wisdom is the characteristic of modern Evolutionists and Atheists, yet they are the ones truly void of understanding. They are fools for turning away from the true source of wisdom and knowledge, [Romans 1:22](#). And so they lost the true conception of God.

They were committing idolatry, [Romans 1:23](#) / [Isaiah 41:21-24](#). It’s easy to see how turning from God can lead to people inventing their own ‘gods’ that are convenient projections of their own selfish plans and desires, [Isaiah 44:9-20](#).

For example, the ‘gods’ people serve today, the four ‘s’ words are science, sports, sex, and silver. Does God take first place, or do we worship the gods of our own choosing?

To be ‘created in the image of God,’ [Romans 1:23](#), means we are moral beings, [Genesis 1:26](#). If we are the same as animals, where do we get our sense of moral awareness? Right or wrong? A dog doesn’t feel guilty after it’s stolen and eaten your dinner.

‘Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.’ [Romans 1:24-25](#)

‘Therefore God gave them over’, [Romans 1:24](#), means He abandoned them to reap the rewards of their own evil actions. This was their punishment for abandoning God, [Hosea 4:17](#). Why did God abandon them to the ‘sinful desires of their hearts’? [Romans 1:24](#). Simply put, to let them learn what lust would plunge them into, [Romans 1:26-27](#).

Notice also that they ‘exchanged the truth about God for a lie,’ [Romans 1:25](#) / [Genesis 3:5](#). To exchange the truth of God for a lie reaches the depths of foolishness. This is true anytime the truth is exchanged for the human, whether in faith or practice, [Romans 3:4](#).

‘Humanism’ is worshipping and serving the creature (man) rather than the Creator, [Romans 1:25](#). Modern man is wrapped up in serving himself rather than God, [Romans 16:18](#) / [Philippians 2:21](#) / [Philippians 3:18-19](#). God is to be forever praised, and the word ‘Amen’ means so be it, [Romans 1:25](#).

‘Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.’ [Romans 1:26-27](#)

Paul says that ‘God gave them over to shameful lusts’, [Romans 1:26](#). God giving them over tells us that people have free will to do whatever they want, and as we see in society today, people often use their free will to reject God. However, when someone rejects God, they engage in all kinds of degrading and shameful lusts. They turned from the God-ordained relationship between husband and wife to lesbianism or female homosexuality, [Romans 1:27](#). The Lesbian vice is so-called because of a band of women homosexuals in Lesbos, a Greek Island in the Aegean Sea. We see from these verses that God detests the practice of homosexuality. The men are also abandoning God’s sexual design and turning to homosexuality, [Romans 1:27](#). Our society seems to want more and more to condone these sins.

However, as shown here and elsewhere, God utterly hates those sins. ‘The penalty of the error which was due’, [Romans 1:27](#), means the physical consequences of their sin. The immorality, disease, and early death brought on those who practice such things, [Galatians 6:7-8](#).

‘Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.’

Romans 1:28-32

They chose to suppress God in their minds. They refused to retain Him in their knowledge. As they refused to retain God in their knowledge, He gave them over to a depraved mind, [Romans 1:28](#).

Paul says, ‘they do what ought not to be done,’ [Romans 1:28](#), which means their depraved minds led them to do many shameful and disgraceful things, as shown in the text. Man is not born totally depraved, but they become that way themselves.

Let me give you the list of sins mentioned in [Romans 1:29-31](#), with their meanings. I’m going to use the KJV.

1. ‘Unrighteousness’, the Greek word is ‘adikia’, which means injustice, unfair and dishonest dealings, [Romans 1:29](#).
2. ‘Fornication’, the Greek word is ‘porneia’, which means illicit sex relations and prostitution, [Romans 1:29](#).
3. ‘Wickedness’, the Greek word is ‘poneria’, which means vicious disposition with evil habits. Depravity, [Romans 1:29](#).
4. ‘Covetousness’, the Greek word is ‘pleonexia’, which means a greedy desire and using evil means to get it, [Romans 1:29](#).
5. ‘Maliciousness’, the Greek word is ‘kakia’, which means hatred and ill-will, a disposition to do harm, [Romans 1:29](#).
6. ‘Full of envy’, the Greek word is ‘phthonos’, which means begrudging the good fortune of others, [Romans 1:29](#).
7. ‘Murder’, the Greek word is ‘phonos’, which means taking human life by premeditated malice, [Romans 1:29](#).
8. ‘Debate’, the Greek word is ‘eris’, which means strife and contention with anger, [Romans 1:29](#).
9. ‘Deceit’, the Greek word is ‘dolos’, which means to get an advantage by trickery and craftiness, [Romans 1:29](#).
10. ‘Malignity’, the Greek word is ‘kakoetheia’, which means bad manner of life or character, evil, malignant, [Romans 1:29](#).
11. ‘Whisperers’, the Greek word is ‘psithuristes’, which means secretly peddling slander by insinuations, [Romans 1:29](#).
12. ‘Backbiters’, the Greek word is ‘katalalos’, which means one who slanders another when he is not present, [Romans 1:30](#).
13. ‘Haters of God’, the Greek word is ‘theostuges’, which means God-haters who defy God and His laws, [Romans 1:30](#).
14. ‘Despiteful’, the Greek word is ‘hubristes’ which means insolent, contemptuous and grossly disrespectful, [Romans 1:30](#).
15. ‘Proud’, the Greek word is ‘huperephanos’, which means haughty, arrogant, thinking too highly of themselves, [Romans 1:30](#).
16. ‘Boastful’, the Greek word is ‘alazon’, which means an empty pretender, vainglorious esteem verbalised, [Romans 1:30](#).
17. ‘Inventors of evil things’, the Greek words are ‘epheuretes kakos’, which means old ways become dull, seek new ways to sin, [Romans 1:30](#).

18. 'Disobedient to parents', the Greek words are 'apeithes goneus', which means a lack of basic respect for authority from youth up, [Romans 1:30](#).
19. 'Without understanding' the Greek word is 'asunetos', which means without good sense, foolish, [Romans 1:31](#).
20. 'Covenant breakers', the Greek word is 'asunthetos', which means will not honour or stand up to their agreements, [Romans 1:31](#).
21. 'Without natural affection', the Greek word is 'astorgos', which means without love for kindred, parents, or children, [Romans 1:31](#).
22. 'Implacable', the Greek word is 'aspondos', which means an unforgiving temperament, too stubborn to accept reconciliation, [Romans 1:31](#).
23. 'Unmerciful', the Greek word is 'aneleemon', which means having no sympathy or pity, without kindness or mercy, [Romans 1:31](#).

That's a long list, and we would think that this letter was written for today's society. Today, more than ever, we need to be careful about the input of knowledge.

With TV, music, movies, and the rest of the media often presenting sinful lifestyles and what is falsely called knowledge, we find ourselves constantly bombarded by attitudes and beliefs that are totally opposed to the Bible.

We need to be careful about what we allow to form our opinions. The Bible is the only standard of truth. We need to evaluate all knowledge and beliefs in light of its teachings.

According to [Romans 1:32](#), they knew that God punishes the low level of morality to which they had plunged. They knew that these crimes should be punishable by death.

They would know this not only from the limited revelation they had, but also from the guilt, suffering, sorrow, pain, and anguish their sins brought upon them. They took pleasure in and endorsed others who did such things. It gives a sense of comfort to the evil to see others practice evil, [Isaiah 5:23](#) / [Micah 7:3](#).

And so, although they know the judgment of God, that God punishes such things by death, they not only continue to do them but endorse those who did them, [Romans 1:32](#).

Paul starts in [Romans 1:18-32](#) by saying the Gentiles were sinners, and the Jews would gladly agree with this. The Gentiles worshipped the creation rather than the Creator. The Gentiles wandered away from worshipping the One true God. God gave them over means God allowed them to pay the consequences of their actions.

Three times, Paul mentions God's rejection of them.

1. God gave them over to uncleanness to dishonour their own bodies, [Romans 1:24](#).
2. God gave them over to vile passions wherein they abandoned God's sexual design, [Romans 1:26](#).
3. God gave them over to a debased mind to do those things which were not proper, [Romans 1:28](#).

He's telling these Roman Christians that the Gentiles were great sinners because they had turned from God, the source of Light, [Luke 2:42](#) / [John 8:12](#), to their own futile reasoning.

Their rejection of the knowledge of God leads them into the lowest state of immorality and vice. No darker picture can be drawn of sinful man, and no better proof can be given to show his need for salvation. In a nutshell, he says in [Romans 1:18-32](#), that 'the Gentiles are scum', but as we enter [Romans 2](#), Paul is going to write, 'so are the Jews'.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realising that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” Romans 2:1-4

GOD’S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

Paul’s purpose in the first three chapters is to show that both Jews and Gentiles are in sin and in need of the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel is God’s power to save from sin, and every soul stands in need of that power.

Paul begins this section to the Jews by reminding them that they have no right to judge the Gentiles when they are so bad themselves, Romans 2:1. They had nothing to plead in their defence when they practised the same evils, Luke 18:10-14.

‘Judgement’, Romans 2:2, includes more than the mere act of judging. It means to pass a sentence on, to condemn. God’s judgment is based on truth and is just and right, Romans 2:2. In other words, it’s not based on appearance. Murray, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Since you know the justice of God, as evidenced by the fact that you are judging others, you are without an excuse, because in the very act of judging you have condemned yourself.’

They were actually ‘condemning themselves.’ In other words, if their judgment was good against the Gentiles, it was good against themselves, for they practised the same things, and so, they stood self-condemned, Romans 2:3.

Now the Jews might say, ‘So my judgment is wrong on the Gentiles, but what does that prove?’ Paul answers, ‘Yes, your judgment may be wrong, but God’s is not,’ Romans 2:3.

Paul is asking, ‘Do you think you can condemn others for doing exactly what you are doing and still escape the wrath of God?’ Self-evaluation seems to be a hard endeavour for human beings.

We need to be careful that the sins we condemn in others have not taken root in ourselves. It is very easy for us to be self-condemned before God. Remember, sin means falling short of God’s standards, His righteousness.

Transgressions mean to go somewhere you shouldn’t be.

1. To ‘despise’ means to look down on; hence, to show contempt for, Romans 2:4.
2. ‘Goodness’ means kindness.

God had been exceedingly good to the Jews. He has been good toward all, Romans 2:4.

3. ‘Forbearance’ means patience; to bear with.
4. ‘Longsuffering’ means to suffer long with; denotes a delay of punishment, Romans 2:4.
5. ‘Leads you to repentance?’ Romans 2:4.

God’s goodness appeals to the best in man and causes him to respond, 1 John 4:19 / 2 Corinthians 7:10. God is good in giving us time to repent, 2 Peter 3:9.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

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

The Jews boasted that they were the objects of God’s special favours, but by not repenting, they showed they despised God’s goodness, [Romans 2:4](#). Modern man thinks that the goodness of God will cause God to overlook his wickedness. How about us? Do we appreciate God’s goodness or despise it? We clearly despise it when we do not repent of our sins.

‘But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favouritism.’

Romans 2:5-11

Paul says they are ‘stubborn’ and ‘unrepentant in their hearts’, [Romans 2:5](#), just as the Jews have been described over and over again throughout the Scriptures and just like many people today.

They are ‘storing up wrath against themselves’, [Romans 2:5](#). At the second coming of Christ, all the wicked will be punished with everlasting destruction, [2 Thessalonians 1:6-9](#).

‘Righteous judgment will be revealed’, [Romans 2:5](#), means the fairness and impartiality of God will be manifested. God will judge the world in righteousness, [Acts 17:31](#). The righteous judge will preside, [2 Timothy 4:8](#).

We can accumulate treasures in heaven by our good works, or we can accumulate wrath by our evil deeds. And Paul says, ‘God will repay each person according to what they have done’, [Romans 2:6](#) / [Psalm 62:12](#) / [Proverbs 24:12](#).

Our God is a consuming fire, [Deuteronomy 4:23-24](#) / [Hebrews 12:25-29](#), and someday we will stand before Him to be judged. What an awesome thought! The judgment will be on an individual basis.

The judgment will be in accord with our works, [Revelation 20:12](#). This, and the following verses, show that ‘faith alone’ or ‘grace alone’ cannot be true. We are not saved by good deeds, but when we commit our lives fully to God, we want to please Him and do His will. As such, our good deeds are a grateful response to what God has done, not a requirement for earning his grace.

‘Persistent in doing good’, [Romans 2:7](#), means they are persistent in practising good deeds. It becomes a way of life for them. ‘Seeking glory, honour, and immortality’, [Romans 2:7](#), is their goal and objective is high, [Philippians 3:14](#). The phrase ‘eternal life’, [Romans 2:7](#), is at the end of the verse in the original Greek.

In contrast, the ‘self-seeking’, [Romans 2:8](#), those who desire to put themselves forward, have a factious, partisan spirit. This word is found before New Testament times only in Aristotle, where it denotes a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.

Paul exhorts us not to put ourselves forward or to be selfish, [Philippians 2:3](#). James speaks against having self-seeking or self-promoting in our hearts, [James 3:14](#). Many people seek to serve, and please themselves rather than God, [Philippians 3:19](#). A very simple basic of Christianity is to ‘deny self,’ [Luke 9:23](#).

Paul says, ‘the Jews reject the truth’, [Romans 2:8](#), and we know that the truth must be obeyed. They follow evil to the point where they become servants to it. But look at what these people will receive, ‘wrath and anger, trouble and distress’, [Romans 2:9](#). They will receive outward affliction and inward misery.

‘The Jew first’, [Romans 2:9](#) / [Romans 1:16](#). Why? Because of his abuse of better opportunities. ‘Glory, honour, and peace’, [Romans 2:10](#), refers to the eternal blessings. ‘Who works what is good’, [Romans 2:10](#), this again shows the importance of works.

Notice Paul says, ‘to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles’, [Romans 2:10](#). In other words, there are no exceptions. The Jews should not have lost sight of the fact that they had been privileged far above the Gentiles. The words, ‘for God does not show favouritism’, [Romans 2:11](#), again are proof that God renders to everyone according to their deeds.

‘All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.’ [Romans 2:12-16](#)

Paul continues to show the Jews that they were no better than the Gentiles. All will be judged by the law under which they live, [Romans 2:12](#). Whether someone sins outside the Law of Moses, as did the Gentiles, or under the law, as did the Jews, they are still a condemned sinner.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘People will be condemned, not because they have the law or do not have the law, but because they have sinned.’

We do not know much about the law under which the Gentiles lived, but we do know they were under law, for sin is transgression of law, [1 John 3:4](#). All are under the law of Christ today, [Matthew 28:18](#) / [Acts 17:30-31](#) / [2 Thessalonians 1:7-9](#).

‘Judged by the law’, [Romans 2:12](#), answers the question, ‘by what will those who lived under the law be judged?’

‘Not the hearers’, [Romans 2:13](#), it is those who hear and do, who are just in the sight of God.

The contrast in [Romans 2:13-15](#) is between those who had the law and did not obey it, and those who did not have the law, that is, the Gentiles, and yet kept its moral precepts.

The words, ‘by nature do,’ [Romans 2:13](#), mean there are fundamental principles of right and wrong inherent in our nature, e.g., we know it is wrong to kill because we don’t want to be killed, it is wrong to steal, because we don’t want to be robbed.

The words, ‘are a law for themselves’, [Romans 2:14](#), explain ‘they had a law written in their hearts’, [Romans 2:15](#). They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts rather than tablets of stone. They had learned it by reason and by limited indirect revelation, [Romans 2:15](#).

‘Their consciences also bearing witness,’ [Romans 2:15](#), means that their consciences testify and are in agreement with the law written in their hearts, [1 John 3:20](#).

‘Their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them,’ [Romans 2:15](#). Their thoughts, coinciding with their conscience, were either accused or acquitted in accord with the knowledge they had.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He is not saying that the law is written on their hearts, as people often say, but that the work of the law, what the law requires of people, is written there.’

The conscience can be a powerful force in helping us to do right, [1 John 3:20](#). If one continually goes against his conscience, it can become calloused, [1 Timothy 4:2](#) / [Ephesians 4:19](#). [Romans 2:16](#) reveals a lot regarding the judgment. A great judgment day is coming when God will judge. God wants a great day of reckoning.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

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

‘People’s secrets’, [Romans 2:16](#), means exactly that, God will judge the secrets of people. The hidden sins of passion, dishonesty, insincerity, lusts, ill motives, and character will all be made manifest. How? ‘Through Jesus’, [Romans 2:16](#), God will do it through His Son, [2 Corinthians 5:10](#)

Notice Paul says, ‘My Gospel.’ ‘As my Gospel declares’, [Romans 2:16](#), means the gospel which Paul taught will judge us, [Romans 16:25](#). The word Gospel is evangelical and is used seventy-five times in the New Testament. The word Gospel is evangelical, the reward for giving the message. The word Gospel literally means good spell, good speech, good news.

THE JEWS AND THE LAW

‘Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’ [Romans 2:17-24](#)

Paul continues to prove that all stand guilty before God. In [Romans 2:17-20](#), he mentions eleven things in which the Jews prided themselves.

1. ‘Call themselves a Jew’, [Romans 2:17](#).

This was a mark of high distinction to the Jew.

2. ‘Rely on the law,’ [Romans 2:17](#).

They rested in it as a ground of safety.

3. ‘Boast in God,’ [Romans 2:17](#).

If it is only a boast, it is vain and empty.

4. ‘Know his will’, [Romans 2:18](#).

It is not ‘knowing’ that counts, but ‘knowing and doing.’

5. ‘Approve of what is superior’, [Romans 2:18](#).

They could distinguish the better things because they had the better light. They also knew of the things the law condemned.

6. ‘Instructed in the law’, [Romans 2:18](#).

Most Jews had been taught the law from childhood.

7. ‘Guide to the blind’, [Romans 2:19](#).

They were convinced they were teachers and leaders of the spiritually blind.

8. ‘A light’, [Romans 2:19](#).

They considered themselves able to lead from darkness to light, from error to truth, and from vice to virtue.

9. ‘Instructor of the foolish’, [Romans 2:20](#).

The Jew thought he was a corrector of those void of understanding.

10. ‘Teacher of children’, [Romans 2:20](#).

He was a teacher of the young and unlearned, [Matthew 5:19-48](#).

11. 'The embodiment of knowledge and truth', Romans 2:20.

The law foreshadowed the reality of knowledge and truth. The law revealed a superior way of life. The Jews, therefore, were teachers and instructors of the more excellent way of that old era. Their problem was that they totally failed to follow the superior law which they had.

Their pride caused them to feel superior to all other peoples, but they were not superior in the way they lived. All this rendered their guilt and condemnation more intense.

We as Christians are the religiously privileged of today. Pride is an ever-present, constant danger. Paul's condemnation, which follows in the next verses, applies to us if we do not live up to what we know and teach.

In Romans 2:21-24, Paul asks a series of questions for self-examination. When one makes a personal application of his questions, it renders much good.

1. 'Do you not teach yourself?' Romans 2:21.

A teacher should be an example of their message. The worst hypocrites are those who continue to teach others, but will not practice what they are teaching. Before we judge or accuse others, we must make a genuine examination of ourselves and see if that sin in any form exists in us.

2. 'Do you steal?' Romans 2:21.

To teach against stealing and then commit that very act is the height of hypocrisy. The Jews were law violators, trying to teach respect and obedience to the law. Christians are law violators, trying to teach respect and obedience to the Lord.

3. 'Do you commit adultery?' Romans 2:22.

Denotes one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another. It carried the death penalty under the law, Leviticus 20:10 / Deuteronomy 22:23-26. It is a sin against God, against one's own marital companion, and against one's own body, 1 Corinthians 6:18. It destroys the sanctity of the home.

4. 'Do you rob temples?' Romans 2:22.

This means to commit sacrilege. To rob a temple was considered sacrilege among the ancients. The thought is, 'do you abhor or hate idols, yet rob temples of idols?' In other words, 'do you abhor idols, but carry off idols to serve them?'

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'Clearly some people held that a Jew might well make profits from dishonest practices connected with idolatry, and Paul may well have had this in mind.'

5. 'Do you dishonour God by breaking the law?' 'Boast in the law'. Romans 2:23.

The Jews regarded the law as a mark of his peculiar favour. They boasted in the fact that they had the law, and were lovers and teachers of it. They 'dishonoured God by breaking it', Romans 2:23.

This shows clearly that we dishonour God when we break His law. Breaking a law is to dishonour the one who gave it. And so, to commit sin is to dishonour God.

The Jews claimed Jehovah exclusively as their God, and since the Jews were corrupt in life, it caused the Jews to speak disrespectfully of their God. And so, they not only caused their own ruin but were injurious to others.

Paul writes, 'as it is written', Romans 2:24 / Ezekiel 36:20 / Ezekiel 36:22, and quotes Isaiah 52:5. The full verse says the following. 'And now what do I have here?' declares the LORD. 'For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock,' declares the LORD. 'And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed.'

It is much easier to advise others on how to live than to live godly ourselves. It is easier to say the right words than to allow them to take root in our lives. We need to make sure that our actions match our words. When we disobey God, we dishonour Him and cause people to speak disrespectfully of Him.

What do people think about God by watching our lives? Do they think God is a wonderful Being who changes people for the better, or do they think God is a Being who is weak and produces evil in people?

‘Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.’ Romans 2:25-27

Circumcision was first given to Abraham as a sign of the covenant, [Genesis 17:11-14](#). Circumcision was later made part of the law, [Exodus 12:48-49](#). Circumcision was simply a sign of the covenant.

Man’s part of the covenant was that he would keep the law, [Galatians 3:10](#). And so, circumcision was worthless unless they kept the agreement (requirement) of the covenant, [Romans 2:25](#) / [Deuteronomy 10:16](#).

‘If you break the law, it’s as though you had not been circumcised.’ As one could keep the law and not be circumcised, so one could be circumcised and not keep the law.

When one did not keep the law, he would be no better than uncircumcision, which was precisely the case with these Jews, [Romans 2:26](#). None but Jews had been commanded to be circumcised. None but Jews, therefore, violated the law when they were not circumcised.

‘The requirements of the law’ refers to those moral precepts of the law. His moral, upright life was exactly what the law required. Paul’s purpose is not primarily to justify the Gentile but to condemn the Jew because of his wickedness.

The Gentile’s conduct, fulfilling the law by his right living, condemned the Jewish transgressor, [Romans 2:27](#), just as Noah by his obedience condemned the world, [Hebrews 11:7](#).

‘A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.’ Romans 2:28-29

The right living Gentile is under consideration here, but the same is true of Christians. The New Testament system works on its subjects from within rather than from without. God wants inward trust instead of outward claims, a true heart instead of a hypocritical ceremony, [Romans 2:28](#).

‘Circumcision of the heart’, [Romans 2:29](#). God wants us to remove everything from our hearts that is contrary to His will, that competes with sincere devotion, and that hinders obedience. ‘Not by the written code’, [Romans 2:29](#), in other words, not in accord with the external written law of the Old Testament regarding circumcision.

‘Person’s praise is not from other people, but from God,’ [Romans 2:29](#). The true Jew seeks to please God, not man. When both his attitude and practice are right, God is pleased with him, [John 4:24](#).

Inwardly	Outwardly
Circumcision of the heart	Circumcision outward in the flesh
In the spirit	In the letter
Praise of God	Praise of men

SUMMARY

Even though the Jews had all their superior advantages, they had not lived up to the revelation they had received. They professed to be teachers, guides, and leaders, but they were guilty of the very things they condemned in the Gentiles.

They stood condemned by the very law which they taught. The conclusion is evident: the Jews had sinned and stood equally with the Gentiles in need of the Gospel.

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul said that the Gentiles are scum. In Romans 2, he says so are the Jews, and we enter Romans 3, Paul is going to remind them that all have sinned.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

“What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God. What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: “So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.” Romans 3:1-4

GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

1. Was there no advantage in being a Jew? Romans 3:1 / Romans 2:11.

Certainly! ‘The very words of God’ or ‘The Oracles of God,’ Romans 3:2. The word ‘oracle’ is the Greek word ‘togion’, which means ‘utterance’. It means that the Jews had enjoyed the advantage of being spoken to by God! This refers to the Law. Exodus 20:1 tells us that ‘God spoke all these words’. And what follows is the giving of the Law at Sinai, Exodus 19:1-20:21. No other nation was privileged in this way. He did not present His Law to anyone else, Romans 9:3-5.

Trapp, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was their prime privilege, that they were God’s library-keepers, that this heavenly treasure was committed to them.’

Paul anticipates the Jew arguing that if his words are right, meaning the Jews are lost, it would cast a reflection on God. God gave the law to make the Jews believe; if they didn’t believe, He didn’t accomplish what He intended. They would argue that God sent the law to make us a better people, but if we are not good people, as Paul is saying, that casts a reflection on God.

If we, the Jews, are unfaithful and lost, God failed in His covenant with us, Romans 3:3. If we are lost, God failed to keep His promises to the nation. The ways and truth of God do not depend upon the beliefs and actions of men.

2. What purpose did the Law serve?

One of its purposes was to make clear what sin is, Romans 5:7 / Romans 5:20 / Romans 7:5. Look especially at that last statement in Romans 7:7, because Paul tells us that he would not have known that he was a sinner had it not been for the Law.

He even says that when he became aware of what God's law said, he died! By which he means that he stood condemned. Example, "Home by 10 p.m." Example; "No Trespassing."

By exposing sin and making the Jew aware of the fact that he was a sinner, the Law also made the Jew aware of his need for forgiveness and told him that such forgiveness would come through the Messiah. Remember the 'Schoolmaster' illustration used by Paul when he wrote his letter to the Galatians, Galatians 3:24.

After the question of having an advantage as a Jew comes the answer, 'not at all', Romans 3:4. We might say, 'absolutely not.' God is always true, man is not, Romans 3:4.

It is absolutely wrong to think that the unbelief of men could prevent God from keeping His promises. He who disagrees with God is a liar. We should never try to prove a thing by what men say.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Should any man say that the promise of God had failed toward him, let him examine his heart and his ways, and he will find that he has departed out of that way in which alone God could, consistent with his holiness and truth, fulfil the promise.'

In Romans 3:4, Paul quotes Psalm 51:4, which shows that David was repenting so that God might be justified in His sayings. In other words, God says that we sin, and our sins show Him to be right. David confessed his sin and acknowledged that God was right in condemning it.

Like a jeweller who displays a diamond on black velvet to make the stone appear even more beautiful, so our sins all the more prove God to be just. Some of God's promises were conditional, others unconditional.

God always kept His unconditional promises, and the conditional ones were not effective until the conditions were met. Since the Jews had broken the covenant, that is, they had sinned, they themselves, not God, had nullified the conditional promises, Romans 3:4.

"But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!" Romans 3:5-8

If we build up and display the righteousness of God by our unrighteousness, is God wrong to take vengeance on us for our unrighteousness? Certainly not is the answer, Romans 3:5-6. How could He justly punish the world, i.e., others besides the Jews?

If God could not condemn the Jews for their disobedience, how could he punish the Gentiles who were also guilty of the same disobedience? Romans 3:6. It appears that Paul is still putting himself in the Jew's position and repeats Romans 3:5 in different words.

The Jew would argue, 'if the truth of God has abounded through my lie, Paul had already referred to men as liars, why am I still judged as a sinner? Although one's sins prove God to be just and thus bring glory to Him, he is not excused for his sins.

Why not do as we have been slanderously reported? Romans 3:8. Do evil that good may come. To be consistent, it was the Jew here who had been slanderously reported, Paul also, since he was a Jew, as teaching that people can do evil that good may come, Romans 3:8.

Their condemnation is just; that is, when they condemn one for teaching. ‘Let us do evil that good may result,’ [Romans 3:8](#). Some may think they don’t have to worry about sin because of the following.

1. It’s God’s job to forgive.
2. God is so loving that he won’t judge us.
3. Sin isn’t so bad; it teaches us valuable lessons.
4. We need to stay in touch with the culture around us.

It is far too easy to take God’s grace for granted. But God cannot and will not overlook sin. Sinners, no matter how many excuses they make, will answer to God for their sins. Paul puts himself in the Jew’s position, the Jews would argue in [Romans 3:1-8](#).

1. No advantage of being a Jew. [Romans 3:1](#).
2. Were entrusted with oracles of God. [Romans 3:2](#).
3. Unbelief would make the faith of God without effect. [Romans 3:3](#).
4. God is always just; man is not. [Romans 3:4](#).
5. God would be unrighteous to inflict wrath. [Romans 3:5](#).
6. How would God judge the world? [Romans 3:6](#).
7. The truth of God through my lie has increased His glory. [Romans 3:7a](#).
8. Why am I judged as a sinner? [Romans 3:7b](#).
9. Why not do as we have been slanderously reported? [Romans 3:8](#).

Paul had demonstrated that the Jew was no better than the Gentile, and in [Romans 3:1-8](#), he answered some objections the Jews might raise.

NO ONE IS RIGHTEOUS

“What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” [Romans 3:9-18](#)

Who are the ‘we’ and who are the ‘they’ in these verses? The ‘we’ are the Jews, including Paul himself, [Philippians 3:4-6](#), and the ‘they’ are the Gentiles. And so, the ‘we’ in [Romans 7:7](#), as well as [Romans 3:1-6](#), is referring to the Jews. The Jews would naturally think themselves better. None lived a perfect life.

‘All under the power of sin’, [Romans 3:9](#), means all are lost because of sin and stand equally in need of salvation offered only in the Gospel. Paul now shows from the Jews’ own Scriptures, a miscellaneous selection from Psalms, Isaiah and Ecclesiastes, that they were guilty before God and needed a Saviour as much as the Gentiles. The Jews might try to deny Paul’s charges, but not their own Scriptures.

‘There is no one righteous, not even one’, [Romans 3:10](#), is probably a quote from [Ecclesiastes 7:20](#). There were none righteous in the perfect sense. Man is universally evil. Righteousness or justification is a relationship that none possess, then or now, without the benefits of the death of Christ.

‘There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God’, [Romans 3:11](#), is a quote from [Psalm 14:2](#) and [Psalm 53:2](#). Man’s ignorance does not result from a lack of opportunity.

Man's natural tendency is to seek his own interest. His only hope, though, is to seek after God. Today, not many seek after God to know and do His will. If some seek God at all, it is only to obtain some selfish blessing.

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

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

'All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one', Romans 3:12, is a quote from Ecclesiastes 7:20 / Psalms 14:3 / Psalms 53:3.

'Turning away' is a word which means basically, 'to turn out of the way, to go in the wrong direction.' They have all 'gone in the wrong direction' so far as faith and obedience are concerned.

'Become worthless', Romans 3:12, means they had a transition from a state of value to a useless, worthless state.

'There is no one who is good', Romans 3:12, means there was no one who followed God's law perfectly, who never sinned.

'Open graves', Romans 3:13, is a quote from Psalms 5:9, and it means they give offensive words as odours from an open tomb. 'Tongues practice deceit,' Romans 3:13, means that behind a deceptive tongue is a deceptive heart. They lead others astray with deceptive words.

'Poison of vipers', Romans 3:13, is a quote from Psalms 140:3. This is a small, but very poisonous snake. Their speech is likewise very poisonous and ruinous in its effect, James 3:8.

'Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness', Romans 3:14, is a quote from Psalms 10:7, and this is still true for many people today. Romans 3:15-17 are from Isaiah 59:7-8. 'Their feet are swift to shed blood' means violence and murder were eagerly committed. 'Ruin and misery mark their ways' is the result of their evil conduct.

Evil people damage and destroy, leaving a trail of pain and suffering in their wake. They destroy the reputations, health, property, and lives of others. They, in turn, receive the same treatment they have been given.

'The way of peace they do not know' means they have not known peace because they have not wanted to know it. God desires that we live a quiet and peaceful life, 1 Timothy 2:2. The highest expression of peace is reserved only for those who love God and do His will. Philippians 4:7.

'There is no fear of God before their eyes', Romans 3:18, is a quote from Psalms 36:1. This is the heart of the problem. They had no respect for God; therefore, the preceding sins resulted. If people have no reverence for God, they will have no regard for His law or their fellow men.

1. A fear of God causes one to depart from and hate evil, Proverbs 16:6 / Proverbs 8:13.
2. It is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge, Psalms 111:10 / Proverbs 1:7 / Proverbs 9:10 / Proverbs 15:33.
3. It prolongs life, Proverbs 10:27.
4. It brings satisfaction, Proverbs 19:23.
5. It produces wealth, honour, and life, Proverbs 22:4.

Have you ever thought to yourself, 'Well, I'm not too bad, I'm a pretty good person'? Look at these verses and see if any of them apply to you. Have you ever lied? Have you been bitter toward anyone, etc? In thought, word, and deed, we, like everyone else in the world, stand guilty before God. We must turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only hope.

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin." Romans 3:19-20

In Romans 3:19-31, Paul shows that justification is not by a system of law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Every one of the Jews was condemned by the very law they were under.

The article, ‘the’ is before ‘law’ in Romans 3:19, and so, he is definitely speaking of the Old Testament law. The principle would apply with equal force to any law. All laws are directed only to those who are under them. All are under law of some sort and have sinned, either by commission or by omission. ‘Every mouth may be silenced’, Romans 3:19, means what it says; their mouths are silenced. None are able to answer back or make a defence.

The ‘whole world’, Romans 3:19, means the law declaring evil deeds to be sins, condemned the Jews, and in effect condemned the Gentiles because they committed the same sins.

The words, ‘accountable to God’, Romans 3:19, make it evident that all are guilty before God. All were under the sentence of condemnation because of sin. We all stand guilty and accountable before Almighty God. There is no denial, argumentation, or defence we can make before Him. Once we admit our guilt, the following verses are truly good news for us.

Notice, there is no article ‘the’ before ‘law’ in either place in Romans 3:20. Law by itself will not justify anyone. Under law, any law, without the benefits of the death of Christ, a lost man is utterly hopeless. Law justifies only if one keeps it perfectly, James 2:10.

‘Through the law, we become conscious of our sin’, Romans 3:20, means the purpose of law is to reveal what sin is and to convict one of sin. The Old Testament law was excellent in accomplishing this.

Let me share with you a quick summary of Romans 1:18-3:20. Everyone needs the Gospel.

1. The Gentiles were without excuse; they refused to have God in their knowledge. Romans 1:18-23.
2. Their moral depravity. Romans 1:24-32.
3. The Jews were no better. Romans 2:1-29.
4. He meets the Jews’ objections. Romans 3:1-8.
5. His conclusion. Romans 3:9.
6. In Romans 3:10-18, Paul strings together one Old Testament reference after another in a complete demonstration of universal human guilt.
7. Then in Romans 3:19-20, he reaches the conclusion toward which he has been driving ever since the announcement of his theme in Romans 1:16-17.

RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH

“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:21-26

We are all guilty! Job 9:2. How shall we be justified? What makes us ‘not guilty’ in God’s sight? After all the revelations about our sinfulness and God’s condemnation, Paul gives the wonderful news. He reveals the way to be declared ‘not guilty,’ or ‘justified’ before God.

Notice the words ‘righteousness of God’, Romans 3:21. This righteousness is treated as something belonging to God. It is the essence of His character. It is His righteousness. It is He who makes one righteous on His terms.

Righteousness is something that is revealed by God. It goes forth from God. It is made available to man by God. Salvation, righteousness, justification, redemption, and remissions of sins are all equivalent. When you have the one, you have the others, [Psalm 98:1-3](#) / [1 Corinthians 1:30](#) / [Romans 4:6-8](#).

‘Apart from the law,’ [Romans 3:21](#). Again, the article ‘the’ is not before ‘law’, but is before ‘witnessed by the Law and the prophets,’ [Romans 3:21](#). This means God’s approval apart from law is revealed. Any law, standing alone, will not justify. Law, by itself, only pronounces guilt upon the sinner.

‘The law and the prophets,’ [Romans 3:21](#), is speaking about the writings of the Old Testament. The Old Testament pointed to redemption in Christ. It was foretold by the promises, [Genesis 3:15](#) / [Genesis 12:1-3](#) / [Genesis 22:18](#) / [Isaiah 53](#) / [Hebrews 9:8-9](#) / [Hebrews 10:1](#).

Paul plainly reveals that the only way for one to have a right-standing relationship with God is through faith in Jesus Christ, [Romans 3:22](#). He also adds that it is to all and on all who believe, Jew and Gentile. We would understand that he is referring to a living faith, a faith that will work and not a dead faith, [Hebrews 5:8-9](#).

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Through faith points to the fact that faith is not a merit, earning salvation. It is no more than the means through which the gift is given.’

‘All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’, [Romans 3:23](#), means there are no exceptions, and no exemptions, [Ecclesiastes 7:20](#) / [Romans 3:9](#) / [Romans 5:12](#) / [Romans 11:32](#).

All men come short of the righteousness that God has and the righteousness that God wants man to have, [Romans 3:23](#). The scheme of redemption makes its appeal to those who are convicted of their guilt, [Mark 2:17](#) / [John 9:40-41](#) / [Luke 18:13-14](#) / [1 John 1:8-10](#).

Remember, the law had limitations. It could make a man aware of the fact that he was a sinner, it could convict him of sin, but it could not provide the way out, once it had been broken. i.e., it exposed the sin and defined sin, but could not tell the sinner how to mend the broken Law, [Hebrews 7:18-19](#) / [Hebrews 8:7-8](#).

The consequence was that Jew and Gentile alike were found guilty of sin, and Jew and Gentile alike needed salvation. Having established this truth, Paul is ready to show how God has acted to deal with this universal need.

The word ‘justified’, [Romans 3:24](#), means ‘just as if I’ve never sinned’, to be declared ‘not guilty.’ When a judge in a court of law declares the defendant ‘not guilty,’ all the charges are removed from his record. Legally, it is as if the person had never been accused.

When God forgives our sins, our record is wiped clean, [Psalm 103:12](#) / [Micah 7:19](#). From His perspective, it is as though we had never sinned, [Hebrews 8:12](#) / [Hebrews 10:17](#).

Justification comes ‘freely by His grace’, [Romans 3:24](#), but it is given as a gift upon conditions. It is not an earned justification in the sense of its original offer. It was not through our goodness or works that God offered justification to man.

The word ‘redemption’, [Romans 3:24](#), means deliverance by means of payment of ransom, [1 Corinthians 6:20](#).

Redemption was secured by His life’s blood and by being redeemed from the bondage of sin, we are justified from sin’s guilt.

In [Romans 3:25-26](#), the justice of God is revealed. The words, ‘God presented,’ [Romans 3:25](#), suggest determination by God. God presented Jesus. Why? Because of atonement, the word ‘atonement’ means appeased or made favourable to God, [Leviticus 16](#).

‘By His blood, through faith’, [Romans 3:25](#). The order of the phrases in the original Greek is, ‘through faith in his blood’. The thought is, ‘believing that Christ’s shed blood is God’s means of taking away sin.’ And so, believing in what the shed blood can do. Why?

‘To demonstrate His righteousness’, [Romans 3:25](#), in other words, the plan of salvation declares or demonstrates the justice or righteousness of God. Forbearance was exercised toward those who sinned until the fullness of time came, [Hebrews 9:15](#) / [Hebrews 10:1-7](#).

Nothing, absolutely nothing, can atone for sins or pay the debt for sins but the blood of Christ. Those who trusted in God under the Old Testament had the promise of forgiveness. It was in promise rather than in fact. Forgiveness was therefore as sure as God’s promise.

‘At the present time’, [Romans 3:26](#), means as distinguished from time past. He has now demonstrated His righteousness through the offering of Christ. Divine justice requires the condemnation and punishment of all who sin. On what basis, therefore, can the Divine justice be maintained, and the sinner be justified? Only through the sacrifice of Christ and faith in Him, [Romans 3:26](#).

The sinner, through faith in Christ, is freed from the penalty of his sins. Christ died in his stead. His death paid for our sins, but the sinner is not required to die. God remains just; in other words, the penalty is paid, and the sinner is justified when he accepts Christ’s death as a substitute for his own.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

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

“Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.” [Romans 3:27-31](#)

Under the system of faith, the New Testament plan of redemption, every reason for human boasting is excluded or shut out, [Romans 3:27](#). ‘The law and works,’ [Romans 3:27](#), the Old Law was a law primarily of works that included faith. ‘But by the law of faith’ is the New Testament system. The article ‘the’ is not in the original.

Under the New Testament, men are justified by a system of faith that includes law. It is the ‘law of faith,’ because it is a system of faith that includes law, [Romans 3:27](#).

The right to brag has been ruled out under the system of faith. We must glory in the Lord. Bear in mind that in context, Paul is referring to the source or origin of the Gospel system, and not to the conditions contained in the Gospel.

In [Romans 3:28](#), Martin Luther added the word ‘only’ to the word faith in his German translation. He is the first on record to teach ‘faith only,’ which obviously contradicts what James teaches, [James 2:14-26](#).

‘Apart from the works of the law’, [Romans 3:28](#), again, the article ‘the’ is not in the original, and so it should read, ‘apart from the works of law’. This does not exclude ‘the law of faith,’ [Romans 3:27](#) or ‘obedience of faith,’ [Romans 1:5](#) / [Romans 16:26](#).

The system of faith is in contrast with a system of law. Law, any law standing alone, once violated, knows nothing but the penalty. Once the law is violated, there is no way to lawfully escape the penalty. This is why the death of Christ is necessary. His death paid the penalty. [Romans 3:31](#) says that faith establishes law.

Paul asks a rhetorical question that demands a negative reply, [Romans 3:29](#). God is not just a national or tribal God. All people are His offspring. Since there is but one Maker of all, He will justify all alike.

I see no difference in the two expressions, ‘by faith...through faith,’ [Romans 3:30](#). They are synonymous. There is one faith by which both are saved. Again, in [Romans 3:31](#), the article ‘the’ before law is not in the original in either place.

Faith makes firm the importance and usefulness of law. ‘Uphold the law’, [Romans 3:31](#), means faith produces an understanding of its importance and produces the need for obedience to it.

Without faith, man would never meet the conditions which God requires for justification. To comply with the conditions is not justification by works, but justification by faith at work. Faith empowers us to obey, work and live as the Lord has taught us.

SUMMARY

All people sin and fall short of the glory of God. None can be justified by law, meaning by law alone apart from Christ. Once law is violated, there is no way to lawfully escape its penalty. Thus, without the death of Christ, there is no hope for sinful man. Divine justice requires the condemnation and punishment of all who sin.

God devised a plan, the Gospel system, whereby His divine justice is maintained, His hate and condemnation of sin, and the sinner can be justified. It is the death of Christ. Christ died in the sinner’s stead. Thus, God remains just, the penalty for sin is paid, and the sinner is justified when he has faith in Jesus, [Romans 3:26](#).

Paul concluded chapter three by asking, ‘Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law,’ [Romans 3:31](#). Faith produces an understanding of the importance of law and produces the need and desire for obeying it. Without faith, man would never meet the conditions which God requires for justification.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.” Romans 4:1-8

ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

How was Abraham ‘saved’, i.e. declared righteous? Not by works, [Romans 4:1-8](#) / [Romans 4:2](#). Not by ceremonies like circumcision, [Romans 4:9-12](#) / [Romans 4:10](#). Not by law-keeping, [Romans 4:13-25](#) / [Romans 4:13](#)

The word ‘Hebrews’ relates to the origin of the race, Abraham. The word ‘Hebrew’ means ‘a crossing over’.

Abraham crossed from Mesopotamia to Jordan, [Genesis 11:31](#). In other words, Abram the Hebrew, the man who crossed over the Euphrates River.

The word 'Israelites' comes from Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, **Genesis 32:28**. God's people were first called 'Jews' after their captivity, **Ezra 4:23**. Moses was the father of their religion, whilst Abraham was the father of their race, **Genesis 14:13 / Genesis 15:7**.

Genesis 15:14-16 lists the sins of the Amorites. Notice that Israel's Father was an Amorite, which refers to Abraham, and his mother was a Hittite, which refers to Sarah, **Ezekiel 16:3 / Ezekiel 16:45**. Abraham wasn't a Jew; he was an Amorite.

Paul wants to prove what righteousness means, **Romans 3:31**. God's righteousness is higher and never changes. The righteousness of God means God is the standard of righteousness.

And so Paul gives the example of Abraham. He is answering the Jew who would be thinking that Abraham earned his justification. Paul showed in **Romans 3:21-26** that law by itself will not justify. The only way law would be justified is when one keeps it perfectly, **Romans 3:27-31 / Galatians 5:3 / James 2:10**.

The same is true of works, works that is, works alone, justify only when one does all of the works perfectly and commits no sin. Of course, no one measures up to this and is thus in need of a Saviour.

Notice the words, 'according to the flesh', **Romans 4:1**. The arrangement of the phrases in the original Greek is as follows, 'Abraham our father by flesh.' Paul is simply asking, 'What has Abraham our father, according to the flesh, found regarding justification?' **Romans 4:1**. Notice, 'Abraham was justified by works', **Romans 4:2**. This means the only way for one to be justified by works, apart from faith, is by working perfectly.

'Has something to boast about' **Romans 4:2**, means he could boast because he obtained it himself, and not by God's grace. Paul has already shown that under the system of faith, every reason for human boasting is excluded, **Romans 3:23 / Romans 3:27**.

'But not before God' **Romans 4:2**, means under the system of faith, all glory belongs to God, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness', **Romans 4:3**, is a reference to **Genesis 15:6**.

How was Abraham justified 'without works' according to Paul, and 'by works' according to James? The works that Paul speaks of are works that 'make faith void', in other words, 'works alone without faith.'

Paul is showing that works alone will not justify, **Galatians 3:6-10**, and James is showing that faith alone will not justify, **James 2:23-24**. Paul included walking in the steps of faith that Abraham had.

Romans 4:4 tells us the only way for one to be justified by works alone is by doing works perfectly. If he did works perfectly, justification would be owed to him as a debt. 'Does not work', **Romans 4:5**, means 'to him who does not work perfectly.' Man cannot be righteous, justified by law or works alone.

Murray, in his commentary, says the following.

'The antithesis is not simply between the worker and the non-worker but between the worker and the person who does not work but believes.'

The words, 'his faith is credited', **Romans 4:5**, show the blessing of being justified by faith. One is saved, although his works are not perfect. Paul is simply revealing 'justification by faith' as opposed to 'justification by works' or 'justification by law.'

'David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works', **Romans 4:6**. Faith is the thing counted, justification is the end for which it is counted.

'Apart from works', **Romans 4:6**, means apart from or without perfect works. Under the Gospel system, we can be justified even though we have sinned. What could David have done to make up for his adultery and murder? **Micah 6:7-8**. He was truly blessed when he was forgiven.

Lenski, in his commentary, says the following.

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

Romans 4:7-8 is a quote from **Psalm 32:1-2**. The person to whom God counts justification without works is the person whose iniquities are forgiven. Forgiveness does not result from human works, but from grace. He is forgiven even though his works are not perfect. Hence, to count justification without deeds is to forgive without perfect obedience.

God counts sin to the sinner so long as he is a sinner, but when forgiven, they are not counted; the forgiven sinner is righteous, **Romans 4:7-8**. Our justification is not by our own righteousness, our 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. This is how God imputes righteousness to the sinner.

In other words, God places the sinner in right standing with Him through the means of the sacrificial death of Christ, **Philippians 3:7-9**. God sees us as righteous. God says you’re right, right in all aspects, speaking and doing. Believing puts you in the right place where God can save you, **John 1:11-12**. When you believe, you have the right to take the step to become a child of God. Righteousness of God through faith. Remember what Paul has already said on this matter in **Romans 1:14-17**.

1. I’m a debtor to Jews and Gentiles.
2. Not ashamed of the Gospel.
3. I’m ready.

Righteousness means rightness, being right with God. The righteousness of Christ means being clothed with Christ.

Let me share a useful summary of **Romans 4:1-8**.

Righteousness is not given on the basis of works, works alone, meritorious works, but on the basis of faith, a faith that takes God at His Word and follows it as did Abraham. If one can earn his salvation by works, he would have no need for Christ.

This does not mean that we have no obligation in our salvation, before becoming a Christian or after. The death of Christ substitutes for the sinner’s death only when the sinner accepts and obeys Him as Lord, **Romans 6:16-18 / Hebrews 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, that is, our duty as commanded by God, are therefore not under consideration here.

It is the works apart from faith, works of merit, works alone, that are excluded. Justification, i.e., salvation, is always viewed in the Bible as a matter of favour, never a matter of debt, **Luke 17:10**. We need to do our best, and then cast ourselves on the mercy and grace of God.

“Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.” **Romans 4:9-12**

A reminder of what I wrote earlier would be useful here. How was Abraham ‘saved’, i.e. declared righteous? Not by works, **Romans 4:1-8 / Romans 4:2**. Not by ceremonies, circumcision, **Romans 4:9-12 / Romans 4:10**. Not by law-keeping, **Romans 4:13-25 / Romans 4:13**.

Why was Abraham righteous? Because he was circumcised? No. When did he become righteous? Abraham didn’t become righteous until God made the covenant with him, **Genesis 15**.

Abraham wasn’t righteous because of the law because that came later. Abraham was righteous on the basis of faith, not by works. Abraham believed Isaac would be raised from the dead, and so he was the first person to believe in the resurrection, **Hebrews 11:19**.

Lot and Abraham went their separate ways; Lot chose badly, whilst Abraham let God choose, **Genesis 13**. In **Romans 4:9-12**, Paul now shows that this blessedness, that is, justification by faith, is not confined to the Jews only.

Notice Paul says, ‘for we have been saying that faith,’ **Romans 4:9**; this is the same as **Romans 4:3**. At what period in Abraham’s life was it accounted to him? **Genesis 12:4** tells us that he was seventy-five years old when he was called. Sometime thereafter, the statement was made.

Genesis 15:6 tells us it was before Ishmael was born. And **Genesis 17:24** tells us that he was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised. Ishmael was thirteen years old at that time. **Genesis 17:25**.

We have the account of the call of Abraham in **Genesis 15:6**, which says, ‘Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.’ **Romans 4:10**. Note that his call came thirteen years before his circumcision, **Romans 4:10 / Genesis 17:24**. Circumcision was not that which brought justification; circumcision was only a seal or sign of it, **Romans 4:11**.

‘That he might be the father of all those who believe’, **Romans 4:11**, as we know, this was a special honour. He was the first to be justified this way. ‘Though they are uncircumcised’ **Romans 4:11**, referring to the Gentiles.

‘Righteousness might be credited to them’, **Romans 4:11**, means if Abraham was counted righteous by his faith before circumcision, that is, before it was commanded, Gentiles could also be counted righteous, even though it was never commanded of them.

Abraham is the father, not to those who are merely circumcised, but to those who also walk in the steps of his faith, **Romans 4:12**. His fatherhood extends beyond the circumcision to all who imitate his faith.

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

‘All true believers, like Abraham, obey. Obedience is faith in action. You are to walk in the steps of the faith of Father Abraham. His faith did not sit still; it took steps, and you must take these steps also by obeying God because you believe him. That faith which has no works with it is a dead faith, and will justify no one.’

ARE WE SAVED BY FAITH ALONE?

In **Romans 4:11**, we read that Abraham was justified by faith before circumcision. Paul refers to Abraham’s justification while still in uncircumcision to prove, as the context of the passage shows, that the justification had nothing whatsoever to do with the works of the law of Moses since the Mosaic law had not then been given, **Romans 4:13**.

We have to keep in mind the imagined conflict between what Paul says about Abraham and what James says about Abraham in **James 2:21-24**. Paul is writing to the Romans to offset the influence of Judaizing teachers who were telling the Gentile Christians that unless they were circumcised and observed the law of Moses, they could not be saved, **Acts 15:1**.

Paul is arguing that Abraham was justified before and without circumcision because of the faith he had manifested, and so today, Paul says, God will justify all those who walk in the steps of the faith that Abraham had while still in uncircumcision, **Romans 4:12**.

Notice that Abraham was not saved by FAITH ALONE because Paul says he walked IN THE STEPS OF FAITH, **Romans 4:12**. The faith of Abraham took certain steps.

This was faith going in a certain direction; it was faith that was active. It was faith doing something, and this is precisely what James sets out to prove when he says, ‘Was not our father Abraham justified by works?’ **James 2:19**. What does he mean?

He is not talking about works of merit; we cannot be saved by any works of merit of our own, but he’s speaking of the kind of faith that manifests itself in obedience to the will of God.

James says if our faith is faith alone, it is a dead faith, **James 2:17**. Faith alone is a barren faith. He says that faith that is without works is incomplete faith, **James 2:22**. He says that by works is faith made perfect or complete.

Now, some argue in favour of salvation by faith alone, while James says emphatically it is not by faith alone. There’s no conflict between the apostle Paul and James when they discuss Abraham, as you understand when you grasp this fact.

Paul’s argument is directed against the works of the law of Moses, while he declares that Abraham’s faith was an active faith. James is arguing against salvation by faith alone and saying that faith can never truly be alone if it is the right kind of faith, but will show itself in what it does.

ABRAHAM’S SEED

How do we become Abraham’s seed? I think we will find the answer to that question in Galatians, beginning at **Galatians 3:26**, ‘so in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith’. That is the case of location. ‘For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ,’ **Galatians 3:27**.

Notice **Galatians 3:29**, ‘If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’. How do you become the children of Abraham? By becoming a child of God by faith, and that is when we are in Christ Jesus.

Paul does say in **Acts 10:43**, ‘All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.’

Notice, however, the expression is that it is ‘through his name every one that believeth on him.’ ASV. That is why in **Acts 10:48**, of that same passage, Peter commanded them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Notice the expression, ‘in the name of Jesus Christ’, **Acts 10:48**.

Peter has used that once before, back in **Acts 2:38**, and there, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is said to be FOR the forgiveness of sins. Here is the same preacher, with the same message, with the same command, expressing the same purpose.

IS A BELIEVER JUSTIFIED THE MOMENT THEY BELIEVE?

There are some people who suggest that because they are a believer, they are justified. A few people often quote Jesus' words in **John 3:36**, 'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life', to justify that people are saved at the point of belief.

However, we need to finish the sentence, because Jesus goes on to say, 'but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.' The word 'reject' is the Greek word 'apeitheo' and it is found sixteen times in the Greek New Testament. In the King James Version, it was rendered, 'Believe not', but in all sixteen instances, the revision has it 'obeyeth not'.

That's why in **2 Thessalonians 1:7-8** we read that Christ will come 'in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and DO NOT OBEY the gospel of our Lord Jesus.'

Look at the believers in **John 12:42**, 'any even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees, they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.'

Some suggest that because these men believed in Jesus, they were therefore justified and saved. Presumably, since repentance comes before faith, they had already repented.

They had repented, they had believed in Jesus, but nevertheless, the Lord Jesus Christ will not confess them before the Father in heaven for the simple reason that in **Matthew 10:33**, Jesus says, 'But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.' Or again, **Romans 10:10** says, 'For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.'

So, in **John 12:42**, we have repentant believers, believers in Christ who are apparently saved according by faith alone, yet the Lord Jesus Christ will not confess them on the day when He stands before the Father in heaven, **Matthew 10:33**.

In **John 8:30-31**, we have certain people who believed in Jesus in that passage. Notice in **John 8:33**, Jesus is talking about them, and in **John 8:39**, we read the same believing Jews are told, 'If God were your father,' **John 8:42**. He says later, 'You belong to your father, the devil', **John 8:44**, and according to **John 8:30-31**, these were believing Jews, Jews who believed in Him.

QUESTION

What kind of faith do the demons have, according to **James 2:19**? What is the distinction between faith? How do we decide when one faith is saving faith, and the other faith is inadequate to save us? Is it possible that there is a kind of faith that saves and a faith that doesn't save?

Notice what James says, 'In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead,' **James 2:17**. 'Faith without deeds is useless,' **James 2:20**. He says in **James 2:26**, 'As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.' Now faith that is alone, without works, is dead. And James very appropriately asks the question, "Can that faith save him"? **James 2:14**.

FAITH IS SEEN

Faith that saves is never alone; the faith that saves is seen, **Luke 5:20**. Is faith a tangible thing, a visible thing, a material thing that we can see? Of course not. We see faith in the things that we do. You can't see my thoughts, or other people's thoughts, but you see their faith expressed in action.

FAITH IS OBEDIENT

Again, faith that saves is the faith that obeys. In **Romans 1:5**, the apostle Paul speaks about his apostleship, 'To the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake.' His job was to lead people to render the obedience of faith, and it was certainly with a view to salvation.

Again, we are told that Abraham's faith TOOK STEPS, and we are told that God saves all those who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, **Romans 4:12**. And as **Galatians 5:6** tells us, 'Faith expressing itself through love.' It is NOT faith alone.

The apostle Paul says in **1 Corinthians 13:2**, 'If I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.' If we are nothing, then we are certainly not saved.

He even says it is possible for man to have the gift of tongues and still be nothing if he doesn't have love, **1 Corinthians 13:1**. So, something much more than faith is necessary. It has to be faith that works through love, and we know this kind of faith is never really alone.

WORKS OF THE LAW

There are three kinds of works referred to in the New Testament. There are the works of the law that Paul is speaking about in **Romans 3:4**. In **Romans 3:28**, Paul writes, 'For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.'

In this section of his letter, the law is spoken of thirteen times, and in the Roman letter, the term 'law' is used in seven or eight different ways. It's true in the Galatian letter that Paul says, 'A person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.' **Galatians 2:16**.

Now, why is that? Because through the law comes the knowledge of sin, **Romans 3:20**. The law convicted the Jew of sin, but the law could not save them, **Romans 8:3-4 / Hebrews 10:1-4**. The law simply could not save, **Acts 15:10**.

Thus, it is not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy, He saved us, **Titus 3:4-5**. This simply means that we do not earn salvation by our own good deeds, **Ephesians 2:8-9**.

We are simply not good enough. We cannot work our way into heaven. We cannot merit forgiveness, because Isaiah says, 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of the Lord', **Isaiah 64:6**.

WORKS OF HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Then there is a second kind of works referred to in **Titus 3:4**, where the apostle Paul has the works of human righteousness, the works of human goodness in view.

He says, 'He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.' Again, it means we simply cannot work our way to heaven, **Ephesians 2:8-9**.

WORKS OF FAITH

Then there is a third kind of works which are necessary, and these are the works of faith, **Romans 1:5**. Obedient faith is not the works of the law, not the works of human goodness, but works of faith. That is faith working through love, as Paul says again, writing in **Galatians 5:6**.

In **2 Thessalonians 1:11**, Paul speaks of every work of faith. Now the Lord Jesus points out that faith itself is indeed a work. In **John 6**, we have the Lord saying, ‘Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.’

Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires? Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent,’ **John 6:27-29**.

Why is believing a work of God? It is simply because it is that which God has commanded. If I am employed by somebody, whose work do I do? Do I do his work, or do I do the work that he tells me to do?

REPENTANCE

Is repentance necessary to salvation? Can one be saved who refuses to repent? Certainly not! In **Acts 17:30**, ‘In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.’ But where does repentance come? Before or after faith?

It’s really immaterial whether it’s repentance then faith or faith and repentance. It doesn’t really matter. It’s not repentance without faith, and it’s not faith without repentance. It’s repentance plus faith so, even there our faith is not alone.

2 Corinthians 7:10 teaches us that repentance comes BEFORE salvation. Surely no one would suggest that repentance wasn’t necessary for salvation. Repentance is joined with baptism with the same purpose in view, which is salvation, and we cannot separate the two.

If people say that faith alone saves us but argue that a person needs to repent to be saved, they have just nullified the first statement. We cannot be forgiven simply by believing; we cannot be saved without also repentance and baptism.

CONFESSION

Paul says in **Romans 10:9**, ‘If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’. Is confession of Christ necessary to salvation? If we say that confession of Christ is necessary to salvation, then this is not faith alone.

Remember, this confession comes after faith because we do not confess Christ first and then have faith; it is impossible. We can only confess that which we believe that which we have.

So, the order evidently is, faith first and then the expression of that faith in confession. But according to Paul’s argument in **Romans 10:10**, your salvation is not until after confession, ‘with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.’

CONCLUSION

Faith is necessary for salvation, but it is the faith that works through love, **Galatians 5:6**. Faith becomes God's condition of salvation, and in **Romans 1:16**, Paul says, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes'.

It is not unconditional; faith itself is a condition of salvation. The gospel is the power of God, but it does not save everybody. It only saves those who believe. We can work the work of God, and believe in His Son, and be saved by faith, but have you earned your salvation? Certainly not! There is no merit in faith.

There is nothing in faith that makes God have to save us, nothing at all. There is no merit at all. But faith saves because faith and baptism have both been commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ, **Matthew 28:19 / Mark 16:16**.

"It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression."

Romans 4:13-15

Before we get into the text, once again, I want to share what I shared earlier as a reminder. How was Abraham 'saved', i.e. declared righteous? Not by works, **Romans 4:1-8, Romans 4:2**. Not by ceremonies, circumcision, **Romans 4:9-12 / Romans 4:10**. Not by law-keeping, **Romans 4:13-25 / Romans 4:13**.

The promise to Abraham was righteousness through faith, independent of the Law, **Romans 4:13**. Abraham and his seed were to become heirs of the world through Christ. 'His offspring', **Romans 4:13**, refers to Abraham's offspring, descendants.

The spiritual blessing that they were to inherit was in and through Christ. The words, 'heir of the world', **Romans 4:13**, have reference to the spiritual part of the promise, **Genesis 12:3 / Genesis 18:18 / Genesis 22:18**.

Newell, in his commentary, says the following.

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

Notice the words, 'depend on the law', **Romans 4:14**. The article 'the' is not before 'law' here, but it is in **Romans 4:15**. The promise was not made because of or in consideration of law, but consideration of justification by faith.

The Jews are under consideration in context. However, the same applies to any law. If law, any law, makes people heirs, there is no purpose for faith in Christ. 'Faith means nothing and the promise is worthless', **Romans 4:14**, means there would be no value if the blessings were already received.

The promise was made before the law was given. The law was added because of transgressions until the promised seed should come. The law was not the promise, nor was it part of the fulfilment, **Galatians 3:17-19**.

In **Romans 4:15**, the article 'the' is before 'law' here. And so, it refers to the Law of Moses. In **Exodus 19**, we see the prophet's ministry began at Sinai with Moses. The people wanted Moses to speak to them, not God, **Exodus 20:19**.

The people didn't keep the law, the law exposed sin, and the law defined sin, but the law couldn't offer forgiveness; that's why there is a new covenant, **Matthew 26:27-28**.

Jesus says this cup, the new covenant, is the forgiveness of sins. Notice what it says, for the remission of sins, not because of the remission of sins, **Matthew 26:27-28**.

The law works wrath both from God and within man, **Romans 4:15**. It works wrath from God because man violates it. It works wrath within man because it condemns rather than saves him. Once the law is violated, it knows nothing but the penalty.

In **Romans 7:9-23**, the great 'I' passage, Paul describes his condition as a sinner under law and shows how the law works wrath and brings condemnation. Notice Paul says, 'where there is no law there is no transgression,' **Romans 4:15**. In context, Abraham could not have been judged for not keeping the Law of Moses because it had not yet been given.

The argument seems to be that where there is no law, there is no transgression, and where there is no transgression, there is no wrath, that is, no condemnation for violating the law.

We could also say, where there is law, there is transgression, and where there is transgression, there is wrath or condemnation. And so he is pointing man to a better system, the system of justification by faith in Christ.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Transgression is the right word for overstepping a line, and this for breaking a clearly defined commandment.’

“Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.” Romans 4:16-17

Abraham was saved by faith. When it is ‘by faith,’ grace is necessarily brought into play, **Romans 4:16**. If the inheritance depended merely on law, none could obtain it, since none obey it perfectly, **Romans 3:20 / Galatians 5:3 / James 2:10**. When it is by faith, it makes it a matter of grace, not of debt.

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Grace and faith are congruous, and will draw together in the same chariot, but grace and merit are contrary the one to the other and pull opposite ways, and therefore God has not chosen to yoke them together.’

The word ‘offspring’, **Romans 4:16**, means spiritual seed. Notice again, Paul says, ‘the law’, **Romans 4:16**, the article ‘the’ is before law, which tells us the phrase refers to the Jews.

‘But also to those’, **Romans 4:16**, means both Jews and Gentiles are included. It includes all of us who have faith like Abraham. Abraham was the first to be justified by faith, and so he is our father in that sense, **Romans 4:16**.

The faith of Abraham is the faith that is counted for righteousness. It is the faith that takes God at His Word and follows His instructions. Paul is referring particularly to believers, but Abraham was the father of many nations both physically and spiritually, **Romans 4:17 / Genesis 17:4-5**.

The words, ‘who gives life to the dead’, **Romans 4:17**, we will look at what that means when we get to **Romans 4:19**. Abraham knew that God could do anything, **Romans 4:17**.

‘And calls,’ **Romans 4:17**, means God spoke it as though it were already done. He spoke of those nations as existing because He intended to bring them into existence.

“Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” Romans 4:18-25

‘Against all hope’, **Romans 4:18**, means against adverse circumstances, against reason. The physical evidence was against hope. ‘Hope believed’, **Romans 4:18**, means Abraham believed in the hope of the promise. He believed in God when the promise, that is, Abraham’s hope, seemed impossible.

‘Just as it had been said to him’, **Romans 4:18**, means it rested on what God had said. ‘Your offspring be’, be what? They would be as numerous as the stars of heaven, **Genesis 15:5**.

‘Without weakening in his faith’, **Romans 4:19**, means his confidence in God’s fulfilling His promises was stronger than his view of any difficulties standing in the way.

‘His body was as good as dead’, **Romans 4:19**, means that the fact that he was at this advanced age didn’t weaken his faith. Some who are getting old are wise enough to see that they are getting old, some are not, **Hosea 7:9**.

‘Sarah’s womb was also dead’, **Romans 4:19**, means she had no child all her life and was now past the age of childbearing. Abraham did not let adverse things affect his faith. He believed God even when it seemed against reason and nature, **Romans 4:20**.

God had spoken it, and that was enough for him. It was this kind of strong, unwavering, active faith that was accounted for righteousness. So it will be with us.

‘Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God’, **Romans 4:20**, means unbelief did not create staggering doubt. He did not decide against God’s promise through unbelief. He had faith that God had the absolute power to carry out His promises, **Romans 4:20**. He did not doubt that God would accomplish what He had promised. He ‘gave glory to God’, **Romans 4:20**, means he honoured God as one worthy to be believed and trusted, even when it seemed contrary to reason and nature. He believed God rather than his own human reasoning and judgment, and in so doing, glorified God. ‘It was credited to him as righteousness,’ **Romans 4:22**. This was said about Abraham’s faith on three occasions.

1. **Genesis 15:1-6**. As quoted in **Romans 4:3**.
2. Here, at the age of about one hundred, **Romans 4:19-22**.
3. At the offering of Isaac, **James 2:23**.

And so his life was a life of faith from beginning to end. The words, ‘not written’, **Romans 4:23**, mean it was not written to just show how Abraham benefited. It was actually written many years after he had died.

The words, ‘but also for us’, **Romans 4:24**, show the importance of studying the Old Testament, so that we, too, might be benefited. We want our faith to be imputed for righteousness just as it was for Abraham. To believe in God who raised up Christ from the dead is to believe that Christ was raised from the dead, **Romans 4:24**.

Lenski, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jesus’ resurrection always includes his sacrificial death, but it brings out the all-sufficiency of his death. If death had held him, he would have failed; since he was raised from death, his sacrifice sufficed, God set his seal upon it by raising him up.’

‘He was delivered over to death’, **Romans 4:25**, means He was delivered up only because God allowed and wanted it, **Romans 8:32**.

He was delivered up for the following reasons.

1. Because of our sins, and
2. As an offering for our sins. Christ, by His death, paid the sin debt in full, and thus made it possible for us to be justified.

‘Raised to life for our justification’, **Romans 4:25**, means Christ arose to consummate this offering, and so, the resurrection is an important part of the atonement, **1 Corinthians 15:3-5** / **1 Peter 3:21**.

SUMMARY OF ROMANS 1-4

Paul has shown that the Gospel is God’s power to save, **Romans 1:16-17**, all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory, **Romans 3:9** / **Romans 3:23**. It is impossible to be justified by law, meaning law apart from Christ, **Romans 3:20**.

It is impossible to be saved by works (meaning works alone apart from Christ, **Romans 4:2-8**. Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness, **Romans 4:3 / Romans 4:20-22**. What the Scriptures said about Abraham was not said for him alone.

We, too, can be justified by faith, **Romans 4:23-25**. It is truly sad that many pass up these blessings from God and continue to 'enjoy' their sinful life. Paul basically asks why can't the Gentiles be saved the same way? Not by law-keeping, not by works, not by circumcision, but by faith.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” **Romans 5:1-5**

PEACE AND HOPE

As we enter **Romans 5**, we are going to see that Paul is going to explain the blessings of justification, **Romans 1:18-3:20**. Notice, we are justified 'through faith', **Romans 5:1**, this always involves an active, living faith, and never a dead faith.

'Faith' is put for the whole plan because it is the foundation regarding man's part in his salvation or justification.

'Peace with God', **Romans 5:1**, is the first result of justification. Peace in terms of our relationship with God, **Ephesians 2:14**. The sin that separated us has been forgiven.

We are no longer enemies, but friends, no longer separated but reconciled. 'Through our Lord Jesus Christ', **Romans 5:1**, means Christ bridged the gap between God and man and made peace possible.

The second result of our justification as Christians we now have 'access by faith into this grace in which we stand,' **Romans 5:2**. In other words, through Christ, we are recipients of God's grace, **Ephesians 2:18**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'And this access to God, or introduction to the Divine presence, is to be considered a lasting privilege. We are not brought to God for the purpose of an interview, but to remain with him; to be his household; and by faith, to behold his face, and walk in the light of his countenance.'

The word 'grace' is used in three ways.

1. Used to describe the blessings a king would bestow upon his subjects.
2. Used to describe the relationship you can have with a friend, a loving relationship between friends and family.
3. Grace to an enemy.

Christ paid our sin debt and thus cleared the way for our entrance, that is, access, into God's favour. As Christians, we stand in the place of the highest privilege.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

'The former rebels are not merely forgiven by having their due punishment remitted; they are brought into a place of high favour with God, this grace in which we stand.'

Not only has God declared us 'not guilty,' but He has drawn us close to Himself. Instead of being enemies, we have become His friends; in fact, we are His own children, 1 John 3:1.

The word 'great' used in 1 John 3:1 should be the word 'manner,' which means 'exotic' or 'foreign'. Love for an enemy is something we humans struggle with. It's easy to love those who are decent human beings, but not so easy with those who aren't, but God can and does.

The third result of our justification is that we are able to 'rejoice in hope of glory of God,' Romans 5:2 / Hebrews 3:6 / 1 Peter 1:8. We rejoice in our hope now, but someday it will be realised. The 'glory of God' includes eternal salvation.

'Glory in sufferings', Romans 5:3, we also rejoice that we can suffer trials, afflictions, and persecutions for His name, Matthew 5:10-12 / Acts 5:40-42. 'Suffering produces perseverance', Romans 5:3, means that suffering actually produces steadfastness, endurance, and patience.

'Perseverance', Romans 5:4, is the trait that bears all the ills of life calmly, and tribulations are what form this trait in us. Affliction or tribulation is a great teacher of patience. It is called 'The School of Hard Knocks'. It is a great school indeed.

'Character', Romans 5:4, produces approval from God, from man, and within ourselves. 'Hope', Romans 5:4, means knowing that God approves gives us a firmer hope. When we have patiently endured a trial, it strengthens our hope, James 1:3-4 / James 1:12 / 1 Peter 1:6-7.

Hope does not make us ashamed or disappointed now, nor will it ever. It will not shame us in the end by disappointing us. That which we hoped for will be realized and we will never be ashamed that we had hope.

'Love of God', Romans 5:5, means His love for us has been clearly demonstrated to us. In what way? 'By the Holy Spirit who was given to us', Romans 5:5. He has been given in two ways.

1. He has been given to mankind in the revealing of the Gospel.

He has not been given to us today directly or miraculously, but indirectly. He has revealed the Gospel through holy writings. In the Gospel, He has revealed to us a loving God, a loving Saviour, and reasons for loving in return.

2. The Holy Spirit has been given as a pledge that every promise will be fulfilled, 2 Corinthians 1:22.

Paul shows that suffering starts a chain of events that eventually ends with the love of God being poured out into our hearts. And so, we should look for and rejoice in the ultimate results of tribulations rather than being discouraged by their present discomfort and heartache.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:6-8

Paul now reveals 'reconciliation through Christ,' 2 Corinthians 5:19. 'At the right time', Romans 5:6, means it was the set time, not too early, not too late, according to God's timetable, Galatians 4:4-5.

'When we were still powerless', Romans 5:6, means when we were helpless and powerless to save ourselves. We had no power to save ourselves, had a law that only legally condemned us, and could do no works of merit to commend us to God. What we could not do, Christ accomplished.

‘Christ died for the ungodly’, Romans 5:6. He died for their benefit. Christ sacrificed Himself on the cruel cross to pay man’s sin debt. God accepted His sacrifice. It is the only way to be forgiven of sin. God controls all history, and He controlled the timing, methods, and results of Jesus’ death.

A ‘righteous man’, Romans 5:7, is someone who is just and fair in his dealings. A ‘good man’, Romans 5:7, is someone who is more than just. He is also kind and generous. One might attempt to die for him, but it is unusual. Paul continues to set out the blessings of Gospel justification. He explains the assurance of Salvation through the life and death of Christ. The word, ‘demonstrates’, Romans 5:8, is present tense. He continues to exhibit, show, or demonstrate His love toward us by what He did.

‘In that while we were still sinners’, Romans 5:8, this is the sign or demonstration of His love. We accept this great truth as fact, and in turn show our love for Him, 1 John 4:19.

‘God demonstrates His love’, Romans 5:8. Has it occurred to you that there is something rather remarkable, even strange, in that statement? Read it again! ‘God displays His Love in that Christ died for us.’

Do you see it? It says that God’s love is revealed by the death of Jesus, and I say that this is a strange statement because what one person does is not usually taken to be a guide to the character of someone else!

For instance, if you are a kind and generous person, that would not prove that I am kind and generous, would it? Why then should Paul tell us that something which Jesus did proves that God loves us?

If he had said, ‘Christ reveals His own love towards us, in that HE died for us’, it would have been straightforward and easy to appreciate. But to say that God’s love is proved by the fact that Jesus died for us needs to be explained. The explanation is found in the relationship which exists between God and Jesus. If they were not related, what Jesus did would tell us nothing about God.

But the Bible repeatedly tells us that ‘in Christ’, God was reconciling the world to Himself, 2 Corinthians 5:19-20. God was manifest, revealed, in the flesh. Jesus and God are One, so what Jesus did was essentially God’s own doing. Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

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

It means that in Jesus, we see God at work. His nature is God’s nature. His deeds are God’s deeds. And when He suffered, God suffered. His pain on the cross was God’s pain. His agony was God’s agony. And His tears were the tears of God.

Therefore, whatever suffering we experience, God knows it intimately. And whatever else is proved by the death of Jesus on the Cross, it also proves about God.

Notice that God is the one who took action; it was God who made the move. And it is God who commends His own love toward us in the death of Jesus. If we read the previous verse, Romans 5:7, we will see that Paul has been writing about the extent to which human love is prepared to go.

He says that the supreme demonstration of human love is seen when someone is prepared to die for a good man. Not, mind you, for a righteous man, or a religious man, but for a good man. And the word ‘good’ used here means kindly or loving. For such a man, someone might even be willing to die.

In the ‘Tale of Two Cities’, which, as you may remember, is a story about the French Revolution, Charles Darnay is a prisoner in the Bastille, awaiting execution the next day. But that night, some friends came to visit him, and they overpowered him with some sort of anaesthetic.

They take his clothes, and one of his friends, Sidney Carton, puts them on and takes his place, for the sake of Darnay's wife and children. The condemned man is spirited out of the prison to freedom, wearing Carton's clothing. And Sidney Carton is executed the next morning, in the place of his friend.

And, in contrast with the dismal, sarcastic ending of Thomas Hardy's book, 'Tess'. This book ends with the famous words, "It is a far, far better thing I do, than I have ever done, it is a far, far better rest I go to than I have ever known". The Lord Jesus did more than that.

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!" Romans 5:8. That is the proof of the love of God, 1 John 4:10. Jesus willingly laid down his life, when there was nothing in us that could demand such a sacrifice. Nothing except our sin. Don't ask me why God did it that way.

Simply be satisfied with the statement of fact that it was that way, for the sheer love of us and that love, the love of God, Jesus died. And I tell you again! The pain and suffering you see on the Cross are God's, and He endured it for love.

What I am trying to say is that God cares for His Creation. We do not serve a cruel God, or a God who has been made to seem cruel by so-called religious people, fanatics, who kill people, who chop off their heads or their hands in the name of God and their so-called faith.

We serve a loving God, and because it is such a love as this, a love which came down to such people as you and me, it opens the door of hope to everybody. We may sometimes be tempted to wonder if God really does love us, but in the light of the cross of Jesus, that is an unworthy thought.

We should trust His love and commit ourselves to it. Because, even though it is a fact that we live in a fallen world in which there is a great deal of evil, God's love is more powerful than evil.

Not only did He create our world, but He continues to be interested in it. John Calvin once said, 'God's hand is on the helm of the universe.' And that is true! Even though we travel through storm and tempest, as well as through calm and sunshine, the captain of our salvation is still steering the boat! And I believe that to know this and to believe it is to possess the answer to the problem of evil.

I say all this because I want to convince you or to remind you of something you may already know, namely, that no matter who we are, what we have done, how far we have wandered from God, nothing, not even our sin, can prevent God from loving us, Romans 8:31-39.

"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation". Romans 5:9-11

Salvation is here presented both as a present reality and a future hope. Since we have now been justified, Romans 5:9, that is, declared 'not guilty' before God, by the death of Christ, how much more shall we be delivered from the wrath to come by remaining in Him.

'Much more', Romans 5:9, is an argument stating the more difficult to prove the less difficult. And so, if the present reality is true, we are justified, most certainly, the other will be true. We shall be delivered from the wrath to come, Romans 5:9.

We were sinners and enemies rather than righteous and friends, Romans 5:10. We were reconciled to God, not God to us. How? 'By His life,' Romans 5:10. His resurrection to life accomplished salvation and He, in person, superintends the work.

As in [Romans 5:9](#), the argument is made from the more difficult, the reconciliation of His enemies by the death of Christ, to prove the less difficult, that is, eternal life for those reconciled. Great joy comes to us as a result of this relationship.

‘In God through’, [Romans 5:11](#), means we can rejoice in the greatest of Beings for the greatest of reasons. Why? Because we have ‘received the reconciliation’, [Romans 5:11](#). He has forgiven us and filled us with the hope of eternal life.

We have good reason to rejoice. Our past sins have been forgiven. We stand justified before God. We have been reconciled to God. We shall be delivered from the wrath to come.

DEATH THROUGH ADAM, LIFE THROUGH CHRIST

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned— To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.” [Romans 5:12-14](#)

Paul now gives a comparison between Adam and Christ. One introduced sin and death, [Genesis 3](#) / [1 Timothy 2:14](#), the other righteousness and life, [1 Corinthians 15:22-23](#).

‘By one man’, [Romans 5:12](#), means Adam introduced sin and its consequences. ‘Death spread’, [Romans 5:12](#), that is, physical death passed from Adam to all, [Genesis 2:17](#). Paul later adds ‘resulting in condemnation,’ [Romans 5:16-18](#), which shows that ‘eternal death’ was also introduced into the world by Adam.

‘Because all sinned’, [Romans 5:12](#), means God decreed death upon the human race, not only for Adam’s but for all sin. When anyone sins, he stands where Adam stood in the beginning.

Notice the digressions beginning in [Romans 5:13](#), and closing in [Romans 5:17](#). [Romans 5:12](#) is not a full sentence.

Paul repeats [Romans 5:12](#), in different words, in [Romans 5:18](#), and then closes his sentence. He wanted to expand on the universality of sin and that which Adam wrought in contrast to Christ before he continued his discussion.

In [Romans 5:13-14](#), Paul describes the universality of sin. ‘For until the law’ or ‘before the law’ means that sin was in the world before the Law of Moses was given.

The article ‘the’ is not before ‘law’ in [Romans 5:13](#), but he is referring to the Law of Moses, as is shown in [Romans 5:15](#). And so there was law before the Law of Moses, and he is showing that sin has prevailed since the time of Adam.

‘Did not sin by breaking a command’, [Romans 5:14](#), means Adam violated a positive law, a moral law. Adam’s sin introduced some things into the world, [Romans 5:15-21](#), whereas the sin of others didn’t. Also, they were different in the way each received instructions.

‘A pattern of the one to come,’ [Romans 5:14](#). The word ‘pattern’ is the Greek word ‘type’ and means ‘a previous figure or shadow.’ He describes how Adam was a type or figure of Christ in the next verses.

“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the

more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5:15-21

In Romans 5:15-21, Paul is going to speak about the offence and the gift.

Romans 5:15	
Offence	Gift
'Many died'	'Grace abounded to many'
Romans 5:16	
Offence	Gift
'Resulted in condemnation'	'Resulted in justification'
Romans 5:17	
Offence	Gift
'Death reigned'	'Life reigns'
Romans 5:18	
Offence	Gift
'One offence'	'One righteous act'
Romans 5:19	
Offence	Gift
'Disobedience-made sinners'	'Obedience-made righteous'
Romans 5:20	
Offence	Gift
'Sin abounded'	'Grace more abounded'

Romans 5:15 sometimes reads ‘the free gift is not like.’ This gives us a contrast. ‘The word ‘free’ is not in the original, only the word ‘charisma’ which is the word ‘gift’.

And so, this destroys the argument, ‘it is absolutely free, and there is nothing one can do to receive it.’ The ‘gift’ refers to God’s gracious redemption through Christ.

The words, ‘many died’, Romans 5:15, are talking about how sin and death entered the world through Adam, but God holds each person responsible for his own sins.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He is not saying that death reigned over us all because we all sinned; he is saying that death reigned over us all because Adam sinned.’

‘Much more’, Romans 5:15, is talking about the blessings we receive in Christ that far outweigh the things we lost in Adam. ‘The gift that came by the grace’, Romans 5:15, means God and Christ were not obligated to restore the human race. They did so by favour.

‘Overflow to the many’, Romans 5:15, means redemption for the human race is unlimited. Many have been wise enough to take advantage of the blessing. Romans 5:16 tells us, ‘the judgment resulted in condemnation.’ In other words, it brought death’s penalty, spiritual death.

‘But the free gift resulted in justification’, Romans 5:16, in other words, it brought justification to sinners.

Condemnation, that is, death’s penalty, spiritual death, was brought upon us by Adam, but justification, that is, salvation, the gift, was brought to us by Christ.

Man’s response is not mentioned here. Condemnation comes to one when he violates the will of God; he obtains the gift, justification, when he obeys God’s will.

Harrison, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If the doctrine of universalism is being taught here, Paul would be contradicting himself, for he has already pictured men as perishing because of sin.’

‘Death reigned through the one’, [Romans 5:17](#), means Adam committed the sin which introduced it. The words ‘much more’, [Romans 5:17](#), express a high degree of certainty.

‘Abundance of grace’, [Romans 5:17](#), means they receive the favour in its abundant provisions. ‘Gift of righteousness’, [Romans 5:17](#), means they receive remission of sins, not as due, but as a gift.

The words, ‘reign in life’, [Romans 5:17](#), mean much more shall the redeemed reign there than death has reigned here. Notice that the verse speaks of salvation both present and future, and the ‘much more’ is affirming the certainty of the future salvation.

‘Through the One,’ [Romans 5:17](#), means through Him, it has been provided. Through Him we have hope, and through Him, eternal life shall be realised. The word ‘consequently’, [Romans 5:18](#), should read ‘Therefore’, because of everything said before. ‘Resulting in condemnation’, [Romans 5:18](#), means physical death and condemnation are the result of sin.

‘One righteous act’, [Romans 5:18](#), means the obedience of Christ in dying for us, [Philippians 2:8](#) / [Hebrews 5:7-9](#).

‘Came to all men,’ [Romans 5:18](#), again, this I understand to mean, ‘to all who obey; to all who take advantage of the blessings.’

‘Resulting in justification of life’, [Romans 5:18](#), in other words, it has the promise of the life that now is, and of eternal life. ‘Were made sinners’, [Romans 5:19](#), means they were made liable to sin and punishment.

‘Made righteous’, [Romans 5:19](#), means they were made liable to justification. Without Him, there is no justification. While all were made potential sinners in Adam, condemnation comes only from one’s own disobedience.

Charles Darwin made evolutionists, but this does not mean that the theory of evolution is an inherited trait. Likewise, Adam made sinners, but he made them by introducing sin into the world. Each one becomes a sinner when he transgresses God’s law, [Ezekiel 18:20](#) / [1 John 3:4](#).

The words, ‘but where sin increased’, [Romans 5:20](#), mean the circle of sin widened. Through the law, man’s knowledge of sin increases, [Romans 3:20](#), and he begins to understand how terrible sin is, [Romans 7:7-13](#).

Law was given that men might see their transgression, show them the seriousness of it, and cause them to turn to God for mercy and pardon. The law of Christ accomplishes the same today.

‘Grace increased all the more’, [Romans 5:20](#), means the blessings far outweigh the losses. The word ‘increased’ is the word ‘abounded,’ used twice in the verse, and is from two different Greek words.

The first means ‘to fill’ and the second means ‘to superabound or overflow.’ So, sin abounded, but grace has been extended beyond measure, far surpassing all the evil effects of sin. ‘Sin reigned in death’, [Romans 5:21](#), notice how sin is personified, sin reigned unto death. Sin brought about physical and spiritual death.

‘Grace might reign’, [Romans 5:21](#). Again, this is personified, favour reigned through justification to eternal life. Grace brought about the present ‘life’ in Christ and shall bring ‘eternal life,’ [Titus 2:11-12](#).

How is this done? ‘Through Jesus Christ our Lord’, [Romans 5:21](#). In other words, He is the personal source of the favour who will fully carry out and execute all He has promoted and devised.

SUMMARY

Adam introduced sin into the world. We suffer the consequences of Adam’s sin, but not the guilt. When a father commits murder, the son does not stand trial for the crime; however, the son suffers the consequences of his father’s sin, shame, no provider, etc, [Ezekiel 18:20](#).

Some overpress Paul's contrast in [Romans 5:18-19](#). However, notice that if all are made sinners because of Adam, all are made righteous because of Christ. Adam introduced certain things into the world, and so did Christ. Adam introduced judgment to condemnation, and we receive it by our own disobedience.

Christ introduced justification to life, and we receive it by our own obedience. Adam introduced disease into the world, but it does not mean that all are born with disease.

It only means that all are subject to disease. Our text is dealing with the blessings through Christ. Man's responsibilities for receiving the blessings are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

In [Romans 5](#), we emphasised that salvation comes to us by grace. We are justified by faith, and we saw that to have faith may mean either of the following.

1. To believe on the basis of the evidence provided for us, or,
2. To believe when there is no evidence to go on, except the word of God Himself, and to believe because we have confidence in the trustworthiness of God.

'Abraham believed' when all the evidence was against the promise of a son ever being fulfilled. He did not hesitate or waver, but believed that, against all the odds, what God had promised would be fulfilled. We saw that faith is demonstrated in obedience, and obedience, in its turn, brings peace with God.

Then, in [Romans 5:9](#), Paul went on to show that not only have we been saved from the guilt of our past, by the blood of Christ, i.e. by His atoning sacrifice, but He continues to work for us, because, since the Lord Jesus is alive, He was raised from the dead, we shall be saved by the fact that He lives and is able to help us to remain saved which means 'keep sound'.

This is possible because whilst sin is powerful, grace is even more powerful. He has said in [Romans 5:20](#) that when the law came in, it exposed and revealed sin. Remember the example of trespass, crossing a field on your way home, then, one day, seeing the sign which says, 'NO TRESPASSING', and you are made aware that all this time you have actually been committing an offence, though you did not know it.

This means that through the coming of the Law, more and more sin became evident or, as [Romans 5:20](#) says in the R. S. V., 'sin increased'. But, Paul says, that where sin increased, grace 'over-abounded'. The word here is related to the Greek word 'huperperissos', which means 'over-abundance'. It is the word 'huper perlsseuo'.

Now, in [Romans 6](#), Paul deals with certain objections or perhaps genuine problems which his readers might have with this teaching. On the one hand, there would be those who were contending for the continued observance of the Law, the Judaizers, who did not really understand the doctrine of grace.

And we have brethren today who are like this, they are very, very legalistic and seek to impose a rigid discipline on their brethren, and try to hold them in a form of bondage to a system, but who do not really understand New Testament teaching of salvation by grace, because their constant emphasis is on works, on what the members of the congregation produce.

This is one of the major errors, if not the major error, of the ‘Boston movement’, so-called. The failure to understand the doctrine of salvation by grace, apart from works.

But, I am sure that there were others, sincere believers, who, hearing Paul speak of the abundance of grace, found that it was a concept so rich, so wonderful, that they could not grasp it.

Certainly, the questions which you find in [Romans 6](#) are not questions that Paul himself asked! After all, his understanding of the doctrine of grace was so clear that it would never have occurred to him even to ask them, [Romans 6:1](#) / [Romans 6:15](#).

I suggest that these are questions that have been raised by others when they heard Paul speaking about grace. He may even have been asked such questions many times over, and so he introduces them into this chapter in order to focus the attention of the readers of his letter to the Romans on the subject of God’s method of gaining the victory over sin in the life of the Christian.

Remember this fact, he has just said in [Romans 5](#), that although sin has increased, there is an abundance of grace that can deal with sin. So, you must imagine someone, perhaps an opponent, responding, ‘Well, if that is the case, why not keep on sinning, so that God’s grace may have more opportunities of working!’

Imagine someone saying to Paul, ‘Are you actually telling us that God is prepared to forgive a man’s sin as often as he commits it? So! The more we sin, the more opportunities God gets of showing his grace! Why not keep on sinning?’

You will readily see how someone might take advantage of this idea, and say, ‘Why not exploit God’s goodness, and commit all the sins we feel like committing if God’s grace is going to cover them anyway?’

There are religious groups today who, whilst not expressing it quite like that, certainly reveal that they have a very similar attitude. They are the people who hold the doctrine which is rather grandly called ‘the doctrine of eternal security’.

This, in simple language, means the doctrine of ‘once saved always saved, once in grace, always in grace’. It is the doctrine that says that, once you have been saved, you can never sin so as to fall away and become lost.

This doctrine is also known as ‘antinomianism’, ‘anti’ means against and ‘nomos’ means a law. In other words, no law! The people who brought out this error taught that justification is a verdict decided by God from eternity, predestination.

And they argued that if God has pre-determined, determined beforehand, that a person should be saved, that person must be saved, cannot help but be saved and cannot possibly be lost, no matter what sins he commits.

But no such doctrine is taught in the Scriptures. A sinner is never said to be saved until he believes and obeys the Gospel, [Matthew 28:19-20](#) / [Mark 16:15-16](#). And, unless our faith can be from eternity, there is no way in which we can be justified from eternity.

DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE IN CHRIST

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” [Romans 6:1-2](#)

Until sin is forgiven by faith and obedience to the Gospel, far from being saved, the sinner is under the wrath of God, [Romans 4:5](#). So, here in [Romans 6:1](#), Paul responds to this idea.

‘If we are saved by the grace of God, apart from the works of law, it doesn’t matter what we do, how much we sin, God’s grace will cover our sin! In fact, why not continue to sin so that it gives God the opportunity of showing his grace?’

In [Romans 6:2-14](#), he deals with that first question, why not continue in sin so that grace may be demonstrated,’ [Romans 6:1](#) / [Romans 5:20](#). That word continue is the word ‘meno’, which is often translated as ‘abide’, or ‘remain’.

And looking at it like that, you can see that the question in [Romans 6:1](#) might very well be rendered, ‘shall we stay, continue, to live in a sinful condition, so that God’s grace might be shown?’

You see how positively and emphatically he rejects the very idea! He says, ‘by no means!’ [Romans 6:2](#). The expression which is used in the Greek text is ‘me enai’, which translates as ‘perish the very idea!’ ‘Away with ire very thought!’ ‘May it never happen!’ or, as the A.V. has it, ‘God forbid!’

When we became Christians, we died to the old life, the life of sin, [Romans 6:2](#). The old man, with his sinful nature, is dead, and we are dead to sin, [Ephesians 2:1](#). Remember that the word for death is ‘thanatos’ and its root meaning is separation.

This is true whether we think of physical death or spiritual death. Physical death means the separation of life from the body. Spiritual death means the separation of the soul from God. And to be dead to sin means to be separated from the power of sin, introduced by Adam.

I think that this is one of the most difficult truths for Christians to grasp. You say, how can I be dead to sin, when I know very well that I sin in daily life? Of course, we know that we are not alone in this, because in the very next chapter, the man who is here telling us that we are dead to sin, tells us that he, himself, struggled with the very same problem.

Look at [Romans 7:21](#), for instance, and this is the theme of a large part of that chapter. “So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.”

John also wrote in [1 John 1:8](#), “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” This states clearly that being a Christian does not mean that we have attained sinless perfection!

This is because, although we have been freed from the guilt of our sin, and God has made available to us the power to overcome sin, in giving us the Holy Spirit, the fact remains that we shall be liable to sin for the rest of our earthly lives, and we shall not be completely beyond the reach of sin until we receive our glorified nature, but, and here is an important fact, God has so constituted us, as New Creations in Christ Jesus, that we do not have to sin.

Sin can be overcome, and that is the reason why Jesus became a man and took on human nature. He came to demonstrate that it is not necessary for God’s people to sin. Sin can be overcome.

Perhaps you have heard the illustration of the electric lamp. Here is a lamp, plugged into a wall socket. So long as the lamp is connected to the source of power, you can get it to light up. Take the plug out of the wall, and you cut it off from the power.

So, with a Christian, when you become a child of God, he cuts the connection between you and your evil nature. Connect the lamp to the source of power, and it will shine again. Connect the Christian with the old evil nature, and he will sin again.

But as always, the choice is ours. We do not lose our freedom of choice when we become Christians. We may choose between obeying the old nature and sinning, or choose to be influenced by our new nature and live as God wants us to. The choice is ours.

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” [Romans 6:3](#)

Paul shows what he means when he writes about our dying to sin, Romans 6:2. He shows that our baptism was an occasion of tremendous importance because of what transpired at that moment. Note, we were ‘Baptised into Christ’. A Relationship ‘into’. A Position ‘in’. ‘Baptised into his death’.

The second reason we should not continue in sin is that we have been baptised. ‘Baptised into Christ Jesus,’ Galatians 3:26-27. One is brought into a special relationship with Christ in baptism, into a state free from sin.

‘Into Christ’ means the same as ‘into the name’, since the name stands for the person. Paul realised they understood that they were baptised into Christ, but asked if they knew if their baptism was also ‘into His death’?

Paul perhaps is simply showing that we are baptised in the likeness of His death. No doubt, he is also showing that we are brought into a special relationship with His death. He shed His blood in His death, John 19:33-35.

And so, we are baptised into the benefits of His death. Members of the church have been accused of teaching, ‘One is saved by water.’ No, the blood of Christ saves, but it is by baptism that one reaches the benefits of His blood.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘From this and other references to baptism in Paul’s writings, it is plain that he did not regard baptism as an ‘optional extra’ in the Christian life.’

Let me ask a question: when do we die to sin? The answer must be when we are baptised into the death of Christ.

Another question: where and when do we come into contact with the blood of Christ?

And again, when do we begin to walk the new life? How would you convince an enquirer that sprinkling or pouring water is NOT New Testament baptism? What arguments would you use?

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” Romans 6:4-8

Notice the emphasis on union with Christ, Romans 6:4, ‘with him,’ Romans 6:5, ‘united with him’. ‘With him in resurrection,’ Romans 6:6, ‘crucified with him,’ Romans 6:8, ‘died with Christ,’ ‘live with him’.

Paul argues that since we have become united with the Lord Jesus, we cannot do and do not need the following.

1. We cannot continue to serve sin because we have acquired a new Master and a new allegiance.
2. We need not serve sin, because we have acquired new strength.

The old man, the old person that we were, the old self died, Romans 6:6. And when that happened, the hold which sin had on our lives was broken. Sin no longer had the grip on us that it once had, Colossians 3:10 / Ephesians 4:24 / Philippians 3:10-11.

Suppose you have the TV on in the house, and a program comes on which is offensive to Christian standards, bad language, immorality, and the program is not one which you would like to have on if Jesus came into the house.

As a Christian, you can do something which unregenerate men and women cannot do. You can switch off the TV and say, ‘I will not allow such filth into my home, or into my mind. I am in control here!’

Now, before you became a Christian, it is unlikely that it would have occurred to you to think like that. For instance, have you ever encountered people to whom it is ‘natural’, and I use that word purposely, to use bad language?

Every sentence contains either filthy language, profanities, or curses. And it is quite evident they do not even know they are using language which gives offence to other people. They have no control over their minds, or their tongues, or their lives, for that matter.

In [Romans 5:20-21](#), Paul describes sin as reigning. Reigning like a king. But now, he says, righteousness reigns. Sin has been dethroned. We have a new King in our lives, and we serve Him.

‘Buried with Him through baptism’, [Romans 6:4](#). There are two Greek words here, both of which mean ‘buried, immersed.’ And so, baptism is a burial. ‘By the glory of the Father’, [Romans 6:4](#), means the glory of God necessitated it, and the power of God brought it about. ‘Even so, we also should walk in newness of life,’ [Romans 6:4](#), and so, we are raised to a new life.

As Christ died, was buried, and was raised, we died to sin, are buried in baptism, and are raised to a new life. And so one’s baptism has a likeness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

A simple understanding of this truth overcomes many false ideas concerning baptism. Sprinkling or pouring has no likeness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Other passages teach that baptism is a burial, [Colossians 2:12](#). Many people have baptism in reverse order. They tell us that when one believes, or ‘accepts Christ as his personal Saviour,’ he is saved and has a new life. They tell us one is baptised to show that he is already saved, and so, ‘salvation before baptism.’

‘If we have been united together in the likeness of His death,’ [Romans 6:5](#), one is united with Christ in the likeness of His death when he is baptised into Him. ‘We will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection,’ [Romans 5:5](#). If through baptism we have been united in the likeness of His death, we shall be, in the future tense, in the likeness of His resurrection. From this verse, we see the importance of the re-enactment of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Paul continues his reasons why we shouldn’t sin. Thirdly, we shouldn’t sin because we are dead to sin, [Romans 6:6](#). If we have been united with Christ, we understand that several things have happened. We know that our old self was crucified with Him. That old life of sin and corruption has been put to death.

‘That the body of sin...’ [Romans 6:7](#), is the same as the ‘old man.’ When we were buried with Christ in baptism, we crucified, destroyed, and buried that old type of life. Why?

‘That we should no longer be slaves of sin’, [Romans 6:6](#). Notice Paul personifies sin as a master who takes control; however, we are no longer bond-servants to sin.

Another reason we shouldn’t commit sin is that we have been freed, in Greek, justified, from sin, [Romans 6:7](#). This shows what being ‘justified’ means. It means to be freed from sin.

We are thankful that we can be freed from sin, even from the grossest, ugliest, darkest of sin, [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#). Christians have continual access to forgiveness through Christ, [Acts 5:31](#) / [1 John 1:9](#).

In [Romans 6:8-11](#), Paul gives the fourth reason we shouldn’t sin because we are looking forward to someday living with Him.

1. ‘Died with Christ,’ [Romans 6:8](#), when we were baptised and when the old man was crucified.

‘We believe’, [Romans 6:8](#), believe what? We believe we shall live with Him in eternity because we have been raised to a new life and are walking in it, [2 Timothy 2:10-12](#).

“For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.” [Romans 6:9](#)

Look at the word ‘mastery’ or ‘dominion’ in [Romans 6:9](#). Here, Paul states that since Jesus has risen in triumph from the grave, death has no more dominion over him. He will never die again, because death has no power over him.

Now, he says in Romans 6:14, in the same way, that because you died to the old, sinful life, sin no longer has ‘dominion’, it’s the same word, over you, because you are not under the old law, but under grace.

The thought of ‘sin reigning as king’ is also in Romans 6:17, where Paul says we were the slaves of sin. The word he uses is the word ‘doulos’, which means bond, servant.

Let me say a few words about the word ‘doulos,’ because it is a word that you will often encounter in your study of the New Testament, since it is used in so many ways.

1. It is used one hundred and twenty-seven times in the New Testament.

Six times rendered ‘bond’. One time, ‘bondman’. One hundred and twenty times rendered ‘servant’.

2. But this is a special kind of service.

For instance, the word ‘therapon’, used in Hebrews 3:5, to describe Moses, refers to one who rendered voluntary service. But this word, which is probably based on the word ‘den’, meaning ‘to tie or bind’, refers to a very different situation!

Thayer tells us that it refers to the following.

1. A slave, a man in a servile condition.

2. One who gives himself up wholly to the will of someone else.

3. One who is devoted to the service of another person, without regard to his own interests.

4. And, not the least significant fact about this kind of servant, one who is bound to another with ties that are so strong that under normal circumstances, only death could break the bond.

Think about these points, and you will see what a serious state we were in as sinners, the slaves of sin. But we have been set free, set at liberty because Jesus has paid the price of our redemption. Paul does not use the word in this letter, though he uses it three times, all of them in 1 Corinthians.

If you notice just two of those occasions, 1 Corinthians 6:20, and 1 Corinthians 7:23. He says, ‘you were bought with a price’. The word ‘agorazo’ means to buy in the market, i.e. the slave market.

But he uses another word, ‘eragorazo’, which means ‘to buy OUT of the market’. And that is what has happened to us. Bought and set free, never to become slaves again, and never to be sold again!

‘Dies no more’, Romans 6:9, means death will never come to Him again. ‘Has dominion over Him’, Romans 6:9, means death will never lord over Him again. While He was in the flesh, He was subject to death as all human beings, but when He was raised, He broke the power of death forever. He conquered death and now lives to die no more, Revelation 1:18.

‘He died to sin once for all,’ Romans 6:10, means He died to the state or sphere of sin, that is, death put Him beyond sin’s power or reach. He died to a sinful world once for all, Hebrews 7:27 / Hebrews 9:26-28 / Hebrews 10:10, He now lives in harmony with the Father’s will, Romans 6:10. He now lives with God. He is now reigning in the presence of God, Hebrews 1:3.

“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.” Romans 6:11-14

2. ‘Count yourselves dead to sin’, Romans 6:11, means we could no longer live in sin than Christ could live His former life over again.

We must seek to be dead to the guilt, penalty, power, sphere, and relationship to sin, [Ezekiel 36:26-27](#). ‘Alive to God’, [Romans 6:11](#), means we are to be walking in a new life of service to Him, trying to be well-pleasing and acceptable in His sight. The Christian must strive to remain a new creature, being renewed day by day, [Ephesians 4:22-24](#).

He has been raised to new life with God; he should remain in this new relationship. He should not let the newness wear off. He must not become old and stale in his service.

In [Romans 6:12](#), Paul now gives words of exhortation based on what he had already said. First, he gives three negatives, [Romans 6:12-13](#).

1. ‘Do not let sin reign in your mortal body,’ [Romans 6:12](#).

We are not to allow sin to re-establish its reign in our bodies. We must overcome sinful habits.

2. ‘So that you obey its evil desires’, [Romans 6:12](#), we are not to obey evil desires and cravings, [1 Peter 2:11](#) / [Galatians 5:24](#).

To commit sin is to obey sin. To obey sin is to become sin’s slave. We must not, therefore, submit to sin’s rule or mastery in any part of our bodies. He gives his third negative exhortation in [Romans 6:13](#).

3. ‘Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness.’

We are not to use any part of our body to sin or as instruments. In Greek, it means arms, weapons, or tools, to do wrong.

Paul now gives two positives.

1. ‘But present...alive from the dead’, [Romans 6:13](#).

We present ourselves to God as alive from the dead. We are to act as if alive from the dead, not half dead.

2. ‘As instruments of righteousness to God’, [Romans 6:13](#).

We are to present the members of our bodies in service to God, [Romans 12:1](#). We are to use the various parts of our bodies as ‘tools’ in doing right. Put off the old sinful man and put on the new person who is made after the image of Him who created him, [Genesis 1:27](#) / [Ephesians 4:22-24](#) / [Colossians 3:8-10](#).

Paul continues to show that justification produces the fruit of holiness. ‘Master’, [Romans 6:14](#). Sin has its rule, control, or mastery over us when it does the following.

1. It leads us in the continual practise of sin, and

2. It brings about our final destruction.

‘For you are not under law but under grace’, [Romans 6:14](#), means you are not under a system mainly of law, but of grace. There are still things we shouldn’t do as Christians, but those laws are there to protect us. It’s a law of love.

Paul uses a figure of speech in which the less is denied to emphasise the greater. If we were under law alone, we could never be forgiven, and so, sin would have its dominion over us.

Under the system of grace, a system that is based on grace, but contains law or requires obedience to the will of God, the means of forgiveness are provided through the death of Christ.

SLAVES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though

you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.” Romans 6:15-18

Paul emphasises that the system of grace requires obedience to God. ‘Not under law’, Romans 6:15, this does not mean ‘wholly without law,’ but ‘not under a system mainly of law.’

Freedom from law means freedom from sin, its rule or dominion, not freedom to indulge in sin, or freedom from rules, standards, and restraints. Grace does not give liberty to sin; it only produces a way of escape.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘To treat being under grace as an excuse for sinning is a sign that one is not really under grace at all.’

Can one sin all he wants because God has provided forgiveness? No, his attitude is wrong and wholly unacceptable to God, 1 John 3:6 / 1 John 3:9. ‘By no means!’ Romans 6:15 is a strong negative, showing that one cannot commit sin because one is under grace rather than law.

To sin under grace is to turn grace into an occasion of lasciviousness, Jude 4. When someone submits to being someone’s slave and obeys him, he is the slave of the one whom he obeys. So it is with sin and obedience.

‘Obedience leading to righteousness’, Romans 6:16, obedience means doing the will of God as revealed in the Gospel, which brings one into the right relationship with God.

And so, it is a voluntary servitude. We choose which direction we will go. If one is born in sin, that is, totally depraved, there is no voluntary serving, Joshua 24:15.

‘Were slaves of sin’, Romans 6:17, is the sinful part of their lives was a thing of the past. ‘You obeyed from the heart’, Romans 6:17, and we know that all acceptable obedience must come from the heart. Notice that one must obey. One is not set free from sin by an inward condition of the heart only.

‘Pattern of teaching’, Romans 6:17, means in context, refers back to one’s obedience in baptism. One cannot obey the death, burial, and resurrection as such, but one can obey a form or mode of it by being baptised. ‘Claimed your allegiance’, Romans 6:17, means you were delivered from sin as your master to the doctrine of Christ as your master.

In Romans 6:18, he says that we have been made free from sin. The word ‘free’ is the word ‘eleutheroo,’ and it means to set at liberty. There is a third word that is used along with these two, and it is the word ‘lutroo’.

It is a very important word when thinking about slavery because it concerns the act of paying the price to set us free. It comes from the word ‘lutron,’ which is the word for ransom, and that was the price paid to free a slave. So ‘lutroo’ describes the act of redeeming by paying the ransom price.

And what was the price of our freedom? 1 Peter 1:18-19. So, do remember these words, ‘doulos’, slave. ‘Agorazo’ redeem to buying in the slave market. ‘Exagorazo’ to buy out of the market, never to be sold again, ‘lutron’ the ransom, the price that was paid to obtain our freedom.

There is yet another word that describes the entire process, it is the word ‘apolutrosis’, which means ‘setting free by paying the price’. You have been set free from sin as your master, and have become voluntarily bound to righteousness, Romans 6:18 / 1 John 1:8.

They were freed from sin when they changed masters when they obeyed the gospel from the heart, and now they should present their members as slaves of God, following His righteousness, as we will see in Romans 6:19 / Romans 6:22.

“I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:19-22

Paul continues with ‘the blessings of justification.’ Romans 6 involves ‘freedom from sin’ and Romans 7, ‘freedom from the law.’ He uses an illustration drawn from the common affairs of men because of their weakness to understand. He uses the well-known servant-master relationship to express the unknown, man’s servitude to God. ‘Human limitation’, Romans 6:19, means weakness, feebleness with regard to man’s physical makeup, including his intellect. ‘Slaves of impurity’, Romans 6:19, means they were slaves to moral impurities, Ephesians 2:2-3 / 1 Peter 4:2-3.

‘To ever-increasing wickedness’, Romans 6:19, means iniquity or lawlessness had become a way of life and was increasing. They had in time past been the slaves of uncleanness and lawlessness.

‘Righteousness leading to holiness’, Romans 6:19, Paul encourages them to now present themselves as slaves to right doing for holiness. They should now pursue holiness instead of uncleanness and lawlessness, Hebrews 12:14.

‘Free from the control of righteousness’, Romans 6:20, means being away from righteousness and not under its influence. When you were slaves of sin, regarding the principles of servitude, you were free as to righteousness, but now being bound as servants to righteousness, you owe it your service.

Before becoming slaves to righteousness, they were slaves to sin and followed it. In Romans 6:21, he asks what benefit? What benefits did you receive? Any honest person would freely admit that a sinful life is empty and worthless.

‘Things you are now ashamed of,’ Romans 6:21. They could now see the disgracefulness of sin and the beauty of holiness. Every Christian is ashamed when he reflects on his past sins.

‘Result in death’, Romans 6:21, means everlasting death, the second death, eternal separation from God. Through obedience, they had changed masters. He mentions ‘God’ in Romans 6:22, as their master, as opposed to ‘righteousness’ in the preceding verses.

‘The benefit you reap leads to holiness’, Romans 6:22. Sanctification is similar in nature to being a child of God. There is a definite time when one becomes a child of God, but as a child, he should grow daily in the likeness of His Father.

Growth is therefore a continual process. So it is with sanctification. One is sanctified when he becomes a child of God, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, but the process continues as he produces fruit in his life.

‘The result is eternal life’ is contrasted with ‘result in death,’ Romans 6:22. They are opposites in quality, but each of the same duration. Sin, as its master pays its wages, and none will be underpaid.

Christ died to redeem us from the wages of sin, eternal death. God, as a master, gives eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, Romans 6:23. He gives eternal life, not as wages, but as a gift upon conditions.

One would naturally expect that since he has God as His master, he would receive the wages of eternal life, but the Scriptures nowhere teach it. The eternal life cannot be compared, in terms of compensation, to the labour extended, 2 Corinthians 4:17 / Romans 8:18. It is similar to working for one day and then being paid one hundred million pounds.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

In Romans, Paul refers to ‘Law’ fifty-two times. First used in Romans 2:12. The church in Rome was mainly made up of Jews, Romans, and Greeks. Each race had its own ‘concept of Law’. Jews recognised only the Law of God as given through Moses.

A RELIGIOUS VIEW

The Romans gave the world Civil Law. An ordered and disciplined society, as we might expect from a militarily disciplined Empire. Greeks, the people of philosophy, reason and argument, for whom legal trials were an entertainment and a social event.

Given the reports reaching Rome, concerning Paul's teaching concerning 'Law', each party in the church would have its own questions about the things they had heard. Did Paul really despise the Law, telling the Gentiles that the Law was obsolete? Was he 'Antinomian'? 'Against Law'. Thus, against the Roman Government?

In Romans 7, Paul presents to the Roman church an exposition of Law such as they most certainly had never heard before. He has already dismissed the notion that salvation could be attained by keeping the Mosaic Law, or by Meritorious Works, i.e. good works, but only through the free Grace of God.

He now proceeds to teach them something about Law which they have failed to understand. In this chapter, the word 'Law' is used in seven different ways.

RELEASED FROM THE LAW, BOUND TO CHRIST

“Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?” Romans 7:1

In Romans 7:1-4, Paul was not teaching a lesson on marriage but was using that well-known relationship to show their relation to the law and to Christ.

1. Law as a general principle.

There is no article 'the' before the word 'law' in Romans 7:1, therefore it refers to all which all mankind is subject to, Galatians 4:4. Without this Law, there would be chaos. We are only released from this law by death, Romans 7:1.

2. The moral law, the code of conduct and rules of behaviour by which civilised society is governed.

Without it, there would be anarchy. When a man dies, the law governs him no longer, Romans 7:1. The law is bound only to the living. His point is, as he will show, that they were not under the law because they were dead to it, Romans 7:4 / Romans 7:6.

“For example, by law, a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man”. Romans 7:2-3

3. The law of marriage.

It is easy to see why he refers to the wife rather than the husband. The law is depicted as being the first husband, Romans 7:1-6. Other descriptions of the Old Law are 'schoolmaster,' Galatians 3:23-29, 'childhood,' Galatians 4:1-3, 'bondage', Galatians 4:21-30, 'shadow', Hebrews 10:1, 'yoke,' Acts 15:10.

An example that operates within the Moral Law, from which again, men are released only by death, Romans 7:2. Decreed by God, Genesis 2:24, and endorsed by Jesus, Mark 5:6-9.

The question of divorce is not discussed, but the situation described in Romans 7:6 is a normal marriage. This Law becomes invalid when one partner dies. Death makes a new marriage possible.

As it is a death that dissolves the marriage bond, so it is also a death that dissolves the legal bond, bondage to the law, Romans 7:2. Are we to understand Paul to say there is no reason at all for divorce? No, the exceptions are not considered here. It is intended that both parties be faithful to each other until the death of one or the other.

‘Released from the law of her husband’, Romans 7:2. The one that governs the relation of the wife to her husband, and she thus no longer has marital responsibilities to him and is free to marry another.

‘Called an adulteress’, Romans 7:3. The word, ‘called’ is an unusual word in the New Testament, it is used nine times and appears from its other uses to refer to ‘divinely’ proclaim, warn, speak, Matthew 2:12 / Matthew 2:22 / Luke 2:26 / Acts 10:22 / Acts 11:26 / Hebrews 8:5 / Hebrews 11:7 / Hebrews 12:25.

And so, when she has a loving husband and is married to another, she is so proclaimed an adulteress by God, Romans 7:3. The death of the mate frees one to marry again, Romans 7:3. Paul is simply speaking of the normal course of life, e.g., when one in the marriage dies, the other is free to remarry.

“So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.” Romans 7:4-10

In Romans 7:4-10, he makes application of his illustration. He used his comparison of marriage to convince the Jews, as well as all, that in obeying Christ, they died to the law, Romans 7:4.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

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

‘Through the body of Christ’, Romans 7:4. By the death of His body on the cross. The death of Christ brought an end to the law, Ephesians 2:13-17 / Colossians 2:14-17 / 2 Corinthians 3:5-18.

TWO PURPOSES

1. ‘That you may be married to another,’ Romans 6:4.

We are now under Christ and His headship. If we turn away from Him to another person or thing, it is spiritual adultery, Ezekiel 23:37 / Jeremiah 3:6-10.

2. ‘That we should bear fruit to God,’ Romans 7:5 / Galatians 2:19.

The Gospel, God’s plan of justification, produces fruit, godly living, faithful service, in the lives of people, Hebrews 9:14 / 1 Peter 2:24.

In Romans 7:5-13, Paul shows the purpose of the law in relation to sin. The law made one aware and conscious of sin and showed that the end result was death.

Notice he writes, ‘were in the flesh’, Romans 7:5. He is not referring to the human body because he adds by contrast Romans 7:6. He means, ‘when we were governed by the flesh.’ Thus, he refers to their former unregenerate state.

‘The sinful passions which were aroused by the law’ Romans 7:5. The thought here is probably that law revealed the nature of sinful passions, not that it produced them. By the law, they learned which desires were sinful.

However, evil people often want to do the very thing that is forbidden, simply because it is forbidden. ‘Were at work in our members,’ Romans 7:5. Sinful passions express themselves through the members of the body.

‘To bear fruit to death’, Romans 7:5. The end result was death because the law was unable to deliver from death. Sabbatarians say that the law which was done away with did not include the Ten Commandments. The next verse shows them to be wrong.

‘Delivered from the Law,’ Romans 7:6. As a Jew, Paul describes the Law which God had given to Israel as ‘against us’, but it has been ‘nailed to the Cross’, Colossians 2:14.

Notice that he is telling us that we should ‘serve,’ Romans 7:6. Let us do that very thing. ‘Newness of the Spirit,’ Romans 7:6. In the new way of the Spirit. This will be described at length in Romans 8.

The word ‘spirit’ here, no doubt, is referring to the Holy Spirit, because of the contrast made in context, and not man’s own spirit. The NKJV uses a capital ‘S’ whereas the KJV uses a small ‘s.’ Nonetheless, we should serve both in the new way of the Spirit and in accord with the newness of our own spirit.

‘Oldness of the letter’, Romans 7:6. The ‘letter’ refers to that which was written down, thus, the external writings of the Law of Moses. In 2 Corinthians 3:5-8, the Spirit that quickens is contrasted with the letter that kills. He adds in 2 Corinthians 3:9-17 that the ministry of the Spirit is far more glorious than the letter which kills.

‘Is the law sin?’, Romans 7:7. Did the law cause or create sin? ‘I would not have known sin’, Romans 7:7. The law defined and condemned sin. The phrase is not the same as ‘would not have sinned’ or ‘would not have experienced sin.’

‘Not have known covetousness’, Romans 7:7. He uses the 10th commandment as an example, Exodus 20:17 / Deuteronomy 5:21. He would not have known covetousness if the law had not prohibited it. Sin is personified here.

Sin, taking the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me coveting of every variety. The law furnished the opportunity for sin to take advantage of. It works up in me the very thing the law forbids; thus, it is sin that causes the unlawful desires, not the law.

‘For apart from the law sin was dead’, Romans 7:8. Without the law, sin was dormant and powerless. Without the law, he would not have known what sin was.

The law did not cause the evil desires, but brought the light of truth upon them and thus revealed them as sin. This does not mean the ignorance of the law would have excused them, but only means that the law made that which is sinful vivid. ‘I was alive once without the law’ Romans 7:9. This refers to his childhood.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

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

‘When the commandment came’, Romans 7:9. For example, ‘when he learned of it.’ ‘Sin revived’, Romans 7:9. ‘Sin sprang to life’, NIV. That is, sin woke up or sprang to life. Paul says, ‘and I died’, Romans 7:9, which means he had spiritually died.

When he was old enough to understand the law, he already saw that he was guilty of death. This would also be true of the convert to the law. Again, this shows that man is not born totally depraved or with ‘original sin.’

What was meant to lead him in the way of life brought him under the curse and penalty of death? Life came by keeping the law, Romans 10:5 / Leviticus 18:5, but death came by violation of the law, Deuteronomy 11:26-28 / Galatians 3:10.

“For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognised as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.” [Romans 7:11-15](#)

Sin is personified as an enemy who had destroyed him. Sin took advantage of the precept to deceive and kill, [Romans 7:11](#). Consider the case of Eve, the devil used the commandment as an opportunity to deceive, [Genesis 3:1](#). Harrison, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The word opportunity in the original is a military term meaning a base of operations. Prohibition furnishes a springboard from which sin is all too ready to take off.’

‘And by it killed me’, [Romans 7:11](#). The law showed him he was a condemned transgressor. The law did not justify those under it. The law is ‘holy’, [Romans 7:12](#), meaning the law is pure in its nature, without the taint of sin. It is holy because it was given by God and therefore is part of His divine nature. The ‘commandment is holy’, this is the 10th commandment, to which he had just referred, [Exodus 20:17](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:21](#) / [Romans 7:7](#). It is righteous in its demands and penalties, [Romans 7:12](#). It is also ‘good’, [Romans 7:12](#), which means it is beneficial in itself for mankind. It was good for the end to which it was given.

This answers Paul’s question back in [Romans 7:7](#), ‘Is the law sin?’ The problem is therefore with the sinner, not the law. This verse is a favourite of the 7th Day Adventist.

However, in context, it has nothing to do with the law as binding on us today. As a matter of fact, he goes on to show that he had been delivered as shown in [Romans 7:24-8:4](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Romans 7:13](#).

‘The law, therefore, is the grand instrument in the hands of a faithful minister, to alarm and awaken sinners.’

‘Death to me?’ [Romans 7:13](#), refers back to the ‘killed me’ in [Romans 7:11](#). It was sin, not the law, that deceived and killed, [Romans 7:13](#). ‘Might become exceedingly sinful’, [Romans 7:13](#). The law was excellent in revealing and condemning sin. It thus leads one to the Saviour who would take away all sin.

In context, he is referring to a condition under the law. Some take these verses to be referring to the inward struggle of the Christian. Of course, there is an inward struggle, but not this severe. Thus, he is referring to his struggle under the law.

Notice he says the ‘Law is spiritual’, [Romans 7:14](#). It was revealed by the Spirit, and it appeals to the inner man, [Romans 7:22](#) / [Romans 7:25](#) / [Deuteronomy 6:5-6](#).

‘But I am carnal, sold under sin’, [Romans 7:14](#). Using the present tense, he is transposing himself back to the time when he was a sinner under the law. This was true of everyone under the law. They could not obtain justification. The Christian is not ‘sold under sin,’ but has been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

He does not stand condemned, [Romans 8:1](#), but is justified by faith, [Romans 5:1](#), and has a continual opportunity for forgiveness as he complies with the conditions, [1 John 1:7-9](#). The demands of the law of sin were obeyed in his life despite his good intentions.

Paul says, ‘I do not understand’ [Romans 7:15](#). He did not understand the full nature and consequences of what he was doing. ‘For what I will to do, that I do not practice.’ [Romans 7:15](#).

Thus, he did the opposite of his intentions. The conflict was so strong under the Law of Moses that he could not overcome it. He was under a yoke of bondage that he could not overcome, [Acts 15:10](#). Christians are freed from all yokes of bondage, [Romans 8:2](#) / [Galatians 5:1](#).

“And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” Romans 7:16-24

5. The law of my mind.

The Law of God.

6. The law of sin and death.

This phrase is used in [Romans 8:2](#), which conflicts with the Law of God. See the reality of sin, defined and exposed. Paul says that, although non-Jews did not have the Old Covenant law, they revealed, by their conduct, that what God demands is ‘written on their hearts’, [Romans 2:14-17](#), that is, in their consciences. He knows that pagan philosophers and thinkers were not completely ignorant of, or in error about, this fact.

Socrates, who lived at the same time as Paul, spoke about ‘the Divine Sign’, the inner voice that he believed kept him from doing wrong. The Stoics also taught that Man is aware of a ‘universal divine law’ and some of them even spoke about ‘conscience’. The word literally means ‘with knowledge’.

You will remember that, in Athens, Paul quoted one of their own philosophers when speaking about God, [Acts 17:22-28](#). Famous Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato believed that, in their thinking, they were ‘reaching out towards God’.

But Paul has stated in [Romans 1:19-32](#), that the knowledge possessed by the Gentiles, and the logic of their philosophy, could not save them because their thinking became ‘futile’, [Romans 1:21](#). The word means ‘vain’, it did not accomplish anything, so that it ended in futility.

7. The law of the spirit of ‘life in Christ’.

Was the Mosaic Law faulty or ineffective? Paul says that the Law was ‘holy’, [Romans 7:12](#). The reason why it could not save was that Israel failed to keep the Law. The people did not reach the standard set by God.

EXAMPLE

On February 4th 2014, The Authorities responsible for the selection of British athletes representing the U.K. in the forthcoming Olympic Games announced that financial backing has been withdrawn from certain sports. The reason?

The athletes involved have failed to reach the qualifying standard set by the International Olympic Committee. The standard has been declared. Failure to reach it results in disqualification.

The law demanded a decent, upright life. Paul wished to live it and so agreed that the law was good, [Romans 7:16](#). Paul says, ‘no longer I who do it’, [Romans 7:17](#), which means, no more I alone who do it. This is a figure of speech often found in the Bible in which one part of a sentence is stated in the negative in order to emphasise the positive, [John 12:44](#).

‘But sin that dwells in me’, [Romans 7:17](#). This shows that he is referring to his condition under the law. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian, [Romans 8:9-11](#) / [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#). Paul is not saying that he is not responsible for his sins, but that he is not the slave of sin by choice. Under the law, sin had conquered him.

Paul says, ‘in me, nothing good dwells’, [Romans 7:18](#). As a condemned violator of the law, he was subject to sin. He was under its power and control. ‘For to will is present’, [Romans 7:18](#). The urge to do good was present. He says, ‘I do not find’, [Romans 7:18](#). He had the desire, but could not find the way. Again, this cannot refer to when he was a Christian. The Christian has found the Way. Paul was making a distinction between his better self and that part of him that acted contrary to it.

[Romans 7:19](#) is the same as [Romans 7:15](#). What he wished to do, that is, obey the law as his master, without being condemned, he was unable to do. What he wished not to do, that is, serve sin as his master, he did. He was unwilling to be a sinner, yet was condemned and sold under sin.

‘Now if I do what I will not to do,’ [Romans 7:19](#). He willed not to serve sin, but sin was his master because he had become a transgressor under the law. He was a transgressor without the Gospel or the blood of Christ to take away his sins.

Wuest, in his commentary, says the following.

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

‘It is no longer I who do it’, [Romans 7:20](#). The contrast is between the part of him who longed to be justified and his state of sin, and not as to who was ultimately accountable for his sin.

He willed to do right but was sold under sin. Thus, he was torn between two masters, the law, which he loved and wanted to serve, and sin, which he loathed and hated to serve. The law was his love, but sin was his master.

‘Sin dwells in me’, [Romans 7:20](#). Sin controlled his life. Sin is ever-present in those who have not died to sin. Paul says, ‘I find then a law’, [Romans 7:21](#). Literally, ‘the law.’ The definite article ‘the’ is before law in the original Greek. The marginal reading of the ASV says, ‘I find then in regard to the law.’

‘That evil is present with me’, [Romans 7:21](#). Again, this refers to his condition as a condemned sinner under the law. He could never absent himself from the fact that he was a sinner and a condemned violator of the law.

‘The one who wills to do good’, [Romans 7:22](#). His desires and intentions to do good were ever-present. He delighted in the law of God, which appealed to the inner man, [Romans 7:22](#) / [Romans 6:15](#).

It could be translated, ‘for according to the inward man, I delight in the law of God.’ Thus, the inner man is pleased with the law of God. This is especially true under the New Testament law.

C.S. Lewis says the following.

‘No man knows how bad he is until he has tried to be good.’

‘But I see’, [Romans 7:23](#). He depicts himself as an observer of the conflict that was going on within him. ‘Another law in my members’, [Romans 7:23](#). He refers to another law besides the Law of Moses, the law of sin, as shown in context. In his flesh or in the members of his body dwells the law of sin.

‘Warring against the law of my mind’, [Romans 7:23](#). The law addressed to his mind, or his constant inclination to do right. The law of sin was warring against, literally ‘soldiering against’, the law of his mind; thus, he again refers to that inward conflict. ‘Bring me into captivity’, [Romans 7:23](#). It made him a prisoner. He had established in [Romans 6](#) that Christians are not the servants of sin.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following concerning Paul calling himself a wretched man, [Romans 7:24](#).

‘It is worth bearing in mind that the great saints through the ages do not commonly say, ‘How good I am!’ Rather, they are apt to bewail their sinfulness.’

‘The law of sin, which is in my members’, [Romans 7:24](#). The rule of sin in his members. Thus, again, he contrasts what he desired to be and what he was because of sin.

A sinner under the law, that is, 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 without the Gospel and how utterly impossible it was to be saved by the law.

Under the dominion of sin, he was helpless in his desire to free himself from the end result of death, [Romans 7:24](#). Who shall deliver me from this hopeless, miserable, and hopeless condition? [Romans 7:24](#).

Again, this whole text cannot be referring to the inward turmoil of a Christian. The Christian is freed from all sin by the blood of Christ, and should never be in such a hopeless state of despair.

“Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.” [Romans 7:25](#)

Paul now answers his own question, [Romans 7:24](#). Deliverance from his wretched, condemned state comes through Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, [Romans 7:25](#) / [Matthew 11:28-30](#).

‘With the mind I myself serve’, [Romans 7:25](#), refers back to his condition under the law, with his mind he served the law of God. In his mind, he wanted to do what the law required.

‘But with the flesh the law of sin’ [Romans 7:25](#). For example, under the law in [Romans 7:5](#). Under the law, ‘when we were in the flesh,’ [Romans 7:5](#), we were slaves to the law of sin. Under the law, they were unwilling servants of sin because sin controlled and condemned them.

He shows in [Romans 8:1-2](#) that in Christ, he has been freed from the law of sin and death. Thus, the flesh loses the battle under Christ. Thus, this whole section refers to his condition under the law.

Too many people say that [Romans 7:7-25](#) is difficult to understand. I believe they have difficulty with it because they try to force the verses to teach something which is not revealed. It does not involve the internal conflict within the mind of a Christian, but rather with the state of mind of one under the law.

Under the law, one stands condemned by the very law he loves and desires to keep. He desired to do right, but because he had violated the law, he was condemned under it.

How could one be delivered from such a wretched conflict of mind? The answer is given in [Romans 7:24-8:4](#). Christ delivers one from that inward conflict. Thus, he has now been freed from it.

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

What we will see in this chapter is that law and death are contrasted with life and love.

We will see Justification. [Romans 8:30](#) / [Romans 8:33](#)

We will see Glorification. [Romans 8:31](#)

We will see Sanctification. [Romans 8:35](#)

We will see Intercession. [Romans 8:34](#)

We will see Predestination. [Romans 8:35](#)

We will see Perseveration. [Romans 8:33-39](#)

LIFE THROUGH THE SPIRIT

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1-2

Those in sin are under sentence of death. Those in Christ are declared to be justified, **Romans 8:1**. Notice the difference between **Romans 7**, life in the flesh and **Romans 8**, life in the Spirit.

The force of the word ‘I’ in **Romans 7** is great. It is mentioned no less than twenty-three times in eleven verses, whilst ‘me’ is mentioned six times and ‘my’ three times.

So in just eleven verses, **Romans 7:14-24**, Paul’s personal self, as he saw it at the time, is mentioned no less than thirty-two times, nearly three times per verse. Contrast the word ‘I’ with the ‘Spirit’ who is mentioned nineteen times in **Romans 8**.

The Spirit of Life is the Holy Spirit. **Romans 8:2**
The Spirit of God. **Romans 8:9**
The Spirit of Christ. **Romans 8:9**
The Spirit of Him who raised up Christ. **Romans 8:11**
His Spirit. **Romans 8:11**

In **Romans 8:1-17**, Paul divides people into two categories: those who let themselves be controlled by their fleshly desires, and those who follow after the Holy Spirit. He gives a strong exhortation to cause us to choose the right path. ‘No condemnation’, **Romans 8:1**, means freed from sin’s guilt and enslaving power; the law of sin and death no longer has control, **Romans 7:23**. Whether he may or may not again come into condemnation is not a matter of consideration here.

Notice the law of the Spirit of Life, **Romans 8:2**. The Holy Spirit prescribes conduct. Tells us how we ought to live. When we follow the course of conduct laid down by the Holy Spirit, we are freed from the old bondage to sin, with the inevitable consequence which that bondage would otherwise bring.

‘Law of the Spirit of life’, **Romans 8:2**. The law is revealed by the Spirit, which is capable of producing life. It is Christ’s law as to the source, and the Spirit’s as to the agent of making it known. It is the ‘law of life’ because it is the principle or rule by which spiritual life is obtained.

Notice, also, ‘made us free’, **Romans 8:2**. This means that following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as to our conduct, we have been set at liberty. When the conqueror of a nation announces new laws, he automatically makes the old laws ineffective and renders them invalid, out of date.

For example, when over two hundred years ago, the American Declaration of Independence was drawn up and became the law of the United States of America, the old laws of the British Parliament no longer had any validity, authority or power.

‘Made me free,’ **Romans 8:2**, this shows, again, that he was not in **Romans 7**, talking about his conflict as a Christian because he would not say in one breath, ‘I am carnal, sold under sin, sin dwells in me, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin’, **Romans 7:14 / Romans 7:20 / Romans 7:23**, etc., and in the same breath say, ‘I am free,’ His conflict was a thing of the past, not of the present.

‘The law of sin and death’, **Romans 3:2**. The law of sin resulting in death, which was in the members. From **Romans 8:3**, the law could not do it. In other words, it could not deliver him from the conflict, but the other could. If the law of sin and death refers to the Law of Moses, Paul would be saying that the Law of Moses could not deliver us from the Law of Moses.

Paul argues that we were under the old dominion of sin, but sin, as we have seen, has been dethroned. We have a new master, and sin’s power and sin’s law have ceased to be valid. We are now under the law of the spirit of life, because whilst sin brought death, the Spirit brings life in Christ, **Romans 8:2**.

But notice the new life is only in Christ, **Romans 8:2**. All the blessings are said to be in Christ. In Him we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins, **Colossians 1:14**. In Him we are children of God, by faith, **Galatians 3:27**. In Him we have all spiritual blessings, **Ephesians 1:3**. We have the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **Romans 3:24**. In Him we are a new creation in Christ Jesus, **2 Corinthians 5:17**.
Poole, in his commentary, says the following about the words ‘in Christ’.

‘This phrase imports that there is a mystical and spiritual union betwixt Christ and believers. This is sometimes expressed by Christ being in them, and here by their being in Christ. Christ is in believers by His Spirit, and believers are in Christ by faith.’

HOW DOES ONE GET ‘INTO CHRIST’?

Quinn, when answering this question, says the following.

‘A first, most reasonable question for those interested in eternal salvation, as well as in the other spiritual blessings of God, would be, ‘How does one get into the relationship described as being ‘in Christ’?’

No Scripture says that we ‘believe’ into Christ or that we ‘repent’ into Christ, though both of these things are prerequisites. There is a specific moment in which the Scriptures teach that a believing, repentant individual is ‘in Christ.’ We do not have to guess about it. We know the precise point.

The Lord God, in His word, places that moment at baptism! Though many would reject this, saying a believer is in Christ before he or she is baptised, we must instead take the Lord’s word for it.

He has told us, through the inspired word given from heaven to Paul, that, ‘Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus have been baptised into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life,’ **Romans 6:3-4**.

And ‘For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ,’ **Galatians 3:27**. So we learn that every spiritual blessing is found ‘in Christ’ and that we are baptized ‘into Christ.’ This means we must be baptised to gain access to the spiritual blessings in Christ!’

“For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.” **Romans 8:3-7**

‘The law was powerless’, **Romans 8:3**. The Law of Moses could not make one free from the law of sin and death. Any law by itself cannot provide redemption. ‘It was weak through the flesh’, **Romans 8:3**; it was without strength because it was of carnal and fleshly things, **Hebrews 7:18-19 / Hebrews 8:6-8**.

Poole, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The law is weak to us, because we are weak to it: the sun cannot give light to a blind eye, not from any impotency in itself, but merely from the incapacity of the subject it shines upon.’

‘In the likeness of sinful flesh’, **Romans 8:3**. His Son was in the same flesh through which men sin. He was in the same kind of flesh as belonging to the rest of sinful mankind. ‘And account of sin’, **Romans 8:3**, ‘Or, by a sacrifice for sin’, Footnote, KJV, ‘As an offering for sin’, Footnote, ASV.

‘Condemned sin’, **Romans 8:3**. The fact that He was given for it was a condemnation of it. His death showed how wrong, terrible, and extremely evil sin is and thus condemns it.

Christ was given as a sacrifice that the righteousness which the Old Testament sought after might be accomplished in us. It fulfils in us exactly what the law was unable to accomplish.

‘Who do not walk according to the flesh,’ **Romans 8:4**. Who do not live a worldly life, devoted to the flesh. Their actions are not governed by fleshly dictates and appetites. ‘But according to the Spirit’, **Romans 8:4**. Their actions are governed by the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Paul explains this more fully in the following verses. The flesh and Spirit both direct and cause behaviour, **Romans 8:5**. Everyone is following one or the other. Only those who are directed and controlled by the Spirit have deliverance. Those who mind and walk after the flesh are under condemnation.

Those who live according to the flesh have the wrong ‘mindset,’ **Romans 8:5-6**. The carnally minded have material, fleshly interests, **Matthew 16:23 / Philipians 3:19 / 1 Corinthians 3:3**.

‘The things of the Spirit’, **Romans 8:5**, means those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on those holy and right things revealed by the Spirit. They are spiritually-minded.

Paul speaks about the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, and the mind of the Spirit. To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, **Romans 8:6**.

‘Carnally minded is death’, **Romans 8:6**, means to be fleshly minded, having one’s mind ruled and controlled by the earthly, material things, results in death. Our physical appetites can distinguish between the pleasant and the unpleasant, but they cannot distinguish between the right and the wrong.

So, our fleshly appetites, our desires, often prompt us to do those things which are not according to the will of God. We disobey God, and that means that we are in rebellion against God, **Romans 8:7**. So, the flesh is hostile to God, and to allow the body to rule is to do that which God has forbidden.

‘Spiritually minded is life and peace’, **Romans 8:6**, means that having one’s mind ruled and controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. Its end result is spiritual life, freedom from sin’s penalty, and peace, that is, tranquillity of heart and mind, which comes to those who are in the right relationship, those who are justified with God.

‘Carnal mind is enmity against God’, **Romans 8:7**, is hostile toward God, showing hatred of God. The fleshly and spiritual minds are hostile to one another, **Galatians 5:17 / Galatians 5:24**. ‘Not subject to the law of God’, **Romans 8:7**, means the carnal mind is not obedient to the will of God because it is governed by the dictates of the flesh.

‘Nor indeed can be’, **Romans 8:7**, that is, the carnal-minded cannot be subject to the law of God while attending to the flesh. It cannot submit to or obey God and remain carnal. Once it chooses to obey God, it ceases to be fleshly and becomes spiritual.

Remember that **Romans 7** involved the inward conflict Paul had when he lived under the law. He now shows that he was freed from that conflict. In **Romans 7:1**, he writes, ‘now’, as distinguished from the time when he projected himself back under the law.

APPLICATION

We must daily centre our minds on spiritual things, **Colossians 3:1-2 / 1 Peter 1:13**. The very best way to be spiritually minded, that is, minding things of the Spirit, is by having our minds renewed by the Word of God, **Romans 12:2 / 2 Corinthians 4:16**.

We must pray that the Lord will give us our daily food, **Luke 11:3**, as well as our spiritual food, **Matthew 4:4**. Spiritual nourishment is far more important, **John 6:27**.

“Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.” **Romans 8:8-14**

Their every interest and desire is against the will of God, **Romans 8:8**; thus, they are under the control of the flesh and not the Spirit. ‘Not in the flesh’, **Romans 8:9**, means not under the control of the flesh, but under the control of the Spirit.

Notice Paul mentions the ‘Spirit of God’, **Romans 8:9**. He either refers to the Spirit which inhabits the Father or the one sent by Him, the Holy Spirit. No one knows which.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a fact plainly taught in the New Testament, **Romans 8:9 / Acts 2:38 / Acts 5:32 / Galatians 4:6 / 1 Corinthians 3:16 / 1 Corinthians 6:19 / 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 / 2 Corinthians 5:5 / Ephesians 1:13-14 / Ephesians 4:30**. Thus, there is no difference among Christians as to the fact of the indwelling.

Paul mentions the ‘Spirit of Christ’, **Romans 8:9**. This identifies in this verse, as well as the first part of **Romans 8:10**, Christ’s Spirit. Christ dwells in the Christian just as the Spirit does.

Notice they ‘do not belong to Christ’, **Romans 8:9**. This means he is not a Christian. Without Christ’s Spirit within one, he does not belong to and is not in union with Christ.

Newell, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Many sincere people are yet spiritually under John the Baptist’s ministry of repentance. Their state is practically that of the struggle of Romans Seven, where neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit is mentioned, but only a quickened but undelivered soul in struggle under a sense of ‘duty,’ not a sense of full acceptance in Christ and sealing by the Holy Spirit.’

‘The body is dead because of sin’, **Romans 8:10**, because of sin, the body is doomed to natural death and, hence, is accounted as already dead. ‘But the Spirit is life because of righteousness’, **Romans 8:10**.

The life-imparting Spirit is dwelling within you because of justification. The Holy Spirit gives life through the Gospel system, that is, justification to those who are indwelt by Christ.

The verse is showing that if Christ is in us, though our bodies must die because of sin, the life-imparting Spirit is dwelling in us because of our justification. Using the Spirit, note, Holy Spirit, ‘S’ in upper case, throughout this text is more consistent.

Notice Paul uses the word ‘if’, **Romans 8:11**. This tells us that the rewards are conditioned on Deity indwelling. ‘The Spirit of Him, through His Spirit’, **Romans 8:11**, means there is no reason to change to the Holy Spirit in this verse. The Scriptures teach that the Spirit of the Father, as well as the Holy Spirit, dwells in us, **2 Corinthians 6:16 / 1 John 4:4 / 1 John 4:13 / 1 John 4:16 / Ephesians 4:6 / Philippians 2:13**.

‘Will also give life to your mortal bodies’, **Romans 8:11 / John 5:28-29 / 1 Corinthians 15:52-53**. We have faith that as God raised up Jesus, we will be as well, **1 Corinthians 6:14 / 2 Corinthians 4:14**.

He now gives an exhortation drawn from what has been previously said. ‘We are debtors, not to the flesh’, **Romans 8:12**, that is, we do not owe the flesh anything.

‘To live according to the flesh’, **Romans 8:12**, means to live after the flesh is enmity against God and will end in everlasting death. We owe absolutely no allegiance to the fleshly rule.

We are debtors to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit. Notice Paul said, ‘will die’, **Romans 8:13**. This means if you live according to the flesh, you must pay the consequence of eternal death, **Galatians 3:3**.

‘By the Spirit’, **Romans 8:13**, means through the instruction, enlightenment, and direction of the Spirit’s revelation.

‘You will live’, **Romans 8:13**, means you will have eternal life. When you put to death the deeds of the body, those sinful things done in the body, you will receive eternal life.

‘These are sons of God’, **Romans 8:14**, the true sons of God are the ones led by the Word of the Spirit. If we are led by the Spirit of God, we truly are His children. We are led by the Spirit through the Word of the Spirit.

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS

THE VERSE	ACTION	THE VERSE
John 3:5 / John 3:8	Regrets	1 Peter 1:23-25
John 4:43	Gives Life	Psalms 119:93
Titus 3:5	Saves	James 1:21
John 16:8	Convinces	Titus 2:9
Romans 8:16	Testifies	John 5:35
Romans 15:13	Gives Power	Hebrews 4:12
2 Thessalonians 2:13	Sanctifies	John 17:17
1 Corinthians 6:11	Washes	Ephesians 5:26
Acts 9:31	Comforts	Romans 15:4

APPLICATION

We must, through the instruction, enlightenment, and direction of the Spirit’s revelation, put to death the deeds of the body, those sinful things done in the body, so that we can be blessed with eternal life. We must bring an end to those sinful deeds of the body. By all means, we must break all sinful habits, for the end of that way of life is eternal death.

“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” **Romans 8:15-17**

Adoption in New Testament times was the public recognition that this was your real son. They would say the words, ‘I adopt thee’ three times. These were children who were brought up by someone else.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the Roman world of the first century AD, an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature.’

‘Spirit of bondage again to fear’, **Romans 8:15**, we have not received the spirit of slavery to once more fill us with fear. ‘Spirit of adoption’, **Romans 8:15**, means we have not received the disposition of slaves serving out of fear, but

that of adopted sons. It is called the ‘Spirit’ of adoption because the Holy Spirit revealed the process, the means by which we become sons of God.

‘By whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father,’ **Romans 8:15**. ‘Abba’ is an Aramaic word that means ‘father’ but expresses the love and trust a child has toward his father. The Greek word ‘father’ expresses an intelligent understanding of the relationship.

The two together express the love and intelligent confidence of the child. We, as adopted children, cry out intimately and intelligently to our heavenly Father, **Matthew 6:9**.

Two witnesses are involved, both bearing witness to the same fact, ‘we are children of God,’ **Romans 8:16**. The Holy Spirit has given His testimony, and our spirits testify that we have done those things. Thus, the two witnesses agree or bear witness together, **1 John 2:5 / 1 John 5:13**.

One can know that he is a child of God when he has the testimony of both spirits, the Holy Spirit revealing what he must do, and his own spirit revealing that he has done it, **Deuteronomy 17:6**.

The Holy Spirit has revealed the plan of salvation, and when our spirits testify that we have obeyed the plan, both spirits are testifying that we are children of God.

Also, when the Spirit reveals the kind of character which constitutes a child of God, and our spirits reveal that we have that kind of character, both bear witness that we are children of God.

‘Then heirs’, **Romans 8:17**. Since we are sons, we are privileged to share in the favours and will be partakers of the inheritance. Notice we are ‘joint heirs with Christ’, **Romans 8:17**, this means we are His brethren, **Hebrews 2:11**, and shall inherit with Him, **Revelation 3:21**.

‘If indeed we suffer with Him’, **Romans 8:17 / Philippians 3:10**, thus, again, our glorification is conditional. ‘That we may also be glorified together’, **Romans 8:17**, we must suffer with Him in this life so that we can be glorified with Him in eternity.

APPLICATION

When our faithfulness to Him leads to suffering, let us rejoice and patiently endure because, someday, we will be glorified together with Him, **Acts 5:40-42 / 1 Peter 4:11-16 / 2 Timothy 2:11-12 / Matthew 5:10-12**.

PRESENT SUFFERING AND FUTURE GLORY

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” **Romans 8:18-21**

The remainder of **Romans 8** may be viewed as six reasons why Christians should endure suffering.

1. Because of the glorious reward, **Romans 8:18**.
2. The body will be redeemed, **Romans 8:19-23**.
3. We are saved by hope, **Romans 8:24-25**.
4. The Spirit helps in our weaknesses, **Romans 8:26-27**.
5. All things work together for good, **Romans 8:28-30**.
6. God is for us, **Romans 8:31-39**.

The Book of Romans is much more than an explanation of God's redeeming grace. It is a letter of comfort, encouragement, and exhortation addressed to you and me.

'Are not worthy to be compared', **Romans 8:18**, means the duration and severity of the suffering, when compared to the reward, will be as nothing, **1 Corinthians 15:19 / 2 Corinthians 4:17**. 'Revealed in us', **Romans 8:18**. It will fill and overwhelm us. We will be part of that glory.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'The glory will be revealed, not created. The implication is that it already exists, but is not apparent.'

The second reason for enduring suffering is that Christians eagerly await the redemption of the body. This section is one of the most difficult in the book of Romans.

There are many different interpretations of the meaning of 'creature,' 'the whole creation,' and 'we ourselves.' Paul is dealing with the present suffering and future glory.

Suffering is temporary, but man is eternal. The suffering Christian will someday be delivered from this present state and transformed into a glorious state. 'Earnest expectation', **Romans 8:19**, means eagerly watching with suspense.

When Paul speaks of 'the creation', there are four possibilities.

1. 'The creation', in terms of all created things, including inanimate objects.
2. 'The creation', in terms of intelligent beings, is humanity.

The same as 'whole creation' in **Romans 8:22**.

3. 'The new creation', in terms of the spiritual creation of God, the Christian.
4. 'The creature', in terms of the physical makeup of man, the body.

As we will see, the second one seems to be the correct meaning in this text. 'Waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.' 'Revealing of the sons of God', **Romans 8:19, NIV**. The emphasis is on man's hope of immortality.

MacKnight, on this verse, said the following.

'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.'

'For the creation', humanity, rational beings. 'Subjected to futility', 'Subject to vanity', **Romans 8:20, KJV**. This means it's subject or liable to suffering, sickness, pain, sorrow, and death.

'Not willingly', **Romans 8:20**, means not by their own choice or will. 'Because of Him', **Romans 8:20**, that is God. In the beginning, when man sinned, God pronounced curses upon him and thus brought him under futility, **Genesis 3:17**.

'Subjected it in hope', **Romans 8:20**, means in hope of the ultimate deliverance from corruption. Even when God pronounced the curses upon man in the beginning, He gave him hope of deliverance. Man was thus subjected to hope.

'The creation itself', **Romans 8:21**, several translations, including the ASV, NASV and the NIV, connect the 'in hope' of **Romans 8:20**, with **Romans 8:21**, giving them the following rendering.

'For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.'

NASV.

'Bondage of corruption', **Romans 8:21**, means that which the body is in, mortality. 'Glorious liberty of the children of God,' **Romans 8:21**, means eternal life, characterised by glory, honour, and immortality.

From the very beginning, sinful man was given hope that God would provide deliverance from the bondage of corruption and mortality to a glorious liberty, immortality, **Genesis 3:15**.

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”
Romans 8:22

What does Paul mean? It is wise when encountering a difficult verse of Scripture to put it in its proper context, that is, by reading what goes before it and what follows.

When we do this with this verse in **Romans 8**, we find that the chapter proclaims the believer’s confident hope in a manner that stands in glorious contrast with the bleak hopelessness which runs through **Romans 7**, especially in **Romans 7:7-24**.

Remember **Romans 7**, which is a chapter on law and death deals with law, all kinds of law. But Paul is particularly concerned with the law of sin, and he describes the despair of the man who, he describes as ‘captive to the law of sin’, **Romans 7:23**.

The despair of the man is clearly heard in the cry in **Romans 7:24**. ‘Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?’ The word ‘wretched’ is ‘talaiporos’, which describes one who has been reduced to weariness by hard labour.

The latter part of the word, ‘poros’, is the word for ‘callus’, bringing to mind hands roughened with exhausting toil, and we find it again in the word ‘porosis’, for ‘hardness’, or ‘callousness’, in **Mark 3:5**.

The man’s wail of agony strikes us with even greater force when Philip Dodderidge, quite accurately, uses the phrase, ‘this dead body’, because it suggests that Paul is very probably alluding to an extremely gruesome form of punishment which, in ancient times, was known to have been inflicted on those guilty of murder.

There is a great deal of evidence to show that the murderer was sometimes bound to the corpse of his victim, hence the question in that verse. In the following lines, Virgil, the Greek poet, describes this punishment as it was imposed by one particularly cruel Greek King.

‘The living and the dead at his command were coupled, face to face and hand to hand; Till, choked with stench, in a loathed embrace, The lingering wretches pined away and died.’

If you think that this was horrid and uncivilised behaviour, let me remind you that, in the reign of Richard 1st, the famous ‘Richard the Lionheart’ beloved of film producers, a law was passed relating to the Crusades, which governed those who sailed to the Holy Land.

It stated, ‘He who kills a man on shipboard shall be bound to the dead body and thrown into the sea; if a man is killed onshore, the slayer shall be bound to the dead body and buried with it’.

So, no matter how we look at them, the words of Paul vividly depict the hopelessness and misery of the sinner, who finds himself bound to a burden from which he sees no release.

Remember **Romans 8**, is a chapter of grace and life! And so, in total contrast, **Romans 8** declares the liberty that the Christian has in Christ. ‘There is no sentence to be served!’ literally, ‘no penal servitude’ for those in Christ Jesus! **Romans 6:1-2**.

We have received the Spirit who adopts us and who bears witness with our own spirit that we are the children of God. This means that we have become joint-heirs with Christ, providing we are prepared to suffer with Him in order to share His glory, **Romans 8:15-17**.

This thought of suffering then leads Paul to acknowledge that, at this present time, suffering is a common experience in life, **Romans 8:18**. But he quickly tells us it is nothing, not worth mentioning! A view of the glory which is to

come. At present, we, who already possess spiritual life in Christ, are waiting for what he describes as ‘the redemption of our bodies’. **Romans 8:23**.

A COMPLETE REDEMPTION!

It is about this consummation of the divine plan of redemption that he writes in **Romans 8:19-23**. At the present time, ‘the creation waits with eager longing’. I use this rendering of **Romans 8:19**, because I believe it is easier to understand than the one we find in the A.V.

The word ‘creation’ is defined by Thayer as ‘the sum and aggregate of all created things’. It refers to the whole of nature, everything we see around us, and all that lives.

The world of creation is waiting for something to happen ‘with eager longing’. This last phrase is the translation of just one word, and it is a word that presents a very vivid picture. Its meaning becomes clear when we break it up into its three constituent parts, which are ‘apo, kara, dokia’. That is ‘apokaradokia’.

The word ‘apo’ means ‘away’, ‘kara’ means ‘head’ and ‘dokia’ means to ‘watch’. Put the three parts together, and we have a picture of someone, stretching out his head, straining his neck, to watch, in eager expectation of some great event.

Now, we know that when God made everything, it was ‘very good’, and the perfect man lived in a perfect environment, **Genesis 1:31**. But, says Paul, creation is ‘groaning’ up to this present time, **Romans 8:23**. That word reveals that this is not the world as God meant it to be, and it is waiting for a change, and ‘agonizing’ as it waits. Yet, it is a hopeful agony, similar to that of a woman who is expecting the birth of her child, **Romans 8:22**. She endures suffering in anticipation of the joy that is to come. We see this from Paul’s use of the word ‘travail’ in **Romans 8:22**. For what are we waiting? What is it for which creation is waiting so eagerly?

Look again at **Romans 8:19**, and **Romans 8:21**. All creation is ‘longing for the revealing, ‘apokalupsis’, ‘revelation’, of the sons of God,’ which means the Lord’s Return.

AND WHAT DOES ‘THE CREATION’ EXPECT?

To ‘obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God’, **Romans 8:21**, which will complete the redemption of believers at His Coming. I use the phrase, ‘complete the redemption’, because we already enjoy a partial redemption as forgiven children of God. But there is a ‘salvation’ yet to come. **Romans 13:11**, and we are now awaiting ‘the redemption of our bodies’, **Romans 8:23**.

THE COMPREHENSIVE EFFECTS OF SIN

According to **Genesis 3**, when God imposed punishment on all three involved in that first sin, Adam, Eve and the Serpent, He made it clear that the consequences of their disobedience were not limited to themselves alone. The earth itself was affected, **Genesis 3:17-18**.

Because of them, the ground itself was cursed and would no longer produce freely, as it had previously done. Furthermore, what had been a pleasant occupation would now become 'toil', and Adam was told, 'By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread', **Genesis 3:19**.

Yet, there was a glimmer of hope. The message of the Bible is one of 'Generation, Degeneration and Regeneration', and it records that God spoke of a time when the effects of sin would be cancelled forever. The destruction of sin and Satan himself would come through 'the seed of the woman', **Genesis 3:15**, who would make possible mankind's redemption.

God had warned Adam that disobedience would affect him in two ways, **Genesis 2:17**. The penalty imposed on disobedience would be death, both spiritual and physical. The Hebrew text reads, 'dying, thou shalt die'. The first and immediate consequence of their sin was that they died spiritually.

The root meaning of the word 'death' is 'separation'. Spiritually, Adam and Eve died instantly. They were separated from God by their sin, and, banished from the Garden, we understand that they no longer had fellowship with Him or free access to Him, **Genesis 3:23-24**.

Furthermore, the process of physical death commenced. Sickness and suffering, which they had never experienced before, affected their physical bodies. They began to age, until, as God had warned them, they died and their bodies returned to the ground out of which they had been formed, **Genesis 3:19**.

But, thanks to the grace of God, His plan of Redemption includes salvation on two levels, so to speak. First, it embraces the instant restoration of man's spiritual relationship with God because it makes possible a new, vibrant life, which brings him back into fellowship with God.

Second, it promises the cancellation of the effects of sin on man's physical body, when, at the resurrection, 'this mortal shall put on immortality', **1 Corinthians 15:53**, as Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth, in that glorious **1 Corinthians 15** chapter.

It is for this that both believers in Christ and Creation itself are waiting. At the Second Coming, the redeemed soul of the believer will be united with his raised and renewed body, **1 Peter 3:13**. It is for this glorious day, which is surely coming! That even 'creation groans', **Romans 8:22**, stretching out in eager anticipation!

"Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."
Romans 8:23-25

As mentioned earlier, adoption in New Testament times was the public recognition that this was your real son. They would say, 'I adopt thee', three times, **Romans 9:4**. Children were often brought up by someone else in Roman culture.

'Not only so' 'Not only they', KJV, all of mankind, 'but we also', Christians as well, **Romans 8:23**. 'Who have the firstfruits of the Spirit', **Romans 8:23**, the first fruit was the first of the harvest. It promised more to come.

So it is with Christians. They have received the first fruit of the Spirit with the promise of greater blessings yet to come, **2 Corinthians 1:22** / **2 Corinthians 5:5** / **Ephesians 1:13-14**.

'Even we ourselves groan within ourselves', **Romans 8:23**. Christians are not exempt from the groanings and travail that characterises the whole human family. We cannot escape the consequences of the fall, but, as shown by the next verses, we have hope, which causes us to patiently wait for our redemption.

'Eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body', **Romans 8:23**; thus, he defines the 'adoption' here. It is the resurrection of our bodies from the grave, **John 5:28-29** / **1 Corinthians 15:51-54** / **Philippians 3:20-21** / **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18**.

In view of the resurrection and the full rewards of the sons of God, let us continue to be faithful to God regardless of whatever hardships, adversities, troubles, difficulties, or persecutions we might face, **Romans 8:18**.

Paul gives the third reason why Christians should endure suffering. ‘Hope’, ‘saved in this hope’, **Romans 8:24**, we are saved by it because it influences us to obtain the glory.

We desire and anticipate the rewards of the future; this is what hope is, and we are thus sustained in trials, sufferings, and hardships. When the object of hope is seen, hope ceases, and realisation takes place.

‘Who hopes for what he already has?’ **Romans 8:24**, but we ‘eagerly wait’, **Romans 8:25**, thus, we wish for that day to hasten its coming, **2 Peter 3:12**. We not only want it to come, but we want it to come quickly, **Revelation 22:20**.

‘With perseverance’, **Romans 8:25**, means in view of the coming reward, we continue to run the race with patience.

Because of the coming glory, we patiently endure whatever suffering is imposed upon us.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is the attitude of the soldier who, in the thick of battle, is not dismayed but fights on stoutly whatever the difficulties.’

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” **Romans 8:26-28**

Paul continues with the fourth encouragement to Christians to patiently endure suffering until the crown is won. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. ‘Likewise’, **Romans 8:26**, as our hope does. Thus, hope enables us to bear our ills.

‘The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses’, **Romans 8:26**, means the Holy Spirit likewise helps us in our infirmities and weaknesses. We don’t know how we should pray, but the Spirit does, **Romans 8:26**. ‘With groanings which cannot be uttered’, **Romans 8:26**, means the Holy Spirit intercedes in groanings which cannot be framed into human speech.

We often lack the ability to use the correct words when we pray. It is not that the Spirit is there working for us separate and apart from our wills, but the Spirit intercedes for us as we pray to the Father. In this verse, we see the following.

1. The fact stated, ‘The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses,’ **Romans 8:26**.
2. The weakness revealed, ‘We do not know how to pray as we should’, **Romans 8:26**, NASV.
3. The help given, ‘The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us,’ **Romans 8:26**
4. The means used, ‘With groanings too deep for words,’ **Romans 8:26**, NASV. Let us take advantage of this blessing.

Romans 8:27 shows how the Spirit is able to make intercession for us. The Spirit appears before God on our behalf. God the Father knows what is in the Holy Spirit’s mind.

This shows, as well as many other passages in the Bible, that the Spirit is a person. The Greek word for ‘intercession’, the same as in **Romans 8:26** and **Romans 8:34**, means ‘to go into the presence of another for the purpose of supplication.’

Thus, the Spirit is able to make intercession for us. He goes into the presence of the Father, and the Father knows what is in the Spirit’s mind. ‘Because, according to the will of God,’ **Romans 8:27** means the Spirit makes intercession in accord with what God desires for His saints.

Paul tells us in **Romans 8:28** the fifth reason for enduring suffering. God is in control and will work all things, even pain and suffering, to the good of those who love Him.

‘We know’, **Romans 8:28**, we know from God’s promises in His Word, and our own experience and observation. ‘All things work together for good’, **Romans 8:28**; all things have some advantage to the saint.

All things have some good in this life, but even more so in the final outcome. God does it through His providence, often in ways known only to Him. ‘To those who love God’, **Romans 8:28**, God blesses, in a special way, those who love Him. ‘Called according to His purpose’, **Romans 8:28**, His children.

‘Those who have been called’, **Romans 8:28, NIV**. This shows that God has a definite plan in calling, 2

Thessalonians 2:14 / 2 Timothy 1:9. The word ‘purpose’ is a keyword in understanding the verses which follow.

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” **Romans 8:29-30**

FOREORDAINED TO WHAT?

What does the text say? Predestined, foreordained means marked out beforehand, **Romans 8:29**. The word, predestined is only found in **Romans 8:29 / Ephesians 1:5 / Ephesians 1:11 / Acts 4:28 / 1 Corinthians 2:7**.

Predestination is simply the purpose, but by no means implies the inevitable accomplishment of that purpose.

You decided while your child was still at school that he would follow the trade of a builder. You ‘predestined’ your child to that trade. You ‘mark them out’ beforehand to be a builder.

That decision or purpose was in ‘your mind’ and is predestination. But that child marked out for that trade may later choose something else, because your will is not the only factor involved.

God foresaw that certain persons would, when the opportunity was presented, become His children. He foresaw that some, by their own choice, would obey. ‘He also predestined’, **Romans 8:29**, means He predestined that a certain group or class would be saved.

He predestined that these must be conformed to the image of His Son, **Romans 8:29 / Colossians 3:10 / 2 Corinthians 3:18**. This is similar to **Ephesians 1:3-5**. He predestined this group to be the adopted.

‘That He might be the firstborn’, **Romans 8:29**. The Son has first honour and distinction in all things pertaining to God. Paul is viewing the whole process of redemption. God has often spoken of things that were not, as though they were. The called, justified, and glorified are all thus viewed in His purpose, **Romans 8:30**.

‘He also glorified’, **Romans 8:30**. Paul is revealing it as an accomplished fact. What took place on purpose back in eternity is viewed as having taken place. The final glorification for the righteous comes after the judgment, **Matthew 25:31-34**.

Thus, Paul views the whole process of redemption from beginning to end. God foreknew His children, that is, foreknew that some would become His, and predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Those whom He predestined, He also called, called them by means of the Gospel, and those whom he called, He also justified, set them free from sin by means of the death of Christ, and those He justified, He also glorified, gave them eternal life. Their present state of glory prepares them for the ultimate glory which is yet to be revealed.

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and

is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:31-39

Note the contrast between **Romans 7** and **Romans 8**. In **Romans 7**, we have those outside of Christ, haunted by sin.

In **Romans 8**, we are told that we are in Christ, freed from sin. **Romans 8:31-39** can be viewed as the sixth encouragement to endure suffering. What shall we say regarding these blessings to Christians?

Because of everything God had done for us, God is for us, not against us, **Romans 8:31**. 'Who can be against us?' **Romans 8:31** means who can be against us to defeat our glorification?

If God is for us, it matters little what men might try to do to us, **Romans 8:32** / **Luke 12:3-4** / **Hebrews 13:5-6**. We are safe from the storms and trials of life, not in the sense that we can escape them, but we have the power on our side to overcome them, **Romans 8:31**.

In **Romans 8:32**, we have an allusion to the Old Testament concerning Abraham and Isaac. The words 'spared not' are the translation of the Greek 'pheidomai'. The only time it is found is in the New Testament.

The Septuagint Translation, in **Genesis 22:12** says, 'now I know seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son.' The word describes the supreme example of sacrifice, and it is used to illustrate God's Own sacrifice, the offering of His Own Son, for the sins of the world.

CONSIDER THE TEST WHICH GOD SET FOR ABRAHAM

'Take, feel the knife going into Abraham's heart!' 'Your SON!' 'Your ONLY son!' 'ISAAC!', Not Ishmael, as the Muslims claim, 'Whom thou LOVE!' **Genesis 22:2**.

CONSIDER THE JOURNEY

Three days to Mount Moriah, already aware of what God required him to do, **Genesis 22:4**. Time to let it sink in! Time to change his mind! Do you think he told Sarah where he was going, and WHY? Do you think Abraham went with an unbroken heart?

This was a real sacrifice. He was not expected, or asked, to enjoy the sacrifice, which was designed to be a demonstration of obedience, regardless of the cost to oneself.

This story is used by Paul to stress the fact that God Himself paid the highest price to make salvation possible. He 'spared not', 'did not hold back from' the sacrifice of Jesus, **Romans 8:32**, even though every consideration would have weighed against going through with it, every consideration, that is, except Love for Mankind! This was the proof of God's love.

This being the case, he reasons, 'How then shall He not, with HIM, freely give us all things?' He asks, Can you not see that God is willing to give you everything else?

Notice the three phrases used here! With him, i.e. along with Him. Along with the gift of Jesus/HE is the Gift of God, which includes all others and guarantees all others.

A logical argument from the greater to prove the lesser. Certainly, if God has given us that great, most precious gift, He will not hold back any of the lesser things we might need, **Romans 8:32**.

‘All things’, **Romans 8:32**, for example, He will freely give us all the things that He intends for His children. Paul says, ‘all things are yours,’ **Romans 8:32**. Maybe a few illustrations will help us understand what all things mean.

- a. The ‘make weight’, the ‘extra’ added after the scales have gone down!
 - b. Gold watch, and the box in which to keep it!
 - c. The millionaire who gives £100,000 for ‘Famine Relief’ will not refuse to give a beggar a pound to buy a cup of coffee!
2. Freely give. Sense the difference between the agony in ‘spared not’ and the willing, joyous generosity in ‘freely give’!
 3. All things.

All other things. Only ‘good’ things? **Romans 8:28 / Romans 8:37-39**. Why don’t we receive the ‘all things’ that God is willing to freely give us? Because even God is unable to put anything into hands and hearts that are closed!

The saddest part of being lost is the fact that one is lost for sins for which the penalty has already been paid. **Romans 8:33** asks, How could anyone lay a charge against, or condemn, God’s elect?

‘God’s chosen’, **Romans 8:33**, the source of the election is through God alone, the means of the election is through the Gospel, and the receiving of the election, that is, the obtaining of it, is through our obedience to the Gospel.

‘It is God who justifies,’ **Romans 8:33**; thus, who has the right to say they are not justified? God has justified them, Jesus died for them, and the Holy Spirit intercedes for them; thus, what right does anyone have to speak against them?

‘Who is he who condemns?’ **Romans 8:34**. Again, when God justifies one, no one has a right to condemn him. If he does so, is he not opposing and fighting against God? The elect has Him who died, was raised, and now reigns to intercede for them.

In other words, who would dare to speak against those who have this Wonderful, Mighty One on their side? These verses refer to the blessings and security of the obedient believer. They do not address whether or not the believer can, through his own choice, lose the blessings and security.

Four things are said about Christ that one would need to remove or deny in order to charge or condemn the ones God has justified.

1. He died to pay man’s sin debt, **1 Peter 2:24 / 1 John 2:2**.
2. He rose from the dead, for our justification, **Romans 4:25 / 1 Peter 3:21**.
3. He is now at the right hand of God, ruling on His throne, **Hebrews 10:11-14 / 1 Peter 3:22**.
4. He makes intercession for us,

He pleads our case before the Father, **Hebrews 4:14-16 / Hebrews 9:24**. The same word is used of the Spirit in **Romans 8:26-27**. And so, no mortal man has a right to condemn us.

Let us rejoice in the Lord. The purpose of this paragraph in **Romans 8:35-39** is to show that no existing power in heaven or on earth can change or modify the love Christ, as well as the Father, **Romans 8:39**, has for us.

This section refers to Christ’s love toward us, not our love toward Him. The hard things which we suffer will not cause Him to stop loving us, but our love toward Him may stop as a result of them, **Matthew 24:11-12**. Note the following things which can’t separate us from His love in **Romans 8:35**.

1. ‘Tribulation’. Outward affliction.
2. ‘Distress’. Inward affliction.

3. 'Persecution'. Literally means 'to drive out, drive away, and then to pursue after.'
4. 'Famine'. Hunger.
5. 'Nakedness'. In need of clothes.
6. 'Peril'. Afflictions of any kind.
7. 'Sword'. The danger of bodily harm, death.

When in terrible suffering, we should not think that Christ has forsaken us, **1 Corinthians 4:11 / 1 Corinthians 15:30**. Paul quotes **Psalm 44:22**, in **Romans 8:36**, to show that there is nothing peculiar in God's people suffering. **Psalm 44** is a long Psalm dealing with the sufferings Israel had faced.

'More than conquerors', **Romans 8:37**, means we can abundantly and overwhelmingly conquer every obstacle. 'Him who loved us', **Romans 8:37**, tells us that we conquer only because Christ loves us first.

Through Christ, who loves us, we can overcome all the trials and hardships of life. Paul himself is an example of such conquering, **2 Timothy 4:6-8**. Rely on the Lord! **Philippians 4:13**.

'For I am persuaded', **Romans 8:38**, means he was totally convinced both by experience, **2 Timothy 4:17**, and revelation, **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**, that nothing in heaven or on earth could separate us from divine love.

'Neither death nor life', **Romans 8:38**, are the two fundamental facts of our being. 'Angels', **Romans 8:38**, if they attempted to do so. 'Principalities', **Romans 8:38**, this word means, 'beginning, government, rule.' Here it refers to the wicked angels, as in **Ephesians 6:12**. It is also used of the holy angels, **Ephesians 3:10**.

'Powers', **Romans 8:38**, authorities of all kinds, heavenly or earthly.

'Nor things present, nor things to come', **Romans 8:38**, means neither present difficulties nor future happenings.

'Nor height nor depth', **Romans 8:39**, means neither can anything within the dimensions of time or space. 'Nor any other created thing', **Romans 8:39**, means any other created things which are not here mentioned; no person or thing whatsoever.

'Shall be able to separate us', **Romans 8:39**, thus, the absolute security of the believer so far as God is concerned. No outside forces can separate us from the love of God; however, we ourselves can depart from His love. Thus, we must keep ourselves in His love, **Jude 20-21**. This statement principle also refutes the doctrine of an infallible church. Christ will never depart from His church; however, His church can depart from Him.

SUMMARY

If God justifies us, who or what can condemn us? **Romans 8:33-34**. If He unites us with Himself, who or what can separate us? **Romans 8:35-36**. If we are more than conquerors in Him, who can defeat us? **Romans 8:37**. The grand climax, **Romans 8:38-39**, is that nothing, no outside force, can separate us from the love of Christ.

Please note that these verses are speaking about God's love towards us. He loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die for us, **John 3:16**, regardless of whether we accept that love or not.

God's love is unconditional, but salvation is conditional. These verses don't say we can never lose our salvation; they say we can never stop God from loving us, even if we do fall away.

We can lose our salvation by not remaining faithful to Him, **2 John 1:9 / Revelation 2:10**, and by falling from His grace, **Luke 8:13 / Galatians 5:4 / Hebrews 3:12 / Hebrews 6:4-6 / 2 Peter 2:20-22**.

Romans 9-11 present the ‘Vindication of God’s choices.’ Paul defends and maintains God’s right to choose. It was offensive to the Jews that God had rejected fleshly Israel and accepted the Gentiles; thus, Paul reveals the basics of God’s rejection and acceptance.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

Romans 9-11 form a separate section of this letter. If we removed it from the letter, what remained would show no sign of having had anything taken out. You may convince yourself of this by looking, first, at the last two verses of Romans 8, I say the last two verses, in order to give the sense of the passage, and then at the opening verse of Romans 12.

This is what we find, ‘For I am sure that neither,’ Romans 8:38-39, ‘I appeal to you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable,’ Romans 12:1.

You see how easily they flow together, eliminating the gap you made when you removed the Romans 9-11. Indeed, if you look at the opening words of Romans 9, you see immediately that the mood is quite different from that in which Romans 8 closes, and it has been suggested that what we have in Romans 9-11 is a discourse by Paul which he has placed in the letter at this point.

An interesting suggestion, of course! But it has to be said that there is no substantial evidence for it. However, there are certain suggestions of something in the style of the typical debate which went on in the synagogue, as you will see if you read Romans 9:14 / Romans 9:19 / Romans 11:1 / Romans 11:11 / Romans 11:19.

Having said this, it is still true that those three chapters are not as ‘out of place’ as might appear at first glance. Put them into context, and you will recognise this, I think.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If God cannot bring his ancient people into salvation, how do Christians know that he can save them? Paul is not here, proceeding to a new and unrelated subject. These three chapters are part of the way he makes plain how God in fact saves people.’

A brief outline of Romans 9-11 would be useful, which deals with the vindication of God’s choices.

1. Paul’s deep sympathy for the Jews, Romans 9:1-5.
2. God’s faithfulness vindicated, although the Jews have been cut off, Romans 9:6-29.
3. Israel’s responsibility. Contrast between legal righteousness and that which is of faith. Romans 10:1-17.
4. Israel’s rejection is confirmed by the Scriptures, Romans 10:18-21.
5. Israel is not wholly cast off, Romans 11:1-10.
6. Principles that regulate the election of grace, Romans 11:11-32.
7. Paul’s praise, Romans 11:33-36.

Remember that Paul has been writing about the grace of God, which, he says, is extended to all mankind. And, whilst he is happy about this, he is understandably saddened by the fact that Israel, as a people, has rejected Christ and refused the grace of God, offered in the Gospel, which he preached, Romans 9:2.

Of course, he realises that there had been a time when he, personally, was in the same position, when he had opposed the Gospel, and therefore he is able to feel for them all the more. His concern is expressed in moving language in [Romans 9:1-3](#).

PAUL'S ANGUISH OVER ISRAEL

“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race”. [Romans 9:1-3](#)

‘I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying’, [Romans 9:1](#). Paul gives a solemn affirmation that what he is about to say is the truth. ‘In Christ’, [Romans 9:1](#), means as one in right relationship with Him.

‘Conscience’, [Romans 9:1](#), is the judgment of the mind which instantly approves or condemns one’s actions in accord with what he has been taught, [1 Timothy 1:5](#) / [1 Timothy 1:19](#) / [1 Timothy 3:9](#). He has always been taught to tell the truth, and so, his conscience is a true witness to the truthfulness of that which follows.

‘In the Holy Spirit’, [Romans 9:1](#), means in fellowship with, under the influence of, and in the presence of the Holy Spirit. And so, Paul did not want to leave any doubt in the mind of the Jew regarding his love for his people.

[Romans 9:2](#) is the truth to which he referred in [Romans 9:1](#). The reason he had great anguish in his heart for his brethren, fellow Jews, is because they were lost. [Romans 9:3](#) simply emphasises his great desire for Israel to be saved, [Romans 10:1-2](#).

‘I could wish myself were accursed from Christ’, [Romans 9:3](#), is given as proof of his deep interest in his fellow Jews. Not that he actually does so wish, but he could do so if such were allowed by God. Moses had the same desire, but God quickly replied by showing that it was impossible, [Exodus 32:31-33](#).

The verse shows that his kinsmen were separated from Christ and, hence, from God. Also, Paul shows his unselfish love for them. He was willing to be accursed from Christ, [Romans 9:3](#), that is, eternally lost, if it would save the Jews.

“The people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.” [Romans 9:4-5](#)

Here, Paul says that their rejection of the Gospel and their present lost condition is all the more tragic in view of their rich history. Notice that he still has a great feeling for them. He still calls them ‘my brethren’ and ‘my kinsmen according to race’.

NOW THAT IS INTERESTING!

He does not identify with them religiously but says according to race. And then he lists the things which marked them out as special and unique. Paul now lists nine great blessings the Jews had received.

1. ‘Israelites’, the angel changed the name when Jacob wrestled with him.

Being an Israelite was a great heritage and honour for the Israelites.

HE CALLS THEM ISRAELITES

There were other names that he might have used in order to identify them. He might have called them Hebrews and that was a name of which they were understandably proud because it pointed to their descent from Abraham, the Hebrew, and the father of their race. Or he might have called them Jews, which in some ways would have been more historically accurate.

You will recall that the ten northern tribes, which had constituted the kingdom of Israel, had gone into captivity in Assyria about 722 B.C., and had never returned as a nation, because they had been dispersed, as an act of policy, throughout the territories of the Assyrians.

Then, some one hundred and fifty years later, the two tribes which made up the Kingdom of Judah had been taken captive by the Babylonians and, after serving the seventy years which God had decreed, had come back again to their own land, the return from captivity which the prophets had spoken about.

The name Jew dates from this time, the time of the return, because it is a name that had its origin in the name Judah. Therefore, when Paul was writing this letter, the people occupying the Promised Land, the land of Palestine, the Holy Land, as [Zechariah 2:12](#) calls it, were, in fact, Jews from the Southern Kingdom, which had survived captivity. Remember, they had survived captivity, because God's purpose was that the Messiah should come from Judah, [Genesis 49:10](#) / [Isaiah 11:1](#) / [Matthew 1:2](#) / [Luke 3:33](#).

But Paul uses the name Israelites. Now, why? Well, because it reminds us that these, the Israelites, descendants of Jacob, who, having been brought out of Egyptian Bondage, became God's special people when, at Sinai, God made a covenant with them.

The great company that Moses led to freedom arrived at Sinai hardly knowing who they were, having spent 400 years in Egypt as slaves. But they left Sinai knowing that they were the chosen, covenanted people of God, [Exodus 19:5-6](#). And it is this that Paul has in mind, this fact to which he draws attention, by choosing the name Israelites. In [Romans 9:4](#), he emphasises this again. Consider the claims which Paul makes for these people who, sadly, have rejected the Gospel, [Romans 9:4](#).

2. 'Adoption', 'Sonship'.

It was national, in the flesh, and not in the Spirit. If you have the A.V., you will find that it has the word adoption. 'To them belongs the adoption.' This points to the fact that God called Israel the nation, His SON.

Moses is instructed to tell Pharaoh, 'Israel is My son, My Firstborn', [Exodus 4:22](#). 'I am a father to Israel', [Jeremiah 31:9](#). 'Out of Egypt have I called My son,' [Hosea 11:1](#). 'You are the sons of the Lord your God,' [Deuteronomy 14:1](#). And the significance of this is found in the very next verse. 'For you are a people holy to YHVH your God, and YHVH has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth,' [Deuteronomy 14:2](#).

3. 'Glory', [Exodus 16:10](#) / [Exodus 40:34-35](#).

This glory is called the Shekinah. You will not find that word in the Scriptures, though it is a Hebrew word that both Jews and Christians have used to describe the presence of God.

It was the visible sign of the presence of the One who, by his very nature, is invisible. It was, in fact, the evidence that God was with His people. And it remained with His people so long as they were faithful to Him.

Not only did the Glory lead the people on their wilderness journey, whilst, at the same time, giving them protection against the pursuing Egyptians, but it was also the evidence of God's Presence in the Holy of Holies, when the High

priest went in, to intercede for the people, on the Day of Atonement, before the mercy-seat, [Leviticus 16:2](#) / [Exodus 25:22](#).

In Ezekiel's vision, we see God's glory. Let me show you something interesting, in this connection, from the Book of Ezekiel, because the keynote of that book is the glory of the Lord.

Incidentally, there are, in Hebrew, about nine different words for glory, all having different shades of meaning, beauty, honour, purity, majesty, adornment, etc., but there is one which is used one hundred and fifty five times in the Old Testament, and whenever you come across such expressions as the glory of the Lord or The glory of YHVH, it is this word, the word Kabod.

This is the only word that Ezekiel uses, and it is the word for glory, which emphasises His holiness and His presence. It is the only word he uses because he is not concerned about the beauty of the land, or the glory of the people themselves, only with the glory of God.

He speaks of God's glory twelve times in the first eleven chapters. And then, there is a long gap, and we don't read about the glory again until we come to [Ezekiel 43:22](#). And do you know why? The reason is that, when you reach [Ezekiel 43](#), the glory of God has left the people, and the temple and the city of Jerusalem, not suddenly, but gradually.

When we turn to [Ezekiel 9:3](#), we see that the glory, which, as we have already seen, rested above the mercy seat, above the golden cherubim, whose wings covered the mercy seat, in the Holy of Holies, has moved to the threshold of the temple. i.e., the entrance.

When we turn to [Ezekiel 10:3](#), we find that the Cherubim, always the guardians of the Holiness of God, have moved and are standing on the south side of the Temple, and [Ezekiel 10:18](#) shows that the glory goes forth from the entrance of the Temple and stands over the Cherubim, in readiness for leaving.

In [Ezekiel 11:22-23](#), the Cherubim mount up into the air, with the glory above them, and they move out across the valley, to the mountain on the other side, east of the city of Jerusalem, which happens to be the Mount of Olives, higher than the city itself, and giving a marvellous view of the city.

And that meant that God had forsaken both Jerusalem and the temple itself. This is the point at which that particular vision of Ezekiel closes. He tells the people in captivity in Babylon what he has seen. The significance is easy to see.

He is telling them that, because of their idolatry and unfaithfulness, because both the temple and their city have been defiled, the glory of God can no longer dwell there. And the Glory has departed.

God has left them, and the protection which His presence had given to them had been removed, because He had given up their city and their temple to the Babylonian armies. Now! When will the glory return?

When we turn to [Ezekiel 43:2-6](#), we see the glory returning to the place it left. We see it entering the temple. And we see the glory of the Lord filling the temple. And notice the very dramatic words with which the prophecy of Ezekiel closes, 'and the name of the city henceforth shall be 'YHVH IS THERE,' [Ezekiel 48:35](#).

4. 'Covenants', these are covenants of promise, [Ephesians 2:12](#), entered into with Abraham, [Genesis 12:1-3](#) / [Genesis 13:14-18](#) / [Genesis 15:4-14](#), Isaac, [Genesis 26:2-5](#) / [Genesis 23-25](#), Jacob, [Genesis 35:9-12](#), and Israel, [Exodus 12:18-26](#). Notice the use of the plural, 'covenants', not 'covenant'. The word refers not only to the following.

1. The covenant made with Abraham, to the effect that of him, God would make a great nation which should be a blessing to the whole of mankind.

2. To Isaac and Jacob also, [Exodus 2:24](#).

3. To Israel, at Sinai, [Exodus 19:5](#)

4. To David, concerning kingship, [2 Samuel 7:11-16](#).

As the Scriptures say, no such covenants were ever made with Gentile nations, Psalm 147:20.

5. ‘Giving of the law’, the Law of Moses was the best that mankind had up to that point.

It contains the only reliable source of the origin of all things.

6. ‘Service of God’, all divine services, temple or otherwise, rendered to God.

Israel’s worship was the true worship for man up to its replacement, John 4:22-24 / Hebrews 9:1. The expression, ‘the worship’, means the religious service, and it refers to the form of worship that the people were to follow. The word ‘worship’ is the translation of the Greek word ‘latreia’, and it has to do with offering religious service.

This is why the Revised Versions have given us ‘worship’ rather than ‘service’, such as you find in the A.V. It reminds us that the people were not left to themselves to decide how or when they were to worship God, but that God gave them very specific instructions.

He planned the tabernacle and the priesthood, and all the rites and ceremonies that were to be observed. His command to Moses was, repeatedly, ‘see that you do everything according to the pattern I showed you in the mountain,’ Exodus 25:40. This meant, once again, that their worship was unique because it was worship as God commanded.

7. ‘Promises’ are those made to Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3, Isaac, Genesis 26:5, Jacob, Genesis 35:11-12, David, 2 Samuel 7:12-13, etc., which found their fulfilment in Christ, Galatians 3:16 / Galatians 4:4-6.

You may recall that when we studied the letter to the Hebrews, we saw that there were at least seven distinct promises which God made to Abraham, many of which were later confirmed to his descendants.

1. A great nation.

2. Protected and blessed by God.

3. Possessing the Promised Land.

4. And the promises relating to the Coming of the Messiah.

The very fact that Israel had such a distinguished ancestry made it all the more difficult to understand how these people could turn away from the very things towards which the Fathers had looked in faith.

As Hebrews 11 shows, these and other great ones of Old Testament times had looked forward in anticipation to the blessings which were to come with the Christ. They had died in faith, not having experienced the promises, Hebrews 11:13. Yet here were their descendants rejecting those very blessings.

8. And most importantly, Israel’s greatest distinction.

Christ Himself had come from Israel, Romans 1:3. As a man, he was of the seed of David. As to His deity, Paul tells us here, he is, overall, God-blessed forever. If you cannot see the word ‘Theos’, God, applied to Christ, all you need to do is to turn to Acts 20:28 / Titus 2:13. In view of all these advantages, Paul’s heart is heavy, pained, that Israel is still unsaved.

The depth and intensity of his pain can be gauged from the words he uses in those opening verses, ‘great sorrow, unceasing anguish I could wish myself accursed and cut off from Christ of my brethren.’

There is no mistaking how deeply he felt when he was actually prepared to be eternally lost, because that is what his statement means by sacrificing himself; his people could be saved.

We see how deeply he felt. We are reminded of the case of Moses, in his prayer recorded in Exodus 32:32, when, pleading with God for Israel, he asked God to blot his name out of the Book of Life, if Israel could not be forgiven.

THINK OF IT!

All these advantages, these privileges, these distinctions, and yet, Israel is unsaved. ‘Fathers’, [Romans 9:5](#), most of the Bible fathers were Israelites. ‘From whom Christ came’, [Romans 9:5](#), Christ, too, was a Jew or Israelite. ‘The eternal blessed God’, [Romans 5:9](#), refers to Christ as God. Some translations make the phrase refer to the Father, e.g., ‘Let God be blessed forever,’ RSV, NAB, and, of course, the NWT of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, there is no justification for such rendering. It is only natural that Paul would say something about the Lord’s Deity here. God, the Father, is not under consideration in the verse.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The grammatical arguments almost all favour the first position (that it says that Christ is God), but most recent scholars accept the second (that God here refers to the Father) on the grounds that Paul nowhere else says explicitly that Christ is God.’

GOD’S SOVEREIGN CHOICE

“It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.” [Romans 9:6-9](#)

In [Romans 9:6](#), Paul points out that this does not mean that the Word of God has failed. And the reason is that not all those in Israel, associated with Israel, are truly of Israel. This means that some of those connected with Israel are not true Israelites. And this is a situation that stretched all the time of Abraham.

The descendants of Ishmael, for example, were never regarded as Abraham’s offspring, even though they claimed a relationship with him, just as the Arabs and Palestinians do to this very day.

Do you think that the Jews consider the Arabs who are descended from Ishmael to be the seed of Abraham? Certainly not. So Paul has made a valid point, which no true Jew would deny.

In [Romans 9:7](#), he takes this step further. He says that not even those who were born to Abraham are regarded as his children. Quite apart from Ishmael, Hagar, after the death of Sarah, his wife, Abraham married again, and Keturah bore him several children, as you may read in [Genesis 25](#), where their names are listed. And [Genesis 25:6](#) also records that he had concubines who bore him sons, who were never regarded as his seed.

The Jews never counted the children of any of these women as the seed of Abraham. So Paul’s argument is plain. It is that mere fleshly descent or fleshly connection with Abraham does not make one an Israelite.

And the reason why he is making this argument is that he is about to announce something that he knows the Jews will find very, very difficult to accept, namely that God has rejected Israel because Israel has rejected Christ.

He knows that they will claim that they and they alone are the people of God and heirs of the promises made to Abraham, and all others are excluded. So he very gently approaches the statement he is about to make, which he knows will offend them, [John 8:39](#), by quoting God’s own words to back up what he has just said.

He says, through Isaac shall your descendants be named, [Romans 9:8](#). In other words, just as Ishmael did not inherit, although he was born to Abraham, the Jews of Paul's day might also miss the blessing, unless their claim is based on something more than fleshly descent from Abraham.

If they are to inherit, like Isaac, they must do so because they share the faith of Isaac, [Galatians 4:28](#). In other words, Abraham's children are divided into two groups. The children of the flesh are those born to Abraham naturally. The children of the promise are those who were born by God's plans, promises, and intervention, [Galatians 4:21-31](#).

[Romans 9:9](#) shows how Isaac was a child of promise, [Genesis 18:10](#) / [Genesis 18:14](#). The point is that God chose to limit His promise to Isaac. Who could then object if God now chooses to limit His salvation to those who believe in Christ?

Being Abraham's child was not sufficient. Abraham had other children. If the Jews could see this point, they could also understand how Christians are children of promise.

To prove that one is the seed of Abraham physically proves nothing concerning salvation. Sonship belongs to those who are the seed according to the promise. Christians are true children of promise.

1. The Israel of God, [Galatians 6:16](#).
2. Abraham's Seed, [Galatians 3:29](#).
3. The Circumcision, [Philippians 3:3](#).
4. A Jew Inwardly, [Romans 2:28-29](#).
5. The Chosen, [1 Peter 2:9](#).
6. Children of Abraham, [Galatians 3:7](#).

Fleshly descent means nothing, no matter what heritage we might have. Let us seek to be numbered with the true children of promise.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

'Paul tells us that no one is truly Israel unless he is governed by God. We have a parallel situation with the word 'Christian.' Not everyone who is called a Christian is truly a follower of Christ.'

“Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father, Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” [Romans 9:10-13](#)

In these verses, Paul develops his argument still further. Of course, here we have a passage that is often mistakenly thought to support the Calvinistic doctrine of eternal election.

He says that Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, had two sons; in fact, they were twins. Jacob and Esau, [Romans 9:10-11](#). And yet, even before they were born, God, who knows men and who sees the end from the beginning, spoke about these two men.

He knew how they would turn out; this is His foreknowledge. Even before either child had done anything, God said that the elder would serve the younger, and Esau would serve Jacob, [Romans 9:12](#) / [Genesis 25:23](#).

Notice [Romans 9:13](#), there is a quotation taken from [Malachi 1:2-3](#). But remember, this statement was not made before they were born. It was not made during their lifetime. It is a statement through the prophet Malachi, a thousand years after they were both dead!

Malachi is speaking about God's judgment on the descendants of Esau, the Edomites, who became the implacable, relentless enemies of the Israelites, and who harried them and cut down the stragglers when Israel was weary and tired during the wilderness journey.

God says that he hated, the word means ‘loved less’, [Genesis 29:31 / 33](#) / [Deuteronomy 21:15](#) / [Matthew 6:24](#) / [Luke 14:26](#) / [John 12:25](#). It is a comparative word, loved the descendants of Esau less than the descendants of Jacob, because of the wickedness of the Edomites.

You will recall that Esau is described as a profane, irreligious and immoral person in the Hebrew letter. He despised his birthright, the privileges and duties of the firstborn. He rashly sold his blessing, [Hebrews 12:16](#).

Whilst Jacob, on the other hand, valued the birthright and valued the blessing. True, he bought the one and stole the other, but he did so because they meant something to him.

Do you see how powerfully Paul is arguing here? The Jews would have argued that Ishmael should have been rejected and excluded, on the grounds that it was Isaac who was Abraham’s only legitimate son, but there could be no such claim with regard to Esau!

After all, Esau and Jacob had the same mother; both were the legitimate sons of Isaac. And, what is more, Esau was the firstborn, and strictly speaking, had all the rights! But God used his sovereign power in allowing the usual legal order of things to be set aside so that Jacob could inherit as the Firstborn.

God could have stepped in and prevented the entire transaction, but He didn’t. Esau was rejected because he rejected his responsibilities to God; Jacob was accepted because he demonstrated faith and saw the worth of both the birthright and the blessing. This is why Jacob became the stronger, according to the prophecy made by God to Rebekah.

This is where we touch upon the real Bible teaching on the subject of election. God chose one of Rebekah’s sons before they were actually born. God elected Jacob, but it was not a random selection. God’s election was based upon his foreknowledge of the kind of man Jacob would turn out to be.

In that quotation from [Genesis 25:23](#), God told Rebekah a little about the basis of his choice of Jacob. God said two nations would be born. Two kinds of people are how the A.V. puts it. Two very different kinds of people.

Ishmael was rejected. Did he ever demonstrate faith? Did Isaac reveal faith? Certainly, he did! [Hebrews 11:20](#) tells us this. And what about Jacob and Esau? Did God reject Esau and choose Isaac without regard to the sort of men they were? Certainly not! We know the kind of men they were, and we know the kind of nations that came from them.

Paul is stating that Israel cannot expect to be saved merely on the basis of her history or because she was the chosen people of God. All her advantages will count for nothing if she does not demonstrate the kind of obedient faith which was demonstrated by the Patriarchs. He has shown that Abraham, in whom they boasted, was not reckoned as righteous for the following reasons.

- a. Because he was chosen by God.
- b. Because of the ceremony of circumcision.
- c. Or because he kept the Law.

He was accounted righteous, because he believed God, and acted on his faith, in obedience to God.

“What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. For Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.” Romans 9:14-18

[Romans 9:14-29](#) deals with two questions that someone might have raised. First, ‘is there injustice on God’s part, when He accepts and rejects people in this way, i.e. Jacob and Esau?’

Paul says, perish the thought! [Romans 9:14](#). Do not even think about it. Remember that God has absolute sovereignty. God Himself says, 'I will have mercy on whoever I choose,' [Romans 9:15](#).

It was no unjust selection that God had made. If God selected Isaac and Jacob because they were the best instruments to work out His plans, it would not be out of harmony for God to reject the Jews because of unbelief and accept the Gentiles for their belief.

In [Romans 9:15](#), Paul quotes what God said to Moses, [Exodus 33:19](#). And this brings us back to the truth that it is God who determines the basis on which His grace is offered to men.

Notice that the pronoun 'I' is emphasised, [Romans 9:15](#). God alone has the right to choose regarding the ones on whom He will have mercy. No one can keep God from showing mercy to whom He wills. The Jews said that God's mercy should be to the Jews only; however, God thought differently, [Luke 1:50](#) / [Acts 10:34-35](#).

[Romans 9:16](#) refers to the origin of mercy. 'Not of him who wills', mercy was not bestowed because man originally wished or desired it. God is the original fountain of it, [Exodus 33:19](#) / [Matthew 20:1-16](#).

'Nor of him who runs', [Romans 9:16](#), means it did not result from any strenuous or intense effort on the part of man, but from God's own decision to bestow it. 'The Scripture says' in [Exodus 9:16](#), it is God speaking, and so, 'the Scriptures says' is the same as 'God says,' [Romans 9:17](#).

In [Romans 9:17](#), Paul quotes the case of God's dealing with Pharaoh. We need to listen very carefully to what Paul says here because if we are not careful, we might get the wrong idea.

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART

Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Behind this question for many is the idea that Pharaoh didn't have any free will, and therefore, he had no choice but to do what God wanted him to do.

BACKGROUND

In the Book of Exodus, we read how Moses had been commanded by God to go to Pharaoh and demand that Pharaoh let His people go, [Exodus 9:1](#). It's understandable that Pharaoh was reluctant to do so because the Israelites were his slaves and they worked hard to help build and maintain his kingdom.

Moses goes to Pharaoh, and by faith and the power of God, he confirms that God is with him by using signs and wonders. These signs and wonders were used to confirm Moses' message to Pharaoh, to let His people go, [Exodus 7:1-7](#). The last plague of Egypt was when the firstborn of every animal and human died, but none of the Israelites died, [Exodus 11:4](#).

It wasn't until Pharaoh's firstborn son died that he decided to let God's people go, [Exodus 12:31](#). But even when he allowed them to go, his pride and arrogance led him to change his mind, and so he went after them. We don't know if Pharaoh himself died, but many Egyptians died in the process, [Exodus 14:28](#) / [Exodus 15:19](#).

GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART

Now remember that all this hardening of the heart business was done during the ten plagues, but there's an important point which is often overlooked. God said that He would harden Pharaoh's heart ten times throughout the Book of Exodus, [Exodus 4:21](#) / [Exodus 7:3](#) / [Exodus 9:12](#) / [Exodus 10:1](#) / [Exodus 10:20](#) / [Exodus 10:27](#) / [Exodus 11:10](#) / [Exodus 14:4](#) / [Exodus 14:8](#) / [Exodus 14:17](#).

PHARAOH HARDENED HIS OWN HEART

Now what is often overlooked is that Pharaoh himself is said to have hardened his own heart ten times throughout Exodus, [Exodus 7:13](#) / [Exodus 7:14](#) / [Exodus 7:22](#) / [Exodus 8:15](#) / [Exodus 8:19](#) / [Exodus 8:32](#) / [Exodus 9:7](#) / [Exodus 9:34](#) / [Exodus 9:35](#) / [Exodus 13:15](#).

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is something which God told Moses He would have to do because God knew Pharaoh wouldn't let His people go straight away, [Exodus 4:21](#), but it's clear after reading the above Scriptures that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was done by both God and Pharaoh himself.

What we see in all those Scriptures is that Pharaoh hardened his own heart during the first five plagues. Pharaoh hardened his own heart because he wouldn't listen to Moses and Aaron; he wouldn't let God's people go, but God didn't harden his heart until the sixth plague came, [Exodus 9:12](#).

God gave him the opportunity to exercise his own free will five times. God called Pharaoh to humble himself and acknowledge that God is his authority, but Pharaoh chose to harden his own heart against the will of God, [1 Samuel 6:6](#).

DID PHARAOH HAVE A CHOICE?

When we read [Romans 9:14-18](#), we find Paul answering a question that someone in Rome may have been asking. 'What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!' [Romans 9:14](#).

Is there injustice on God's part when He accepts and rejects people in this way, i.e. Jacob and Esau? Paul says, 'Not at all' or 'perish the thought!' [Romans 9:14](#). Paul says don't even think that for one minute.

Remember that God has absolute sovereignty. He Himself says, 'I will have mercy on whoever I choose,' [Romans 9:15](#). The A.V. says, 'him that runneth,' he's obviously using the illustration of the foot race, but it's not a matter of the prize going to the one who wins the race. Your version may say, 'it depends not on a man's will, or exertion', i.e., on his effort, but upon God's mercy.

It was not an unjust selection that God had made if God selected Isaac and Jacob because they were the best instruments to work out His plans. It would not be out of harmony for God to reject the Jews because of unbelief and accept the Gentiles for their belief.

Paul quotes what God said to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion,' [Romans 9:15](#) / [Exodus 33:19](#).

This brings us back to the truth that it's God who determines the basis on which His mercy and compassion are offered to men. Notice that the pronoun 'I' is emphasised.

God alone has the right to choose regarding the ones on whom He will have mercy and compassion; no one can keep God from showing mercy and compassion to whom He wills. The Jews said that God's mercy should be to the Jews only; however, God thought differently, [Luke 1:50](#) / [Acts 10:34-35](#).

In [Romans 9:16](#), we read about the origin of mercy; mercy wasn't bestowed because man originally wished or desired it. God is the original fountain of it. 'It does not depend on human desire or effort' means it didn't result from any strenuous or intense effort on the part of man, but from God's own decision to bestow it.

In [Romans 9:17](#), Paul quotes the case of God's dealing with Pharaoh, and we need to listen very carefully to what Paul says here because if we are not careful, we might get the wrong idea. God said that He had raised up Pharaoh in order to display His power through the Egyptian ruler. Notice, 'to display His power'.

He did not say that He raised up Pharaoh to 'destroy' him, or to 'drown him in the Red Sea', but, through His dealings with Pharaoh, to let the nations around see how powerful Israel's God was. Now, just how God's intention should be accomplished depended on Pharaoh himself and on the way he responded to God's command through Moses.

It was within the sphere of Pharaoh's choice either to submit to the will of God, whom Moses represented or to take the course which, in fact, he did take, to resist God's will and face the consequences.

Either way, either by Pharaoh's immediate and voluntary submission to God's demand or by being compelled to let the people go, when the children of Israel marched out of Egypt, the world would know the power of God.

In [Exodus 9:16](#), God is speaking, and so, 'for Scriptures says' in [Romans 9:17](#), is the same God who says, 'for this very purpose, that I may show My power in you'. Each time Pharaoh refused to let Israel go, the power of God was more clearly demonstrated in another plague.

Everyone, including foreign nations, began to hear of God and the mighty power He demonstrated in delivering Israel, [Joshua 2:10](#) / [Joshua 9:9](#). The time had come for God to show mercy on Israel, and Pharaoh could not stop Him, [Romans 9:18](#).

God hardened Pharaoh's heart by demanding something Pharaoh didn't want to do. God didn't harden his heart, separate from his will, but used his evil disposition to carry out His plans.

God shows favour to whom He wills, just as He favoured Isaac, Jacob and Moses. He rejects those whom He wills just as He did Ishmael, Esau and Pharaoh. The means by which He shows mercy or rejection must be learned in other passages.

HOW DID GOD HARDEN PHARAOH'S HEART?

We know that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, but maybe we should also ask the question, how did God harden Pharaoh's heart?

Clarke, in his commentary, has the following useful thought.

'God does not work this hardness of heart in man; but it may be said to harden him whom refuses to soften, to blind him whom refuses to enlighten, and to repel him whom refuses to call.' It is but just and right that He should withhold those graces which were repeatedly offered, and which the sinner had despised and rejected.'

OTHER EXAMPLES OF GOD WORKING ON PEOPLE'S HEARTS

In [John 16](#), Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, who would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, [John 16:8](#). In [John 17](#), Jesus spoke of having given the apostles the word they would preach to the world, [John 17:8](#) / [John 17:18](#).

Jesus also spoke of all who would believe in Him through the apostles' words, [John 17:20](#). In [Acts 2](#), the apostles preached the Gospel, that message given to them by the Holy Spirit, [Acts 2:4](#).

PETER'S AUDIENCE ON PENTECOST

In [Acts 2:36-37](#), we read that it was the preaching of the Word of God as the means by which men were convicted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

STEPHEN'S JEWISH AUDIENCE

Stephen accused his Jewish audience of being stiff-necked and resisting the Holy Spirit, [Acts 7:51](#), but the question is, were they in a literal battle against the Holy Spirit, or were they resisting the words of Stephen given by the Holy Spirit?

LYDIA

Did the Lord operate directly on Lydia's heart, or did He indirectly use some other means? [Acts 16:14](#). Notice that it was the Spirit-given Word of God that was preached that convicted the Jews at Pentecost, and as it was the Spirit-given Word of God that was preached that Stephen's audience resisted, it was the Spirit-given Word of God that Paul preached that opened Lydia's heart and the hearts of those women with her.

It appears that the Spirit-given Word softens some people while it hardens others. It was the message and signs of God given through Moses that hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Knowing all things, God knew that Pharaoh's stubborn heart would not be persuaded. And so, He could speak of hardening Pharaoh's heart when in truth, it was the Word and signs given through Moses that caused Pharaoh to further harden his own heart.

EXODUS

After considering the above texts, let's see how this ties together with Pharaoh. In [Exodus 10:1](#) and [Exodus 10:3](#), we read that Pharaoh is condemned for refusing to humble himself, which obviously implies he possessed free will. Notice [Exodus 10:7](#), that Pharaoh's servants were pleading with Pharaoh to let Israel go. In other words, the prospect of more plagues softened the hearts of Pharaoh's servants while hardening the heart of their king. This tells us that both Pharaoh and his officials possessed free will but acted in opposite ways in the same situation.

CONCLUSION

Pharaoh's part in hardening his own heart was an active part; he chose not to obey the will of God. God's part was simply to empower Pharaoh to exercise that choice.

This is evident from the fact that Pharaoh was held fully responsible for his hardness and punished for it. God didn't overrule Pharaoh's power of choice; Pharaoh actively hardened his own heart, and God allowed him to do so.

That old saying, 'the same sun that melts wax also hardens clay,' is very applicable to this study. Through the Gospel, God hardens the hearts of some and melts the hearts of others.

Those who accept the offer and obey its requirements are saved, selected and favoured. Those who reject it are lost, hardened and rejected. The same idea is shown in God sending powerful delusions to those who refuse to love the truth, [2 Thessalonians 2:9-12](#).

The writer of Hebrews warns believers today not to harden their hearts when they hear the voice of God in His Word, [Hebrews 3:8](#) / [Hebrews 3:13](#) / [Hebrews 3:15](#) / [Hebrews 4:7](#).

APPLICATION

Through means of the Gospel, God hardens the hearts of some and melts the hearts of others. Those who accept the offer and obey its requirements are saved, selected, and favoured. Those who reject it are lost, hardened, rejected. Let's strive to be among the favoured.

"One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?" [Romans 9:19-21](#)

[Romans 9:19](#) introduces another problem that may have arisen in the minds of his readers. Who can resist him? [Romans 9:19](#). If, as Paul seems to be saying, God's will is going to be worked out anyway, how can a man be blamed for what he does, and why should he be punished?

If the will of God is always going to be worked out anyway, doesn't this mean that men have no moral responsibility? Paul might have replied to this argument in several ways, but, in fact, he doesn't think that it deserves a reply! Notice in [Romans 9:20](#) that he dismisses it out of hand.

He says, 'even to ask such a question reveals disrespect for God.' You are questioning the justice and righteousness of God when you ask it. And, no matter how it may look to you, God is always just, right and good.

Abraham understood this when a lesser man might have thought that God was about to act with undue severity in His dealings with Sodom and Gomorrah, [Genesis 18:25](#). And so, Paul anticipates some objections. How could God find fault with man if everything man does is in accord with His overall purpose?

[Romans 9:20](#) gives the rebuke to those who ask such questions. Such questions show a lack of respect toward God. It is presumptuous for man to pass judgment on God because of His decisions and actions.

'Reply against God?', [Romans 9:20](#), 'Or, answers again, or disputes with God?' Footnote, KJV: Who has the right to talk back to God? We should never dispute with God when we don't understand His purposes.

If God chooses to save both Jews and Gentiles upon obedience to the gospel, who has the right to question Him?

'Will the thing formed...?' [Romans 9:20](#), refers to the thing formed stepping out of place by asking such a question.

All people must choose either to submit to God's will and be saved or to continue to sin and be lost. Modern man does not like this choice as imposed by God. Nonetheless, God, by right of Creator, has so established it, and our reaction to it determines our own destiny.

Then Paul uses that well-known illustration of the potter and the clay in [Romans 9:21](#). Quite simply, it means that man has no right to question the omnipotent, omniscient God. Notice the expression 'the same lump' in [Romans 9:21](#). The commentator Godet offers an interesting thought here; he says the following.

'At the forefront of Paul's mind there is still the fact that the Jews, who were the people of God and who had all the advantages, have rejected Christ, whilst the Gentiles, who were separated from God, have accepted salvation.'

The potter has a right to make from the same lump of clay a vessel of honour, that is, to make something that is beautiful and of noble purpose, and a vessel to dishonour, that is, ugly and of common use.

The fact that God made the creature declares His right to make it suitable to Himself. The potter, that is, God, not the clay, that is, man, determines the design of His work. God has the right to make one honour and another to dishonour.

The verse does not refer to the manner in which He does it, [2 Timothy 2:20-21](#). To press the illustration to destroy man's free will, denominational predestination, is a misuse of the passage.

So Paul is saying Israel must not say to God, 'You have no right to make ME anything else than a vessel to Honour, and you have no right to make the Gentiles anything else than a common vessel.'

"What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," and, "In the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'children of the living God.'" Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality." It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah." Romans 9:22-29

[Romans 9:22-24](#) is asking a question. If the potter has a right, does not God have a right to destroy sinners as a means to demonstrate His wrath and show His anger?

'Much longsuffering', [Romans 9:22](#), shows He does not make them 'vessels of wrath' apart from their own wills. There would be no need for long-suffering if man had no part in it, [2 Peter 3:9](#).

They make themselves vessels of wrath by opposing God's will, and they make themselves so against God's will, [Romans 9:22](#) / [2 Timothy 2:4](#). God's patience and longsuffering are extended toward everyone, but there will come a time when it will cease, [2 Peter 3:9](#).

'Prepared for destruction', [Romans 9:11](#), means just as God determined beforehand that a certain group or class will be saved eternally, that is, those in Christ, He determined beforehand that a certain group or class will receive everlasting destruction, that is, those who fail to believe and obey Christ.

He will demonstrate His wrath and make His power known upon sinners as in [Romans 9:22](#), but He will give the riches of His glory to those on whom He has had mercy, that is, the obedient, [Romans 9:23](#).

'Which He prepared beforehand for glory', [Romans 9:23](#), and so, again, God so planned or purposed glory for a certain group or class before He made the world.

Notice Paul says, 'even us,' [Romans 9:24](#), that is, Christians, the objects of God's mercy and vessels of honour.

'Whom He Called', [Romans 9:24](#), the call is to all, [Revelation 22:17](#), and it is by the Gospel, [2 Thessalonians 2:14](#). And so, all people have the opportunity to be vessels of mercy.

These verses show the Jews that God has a right to save Christians and destroy unbelievers. God makes the choice as to whom He will save. It is not by an arbitrary 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 it.

Those who accept and obey His plan, He chooses to save. Those who reject His plan are thereby rejected. Let us be among those who choose to follow God's plan. If God decides to show His grace by extending salvation to the Gentiles, no one has the right to question Him.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Jews were inclined to think that God could not make them anything other than vessels of honour. Paul rejects this view and points out that God does what he wills.'

God has done what He said He would do, through the prophet Hosea, [Romans 9:25](#) / [Hosea 2:23](#). Paul is showing the Jews by their own prophets that the Gentiles would be called the people of God. He quotes [Hosea 2:23](#), though not quite to the letter, a passage relating directly, not to the Gentiles, but to the kingdom of the ten tribes.

However, since they had sunk to the level of the Gentiles, who were 'not God's people,' [Romans 9:26](#), and in that sense 'not beloved,' the apostle legitimately applies it to the Gentiles.

His point is that the prophet prophesied that those who were not God's people would someday be His people. This can only mean that there would be a time when Gentiles become the people of God. And, as for Israel, which thinks so highly of itself.

In [Romans 9:26](#), he now quotes [Hosea 1:10](#), which teaches the same as the preceding [Romans 9:25](#). This expression seems to be designed to give greater emphasis to the gracious change, from divine exclusion to divine admission to the privileges of the people of God. Again, the point is that there would be a place, as well as a time, where those who were not His people would be His people.

In this section, Paul is showing God's right to choose the believers and to reject fleshly Israel. This is shown by many illustrations, Isaac, Jacob, Pharaoh, the potter, by Hosea the prophet, and now by Isaiah the prophet.

In [Romans 9:27-28](#), Paul quotes from [Isaiah 10:22-23](#), and also from the latter part of [Isaiah 28:21-22](#). This should remind the Jews that even in the Old Testament age, not all of Israel was saved. They shouldn't, therefore, complain that the greater part of Israel was not being rejected under the gospel system.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was stupid to think that, since the whole nation had not entered the blessing, the promise of God had failed. The promise had not been made to the whole nation and had never been intended to apply to the whole nation.'

'For He will finish the work', [Romans 9:28](#). Translations differ for this verse as follows. 'For the Lord will execute his word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short.' ASV. 'For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.' NIV.

'The Lord had spoken, and it would be done. He will execute His work speedily. He cut short, that is, consumed, many of them because of their wickedness, [2 Kings 10:32](#).

And, look at [Romans 9:29](#), another quotation from Isaiah concerning Israel, [Isaiah 1:9](#). 'As Isaiah said before' means as Isaiah foretold. A farmer saves 'seed,' a small portion of the harvest to continue the next crop.

Here it refers to the few righteous individuals by whom God, through His mercy, allowed the nation of Israel to continue. This is the same lesson as taught in [Romans 9:27](#).

The Jews should not think it so strange that God was now saving only a few of fleshly Israel. There were only a few saved in Isaiah's time, and without the mercy of God, all would have been destroyed.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘But if only a remnant will survive, at least a remnant will survive, and constitute the hope of restoration.’

This very clearly means that, but for the remnant, the few who remained faithful, the rejection of Israel would have been utter and complete.

ISRAEL’S UNBELIEF

“What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.” Romans 9:30-33

Romans 9:30-33 explains why, when Paul was writing this letter, the majority of Israel was still unsaved. There could be no questioning Israel’s zeal. Paul admits that they are very zealous; he says this in Romans 10:2. They pursued righteousness. They tried to establish themselves as righteous. But they went about it the wrong way.

‘What shall we say then?’, Romans 9:30. In other words, what shall we conclude from all this? ‘Even the righteousness of faith’, Romans 9:30, the ‘righteousness of faith’ is the righteousness revealed and obtained through the Gospel, Romans 1:16-17.

While the Gentiles did not seek righteousness according to the law, they became righteous by their obedience to the Gospel, Romans 6:17-18. They failed to keep the law and so, instead of being righteous, were sinners.

They sought justification by the law, but because of their own weaknesses, it was impossible. To be righteous ‘by law,’ one must never violate law in any way. This, no one has ever done, except Christ.

‘Of the law’, Romans 9:31, this is not in some ancient manuscripts. The Jews were trying to attain righteousness by works, and instead of having faith in Christ when He came, they rejected Him.

Because of their undue and misguided reliance on works, they rejected Christ, Romans 9:32. Christ, therefore, became a stumbling block to them, Romans 9:33, just as the Scriptures had said He would, 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 / 1 Peter 2:6-8.

In Romans 9:33, He quotes from Isaiah 28:16, which refers to the Messiah. ‘Not put to shame’, ‘Not be ashamed’, Romans 9:33, KJV, ‘Not make haste’, Isaiah 2:16 KJV, ‘Not be confounded’, 1 Peter 2:6 KJV.

He will never have fear, shame, or disappointment for having believed or trusted in Him. One who puts his trust in a man most certainly will be ashamed and disappointed.

Their entire activity was dedicated and aimed at establishing their own righteousness. They wanted to become right in their own eyes, to their own satisfaction and according to their own standard. They tried to become righteous according to the law, and, because they never succeeded in keeping the Law, they failed.

Unlike the Gentiles, who never had the special revelation that the Jews had, but who accepted salvation by faith in the grace and the unmerited favour of God. The Gentiles did not try to earn righteousness; the Jews did try and failed, because they did not seek it through faith, but through works, Romans 9:32.

APPLICATION

We can also have an undue and misguided reliance on works. We could remove our hearts from the Lord, Matthew 15:8, all the while going through the motions of worship. We could pursue our own interests, Ezekiel 33:31 / Matthew 6:33, all the while thinking we are doing well since we are still attending services. A reminder of our brief outline of chapters 9-11, which deal with the vindication of God's choices, would be useful.

1. God's right to choose as shown by many illustrations.

Isaac, Jacob, Pharaoh, the potter, by Hosea the prophet, those, not His people, would be called His people, and by Isaiah the prophet, not all of the Israelites were saved even in the Old Testament age, Romans 9:1-10.

2. The next section shows why they were rejected, Romans 9:11-21.

a. They were seeking it by the works of the law and stumbled, Romans 9:30-33.

b. They were ignorant of God's righteousness, Romans 10:1-4.

c. He shows what true righteousness is, Romans 10:5-15.

d. Israel had heard and should have known, Romans 10:16-20.

e. Their rejection was because of their own rebellion, Romans 10:21.

3. God had not cast away His people, Romans 11:1-31.

a. Paul was an Israelite, Romans 11:1.

b. Elijah was wrong when he thought none were faithful in Israel, Romans 11:2-5.

c. They were temporarily hardened to open the way for the Gentiles, Romans 11:6-16.

d. God could now graft them in if they did not continue to abide in unbelief, Romans 11:7-31.

4. All of this worked out in accordance with God's plan, so He might have mercy on all and all glory belongs to Him, Romans 11:32-36.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS 9-11

1. God's right to choose as shown by many illustrations.

Isaac, Jacob, Pharaoh, the potter, by Hosea the prophet (those, not His people, would be called His people), and by Isaiah the prophet (not all of the Israelites were saved even in the Old Testament age), Romans 9:1-10.

2. The next section shows why they were rejected, Romans 9:11-21.

a. They were seeking it by the works of the law and stumbled, Romans 9:30-33.

b. They were ignorant of God's righteousness, Romans 10:1-4.

c. He shows what true righteousness is, Romans 10:5-15.

d. Israel had heard and should have known, Romans 10:16-20.

e. Their rejection was because of their rebellion, Romans 10:21.

3. God had not cast away His people, Romans 11:1-31.

a. Paul was an Israelite, Romans 11:1.

- b. Elijah was wrong when he thought none were faithful in Israel, **Romans 11:2-5**.
 - c. They were temporarily hardened to open the way for the Gentiles, **Romans 11:6-16**.
 - d. God could now graft them in if they did not continue to abide in unbelief, **Romans 11:7-31**.
4. All of this worked out in accordance with God's plan, so He might have mercy on all and all glory belongs to Him, **Romans 11:32-36**.

THE VINDICATION OF GOD'S CHOICES

“Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” **Romans 10:1-4**

In **Romans 10**, the apostle once again expresses his deep grief about the state of Israel because of what he has just had to say about their failure. That expression, ‘my heart's desire for them’, **Romans 10:1**, literally means, ‘the goodwill of my heart’.

The Good News for modern man translation says, ‘I wish with all my heart’ that they might be saved.’ There is no doubt in his mind where the problem lies. It lies in their ignorance of the truth.

And, by the way, you will surely realise from what Paul says here that there is no such thing as an irrevocable decree, which says that Israel must be saved or, for that matter, that Israel must remain lost!

Paul knows what the present condition of the Jews is; they are in a lost state. But he also knows that the case is not altogether hopeless; they can be saved, **Romans 10:1**.

This is why he expresses himself in this way. If there were no possibility of Israel being saved, there would be no point in making such a statement. My prayer for them is that they might be saved.

Romans 10:2 speaks about zeal or enthusiasm, which is good. With zeal, there is hope. Zeal without knowledge is no good, and neither is knowledge without zeal, **John 2:17 / Acts 9:1-20**.

People in various denominations generally have zeal without knowledge, and brethren often have knowledge without zeal. Other examples of misguided zeal are **Matthew 13:15 / Acts 26:11 / Philippians 3:6**.

Notice in **Romans 10:3** that the Jews were so concerned to establish their own righteousness by trying to keep the law that they ignored God's righteousness, **Romans 9:32**. They did not submit to the plan which God had put forward and which is designed to make men righteous, to put them right with Himself.

They were ignorant of God's plan to make men righteous and went about establishing their own, **Romans 3:20**. They thought that by their works they could earn salvation and would be in a position to make demands of God. The result was that they had not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Today, people have their own theories of justification, e.g., ‘faith alone,’ ‘Holy Spirit religion,’ ‘revelations of Joseph Smith.’ The result is that they are not obedient to the righteousness of God.

Romans 10:4 tells us that they did not know that Christ is the end of the Law, in order that everyone who has faith may be justified. The expression ‘Christ is the end of the Law’ means two things.

1. That Christ is the one to whom the law points, to whom the law led.

The word which Paul uses is the word ‘telos’, and it means the termination, the conclusion, **Galatians 3:24-25**. You will recall what Paul wrote to the Galatians about the law being a schoolmaster, ‘pedagogue’, to bring men to Christ. The law led to Christ, and He, therefore, is the end that God had in mind when He gave the law.

2. Christ is also the end of the law in the sense that He came to fulfil the law, and in fulfilling it, He brought it to a close, **Matthew 5:17-20**.

The very thing the Jews sought after is now possible in Christ. Seeking righteousness is over when one believes, which includes obedience in Christ. When righteousness, that is, justification, is obtained, one has reached the purpose toward which the law was designed. The law has served its purpose when one attained the righteousness of God by faith, **Galatians 3:21-29**.

“Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.”

But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” **Romans 10:5-**

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Romans 10:5 points out that Moses said that if a man kept the law, he would be a righteous man. But Paul has already shown that no one ever succeeded in keeping the whole law, **Romans 3:20 / James 2:10**, and therefore, by the law, no one could be justified.

The law required perfect obedience, **Leviticus 18:5 / Galatians 3:10-12**. A person had to live by it and do exactly as it said in order to obtain righteousness. Since all had sinned and violated the law, **Romans 3:23**, and since the law had no means of pardon, it was impossible to be made righteous by the law.

The design of the law was to bring men to Christ, where they could be justified by faith. In **Romans 10:5**, Paul gave a quote from the law to describe what the law required, **Leviticus 18:5**. He will do the same regarding the word of faith which they preached.

Romans 10:6-7 tells us that neither does righteousness come through merit or as a reward for good behaviour. You do not need to ascend into heaven to bring Christ down, **Deuteronomy 3:12**.

You do not need to descend to the deep, that is, the grave, to bring Christ up from the dead, **Deuteronomy 30:13**. It is so much simpler than all that; it is a matter of faith.

Notice that the righteousness of faith is personified. In **Deuteronomy 30:12-13**, Moses told the children of Israel that God’s commandments were not in heaven, nor beyond the sea, but were at their disposal so that they could do them. As Paul draws from Moses’ words, he adds his own information in brackets, and shows that the same is true regarding the righteousness of faith, **Romans 10:7**. The Jews expected their Messiah to remain forever, **John 12:34**.

“But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” **Romans 10:8-11**

In **Romans 10:8-11**, Paul says it is a matter of hearing, believing and obeying the Gospel. It is then the case that Israel doesn’t believe because they have not heard? **Romans 10:18** says certainly not. They have heard because the Gospel has gone out into all the earth.

If it says neither of those things, what does it say? There is no need to ascend into heaven or descend into the deep to learn the word of faith. It is as close as belief in one’s heart or words in one’s mouth, **Romans 10:8**. His word has been implanted in our minds, **Hebrews 8:10**.

These verses reveal the accessibility of the Word and the simplicity of that required, in contrast with the obedience necessary under the law. ‘With the mouth’ and so, here the ‘confession’ does not refer to confessing Him by the way we live. We must go to other passages for that.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If a man called Jesus, Kurios was ranking him with the Emperor and with God; he was giving him the supreme place in his life; he was pledging him implicit obedience and reverent worship.’

Different translations have the following for **Romans 10:9**: ‘The Lord Jesus’, ‘Jesus as Lord’, ASV, NASV, ‘Jesus is Lord’, RSV, NIV, NCV. ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’, **Matthew 16:18 / Acts 8:37**.

All of these mean the same, that is, we confess our allegiance to Him. He is Lord of our lives, He is the Son of God, which refers to His Deity and therefore, has the authority to command.

Robertson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No Jew would do this who had not really trusted Christ, for Kurios in the LXX is used of God. No Gentile would do it who had not ceased worshipping the emperor as Kurios. The word Kurios was and is the touchstone of faith.’

Both ‘Lord’ and ‘Christ’ are founded on His resurrection and glorification, **Acts 2:36 / 1 Peter 3:22 / Philippians 2:9-11**. The resurrection of Christ is fundamental to the Christian system. The Gospel is preached, the testimony is believed, the mouth confesses one’s belief, and the result, when all other conditions are met, is salvation.

People in their hearts exercise faith, which leads to right standing before God. The mouth confesses what the heart believes to obtain salvation from past sins. One does not believe to obtain one blessing and confess to obtaining another, and so, ‘righteousness’ and ‘salvation’ are equal, **Romans 10:10**.

‘Righteousness’, justification, is having the death of Christ credited as payment for one’s sins, and so, his sin debt is paid, and he stands just, righteous, before God. These are not the only things required, e.g., repentance is also required, **Luke 13:3 / 2 Corinthians 7:10**.

Romans 10:11 is a quote from **Isaiah 28:16**, a Messianic prophecy. The one who believes in Him will never be ashamed, confounded, or filled with regret. ‘Belief in Christ’ or ‘faith in Christ’ in the Scriptures is often used as a ‘Synecdoche’, that is, a figure of speech where a part is used for the whole.

And so, to the inspired writers, a believer was one who both believes and obeys Christ. ‘Whosoever’, **Romans 10:11**, refers to all. This is proof that anyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who believes will receive the blessings.

“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” **Romans 10:12-13**

Romans 10:11b supplements **Romans 10:12b**. One will not be ashamed because the Lord is rich to all who call upon Him. Some think that the Jews are still the object of God’s special delight and have a glorious future in store for them.

However, they are mistaken. This was hard for the Jews to see, but it was the teaching of their own prophets. **Romans 10:13** is a quote from **Joel 2:32**. Again, this is important information to the Jew. God’s offer of salvation is universal; the offer is to both Jew and Gentile.

CALLING UPON ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

In Christianity today, the phrase, ‘calling upon the Name of the Lord’, has become used by many as a phrase by which a person can be saved without doing anything else.

As a result, after admitting they are sinners, many people now believe they are saved simply because they called on Jesus to save them. Let’s go ahead and see if we can understand what this phrase actually means.

The first time the phrase is used in the Old Testament is by the prophet Joel, **Joel 2:32**, speaking of what people will do in the future in order to be saved. And the first time it's used in the New Testament is by Peter as he quotes Joel's words in the very first Gospel sermon ever preached in **Acts 2:16-21**, which tells us that Joel's prophecy was fulfilled during this time.

When we carefully read **Acts 2**, after informing those present that 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved', we see the response of those present, they asked, 'What shall we do?' **Acts 2:37**, they were asking, What must they do to be saved?

In what way do we call upon the Lord? If calling on the Name of the Lord simply meant confessing your sinfulness and inviting Jesus into your heart, then surely, Peter would have told them to do just that, but he didn't, **Acts 2:38**.

Notice what those present on that day did, even before they asked the question, 'What must we do?' They heard the Gospel, **Acts 2:14 / Acts 2:41**, and they believed the Gospel, **Acts 2:37**, and they repented of their sins, **Acts 2:38 / Acts 2:41**. So what we see here are faith, repentance and baptism. This was how they called upon the Name of the Lord.

The apostle Paul had been taught the Gospel and demonstrated faith and repentance, **Acts 22:6-10**. Again, if calling upon the Name of the Lord simply meant confessing your sinfulness and inviting Jesus into your heart, then surely, Ananias would have told Him to do just that, but he didn't, **Acts 22:16**.

Again, what we see here is faith, repentance and baptism, **Acts 9:18**. This was how Paul called upon the Name of the Lord. A little later, Paul goes on to write about how God saves people from their sins when he writes to the Romans. Notice also that he quotes from **Joel 2:32**, just as Peter did.

It's such a shame that many people just read **Romans 10:13** without reading it in its context. A careful reading of the text shows us that calling on the Name of the Lord involves hearing and believing the Gospel, **Romans 10:14**; it involves a change of heart, which is repentance, and it involves publicly confessing faith in Jesus as the Christ, **Romans 10:9-10**; it involves obeying the commands of the Gospel, **Romans 10:16 / Romans 10:19-21**.

If calling on the Name of the Lord simply meant confessing your sinfulness and inviting Jesus into your heart, then surely, Paul would have told them to do just that, but as we shall read in a moment, he didn't, **Romans 10:13-17**.

Paul, after saying, 'everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved,' goes on to ask a series of questions that tell us what this phrase means, **Romans 10:13-17**.

In other words, to call upon the name of the Lord means we must hear the Gospel, believe the Gospel and obey the Gospel. When someone calls upon the name of the Lord, they are simply obeying God's plan of salvation to hear God's word, believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent and be baptised.

CONCLUSION

As I mentioned earlier, there are thousands of people in the religious world today who believe they are saved because they've called upon the name of the Lord.

Sadly, saying the name 'Lord' won't save anyone, **Matthew 7:21-23**, it won't save anyone unless it's accompanied by obedience to the Gospel, **Matthew 29:19-20 / Mark 16:16 / Luke 6:46**.

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" **Romans 10:14-15**

Paul's comment about calling on the name of the Lord brought up several rhetorical questions. The answer to these first three questions is implied: 'they cannot,' **Romans 10:14**.

These questions show that believing in Christ is not a direct gift from God. They could believe in Him without hearing or without a preacher if the Holy Spirit operated directly on their hearts, saved them by an ‘experience,’ etc.

These verses refer primarily to the sending of inspired teachers, **Romans 10:15**. They taught, were sent, and commissioned to do so, the Word which brings faith; thus, acceptable faith comes as a result of the Word which they brought.

A person today could believe without a preacher simply by reading **John 20:30-31**. Nonetheless, we need to do all we can in sending preachers because many will fail to believe without them, **Matthew 9:37-38**.

‘Beautiful are the feet,’ **Romans 10:15**, is a quote from **Isaiah 52:7**. This means their message is precious and wonderful to those who accept it. Preaching the Gospel is the grandest, highest, noblest, holiest, most needed, and vital work known to this sinful world, **1 Timothy 4:16**. However, very few people think so.

‘Bring good news!’ **Romans 10:15**. To name only a few, the tidings of God’s love, the benefits of Christ’s death, peace with God, the forgiveness of sins, a better life, the joy that is full, and hope of eternal life.

“But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?”

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Again, I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” **Romans 10:16-20**

Despite the ‘good things’ announced, many have rejected them. **Romans 10:16** plainly shows that one must obey the commands of the Gospel to receive its rewards. Obedience was the aim and design of the preaching.

‘Lord, who has believed our report?’, **Romans 10:16**, again, he quotes **Isaiah 51:1**, to confirm his point. Many prophets had been sent, but despite this, many did not obey.

Likewise, today, many preachers have been sent bearing the good news, but the great majority are not interested. Paul is saying that the Israelites have not obeyed the Gospel because, as was the case with Isaiah’s report, they had not believed it.

This shows that the inspired writers always wrote with the understanding that acceptable faith included obedience. God had afforded them the opportunity, but they had refused it. Some believed, but the majority remained disobedient.

Notice about Paul describes how faith comes, **Romans 10:17**. Without hearing the message, there is no faith. Also, whatever is not found in the Word of God is not properly a matter of faith.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Hearing is a reflection of first-century life. Paul does not raise the possibility of the message being read. While there were people who could read, the ordinary first-century citizen depended rather on being able to hear something.’

In **Romans 10:18**, Paul used the words in **Psalms 19:4** to describe the spread of the Gospel and thus shows they had heard it, **Colossians 1:23**. The Jews had no one to blame but themselves.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is not a part of the promised land in which these glad tidings have not been preached; and there is scarcely a place in the Roman empire in which the doctrine of Christ crucified has not been heard: if, therefore, the Jews have not believed, the fault is entirely their own; as God has amply furnished them with the means of faith of salvation.’

‘Did Israel not know?’, **Romans 10:19**, means Israel should have known by their many prophecies. ‘By those who are not a nation, a foolish nation’, **Romans 10:19**, is a quote from **Deuteronomy 32:21**. It refers to the Gentiles and how they were regarded in the Jews’ estimation.

They could not say they did not know about the Gospel system, for Moses had spoken of a time when God would provoke Israel to jealousy by the Gentiles. **Romans 10:19** is a key verse for understanding much of what is said in **Romans 11 / Romans 11:11 / Romans 11:14 / Romans 11:25-26**.

Romans 10:20 is a quote from **Isaiah 65:1**, which shows from the prophets that God would be made known to another nation. His point here is that it was prophesied that God had planned to save the Gentiles before their seeking and asking to be saved.

It was God's choice to bring other nations into His new covenant. Israel was ignorant of its rejection, though Moses and Isaiah plainly foretold it, **Jeremiah 31:31-34 / Hebrews 8:8-12**.

“But concerning Israel, he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”
Romans 10:21

Why then are they still unsaved? Because of disobedience and rebelliousness, **Isaiah 65:2**. And that word is ‘disobedient’, the word ‘apeitheo’. It means ‘not to allow oneself to be persuaded.’ They had actively rejected God's invitations.

Notice also the use of the word ‘obstinate’. The word ‘antilego’, literally means to set oneself against someone, to refuse to have anything to do with him. Even to declare oneself to be opposed to a person.

‘All the day long’ shows that He was meek, patient and long-suffering in His dealings with them. ‘To disobedient and contrary people’ means they were a rebellious people who refused to submit to God.

And so, they were not His chosen people, not because He had forsaken them, but they had continually rejected Him. You see how rebellious the Jews were. They set themselves against Christ; they refused to allow themselves to be persuaded by evidence and declared that they did not wish to have anything to do with Him.

But Paul is not finished yet. You might have thought that all this would be sufficient explanation for the failure of the Jews to find salvation, but Paul asks another question in **Romans 11**.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

We need to keep in mind the brief outline of **Romans 9-11**, which deals with the vindication of God's choices.

1. God's right to choose is shown by many illustrations.

Isaac, Jacob, Pharaoh, the potter, by Hosea the prophet, those, not His people, would be called His people, and by Isaiah the prophet, not all of the Israelites were saved even in the Old Testament age, **Romans 9:1-10**.

2. The next section shows why they were rejected, **Romans 9:11-21**.

a. They were seeking it by the works of the law and stumbled, **Romans 9:30-33**.

b. They were ignorant of God's righteousness, **Romans 10:1-4**.

c. He shows what true righteousness is, **Romans 10:5-15**.

d. Israel had heard and should have known, **Romans 10:16-20**.

e. Their rejection was because of their own rebellion, **Romans 10:21**.

3. God had not cast away His people, **Romans 11:1-31**.

a. Paul was an Israelite, **Romans 11:1**.

- b. Elijah was wrong when he thought none were faithful in Israel, [Romans 11:2-5](#).
 - c. They were temporarily hardened to open the way for the Gentiles, [Romans 11:6-16](#).
 - d. God could now graft them in if they did not continue to abide in unbelief, [Romans 11:7-31](#).
4. All of this worked out in accordance with God’s plan, so He might have mercy on all and all glory belongs to Him, [Romans 11:32-36](#).

THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL

“I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don’t you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? And what was God’s answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too, at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.” [Romans 11:1-6](#)

Paul now asks, ‘Did God reject His people?’ [Romans 11:1](#), Has God totally rejected those who were formerly His people? Only the unbelieving, hence, as a nation, God has rejected Israel for their disobedience to Christ. He cast them out but left an open door behind them, and into it, they had the liberty and duty to return. Paul is arguing that God has not rejected all Israelites; otherwise, Paul himself would also be lost.

‘Of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin’, [Romans 11:1](#), gives Paul a place of dignity and importance among the Jews. ‘Whom He foreknew’, [Romans 11:2](#), God had not completely cast off those whom He before purposed or designed to be His people.

National Israel had been rejected, but each individual Israelite is now invited to be a part of spiritual Israel. He can now be part of spiritual Israel by his own faith and choice. [Romans 11:32](#) / [Galatians 6:16](#).

Paul speaks of what the Scripture says in the case of Elijah, [Romans 11:2](#). [Romans 11:3](#) is a quote from [1 Kings 19:10](#) / [1 Kings 19:14](#). The complete story is revealed in [1 Kings 18](#) and [19](#).

Elijah was discouraged and in despair when he was forced to flee from Jezebel, who was seeking to kill him. He was all alone in the wilderness and supposed that all of Israel had abandoned God for idols.

[Romans 11:4](#) is a quote from [1 Kings 19:18](#). God informed Elijah that He had seven thousand left in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And so, Elijah was wrong when he thought there were none who were faithful in Israel, and, likewise, it would be wrong to think there were none faithful in Israel now.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was not the number as much as the permanence of God’s plan for Israel that mattered in the time of Elijah. He put his trust in God’s grace, not in numbers.’

God had not utterly cast away all Israelites, now just because the greater majority of them were unbelieving. In this same way, there is a remnant now, at the time of Paul’s writing, and likewise now. The remnant was positive proof that God had not totally cast off His ancient people.

‘A remnant chosen by grace’, [Romans 11:5](#), is the election that proceeds from God’s grace, or the election made possible by God’s grace. The choice came about as a result of God’s grace. This is what Paul is referring to in [Romans 11:6](#).

The source of election is a result of the grace of God. It did not come as a result of the works of men. So far as God's original plan of election is concerned, grace and the works of men are mutually exclusive, Romans 11:6. If it came about as a result of the one, it could not be a result of the other, Romans 9:11 / Romans 9:16.

False teachers flock to Romans 11:6 to teach that a man is not saved by works. However, not only are they pulling it out of context, but their interpretation contradicts many other plain passages, Matthew 7:24-26 / Ephesians 2:10 / Titus 3:8 / Titus 3:14 / James 2:24 / Philippians 2:12 / Hebrews 5:9.

SUMMARY

Are they unsaved because God has rejected them? No! Paul points out that he himself is a Jew; therefore, the fact that he has been saved proves that God has not cast off anyone simply for being a Jew! They are unsaved because they have rejected the Gospel. And God still has a remnant, even of the Jews, who will be saved, just as in the days of Elijah.

The point of Paul's argument here is that God's purpose does not save Israel as a nation, but He saves Jews as individual believers, on the basis of their personal faith in Christ. These are the ones he calls a remnant, who are chosen by grace. They are the people who have accepted God's grace and have obeyed the Gospel.

“What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly, they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day.” And David says: “May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.” Romans 11:7-

10

As for the rest of Israel, their hearts were hardened, Romans 11:7. Israel did not obtain it, that is, the chosen of God, the election according to grace, because it sought it in the following wrong ways.

1. By blind adherence to the law.
2. Through the wrong view of the Messiah.

‘The elect have obtained it’, Romans 11:7, means national Israel was rejected, but some individuals were of the chosen. They had believed and obeyed the Gospel and thereby had become the elect.

The words ‘hardened, ‘blinded’ KJV, Romans 11:7, in Greek is ‘poroo’, which means turned to stone, ‘poposis’.

‘And the rest were blinded’, Romans 11:7, KJV, means the vast majority of the Jews were blinded, dulled, hardened.

God never directly hardens individuals against their own will. Just as Pharaoh had hardened his will against God's demands, most of the Jews chose to harden themselves against the Gospel, Acts 13:46.

Their wills were hardened, and their understanding was dulled in accordance with that which was written by Isaiah. Romans 11:8 is a quote from Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10.

God did not offer the Jews what they wanted; they, therefore, turned a deaf ear to His word. They did not see in Jesus anything they desired. They would not hear and would not see; therefore, they did not understand.

‘To this very day’, Romans 11:8, means originally to the time Moses wrote, Deuteronomy 29:4, but the condition prevailed to the time Paul wrote and has not improved even until now.

God gave them these things in punishment for their sin, not as taught in Calvinism before they did anything. We should not have a stubborn and obstinate heart; otherwise, God will stand in opposition to us, 1 Peter 3:15 / Jeremiah 21:10 / Ezekiel 15:7.

Romans 11:9 is a quote from Psalm 69:22-23. David spoke these words by inspiration against those opposing God's will in his day. 'Let their table become a snare and a trap', Romans 11:9.

The Jews in Paul's time were trapped by their blind adherence to the law. And so, they had been trapped by the very thing which was designed to lead them to Christ, Galatians 3:19-29.

'A stumbling block', Romans 11:9, although the law was designed to lead them to Christ when they chose it over Him, it became the cause of their fall. 'And a retribution to them,' their table, that is, their law, had become a retribution to them. Again, all this is punishment for their sin.

'Let their eyes be darkened', Romans 11:10, the same words apply to the wicked at all times, in David's, Paul's and our day, Psalm 69:22-23. Where men refuse the light, God will send them strong delusions, 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12.

'Bow down their back always', Romans 11:10, means, for example, let them bow down with the heavy burdens of trouble. National Israel had rejected Christ and was now lost, Romans 9:1-3 / Romans 10:1-4; however, all was not hopeless because each individual was invited to repent and be converted, Acts 3:19.

INGRAFTED BRANCHES

"Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!" Romans 11:11-12

Did they stumble so as to utterly fall? In other words, have they stumbled so as to remain fallen? Or, is their fall without remedy? God did not will their fall; their final doom was not what God had in mind.

'Through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy', Romans 11:11, because of the unbelief of the Jews, the way was opened to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, Acts 13:46 / Acts 18:5-6 / Acts 28:25-28.

Becoming Jealous of the blessings the Gospel brought to the Gentiles, some of the Jews began to reconsider the Word of truth. God can bring good out of evil, Romans 11:5 / Romans 11:14.

Romans 11:30-31 show that Paul was referring to events in his day. They fell in their rejection because of unbelief. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, Romans 11:11.

'Their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!', Romans 11:12, means if Israel's fall resulted in riches for Gentiles, their fullness, that is, acceptance of the Gospel, will result in far greater blessings. Paul continues this thought in Romans 11:15.

"I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches." Romans 11:13-16

In Romans 11:13, Paul issues a warning to the Gentiles, lest they become proud because they have been saved, whilst the Jews remain unsaved. He admits that when the Jews rejected the Gospel, the door was opened to non-Jews, Acts 13:46 / Acts 18:5-6 / Acts 28:25-28.

He says that he is proud of the fact that he is an apostle to the Gentiles, Romans 11:13. He magnifies it, he glories in it, in the hope that he might make his fellow Jews jealous, jealous, that is, when they see the Gentiles accepting what they themselves have rejected.

Romans 11:14 describes his burning desire to save lost souls, especially his brethren in the flesh. This shows that Romans 11:26 is not referring to all the Jews.

Some become envious of the spiritual blessings others have and thus seek to obtain them. And so, ‘envy’, Romans 11:14, basically ‘desire’ in the original, the context determines, can sometimes be a good thing. It is wise for us to be envious of the spiritual qualities and attainments.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is a matter for profound regret that just as Israel refused to accept this salvation when it was offered to them, so the Gentiles have all too often refused to make Israel envious. Instead of showing to God’s ancient people the attractiveness of the Christian way, Christians have characteristically treated the Jews with hatred, prejudice, persecution, malice, and all uncharitableness. Christians should not take this passage calmly.’

Romans 11:15 means the Gospel could not be preached to the Gentiles until it had been offered to the Jews; this is what Paul said in the passage referred to already in Acts 13:46.

So, the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews might be described as ‘the reconciling of the world’, Romans 11:15. Bear in mind that, if Israel had accepted Christ, the Gospel would have come to the Gentile world eventually, because Israel was intended to be the means whereby all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Genesis 12:3.

For this reason, the Gentile believers should recognise that they have a reason for gratitude to God for their salvation. You might say Israel’s present position was foreseen by God, even though it was not planned by Him. And even yet, they are not beyond hope, because the fact that the Gentiles have accepted salvation may result in Israel becoming jealous, ‘in a good sense’.

Romans 11:15 is the same as Romans 11:12. ‘What will their acceptance be?’ Romans 11:15, for example, what will the acceptance of the Jews be to the Gentiles?

‘Life from the dead?’ Romans 11:15, that is, even greater blessings will be obtained; e.g., such as those to come, eternal life. This tells us that since one great blessing has come to the Gentile world because the Jews rejected the Gospel, will it not be an even greater blessing if the Jews also begin to be converted? Putting that another way, since the world was blessed when the Jews rejected Christ, think how blessed it would be when the remnant accepts Christ. ‘Firstfruit’, Romans 11:16, or ‘First portion’, means the first converts. ‘Lump’, ‘the mass’, means the other Israelites, the whole nation. ‘Root’ means the first converts. ‘Branches’ are all other Israelites.

And so, Paul gives the same thought under different imagery. This shows that if God had accepted the first converts as holy, He would likewise on the same conditions accept all Israelites as holy, Romans 11:16.

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, Galatians 3:28-29. God has no other plan to save either Jews or Gentiles. All who are saved must be saved by the Gospel, not by the law or a restoration of national Israel.

“If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.” Romans 11:17-21

The Gentiles are like the branch from a wild olive tree, which has been grafted into the tree, when the natural branches were cast out. The Jews are called the ‘natural branches’ in this text because they were at one time God’s chosen people.

‘Some of the branches were broken off’, Romans 11:17. These discarded branches are the Jews who could have been accepted as were the first converts to Christianity. They were broken off because they were sinners and refused God’s offer of forgiveness through the Gospel.

‘And you, being a wild olive tree’, [Romans 11:17](#), the Gentiles are called the ‘wild olive tree’ or ‘root’, because they have been left to grow up in a state of nature, [Romans 1:24](#) / [Romans 1:28](#).

‘Were grafted in among them’, [Romans 11:17](#). Grafting is the process of inserting a scion or young shoot into a plant or tree. Nearly all fruit trees are put through this process today, e.g., an orange tree has a lemon tree’s roots. Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When an old olive tree had lost its vigour, it seems that one remedy in antiquity was to cut away the failing branches and graft in some wild olive shoots. The result was said to be the invigoration of the failing tree.’

The Gentiles had been grafted in with those Jews who had accepted the Gospel. ‘Now share in the nourishing sap,’ [Romans 11:17](#), means all the new branches, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, are partakers together of the sap of the root, the blessings of the Gospel.

‘Do not consider yourself to be superior’, [Romans 11:18](#), means do not glory over the broken off branches, that is, the unbelieving Jews, [Romans 11:20](#). The original rejection of the Jews and neglect of Gentiles made the Jews proud and gave them a feeling of superiority. Paul is admonishing the Gentiles to avoid this evil attitude toward the Jews.

‘But the root supports you’, [Romans 11:18](#), in other words, you did not give the spiritual blessings, but they came from them to you, [John 4:22](#) / [Romans 15:27](#). For example, it was by the Jews that Christ came, the apostles were Jews and taught the Gentiles. Let us avoid the wrong attitude toward unbelievers. Let us have no boasting among the branches. Let us avoid feelings of superiority among us.

[Romans 11:19](#) tells us that the Gentile Christians might conclude that the Jews were rejected for the sole purpose that the Gentiles might be received. [Romans 11:20](#) explains why they were broken off. Hence, God does not unconditionally preordain one’s rejection. Men have a choice between belief and unbelief.

‘Stand by faith’, [Romans 11:20](#), means the Christian does not stand by perfect obedience or sinless perfection. Faith motivates us to obey; faith produces obedience. To ‘stand by faith’ is a high and noble privilege granted by God through His grace.

‘Don’t be arrogant’, [Romans 11:20](#), since it is a blessing granted by God, no one has the right to personal pride or arrogance. Certainly, this was a problem among the Jews. Paul is admonishing the Gentiles to avoid it.

‘But tremble’, [Romans 11:20](#), means they too needed to fear, lest they be broken off as were the Jews because of their unbelief. ‘Fear’ is a little word that carries deep meaning, [Luke 1:50](#) / [Luke 12:4-5](#) / [Acts 10:34-35](#) / [Hebrews 10:30-31](#).

For if God did not spare the natural branches, that is, the Jews, take heed lest He does not spare you either, [Romans 11:21](#). They offer positive proof, or else the warning is totally meaningless, that a Christian can so conduct himself as to be cut off and therefore be in the same lost state as the unbelieving Israelites.

“Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!” [Romans 11:22-24](#)

[Romans 11:22](#) gives us the reason to be humble. Do not boast over the Jews, the natural branches, because what happened to them could happen to you! If you do not continue in God’s goodness, you too will be cast out.

‘If you continue in His kindness’, [Romans 11:22](#), means remaining in the favour of God, here, for the Gentiles, is conditional. They had to remain faithful to God in order to remain in His love, [John 15:1-8](#).

We, too, must continue in His service, praying, visiting, teaching, etc., worshipping Him in spirit and trust, and living godly in order to remain in His goodness, [Jude 21](#) / [Colossians 1:23](#).

But notice that expression, ‘do not persist in unbelief’, [Romans 11:23](#), it means that salvation is conditional. No such thing as once saved, always saved. God is love, [1 John 4:8](#), but God is also a consuming fire, [Hebrews 12:29](#). We are to fear His wrath.

Parents also must have a balance. It is wrong to have all discipline without appreciation, kindness, and love. Churches likewise must be severe against those who sin, yet have genuine love. [Romans 11:23](#) teaches that if they do not continue in unbelief, they may be saved. And this means that we are not in any position to boast over the Jews. ‘For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature’, [Romans 11:24](#), refers to the Gentiles. ‘Were grafted contrary to nature’, [Romans 11:24](#), means it was not a normal practice. Grafting is a delicate process; not many actually work. Many stems will not ‘take’ and are rejected by the plant.

It is easier to graft the natural branches than any others. Just as it is easy to graft a natural branch into its own olive tree, God would readily accept the Jews if they turned to Him.

The Jew’s covenant relationship with God had been broken off so that a new covenant could be established with new conditions and promises, [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) / [Hebrews 8:6-13](#).

ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” [Romans 11:25-27](#)

The word ‘mystery’, [Romans 11:25](#), is interesting because the word in Greek does not mean ‘mysterious’ but ‘once hidden, but now made known,’ [Ephesians 1:9](#) / [Ephesians 3:4](#).

The ‘mystery’ in this context is the Gentiles having the opportunity to receive salvation because of the fall of the Jews, [Romans 11:11-12](#) / [Romans 11:15](#) / [Romans 11:18](#) / [Romans 11:30](#). The word, ‘conceited’, [Romans 11:25](#), ‘Conceits, estimation’. This word means ‘excessive appreciation or estimation of one’s own worth or virtue.’

The words, ‘hardening in part’, [Romans 11:25](#), mean their hardening was not universal. There was a remnant who believed. The hardening of the Jews was favourable to the bringing in of the Gentiles, [Romans 11:7](#) / [Romans 11:11](#). ‘Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in’, [Romans 11:25](#), refers to the completion of that period of time in Paul’s day when the Gentiles were having the opportunity to receive salvation because of the blindness of the Jews, [Romans 11:11-12](#) / [Romans 11:15](#) / [Romans 11:28](#) / [Romans 11:30](#). The word for fullness in Greek is ‘pleroma’ and it means, ‘the completeness of the blessing.’

At present, their hearts are still hard, set against the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. But that could have changed, [Romans 11:25](#). And so, the national concept is destroyed under the Gospel system.

The Jews had been rejected, not simply because they were Jews, but because they failed to believe in their Messiah. If they turned from their unbelief, God would readily accept them, not as a nation, but as Christian individuals.

[Romans 11:26](#) tells us that in this way, Israel shall be saved, which way? By believing and obeying the Gospel, [Romans 11:23](#) / [Galatians 3:7](#). The word, ‘so’, KJV, [Romans 11:26](#), is an adverb of the manner in the Greek and means, ‘in this way, in this manner.’ It does not mean and is never translated as ‘so then,’ or ‘so when.’

Premillennialists teach that [Romans 11:23](#), refers to a future mass conversion of the Jews.

And so, in this manner shall all Israel be saved, that is, all Israelites would be saved in precisely the same manner as Gentiles, by being grafted in by faith into a covenant relationship with God.

‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion’, [Romans 11:26](#), has reference to Christ’s first coming, not His second. Paul is simply affirming that Israelites must be saved in the same way as the Gentiles, that is, by believing in Christ, the Redeemer. Please keep this in mind, that the only way in which the Jews can be saved is the way in which we were saved, by obeying the Gospel.

Look at the passage Paul quotes from in [Romans 11:27](#). He quotes from the prophet Isaiah, [Isaiah 59:20-21](#) / [Isaiah 27:9](#). This is a very appropriate passage because it refers to the exile in Babylon, and it says that ‘then’, as ‘now’, a part of the nation remained true to God, and these would come back, be delivered from captivity because of their obedience.

[Romans 11:27](#) is probably based on [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) / [Hebrews 8:8-12](#), which means that God would make provisions by which sins could be forgiven. The verse does not refer to something yet to be fulfilled. It was fulfilled when God offered forgiveness through the Gospel.

“As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you, who were at one time disobedient to God, have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.” [Romans 11:28-32](#)

‘Concerning the gospel’, [Romans 11:28](#), means from the standpoint of the gospel system, God’s plan to save.

‘Enemies’, they, that is, the Jews, were cast off by God because of their unbelief.

‘For your sake’, [Romans 11:28](#), means they were cast off in order to give them, the Gentiles, the opportunity to be saved. It turned out to the advantage of the Gentiles. ‘But concerning the election,’ or ‘but with regard to the choice,’ [Romans 11:28](#). For example, God chose the lineage of the Messiah.

‘Are beloved for the sake of the fathers’, [Romans 11:28](#), means they are still loved on account of the fathers. They were enemies, as far as the covenant relationship was concerned, but were still loved for the sake of their forefathers and the covenant God had made with them.

‘Irrevocable’, or ‘without a change of mind or purpose,’ [Romans 11:29](#). Some versions have ‘repentance’, but it is not the same word as ‘repentance’ elsewhere in the New Testament.

The gifts and calling of God are not reversible. God had not changed His mind regarding the calling of the fathers, or His blessings toward them. God’s gifts and calling were conditioned upon obedience to His will, [Exodus 19:5](#) / [Exodus 24:7](#) / [Leviticus 26:3-13](#) / [Deuteronomy 27](#).

When the Jews rejected Christ, they rejected God’s will, which included the gifts and calling. And so, by their rejection, they removed themselves from the blessings.

Furthermore, God’s dealings with them, which included the gifts and calling, made provision for a change in covenants, [Deuteronomy 18:18-19](#) / [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) / [Hebrews 8:6-13](#). When they refused to accept the change, God had no choice but to reject them. Hence, the fault in all these matters lies with them, not God.

Notice the words, ‘have now’, [Romans 11:30](#), mean not in the future. ‘Through their disobedience’, [Romans 11:30](#), the preaching of the Gospel was opened to the Gentiles through the unbelief of the Jews, [Matthew 21:33-45](#) / [Acts 13:46](#) / [Acts 28:25-36](#).

‘These’ in [Romans 11:31](#), again, refers to the Jews. ‘Have now been’, and so, again, this refers to Paul’s time.

‘Through the mercy shown you’ means through the mercy the Gentiles received.

‘They also may obtain mercy’, [Romans 11:31](#), the Jews, being provoked to jealousy. And so, the same source of mercy which provided salvation to the Gentiles can now result in salvation for the Jews.

[Romans 11:32](#), in very precise form, makes a summation of all that Paul has contended up to this point. God had shut all up, both Jews and Gentiles, in disobedience, that is, sin, so that He might invite all to deliverance and forgiveness.

God had declared and shown all to be sinners so that He could free them in His own way and time. This was God's plan and God's way.

DOXOLOGY

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” Romans 11:33-36

Paul now closes with praise to God for His profound wisdom and care toward men. ‘Riches’, [Romans 11:33](#), means inexhaustible resources. ‘Both of the wisdom and knowledge’, [Romans 11:33](#), God's ways are far too deep, vast, and incomprehensible for man. ‘How unsearchable are His judgments’, [Romans 11:33](#), means they cannot be discovered or found out until revealed or executed.

‘And His ways past finding out’, [Romans 11:33](#), means we know of them only through His revealed Word. No one has ever enriched God by giving Him suggestions of wisdom. His ways and thoughts are immeasurably above ours, [Romans 11:34](#) / [Isaiah 55:8-9](#). No one can ever put God under obligation to anyone, [Isaiah 40:13](#).

All receive from Him and He from none. God is not any more obligated to the Jews than the Gentiles. We should not try to bind God when we pray to Him, [Romans 11:35](#) / [Job 41:11](#).

[Romans 11:36](#) is proof that no one has first given to Him. He is the source, accomplisher, and goal of our salvation as well as all things, [Revelation 4:11](#). The supreme purpose of man's existence is to glorify His Creator and Benefactor, which can only be done by doing His will, [Ephesians 1:6](#). This ends the predominantly doctrinal part of the book.

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

When we reach the end of [Romans 11](#), the doctrinal part of the Roman letter has ended. In [Romans 11:28](#), Paul has concluded with a statement on the position of Israel, in the light of the Gospel, and it becomes evident, from the ascription with which the chapter ends, that he has said all that needs to be said on the subject. [Romans 11:36](#). Now, in [Romans 12](#), we come to a new tone and a new topic.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2

A LIVING SACRIFICE

‘Therefore, I urge you’, or ‘I, therefore, appeal to you’, Romans 12:1. You see at once that the tone is different. It is an appeal, an urgent request, based on all the mercy which God has shown. He says, in effect, ‘in the light of God’s mercy and in view of all that I have written, I urge you.’ ‘I urge you’ means, ‘I beg of you, please’.

As an apostle of Christ, Paul might very well have exercised apostolic authority and issued a command. But he does not say, ‘I, therefore, command you as an apostle of the Lord’, but rather, ‘I beseech you by the mercies of God’, Romans 12:1.

There are indeed other matters about which it would be both right and proper to issue commands, and there are times when commands would be effective. But Paul knows that certain things cannot be commanded, and what he now has in mind is one of those things.

It is something that has to come spontaneously, voluntarily, because it has no value if it is done under duress, Philemon 1:17. Here it is, ‘present your bodies as living sacrifices’, Romans 12:1. I said that both the tone and the topic are new, and the new topic is sacrifice.

Although Paul had great reasoning powers, with which he could grapple with the deep subjects which we have encountered in the letter, he was never merely content to prove his case. He never wrote a letter without, at the close, seeking to move his readers to action.

He evidently believed that if one is a Christian, it will be revealed in the way one behaves, Galatians 5:22-23. And that is why this chapter commences with practical advice. He urges a certain course of conduct, and he tells how it should be achieved.

1. What to do.

Present your bodies as living sacrifices, Romans 12:1.

2. How to do it.

Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed, Romans 12:2.

Look at these two aspects of his teaching. ‘Present your bodies,’ Romans 12:1. When we stop to think about this statement, I suggest that it comes as a surprise to us that he said, ‘present your bodies’, because we are inclined to regard our bodies as the lower part of our being.

It might have sounded more natural and proper for him to say, ‘present your lives in sacrifice’. But Paul surely knew what he was saying.

He knew that there were philosophers among the Greeks who taught that the body, the flesh, is quite unimportant and that what really matters is the spirit. They said that the body is merely a shackle, which holds the spirit in bondage, or the body is merely a housing for the spirit.

This idea found its way into the thinking of the early monastic orders set up by the church of Rome, where the monks believed there was something inherently sinful and vile about the body, and the best thing they could do with their bodies was to mortify them, make them suffer, even to the point of neglecting them.

They called the body, ‘the tomb of the soul, a muddy vesture of decay. Brother so and so, who needed to be whipped!’ James Russell Lowell. ‘Here lies the part of J.R.L. Which hindered him from doing well’.

The Scriptures indeed teach that the body is the tent of the true man, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8. But they certainly do not say that the body is unimportant, or that it should be neglected. Nor do they teach that it is something to be despised or to be ashamed of.

After all, God designed the human body, Genesis 1:27, and it belongs to Him, just as surely as does our soul, and our spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Furthermore, God did not disdain to allow his Son to take on himself a body of flesh and blood; He says, ‘a body you prepared for Me,’ Hebrews 10:5-7.

Far from being a tomb, the body of a Christian is a temple, 1 Corinthians 6:19. This being the case, the Holy Spirit works through our bodies. Indeed, when you think about it, it is impossible to obey any of the commands of God without our bodies.

So, when Paul pleads, ‘present your bodies,’ he is really saying, ‘present all that your body is capable of, all the tasks you fulfil every day, wherever you might be at work, at home, at school, everywhere. And offer everything you do in service or worship to God, as a living sacrifice.’

I have occasionally heard brethren say that these words mean that, in contrast with the dead sacrifices which were offered under the Law of Moses, the Christian has to present his body as a living sacrifice.

But I am not sure that this is all that Paul had in mind. Strictly speaking, when a Jew brought an animal for sacrifice, he brought a living animal, not a dead one. It was a living thing that he offered.

What Paul is saying is that even Christianity has its sacrifices. But they do not consist in the lives of others, the lives of unwilling animals, animals which had no choice in the matter, and whose wishes are certainly not taken into consideration. We must offer our own lives in service.

The word ‘worship’, Romans 12:1, has an interesting history.

1. It is, as you know probably know, the word ‘latria’ and originally meant work for pay.

It described service or employment into which a person entered voluntarily.

2. Later, it came to represent anything to which a man gave his entire life.

For instance, a man might devote his life to the service, or study, or art, or music, or medicine. This means that he dedicated his life to a particular interest.

3. Eventually, however, the word came to mean the dedication of oneself, one’s service to the gods.

This is its meaning in the New Testament, the service of God. It is never used for service performed for men but is always used concerning the worship of God Himself. And so, as Christians, we are to present our bodies in service and worship to God.

This is very interesting because it implies that real worship is very different from what many people imagine. It is not a matter of coming to a meeting place on a Sunday morning and sitting through a service, bored and uninterested.

It is not even a matter of coming to that same meeting and genuinely taking part in prayer and praise and devotion. It means much more than this; real worship means the offering of our day-to-day life, with all its activities as service performed for God.

We are inclined to make a distinction in our lives between the sacred and the secular. And much as we ought to know better, we used language which suggests that what happens in the service on the Lord’s Day is one thing and what happens outside the meeting place during the week is something else.

The very phraseology we use is, ‘I go to worship on Sunday morning’. ‘The worship service will take place in the church building.’ Since, as Christians, our lives belong to God, we should be able to say, ‘I worship God when I go to school, or when I go to the office, every day, my activities are expressions of worship,’ Colossians 3:17.

In the old church of Christ hymn book, there was a hymn, the content of which was light years superior to many of the trite and trivial things which are often sung today.

‘Behold us, Lord, a little space, from daily tasks set free. And met within this quiet place, to rest awhile with Thee. Around us rolls the busy tide, or commerce, toil and care. And scarcely can we turn aside for one brief hour of prayer.’

Yet these are not the only walls wherein Thou mayst be sought. On humblest task, Thy blessing falls, in faith and patience wrought.

Thine is the forge, the loom, the mart, the wealth of land and sea;

The worlds of commerce and of art are all controlled by Thee. Work shall be prayer if all be wrought as thou wouldst have it done. And prayer, by Thee, inspired and taught, itself with work be one.'

So this ought to be our goal, our aim. To live a life that is a hymn of praise and worship and service to God. The word 'prove', in Romans 12:2, in Greek is 'dokimazo', and it means to test in order to be able to approve, to test for the purpose of demonstrating that it is good.

What God wills, that is, what He wants to achieve when we undergo this transformation of our mind, is something that is good, acceptable and complete, Romans 12:2.

The message of this part of the letter is that, as Christians, we stand in a special relationship with each other, which, I fear, we do not always fully appreciate, namely, as Paul says in Romans 1:5.

But how can we do this in a world where there are so many distractions? And so many things that would drive even the very thought of worship from our minds? Well, Romans 12:2 explains.

When we see those two words 'conformed and transformed', Romans 12:2, we might be tempted to suppose that they came from the same root word, but they do not.

They are remarkable words, so remarkable that scholars tell us that they cannot be adequately translated into English, certainly not in one word; we need two phrases to express them.

That first word 'conformed' is a real mouthful 'sus schema zesthai', and its basic meaning is, 'do not be fashioned'. At the heart of the word is the word schema, and schema means outward form.

In Philippians 2:8, Paul tells us that Jesus took upon himself the schema, the outward form, of a man. Now, schema refers to something which is subject to change, something which never stays the same, something temporary.

Take our bodies, our schema, our human form, is not the same today as it was a year ago, and whichever way you take it, your schema today is different from what it will be ten years from now. So Paul says, Do not be conformed, fashioned, to the changing fashion of the world around you.

As a Christian, do not take on an outward appearance that belies your true, inward nature. Do not allow the world to influence you in its own fickle, changeable, unstable way. Do not allow it to determine what you are going to be like. Recognise that it is a changeable, transient thing.

We know very well that the world is constantly exerting an influence on us which would cause us to change its form, but do not allow the world to pour you into its mould, as one translator puts it.

And we are all aware of the fact that there are influences in the world that try to shape our minds and our lives. T.V. is a very powerful influence in our society, and the adverts are so subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, designed to win us over to a particular kind of lifestyle.

We need to be on our guard against fashions and lifestyles which would destroy our Christian witness so that people are unable to recognise that we are Christians. That way, we are certainly not presenting our bodies as living sacrifices in service to God.

Instead, we are to be 'transformed', Mark 9:2-3 / 2 Corinthians 3:18. And, here again, we have another remarkable word, 'meta morphous thai.' And that is something different, because whilst the schema of the world points to something which never stays the same, the word 'morphe' relates to the unchanging, essential quality of a thing.

I have just said that your schema, your outward form, is constantly changing. But, in contrast, your morphe remains the same, no matter what happens to your outward form. The inner man, the real you, does not change into a different person.

If we go back to that Philippian passage which says that ‘Jesus took upon himself the form of a servant and was found in human form’, [Philippians 2:7-8](#). The word is ‘schema’, a temporary state. He was, in fact, in the form of God, and here the word is morphe, which was His unchanging and true state. Deity, God.

So what is Paul saying? He is saying that what we should be looking for is the transformation that comes through the renewal of our minds. Now, we all know what the word renewal means. It means to make new, and the word which Paul uses here is the word ‘kainos’.

Kainos means new in respect of character, [2 Corinthians 5:17](#). The word is kainos; his character and nature are made new. In other words, we are to be transformed in the sense that our thinking is gradually changed so that we develop into the kind of people God wants us to be.

ILLUSTRATION

A caterpillar undergoes a gradual change that turns it into a beautiful butterfly. And the word which describes this transformation is the word metamorphosis, and there we have that word ‘morphe’ again.

Here is a little creature that can only crawl, but it undergoes a change that enables it to fly. Remember that the nature of those little creatures remains the same. And this is the kind of change for which God is looking in our lives, the change, working within, which will turn a spiritual caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly.

HUMBLE SERVICE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” Romans 12:3

The sentence begins with the word ‘For’, and it tells us that the immediate result of being transformed is humility. Notice Paul has discussed ‘presenting our bodies’ and ‘renewing our minds,’ now he takes up again the discussion about the body.

The body can be controlled fairly easily, but the mind, the disposition of pride, self-conceit, and self-centeredness, is not so easy to control because we all think well of ourselves, and we want other people to think well of us.

Paul does not condemn us for that; if you read his words very carefully, you will see that what he does condemn is excessive pride. Thinking more highly than we should. There are two extremes against which we need to guard.

1. There is the danger of excessive pride, against which Paul is warning here.
2. But there is also a false humility.

[Colossians 2:18](#) speaks of insisting on humility or, in A.V., voluntary humility. The Greek says, ‘willing in humility’, and is often translated in the LXX as ‘delighting in.’ Some of you may not be familiar with the character Uriah Heap in the novel by Charles Dickens.

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‘I’m well aware that I’m the ‘umblest person going, My mother is likewise a very ‘umble person. We live in a humble abode.’ You may not have met anyone quite like that; nevertheless, the fact remains that certain religious people seem to consider it a sign of a superior sort of piety to be incredibly self-effacing and assume an attitude. A deep humility, very pious, very devout.

For instance, there are those who, if you ask them if they possess the assurance of salvation, seem to think it is a sign of their devoutness to say I hope that God will find it in His heart to forgive me! I would not dare to presume to say that I am saved! In other words, ‘I am too humble to claim to be saved’.

Well, let me say that, as a Christian, there are certain issues on which you should speak with confidence, with certainty and with a certain pride, and one of those issues is your salvation, 1 John 5:13.

And, as for humility, ‘the truth is that humility is a virtue, a grace, which is unaware of itself’. In other words, a truly humble person doesn’t show it as a badge and doesn’t wear it like a badge.

That is certainly not what Paul is writing about here. We should have a degree of holy pride in who we are and what we are, thanks to the grace of God, and we should appreciate and value the gifts we have received from God, and be grateful for the place we have in God’s plan.

‘To each one a measure of faith’, Romans 12:3. God gives and develops faith through the Word. One should not over evaluate himself, but remember that God develops each person into what he is.

“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” Romans 12:4-8

In Romans 12:4-8, we see that he is writing about the abilities with which God has blessed us. The context shows that this is what Paul is writing about. What will help us to maintain a proper perspective, a balanced view of ourselves, is the realisation that we are all members of one body, and we each play the part for which God has fitted us, Romans 12:4-5.

Whatever your gift, you should use it, not to elevate yourself, but wisely and discreetly, recognising that others have gifts which, although different from your own, are just as necessary to the well-being of the body as yours, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

The word ‘gifts’, Romans 12:6, means that every talent is a blessing from God, 1 Peter 4:10-11. This shows that the word ‘gift’ does not always refer to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The word ‘prophecy’, Romans 12:6, in this passage simply means speaking forth, ‘preaching’. This is not the miraculous prophesying we see in Corinth, for example, which would fail, 1 Corinthians 13:8.

To help us understand this more, let’s go to 1 Thessalonians. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:20 mean when it says, ‘no not despise prophesying’? When one encounters a problem passage, it is important to consider the context.

In practice, this means looking at the verses which go before, and those which follow. That is always sound advice, and it is advice worth following as we consider the question before us this month. The previous verse, 1

Thessalonians 5:19, says, ‘quench not the Spirit.’ The Spirit is referred to as unquestionably the Holy Spirit.

Notice that in this verse the present imperative tense is used, which means that we have here a statement that relates to something which the believers in Thessalonica had evidently been doing and were continuing to do up to that moment.

An ‘imperative’ is a command or an instruction, so the sense of this verse is literally, ‘do not continue to quench the Spirit’. This tells us that the Thessalonians were offending the Holy Spirit. They were disregarding and perhaps even repressing a particular manifestation of the Spirit.

We see from 1 Thessalonians 5:20 that the specific gift involved was the gift of prophecy because the word which is translated ‘prophesying’, ‘propheteia’, occurs on only two other occasions, 1 Corinthians 14:6 / 1 Corinthians 14:22, where Paul discusses the exercise of spiritual gifts.

The church at Thessalonica, therefore, is told, in effect, ‘do not continue what you have been doing, quenching, or suppressing, this manifestation of the Spirit’. Certainly, at the very least, they were discouraging the exercise of the prophetic gift.

The apostolic command in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 is followed by the verse, at which we are now looking, 1 Thessalonians 5:20, ‘and do not despise prophesying’. Here, again, this is a present imperative, and it means, ‘do not continue to despise prophesying’.

You will notice that there is a significant difference between the Authorised Version and many modern versions in the way in which 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 is rendered.

In the A.V., we find two short sentences, ‘quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying.’ But in modern versions, the Revised Standard Version, for example, the two verses are separated only by a comma, so that they read as one sentence, ‘do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying.’

The implication is that to despise ‘prophesying’ was to quench the Spirit. Then, Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, regarded the exercise of that particular gift, the gift of prophecy, as of very real importance to the spiritual growth and well-being of the infant church in Thessalonica.

This letter was written during the second missionary journey, and is, therefore, reliably regarded as one of the earliest of the apostolic letters. It was written from Corinth, where Paul arrived about 50 AD, after leaving Thessalonica, and where he stayed for 18 months, Acts 18:11.

We arrive at this date because we know that the proconsul Gallio, who is mentioned in the next verse, took up his position in Corinth about that time. The letter was probably about 51 or 52 AD.

It is even likely, although not stated, that it was Paul himself who imparted spiritual gifts to the Thessalonian Church as he had at Corinth during the year and a half he remained in that city. On the matter of spiritual gifts in the infant church, we learn that Paul informed the Ephesian believers that prophets were among the Lord’s gifts to the church, Ephesians 4:11.

Earlier in the same letter, he had stated that apostles and prophets had laid the foundation on which the Church is built, that foundation being Christ himself, Ephesians 2:20. He followed this, in Ephesians 3:5, with the assertion that the Spirit used apostles and prophets as instruments for the revelation of truth.

Although we do not believe that there are such inspired men alive today, it should not be difficult for anyone to understand that in those days, apostles and prophets fulfilled an essential role in the revelation of the truth and the establishment of the church.

Bear in mind that the New Testament had not then been compiled. Indeed, as I have already implied, many of the books which comprise our present New Testament had not even been written.

Therefore, instead of being able to study written instruction and teaching, we find that prophecy, ‘oral,’ that is spoken instruction, was the means by which the early Christians were taught.

Bear in mind, also, that the word ‘prophesying’ does not mean that a new revelation was presented every time the prophet opened his mouth! The word ‘profetes’ means ‘to speak forth’, and covers preaching and teaching generally.

If you examine the Old Testament books, you will find that many of the writers never foretold future events, but simply delivered a message on God's behalf. In the Old Testament, a prophet, for example.

1. Delivered a message from God.
2. Interpreted current events.

He explained what was happening at that moment. And very often. The explanation the prophet gave. It was very different from what the people thought!

3. And sometimes was able to tell the people what God was going to do.

In the New Testament, the exercise of the gift of prophecy simply meant that men were led by the Holy Spirit to speak so that the Church might be strengthened and built up.

Now it is clear from 1 Thessalonians 5:20 that some of the Thessalonian Christians had been inclined to undervalue this particular gift because the word 'despise' means 'set at nought'.

So Paul is urging them not to 'set at nought' these Spirit-led teachers or the messages they delivered. However, he also issues this warning: 'test everything'. In other words, 'be on your guard, and hold fast what is good,' 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

I stress again that this instruction, to pay attention to the prophets, was valid as long as the spiritual gifts, which included apostles and prophets, remained. But when they were removed, the specific sense of these words ceased to apply.

Yet there is a sense in which they contain a message for us today. 'Prophesying' means 'speaking forth', and prophecy, in the general sense of the word, is that which is preached. It is preaching and teaching.

There is no one today who possesses the gift of prophecy, about which Paul writes. Be on your guard, and do not trust those who claim to predict future events.

Remember that almost two thousand years ago, Paul said that prophecies would fail; the word means 'cease'. The gift of tongues, which was the ability of people to speak in languages they had not learned, would cease, and the gift of miraculous knowledge would end, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.

We have no inspired, Spirit-led messengers, no apostles and prophets such as those who served the infant church. But we do have those who preach and teach that which the Holy Spirit has preserved for us and presented to us in the Word.

We have inherited the rich blessing of 'all things that pertain to life and godliness', in the New Testament Scriptures. We have the recorded words of 'holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit,' 2 Peter 1:3 / 1 Peter 1:21. It is as imperative today as it ever was that we who love the Lord should not undervalue and despise the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. We should never forget that the Lord himself told his apostles, Luke 10:16. I wonder how anyone can claim to accept the authority of Christ, whilst rejecting the writings of the apostles whom he authorised to speak on his behalf.

'Proportion to our faith', Romans 12:6. This is the same as in the latter part of Romans 12:3. One must prophesy, 'preach', in accord with what God had given him. By doing this, one would remain true to Him who is the source of the gift.

'Or ministry, let us use it in our ministering' or 'if it is serving, let him serve,' Romans 12:7. The word 'ministry' is from the Greek 'diakonia' which means 'to deacon, serve, minister.' It refers to practical service. Some are especially good at serving in physical ways.

‘He who teaches, in teaching’ or ‘if it is teaching, let him teach’, Romans 12:7. This refers to instructing in what was already revealed. This requires much work. Some want the praise of being a teacher, but don’t want to do the work required for being a teacher.

And so, Paul gives an exhortation to teachers to do their work. ‘He who exhorts, in exhortation’, Romans 12:8. This naturally follows teaching, and it means to encourage or incite to duty. Some are especially good at this; they give great encouragement to all.

‘He who gives, with liberality’ or ‘Let him do it with simplicity’, Romans 12:8. The word ‘liberality’ here has a dual meaning.

1. ‘With a single goal in mind, with singleness of heart’, without ulterior motive, free of pretence and hypocrisy.

2. ‘Openness of heart manifesting itself by generosity’, liberally, generously, abundantly, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

Some are particularly blessed financially and can abundantly give. Paul is exhorting them to do so.

‘He who leads, with diligence’ or ‘He who rules’, Romans 12:7. The same word is used for overseers, and elders, 1 Thessalonians 5:12 / 1 Timothy 3:4 / 1 Timothy 5:17. Elders must be diligent in their work. Many elders are sorely lacking in this.

‘He who shows mercy, with cheerfulness,’ Romans 12:7, means to forgive the one who has sinned against you can be one of the hardest commandments. It must be from the heart. Matthew 18:35. Also, let us cheerfully show sympathy and understanding, mercy, to those who are suffering.

LOVE IN ACTION

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” Romans 12:9-13

‘Love must be sincere’, Romans 12:9, means we must have a pure, genuine, sincere love. It must not be faked or in pretence. ‘Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good, Romans 9:9 / Amos 5:15 / Isaiah 5:20 / Psalms 119:104. To ‘hate’ means to ‘view with intense hate, dislike.’

If more Christians had this sentiment toward sin and error, fewer would become entrapped by the devil. To ‘cling’ is the same word used of a man and wife, Matthew 19:5, which means to be joined to as by glueing. We need a stick as an adhesive or glue to the things that are good.

‘Be devoted to one another in love’, Romans 12:10. The Lord commanded us to love each other, John 13:34-35 / 1 John 4:20-21. As a close family, we should have tender devotion and understanding of one another.

We are to love everyone, but there is a special, deep, tender bond existing between members of the body of Christ. By love, we serve one another, Galatians 5:13.

‘Honour one another above yourselves’, Romans 12:10, means to regard others as better than yourself, Philippians 2:3-4. Do not look for praise on yourself, but bestow praise on others.

‘Never be lacking in zeal’, Romans 12:11, means we should not be slack or sagging in enthusiasm or zeal, Ecclesiastes 9:10. Diligence is a requirement in all the duties of the Christian life.

‘But keep your spiritual fervour’, Romans 12:11, means we live the Christian life with all urgency and fervency of mind. ‘Serving the Lord’, Romans 12:11, means our service to the Lord should be with great diligence and deep earnestness.

‘Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer,’ Romans 12:12. Our hope constitutes our richest area of rejoicing. We must persevere under pressures, hardships, and persecutions. Let us all develop good prayer habits. ‘Share with the Lord’s people who are in need,’ Romans 12:13, means we are to provide aid to the saints who are in need. We need to be people of action rather than talk.

‘Practice hospitality’, Romans 12:13, literally means ‘to love strangers,’ Hebrews 13:1-2. 1 Peter 4:9 shows that we are to show hospitality, provide meals, lodging, etc., to one another. It’s also a qualification for an elder, 1 Timothy 3:2.

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” Romans 12:14-16

Several verses in this section, Romans 12:14 / Romans 12:17 / Romans 12:19 / Romans 12:21, show that we should not mistreat those who mistreat us. And so, the Christian does not retaliate with like persecution, but with blessing, Romans 12:14.

The word ‘curse’ in Romans 12:14 does not mean ordinary profanity, such as is condemned in other verses, but means to call calamity to befall a person. And so, the Christian does not wish evil on those who are doing them evil, Matthew 5:46.

If a fellow Christian has a cause for rejoicing, we should rejoice with them, Romans 12:15 / Hebrews 13:3 / Job 30:25. Too often, we are filled with envy because of the good fortune of others. We should enter into full sympathy with others in their sorrows, Romans 12:15.

‘Live in harmony with one another’, Romans 12:16, means that we are to harmonise with others in our thinking. We all need to be of the same mind in the following.

1. Doctrine. Romans 15:5-6 / 1 Corinthians 1:10 / 2 Corinthians 13:11.

I know of a ‘liberal’ church that would not allow teaching on the issues. They thought this would keep them united; however, they were already divided because many were objecting to the unscriptural things that were being done.

2. Practice.

We all need to be mindful of the same things, Philippians 1:27.

‘Do not be proud’, Romans 12:16, means do not set your heart on high places, things, company, etc. We might fool or deceive others as to where our interests are, but not God. ‘But be willing to associate with people of low position’, Romans 12:16. The footnote in the KJV shows this can refer to ‘things as well as persons.’

Associate with those who are humble according to God’s definition. Also, associate with those who are lowly in the world’s eyes. Follow the example of Christ.

‘Do not be conceited’, Romans 12:16. Many people have deceived themselves about their own wisdom. In other words, they are not nearly as wise as they think they are. An old joke states, ‘Some people are educated far beyond their own intelligence.’

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.” Romans 12:17-19

Paul says, ‘do not repay anyone evil for evil,’ Romans 12:17. 1 Peter 3:9 and other passages show what we are to return for evil. The Christian uses forethought to determine his conduct, Romans 12:17 / Matthew 5:38-45. The good, honourable things are what are important to the Christian.

‘If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone,’ Romans 12:18, means we need to pursue and follow after peace with everyone, 1 Peter 3:11. Sometimes it is impossible to have peace with others, but it should never be the Christian’s fault.

Murray, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If it be possible indicates that it may not always be possible.’

The word ‘revenge’, Romans 12:19, means to get even with others, to render evil for evil. ‘Leave room for God’s wrath’, Romans 12:19, in this context means to give place to the wrath of God, leave it to Him, Deuteronomy 32:35. And so, to the Christian, the right of vengeance belongs solely to God. Also, the phrase implies that God most certainly will do it.

“On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:20-21

Not only are we to refrain from vengeance, but are to take positive action for the good welfare of our enemies, and so, returning good for evil, Romans 12:20. ‘You will heap burning coals on his head’, Romans 12:20, is a quote from Proverbs 25:21-22.

It’s a figure of speech showing strong, positive results. It will fill them with shame and remorse and melt their enmity. An old saying, ‘The best way to get rid of enemies is to make friends out of them.’

‘Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good’, Romans 12:21, is the Christian way. He always does right and never permits the actions of others to determine his own actions. If the Christian seeks with his own hands to take vengeance, he, himself, becomes evil; it is disobedience to God.

However, if he does good to his enemy, it is the greatest of all ways to overcome evil; it is obeying God. The Christian does not overcome evil by doing evil. The principle of doing good for evil is the basic principle by which we live. It is the fundamental virtue of a follower of Christ.

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority?

Then do what is right, and you will be commended.” Romans 13:1-3

SUBMISSION TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES

Why is there a change of subject? The Jews were under Roman authority, and the Jews resented the Roman soldiers walking around, Deuteronomy 17:15. That’s why the Jews asked Jesus the question about paying taxes to Caesar

in [Luke 20:22](#). In Rome, there was a large Jewish community, and the Roman church was made up of Romans and Jewish people.

God has instituted the principle of human government, whatever form it is. In [Romans 13:4](#), the word servant is the Greek word ‘diakonos’, and in [Romans 13:6](#), the word servant is the Greek word ‘leitourgos’, which means ministering servant. Paul is not discussing bad servants. The Book of Romans was written before the Christian persecutions, before Nero was on the scene. Nero was the first person to start persecuting the church.

Newell, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Your Saviour suffered under Pontius Pilate, one of the worst Roman governors Judea ever had, and Paul under Nero, the worst Roman Emperor. And neither our Lord nor His Apostle denied or reviled the ‘authority!’

What if the rulers are evil? This is not discussed in [Romans 13](#). We have the right to vote today, but they didn’t have this right in Paul’s day. Paul doesn’t talk about what happens if you have a bad government.

The point is that God has determined that we should be governed, and to a degree, this is an endorsement for capital punishment, [Genesis 9:4-5](#) / [Numbers 35:33](#). We have a responsibility to act correctly, pay our taxes, etc., [1 Peter 2:13-17](#).

Now again, this section refers to the normal functioning of governments, not evil ones. It was given, no doubt, to answer the question, ‘What about hardened criminals? Can we render evil for their evil?’

Paul has just shown that Christians are to love their enemies, return good for evil, and leave vengeance in the hands of God, [Romans 12:17-21](#). Now he shows how God’s vengeance is carried out on earth. It is not the Christian’s place to execute God’s wrath.

He is rather to demonstrate God’s love, by word, that is, by teaching the Gospel, and by life, that is, doing good to all, blessing enemies, etc. God has established civil government to carry out His wrath on the earth. These verses deal with the divine ‘order’ or ‘arrangement’ of civil justice.

‘Governing authorities’, [Romans 13:1](#) / [1 Peter 2:13-14](#) / [Titus 3:1](#). They have been established or instituted by God. They are a part of a civil arrangement instituted by God. They exist to serve His purpose and are constantly under His watchful eye.

The fact or principle of civil government is from God, [Romans 13:1](#), but it is up to man to choose whatever form, democratic, monarchical, or socialistic, which best serves the divine purpose at a given time and under present circumstances.

Not all authorities, and probably 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, the Christian must obey God rather than man, [Acts 4:18-15](#) / [Acts 5:28-29](#). When civil government tries to force its citizens to do wrong, or when it permits and encourages that which is evil, it has transgressed its divine right, [Romans 13:2](#).

The Christian has no right to resist government as such. It has always been a common sin to rebel against civil government. Even if a government is exceedingly wicked, the Christian has no right to forcibly overthrow it, e.g., go to war against it.

Consider the government existing during Paul’s time. God is still in charge, and He will punish the wicked in His own time and manner, [Daniel 2:20-22](#) / [Revelation 1:5](#). They bring the condemnation of God upon themselves.

Those in power are not a terror to those who do good, but to those who do evil, [Romans 13:3](#). This verse shows the proper purpose and function of civil government as ordained by God.

1. To protect and encourage the good.

2. To restrain and punish the wicked.

The person who does what is right has no need to fear the government, which functions properly. Rulers should be a terror to lawbreakers. There can be no government without laws. There can be no law without penalty. There can be no terror of law without the enforcement of the penalty.

And so, it is the duty of the government to bring criminals to trial swiftly and punish them justly. Paul's own application is, 'do what is good, what is lawful and right, and you will have praise from the rulers,' [Romans 13:3](#).

"For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience."
Romans 13:4-5

God's arrangement regarding civil government is for the good of the Christian, [1 Timothy 2:1-3](#). God's order provides for the lawful authority to be a revenger and to execute wrath on those who do evil. In this sense, the ruler is a minister of God, [Romans 13:4](#).

In praising the well doer and punishing the evildoer, it is exercising its God-ordained function and is to be viewed by the Christian as God's appointed servant, [Romans 13:4](#).

The words, 'bear the sword', [Romans 13:4](#), are referring to the emperor Trajan. The sword was the symbol of life and death, [Luke 21:24](#) / [Acts 12:2](#) / [Revelation 13:10](#) / [Hebrews 11:34](#).

The government has an obligation to enforce the 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 word 'therefore', [Romans 13:5](#), tells us there is a conclusion drawn from [Romans 13:3-4](#). We must be subject, not only so that the ruler's anger will not be executed upon us, but for conscience's sake, that is, because God has told us to do it, in order to have a clear conscience before Him. One who can disobey the laws of his government without having any remorse or conscience is lacking in respect for God's commands.

"This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour. Romans 13:6-7

We pay taxes in order to escape the wrath of the ruler and to have a clear conscience before God, [Romans 13:6](#). Our Lord taught His disciples, as well as all, to pay taxes, [Matthew 17:27](#) / [Matthew 22:15-22](#).

The government needs funds in order to function, and no Christian should try to avoid paying their just share of government expenses. They are God's servants carrying out a divinely ordained service by rewarding the good and punishing the guilty.

'Taxes' are charges laid on a person and his property, [Romans 13:7](#). 'Revenue' is charges levied on imports and exports, [Romans 13:7](#). The words 'respect and honour', [Romans 13:7](#), refer to that which is due regarding rulers. Honour should be given, not only to rulers but to all those who deserve it, [1 Timothy 5:17](#) / [1 Peter 2:17](#). If no honour is due, it should not be given, [Job 22:21-22](#).

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'We may pay our taxes and be quiet. We may give respect and honour where they are due and have no further obligation. But we can never say, 'I have done all the loving I need to do.' Love then is a permanent obligation, a debt impossible to discharge.'

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not

steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore, love is the fulfilment of the law.”
Romans 13:8-10

Paul tells us that law is fulfilled by love, Romans 13:8-10. We should seek not to be overburdened with an indebtedness so that one can be free to give, Romans 13:8 / Proverbs 22:7 / Ephesians 4:28. This doesn't mean that Christians can't borrow from others, Matthew 5:42.

Love is what we always owe to everyone, Matthew 5:43-45 / John 13:34-35 / 1 Peter 1:22 / Luke 6:27-35 / Luke 14:12-14. Love is a debt that can never be paid in full. We must continue to love as long as we live.

‘For whoever loves others has fulfilled the law’, Romans 13:8. There is no definite article, ‘the’, here before law. And so, literally, Paul says, ‘he who loves another has fulfilled law.’ However, in context, he is referring to the Old Law. Since love demands doing good to others, it fulfils law.

When one loves, he has reached the end for which the law was given. One who loves others would not do to them any of those things mentioned in Romans 13:9. Adultery, steal, murder and covet, Exodus 20:13-15 / Exodus 20:17 / Deuteronomy 5:17-19 / Deuteronomy 5:21.

Up to this point, the Christians have had a decent relationship with the Romans. Peter asks Jesus about the temple tax, Matthew 17:24-27. Jesus submitted to the Jewish and Roman authorities, which is the example we should follow, Matthew 5:40-41 / Romans 12:20.

‘You shall not commit adultery’, the seventh commandment, Exodus 20:14. It is the breaking of the marital bond.

‘You shall not murder’, the sixth, Exodus 20:13. The unlawful taking of human life.

‘You shall not steal’, the eighth, Exodus 20:15. The unlawful taking of that which belongs to another. ‘You shall not bear false witness’, the ninth, Exodus 20:16. Testifying falsely. It prohibits all lying. ‘You shall not covet’, the tenth, Exodus 20:17. All unlawful desire for that which belongs to another.

‘And if there is any other commandment’, Romans 13:9, means any others not named here. ‘Are summed up in this one command’, Romans 13:9, which is quoted from Leviticus 19:18. And so, all the commandments are briefly comprehended in the command to love one's neighbour as himself.

When one loves his neighbour, he will not sin against him, Romans 13:10, by violating his marriage, destroying his life, taking his property, misrepresenting him falsely, or desiring his property or possessions. Love is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Such love is not of human origin but is derived from and developed by God.

‘Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law’, Romans 13:10. The definite article ‘the’ is before law here in the original. Since the one who loves would do no harm to his neighbour, but greatly benefits his neighbour, love fulfils the law. Love establishes the kind of relationship the law demanded.

“And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.” Romans 13:11-14

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‘To wake up from your slumber’, Romans 13:11, is figurative of their indifference and inactivity. Few Christians are as wide awake as they should be, Ephesians 5:14 / Hebrews 12:12-13 / 1 Corinthians 15:34 / 1 Thessalonians 5:6. All Christians should be diligent in preparing themselves and others for eternity.

‘Because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed,’ Romans 13:11. As time passes, eternity comes nearer, and each passing second brings us closer to meeting our Maker. Certainly, this is true for every Christian. The end of all things is nearer than when we first believed.

Here we read of exhortations to holiness based on the nearness of eternity, [Romans 13:13-14](#). And do this especially because you know how critical the time is. In one sense or another, everyone lives in critical times; hence, the admonition here applies with equal force to all, regardless of when or where they live.

The ‘night’, no doubt, refers to our life period on this earth, and the ‘day’ refers to the next period, [Romans 12:12](#) / [John 9:4](#). It perhaps refers to the existence of the present age, as opposed to the one to come. Let us cast off works of the flesh, ignorance, false doctrines, etc, [Galatians 5:19-21](#) / [Ephesians 5:11](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:4-7](#) / [John 3:19-21](#).

‘Armour of light’, [Romans 12:12](#), is the panoply of the Christian, [Ephesians 6:13-17](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:8](#) / [1 John 1:5-7](#). Let us cast off the works of the flesh, and put on the fruit of the Spirit. Let us leave the old sinful way of life, and put on the new Christian way.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Putting on Christ is a strong and vivid metaphor. It means more than putting on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, signifying rather ‘Let Jesus Christ Himself be the armour that you wear.’

‘Let us behave decently,’ [Romans 13:13](#), means let us walk in such a way that brings honour to our Lord and Saviour. Let us walk properly as in the light of day, doing everything honourably and openly. Paul lists six practices that must be avoided.

Paul lists three sets of sins that accompany each other in [Romans 13:13](#).

1. ‘Not in carousing and drunkenness’ means revelling, tumults, disorders, and drunkenness, drinking and the conduct of those who drink.
2. ‘Not in sexual immorality and debauchery’ means immodest behaviour, and lasciviousness, anything tending to promote or fulfil fleshly lusts, [2 Corinthians 12:21](#).
3. ‘Not in dissension and jealousy’ means contentions, wrangling, fighting with words, and evil desire to obtain what another has, [Matthew 27:18](#) / [Proverbs 27:4](#).

We must clothe ourselves with the character of our Lord, [Romans 13:14](#) / [Colossians 3:10](#) / [2 Corinthians 3:18](#). We must put ourselves completely under Him, and follow what He taught.

We must make no provision to fulfil evil fleshly desires, [Romans 13:14](#). We must be pure as was our Lord. Let us move onward and upward, and never backwards in the world.

The footnote for the word flesh in [Romans 13:14](#) says the following.

‘In contexts like this, the Greek word for flesh (sarx) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit.’

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

“Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters.” Romans 14:1

This chapter deals with matters of personal conviction which are indifferent, that is, matters which are neither right nor wrong within themselves. This chapter has been used to try to justify everything from adulterous marriages to instrumental music in worship.

However, the principles must be applied to things that are neither right nor wrong in and of themselves. For example, it is neither right nor wrong to eat meat or to refrain from eating it. Paul is showing us in this chapter how to receive those who might differ from us in such matters.

‘Receive one who is weak in faith’ means receive him into full fellowship. He uses in this chapter the examples of eating certain things and keeping certain days.

It is wrong to force one’s opinion, in matters of personal conviction, on others. It is wrong to force others to change their convictions before fellowship can be extended.

‘But not to disputes over doubtful things’ means the weak should not be received for the purpose of judging their doubtful thoughts. Some brethren thrive on controversy, and it causes a lot of problems and heartache in the Lord’s church.

Weak in ‘the faith’ means knowing what they ought to believe. The weak are usually those who are strong-minded but don’t argue with them. The weak in faith usually argue about everything. Orthodoxy means they think they have the right faith. Heterodoxy means they believe that others have the wrong faith.

MATTERS OF PERSONAL CONVICTION

Things not wrong in and of themselves. Paul’s examples in Romans 14.

1. Eating of meats, Romans 14:6.

One eats all things, another eats only vegetables, Romans 14:2.

2. Observing days, Romans 14:6.

One personally observes a day, another esteems every day alike, Romans 14:5.

EXAMPLES IN OUR TIME

1. Wearing the covering. Out of conviction from 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, one lady wears it during worship, another does not.

2. A woman speaking during the Bible class, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, one speaks during Bible class, another does not.

3. Killing for the government.

All agree that the government has a right to do it. One in good conscience does it for the government another, because of conscience does not do it.

4. Doing work on Sunday.

One is convinced that honouring the Lord’s Day forbids it, another is not.

5. Putting up a tree at Christmas time.

One is convinced that it sets a bad example, another is not.

“One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.” Romans 14:2

Vegetables, garden herbs, Romans 14:2, is the Greek word, 'Lachanon.' Vegetarians, don't despise them because they eat vegetables and don't despise someone who eats meat.

The Essenes were the third Jewish sect, along with the Sadducees and Pharisees. The Essenes practised self-denial, a monk-like style, no eating or drinking for periods of time. In Rome, the Christians had problems with eating and drinking. Some said you shouldn't eat meat, others said you shouldn't drink wine, 1 Corinthians 8:1-6.

MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS

1. Pagans were brought up to believe in idols.

They believed that if they ate the meat, then the spirit of that god would enter them.

2. Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher, said they shouldn't kill animals and eat them as you might be eating the soul of a dead relative.

In Peter's vision, he saw clean and unclean animals and realised that God made all things clean, Acts 10:9-15.

“The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.”
Romans 14:3-4

Let not the one who eats all things view with contempt the one who does not eat, Romans 14:3. The non-meat eater would be apt to judge the other as sinning when he ate meat that had previously been offered to idols.

'God has accepted them', Romans 14:3, means don't look down on people who eat vegetables or meat. God says you have a choice: do what you think is right, you might be right, you might be wrong. God has received the strong as well as the weak. When God approves, no one has the right to disapprove.

The word 'judge', Romans 14:4, is used in the sense of condemning, i.e., the weak or the strong condemning the other. 'Another's servant', Romans 14:4, means we should not judge, that is, condemn one another in these matters of personal conviction. In many things, one's personal convictions are between him and God.

'To his own master', Romans 14:4, means in all matters of personal conviction, each one of us stands approved or disapproved only to the Lord. One may stand or fall, but it will be by the judgment of Christ and not by the judgment of others. 'For the Lord is able to make him stand', Romans 14:4, means by His grace we are what we are, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

“One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.” Romans 14:5

To personally regard a day is alright. In other words, if a brother wanted to set aside a special day for prayer and devotion, it is his prerogative. However, it is wrong to bind it on others, Galatians 4:10-11 / Colossians 2:16, as do some churches.

'Another considers every day alike'. The whole Jewish system, which had a multitude of special days, has been nailed to the cross. The only day with special significance under the Gospel system is the first day of every week, Acts 20:7 / 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

Each one must study for himself. It would be wrong to think that we should not scripturally determine the truth on matters of personal conviction. Remember, sinful practices and doctrinal errors are not under consideration here. For

example, ‘If one is fully persuaded that he can (insert any sin for doctrinal error) with no pang of conscience, would God accept him?’ Certainly not!

“Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.” Romans 14:6

Some people treat certain days as holy and dedicate them to God. We are to treat every day as holy because you belong to God and give Him the thanks due Him for that day. Some people restricted God to certain days and places. God is not the God of one day, He’s the God of every day.

Each in good conscience does so in honour of God. Both are honestly trying to serve and honour God. While one or the other is mistaken in his convictions, both are doing what, in the final analysis, is permitted either way and, thus, neither has sinned by their actions.

We ask again, Can a person get drunk, ‘to the Lord’? Can one commit adultery ‘to the Lord’? Can one preach error ‘to the Lord’? Of course, the answer is, ‘Absolutely not!’

I ask such questions because many brethren try to use Romans 14 to find a loophole for their sin or error. Also, they often attempt to use Romans 14 to find a way to maintain fellowship with a brother who insists on teaching errors.

“For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.” Romans 14:7-9

‘For none of us lives to himself’, Romans 14:7, means the Christian does not live a self-centred or self-seeking life, Ecclesiastes 12:7. The Christian lives and dies to the Lord, as shown in the next verses, that is, in every way, he promotes the Lord’s honour and glory.

Whether living or dead, we are the Lord’s property, Romans 14:8. We belong to Him, and whatever we do in life or death, we do to His honour and majesty. Christ died on the cross, arose from the dead, and now lives at the right hand of the Father, Mark 16:19 / Acts 7:56 / Hebrews 1:3.

Through His death and resurrection, He became Lord of all, Romans 14:9. By His death and resurrection, He secured the right to exercise Lordship over both the dead and the living.

“You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. It is written: “As surely as I live,” says the Lord, “every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.” So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.” Romans 14:10-12

Note the words, ‘why do you judge your brother or sister?’ Romans 14:10. This cannot be applied to all matters of judging. It cannot refer to sinful practices or doctrinal differences, for it would contradict Jesus, John, and Paul himself, John 7:24 / 2 John 9-11 / 1 Corinthians 5:10-12.

‘Why do you treat them with contempt?’ Romans 14:10. Why do you look down on your brother as someone unworthy of fellowship? ‘For we shall all stand,’ Romans 14:10. The reason we cannot judge our brethren in such matters is that Christ Himself is the judge.

Please note the judgment seat mentioned here isn’t speaking about salvational judgment, Acts 17:31. The judgment seat refers to the time when Christians will receive their rewards and responsibilities.

It’s about being judged for the things we have done in the body, either good or bad, not salvation, John 5:22 / Matthew 25:31-46 / 2 Corinthians 5:10 / 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following concerning the judgment seat.

‘This is the bema seat, equivalent to the judge’s seat in the Olympic Games. After each game, the winners came before the judge’s seat to receive crowns for first, second, and third places. Likewise, the Christian’s works will be

tested by fire, and he'll be rewarded for those which remain. The judgment seat of Christ is only concerned with a Christian's rewards and position in the kingdom, not with his salvation.'

Many Christians have built up a great reward in heaven, but we must ensure that we don't forfeit those rewards, 2 John 4-10. John does not want any of us to lose our 'full reward'.

He doesn't want anyone to get to heaven and receive only a portion of what could have been theirs. He wants us to get all the rewards God wants us to have, 2 John 4:8.

Romans 14:11 is a quote from Isaiah 45:23. 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord', and so, as certain as God is alive, everyone shall bow and confess to Him. We can either willingly bow or confess to Him now, or we will be forced to do so at the judgment, Philippians 2:9-11. Hence, we will not be judged as a church or as a family, Romans 14:12.

Also, no one will get lost in the crowd and not be judged, Psalms 33:13-15. Christ Himself will judge everyone. If we judge, in the sense of justifying or condemning, we assume the privilege of Christ.

"Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died." Romans 14:13-15

The words, 'therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another', Romans 14:13, as I mentioned, are limited within the bounds of the things under consideration in this context. Leave all judgment to Christ in matters of personal conviction, Romans 15:14 / 2 Timothy 4:2.

Notice the words, 'not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister', Romans 14:13. These two expressions are very similar in meaning; the last one was probably given to explain the first. We should be careful not to influence a brother to go against his conscience or to drive him away.

'Nothing is unclean in itself', Romans 14:14, reminds us that the Mosaic distinctions were done away in Christ, Colossians 2:14-17. Under the Gospel system, there are no unclean foods, 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

'If anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean', Romans 14:14, means something clean can become unclean in the eyes of the one who so regards it, and if he violates his conscience in the matter, he thus condemns himself.

Our conception can convert right into wrong, but never wrong into right. One's own conception of sin or error, cannot change it into purity or truth. 'If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat', Romans 14:15, means he is injured by your action because he sees you doing something he thinks is wrong.

'You are no longer acting in love', Romans 15:15, means your behaviour is not regulated by the principle of love. How could the eating of certain foods by the strong destroy another? Romans 14:15.

It does so when it influences one to go against their conscience. It does so when it forces him from fellowship with God's people. We should not nullify the death of Christ by destroying a brother over indifferent matters.

"Therefore, do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval." Romans 14:16-18

Use your liberty so as to prove beneficial for all, and it will not be evil spoken of. The act of eating various foods is not wrong; Paul here calls it good, but if others believe it to be wrong, they could speak of it as evil, Romans 14:16. It would thus destroy the influence of the strong and be an occasion of reproach both to him and the cause of truth. And so this encourages the strong to carefully consider their actions in the presence of the weak.

The kingdom of God is not made up of restrictions and non-restrictions on food and drink, [Romans 14:17](#). What one eats or drinks does not affect, except in circumstances where the eating might lead another astray, his standing or relation to God.

‘Righteousness’, [Romans 14:17](#), means attaining a state of justification and living righteously. ‘Peace’, [Romans 14:17](#), is a kingdom of peace; its citizens have peace within their hearts. Its citizens endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

‘Joy in the Holy Spirit’, [Romans 14:17](#), means happiness instilled and nourished by the Holy Spirit. It is joy inexpressible and full of glory, [1 Peter 1:8](#). [Romans 14:18](#) shows the importance of the application of the things mentioned in this chapter. We serve Christ as we are instructed in His Word.

This is the only way we can know we are acceptable to God. When we secure acceptance with God, the approval of men, i.e., of our brethren, will follow. We should never, like the Pharisees, reverse the order.

“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.”
Romans 14:19-21

They were to avoid strife, which results from disputes over doubtful things, and follow after things that promote peace and edification, [Romans 14:19](#). They were to be constructive, not destructive, in their dealings with each other and thus work together toward peace and mutual up-building. However, we dare not espouse a false doctrine in order to have peace and unity.

The words, ‘do not destroy’, [Romans 14:20](#), mean do not cause him to stumble, that is, to go against his conscience or drive him away. The word ‘destroy’ here is not the same word as ‘destroy’ in [Romans 14:15](#). Here it means to ‘loosen down, or weaken.’

Hence, do not, for the sake of food, tear down or weaken the work of God, that is, a brother in Christ, which would be the opposite of edifying or building up. ‘All food is clean’, [Romans 14:20](#). Again, he is referring to the things under consideration in this context. He is not referring to sin or error.

‘But it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble’, [Romans 14:20](#). It becomes evil for the one who is eating and violates their conscience. Also, perhaps this refers to the strong who influence the weak to do wrong. In other words, it is evil for the one who is eating to give offence.

‘It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall,’ [Romans 14:21](#). Under any of these conditions, it is wrong to engage in things that are indifferent in and of themselves.

Even though one does not see anything wrong in a given practice, congregational or otherwise, when it becomes an occasion of offence, a falling into sin to others, he must abstain from it.

We should abstain from things that might weaken or cause a brother to go against his conscience. One needs to be willing to surrender one’s rights for another’s good.

DRINKING WINE

When we read [John 2:1-12](#), the Canaan wedding, we can’t prove that this was non-alcoholic, and we can’t prove it was. Elders were to refrain from much wine, [1 Timothy 3:3](#) / [Titus 1:7](#).

Whilst John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, [Matthew 11:18](#), but the Son of man came eating and drinking, [Matthew 11:19](#). There is a huge difference between drinking and getting drunk. Noah got drunk after planting a vineyard, [Genesis 9:20-21](#). We can’t go to the Scriptures and say we can’t have a glass of wine.

“So whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.” Romans 14:22-23

Some things are between us and God, Romans 14:22. In matters of eating and drinking, let it be a matter between you and God, and not between you and your brother.

‘Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves,’ Romans 14:22, means we are happy when we do what is right. Unhappy when we don’t. One is happy indeed when he does not bring condemnation on himself or others in the things he judges commendable before God.

‘But he who doubts is condemned if he eats’, Romans 14:23, means the one who has questions, that is, doubts as to the lawfulness of practice, should follow the safe course and not engage in something which he feels might be wrong.

‘Because their eating is not from faith’, Romans 14:23, means if he engages in something which he questions, as to its right or wrong, he violates his own conscience and thus condemns himself, 1 John 3:20.

‘Everything that does not come from faith is sin’, Romans 14:23, means every act that does not spring from faith is sin, and every act that does spring from ‘the faith’ cannot properly be a matter of one’s faith, Romans 10:17.

The footnote for Romans 14:23 says the following.

‘Some manuscripts place Romans 16:25-27 here; others after Romans 15:33.’

To live in peace with God and himself, one must always do what he has determined to be lawful and right, his own faith from the Word of God, the faith. When one engages in something he does not believe to be right, that is, matters of indifference or otherwise, he sins.

Furthermore, when one engages in something he has doubts and questions about, that is, matters of indifference or otherwise, he sins. As a Christian, you have rights, but don’t exercise those rights if it may cause someone to stumble. Some might say if it’s OK for the preacher to drink, then it’s OK for me.

It’s all about the example. Paul says he has liberty, but he denies himself for others’ sake, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

Christian liberty means the right not to do things that are OK.

If you do something and you didn’t really believe in it, you’re a hypocrite. There are certain things you keep to yourself. In matters of faith, unity, matters of opinion, liberty. In all things, love. Matters of faith are things expressed in terms of the Scripture.

In John 3:2, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night; this is a matter of faith. Why did he come at night? Because it was cooler, because he was afraid, and because he was busy throughout the day are all matters of opinion.

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

This is a continuation of Romans 14. Notice that God is described as patient and encouraging, Romans 15:5. He is also described as the God of hope, Romans 15:13, and also the God of peace, Romans 15:33.

Notice also how the Holy Spirit is described. He is powerful, Romans 15:13 / Romans 15:19. He sanctifies, Romans 15:16. Also, He loves, Romans 15:30. This shows His personality.

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The

insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have hope.”

Romans 15:1-4

‘We then who are strong’, Romans 15:1, links to the thoughts in Romans 14. The word, ‘ought’ means an obligation, a responsibility. This is not a command, and that’s because there are some things you can’t command.

‘To bear’, Romans 15:1, means to carry, to bear. It means more than ‘bearing with or tolerating,’ but involves shouldering their burdens along with them, Galatians 6:2.

‘And not to please ourselves’, Romans 15:1, means we should not be concerned only with our own interest, but with the interest of others, Philippians 2:4 / 1 Corinthians 10:24.

The pleasing of ourselves above and beyond any regard for how it affects others is what is condemned here. Paul’s point is to exercise control to deal with the weaker brother properly.

‘Please his neighbour for his good’, Romans 15:2, in context, refers to a brother; however, the application can be made to everyone. Jesus in the story of the Samaritan said, ‘Go, and do thou likewise,’ Luke 10:30-37.

‘To build them up’, Romans 15:2, means to lead others toward spiritual edification, which is what’s important in this life, Ephesians 4:29 / 1 Corinthians 10:33 / 1 Corinthians 14:12 / 1 Corinthians 14:26.

‘Christ did not please Himself’, Romans 15:3 / 2 Corinthians 8:9. He lived and died for the benefit of all mankind, John 15:13. ‘Your will, be done’, Luke 22:42. Jesus was sinless, and He was more sensitive to sin and its consequences than we are.

John 8:57 tells us that the Jews thought Jesus looked ‘fifty years old’; Jesus looked older because He saw the consequences of sin. In John 11:35 ‘Jesus wept’ because He saw the consequences of sin. He wasn’t crying for Lazarus because He was about to raise him back to life. We tend to please ourselves, but Paul says to be like Jesus. In Romans 15:3, he quotes Isaiah 53:5 and Psalms 69:9. Jesus is our sin-bearer. The word ‘for’, Romans 15:4, shows that the above Scripture, as well as all, applies to us as well. ‘Whatever things were written before’, Romans 15:4, is an obvious reference to the Old Testament Scriptures.

‘Were written for our learning’, Romans 15:4, tells us that a study of the Old Testament is good, 1 Corinthians 10:6 / 1 Corinthians 10:11. The Old Testament Scriptures are there, not only for the benefit of the people who lived under them, but for us as well. The Old Testament Scriptures teach us by example, principle, type, prophecy, etc. Notice, ‘that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, the Scriptures produce patience, that is, perseverance, and give comfort, that is, encouragement, Romans 15:4.

The words, ‘might have hope’, Romans 15:4, means without the Scriptures, those who do not study and rely on them, there is no hope of being saved eternally.

The Holy Scriptures have the solution for every emergency and problem from the cradle to the grave. If we believe the Bible is the Word of God, we should be listening to what He says.

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” Romans 15:5-7

Paul now makes a request, a prayer to God for them. ‘May the God of patience and comfort’, Romans 15:5, means to remember it is God, a Person, who gives the patience and comfort. The Scriptures themselves are not to be worshipped; they are only the means by which God gives patience and comfort.

‘Give you the same attitude of mind toward each other’, Romans 15:5, means Christians need to be like-minded, that is, of the same disposition and will, as they live and work together, Romans 12:16 / Philippians 1:27 / Philippians 2:2 / 1 Corinthians 1:10. And so, he is asking God to help them to do the things required in Romans 14.

‘That Christ Jesus’, [Romans 15:5](#), means in accord with His example and will. And so, Paul is beseeching God, the great giver of patience and comfort, to grant them to be of one mind as they follow Christ. Christians should be of one mind with one another so they can unite in praising God and our Lord Jesus Christ, [Romans 15:5-6](#).

‘And one voice’, [Romans 15:6](#), means Christians, both the strong and weak, should be perfectly united with one voice praising and honouring God, [Hebrews 13:15](#).

[Romans 15:7](#) refers back to [Romans 14:1-3](#). The division of the chapter should have been here because it closes Paul’s comments on the subject of receiving one another.

‘Just as Christ also received us,’ [Romans 15:7](#), means just as Christ received us to the praise of God, we ought to accept one another to His praise and honour. And so, our action is based on the action of Christ, [Colossians 3:13](#).

To reject the weak brother runs completely contrary to Christ’s will and example. When we receive one another in the way as revealed in [Romans 14:1-15:6](#), God is glorified, [Romans 15:7](#).

What is the basis of our fellowship? We’re all members of the family of God. We are not all alike, and we have different opinions, but we’re all born of the same Father, despite being different. That’s why we need toleration, compassion and understanding, [Romans 14:22](#).

“For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name.” Again, it says, “Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people.” And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him.” And again, Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope.” [Romans 15:8-12](#)

‘For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews’, [Romans 15:8](#), reminds us that although Jesus was a minister to the Jews, most of them rejected Him, [John 1:11](#).

‘For the truth of God’, [Romans 15:8](#), means He came on behalf of, for the welfare and benefit, of the truth of God.

‘To confirm the promises made to the fathers’, [Romans 15:8](#), means Christ came to fulfil those great promises, [2 Corinthians 1:20](#).

In [Romans 15:9](#), we get the first mention of the Gentiles in this chapter. He uses the word 10 times throughout this chapter. Remember that the Roman church was very cosmopolitan; there was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles who all had their own cultures and religious baggage.

Also, remember the Gentiles were seen as unclean, dirty, and even using the word ‘Gentile’ was classed as a dirty word. And so now, here in Rome, we have the Jewish Christians worshipping with the Jewish Christians.

‘And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy’, [Romans 16:9](#), means those great promises God made to the Jewish fathers also included the Gentiles. Mercy to the Gentiles, that is, salvation, repentance to life, was an integral part of the promises made to the fathers and fulfilled in Christ, [Acts 11:18](#).

Paul quotes several passages which show that the Gentiles were to be included in the Gospel system. ‘For this reason, I will praise you among the Gentiles,’ [Romans 15:9](#), is a quote from [2 Samuel 22:50](#) and [Psalm 18:49](#). Paul quotes David, who represents himself as confessing and singing to God among the Gentiles.

[Romans 15:10-11](#) are quotes from [Deuteronomy 32:43](#) and [Psalm 117:1](#). In [Romans 15:10](#), the Gentiles are represented as being glad among the Jews. And so, the Gentiles were to rejoice and praise God along with the Jews.

In [Romans 15:11](#), the Gentiles were to praise the Lord, the one true God, along with all other peoples. And so, the design of the verses is the same, to establish mutual acceptance of each other.

[Romans 15:12](#) are quotes from [Isaiah 11:1](#) / [Isaiah 11:6-10](#). And so again, the Old Testament Scriptures clearly showed that the Gentiles were to have a part in the gospel system.

Quotations from the law, prophets, and the Psalms establish that God had promised salvation to the Gentiles along with the Jews. In the Messiah, the root of Jesse, the Gentiles would also submit and have hope, [Romans 15:12](#).

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

Paul makes a beautiful request as he moves toward the conclusion of the epistle. ‘The God of hope’, God is the author, source, means, and fountain of true hope. The words, ‘fill you with joy’ mean the Christian has manifold blessings of which to rejoice, [Romans 5:1-5](#) / [Romans 8:1-2](#).

‘And peace’ means Christians have a peace that passes all understanding, [Philippians 4:6-7](#) / [Hebrews 6:18-19](#). ‘You trust’ means as one continues to believe, or because he believes. ‘That you may overflow with hope’ means when filled with joy and peace by believing, our hope increases.

Notice it is ‘by the power of the Holy Spirit’, that is, the power of the Holy Spirit makes this hope possible. The Holy Spirit plays an important part in making this hope possible because He has revealed the will of God to us, [1 Corinthians 2:10](#).

PAUL THE MINISTER TO THE GENTILES

“I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another. Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:14-16

Notice Paul’s politeness; he says he knows he’s been hard on them, but it was for good purposes, [Romans 15:14](#).

Notice also the three things Paul had confidence in, or was persuaded regarding them.

‘Full of goodness’ means kindness, generosity of heart and actions, [Galatians 5:22](#) / [Ephesians 5:9](#). ‘Filled with all knowledge’, this comes through study and meditation on the Word of God, and by means of experience in living the Christian life, [2 Timothy 2:15](#) / [1 Peter 1:1-2](#) / [2 Peter 3:18](#).

‘Able also to instruct one another,’ instead of depending on one man, the preacher, every saint should be capable of admonishing others, [Colossians 3:16](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#). Unlike the Hebrews, [Hebrews 5:12-14](#), the Roman Christians had grown to the point where they could mutually teach and admonish one another.

Despite their maturity, he had to boldly write to them regarding certain points, [Romans 15:15](#). Some in Corinth were accusing Paul of being bold in his letters, but weak in presence, [2 Corinthians 10:10](#). However, Paul was both gentle and bold as the need arose. Most of our teaching is simply reminding people of what they already know.

‘Because of the grace given to me by God’, [Romans 15:15](#), means, as shown in the next verse, this refers to his apostleship. ‘A minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles’, [Romans 15:16](#) / [Acts 9:15](#) / [Acts 22:21](#) / [Acts 26:17-20](#) / [Romans 11:13](#) / [Galatians 1:16](#) / [Galatians 2:7-8](#) / [Ephesians 3:7-8](#) / [Colossians 1:25-27](#) / [1 Timothy 2:7](#).

‘Ministering the gospel of God,’ [Romans 15:16](#), all Christians must do the same, [2 Timothy 2:2](#) / [1 Peter 3:15](#) / [Luke 14:23](#). The word ‘ministering’ is from a word meaning ‘one who does priestly service.’

Murray, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When he defines his ministry as ministering the gospel of God, the apostle uses a word occurring nowhere else in the New Testament which may properly be rendered ‘acting as a priest.’ So the ministry of the gospel is conceived of after the pattern of priestly offering.’

‘That the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable’, [Romans 15:16](#), means by preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, he converted many to God, and these converts were his offering to God. Paul saw his apostleship as a sacred duty, ministering in the fashion of a priest, which resulted in various Gentiles being offered as an acceptable sacrifice.

‘Sanctified by the Holy Spirit,’ Romans 15:16, means that if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit, none would be set apart to God. The Holy Spirit sanctifies through the inspired Word, which was preached by Paul, John 17:17 / Ephesians 5:26 / 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.

Notice how Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit, and in the verses coming, he will speak of Christ and the Father, Romans 15:16-19. In other words, Paul is speaking about the Godhead, which is used in the KJV, Acts 27:19 / Romans 1:20 / Colossians 2:9.

“Therefore, I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.” Romans 15:17-20

‘Therefore’ is the word that connects the preceding, his ministering to the Gentiles, which was his reason to glory in Christ Jesus. The words, ‘glory in Christ Jesus’, Romans 15:17, tell us that Paul’s cause of boasting was not in himself.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Paul will glory only in what Christ has done through him. He is sure that Christ has done great things through him, and he is glad that he can draw attention to those things. But he is not trying to attract adulation. It is what Christ has done that is his theme.’

‘In the things which pertain to God’, Romans 15:18, means in the things he had done as an apostle to the glory, honour, and praise of God. He did not glory in his Jewish heritage, but only in those spiritual things which are in Christ Jesus, Philippians 3:3-11.

‘To make the Gentiles obedient’, Romans 15:18, Paul was Christ’s agent for bringing about obedience among the Gentiles, and in that way, Christ worked through him in word and deed.

‘In word and deed’, Romans 15:18, teaches us that Paul both taught and set a good example before the Gentiles, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9. Paul would boast only in that which Christ had worked through him. Paul certainly would not boast regarding another’s labour as though it were his own, 2 Corinthians 10:13-17.

‘In mighty signs and wonders’, Romans 15:19, these are Paul’s credentials as an apostle, 2 Corinthians 12:12. ‘By the power of the Spirit of God,’ Romans 15:19, both Jesus and the apostles attributed their power to work miracles to the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:28 / Hebrews 2:3-4. Paul says his message was backed up by signs and wonders.

‘From Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum’, Romans 5:19, shows the wide scope of territory Paul covered in his teaching. ‘Illyricum’, Romans 15:19, is the territory lying between Italy, Macedonia and Achaia.

‘I have fully preached the gospel of Christ’, Romans 15:19, means he always preached the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:20 / Acts 20:26-27, but he probably means here that he fully fulfilled his mission by preaching in many localities. It staggers the imagination as to how much this man was able to accomplish in his life. He always attributed his success to the Lord.

It was Paul’s main aim to preach the Gospel where Christ had never been named. He did not want to be a rival or competitor of other preachers. It is not wrong to preach where Christ has been named, Romans 15:20. Some must do the ‘watering,’ 1 Corinthians 3:6-11. Sadly, many today have the opposite spirit of the beloved apostle, Paul.

The three most common questions for many preachers as they consider moving to a congregation are as follows.

1. Do you have elders?
2. Are you self-supporting?
3. Do you have a preacher’s home?

Often, if a church does not meet this criterion, they are not willing to move there. Paul's work, for the most part, consisted of planting churches. He left the watering in the hands of others.

While there is a divine place for watering, planting is an indispensable part of carrying out the great commission. When there is no planting, there soon comes a time when there is no longer a need for watering.

“Rather, as it is written: “Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.” This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.” Romans 15:21-22

What Paul did was in keeping with the Scriptures as written in Isaiah 52:15, which has reference to the conversion of the heathen, the very work to which Paul was referring, Romans 15:21.

Paul's main mission was to provide an opportunity to hear and understand the gospel to those who had never been taught. Because his preaching where Christ had never been named had been so extensive and time-consuming, he had been hindered from coming to them, Romans 15:22.

PAUL'S PLAN TO VISIT ROME

“But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.”
Romans 15:23-29

‘But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions’, Romans 15:23, means he did not have further opportunities in those places to preach where Christ had never been named.

‘And having a great desire these many years to come to you’, Romans 15:23 tells us that for many years he had a deep longing to visit the Christians in Rome, Romans 1:8-13 / Romans 15:32.

‘Whenever I journey to Spain’, Romans 15:24 tells us that Paul himself had travelled to nearly all of the parts of the then-known world. He now wanted to go to the Far West.

Peter, it appears, was working in the other direction, 1 Peter 5:13. They were to ‘go into all the world,’ Matthew 28:19-20 / Mark 16:15-16, and it appears they did, Colossians 1:23.

‘And to be helped on my way there by you’, Romans 15:24, means he wanted them to help provide support for him in his journey and preaching in Spain, 3 John 5-8.

‘If first I may enjoy your company for a while’, Romans 15:24, means that before he went into Spain, he wanted to first enjoy for a limited time the richness of their fellowship.

Before he went to Spain, he had another mission to perform. He was going to Jerusalem to deliver contributions from the Gentile churches to the poor saints in Jerusalem, Romans 15:25-26.

From this and other passages, we know which churches were making contributions for the poor saints in Jerusalem, 2 Corinthians 8:1 / 2 Corinthians 9:2, how the funds were to be raised, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, and how it was to be taken to Jerusalem, 1 Corinthians 16:3-4 / 2 Corinthians 8:16-24.

‘It pleased them indeed’, Romans 15:27 means the Gentile churches were delighted to be able to share with the poor saints at Jerusalem. ‘They are their debtors,’ Romans 15:27, gives the reason for the Gentile Christians helping the poor saints in Jerusalem.

‘Partakers of their spiritual blessings’, Romans 15:27, the spiritual things had their origin among the Jews. See also Romans 11:17-18. ‘Their duty is also to minister to them in material things’, Romans 15:27, means that since the Jews had shared the blessings of the gospel with the Gentiles, it was only natural for the Gentiles to now share with the Jews their physical blessings. In 1 Corinthians 9:11, Paul makes this same argument for the support of those who preach the Gospel.

‘This task’, Romans 15:28, means the contribution to the poor saints. The fruit, that is, benevolence, that the Gentile churches had produced. The words ‘made sure’, Romans 15:28, speak of when he had secured it to them, the contribution to the poor saints in Jerusalem.

To seal a writing, contract, deed, etc., was to authenticate it, to make it sure. Paul was going to Jerusalem, himself, to see that it was placed securely in the hands of the poor saints. ‘I shall go by way of you to Spain’, Romans 15:28.

Again, he mentions his desire and plans to go there; however, we have no record of his accomplishing it.

‘In the fullness of the blessing of the gospel,’ Romans 15:29, means he would come to Rome with full and abundant blessings supplied through the Gospel of Christ, Romans 1:11-12.

Though he later went as a prisoner, he was able to preach to all, Acts 28:30-31, and no doubt to impart spiritual gifts to many, Romans 1:11-12. His mission was accomplished, though differently than he had expected.

“I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favourably received by the Lord’s people there, so that I may come to you with joy, by God’s will, and in your company be refreshed. The God of peace be with you all. Amen.” Romans 15:30-33

‘I beg you, brethren’, Romans 15:30 tells us that Paul often incited his brethren to good works, and so should we, Hebrews 10:24. ‘Through the Lord Jesus Christ’, Romans 15:30, he makes his appeal through, on account of, based on, the Lord Jesus Christ, because of His authority and will.

‘Through the love of the Spirit’, Romans 15:30, he also makes his appeal based on the love which the Holy Spirit compels to be in us. The words, ‘join me’, Romans 15:30, literally mean, ‘to carry on a combat or conflict in company with another.’

He was striving, wrestling in prayers and wanted others to participate in the same, Acts 20:22-23 / Acts 21:10-14 / 2 Corinthians 1:11. The words, ‘for me’, show us that Paul often asked for the prayers of the saints, and so should we, Ephesians 6:18.

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Does it astonish you that a man so rich in grace as Paul should be asking prayers of these unknown saints? It need not astonish you, for it is the rule with the truly great to think most highly of others. In proportion as a man grows in grace, he feels his dependence upon God, and, in a certain sense, his dependence upon God’s people.’

Paul asks the Roman Christians to make four requests for him in their prayers.

1. ‘That I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe’, Romans 15:31.

His request here is the same as in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2. The evil Jews in Jerusalem would have put Paul to death, but he was delivered by the Roman soldiers, Acts 21:27-32 / Acts 23:12 / Acts 23:23-24. And so, by God’s providence, he was delivered from those who did not believe.

2. ‘That my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints’, Romans 15:31.

Paul feared that the poor saints in Jerusalem, through their Jewish prejudices, might decline relief from Gentiles. It appears that Paul was not disappointed, and the contribution served to cement the universal spirit of brotherhood among the saints.

3. ‘That I may come to you with joy’, Romans 15:32.

Paul went there on an all-expenses-paid trip by the Roman government! [Acts 25:10-11](#) / [Acts 26:32](#) / [Acts 27:1-28:15](#). ‘By the will of God,’ we can do something only if it is the Lord’s will, [James 4:15](#).

4. ‘And may be refreshed together with you’, [Romans 15:32](#).

No doubt Paul was able to spend time with many of these saints who had read and studied his epistle, [Acts 28:30-31](#).

Paul was refreshed by the Roman saints before he arrived in Rome, [Acts 28:14-15](#).

God is the author of peace and the One who imparts it, [Romans 15:33](#). Paul often made this request. No greater blessing could be wished upon anyone. ‘Amen’ means may it be so, that is, may the God of peace be with all of you.

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

[Romans 15:33](#) writes like it’s the end of the letter, and after all the arguing and reasoning, it’s almost as though Paul is in a different world. [Romans 16](#) is a story within stories.

There are thirty-six names mentioned in this chapter who received greetings or sent their greetings. With the Jews, women weren’t highly regarded by the men, although they thought they were useful. Men weren’t allowed to speak to them on the street.

You needed a dowry to marry the woman. You could marry your cousin, but this needed approval from the woman’s father. Rabbis said, ‘It’s better to burn the Word of God than to teach women the Word of God.’

The Gentiles treated their woman just about the position of a slave. The way Paul praises these women was very unusual. This is what Christianity did for women.

1. It elevated them, [Galatians 3:28](#). Christ has done all this.

2. The intermingling of all races, [Colossians 3:11](#). Christ has done all this.

People were bilingual; Peter spoke Greek and Aramaic. The Romans were the organisers, the Jews were the religious, and the Greeks were the scholars. And so in [Romans 16](#), we find all these women and all these races sending greetings to one another. Christianity is very powerful, [Acts 17:26](#).

God doesn’t want us to destroy our own culture, even though He brought us all together. Christianity can bring nations together, but not by persecuting people or by forcing them to convert.

PERSONAL GREETINGS

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.” [Romans 16:1-2](#)

Phoebe was simply a servant who was worthy to be praised. Mentioned only here, evidently, Phoebe was going to Rome on some type of business, and Paul was commending her to them. Perhaps she carried Paul’s epistle to the Roman Christians.

‘Servant of the church’, literally, ‘deaconess of the church.’ For one to be in the office of a deacon, he must be the husband of one wife, 1 Timothy 3:12. All of us are servants, ministers, deacons, 1 Peter 4:10 / Hebrews 6:10 / 2 Timothy 2:24, etc., but those in the office of deacons are chosen ahead of time so that when a need arises, they can immediately attend to it.

No doubt Phoebe was a deaconess, Romans 16:1, in the sense of being a diligent worker and or in the sense of being appointed to various tasks by the church. The word ‘deacon’ in Greek is the word ‘diakonos’, and it simply means a servant, and it can be translated as servant, minister, deacon, or waiter. The word ‘deacon’ is used in a special way and a general way.

Most translators try to use the word ‘minister’ when diakonos is being applied to a preacher, 1 Corinthians 3:5 / 2 Corinthians 3:6 / 1 Timothy 4:6. In the New Testament, when it’s applied to an office in the church, it’s translated as deacon.

In a special sense, men who meet the qualifications are appointed for special work in the local church, 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The church in Philippi had elders and deacons, Philippians 1:1.

Again, in the New Testament, when it’s clear that we’re talking just about servants in general, then the word servant is used. It means a servant, so it may apply to anyone who serves, John 2:9 / John 12:26 / Romans 15:8.

There is one case where the word servant is applied to a woman, and that’s found here in Romans 16:1. Some translations used the word ‘deaconess’ to translate it because Phoebe was connected to the church.

This has led some churches to use this text as their proof text to appoint deaconesses. The word ‘deaconess’ can be very misleading in English, even while being technically correct. The word ‘servant’ makes a better translation in English, even if the language doesn’t distinguish between male and female servants.

We always have to remember that one possible translation of any Bible verse can’t and should never overrule or contradict other passages of the Bible. Remember, since qualifications for the office of deacon rule out women, we can’t just ignore such passages, 1 Timothy 3:12.

Should congregations appoint deaconesses? Paul, in 1 Timothy 3:11, gives some qualifications for the wives of deacons, but there are no special qualifications for a deaconess.

All faithful women are servants, thus deaconesses in the general sense, just as all men are deacons in this sense. The point is simply this: there are special qualifications for the office of deacons, but not for the office of deaconesses.

‘Cenchrea’, Romans 16:1, is mentioned only here and in Acts 18:18; it was a port-town about nine miles east of Corinth. Notice that Paul says that the church in Rome was to give Phoebe a warm welcome as a Christian and as a characteristic of saints, Romans 16:2.

‘Give her any help she may need from you’, Romans 16:2, tells us that Paul knew she would be involved in helping saints, and they should help her in that endeavour.

‘For she has been the benefactor of many people, including me’, Romans 16:2. She had assisted and ministered to many, including Paul. No doubt many travelling Christians had passed through Cenchrea, and Phoebe had taken advantage of the opportunity to be of service to them as well as to Paul.

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.” Romans 16:3-4

Priscilla and Aquila, who were a married couple, were tentmakers who travelled throughout the Roman Empire preaching the Gospel. They are mentioned five times in the New Testament: Acts 18:2-3 / Acts 18-19 / Acts 24-26 / 1 Corinthians 16:19 / 2 Timothy 4:19.

Their business had probably taken them back to Rome at this time. When they endangered their own lives for the life of Paul, we are not told why they were in Rome; perhaps it was during the uproar at Ephesus, Acts 19:23-41.

When Paul met them in Corinth, the order of the names is Aquilla and Priscilla, [Acts 18:2](#), but after that meeting in Corinth with them, Luke then always places Priscilla's name first. Why?

There are a few theories about why Priscilla is often mentioned before Aquila in the Bible. Some believe that Priscilla was more outspoken than Aquila, so that's why she was mostly mentioned first.

Some believe it denotes her higher social standing, or perhaps she took the lead in teaching. Others believe that Priscilla was born into an elite Roman family but fell in love with Aquila, an ordinary Jewish tentmaker and gave up her wealth to live with the love of her life. So she is named first because of her rank. The truth is, we will never know for sure, but we do need more husband and wife teams who do a great service for the Lord, as did Priscilla and Aquila.

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

'When two loving hearts pull together, they accomplish wonders. What different associations cluster around the names of 'Priscilla and Aquila' from those which are awakened by the words 'Ananias and Sapphira'! There we have a husband and a wife conspiring in hypocrisy, and here a wife and a husband united in sincere devotion.'

"Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia." Romans 16:5

The Roman Christians were to greet the church which met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. We likewise are to 'Greet the friends by name,' [3 John 14](#). Churches met in many different places in New Testament times, [Acts 19:9](#) / [Acts 20:8](#) / [Philemon 1:2](#) / [James 2:2](#).

The word 'assembly' in [James 2:2](#) is literally 'synagogue,' a word which always stood for the building and not the people. Jesus showed that the 'place' where one worshipped would have no significance, [John 4:20-24](#). Epenetus was the first convert in Achaia, now living in Rome.

"Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you." Romans 16:6

There are several 'Marys' mentioned in the New Testament, e.g., [Matthew 1:16](#) / [Matthew 27:61](#) / [Luke 8:2](#) / [Luke 10:39](#) / [Acts 12:12](#). This one is praised for her labour.

"Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was." Romans 16:7

The words 'my relative' is found three times in this chapter, [Romans 16:7](#) / [Romans 16:11](#) / [Romans 16:21](#). This means their origin in terms of being Jewish was not family or bloodline; they were Paul's fellow Jews, [Romans 9:3](#). Paul calls them 'my fellow prisoners', which means that at some time, they were imprisoned with Paul for the sake of Christ. Notice they 'were outstanding among the apostles'.

This does not imply that Andronicus and Junia were apostles, but were well recognised and honoured by the twelve apostles. 'Who also were in Christ before me', means they had become Christians before Paul's conversion.

"Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys." Romans 16:8-9

'My dear friend,' both Ampliatus and Stachys were special friends to Paul. The words, 'our co-worker in Christ', suggest that Urbanus had been a teacher of the Gospel of Christ and a helper of the saints.

"Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus". Romans 16:10

Apelles had passed through some very trying circumstances, tests or trials with success. Notice he, ‘stood the test’ or ‘approved in Christ’, KJV. The word ‘approved’ is from the Greek word ‘dokimos’, which means approved, accepted. In 1 Corinthians 9:29, Paul used the same word, but with the negative ‘adokimos’, unapproved, rejected. ‘Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus’. Notice Paul didn’t say, ‘Greet Aristobulus and his household.’ And so, Aristobulus himself was not a Christian or had already died.

“Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.” Romans 16:11
Herodion was a Jewish Christian, Paul’s fellow Jew. It appears that some in the household of Narcissus were Christians and some were not. Being one ‘who is in the Lord’, is the greatest privilege and honour on this earth.

“Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.” Romans 16:12

Tryphena and Tryphosa were possibly twins. All of the names in this verse are feminine in the Greek. These women are praised for their labour, their works in Christ. Persis was loved by more than just Paul and was a hard worker for the cause of Christ.

“Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.” Romans 16:13

Who is Rufus? Rufus was an eminent, excellent, or choice Christian, Mark 15:21. The words, ‘his mother and mine’, no doubt on several occasions, Rufus’ mother had ‘mothered’ Paul.

“Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them”. Romans 16:14

There are five names mentioned here who were either from a small church or from the same household or neighbourhood.

“Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord’s people who are with them.” Romans 16:15

Another five names are mentioned here, all of which are Christians and brethren in the Lord.

“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.” Romans 16:16

How many times is the Holy Kiss mentioned in the scriptures? Besides this reference in Romans 16:16, we find it also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:20 and 2 Corinthians 13:12. In these verses, the same words are used.

We also have it mentioned as a holy kiss in 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and described as a kiss of love in 1 Peter 5:14. And so, it is mentioned five times. But what is it that these verses teach?

1. We must remember that throughout Bible times, this was the customary, familiar mode of greeting.

We find it as early as Genesis 27:27, when Isaac greeted Jacob. It was the manner in which family members greeted each other when they were either meeting or parting.

And we have an example of the degree of importance they attached to observing this custom, when we see how deeply offended they must have felt when he complained bitterly that Jacob and his family had slipped away secretly, without allowing him to bid his daughters and grand-daughters farewell, Genesis 31:28.

2. Outside of the family relationship, it was the way in which men greeted men and women greeted women.

In 1 Samuel 10:1, the prophet Samuel kissed the young king Saul. 1 Samuel 20:41, when David had to flee from King Saul, he and Jonathan kissed in parting. This incident is sometimes used by homosexuals to justify their unnatural behaviour, but they use it because they are in grave ignorance of the familiar, long-established social customs of that time.

David kissed the aged Barzillai, who had helped him when he was a fugitive, being hunted by Absalom, 2 Samuel 19:39. This incident is also sometimes used by homosexuals to support their perversion, but they make such a claim because they are ignorant of the ancient Eastern social custom of that time. Ruth 1:9 records that Ruth kissed her two daughters-in-law farewell after the deaths of her two sons.

3. But this ancient, familiar custom could hold hidden dangers, as we see in the account of the treachery of Joab, David's uncle, 2 Samuel 20:9.

Joab regarded Amasa as a rival for the then post of commander of David's army, and so, when the two met, Joab extended his right hand, apparently in friendship, and, according to ancient custom, he took hold of Amasa's beard, as though he was about to kiss him. But, with his left hand, he thrust a sword into Amasa. The deception worked because Joab was left-handed, and Amasa was caught by his treachery.

4. The kiss was also a familiar mode of greeting in New Testament times. Consider the following.

The father's greeting of the returning Prodigal, Luke 15:20. The kiss with which Judas betrayed Jesus, Matthew 26:48-49. The shame of the appalling action of Judas is revealed in the reproachful response of Jesus Himself, Luke 22:48.

After the establishment of the church, the kiss was still used when friends were parting. When Paul met with the Elders of the Ephesian church who had come to meet him, knowing that this was to be their last meeting with him they 'fell on his neck and kissed him', Acts 20:37.

5. Furthermore, this was the expected mode of greeting in the days of Jesus.

It was the traditional act of courtesy and welcome which expressed respect. Jesus rebuked Simon, the Pharisee, for failing to offer Him the kiss of welcome when he accepted the invitation to visit Simon's house, Luke 7:44-45. It must have been a particularly ungracious invitation!

6. In those days, it was not the custom to shake hands in greeting or parting.

It would have been better for Amasa if they had! Instead, the use of the kiss followed rules which had been set by custom. Family members and Friends would kiss on the cheek, or both cheeks, as in certain countries, even today, France, Russia, and Italy, e.g.

Young people would kiss the hand of an older person, whilst the older person would kiss the young person/s head or forehead. It is important to notice that whilst men greeted men, and women greeted women with a kiss, it was not the practice for men and women to greet each other in this way.

Obviously, the kiss as a token of love between men and women was also practised, as is shown in 'The Song of Songs', which is an Eastern love song, Song of Songs 1:2 / Song of Songs 8:1, but the kiss of greeting was something quite different and distinct, and free from any romantic associations.

7. The Holy kiss and the church.

History records that the early church continued to use this mode of greeting, as Paul's letter makes plain, so we understand that he is not introducing a new revelation or imposing a new practice on the church.

Justin Martyr, who was born about 100 A.D., and lived during the 2nd Century, when describing the Church's worship, wrote, 'Prayers being ended, we salute one another with a kiss, and then the bread and wine are brought to the president.' It is interesting to notice his use of the term 'president'. He merely describes the brother, usually an elder, who 'presided' at the Lord's Table.

The older congregations in the UK adopted that term and used it when they referred to the brother who 'presided' at the Lord's Table on the Lord's Day worship. Also worth noting is that.

1. The kiss was given during the service.
2. It is before the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
3. It was intended to show that those who met at the Lord's Table meet in harmony and love.

So, this is what we have seen so far. The kiss was an Eastern mode of greeting of very great antiquity. It is found throughout Old Testament times and in the days of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Christians used it among themselves after the Church was established. In his letters, Paul commended it to the churches as the usual greeting of members of the Family, and he stresses the word 'holy', although he does not describe the kiss as something that has been expressly commanded by God. That is, he does not describe it as 'the holy kiss' in a way that would imply that it was a distinct ceremony or ritual.

My personal view is that if Paul were writing today, he would probably say, 'Greet each other with a warm handshake!' Let me stress his use of the word 'holy' because it indicates something pure and free from defilement.

There is nothing suggestive or promiscuous about the kiss of fellowship. It is 'hagios', holy, separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God. It is godlike in character.

Another early writer, Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived about 350 A.D., wrote, 'Do not think that this kiss is like the kiss given to each other by mutual friends in the marketplace.'

Historically, this mode of greeting continued for several centuries, as the last quotation reveals. There is evidence to show that it remained in the Western Church, that is, the church in the western part of the world, until about the 13th Century, and it remains in the Eastern Church up to the present time and is especially widely practised by congregations at so-called 'Easter-time' when it is described as 'the kiss of love'.

Why did it die out as a regular practice in Western Christianity? There may be several reasons.

1. There is the simple fact that the kiss, as a form of greeting, belongs to the East rather than to the West.

Here, as every woman knows, it is more usual to shake hands, and when you examine 'hand-shaking' closely, you see that it is a very significant gesture.

There was a long period in our history when men wore sidearms. They carried swords, and the practice of extending the right hand in greeting showed that the hand was empty; it carried no weapon, and this implied a friendly greeting.

Remember that the sword was usually carried on the man's left side, and was used in his right hand, the hand he extended in greeting. In those days, also, men would embrace each other in greeting and would kiss the hands of ladies.

2. Another plain fact is that the kiss of greeting fell out of use because it was clearly liable to abuse and could degenerate into something dangerous and harmful.

3. The enemies of the Church were always ready to seize on anything that might be construed as immoral or suggestive behaviour.

From Roman times, Christians were falsely accused of all kinds of excesses in their worship. The Lord's Supper was actually said to be a time when Christians 'ate human flesh and drank blood', by people who were not interested in learning what the Lord's Supper really is!

It is not difficult to see that those who spread such reports were capable of putting the wildest interpretation on the Christian's kiss of fellowship. It was to disprove and dispel such stories that the kiss was probably discontinued.

4. No doubt, also, the growth of the church and the size to which congregations grew would make it difficult to continue the practice.

There is no doubt that, although the number of Christians grew rapidly, they did not form the very large congregations that are seen in some places today. So long as the congregation remains within a manageable size, it is not difficult to maintain the intimate sense of 'family'.

But the sad reality is that, here in the West, where size and number are regarded as desirable, it is not unusual to learn of congregations that are so large that the Shepherds do not know their sheep! And the sheep do not know each other!

Growth is fine, but we need to ensure that the close bond of family is not lost. I am not arguing either for or against very large congregations. I am merely pointing out that it is possible for a congregation to become so large that it loses its character as a family in which the members know and care for each other.

However, if the practice of greeting with the Holy Kiss has died out, the brotherly love created by the love of Christ Himself should never die. But, even if today we do not 'greet one another with a holy kiss', there should be other tokens of brotherhood. I believe that when we meet as a church, we should make an effort to greet as many of our brethren as possible.

I say, 'make an effort', because in most congregations, when the church meets for worship on the Lord's Day, there are some members who never make a move to greet their brothers and sisters.

If you wish to greet them, you will find it necessary to go to them, because they will never make the effort to come to you. And it is not unusual for these brethren to complain that they 'feel neglected' in the church, or that they feel 'left out'.

Well, just as it takes two to kiss, it takes two to be friendly. Fellowship is not a one-way street. As congregations, we need to make a greater effort to show ourselves interested in people.

When visitors and strangers attend our services, what do we do? Do we sit or stand around speaking to our special friends? Or do we realise that, as members of the Lord's Body, it is both our responsibility and privilege to extend a welcoming hand to someone who may be finding it both unfamiliar and strange to be in our Service?

I am thankful that there are many friendly people in our congregations, but if it were to be left to others, visitors may well form a poor opinion of us! Be friendly! Make an effort.

It is not necessary to become involved in a theological discussion, much less an argument with visitors. Just remember that if at some time, someone had not made an effort to speak to you, you probably would not be in the church today.

'The churches of Christ greet you', **Romans 16:16**, means the congregations in different localities sent greetings. This is the only verse in the New Testament which has the specific expression 'church(es) of Christ,' although the thought is in other places, **1 Thessalonians 1:1** / **2 Thessalonians 1:1**.

It's very sad today that some have taken the description of Christ's church and made it into a title of exclusiveness. We must remember no one is saved because of the 'name' outside their meeting place; they are saved by the blood of Christ.

"I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them." Romans 16:17

Paul says, 'I urge you'; some translations use the word 'note', or 'mark', KJV. This word means, 'to look out for, to be aware of.' It also carries the idea of 'to publicly point out,' **2 Thessalonians 3:14**.

The church was to watch out for those who cause dissensions, quarrels, and disputes, which cause separation and breaking off into parties or sects. The church was to watch out for those who cause occasions of stumbling, hindrances, Romans 14:13 / Romans 14:21.

The reason why they were to watch out for those people was that they were teaching things which were ‘contrary to what they had learned’, 2 John 9. The church was to ‘keep away from them’, 2 Thessalonians 3:6 / 2 Thessalonians 3:14 / Titus 3:10. The church was to turn away from them and have no fellowship with them in their destructive ways.

“For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people.” Romans 16:18

Paul says, these people who are causing so much trouble within the church and teaching falsehoods do not serve the Lord, but their own fleshly appetites and interests, Philippians 3:19.

They use ‘smooth talk’, which means by words that are smoothly used with the appealing powers of speech. They were also using ‘flattery,’ the expression carried the idea of ‘flattery’ in the original.

They deceive by smooth words and flattering speech, the very kind of speech that many desire from their preachers, 2 Timothy 4:3-4. Notice Paul says they ‘deceive the minds of naive people’. They easily deceive the minds of the naive and unsuspecting.

Newell, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Mad dogs are shot; infectious diseases are quarantined; but evil teachers who would divide to their destruction and draw away the saints with teaching contrary to the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles are everywhere tolerated!’

There are many warnings in the Scriptures against the deceptions of false teachers. To say the least, far too many in our time are being deceived by the smooth and flattering speech of their own preachers.

“Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you, but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.” Romans 16:19

The faith and obedience of the Roman Christians were widely known, Romans 1:8, and Paul rejoiced in this fact. Just as the church in Rome was, ‘to be wise in what is good’, we should be wise in promoting and doing good. The words, ‘innocent about what is evil,’ the word ‘innocent means the following.

1. Unmixed, pure as in wines or metals
2. Of the mind, without a mixture of evil, free from guile, innocent, simple.

We should not get ‘mixed up’ with anything that is evil.

“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you”. Romans 16:20

Here, Paul is hinting at the persecution they were facing. This refers to either when the kingdom was proven to be an eternal one, as shown in the book of Revelation, or simply to their victory over false teachers and evil at that time.

We share in Christ’s victory over Satan, Genesis 3:15 / John 12:31-33 / Colossians 2:14-16 / Hebrews 2:14-15, because we have remission of sins. Every time a Christian escapes a temptation or overcomes a trial, Satan is crushed under his feet. The final crushing of Satan will take place when Christ comes again, Revelation 20:1-3.

“Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews. I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city’s director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.” Romans 16:21-23

This list differs from the earlier one because it contains greetings from those who travelled with Paul. Notice the names. Tertius, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Gaius, Erastus, Quartus.

Not all of these travelled with him on his journeys. For instance, Erastus was the city treasurer at Corinth, where the letter was written. Tertius was a scribe, probably a professional letter-writer. Quartus is described simply as a brother.

TIMOTHY

We all know Timothy, Romans 16:21, or Timotheus, to give him his correct name. He was a native of Lystra, where, on his first visit, Paul was stoned and left for dead, Acts 14:19-22.

Paul said he had no one as like-minded as Timothy, Philippians 2:19-22. Perhaps the words, ‘fellow Jews’, refer only to Jews; however, there are Jewish names in his salutation to whom he did not refer as his relatives.

‘Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives’, Romans 16:22. If ‘my relatives’ refers to all three names, Lucius must have been a Jewish Christian. But some scholars suggest that this Lucius is really ‘Lukas’ or ‘Luke’, as we know him. However, Luke was a Gentile doctor, Colossians 4:10; therefore, if we wished to make this passage refer to Luke, the ‘beloved physician’, it becomes necessary to place a comma after ‘Lucius’ so that the passage reads, ‘Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, so do Lucius, and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives’.

Besides these relatives in Corinth, Paul had three more in Rome, to whom he also sends greetings. He refers to Luke in three different places, Colossians, Philemon and 2 Timothy, and he calls him Lucas. But it does seem that Lucas was used as an alternative form of Lucius.

TERTIUS

This shows that Paul dictated this epistle to a scribe, Romans 16:22. This provides for absolute accuracy, 1 Corinthians 16:21 / 2 Thessalonians 3:17 / Colossians 4:18.

Gaius was Paul’s host, Romans 16:23, a wealthy Christian living in Corinth, who was not only able to provide Paul with hospitality but who appears to have been able to act as host to the entire church in Corinth, i.e. provide a meeting-place, probably in his own home.

If we turn to Acts 18:7, we find mention of a certain Titius Justus, who, at Corinth, gave hospitality to both Paul and the infant church, after they had been expelled from the synagogue next door. His full name would be Gaius Titius Justus. Gaius was his Roman name, given by his parents. Titius was his Gentile name, and Justus his third name. He was a citizen of the Roman colony in Corinth.

ERASTUS

Erastus is also mentioned, Romans 16:23. In 1929, a paving stone was discovered at Corinth, which read, ‘Erastus, Commissioner for public works, laid this pavement at his own expense.’

The pavement belongs to the 1st century A.D., and might very well have been paid for by Paul’s friend, named in this letter. It is possible that he had been appointed treasurer by the time Paul wrote the letter.

QUARTUS

Paul calls Quartus, ‘his brother’, [Romans 16:23](#). The designation ‘a brother’ is of supreme honour and worth for anyone.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” [Romans 16:24](#)

Although left out of most Bibles, this verse should be read as above. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is also mentioned in Romans, [Romans 16:20](#) / [Romans 16:27](#).

“Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.” [Romans 16:25-27](#)

Paul closes with beautiful praise to God for His redemption through Christ. He recites again, in brief, the story of salvation as unfolded in the divine history of redemption. We have in Paul’s final benediction.

The Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ. The good news and proclamation of Jesus Christ. Notice he uses the words, ‘my Gospel,’ [Romans 16:25](#). The word Gospel is evangelical, the reward for giving the message, and is used seventy-five times in the New Testament.

Apart from the four Gospels, Paul is the only one who uses this word. Gospel literally means good spell, good speech, good news. Note the words, ‘the revelation of the mystery’, [Romans 16:25](#).

This means it was once hidden, but is now made known or revealed. Kept secret since the world began. It had been hidden from the beginning, but now has been revealed by the unfolding of the Gospel plan. By the prophetic Scriptures have been made known to all nations.

It was the plan foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures, [Romans 16:26](#), and is now made known to all nations, [Romans 16:26](#). According to the command of the everlasting God, [Romans 16:26](#).

God Himself willed it to happen for the obedience of the faith. God’s design or purpose was to produce obedience to Him, [Romans 16:23](#). The Romans had received, believed, and obeyed the Gospel, and Paul was now praying that God would confirm and establish them even to the end.

May the same be true of us as well. May the Eternal God strengthen and establish us through means of the glorious gospel of Christ, so that someday we can live with Him forever, [Romans 16:27](#). May we all, with Paul, say the word, ‘amen,’ which means so be it.

SO BE IT! AMEN AND AMEN!