

Romans

A Commentary

By

Curtis Camp

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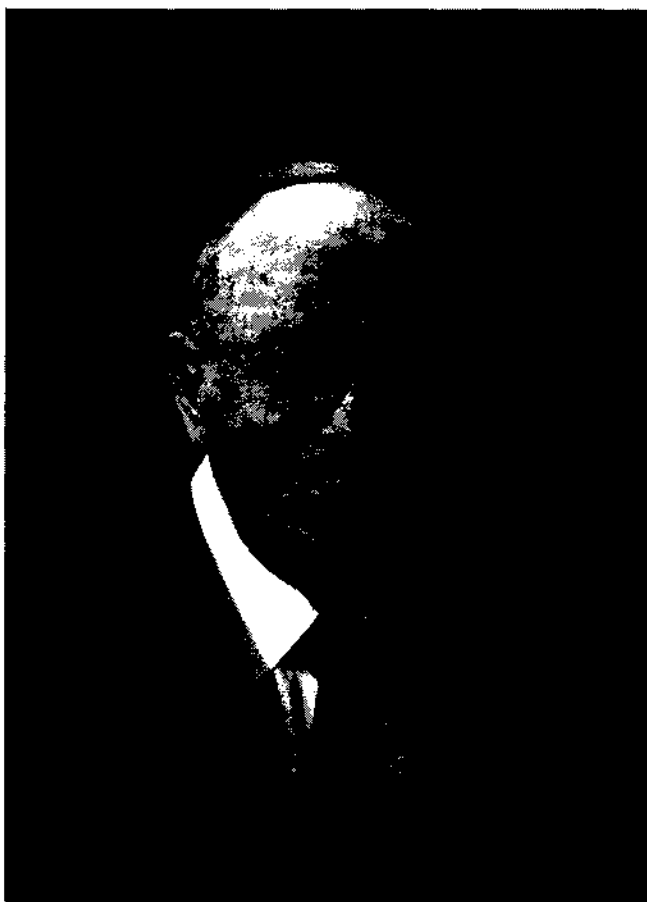
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- Author:** A commentary on **Romans** and two sermon outline
books to be released soon.

THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

The book of Romans is very special to the Bible student. It contains a storehouse of information about God and His righteousness, law and grace, the power of the gospel, and the relationship with the Lord which comes through our obedience to Him.

Paul's writings help one to immerse himself in these great themes. This is not a study for a lazy student but it enables him to partake of a rich spiritual feast. If one is looking for challenge and growth, an indepth study of these eternal truths will surely produce just that.

This commentary was authored by Bro. Curtis Camp, a gospel preacher for most of his life, and a serious student of God's word. Brother Camp has written out of those years of study and experience. Although there are numerous commentaries on Romans, you will find that these pages were not written just to produce another commentary, but to impart information which will be very helpful to the serious student of God's word.

Bro. Camp, and his faithful wife, Sylvia, make their home in Amarillo, TX where they have lived for many years, and where brother Camp continues to preach God's word. He is loved and highly respected by all who know him.

I am honored to be able to serve as the publisher of this commentary. Both brother Camp and I would wish for it a wide circulation.

J. C. Choate
Winona, MS
August 8, 1994

INTRODUCTION

I trust the thoughts in this commentary will prove to be a blessing as we expound on the great theme which motivated *Romans* to be written—"The righteousness of God revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ."

1. Book title: We say "Romans," and in the oldest manuscripts it is simply, "To the Romans."

2. Writer: The apostle Paul. He was a conscientious man who wanted more than anything to be right. Regardless of the cost in labor and suffering, he had a self-sacrificing devotion to the right. He had these marks even before his conversion. It seemed he had an ambition to suffer like Christ for the salvation of the world. His life was one of labor, self-denial and suffering (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). He wrote more of the New Testament than any other writer with fourteen books to his credit. How little did men recognize his greatness. No one man has ever lived, before or since, who can furnish a perfect parallel to him.

3. When: A.D. 57-58

4. Written from: Paul was ready to go to Jerusalem with the contribution from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints (Romans 15:25, 26), then he planned to travel by way of Rome to Spain (15:28; Acts 19:21). He spent three months in Achaia, and it was during this time that he must have written the Roman letter.

5. To whom: The Christians in Rome.

6. Purpose: Paul longed to visit the Roman brethren, and this desire was not that of a tourist for travel and sight-seeing. He wanted to impart some spiritual gift to them (Romans 1:11, 12). Paul stated that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Can we affirm the same without any reservations? There is and always will be but one gospel that is the power of God unto salvation. It is the one so wonderfully set forth in the book of *Romans*. After we read and understand what he said about it, we should be fired with a zeal to make

it known to every man and woman in the world. The gospel of Christ is still the sweetest music ever heard upon earth, the most powerful message proclaimed among men, and the most precious treasure entrusted to the people of God.

7. Beginning of the Roman church: Nothing is said in the Scriptures concerning the origin of the church at Rome. We do not know when or the precise time the gospel first gained a footing there. The most popular conjecture is that it was begun by the "sojourners from Rome" who heard and obeyed the gospel on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Some claim it was started by the apostle Peter. There is no record nor evidence that Peter ever visited Rome. If so, it is evident the church was not of his planting. Paul made no mention of him in his letter. Also, on the other hand, Paul distinctly stated that his coming to Rome was "not to build upon another man's foundation."

8. Why Paul wrote:

- a. He had heard of their faith "everywhere spoken" (Romans 1:8).
- b. For years he had a longing to visit them (1:11; 15:23).
- c. He definitely purposed to come unto them (1:13), but often he was hindered (15:22).
- d. A year before at Ephesus, he had "purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome"(Acts 19:21).
- e. His eventual destination was to be Spain (Romans 15:24, 28), but as he writes this letter, he expresses his longing and hopes to see them on the way (1:10, 11).

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A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

INTRODUCTION:

1. States definitely the theme of the book
2. The gospel (1:16, 17)

I. THE WHOLE WORLD IN NEED OF IT (Vv. 17-32)

- A. Whether lawless Gentiles (vv. 18-32) or privileged Jews (2:1-3:8)
 1. All, without exception, are guilty before God (3:9-20)
- B. The nature of the righteousness which God provides (3:21-31)

II. SHOWS HOW FAITH RESULTS IN LIFE OF HOLINESS

- A. Answers objections to the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ
 1. If one is saved and is not under the bondage of law, he will be encouraged to sin (6:1-14)
 2. This salvation makes one free to sin (6:15-7:6).
 3. Makes the law a useless, even an evil thing (7:7-25)
- B. Next shows that faith in Christ results in a life of holiness (8:1-11)

III. WHY THE JEWS WERE REJECTED AND CONDEMNED (9:1-29)

- A. Why and how they were rejected (9:30-10:21)
- B. The rejection was not final (Chapter 11)

IV. EXHORTATIONS TO CHRISTIAN LIVING

- A. Christian duties
 1. To be unselfish (ch. 12)
 2. As citizens of the state, to show loyalty and submission (13:1-7)
 3. As members of society, to live in love and purity (13:8-14)
 4. Conduct in relation to conscientious scruples (14:1-15:13)
- B. Paragraphs of personal explanations and greetings (15:14-16:27)

Chapter 1

VERSE 1

Paul used the salutation to declare his authority as an apostle, to describe the Christians in Rome, and to define the gospel of which he was about to write.

"a servant." From the Greek, *doulos*, defined as a slave, one not free, had no control of own acts but bound by or subject to the will of others. So Paul was a slave, not of men (a free-born Roman) but of Jesus Christ. He was a bond-man and hence not free; he neither owned himself nor controlled his own acts. He was bound by the will of another. But his bondage did not degrade, it ennobled. The best form of freedom is that freedom to do right, freedom from sin, and freedom from the fear of death.

Christians have been redeemed or bought back by the blood of Christ, the price paid for them. Consequently, they belong to Him and are bound by His will which is the measure of their acts, their lives, their liberty and the rule of their actions.

Servant or slave denotes that they are equal. This is not a title of office nor a mark of special distinction, but denotes a simple fact common to all Christians.

"called to be an apostle." To be is supplied by the translators. It is not in the original text. Paul was not merely called to be an apostle, he actually was one. But look at Acts 26:16. He was a chosen apostle. The word apostle tells what he was, and the word called tells how he became one. He was not set apart by men. It was not an ego-building appointment. Paul never thought of himself as a man who had aspired to an honor; he thought of himself as a man who had been given a task. Jesus said to His men, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," (John 15:16). Paul never thought of life in terms of what he wanted to do, but in terms of what God meant him to do.

Paul was a set-apart person to serve the living God. Galatians 1:15, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace..." He was sent into the world to do some definite thing. Are we? Acts 13:2, "...the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

"apostle," (Greek, *apostolos*) means a delegate. That is, one sent with a

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special message or commission. The original qualification seemed to be, as stated by Peter in Acts 1:21, 22, that he should have been personally acquainted with our Lord and His ministry from His baptism by John to His ascension. Thus he would be a witness of Jesus after His resurrection.

The phrases, "separated unto the gospel of God," "set-apart," and "separated unto this gospel" are all defined as entrusted with a special message; namely, the gospel. Its proclamation was his sole task, this one thing only he was set aside to do. Thus we see throughout the rest of his life a concentration in effort and singleness of aim.

"Gospel" means good news or glad tidings, and Paul described it as the gospel of God. Thus the gospel is God's good news for mankind. Its source or origin is God. It is not an invention of man but it is a revelation—heavenly, glorious, divine.

VERSE 2

"the gospel which He had promised by His prophets in the holy scriptures." They were God's prophets and were therefore guided, directed, and inspired by Him.

"Holy Scriptures" are called holy because of their origin, character, and content! So, in the Old Testament, the gospel was contained in type, symbol and prophecy which foretold the great redemptive facts that form the substance of the gospel message.

VERSE 3

Paul says the gospel of God was "concerning His Son" who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. Thus Jesus was of princely and royal lineage.

VERSE 4

These two verses present a contrast between the human and divine nature of Jesus. By His genealogy, He was proven to be of the seed of David. By His resurrection, the final proof, that He was the Son of God.

VERSE 5

In verse 1, Paul says he is called an apostle. Now he gives the source of that call. He had not forced himself into that office, neither had he been called to it by men, but he had received his apostleship directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore he was an equal with any other apostle of

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the Lord (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11), and he was an agent of God to bring men to an obedient faith (Acts 26:15-18).

VERSE 6

The letter is addressed to "all that be in Rome," but not to every citizen. Rather, it was written to "you who are the called of Jesus Christ."

VERSE 7

"beloved of God, called to be saints." All are called who hear the gospel, but the chosen are only those who obey it. Therefore the "saints" denote the saved.

VERSE 8

It seems Paul seeks to establish a sort of personal relationship with the Roman brethren. He gives the letter a more personal touch by saying he was thankful for them. He was grateful that their faith was so active that it was known and proclaimed throughout the whole Roman Empire. Paul was always thankful for the church wherever it was, but especially in this very strategic center, the capital city of the empire.

VERSE 9

He begins with a compliment. Though he did not begin the church in Rome and had never seen it, yet he had a deep interest and a sense of personal fellowship for them. We should feel this way about every congregation of the Lord's church though we have never seen them. This church exerted a wide influence, because wherever he went he heard of the faith of the church at Rome, "and so I pray for you at all times and wherever I go."

VERSE 10

One of his fervent requests of the Lord was that soon, after many previous delays, He would make it possible for him to visit these Christian friends in Rome—"if it may be the will of the Lord."

VERSE 11

"some spiritual gift." Though Paul wished to impart a gift to them, he was not suggesting they had none. In Romans 12:6-8, we learn they had already been endowed with spiritual gifts for Paul gave instructions about the proper use of them.

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VERSE 12

What was Paul's purpose? He wrote in verse 11, "to the end that you may be established." Would it have strengthened them? Built them up? Would they know the gospel and its aspects more accurately? We have no decisive means of settling it. Surely it was some miraculous gift or spiritual favor. At least he wanted both them and himself to be comforted in each other's faith. Some spiritual gift would comfort them, and to see their increase in faith and usefulness would be a comfort to Paul.

VERSE 13

He had been hindered from carrying out his plans to visit them. Does this show that he was not guided by inspiration in forming his plans? The Holy Spirit would not guide him in forming plans and then allow him to be hindered in carrying them out. As an example, Paul did form his own plans and purposes but was not allowed by the Holy Spirit to follow through on some of them (Acts 16:6-8).

VERSE 14

Paul said he was under obligation to preach the gospel to all men in all nations. He had done so already in many of them and had obtained fruit, so now he is ready to preach among the Romans for yet more fruit. It was nothing these Greeks and barbarians had done for Paul that put him in their debt. But since Jesus had redeemed him, saved him, and made him an heir of heaven, he felt he had been brought under obligation to do all he could to carry that same blessing to others. Was he under any obligation that the rest of us are not under? Are we not also in debt as was he?

VERSE 15

"So as far as I am concerned, I am ready." "I may be hindered again as in the past," he said, but his strong desire was to be permitted to preach the gospel in Rome. There was no lack of interest, willingness or zeal on his part. He wrote, "I am eager." Not having been there before was due to his circumstances and not to his choice. Note: The delay may have been good, for it resulted in the writing of this epistle.

VERSE 16

This verse is remembered by more Christian than any other from *Romans*.

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The fundamental truth of the gospel is what? That Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is to be believed in order to salvation. No one can reject it and be saved. But it is not unconditionally the power of God for salvation. It saves only those who believe it. To all others it is condemnation, "He that believeth not" (Mark 16:16). Then to belief one must add obedience, (Romans 1:5, 16). Springing from that faith, obedience is prompted. Paul loved the gospel and he had confidence in its saving power.

The gospel is God's only power for salvation. He who is not saved by it will never be saved at all.

The gospel is God's power because it proceeds from Him. It is for salvation because it is ordained to effect it, to do it, to bring it about. To save from sin is to save from the love and practice of sin. Then one is saved and purged from the guilt of sin, from all its results and penalties. God has revealed no other provisions for the salvation of the world than through the gospel. (See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

"To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (See Acts 13:46).

"I am not ashamed of." A negative statement is sometimes the most emphatic way of expressing an implied opposite. For instance: "not far from the kingdom" means very near to the kingdom. "No mean city" denotes a famous and prominent city. So Paul may be saying, "I am proud of the gospel." It may mean that he rejoices and glories in the gospel. Therefore, he would preach it and with no apologies. He wants them to know his delay in coming to them was not because of timidity or fear. He has no fear, reluctance, or shame, because he knows the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." No Jew can be saved aside from faith in Christ, and by faith in Christ any Gentile can be saved. Why should anyone be ashamed of the gospel?

R. L. Whiteside wrote:

"It has God as its source, Jesus Christ and His plan of salvation its subject matter, the Holy Spirit as its Revelator, the highest ideals as its philosophy of life, and heaven as its ultimate goal. To be ashamed of the gospel is to be ashamed of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. Should a person be ashamed to be a child of the Ruler of the universe, ashamed of being a citizen of the glorious kingdom of Christ, ashamed to be striving for heaven and immortal glory? Yet some people are ashamed of the gospel, but not so Paul. No sane person, when he considers, will be ashamed of that

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which brings the greatest possible good to his fellows. He may have many reasons for being ashamed of himself, but not one reason for being ashamed of God."

VERSE 17

The "righteousness of God" here is not speaking of an attribute of God. Of course, He is righteous. The truth that God is a righteous being had been fully revealed in the Old Testament. (See Romans 10:3). They were not ignorant that God was righteous. This righteousness or justification is revealed (made known) in or by the gospel. The gospel is God's power to save; therefore, this "righteousness" must be His way of making man righteous, or of justifying the sinner. Where is His way or plan for man's salvation revealed? In the gospel.

This way or plan of salvation or justification is revealed "from faith to faith." So this "righteousness is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith," Philippians 3:9. It is a message of faith (not works of the law) delivered to man to beget faith in us that we might be saved. So the justification of God which is by faith, has been revealed to mankind that he may believe—thus, "from faith to faith." It is written, "The just shall live by faith" or "The righteous by faith shall live," (2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17).

Never does it say "by faith alone." Some commentators say it does. (See Galatians 2:16). Surely there is a plan of righteousness, or justification revealed in the gospel as an inducement to believe. (See Romans 3:21).

VERSE 18

Some think the use of the word "for" (Greek *gar*) should be translated "now," since there seems to be no connection between these two verses. It does not say "God is revealed from heaven," but that "His wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness." God's wrath is against every form of sacrilege and immorality. How desperately the righteousness just discussed is needed. And, when one's sins incur the judgment of God, he can be delivered from it only by the righteousness of God.

Chapter 2:1-16 deals with this very thing. The two words here, ungodliness and unrighteousness, express the whole volume of human sins. Remember, here God's wrath is legal wrath rather than emotional. His law has been violated, and the wrath of the law (penalty for viola-

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tion) must be visited upon the transgressor, unless some means can be devised whereby God can be just while justifying the sinner. What great news that God would devise a plan by which He could save the sinner from His own wrath.

To sum it up: The gospel is God's power for salvation to those who believe it, a way for sinners to become righteous is revealed in it, an inducement for men to believe it so as to escape the penalty of a violated law. If the gospel is to be of any benefit, a real power to save, there must first be a need for it. If the world were not lost, there would be no need for anything to save it; or if the world were lost and there was already something at hand (a means of saving it), there would be no need for the good news. But from Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul shows that both Jews and Gentiles were lost without it. All were sinners and all were under condemnation. So, we see more clearly the purpose of the gospel. Would sinners have perished if there had never been one? Why were they lost in the first place? "Sin is transgression" and "all have sinned"—that is the reason all mankind was lost.

Illustration: A man is drowning. A boat is rushed out to rescue him, but he refused to be rescued and is drowned. Now why did he drown? "He drowned because he would not get in the boat." Wrong. The boat had nothing to do with his drowning; he drowned because he was in the water, and he would have drowned just the same if there had never been a boat. His refusing to be rescued made his drowning a case of suicide.

Just so with the sinner. The gospel is sent out to rescue the perishing. When the sinner refuses to be rescued, it intensifies his guilt and show it to be a case of spiritual suicide. But the gospel had nothing to do with his perishing; he would have perished had there never been a gospel. The boat was a means of rescue, and so is the gospel. The gospel was designed to save a world already condemned. Primarily, people are lost because they are sinners. So, God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Godliness does not mean godlikeness, but it is piety, reverence. Such as one has respect for God and sacred things. Ungodliness is irreverence, impiety, a lack of respect for God and sacred things. Godliness is a right attitude toward God; ungodliness is a wrong attitude toward God. Righteousness refers more particularly to our right attitude toward our fellowmen. It is treating our fellowmen right. Unrighteousness is the fail-

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ure to do right toward our fellowmen.

“Who hold the truth in unrighteousness,” who hinder (ASV) or hold down the truth in unrighteousness. This seems to mean, to know the truth but live in unrighteousness. When we do worse than we know, we hinder or obstruct the truth.

VERSES 19-22

Read Romans 16:25, 26; Ephesians 3:3-9.

The reason they were without excuse in their ignorance of the knowledge of God was that God once revealed Himself to Gentile and Jewish fathers alike. How did they receive this knowledge? It came from God to Adam, and through angels and inspired men in the subsequent ages. This is the only knowledge of God the world possessed prior to the gospel.

Even when the Gentiles knew God, they did not glorify or honor Him as God. And thus they were given over to their vain and wicked desires.

They thought themselves very wise—that they could live without Him. Their senseless or foolish hearts were darkened. The “heart” is a comprehensive term for human faculties. The following capabilities are attributed to the heart: thinking, reasoning, perceiving, loving, hating, purposing, desiring, rejoicing, sorrowing, believing. Many of these things gradually took possession of the minds of the Gentiles since they thought themselves to be wise. The truth faded from them and the light went out. They thought they were wise but acted as fools. Those who doubt that God is and that what the Bible says is myth, pretend to be very wise while in reality they act the fool.

VERSE 23

They “exchanged (not changed) the glory of the incorruptible God for an image.” They changed the object of worship from God to idols, like “corruptible man, fowls, four-footed beasts and creeping things.”

VERSES 24, 25

Because they refused to worship God but worshiped idols, God gave them up to the vile and unclean practices into which their own unrestrained lusts led them. Leaving God, He allowed them to be swept by the strong currents of their impure desires down, down into the abyss of immorality and vice because they chose to worship something other than Jehovah—“the creature rather than the creator.”

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VERSES 26, 27

These verses show how they precisely dishonored their bodies. Did not Paul show that morality depends upon religion? Without it the Gentiles pursued "vile passions." They became victims of the most abnormal lusts and degrading vices. Thus, sin brings its own punishment in the form of more shameful sins.

VERSE 28

God gave them up to a reprobate mind, a mind in which the distinctions between right and wrong are confused or lost, a mind upon which God's disapproval rests. That sort of inner disposition cannot fail to express itself in "things which are not fitting" ("convenient," KJV), things that cannot be thought to be suitable or right. Of these Paul gives twenty-one examples and ends the list by saying, "they which commit such things are worthy of death." Worst of all, they rejoice in others, and encourage others who practice the same sins.

"God gave them up," (verses 24, 26, 28) in a way of righteous judgment, as the just punishment of their idolatry. He took off the bridle of restraining grace, leaving them to themselves, letting them alone. His grace is His, thus He may give or withhold His grace at His pleasure. They would neither know or do anything but what pleased themselves, their highest goal. Many have God in their knowledge but will not retain Him in daily actions and decisions. Such would thwart and contradict their lusts. There is a difference in knowledge and acknowledge. These pagan Gentiles knew God but would not and did not acknowledge Him. These twenty-four grievous sins is "where the devil's seat is." So, it was time to have the gospel preached to them.

They "became vain in their reasonings." Nothing can be more ridiculous than the religious speculations of irreligious men.

"uncleanness" is defined as impure desires, immorality, vice. Morality depends upon religion.

"vile passions" or vile affections (KJV) is abnormal lusts and the most degrading vices.

"a reprobate mind" (verse 28) results when distinctions between right and wrong are confused or lost. Such an inner disposition will express itself in "things which are not fitting."

This is surely a melancholy, vivid and impure picture of the universal

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depravity of the heathen world (Gentiles). But, aren't all these things being reproduced in our day? Could such a people be justified by their own works?

Romans

Chapter 2

VERSE 1

Doubtless the Jews would heartily agree with Paul about the awful Gentiles, but Paul now opens chapter 2, saying they were just as bad. What a blow! How unreasonable!

The Gentiles did not have the law. The Jews did but they were guilty of rejecting and refusing to obey it. So, "Why condemn the Gentiles when you are just as bad as they?" When men cut loose from God, they all go the same road. Disobedience to God is the mother of all vices.

Paul charges the Jews with censoriousness and self-conceit. "Why, you are as sinful as the Gentiles. You practice the same things they do. So in judging them to be such criminals worthy of death, you condemn yourselves."

VERSE 2

The Jews in condemning others for certain sins were doing the same things. Therefore, by their condemnation they indicted themselves. Preaching against sin does not atone for the guilt of it.

"But the judgment of God is according to truth against them (Gentiles and Jews) which commit such things." The Jews reasoned, "God loves Israel alone of all the nations of the earth. So, God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another."

"Judgment according to truth?" It is in accordance with guilt, facts, etc., and not according to a man's profession. Instead, judgment is based on his conduct.

VERSE 3

They really thought they would escape the judgment. In fact, they believed themselves to be the only ones who would escape.

VERSE 4

Did they think they could despise the riches of God's goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, continue in their sin and God would take no note of it? God has shown peculiar goodness, patience and forbearance toward the Jews, but what had they done with it?

VERSE 5

What gave rise to provoking the wrath of God? A hard and impeni-

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tent heart. Even "walking after such a heart, being led by it" treasures up wrath. "Treasurer up" means abundance, never exhausted. Yet, sinners persist in adding to it as a treasure. Every willful sin adds to the score. "against the day of wrath" means a day of wrath is coming. See Revelation 6:17.

Yet, it is a righteous judgment. It is against His nature to hate the sinner, yet His will requires condemnation of sin. Thus, we must not treat with contempt the wealth of His kindness, forbearance and patience.

It was an easy matter to get the Jew to agree that the Gentiles were sinners. Yet for his own good, it was necessary for the Jew to see himself as a condemned sinner, else he would never see his need of the gospel.

VERSE 6

God will judge without favoritism and will render to every man according to his works. It is not a matter of so much pay (or punishment) for so many sins, and less for X-number of good things done. But the kind of works shows what kind of person you are. God rewards according to the nature and not the amount of works. So, God will render or give back to you according to the nature of your works.

Are we saved by works? or grace? On God's side our salvation is wholly of grace, for He receives no pay for saving us; on our side our salvation is wholly a matter of works, for we can furnish no grace.

God will reward certain ones. Who are they?

VERSE 7

This reward of salvation is conditional, for eternal life must be sought by patience in well-doing. Mankind is divided into two great classes; those who obey God and those who obey unrighteousness. To the first class, God will render eternal life; to the second, wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish. If we seek for glory and honor and incorruption in doing the will of God, we shall receive eternal life.

God only has incorruption and immortality. If eternal life is not conditional, no man can give a reason why one person is saved and another lost, for there is no respect of persons with God. "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation..." (Acts 10:34, 35).

VERSE 8

"contentious" means factious, self-seeking. Evil principles are spread

Romans—Chapter 2

by their disputings. They argue as atheists, infidels, skeptics, agnostics and propagate their own feelings. They "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," refusing to do what God says do and doing everything God forbids them to do. These shall receive "indignation and wrath." "Indignation" is the outbreak of wrath on the day of judgment.

VERSE 9

The righteous judge will inflict misery of all descriptions upon every one that does evil, and there will be no possibility of escape. So if doing wrong causes a person to be lost, then to be saved he must leave off the wrong and do the right. If being lost is conditional, so is being saved, Hebrews 5:9. He gives eternal life to those who by patience in well-doing seek it, John 5:28, 29.

"of the Jew first" indicated he was favored above all others and with his fuller knowledge, he carried a heavier responsibility.

VERSE 10, 11

Now, God does not respect Jews over Gentiles, a blow to the Jews, (verse 11). Still, God will give glory, honor, and peace to all, "to every man (Jew and Gentile) that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentiles." (After all, the Jews heard it first. Pentecost, etc.)

VERSE 12

The Gentiles had been without the law of Moses, yet they sinned. Therefore they must have been under some law since "sin is transgression of the law." The charges against the Gentiles in chapter 1 had not been committed under the law of Moses nor against that law. But we are sure of two things, they had sinned, and it was not under the law of Moses. Therefore they would not be judged by the law of Moses but would perish without the law.

However, this is not true of the Jews because they were under the law of Moses. The sins they committed under and against the law would therefore be judged by the law. Then, by it they would be condemned for none could keep the law. Therefore, a change must be made. The "keeping" of the law had to be put away and the Jews had to come under the law and will of Christ. The Gentiles could not possibly be judged by the law because they were never under it.

Therefore, sin is the cause of death, not election or predestination, not

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lack of ignorance or knowledge of Christ, but voluntary, willful sin, disobedience to law, unfaithfulness to light that will occasion "death." The Jews' situation was precarious indeed, for they were privileged. They had the law, will be condemned by the law, and so perish. However, Paul says, "Those who sin, whether without the law or under the law, shall perish."

VERSE 13

The Jews were made custodians of the law. It was always with them, they could read it when they desired and hear it read in the synagogues every sabbath. They put a lot of stress on their hearing and knowledge of the law, but they neglected the doing of it. This became a fatal mistake for not hearers but doers of the law were justified. This would apply to Gentiles as well, for surely they were under some law, even a moral law. So the principle applies to whatever law people lived under, whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

The justification in this verse is merely potential, not actual. No Jew, not even the best, could claim that he kept the law perfectly. He could see then that there was no justification by law for him. That is what Paul wanted him to see.

VERSE 14

This no doubt refers to a moral law. They had a sense of justice and equity, honor and purity, love and charity. Nature taught them obedience to parents, pity to the miserable, and conservation of peace and order. Their law forbade murder, stealing, lying, perjury, etc. Though they had no revealed law, they were a law unto themselves. Their conscience examined them, "their conscience also bearing witness" (verse 15). The moral requirements of the law of Moses are the things which the Gentiles might do naturally. The Jews did those things by revelation while the Gentiles, if they did them at all, did so by nature. Within themselves, some things are right and some things are wrong. Even if one never has a revelation from God, he would know that it was wrong to murder his fellowman, to rob him of his possessions, or in any way to infringe on his rights. God's moral law is the same to all nations. The law under which any person lives condemns him if he does not keep it perfectly. Paul does not say that the Gentiles lived up to their natural law any more than the Jews lived up to the revealed law. He is showing that

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both were sinners. Therefore, all Jews and Gentiles needed the gospel of Christ to save them.

VERSE 15

“Show” or give proof refers to the moral requirements of the law. These are those things any decent set of people would recognize as proper and right even if they never had a revelation. Their consciences, like the consciences of those who had a revealed law, would accuse them when they failed to live up to their standard of right, and approve them when they did right as they saw it. That is the office of conscience, to simply approve you when you do that which you believe to be right, and to disapprove when you do that which you believe to be wrong. But, it will not tell you what is right and what is wrong. We know it is “right to do right” and it is “wrong to do wrong.” Therefore, conscience is not a guide. It was not given for this purpose. Conscience is something that backs up our moral judgment. Paul is an example. He always did what he thought was right and therefore always had a good conscience. But his information was wrong and therefore his moral judgment was wrong. So our conscience urges us to do what we have judged to be right.

Thus the Gentiles were convicted by their consciences when they went against the written law in their hearts (the knowledge of God they did possess). “and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” That their thoughts accused them indicates that there was some sense of right and wrong, of what is acceptable and what is not. So, this conscience became the “law” for the Gentile without Christ.

VERSE 16

“In the day” tells when it is that the thought of the Gentiles will either excuse or accuse them. It is in the judgment day. This verse, as you can see, connects with verse 12. With Jesus as judge, Jews and Gentiles will be judged by or according to the gospel. “My gospel” here does not denote origin or ownership, but it was the one Paul preached, the gospel that was the subject of his preaching.

VERSE 17

“Jew,” where did the name come from? We don’t know when it was first used. After the kingdom divided, the southern kingdom was called

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Judah (Judah, Benjamin and the half-tribe of Manasseh). So sometime later, they became known as "Jews" with the name being derived from Judah. When the kingdom was about to be carried into captivity, the name was used a few times in *Jeremiah*. During the captivity and thereafter, "Jew" became the common name of all the people. They were proud of the name and of what, in their estimation, the name stood for.

But Paul shows in verse 17 that though the Jews were a blessed race and the ones who had received the law of God, still they had no special advantage in judgment over others. Refer to verse 11.

VERSE 18

But the Jew who knew the law, taught it, explained it, and attempted to enforce it, was still guilty if he broke it himself. This verse goes back to verse 13. To be taught and know the will of God does not make one righteous. It is the doer of the law that is just or righteous. The law was not a thing to be had (verses 17, 18), it was a thing to be obeyed.

In fact it was right, even highly commendable, to know the law. One is to be blamed who has had the opportunity and yet does not know it. The wrong then lies not in knowing God's will, but simply regarding this knowledge by itself as a mark of superiority, and as the ground of acceptance with God. Just the knowing is not what makes one better than others, but doing. So the Jew had God's will and knew it, but he failed to obey it. He did worse because he sunk to the level of Gentile in positive vice and unrighteousness. The Jew knew the better things, but he practiced the worse things.

VERSE 19

They thought of themselves as fully capable of teaching others. They considered themselves guides to the poor blind Gentiles who sat in darkness. They were very proud of the fact that anybody who did not have the knowledge of what the Lord required would have to come to them, because they had it all. This gave them a proud conceit of themselves and contempt of others. They loved to heap titles of honor upon themselves. The best work when done in human pride, is unacceptable to God. The biggest fault seemed to be they were nothing comparable to what they proposed to make out of others. They claimed to be a light in the darkness, but the claim was only a pretense and not a reality. The light they claimed to be to others was only darkness in themselves.

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Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 15:14.

VERSE 20

"An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes." A Jew looked upon all men except himself as ignorant. He assumed himself capable of instructing everyone. Indeed he could have been but he wasn't doing it. (See Matthew 23:1-5.) So, they taught much and practiced little. Jesus said of them, "they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:3).

VERSE 21, 22

These are searching questions. Any man is a poor teacher who does not teach himself while he is teaching others., He is a poor preacher if he cannot preach better than he can practice, but he is a poorer preacher if he does not try hard to practice what he preaches.

The Jews taught much and practiced little. They claimed so much superiority. They looked on themselves as able teachers but Paul said, "First teach yourself." He tried to show them they were inconsistent and needed the lesson which they sought to give to others. (See Matthew 7:1-4 and 23:1-5.)

"You who preach 'steal not,' do you steal?" They proclaimed steal not, but were themselves thieves. Thus they were gross hypocrites. We are not supposing that every Jew was a thief, but the sin was very general. One Judas in twelve is quite enough. So they had sinned against their knowledge and profession. They did that which they taught others to avoid. Teaching is part of that charity that begins at home. But it must not end there. They pulled down with their lives what they built up with their preaching. Who will believe those who do not believe themselves? Examples will govern more than rules. Bad lives will contradict good doctrine. "Those in the pulpit preach so well that it is a pity they should ever come in and out of the pulpit. Some live so shabbily, it is a pity they should ever enter it."

In this section, Paul points out and charges these Jews with three sins:

- 1) Stealing — "devouring widows' houses" (Matthew 23:14).
- 2) Adultery
- 3) Sacrilege — robbed God in tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8, 9).

This is very close to idolatry, because they converted the tithes and offerings to their own use and to the service of their lusts. (Read Ezekiel 22:26).

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VERSE 23, 24

They gloried in the fact that the law had been given to them, yet in their transgressions of the law they dishonored God's law. May we not dishonor the gospel in the same way? *Example:* David, 2 Samuel 12:14.

It is hard to make one believe there is any good in your doctrine if it has not done you any good. The Jews had so lived as to cause the Gentiles to blaspheme their preaching instead of believing it. They became a hiss and a byword (Isaiah 52:5).

Opposition from without is not what hurts the most. We are not to try to sell the gospel by mere talk but to show what the gospel will do for people who believe it, (Matthew 5:16) Paul told the Ephesians to "walk circumspectly" (Ephesians 5:15). The heathen could reason, "like people, like God." How do we judge a person's profession? By his life. But of course, Christianity must be judged on its merits and not by the abuses which it suffers at the hands of those who have embraced it.

VERSE 25

If the law were not kept, then being a son of Abraham, having the law, and being circumcised were all useless. Everything depends on keeping the law. Does not the same principle hold under the gospel? One thing is void without another. Faith is worthless without repentance, and coming into Christ is useless unless it is followed by a life of devotion to God.

Circumcision was a seal and pledge of God's blessings to those who kept the law. On the other hand, conversely, it was a seal of unfaithfulness to those who did not keep the law and assured the deeper condemnation.

Circumcision was a refuge of last resort. The Jew seemed to feel that if all else failed, he might yet claim eternal life as his just inheritance. As it is discussed here, circumcision refers to the rite itself, and not to the whole law of which that rite was a covenant seal. But it is also plain that not even circumcision could do a person any good eternally if he did not keep the law. Therefore, to transgressors of the law circumcision became uncircumcision. Every Israelite should have known this already. In spite of the rite, the death penalty was executed upon sabbath breakers (Numbers 15:35) and such men as Achan (Joshua 7:24). From these and many other cases, they should have known that no such thing as circum-

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cision could possibly prevent the judgment of God upon apostates.

If a Jew did not live up to the covenant requirements, then the sign (circumcision) of covenant relationship was worthless. So, why boast of being circumcised and of having the law, if he had broken the covenant? The Jew put stress upon the sign and not the substance. Everything depends on keeping the law.

The same general principle holds good under the gospel. One thing is void without another. Belief is of no validity without repentance, baptism is of no account without belief, being in the church is useless without a holy life, etc.

VERSE 26

Circumcision is of no value to him who breaks the law, and being uncircumcised is no disadvantage to him who keeps the law. But we must not overlook a difference. For a Jew not to be circumcised was not the same as for a Gentile to be uncircumcised. For a Jew to not be circumcised broke the covenant, but not so the Gentile. But after the Jew became circumcised, unless he kept the law, his circumcision amounted to nothing. In being uncircumcised, the Gentile violated no law, for the law did not require the Gentile to be circumcised. Of course, this reasoning does not warrant any one to neglect anything God has commanded him to do. If a Jew refused the rite he broke God's covenant (Genesis 17:9-14; Leviticus 12:3), but not so in the case of the Gentile.

Theologians: "This can be applied to baptism." They ask, "If an unbaptized person lives right, shall he not be considered as if he had been baptized?" Difference: Gentiles had not been commanded to be circumcised, and therefore violated no law, committed no sin, in not being circumcised. Whereas gospel obedience, including baptism, is required of all people.

And Paul is not affirming that any Gentile had so kept the ordinances of the law as to be sinless. His purpose was to make all men see themselves as condemned sinners and cause them to see their need of salvation through Christ.

VERSE 27

"Uncircumcision" and "circumcision" are used to mean the Gentiles and the Jews. "By nature" means the Gentiles did by nature what the Jews did not do, though they had the written law that showed them

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plainly what their duty was. By this better example of the Gentile, he judged (condemned) the Jew in his transgression of the law that had been given to him by letter (had been written in words).

The obedient uncircumcised heathen (Gentile) would be better off, he would stand on higher ground, than the disobedient, circumcised Jew. This is a hypothetical case, for neither Gentile nor Jew ever kept of fulfilled the law. A good man among Gentiles, though not a perfect one, was better than a bad man among Jews. The Gentile condemned the Jew by showing that his disobedience was inexcusable.

VERSE 28, 29

Outward circumcision was necessary to a Jew, but it was worthless unless it was accompanied by the circumcision of the heart. Circumcision of the heart is the cutting off of the stubborn and sinful desires of the heart. So many of the Jews depended on outward appearance but inwardly were full of corruption. In God's sight an honest-hearted Gentile was better than a corrupt Jew. Man looks on the outward appearance and praises show and display; God looks on the heart and praises honestly and virtue.

The external rite of circumcision alone, without the God-honoring life that was supposed to accompany it, was worthless. Now, "in the spirit not in the letter" does not mean that the external rite of circumcision was not necessary under the law, but only that there was an inward meaning designed to accompany the outward act.

Thus in the closing of these first two chapters, Paul has spoken concerning the sinfulness of all men, Jews and Gentiles alike. The only hope both have is in forgiveness of sins and continued faithfulness made possible for all men (Jews and Gentiles) by the gospel of Christ of which he was not ashamed.

Chapter 3

VERSE 1

The Jew certainly felt there was a great advantage in being one. He resented any idea that put him on a par with people of other nations. Did Paul seek to make it appear that there was no advantage in being a Jew and no profit in circumcision? It seems he was anticipating an objection from the Jews. He had already shown that in point of guilt, the Jew stood on a level with the Gentile; and that God would judge both with impartiality. He also showed that having the law, or merely hearing it, amounted to nothing. And he showed that the law and circumcision, which avail with God, are in the heart and not external. Then how natural for the question in verse 1 of this third chapter to be raised. It seemed Paul asked this question in order to get the chance to answer it himself. He anticipated objections to what he said and proceeded to meet them. Would the answer to his question be "none"? But this is not true and so it was not given as the answer.

If Jew and Gentile stand so much upon the same level before God, what advantage then hath the Jew?

VERSE 2

"Much every way." They were entrusted with the oracles of God. Every book of the Old Testament, with the possible exception of *Job*, was written by a Jew. Thus is shown the great affection God had for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The matchless revelation of God's will was given to the Jews. These revelations contained God's promise of a coming Savior and His assurance that the Jews should some day be a source of blessing to the whole world. What a gift to a people to possess the sacred Scriptures and their instructions. (See Romans 9:4, 5; Psalms 147:19, 20.) (See also Acts 7:53.) This was the prime and principal privilege.

Think what a blessing the commitment of the oracles of God was to a race of people who wrote and preserved them for the benefit of all. They are today the authentic record of the origin and early history of man; and besides, they have in large measure taught us what is fair and equitable and just and right.

VERSES 3, 4

The question is, "Would the lack of faith (unbelief) on the part of the Jews interfere with God's promise?" True, God gave the oracles of God

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(words of God) to the Jews, and they were not faithful to the trust. The question now is, "Will God still keep His promise and obligation to keep faith with Israel? Will their unfaithfulness render God's fidelity of no effect?" Not only did He give Israel His oracles, He also promised to bless them above all other people. What effect will the unbelief of the Jews have on God? Will He now feel He has no obligation at all to them? The answer is, "Not at all." In no case will God's fidelity fail.

So Paul says, "On the contrary, let God be true, but every man false." Though every man be false to his trust, God can never be. All of God's covenants and promises will be kept. Lack of response on the part of man does not impugn the righteousness or truth of God. If all the men on earth held an opinion contrary to God's, they would be wrong and God would be right. "As it is written" in verse 4 refers back to Psalms 51:4 where David confessed his terrible sin with Bathsheba. He said, ". . . that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." When God is arraigned on His words He is justified; that is, He is shown to have strictly kept His words. To justify God is to show that His word is just, that He is true to all He has said and therefore is without guile. God is judged when He is questioned or doubted by men as to His dealings with them. He is shown to be innocent of every charge made by man or the devil. Therefore God is right and just in condemning men for their sins. It is a fixed and unwavering principle that God is right and true, whatever consequences are involved.

These verses contain another objection of the Jews—"If some of the nation of Israel does not believe, then the faithfulness of God in His promises will fail." Evidently they believed all Jews would be saved. Therefore, God would be unfaithful to His promise if any of them are lost. So Paul answers, "Let not this by any means be supposed. Let God be the God of truth." This implies that every opinion which Paul and all others held, and every doctrine which had been defended, should be abandoned if it implied that God was false.

VERSES 5, 6

This verse too is directed to the quibblings of the Jews. "If our wickedness serves to show the justice of God, what shall we say (infer)? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means. For then how could God judge the world?"

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They were saying, "If unbelief does not make void God's faithfulness but rather brings it out clearly, or exhibits God's righteousness more clearly, then God would be unrighteous in inflicting His wrath upon the ungodly."

"Is not God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) Not at all." The expression "I speak as a man" means in what I now say, I am using the language of others, not my own. I am talking as an objector. "God forbid" means not at all. Thus, he is saying, "What I am saying here is what you Jews are saying and it is not true."

The Jews seemed to be asking, "If our unrighteousness confirms the righteousness of God, why would God punish us for it? He should rather reward us for helping Him out."

How could God judge the world if the unfaithfulness of the world (Jew and Gentile) displays the fidelity of God? If man's sins cause such a marked display of God's righteousness, then would not God be unrighteous to punish us for living so as to cause Him to make such a display of His righteousness? Paul said, "I speak as a man."

VERSE 7

Paul seems to use a personal argument drawn from his own case. The Jew regarded Christianity as a lie. When Paul preached it that made it his lie. When he forsook Judaism for Christianity, he committed about the greatest sin that a Jew could commit. Now, Paul is saying, "If you justify your sins on the ground that your sins brought out and displayed God's righteousness, why condemn me for what you consider my great sin?" Why should he not sin more and more so that God could be the more glorified?

The word "lie" here means falsehood, deceitfulness, unfaithfulness. If the unfaithfulness of the Jewish people to the covenant caused God to glorify Himself, then how could they be condemned for it? So Paul uses the Jews' reasoning and gives himself as an example. Then he asks, "How could you condemn me?"

VERSE 8

Now we have Paul's answer to all this. He shows that if the glory of God is to be promoted by sin, and if man is not to be held guilty or condemned by it, then why not make this a principle of conduct and do all the evil we can in order to promote His glory? Therefore, since sin is to promote the

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glory of God, let us sin as much as we can so that more good may come. Then, God can thereby promote His glory.

Of course, everyone's feelings should revolt at such a doctrine. Surely everyone would know that it could not be true. They should be able to see clearly that the objection of the Jews was not valid. Paul, in this verse, lets it be known that he knew the Jews had slandered him and had no scruples in misrepresenting him. Then he tells them they are condemned for this deed, and the sentence is just.

VERSE 9, 10

"Do we excel?" "Are we superior?" That is, "Do we excel the Gentiles?" They did in many respects. But only in the way in which God had favored them. Their opportunities for spiritual and moral culture were unparalleled. But in two respects they did not excel. In guilt, they stood on a level with the Gentiles. As to justification or forgiveness, they had no advantage. Both Jews and Gentiles were under sin. Both had sinned and both were under its condemnation. As long as Jews and Gentiles are without Christ, they are under the dominion of sin. "Under sin" here means in the power of, under the authority of, or under the guilt of sin. Under it as under a sentence.

"As it is written"—Psalms 14:1-3; 5:9; 10:7; 36:1; Isaiah 59:7; Psalms 53:1-3.

Paul's point was to prove that the Jews were no less sinners than the Gentiles. There is none righteous, or there is none that doeth good, no, not one. This is a strong, universal expression. This does not mean that there was not literally one pious person in the nation, but he is simply showing the characteristic of the nation was that of exceeding corruption. Therefore, the Jew has no advantage in judgment. Both Jew and Gentile stand condemned without the gospel which Paul said is the power of God to save both Jew and Gentile (1:16).

The word "righteous" in verse 10 means to be wholly free from sin—free from it in the sense of never having committed it. There are none who are absolutely righteous. Therefore, all are under sin. For the Jews to deny this they would have to deny their own Scriptures.

VERSE 11

The Jews were great students of their Scriptures. They did not understand that their whole system was temporary and typical. They thought the whole system of Judaism was God's permanent order of things, and

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that they were always to be His special people. The Jewish system was like the scaffolding of a building—due to be torn down when the great antitype was revealed, which was the gospel system that included the church of our Lord.

There was none of the Jews who endeavored to know God and to do His will. A righteous person will wish to know God and to understand His will. Perhaps no people ever studied the Scriptures more than the Jews, yet they were not seeking after God. To seek after God is to seek to know and do His will, to make His thoughts our thoughts and His ways our ways. Instead of seeking to be justified in the sight of God, they sought to justify themselves in the sight of men (Luke 16:15; John 12:43; 5:44).

VERSE 12

Because Israel did not understand and did not seek after God, they turned aside to follow foolish and hurtful things. They had departed from Him to follow after the gods of the pagans, thereby becoming unprofitable to God. They did not recognize and honor the Messiah when He came. They even hated and murdered the Son of God. They were corrupt, useless and worthless. They are of no value in regard to works of righteousness. But notice, they were not born in that condition but had turned aside and became unprofitable. None were absolutely good—all had sinned. The expression "become unprofitable" in the Hebrew means to become putrid and offensive, like fruit that is spoiled. Thus, as applied to moral subjects, it means to become corrupt and useless. They are of no value in regard to works of righteousness.

VERSE 13

An open grave is an unnatural sight. It is expected to be closed. So of the throats alluded to. They should have been shut on their corrupt contents but were not. They stood open. Everything that issued from them in the form of speech was offensive—words as repulsive as odors from an open grave. Try to imagine the filthiness of their speech. No dependence can be put in what a deceitful person says. And back of a deceptive tongue lies a deceptive heart. There is the purpose to deceive. Their noxious slander is as deadly as the poison of an asp (James 3:8). They blast the good name of their neighbor by reproaches.

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VERSE 14

They are full of blasphemy and oaths which are aimed against God. The mouth which He created to bless Him is used to grieve Him. Paul continues to pile up scriptures to prove the wickedness of that generation which rejected Christ. This verse is a paraphrase of Psalms 10:7. By "bitterness" is meant those wounding, stinging words which the wicked utter.

VERSE 15

This is quoted from Isaiah 59:7 and contains the charge of being swift and ready killers. They are eager to commit murder, and rush fiercely on their victim. (Matthew 23:37). From the trial of Jesus we learn that even their high court sometimes was eager to murder an innocent victim.

VERSE 16, 17

This is a continuation of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 59:7ff). Here one sees the end result of not knowing and not seeking after God. They cause the destruction or ruin of the reputation, happiness, and peace of others. But, worst of all, they ruin souls. Turning away from the Father always brings the defector into a destructive and miserable way of life, a way of wretchedness, violence, and conflict. They are strangers to the way of peace. Discord and strife are the unnatural elements in which they delight. Because of their own guilt, they seek to destroy the peace of everyone else. What they will not have, they resolve others shall not. Had they loved peace, they could have found it. They did not know how to be peaceable.

VERSE 18

They did not know how to be at peace with God or man. And here is the reason—there is no fear of God before their eyes. They had no reverence for God, and therefore no regard for their fellowman. Where God is not feared, nothing else is (Psalms 36:1). By quoting the prophets, Paul is showing that they all recognized that the Jews were disobedient to God and would fall short of His favor. With this verse, Paul ends a list of twelve classes of wickedness charged against Israel, each of which he documented by quotations from the prophets of the Old Testament.

VERSE 19

Everybody knows that whatever the law says, it says to those under it. The law here is the entire Old Testament, and those under it were the Jews.

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A paraphrase of this verse might be. "This is what your own law says about you, and that should shut up every mouth which would deny that Israel is under sin exactly like the rest of the world." Not only were the Jews under this law, but Gentiles as well. They were guilty also and sinners as great as the Jews. Paul has been quoting from the Prophets and the *Psalms*, referring to all his quotations as being from "the law." Both Jew and Gentile fell under the condemnation of God, and can be saved only by the grace of God revealed in the mission of Christ.

Verse 20

"there shall no flesh be justified" simply means no human being among the Jews or Gentiles can be justified by the law. "Justified" means to be made righteous. The word "justification," as a practical thing, is the equivalent to salvation. If the Jews and Gentiles had kept the law perfectly, they would have been justified by it. Paul proved by the Scriptures that they had not done so. Therefore, the whole world was guilty before God because no flesh can be justified by the works of the law. Both Jews and Gentiles should abandon it and resort to Jesus Christ.

Paul showed the Jew and Gentile to be guilty of many grievous sins "for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin." So the law could have been the means of their justification, but their sins caused the law to convict them. The Gentiles had not lived up to their law of nature. But neither had the Jews lived up to the demands of the law of Moses. Keeping it would have justified them, but instead they transgressed it and were convicted. The law would justify a man if he kept it perfectly, but it could not justify one after he had transgressed the law. Law can justify only the one who keeps it perfectly. If the law be broken it must condemn. But all had broken it. Therefore, by works of law no one can be justified. By the law sin is manifested and made known.

Verses 21, 22

Paul has just said that by works of law no one can be justified. But now he says a justification without law has been revealed. The word "now" is emphatic, in the present case. So in this dispensation, a plan of righteousness has been manifested (made known, or brought to light). The Jews should not have been astonished at this new plan of righteousness, for both the law and the prophets had written and spoken concerning it. Really, it was not a "new doctrine," for prophetically it is found in the Old

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Testament. The prophets bore witness or gave testimony concerning the coming of this plan of justification of the sinner. Please note that Paul says it is "apart from the law."

"The righteousness of God" as used here does not mean that God is righteous. Of course, we know He is, but this speaks of God's way of making man righteous. After he sins, how can man ever be right with God anymore? The law of Moses and the moral law under which Gentiles lived could not make man righteous (put man right with God, save from the guilt and consequence of sin). But now, God's way of saving man from punishment for his guilt is revealed (Romans 1:16, 17) or made known.

This way of making man righteous (guiltless) is not by the law or any law, but it is a way of faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who has come.

The Jews had sinned under their law by transgression and the Gentiles sinned under their law by transgression. Now both can be forgiven by this "new and living way" of forgiveness or justification. And if either is forgiven, it must be by this "righteousness of God" now made known.

VERSE 23

Now, there is no difference in Jew and Gentile because both have sinned and fallen away from God. Law could not forgive them. Therefore, if either is saved or forgiven, it must be by this righteousness which is by faith. Man "is the image and glory of God" (1 Corinthians 11:7), because he is capable of receiving and reflecting God's glory. The word "glory" in this passage means honor, the honor due to God. All have sinned and thereby have failed to honor God as they should.

VERSE 24

To be "justified" means to be declared free from sin and its penalty. Those who believe are the ones who are freely justified. It is bestowed on us as a gift. It is not earned by us but it is by the favor of God. He does not owe it to us nor can we claim it as a right. We accept it as a gift graciously given. We have this because of the redemption (ransom) in Jesus Christ. He paid His life for us and thus releases us from sin and its consequences (1 Corinthians 6:20).

VERSE 25

The word "propitiation" means an atoning sacrifice. The purpose of this was that the offended majesty of heaven must be propitiated, made favor-

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able, that man might be saved. God's laws must be satisfied and His honor vindicated before man can be received of God. This was accomplished "as a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ . . . who was manifested in these days for your sake, who through Him are believers in God" (1 Peter 1:19, 21). The atonement made for our sins was the life of Jesus Christ. In being slain, He shed His blood, and this blood contains His life. Leviticus 17:11, "The life of the flesh is in the blood." The penalty for sin is death, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Thus, Jesus paid that penalty for all, Jews and Gentiles, that we might live spiritually and eternally with Him. The exchange of Christ's blood for the sinner is the atonement (Ephesians 1:7). The blood has the power to redeem all—not that all will be redeemed but all might be. This blood takes effect when we believe in and obey Christ. Then we are released from sin and it is forgiven. God would not be just if He did not punish sin. The sacrifice of Jesus showed that justice was done for those sins. Punishment was exacted. Therefore, the sacrifice of Jesus was the public vindication of the righteousness of God. When Jesus suffered for our sins, He paid for us the penalty for our sins. He suffered the penalties of the violated law.

VERSE 26

God was just while justifying sinners who now believe in Christ. He showed Himself "just" because He exacted a penalty for the sins committed.

VERSE 27

Neither Jew nor Gentile can boast because there is no ground for it. Both were sinners, and neither could pay the penalty for their sins and live. All have sinned and all are condemned. No one merits justification; the Jew does not merit it by his law, nor the Gentile by his. Consequently, there is no place for boasting. It is utterly excluded. If one were to live a perfect life, he would have grounds for boasting that he had always done the right thing, that sin never soiled his spotless life, and that he stood justified on his own record. But none so lived for all have sinned. When we recognize ourselves as sinners, there is cause for humility but no grounds for boasting. The most humbling experience is to realize that an innocent person died to save me from my own folly. We are not saved by the law under which they lived, but Paul says, we are saved by an act of grace on the part of God to the believer. Salvation can never be earned by commandment keeping.

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VERSE 28

Paul is not contrasting faith and the obedience of faith, but he is contrasting justification by works of law and justification by faith. In Romans 1:5, he speaks of the “obedience of faith”—that is, obedience of which faith is the source or foundation, an obedient faith. Works of law is an entirely different thing from obedience of faith. When Paul speaks of it, he is referring to an obedient faith. He is talking here about how a person is “justified” or made righteous (verses 20, 24). He is saying that justification is “apart from works of law,” that being made righteous has nothing to do with meritorious works. In Romans 16:26, Paul says that the end of his apostleship was unto “obedience of faith among all the nations.” This indicates that wherever he spoke of a sinner’s faith, an obedient faith was meant. He never wrote anywhere, at any time, that men are saved by faith alone or by faith only.

VERSES 29, 30

The Jews did not think that God would recognize a Gentile unless he became a part of the Jewish nation. In their estimation, He was the God of the Jews only—a national God. Even many early Christians of Jerusalem taught that Gentile Christians had to be circumcised and keep the law, or they could not be saved. They could see no salvation for any but Jews; hence, they demanded that Gentile Christians become Jews. He is the God of both Jews and Gentiles—the God of all nations. He is not one kind of God to the Jews and another to the Gentiles. The one and the same God will justify both Jews and Gentiles by the same manner of faith in Christ Jesus. “The faith” is the same as the gospel in Romans 1:16. The expressions, “by faith” and “through faith” mean the same. God will justify both Jew and Gentile “by the faith” (marg. reading).

VERSE 31

Again, Paul raised a question so he could answer it. He knew that someone would likely be asking it. He would have them understand that law is of no service as a means of justification. It cannot void the law of Moses for it told of the coming of the ultimate scheme of redemption as set forth in Christianity (1:2; 3:21). Christ perfectly fulfilled that law. Physical law is not voided by faith. The faith of the young man who went to sleep while Paul preached did not suspend the law of gravity. They took him up dead (Acts 20:9). Neither can faith void the moral law of God. Faith imposes

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even stricter standards of morality than those taught under the law of Moses (Matthew 5:21, 22). Faith cannot void political law. Paul's teaching in Romans 13:1-7 and Peter's in 1 Peter 2:13-17 dogmatically affirm the duty of Christians to obey civil law. So, Paul says we establish law by belief. How did Paul do this? By his teaching and practice. He taught all to do what is right and not to do what is wrong. This is the purpose of law. Paul is saying, "I therefore endorse and confirm law; I show it to be both necessary and right." But, he is also saying that the law given aforetime was not kept and that none were justified by it. As to whether the law of Moses is yet in effect as a covenant with any people, we need only to study Galatians 3:19-25. For the law to fail to bring in the gospel, faith, and the promised seed, was for the law to fail. Bringing in these was to fulfill its mission and to establish it as of God. To fulfill the law and take it out of the way was to establish it in the fulfillment of its end. So, in coming to faith in Christ, we establish the law.

Chapter 4

VERSE 1

Paul is now addressing those Jews who had obeyed the gospel but still held to the keeping of the law and the rite of circumcision. Obviously he is not addressing all Jews but only those who were believers in Jesus Christ. Paul has just said that man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law (Moses' law) (3:28). Therefore he is saying that this is true in all ages, both before the law and since the law, that both Jew and Gentile are to be justified by faith. As further proof, Paul is here referring to Abraham. How was he justified? It could not have been by the law of Moses and by circumcision, the seal of the covenant to keep the law. That law was given to the Israelites long after the time of Abraham. So far as the law of Moses and the rite of circumcision were concerned, the Gentiles had an equivalent status to that of the Jews themselves in the person of their great ancestor, who had neither the law nor circumcision at the time God called him. Why then would Jewish brothers require Gentile brothers to submit to a system that was not even a prerequisite for the call of Abraham? To require Gentile converts to accept the law and circumcision would demand of them something not even required of Abraham.

There is no contradiction between Paul and James on this point. Paul wrote of justification by faith, and James of justification by works. However, neither of them said that salvation is by one or the other only. That is the only way there could be a contradiction here (See James 2:24).

VERSE 2

"Works" here simply means the law of Moses, "works of law" (RV margin). Now, in James 2:21, he says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Note: He did not say that Abraham was justified by the works of the law of Moses. That law had not been given at that time. One would have a contradiction between Paul and James. Yet, Abraham was dead and gone many years before the law of Moses was given. James 2:22 says, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." Now, see James 2:23. So, James identified the class of works involved in the justification of Abraham as works of faith, not works of Moses' law.

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One writer (Greathouse) said, "Man is justified without the deeds of the law (Romans 3:28). It is by faith alone because it is by grace alone." Surely he could see that if justification is by faith alone, then it could not simultaneously be by grace alone. If it is by faith alone then it could not be by grace, and if it were by grace alone it could not be by faith. Faith and grace are not identical. If one is saved by either of them alone, the other is excluded.

The believing Jews were trying to make the church a mere sect of the Jews and the gospel a sort of adjunct to the law of Moses. These were referred to as "Judaizing Christians." Paul is here meeting the necessity to indoctrinate the churches on this point so as to limit the pernicious influence of these Judaizers.

The Judaizers put stress on their fleshly relation to Abraham and on the fleshly mark of circumcision. Therefore, it seems that Paul is saying, "You put so much stress on the flesh, now tell us what Abraham obtained according to the flesh. He had no fleshly connections of which he could boast, and he was also justified before he was circumcised. He was not justified by works of the law, and therefore he could not boast toward God."

VERSE 3

What do the Scriptures say about this? Genesis 15:6, "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Abraham not only believed in God but believed all He said. This shows that Abraham could not possibly have been justified by the law. Neither can one make this language refer to the justification of Abraham as an alien sinner. Up to this time, was he an unforgiven, condemned sinner? The history of Abraham is against such a supposition. Abraham had been a faithful servant of God for some time before this pronouncement.

1) God appeared to him in Ur of the Chaldees with a command which Abraham obeyed (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 7:2, 3).

2) "By faith Abraham when he was called, obeyed . . . and went out" (Hebrews 11:8). By faith he obeyed and did as commanded, not knowing where he was going. That would be strange conduct for an unforgiven, condemned sinner.

3) He worshiped God at Bethel and Ai (Genesis 13:3, 4). Thus, the language in Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3 does not refer to the justification

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of an alien sinner.

4) In the encounter with Melchizedek, Abraham appears as a devout and faithful worshipper of God (Genesis 14:14-24).

These events and others as well show that Abraham's faith was one of obedience, the only kind of faith that can lead to any kind of justification.

Of course, the principle of justification is the same whether the justification be that of the saint or the sinner. In both cases it is by belief with other acts, and in neither case by belief without those acts.

VERSE 4

If one had kept the law of Moses perfectly, then he could claim that God owed him salvation. In such an event, it would not be by virtue of God's grace at all. Many false deductions have been made on this verse:

- 1) That salvation does not depend upon any human effort
- 2) That there is nothing anyone can do to be saved
- 3) That faith and works are opposite
- 4) That obeying the gospel makes man his own Saviour, etc.

But, if salvation does not depend upon any human effort, all men would be saved. Then why did Jesus teach that many will be lost (Matthew 7:13, 14)? Truly no amount of human effort can earn salvation; yet the Bible does not give the impression that salvation is unconditionally bestowed upon the entire human race. If it were, then salvation would be universal. Yet Jesus spoke of the narrow gate and the broad way leading to the destruction of many. If there is nothing one can do to be saved, then what did Peter mean when he said, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40)?

Many people heard Peter's sermon on that day of Pentecost and cried out, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Did Peter answer, "There is nothing you can do to be saved"? Instead, he said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" (Acts 2:38). Instead of faith and works being opposites, they are intimates. James declares that faith cannot even exist apart from works, except in a barren and dead condition, insufficient to save (James 2:14-26).

So far as man obeying the gospel, it is a condition divinely imposed and made prerequisite to salvation, and all who do not fulfill this condition will be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9). When a person works at his job, his daily wages are paid to him as a debt. If one had perfectly kept the

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law, he would have actually worked out his own salvation and been saved by his own merits. To do that one would have to be perfect to so live as to never sin or incur any guilt. But if he sins once, salvation can never come to him as a debt. Such an one can never be justified by works of law. If a human being is made righteous without any human effort, then why are not all righteous? If man never sinned, he would be righteous by works. But, if he sins God forgives him, he is then righteous by grace or favor. There would be no ground for boasting. God put righteousness to Abraham's account though he did not earn it. Righteousness is God's to give. He gave it to Abraham because Abraham "believed." (See again Romans 3:25, 28, 30 and Romans 1:16, 17).

When Paul says "the one who works," he means the one who works for his justification. Therefore, one does not earn his righteousness by his law-keeping. God would owe man salvation if he had earned it. One would have to keep the whole law to qualify for this.

VERSE 5

"him that worketh not" is not the disobedient, but the one who does not try to earn his salvation. He has no thought that he can merit salvation by keeping the law of Moses. Rather, he "believeth on Him that justifieth." This is a reference to obedient faith, the kind exemplified by Abraham. Place Paul's teaching beside the teaching of James (James 2), and we can catch the harmony. Paul was affirming that works cannot justify apart from faith in Jesus Christ, and James was stressing that faith in Jesus Christ cannot save without works. To exclude either faith or the work of faith, is to fail of justification. Both James and Paul referred to the example of Abraham to corroborate their teaching. Paul pointed out that Abraham was not justified by the works of the law. James pointed out that Abraham was not justified by faith only but by the work of faith—a far different thing from works of the law. Thus the teaching of Paul and James harmonize perfectly.

The conditions of salvation, given through Jesus Christ and the apostles, constitute "the work of faith" (2 Thessalonians 1:3). James says one is justified by these and not by faith only. Faith is even referred to by the Lord as a work. John 6:29, "This is the work of God that you believe on Him whom He hath sent." Of course it is not the works of law, nor is it a meritorious work. Our obedience to the gospel is essential to salvation.

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Paul says one obeys (is obedient) in becoming a Christian, a saved person (Romans 6:17, 18).

One misses the mark if he tries to array the commands of God against the grace of God. God's grace is in every command He gives. All the grace is on the part of God, and all of the faith that obeys is on the part of man. God prepared a way by which man could get out of his lost state. That was grace. But that was not enough. Man needed to know how to find that way and how to walk in it. It is as much a matter of grace to tell him how to find that way and how to walk in it as it is to provide the way. But when the way is fully prepared and full directions given as to how to find the way and to walk in it, the next move is man's.

Acts 2 contains a good example. Faith is an act of the heart, the soul, the inner man—something the man does. It is a work. The same is true of repentance also. Believe and repent are both active, both done by the subject. A good example of obedience is the blind man in John 9:7. Paul is another good example, Acts 22:16.

VERSES 6-8

Paul refers to what David said in Psalms 32:1. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Thus David described the blessedness (the happiness, or the desirable state or condition) of the one upon whom God has reckoned or counted to be righteous. This is the blessedness of the one whose sins are not charged to him but is freed from the punishment due to his sins. This was true of Abraham, and it was reckoned to him without his obedience to the law of Moses. Therefore, one can have a good standing with God when his sins are no longer charged to him. Now God treats him as a pardoned and righteous man. What did David say? "Blessed (or happy) are they whose sins are covered" (concealed or hidden from view), Psalms 32:1. And this was not given by the law of Moses. The law could not save for it only condemned. It seems Paul quotes Psalms 32:1 to set forth the fact that it refutes by implication the thought that anyone ever earned salvation. David's thoughts on justification show that not even the Jews had earned redemption, and this carried the implication that the Gentiles were as entitled to be saved as the Jews. When one obeys the gospel and has thus been made clean and free from sin, God reckons righteousness to him because he is righteous.

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VERSES 9, 10

Paul now deals with the last stronghold of Jewish objection to Gentile admission to Christianity. This objection was offered, not by unbelieving Jews, but by the Jews who had accepted the faith of Christ, and were contending for the continuation of the rite of circumcision not only for themselves but also for Gentile converts. But Paul shows that Abraham was justified a full thirteen years before the rite was given. Therefore if Abraham was justified so long before circumcision, is it illogical to expect that the uncircumcised (Gentiles) should also partake of God's salvation in Christ? So the blessing of justification is not limited to circumcision, but it extends to and includes the uncircumcision. It is for Gentiles no less than for Jews.

VERSE 11

Paul is showing that justification is as independent of special privileges as it is of boasted deeds of the law. The story of Abraham's call and of God's blessing on him is in Genesis 15:6; the story of Abraham's circumcision is in Genesis 17:10ff. A time of at least fourteen years separates these events. It was while he was still uncircumcised that Abraham was accounted righteous. His being accounted righteous had nothing to do with circumcision and everything to do with his act of faith. Thus, Abraham is not the father of those who have been circumcised, he is the father of those who have made the same act of faith in God as he made. Therefore the real Jew is not the man who is racially a Jew and who is physically circumcised, but the man, no matter what his race, is the one who trusts God as Abraham did. Abraham's circumcision was a seal of the covenant God had made to him—"in thee and thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Therefore, Abraham became "the father of all them that believe," whether Jews or Gentiles, and his own experience became the proof that men can be and are justified independently of the law of Moses and the rite of circumcision (Galatians 3:27-29). Abraham is the "father of all them that believe," and this shows that all of the saved are children of Abraham, both Jews and Gentiles, called here circumcision and uncircumcision.

An error has been taught for many years concerning this passage. It is, "Since Abraham was justified by faith only, so are the Gentiles." Paul does not here teach that Abraham was justified by faith only, but by faith

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without the law of Moses and the rite of circumcision. The faith that saved Abraham was an obedient faith. The passage clearly shows that if circumcision contributed nothing to Abraham's justification, the Jews could not hope to be justified thereby, nor by the other rites of the law. Instead, they were to be blamed for pressing this rite on the Gentiles as necessary to their salvation. The summation seems to be that Abraham's faith had nothing to do with the fact of his circumcision which came later. The righteousness granted to Jewish believers then has nothing whatever to do with being a Jew. It comes only through the gospel.

VERSE 12

The promise to Abraham was not dependent on the law but on the righteousness of faith. If we would be the children of Abraham by faith, we must walk in the same steps which faith led Abraham to take. When men perfect their faith by walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, then God will reckon that faith for righteousness. Abraham is said to be the father of the believers, whether they be Gentiles or Jews. There is no difference (Galatians 5:6). Peter also makes a strong statement about this (Acts 15:9). Abraham's seed through whom the world was to be blessed, was Jesus the Christ and none other. But there is a sense in which all Christians are Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:29). "but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham" simply means who have an obedient faith as did Abraham. It was certainly no such thing as faith only, but it was a faith that walked after God's commandments as we see in verse 3. In fact we can see the steps of Abraham's faith in Genesis 12:1, 2. He was told to leave something, to enter something, and to become something. Did Abraham obey? Hebrews 11:8 answers that question. Did he enter that land? See Genesis 12:5. Is ours the faith of Abraham if we refuse to obey the commandments in the gospel?

VERSE 13

Abraham did not receive the promise through law though he kept the law perfectly. The promise is under consideration in this verse, and of course law here is a reference to Moses' law. This would also exclude every other kind of legal system. "The promise . . . that he (Abraham) should be the heir of the world," was given by God to Abraham long before the law of Moses (Genesis 12:1-5), thus being "not through the law." "The promise" as here stated means all the spiritual blessings that

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were to come eventually through the Messiah and His heavenly kingdom. The word "seed" as it is used of Abraham has four distinct meanings. In the singular it means Christ (Galatians 3:16); in the literal plural it means all the fleshly descendants of Abraham, those through Keturah and Hagar, as well as through Sarah; in the legal plural it refers to the Jews, those who possessed the law of Moses; in the spiritual plural, it refers to baptized believers in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27-29); and, in the extended spiritual plural, it refers to all of the redeemed under both the old and new covenants. This is again the contrast being made between faith and works as was made in Romans 3:27-30. The promise was given to Abraham "because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:18). Abraham lived before the law but he was a man living by faith (Romans 1:17).

VERSE 14

If the ones who were under the law were the only heirs, then belief turned out to be a fruitless thing. But the ground on which the fulfillment of the promise was to be realized was that of faith. The promise of worldwide inheritance was not made to Abraham through the righteousness of the law but through the righteousness of faith. Of course the worldwide inheritance promised to Abraham was destined to be fulfilled in the promised seed, Jesus Christ, Hebrews 1:2; Psalms 2:7, 8.

The promise did not depend on keeping the law. If it did, then the promise could never be fulfilled. Who could keep the law? None except our Lord Himself. If the promise was merely to those who kept the law, the promise was ineffective because no one ever did or ever could keep the law.

VERSE 15

"the law worketh wrath" or it inflicts punishment. It would be fine if it were perfectly kept but this is never done. The law was a standard and it exposed the transgressions of men. Only where there is no law is there no transgression. The Jews had the law but they broke it, and therefore cannot be justified by it. Thus, Abraham did not transgress the law of Moses for it had not been given in his day. Neither did he transgress the law of baptism or the Lord's Supper. There were no such requirements in his day. (See Romans 3:19). Gentile Christians were never guilty of transgression of the law in failing to be circumcised or in failing to keep

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the law of Moses. For them there was no such law. Men sometimes use this passage to teach error. They make Paul say that where God has not given a specific command prohibiting a thing, that thing may be done in religious service, that man is authorized to do anything in the service of God not specially prohibited in the scriptures. (See Deuteronomy 12:8, 9). Thus they were not left to do what was right in their own eyes, but must conform to the will of God. The above theory destroys the authority of the Bible and makes man's own wishes his supreme law. It dethrones God and enthrones man.

VERSE 16

The works of the law develops the spirit of disobedience in man and thus brings down the wrath of God. Therefore that system could not save. Perfect law-keeping would have saved, but none kept the law perfectly. Salvation comes through the law of faith. Since the promise was of faith it could be a matter of grace or favor and not of merit. If any were to keep the law perfectly it would have been a matter of merit. Of course, none kept the law perfectly so merit was not a consideration. The promise is made to all who are of the faith of Abraham, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Not once did Paul use such an expression as "faith only" or "faith only of Abraham." The Bible shows plainly that Abraham's was an obedient faith. The promise came through the law of faith that it might be to all the believers, even to those Jews who walk in the faith of Abraham. Those Jews and Gentiles who do not thus walk do not have the promise of salvation. Therefore, Abraham is the father of all believers. Man is saved by an obedient faith and not at all by the works of the law.

VERSE 17

"As it is written" (Genesis 17:5). This was true of Abraham in a spiritual sense since he was the father of all who believe in God in every nation under the heavens. The written passage shows Abraham to be "the father of many nations" after the flesh. But more importantly, this was also true in the spiritual sense. The question arose concerning Abraham being the father of many nations when he was old and his body as good as dead so far as propagation was concerned. That he and Sarah should have a son was virtually a case of making the dead alive. Before Isaac was born, God changed Abraham's name from Abram

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(exalted father) to Abraham (the father of a multitude). Thus he "callesh the things that are not, as though they were."

VERSE 18

Paul here shows the quality of Abraham's faith. He truly believed God, though God's words were contrary to all natural and human expectations. This quality of believing in "things not seen as yet" was made the theme of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. From this we may conclude that genuine faith accepts what God has said, no matter what considerations of human wisdom and experience seem to nullify it. For Abraham there was no ground of hope but against this fact, or in spite of it, Abraham believed. He believed all God said and hoped for all He promised. Even after Abraham had grown old and all hope of a son according to the flesh had passed, he still hoped in the promise of God. He believed with the full intention of becoming what God had promised—the father of many nations.

VERSE 19

Abraham was not weak in the item of belief. That kept him strong. He did not regard his own body as dead. As to the power of reproduction, Abraham's body was literally dead. Sarah had never had the power of reproduction. Yet, he refused to be affected by these adverse facts (See Hebrews 11:11, 12). Abraham considered the difficulties but still believed. We may wonder why Paul would pursue Abraham's faith so persistently. This chapter deals with the fact that God accepted Abraham's faith for righteousness. Therefore, it was absolutely imperative that the nature of that faith should be made perfectly clear. Though he was one hundred years old, Abraham's faith was not in himself but in the promise of God.

VERSE 20

Abraham's faith did not waver in the least concerning the promise of God. He believed God contrary to every earthly consideration against it, and received the fulfillment of all that God had promised. He never doubted the fulfillment of God's promise through disbelieving him. To glorify God is to exalt and honor Him as one worthy of the highest praise and most faithful service, and this service he rendered (See James 1:23). Abraham's faith was a faith that staggered at absolutely nothing that

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God either promised or commanded. It was an obedient faith. He was subjected to a long series of tests and demonstrations, beginning with his obedient response to God's call to leave Ur, his kindred, and his father's house. Those who speak of his faith as faith only have not taken into account the biblical record of just what that faith actually was.

VERSE 21

Abraham had full confidence that God could and would perform His promise however improbable. The believer in Christ has the same conviction. He is convinced that God is able to save him. Man cannot save himself, but God can through the gospel (Romans 1:16). Abraham's faith may have been extraordinary but its essence was quite plain. It consisted in taking God at His word, in believing that what He said was true, in trusting that what God promised He would bring to pass. Abraham's obedience is the proof of his believing what God had said unto him. He went forth in obedience to God, trusting Him to keep whatever promise that was made.

VERSE 22

"it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." "Wherefore also" gives the reason Abraham's faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness. His faith was proved by a long and exhaustive series of tests, beginning with the call to leave Ur and reaching the climax in the offering of Isaac. His obedience was not perfect but it was good enough to prove his faith. That obedience was the only ground upon which God evaluated the faith of Abraham (Genesis 22:11, 12). James tells us when Abraham's faith justified him (James 2:21). It was at that point in time when it was proved to be genuine in the instance of offering up Isaac. God said, "Now I know."

VERSES 23-25

That Abraham's faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness was written for the sake of those who now believe. Thus, there is a similarity in the faith of Abraham and that of Christians. It is made clear that only an obedient faith avails or availed, either for Abraham or Christians. So we are encouraged to exercise and perfect our faith by walking in the steps of our father Abraham, and so making our faith perfect by works as his faith was made perfect by works (James 2:21, 22). If we believe in Jesus Christ and perfect our faith in obedience to Him, God will reckon

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our faith to us for righteousness. What we are required to do by faith does not merit salvation, but are conditions by which we show fitness and willingness to receive the offered blessings. Surely Abraham's faith was exactly like that of Christians in the matter of its being an obedient faith, but the tests God required of Abraham are utterly different from the tests required of sinners who would become Christians. The very thought that God would have required proof of Abraham's faith and that now a sinner's mere assertion of it is enough, is illogical.

Chapter 5

VERSE 1

The word "therefore" is based upon all that was said in the first four chapters. Jews and Gentiles were both sinners and stood condemned without Christ. God justifies men "freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Also, "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:28). Such was the case with Abraham and such is the case with us (chapter 4). The predominant thought of Romans is the virtue of faith in Jesus Christ as against the works of the law. The word "justified" here means right standing or to pronounce a person free from any guilt or blame. So Paul is saying that both Jews and Gentiles are made righteous by faith in Christ instead of by works of the law. The phrase "justified by faith" does not warrant the conclusion that we are justified by faith only. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews illustrates Paul's use of the phrase "by faith." Please review verses 4, 7, 30, 29 of Hebrews 11 and also 1 Corinthians 10:1,2. In our deliverance from sin the phrase "by faith" includes our baptism into Christ (Galatians 3:26,27). Obviously then, faith is taking God at His word and doing what He commands. (See Romans 16:26). Therefore to be saved through faith in Christ Jesus is to be baptized for the remission of sins, to be baptized into Christ, and to put on Christ - all mean exactly the same thing. Paul, in Romans 6:17,18, defines exactly the point in the time sequence of the believer's obedient actions when his salvation actually occurs. "Peace with God" indicates pardon and acceptance. It speaks of the position of those who were once under condemnation, but now are enjoying the full measure of forgiveness and favor. This peace with God is grounded on the atoning death of Christ and our being willing to accept the benefits thereof.

VERSE 2

"Through whom" means Jesus Christ. Only because of Him and His atonement do we have access to this grace which made salvation possible. God forgives our sins and makes us His children because of Jesus. We have access to grace through faith. We stand in this grace. This indicates that we have stood and we do stand in God's marvelous grace! We

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walk by faith and we are always in a state or condition to be forgiven of our Father. When one has come into this favor, being at peace with God, he stands in God's favor and rejoices in the glory yet to come.

VERSE 3

Being now in this exalted state, we can even rejoice in the tribulations which we suffer as Christians. If we will endure our tribulations with grace and patience, then this will give us steadfastness of character. Attainment of the glorious and final hope depends upon our response to tribulations (Matthew 5:11; 2 Corinthians 11:30; 12:10). Here we have divulged the secret of what was written of the apostles in Acts 5:41. We can now better understand Peter's statement in 1 Peter 4:12,13. The feeling to be expressed is one of exultation or triumph "knowing that afflictions produce patience." These afflictions constantly recur, and so the necessity for patience becomes apparent.

VERSE 4

"and patience, experience," or approval. Approval from God and from ourselves. The attainment of the glorious final home depends upon the soul's response to tribulations. The misfortunes, sorrows, calamities, and bitter disappointments of life are not meaningless tragedy to the Christian (Matthew 5:11). Then this "approvedness produces hope." It causes us to hope for the blessings embraced in the promises. The hope of future good gives strength to bear the present ills. James says, "Knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3). Patience in its perfect work will complete the character and fit it for association with God.

VERSE 5

Paul is showing that this hope we have will not put to shame or be disappointing. God has promised great things for the Christian and has given us the Holy Spirit as a pledge that every promise will be fulfilled. Paul also writes to the Corinthians about this (2 Corinthians 1:21,22; 5:5). Paul speaks of the revelation he has received by the Spirit, and thus he knows of God's great love for him and for us. These promises and this love which prompted them is from God as a fountain, and they are poured out in us. All this is given to us, both Jews and Gentiles, and to all who are justified. Those precious promises revealed to us by the Spirit

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are given to us as an earnest of our future inheritance (Ephesians 1:14, 15). God gave the Holy Spirit to the apostles in the beginning to impart to them His mind (1 Corinthians 2:12). Thus, the Holy Spirit imparts to us the knowledge of God. When this knowledge of God's love is imparted into our hearts, then the same kind of love dwells in our hearts as dwelt in the heart of God. We are caused to love just as God loves, to love the same objects that God loves and to love them in the same way that God loves them.

VERSE 6

(ASV), "For while we were yet weak" When we were helpless and powerless to save ourselves, "in due time" or in due season, "Christ died for the ungodly." While "we were yet without strength (helpless and powerless to save ourselves) Christ died for the ungodly." The pronoun we comprehends the whole human race, Jews and Gentiles. And, since He died for the ungodly, the wicked, then this comprehends the whole human race as sinners! Hence the we and the wicked are identical. Before Jesus came, men were condemned sinners with no means of escape from sin and condemnation. They were helpless. But the death of Christ opened up the way of escape, and removed the weakness spoken of in this verse. "Due time" means at the time which God in His wisdom had selected. (See Galatians 4:4). "The ungodly" refers to evil and unrighteous men filled with every work of Satan. It is those who practice lawlessness, idolatry, profane swearing, disobedience to parents, murder, adultery, false witness, indifference to God, atheism, pride, vanity and selfishness. These are but a few characteristics of the ungodly. For people like that Christ died! It is imperative to remember that Christ died to save men from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

VERSE 7

"Hardly for the just will anyone die; yet for the good it may be one might venture to die." This is spoken of course to set forth God's love for the world in contrast with our love for one another. However, none can be found who are ready to die for the wicked. Hardly would any one be ready to die for the just, yet Christ died for the unjust. It is hardly possible to find one who is bold enough to die for even the good, but Christ died for the bad. For this very purpose God sent Him into the world. Then truly, does not His death prove our Father's love?

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VERSE 8

"God commendeth His love toward us" - that is, God demonstrated or showed His love for us because, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Thus, the greatness of God's love is shown by contrasting it with man's love. To die for a good man is great love. But Jesus died for sinners, for those who were His enemies. He died even for those who mocked, scourged, and crucified Him. He died that those who shed His blood might live. Never any other love like that. As we grow in the image of God, will we bless our enemies, do good to them that revile and persecute us, and pray for them that spitefully use and abuse us? Read Philippians 2:5-9. Notice, Paul says in verse 6 that "while we were without strength (were weak) Christ died for the ungodly;" then in verse 8 he says that "while we were sinners Christ died for us." This comparison shows that the reason we were without strength (weak) is that we were sinners and under the condemnation of God's law. The "ungodly" (verse 6) are the same as "us" in verse 8. Before being justified by faith, we were among the ungodly.

VERSE 9

If Jesus died to redeem us while we were still sinners, much more will He save us from the punishment of sin now that we have been forgiven. If He could love us and save us by the shedding of His blood when we were sinners, then surely now that we are God's children, He will keep on cleansing us with His blood.

Surely God is more willing to save those who have accepted the redemption offered through Christ than He was to save while they were yet enemies. Christ invested His life's blood in those who accept Him. The redeemed by this become so much dearer to God. "We shall be saved from wrath through Him," verse 9. The wrath reserved for the ungodly will not be our lot to endure (1:18; 2:5-8; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

VERSE 10

We were reconciled to God, not God to us. Reconciliation implies a change, a change from enmity to love, and from disobedience to obedience. In the death of God's Son, we have the most astounding proof of God's love for us. We left God by our transgressions, but now we are reconciled (brought back) to Him by the death of His Son. Now that we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, then it must be that we

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shall be saved by His being alive. Jesus is presently doing many things on behalf of the redeemed. He adds to the church those who are being saved (Acts 2:47). He helps those who are tempted by providing a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). He provides mercy and grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:15,16). He makes intercession for His own (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24), and He is, in fact, reigning over all things (1 Corinthians 15:25,26). We must note that no blessing or favor is provided out of Christ. All blessings are in and through him.

VERSE 11

“we also joy (rejoice or glory) in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We not only glory in afflictions (Romans 5:33), but we also rejoice in God. To rejoice in God is to rejoice in Him as our Father, as having forgiven our sins, and filled us with hope of eternal life. We usually understand the word “atonement” to mean reconciliation, and so it does. That is, He died, shed His blood which cleanses us from our sins, and makes us one with the Father again. The word “atonement” means to be, or cause to be, at one. To be in unity or concord, to return or restore to favor, to reconcile, to satisfy, to propitiate. (“propitiate” is to cause to be favorably disposed, appease, conciliate.) Many use the word reconciliation for atonement. Indeed, the two are very much alike and many prefer the word reconciliation. Therefore, we are brought back to the Father from whom we were separated by the blood of His Son. Any one whom His blood cleanses from sin is made one with the Father again. It was through the Lord Jesus Christ that we are reconciled to God. The summation seems to be - if God would give His Son to reconcile His enemies to Himself, how much more will He show love to those who are now His children. If God has done so much for His enemies, what will He not do for His friends? This is but another great reason for our triumphant joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

VERSE 12

Here we have a very profound and comprehensive passage. Though Adam is not mentioned in this verse, he is mentioned in verse 14. Regardless, we would have known of whom Paul was speaking. Adam’s violation was the first sin. The first sin then was an act. It was not nature, nor a principle, nor a weakness, but an act - the act simply of doing what God told Adam not to do. Adam’s transgression was the act in which sin

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had its origin in the world.

There is controversy over the use of the word death. In Romans 6:23, Paul says that the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life. Here it seems certain that the word death is that spiritual state of separation from God. Paul in Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5 says, "And you, when you were dead in your trespasses and sins..." Death is the state of man before he is reconciled to God (Romans 5:10, 11). When Adam sinned, he was driven out of the garden (Genesis 3:24). His separation from God and his resulting separation from the tree of life, eventually caused him to die physically. However, physical death is not the matter under discussion here. Adam died physically because he was driven from the Garden of Eden and was not allowed to ever reenter it. That's where the Tree of Life was, and since Adam could no longer eat of it, he died physically. Every person since Adam has been born away from the Tree of Life, and therefore must die physically. Adam died spiritually when he transgressed God's law concerning eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The penalty for the transgression is death, spiritual death, separation from God.

Today we are sinners because we sin and not because Adam sinned. So we die spiritually because we sin; we die physically because we were born away from the Tree of Life. Surely then, the death of which Paul speaks in our passage is that state of being separated from God. Death came to Adam when he sinned. In this manner death came to the rest of humanity. When they sinned, they were separated from God. Death, like life in this passage, is conditional. Life is conditioned on receiving the grace of God and the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17).

Death is conditioned upon each man's sin. Paul has said that all have sinned, both Jews and Gentiles, and thus deserve death (Romans 2:12; 3:23). Here the writer draws a contrast between the effects of what Adam did and the effects of what Christ did; and he did this to show how the gospel of Christ more than overcomes the effects of Adam's sin. Facts are certainly against the idea that all men suffer physical death on account of their own sins; but spiritual death does come in that way, and in no other way.

VERSE 13

"For until the law" is defined in verse 14 as from Adam until Moses.

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Sin came into the world through Adam. Then other men, like Cain and the people destroyed in the flood, continued to sin. And sin is not charged to one's account when there is no law. But just as far as there was law, there was sin. It is shown in Romans 2:14, 15, that there was law in a certain and true sense before the law given to Moses. We also know that people were punished for sin (Genesis 4-9). So our passage must mean that just to the extent to which law was present. People have always been under moral law, and when people violated that law they became sinners. Paul has said, "for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). But there were sinners from Adam to Moses, so there must have been some law. But people who were not circumcised before the law of circumcision was given, were not counted sinners for their failure to be circumcised. People were sinners from Adam to Moses, but they were sinners only to the extent of the law which they had.

VERSE 14

Just as justification never had anything specifically to do with the law of Moses (chapters 2-4) so condemnation was never dependent on the law of Moses. People sinned, "knowing the ordinance of God" (Romans 1:21, 32) and they were separated from God. Perhaps Paul is saying that even though those people sinned, they were not guilty of a sin like Adam's sin. Adam violated a positive law; these people violated the moral law. And that was not like Adam's sin.

VERSE 15

Paul assures us that the blessings through Christ abound much more than the curse through the trespass of Adam; they include deliverance from our own sins. By the trespass of one, many died because it was Adam who first allowed sin to come into the world, and thus brought death for every man. Every man who sinned died. Paul is not teaching universal salvation here, but if Adam brought death into the world as a possibility for every man, Christ brought reconciliation, justification, and life as a possibility for every man. Those who sinned were separated from God (5:12). Those who receive the grace of God in Christ are reconciled to God (5:17). The reason people die is their own sin (spiritual death). The reason people have life is their faith in Christ. Adam brought death to the world; Christ brought life. Both are conditional. Now, if the

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life which Christ brought is the opposite of physical death, then why do Christians still die? No, physical death is not the matter under discussion. The matter being discussed is separation and reconciliation.

VERSE 16

Paul here is still stressing the contrasts between Adam and Christ. In verse 15, there is a contrast in quantity. Here the contrast is between the fact that condemnation resulted from a sin of a single individual, and on the other hand, the fact that justification applies, not to a single sin only, but to all sin.

The gift is not as through one who sinned. That is, the gift was not given because of one who sinned. One man, Adam, sinned and allowed death into a world which previously knew no death. He made death available to all, and because all sinned, all died. Thus all stood condemned (3:23; 5:12). All men are separated from God, each because of his sin. Then, God offered sinful man a gift "while we were yet sinners" (5:8), "while we were weak" (5:6), and "while we were enemies" (5:10).

VERSE 17

In this verse Paul contrasts death with the "gift of righteousness", (Greek text: "an act of righteousness") which is the spiritual life. The death that reigns through the one man Adam is overcome or destroyed, by the gift of righteousness through Christ. It is a fact that spiritual death as well as physical death, entered the world through the sin of Adam, and it is a fact that spiritual life entered the world through Jesus Christ. But are we all dead spiritually because Adam brought spiritual death into the world? No more than that we are all alive spiritually because Christ brought spiritual life into the world. As we do not partake of the spiritual life unconditionally, so neither do we partake of the spiritual death unconditionally. If Adam had introduced measles into the world, that would not prove that all his descendants are born with the measles. To say that people are born subject to sin is far from saying that people are born sinners. Adam was created subject to sin and he sinned, but that does not prove he was created a sinner nor even with a depraved nature. Spiritual life and spiritual death are both the result of our own choice. It is surprising that any one ever thought that the personal righteousness of Christ is given to the believer.

Both death and life are conditional (6:23). Whatever death is, life is the

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opposite. The next verse makes it very plain that spiritual death is the matter under consideration.

VERSE 18

“offense of one” refers to the sin of Adam. Condemnation means the spiritual death which resulted. “The righteousness of one” refers to the ample remedy which God has provided in Christ for our sins. This remedy not only removes the penalty we incur when we sin, but Jesus Christ by His resurrection gives us the hope of our bodies being raised from the dead.

By our sins there is a condemnation to death. By the justification of life, our sins are forgiven and now we hope for eternal life. Adam brought sin; Christ brought righteousness. Adam offered death; Christ offers justification.

VERSE 19

Surely “the many” in this verse includes all that arrive at the years of responsibility. In whatever manner Adam brought death to all men, Christ brought life to all men. Comprehended here are Jews and Gentiles. As Adam brought sin and thus condemnation into the world, so Christ brought justification. Both Jew and Gentile sinned and died, and both Jew and Gentile can be saved through the gospel. All men are affected by what Adam did. All men are affected by what Christ did. It seems Paul is simply making people aware of the alternatives. We know that those who are made righteous are those who believe (4:1-6; 5:1). All men can choose this just as all mankind can choose condemnation. We should remember that personal righteousness cannot be transferred from one person to another. It is only assumption to argue that the disobedience of Adam is imputed to his offspring, or that the obedience of Christ is imputed to anybody.

VERSE 20

Beside sin and death, the law also entered in. The law of works or the law of Moses, was added because of transgression (See Galatians 3:24, 25). The law brought the knowledge of sin to man (Romans 3:20). The real purpose of the law then, was to magnify sin. The law made men aware of sin (7:7-11). Thereby he is also made aware of his condemnation before God. Though man was made painfully aware of his sin and its

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horrible result, he was also offered full forgiveness and justification in Christ (3:24). God's grace is bigger than all of man's sin. Law was given to restrain people from wrong and guide them in the right way. A man might observe the moral law out of regard for himself and his fellowman without any regard for God, but a positive law determines his attitude toward God. If one has rebellion in his heart, positive law reveals it. Adam violated a positive law, not a moral law. The law then made people see the enormity of sin. This would help them see more and more their need of some means of deliverance. Sin abounded in that it triumphed over the sinner, made him feel his helplessness, and offered him no hope of deliverance. But grace through our Lord Jesus Christ abounded to take sin away. Thus Paul is back on his subject, The Gospel.

VERSE 21

Paul here is referring to spiritual life and spiritual death. This is made clear by the verses that immediately follow in the next chapter. In spiritual death, sin's reign is absolute. But grace reigns through righteousness - that is, through the gospel plan of righteousness. It is God's grace that produced this plan of righteousness; it is the power that banishes sin from the heart and leads one in devoted service to God.

A summation of these closing verses shows that the disastrous consequences of Adam's transgression had been more than offset by a righteous act of God Himself through the giving of His beloved Son for man's redemption. Jesus has broken the power of sin to rule. No longer are men helpless before sin. They can be free from sin unless they choose to serve sin.

Eternal life is here the opposite of death. Certainly therefore the death under discussion is spiritual death.

Chapter 6

VERSE 1

Paul continues his same line of argument pursued in chapter 5, the doctrine of justification by faith. He continues this line of thought in chapter 6. It is not without significance that chapter 6 begins like chapter 4. It seems Paul often began arguments and it was his device to conclude arguments (Romans 3:1, 9). Is it not good and wise even today to thus begin and conclude discussions and arguments for our learning? Paul has shown in chapter 5 that we are justified by faith, and that such justification or salvation is provided by the grace of God. In Romans 5:21, Paul concludes the chapter by saying sin brought death, but God's grace brought life.

Then he asks in 6:1, "What then shall we say (infer)? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound the more?" It seems some might argue that since God in His righteousness displayed His great grace and favor in making men free from sin, then man should be encouraged to sin more so that God could be more righteous and that His grace could be more exalted. Paul's answer to that was a firm, "God forbid." Absolutely not, by no means.

Some may have been asking, "Do you suggest that we should go on sinning in order to give grace a greater chance to operate?" Even yet some feel that sin does not matter for God will forgive anyway. Paul's answer to all such was a resounding "Certainly not" in verse 2.

VERSE 2

"How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" This is the reason given as to why we should not continue in sin. It is impossible for those who are dead to act as if they were alive. So Paul says it is just as absurd to suppose that a Christian should desire to live in sin, as that a dead man should put forth the actions of life. To be dead to a thing is a strong expression denoting that it has no influence over us. A man that is dead is uninfluenced and unaffected by the affairs of this life. Therefore, when it is said a Christian is dead to sin, the sense is - that it has lost its influence over him, he is not subject to it, he is as dead to the busy scenes and cares of this life as the man in the grave (See Galatians 2:19; Colossians 3:3; 1 Peter 2:24).

In fact, all Christians are dead to sin. They do not live to sin nor has

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sin dominion over them. Actually, how shall we, who have become aware of the evil of sin and have renounced it, continue to practice it? It is abhorrent to the very nature of the Christian profession. When a person dies physically, there is one less human being on the earth; when one dies to sin, there is one less sinner on the earth. The only evidence we can give that we are truly dead to sin is our aversion to it and our cessation from it. The chief object of our dying to sin is that we may remain dead to it.

VERSE 3

All of those whom Paul is addressing were conscious of having been baptized. It was not possible for them to doubt it. However, it seems Paul may be asking them if they understood the fact that they had been baptized into Christ. The implication is that if they knew they had been baptized into the death of Christ, they would know that they should no longer continue in sin. To be "baptized into" is a transition into some one or into some thing. Examples: 1 Corinthians 12:13; 10:2; Matthew 3:11.

So, to be baptized into Christ is to pass from the world into a state of freedom from sin and complete subjection to His will. Paul says here that we "were baptized into His death." Verse 10 says, "For in that He died, He died unto sin once..." Thus we die with Him. We are then dead to our former state of living in sin. Now we are separated from our sins, and we are determined not to live a life of sin anymore. We are dead to that old life of sin.

Also, we are baptized into the benefits of Christ's death, including freedom from sin. A person is not completely dead to sin until he is separated from it, and that separation takes place in baptism.

We are baptized into the benefits of His death. He shed His blood in His death (John 19:30, 33, 34). We are cleansed by His shed blood. The separation from our sins takes place in baptism where they are washed away. We are not completely dead to sin until we are separated from it, and that separation takes place in baptism.

Paul's teaching is clear that baptism was the point at which one came into Christ. (See also Galatians 3:27). And, he has also shown the definite connection between the death of Christ and man's justification (Romans 3:25; 5:9, 10). This is written to those who have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son (1:7).

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It is by the one baptism (Ephesians 4:5) that believers are baptized into the one body (1 Corinthians 12:13), into Christ (Romans 6:3), into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20), into His death (Romans 6:3), and into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

The result of death is separation. One is not dead to sin until he is separated from it, and that separation takes place in baptism.

VERSE 4

Charles R. Erdman, in his *Exposition of Romans*, page 78, states, "The New Testament and the practice of the early church both indicate that baptism was administered by pouring (affusion) or by sprinkling, as well as by immersion." Although Mr. Erdman is supposedly dealing with the sixth chapter of Romans, he fails to give us any proof or evidence of the truthfulness of the above statement.

William Barclay, in his *The Daily Study Bible on Romans 6*, page 84, has this to say, "Commonly, baptism was by total immersion, and that practice lent itself to a symbolism which sprinkling does not so readily lend itself to. When a man descended into the water, and the water closed over his head, it was like being buried in a grave. When he emerged from the water, it was like rising from the grave. The man died to one kind of life and rose to another kind of life. He went down into the water a man of the world and rose a man in Christ. He was not only a changed man, he was a new man, a different man." We can only agree with Mr. Barclay in these statements.

However, on page 83 of this same work, Mr. Barclay says, "We must remember that baptism in the time of Paul was different from what baptism commonly is today. It was adult baptism. This is not to say that the New Testament is in any sense opposed to infant baptism."

But, now to what Paul says. If there were no other source of knowledge as to how baptism was performed, this text should settle the matter beyond doubt.

The candidate for baptism has died to sin, to the love and practice of it. Yet he still bears the guilt. We bury dead people so one is buried in baptism. Then he is raised up from the watery grave "so that we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether" (Phillips Translation). Just as a man that is dead physically is freed from sin, so the one who has died with Christ in baptism is also freed from sin, from its penalty, its power,

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and is to abstain from its practice. One day, when he is with God in glory, he will be free from its presence.

VERSE 5

Jesus was buried and arose to a new life; we are buried in baptism and arise to a new life. Paul is still pressing the requirement of holy living on the part of Christians. This verse shows that baptism is the point at which men are united with Christ. We, like Jesus, died to sin. Like Jesus, we made the decision to turn away from sin and do the will of God at all costs. When raised in baptism, we are not to live the life we lived before; we are to live a new life and cannot continue to sin.

VERSE 6

“Old man” here refers to our old selves. Paul said our old selves died with Jesus on the cross that our bodies might be made inactive for evil. Our old sins have been done away (do not exist anymore) and the tyranny of sin over us is broken (See Galatians 5:24; and Colossians 3:5). For us to have any success in living above sin, a state of innocence must first be achieved providing a fresh start. This is accomplished in conversion to Christ wherein all past transgressions are forgiven. This is the purging from “his old sins,” as Peter called them (2 Peter 1:9). What an incentive to holy living. Of course, the personal aspect of death to sin is a growth process. We see what Paul wrote to Christians and encouraged them to continue this process which they had begun when they became Christians (Colossians 3:5-8). The object of our being crucified with Christ is to render inactive the sinful body that we may no longer serve sin. Not to serve sin is not to commit it. So, Paul reminds us that we cannot continue in sin.

To crucify the old man is the same thing as to die to sin. Of himself Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). Paul the sinner died. We die as sinners and are raised up as saints.

VERSE 7

This is but another way of saying, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” The words justified or freed from sin denote acquitted, absolved from the guilt of sin. A dead man does not sin. The marginal reading in the *American Standard Version* states, “For he that hath died is released from sin.” Sin rules no more. In verses 2-7, Paul answers the

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question of the first verse, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"

VERSE 8

This reference is not referring to life with Christ in the world to come. We died to sin and were raised to a new life. This new life we live with Christ. We must live with Him as our guide, our Teacher, our High Priest, and our King. We cannot therefore continue in sin. The idea here is similar to that of Colossians 3:1-3. To "live with Him" is to live with Christ. It is to live united with Christ. It is to live no longer serving sin.

VERSE 9

Jesus had been brought out from among the dead, leaving them still in the grave. This also means that He is restored to life. He died once, never to die again. The results achieved by His resurrection and its value to mankind can never be fully told. Our hope of living with Christ forevermore rests on the fact that He is alive forevermore. Death no longer rules over Him in the sense that He is no longer separated from God. Since we do not fear that Christ will ever die again, we are given assurance that we shall live with Him. Therefore, we must not cease to live for Him here that we may live with Him there. One who does not believe that Christ lives forever and "dieth no more" does not believe in Christ at all. See Revelation 1:18. This is not only a consolation to the Christian, but it is an argument why he should be holy. Now death has no rule, no lordship, no power over our Saviour. Thus, the Christian is free from all such influences.

VERSE 10

Jesus died for sin once. The Greek uses the expression "once for all," which simply means one time for all time He died for sin, not for His own (He never sinned even once) but for ours. See 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15. Jesus became "obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). "He died once unto sin," but that ended His relation to sin. He is forever free from the power of sin, and therefore from the power of death. He now lives and that forevermore. Just so, we too have died to the love and practice of sin. Some have suggested that the new way of living in Christ need not make much difference in a person's life. But Paul is saying that it ought to make all the difference in the

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world. There was a finality to the death of Jesus. He was not to repeat that death (Romans 6:9). Jesus, like the believer in Christ, died to sin. He made the final decision against sin. The life which our Lord lives, He lives for God. It admits no possibility of sin. Our resolve as believers, must be based upon His life and death and His life now - a life in total unity and harmony with the will of God.

VERSE 11

If one is dead to sin, he is admonished to so consider himself. No longer are we to have anything to do with sin. We have buried the person who was ruled by sin in the grave of baptism. We also consider ourselves to be alive as far as God is concerned. Sin is not admitted as a possibility for us for we live to serve God. We reckon ourselves as both dead and alive - dead to sin and alive to God. Hence, we cannot continue in sin. We have seen that our Lord's dying to sin once was for Him an end of dying. Just so, our dying to sin is never to be repeated. We have died once and that is enough. But for it to be enough we must desist from sin. In our full devotion to God, His will is to be the rule of our conduct. Our very selves, life and time are all due to Him. Nothing remains for sin. When we arose from the watery grave of baptism, we arose with Him to live a new life. When we died in Christ (in Him we were dead to sin), we were buried, and then we arose and with him returned again to life. Now it behooves us to live like Him as nearly as possible.

VERSE 12

In view of Paul's previous reasoning, he draws a conclusion that sin should not be suffered to reign in us. The word reign means having dominion, or rule. "In your mortal body" simply means in you. The tendency of the flesh is to sin and corruption. The flesh is used often to denote evil passions and desires (7:5, 23; 8:3, 6). Therefore, Paul warns lest sin come to rule over us and make us slaves to the lusts and desires of the flesh.

If we yield to our lusts, then we allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies. Rather we are to yield our bodies to God's service and consider the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness unto God for His service. Our natural appetites and passions are not evil within themselves. They are God-given and become evil only when they become the master and lead us into sinful thoughts and deeds. Since we died to sin,

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we are not to allow sin to reestablish its reign in our bodies. We must control the lusts of our bodies, not obey them. This verse shows us what our general attitude, our way of thinking should be toward sin. Sin indulged makes sin the king instead of Christ.

VERSE 13

Paul's plea to Christians in this verse is that we not present our bodily members as tools of wickedness. The word members includes every faculty and power of the human body with which we either commit sin or work righteousness. To present our members to sin is to allow our members to be used in its service (See Proverbs 4:23). Obedience is from the heart. The spirit expresses itself through the body. Not one thing can be done in service to God without the use of the body. Hence, the command to present our "members as instruments of righteousness unto God." But the spirit also sins through the instrumentality of the body. Sin comes from the heart (See Mark 7:21-23). Some claim that the body of a regenerated person may sin but his spirit remains pure and sinless. Actually the spirit of the Christian is responsible for the sin. To say otherwise is to say that a Christian is not in any sense responsible for any wrong that he does. Paul says we have a choice either to yield the members of our bodies over to sin to be used as weapons of unrighteousness, or to God.

"As those that are alive from the dead" goes back to the idea of being raised to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). We have died as far as sin is concerned, and we only live in regard to God. Paul urges that we use our bodily members as instruments in the hand of God for good.

VERSE 14

"Sin shall not have dominion (rule) over you." We have escape from sin not possible under the law which condemned but could not forgive. Where law condemns; grace makes pardon possible. Sin would have dominion over us if we had no means of escape from it, but through grace there is a way of escape from sin. Of course we are under a law else there would be no sin, thus no need for grace. By grace we are made free from sin and can present our members to God as instruments of righteousness. This wonderful gift of God, this grace, is offered to all. Therefore, there is no reason for any person to serve sin.

We are under a law of faith, which says that a person is justified by faith and not by works of law (3:27). This law of faith is the same as say-

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ing we are under grace.

VERSE 15

Paul continues to anticipate and meet arguments or objections that the Judaizing teachers might present. Since we are under grace, not law, some might contend that one would then have liberty to go on sinning. But the grace given to forgive us does not give us license to indulge in sin. Rather, grace grants to us a way of escape from sin. Certainly God's grace, which is His power to save people from sin, would not encourage people to sin. Today, some have indicated that there is hardly the likelihood that any saved person could be lost because God's grace covers all of our sins. We must remember we are not without restraint. We have died to sin and we are not to go on sinning.

Of course, we are not without law as Christians. In 8:2, Paul says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The law of the spirit is the law given by the Spirit through which life comes. To be under grace does not exclude law. True, we are not under the law which condemned sin and made no provision for pardoning it, but we are under the restraining will of Jesus Christ. Therefore, to go on sinning is a willful abuse of God's goodness.

God's grace covers us when we are making a determined effort not to sin. Consequently when we sin willfully, His grace is withheld. Some at that time may have felt that one justified, not by the law but by grace, is now free to break the law. Paul's answer is "God forbid." True, one is not justified by the law of Moses. In fact, that law no longer exists. And, even though we are saved by God's grace and our faith, this does not make one free to sin but free from sin.

VERSE 16

We either present our members to sin for unrighteous purposes or to God for the doing of righteousness. We are slaves to one of two masters. The choice of masters is ours. In the slave culture that person to whom they always rendered obedience was their master. A master is one who is served. Therefore, we cannot say Christ is our master if we are serving sin (1:14,7; 5:1,11,21). To be the slaves of sin is to be guilty of a great fault and a terrible misfortune. Since one cannot serve two masters, then he is either a slave of sin which results in death, or he is a servant of Christ, a service which results in righteousness. Those Roman brethren had

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become the servants of righteousness, and were therefore bound by the proper laws of servitude to obey their new master. Paul is telling them that they ought to know what is required in such cases. The one to whom they gave themselves up for servitude or obedience is the one whom they must obey.

Christians are the voluntary servants of God and are therefore bound to obey Christ entirely. If the Christian goes on obeying his old master (sin), he will receive the pay of sin which is death. If his obedience is to his new master, the result will be righteousness. ("unto righteousness" here means justification). It results in our being justified by God. Thus we see that sin is obedience to the evil one, as contrasted with righteousness which is obedience to Christ. Obedience is, in general terms, the condition on which justification depends. God justifies or acquits the obedient, not the disobedient, while the ultimate end of sin is eternal death.

Freedom has been bought for us by the blood of Christ, but God does not force us to accept the freedom bought for us. We are not forced to be servants of sin, nor does God force us to be servants of righteousness. Paul's warning here is to Christians not to indulge in sin on the ground that we are not under law but under grace. To do so is to become servants of sin.

The life we live determines whose servants we are. To become servants of sin leads to death, but gospel obedience leads to righteousness. There is a universal law that one becomes the subject of what he does. If he yields to sin, that sin gets a grip upon him and he may continue to serve sin, but obedience leads to righteousness. Paul, in this verse, is teaching the Romans that grace does not destroy human liberty. It was still in their own power to choose whether they would present themselves slaves to sin or servants to righteousness.

VERSE 17

Paul is not thanking God for the fact that they had been sinners, but that their lives of sin were a thing of the past. They had served sin but now they have been delivered from it. When they became free from sin by obeying from the heart the form, pattern, or mold of doctrine into which they had been delivered, they became servants of righteousness. They become obedient from the heart (verses 3-6) to this mold of doc-

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trine, and by that obedience they had changed masters. The doctrine is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In our death to sin, we are buried with Him, and are raised up to a new life. Thus, the Romans had been made free from the slavery of sin and had become slaves of righteousness. Paul was thankful that the Romans had been rescued from a sinful service.

The word "form" is defined as a pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made. The pattern is the example that Jesus set when He died for sin and was raised from the grave to die no more. Notice that Paul did not say, "Thank God that...you believed" but "Thank God that...ye became obedient." This shows that what is said of either faith or obedience was never intended to exclude the other. It is made very clear here that obedience to the form of doctrine delivers the believer out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, and thus in this action (baptism) he is freed from the bondage of sin and becomes a bondservant of Christ.

VERSE 18

Now the believer has become free from sin and has become a servant of righteousness. So, Paul is saying, "you were slaves of sin...you obeyed...you were freed...you were made slaves." Christians are made free from one master and enslaved to another. Jesus said, "...and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Therefore we, though His slaves, have freedom and liberty in Christ Jesus.

Paul is making it very clear that this obedience makes one free from all past sins and makes one a willing servant of righteousness. It is also clear that justification through faith and obedience does not allow one to go on in a life of sin. It is made clear also that one cannot serve two masters for either he is a slave of sin resulting in death, or he is a servant of Christ, a service which results in righteousness.

Verse 18 carries the very same thought as verse 11. To be made free from sin is to be pardoned. To bring this about, two things are necessary: belief and obedience from the heart (verse 17). To be freed from sin is to be justified, and that resulted from obedience to that form of doctrine which had been preached to these Romans. Having thus obeyed, one is voluntarily bound to do everything that is right and to abstain from everything that is wrong. Not only has one been made free from

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sin, but he is also freed from the rule of sin and is thus obligated to the life of righteousness in Christ.

We cannot be made the servants of God until we are freed from the power and dominion of sin. We cannot serve two masters.

VERSE 19

Since man is slow to comprehend spiritual relations, Paul uses the customs of men as an illustration to enable them to see the truths he would plant in their hearts. The examples he uses would be familiar to these brethren.

Before they believed, they used their bodies and spirits in serving sin, in degrading immoral practices and lawlessness, and did not regard God's law. "Iniquity to iniquity" seems to say that they worked uncleanness from one stage or degree of iniquity to another. Then, Paul says "in the same way you are to present your members as servants to righteousness" to work out their sanctification or consecration. One cannot imagine a person following Christ and continuing in lawlessness and positive transgression. As these people had formerly used all their powers of mind and body in committing sin, so now they are to use them in doing right that they might be holy and pure within and sinless without. Before the conversion of the Romans they were wholly given to sin, but after conversion they should be wholly given to God. They were to employ the same energies in advancing the kingdom of God that they had in promoting the kingdom of Satan. No requirement is more reasonable than this.

VERSE 20

During their former days, they yielded themselves in obedience to sin; they were serving sin as their master and not righteousness. We can serve only one master at a time. The servant of one master is not expected to obey the commands of another. While the Romans were slaves to sin, they were not performing any righteous duty. They had not been justified because they had not believed, received, presented or obeyed. Now however that they are slaves to a new master, Christ, they are to give themselves wholly to righteousness. It would be most improper for them to now serve the old master through a sin-committing life (Matthew 6:24).

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VERSE 21

“What fruit” here seems to mean what benefit? What advantage? Or, what gain? What advantage did you get out of that kind of life? What is the result of such a life? What is the end of such a life when you come down to die? The only answer is “death,” eternal death. Of course, Paul is not speaking of physical death, but eternal separation from God, where all is blackness, death and perdition. If they had derived no benefit from their past sins, but on the contrary felt ashamed of them, they could certainly have no reason for returning to them. Seemingly, this is what Paul is seeking to guard against.

VERSE 22

The fruit of being made free from sin and becoming servants of God is sanctification here and eternal life in the world to come. Then, how could it pay if one were to go back under sin?

Verses 17, 18 tell us how the Romans were made free from sin. They died to the love and practice of sin through their faith and repentance and were buried with Christ in baptism and were raised up from that watery grave to walk in newness of life. Now, they have a new master and are obligated to serve God.

“Fruit unto holiness” is, in other translations, “fruit unto sanctification.” To be freed from sin is to be forgiven. There is no bondage like that to sin, nor any freedom like release from it. The end of one is eternal death; the end of the other is eternal life.

“Fruit unto holiness” means fruit yielded or borne, rather than benefit received. Therefore, your fruit consists in holy deeds and holy living. The product of servants of God is a holy life. We have our fruit in the holy lives we live. Thus, we appreciate the more Jesus’ teaching on fruit-bearing in John 15. Thus we have our fruit unto holiness and at the end everlasting life.

In opposition to their former life, now the Romans were to be living in holiness. Then, how could they abandon that and return again to the practice of sin? Such an act would be beyond reason. The final reward for such sowing and reaping is everlasting life.

VERSE 23

“The wages of sins” —not the wages of great sins, or of some sins, but the wages of sin is death. How could one continue to serve Satan? He is

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such an unprofitable employer. Is it because payment seems to be so delayed that sin is so attractive to us? Is it the buy now, pay later attitude that allows sin to remain in our lives?

Of course, this refers to the second death - eternal punishment and separation from God forever. A life devoted to the service of sin will earn or merit the wages of death. Why would anyone serve for such a reward? The devil pays wages but God makes a free gift. Satan will pay in full. If one serves sin, he must look to sin for his wages. We cannot perform service that will entitle us to eternal life as wages; it comes as a free gift to those who love and serve the Lord. God has given teaching and made requirements but He does not require service because He needs it, but because we need the schooling and training which that service will give us.

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VERSE 1

This is not a lesson on the relationship of husband and wife, but it is to show the Christian's relationship to the law and to Christ. Paul is still defending the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith against the supposed objection that it allows sin. It seems the Jews were thinking that if one can be made just without the works of the law, then he is free to break the law. Paul is showing them that on the contrary when one submits to the law of faith, he is brought into a life of holiness. By this system of faith we are made free from the sins of our past and we have turned to a new and holy life.

It seems that many Jewish Christians were yet so attached to the law of Moses that they were determined to bind certain provisions of it upon Gentile converts to Christ. Paul, in Romans 3:20-24, has set forth the truth that no flesh (Jew or Gentile) can be justified by the law, but that God's grace provided free and full redemption "in Christ Jesus." In chapter 5, verses 20,21, he has shown that the temporary nature of the law was primarily to expose sin. In chapter 6 and verse 14, Paul declared that Christians were not under the law at all but under grace. The expression "under grace" stands for the entire system of Christianity. Thus, in verse 1 of this chapter we understand that when a man dies, the law governs him no longer. He is dead to the law and the law is dead to him.

VERSE 2

We have in this verse a general rule that law rules over a man so long as he lives. Paul confirms this by a special illustration taken from married life. If the husband dies, the wife is released; if the wife dies the husband is released. Therefore since we are dead to the law, we are released from it. The expression "loosed from the law of her husband" refers to the husband being the head of his wife and thereby having control over her. When he dies, she is released from this law. Thus when a person who was under the law died to the law by obedience to the gospel, then he is released from the law. If one is dead to the law, then he is free to marry the bridegroom who is Christ. The wife is bound to her husband by God's law of marriage, but when he dies she is released from the law that bound her to that husband. A woman cannot be law-

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fully bound to more than one man at a time, neither can a person be subject to more than one religious law at the same time. It is either the law of Moses or the gospel of Christ. It cannot be both at the same time.

VERSE 3

If a woman were married to another man while her husband is still living, this would make her an adulteress, which would subject her to the severest punishment of the law, stoning to death (Leviticus 21:10; John 8:5). Had the Jews served according to another law while the law of Moses was in force, they would be guilty of spiritual adultery. The law that renders the wife inseparable from her husband as long as he lives sets her free from this subjection as soon as he dies. Therefore, if the law of Moses be dead or taken out of the way, then those who have been under it would not be guilty of spiritual adultery, though they served under the law of Christ.

Several times the Jews, who were under the law of Moses, turned to idols and mixed in other religions, and God accused them of being guilty of whoredom and adultery (Jeremiah 3:9; Ezekiel 23:37). So long as the law was of force, they could not be married to another.

Since the law of Moses had been taken out of the way, the Roman brethren were at liberty to become bound to Christ. The great difficulty here was that the Jews held the law to be of perpetual obligation. Therefore, they believed the greatest sin would be to abandon it. Most all, including the apostles, found it exceedingly difficult to give up the law. Paul is showing the Romans how it can be honorably done. When one becomes a Christian he dies to the law and becomes as released from it as a wife at her husband's death.

VERSE 4

"Dead to the law" is like dead to sin. It surely means that we are dead as far as the law is concerned. So, Paul is saying, "We were joined to the law as long as we lived, but we have died with Christ, been buried and have been raised (Romans 6:1-4)." All of this took place that we might be joined to another, to the One who was raised from the dead. Therefore, we have been raised to a new life (6:9,10). Now we are free to be joined to that One. We were united with Him in the likeness of His death and resurrection (6:5). Christ is now our husband and we are subject to Him and not to the law.

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Paul gives the purpose of all this, that we may “bring forth fruit unto God.” In chapter 6 and verse 22, he says that we are to bear “fruit unto holiness” or unto sanctification. See Ephesians 2:14-16 and Colossians 2:14.

Christians, whether of Jewish or Gentile descent, had nothing either of benefit or blessing in the old system. Christ died to annul the old contract that Jewish Christians had with God. This then freed them to be united with Christ. This is what “that ye should be married to another” is referring to. Of course, for the Gentile Christians, their freedom from the old system was also complete. Actually, it never applied to them. We could wonder why true believers in Christ should have any regard for a system that crucified Jesus Christ, making Him a curse, and casting Him out!

The expression “to be in Christ” is to be absolutely beyond and apart from the law and everything in it. Thus, those who had died to the law were released from it; they had committed no sin in abandoning it for Christ. In believing and being baptized into Christ, they all became, in life, somehow identified with His life. Hence whatever He died to, they died to. They both died to the law. Really, then, they became dead to the law that they might be joined or married to Christ. They became dead to the law through the death of the body of Christ. People became dead to the law when it ended, or was abolished (Ephesians 2:14-16).

The “fruit unto God” is found in Galatians 5:22, 23 and Titus 3:8.

VERSES 5, 6

The word flesh here does not mean the human body, for their being in the flesh was a thing of the past. Paul used illustrations to show the Jewish brethren’s relation to the law and to Christ. No others were delivered from the law that they might be joined to Christ. “In the flesh” refers to the time they were under the law of Moses. The reason he speaks of them as in the flesh is to denote the time they were under the law. The old covenant was a flesh covenant. By reason of their flesh connection with Abraham, they were members of the old covenant. Circumcision in the flesh was a sign of membership in that covenant. They became sinful through violations of the law. These sinful passions worked through their bodies to bring forth fruit unto death. Now that they were delivered from the law is a positive declaration that they were

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no longer under the law. They were now dead to that wherein they were held and no longer had any connection with it.

“Newness of spirit” is the new life of the spirit into which they were raised at their baptism (Romans 6:4). The “oldness of the letter” was the old law. They were not then serving God in the law of Moses. To serve God in the oldness of the letter means to serve Him in the old mode prescribed in the law. They were dead to the law and consequently released from it.

VERSE 7

Now it is as if Paul is saying, “Having said these things, what is the conclusion?” He has established that we are not under law (6:14), and that we have been released from the law (7:6). But now, what about the law? “Is the law sin?” He says again what he said in chapter 3, verse 31. Because we are not under the law that offered no means of justification for man, this does not mean that the law is evil. On the contrary, it is “holy and righteous, and good” (7:12). He says we would not have been aware of sin except through the law. Then he gives an example. He would not have known coveting was wrong, except the law had said, “Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:17). The word “covet” means to lust after or desire. Thus, God’s law made Paul aware of his own sin (for which he was responsible and accountable). This is the case with every person (Romans 3:20). The law was just and good and was designed for nothing other than the highest welfare and the greatest good for those under it. The law was good in its own sphere and for its proper purpose. It revealed sin, but it was not designed to relieve from sin.

We know Paul was speaking here of the law of Moses. He identified it by speaking of the tenth of the ten commandments. Therefore, he was surely not speaking of the commandments of Jesus Christ.

It seems Paul may be asking, “Is the law the cause of sin?” His question may be just a comment on verse 5. If sinful desires were really by the law, then the law would become the author to the sins committed. But, Paul is saying, “Not at all.” Sinful desires were not generated or excited by the law. Those desires existed before and after the law was given. They are merely shown by the law to be sinful. This really defines the relation of the law to the Jews. Paul says he “had not known sin but by the law.” He did not say he had not experienced sin. He is simply saying,

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"I would never have known what sin is, but by the law." Then he gives the example of covetousness. The law is not sin, but it points out what sin is and forbids it. It does not produce sin nor abet it, rather it condemns it and prescribes its punishment.

When Paul says, "I had not known sin" and "I had not known lust," he is saying he had not known what covetousness is. He is saying, "I did not know it was sin to covet." He knew covetousness as well before the law as after it had come, but he did not know it to be sin.

A point to consider here is a reminder that the ten commandments were a part of the law of Moses. Paul says, "... the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

VERSE 8

Law makes men sensible or aware of their sins and of the sinfulness of their sins. While people are ignorant of law, they feel they are without sin. But when law is in their conscience, they come to a knowledge that sin lives in them, and they know they stand condemned. All sin is lawlessness. Sin could not operate where there is no law. Now a commandment of God does not stir up evil desires. The propensity is already there even if God had given no command, but it becomes an evil desire when it seeks to override the command. Mother Eve is an example. There was law in the garden. Satan took advantage of the existence of that law when he stirred up desire in Eve by showing benefits to be derived by eating the forbidden fruit. The law did not create the desire but Satan did when he tempted Eve to violate it.

Achan is also a good example just here (Joshua 6,7).

1. He saw the articles of value.
2. He coveted. Satan worked in him the desire to take unlawful things.
3. He took. He saw benefits to be derived from violating the law.
4. He died. He suffered the penalty of the law.

Sin is lawlessness and it would not be operative if there were no law. The law is not sin nor does it cause those evil desires which induce sin, but sin itself causes them.

Without law sin is dead; it is non-existent. Actually, we cannot think of sin without law. Any criticism of the law causing sin is unjust. Rather, man's carnal disposition causes him to crave that which is forbidden by law.

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Paul seems to say that previously he had been covetous even before he was aware of the commandment. Now he is much more aware of the sin and he very keenly feels his guilt. We should remember that there has always been law since the Garden of Eden, and law makes us aware of our sin. We would do well to remember 1 John 2:16.

1. The lust of the eye, Matthew 4:8, 9
2. The lust of the flesh, Matthew 4:3, 4
3. The vain glory of life, James 1:13-15

VERSE 9

Paul was born into the nation of Israel, so what does he mean by this statement? Surely he means that there was a time in his life (childhood), when he was unaware of God's law and its implications for human life. He could possibly be referring to the time before his conversion to Christ when he was self-righteous and observed the letter of the law, satisfied that he was safe. He had no sense of sin or of its condemnation. His conscience was untroubled. Maybe he felt as did the young man in Matthew 19:20, "All these things have I observed: what lack I yet?"

We do know that Paul's life as a child was untouched by the demands of law. As he developed, he became aware of the law and understood that some of his actions were condemned by the law. Thus, the command came to Paul when he began to realize his own individual responsibility in the matter of obeying God. Then "sin revived," or sprang to life. That's when Paul died spiritually. When he was made aware of the law "Thou shalt not covet," then he realized it required a heart service as well as an outward service. This was when he died or felt he was dead in sin.

VERSE 10

Then Paul realized that the commandment which was intended to bring life had actually resulted in his death. Of course Paul did not mean he died physically. All along he has been talking of spiritual death which is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). Obedience to the commandment was life; disobedience brought death. The commandment was good but because Paul violated it, he was guilty of sin and condemnation was the result. This commandment was not intended for death, but being transgressed it condemned the transgressor and so ended in death.

"The commandment" does refer back to the law against covetousness,

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but in an expanded sense is a synonym for Moses' law. Paul had great respect for the law, for he said, "I have lived in all good conscience." This was in reference to that law.

VERSE 11

The commandment was given and the devil took advantage of it to tempt Paul as he did Eve, to transgress the law to gain some advantage. He said to Eve, "You shall not die, but shall become wise." So, he used God's law to deceive her. The commandment afforded the advantage, but it was the lie that did the deceiving. Satan simply took advantage of the presence of the law and was able to deceive her. His strong plea to her was that by transgressing this law and eating of the tree, she would become wise. So, Eve was told that it would be of great advantage to her to eat the fruit. Eve's case is such a close parallel to Paul's that we can say the same things about each case. In both cases, the commandment afforded the advantage. But Satan told Eve that she would not surely die. This deceived her and the violating of the law brought death.

VERSE 12

"Therefore the law is holy..." It is obvious that the law and the commandment are the same thing. They are faultless. It was a perfectly holy standard. Paul continues to speak of the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of men. So, he has exonerated the law from the possible charge of verse 7. God's law is holy. It reflects the character of God and demands nothing but purity of us. It is righteous (just) because it reflects the justice of God. It demands nothing but what is right and just. It is good because it reflects the goodness of God and promotes man's highest well-being.

The Romans might have asked, "If we had to be delivered from the law before we could be made free from sin, does that mean that the law is sin?" Sin and death had come through a failure to keep the law. The commandment was just in its demands and good in its results. But Paul's answer here may raise another question in verse 13.

Holy means that the law is pure within itself and is without the taint of sin. "Just" means that it is right in its requirements of men, or free from wrong. "Good" means that it is positively beneficial, working the welfare of those to whom it relates.

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VERSE 13

Paul now asks, "Did that which is good become death to me?" The good and just commandment did not work death. Sin brought death through the good commandment that sin might appear in its true nature and thus appear to be exceedingly sinful.

A good law is not to blame if people disobey it and bring punishment upon themselves. Did that which is good bring death? Paul said in verse 10, "The commandment which was unto life, this I found to be unto death." A law is not a law unless it carries a penalty for violation. The penalty in this case is death. It was sin and not the law that beguiled and did the slaying. It was not the law of God that separated Paul from God, but it was sin. Satan uses the law to bring about death to all whom he can influence. In this, sin becomes exceeding sinful. If Satan had used something evil to bring death to us, it would be bad. To use the law that is holy to bring death to us makes his act exceeding sinful. Thus he makes the good commandments of God instruments of death. A good law is not to blame if people disobey it and bring punishment upon themselves.

"But sin...working death in me..." We must recognize the penalty of sin as just, and from the penalty infer the character of sin.

VERSE 14

The law is to appeal to the inner man, the spirit of man (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). Paul here is stating the fact that the law of Moses is not binding upon Christians, for justification was absolutely impossible under that system. Surely he speaks of the law of Moses, for of what other could it have been said that "it is spiritual"? He is not speaking of his experience as a Christian when he says, "I am carnal, sold under sin..." He had just finished saying that Christians are dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11). He does mention the efforts of many who had diligently sought to please God under the old law. Surely his thought here is retrospective and he was speaking of a past condition. There were many no doubt who put forth great effort to keep the law but still could find no justification under it.

The law was spiritual because it spoke to the heart or mind of man, commending what was right and forbidding what was wrong. In this chapter, verse 22, Paul speaks of "the law of God after the inward man."

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The Jews were likely to see nothing in the law but forms and ceremonies but it was meant to appeal to the heart. Notice Deuteronomy 6:5,6 again. Paul, in our text, is merely speaking of himself as a type of all who were under the bondage of sin. He is not describing those who were Christians. Were he speaking of his experience as a Christian, would he say, "O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (verse 24)? In verse 25 he thanks God that deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord.

VERSE 15

Paul now shows the inner conflict of a man trying to be justified on the basis of law-keeping. Law is good. The problem is man's own inability to live by it perfectly. The Jews may have supposed that God's grace would somehow overlook their failures along this line, but Paul shows that if a man expects to be saved under law he must keep it perfectly.

It is not that a man does not want to please God - he desires to please Him and makes plans accordingly. Yet he finds himself doing the very things he intended to avoid and failing to do that which he planned to do. To perform the perfect will of God eludes human wisdom and strength. This is the struggle of sinful man who wanted to do right under the law.

Paul is such a great example of one who tried to do this. It seems that Paul, using the first person present tense, made himself the personification of the legal Jew of upright intent who sought sincerely to please God under the law. He may be the perfect example of such a person. Who but Paul could say that he had lived "in all good conscience before God"?

Paul seems to say that the best of his human intentions fell far short of what he wanted to do and be. The law required absolute perfection, and he knew he could never attain success in doing what he wanted to do, or to refrain from what he did not wish to do. In other words, he could never reach perfection. If one fell short of that he sinned, and the law had no provision for one's forgiveness. Without Christ's coming and sacrifice, one would forever remain under the dominion of sin.

Paul makes it plain that he hates sin. He knew he did not keep the law perfectly and therefore he sinned. He seems to say that he did not commit all the sins he hated, but all he committed he hated. He certainly did

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not sin because he loved sin.

VERSE 16

The law demanded a decent and upright life. Paul wished to live that kind of life, knowing that it is really the best life. He agreed that the law was good, yet he knew he had not kept it perfectly. He realized how much better he would be if he could keep the law perfectly for it was a good law. But the power to keep the law perfectly was missing in Paul's life and in the lives of all others under the law.

VERSE 17

There is strong evidence in this verse that Paul is not representing the condition of the Christian, for it cannot be said that sin dwells in the Christian. The words given by the Holy Spirit and sin cannot inhabit the same dwelling place. He who dwells in a house has charge of the house. To say that sin dwells in a person is to say that sin has control of him. When sin enters into a Christian, it enters as an intruder and not as a dweller.

In verse 9 Paul spoke of his being alive at one time. When he became older and responsible, he sinned by violating the law. It remained a dweller in him (no forgiveness) until he was redeemed from his bondage by the gospel of Christ. So it was not Paul alone that did it, but sin which dwelt in him - unforgiven sin and it had control over him.

VERSE 18

Note the distinction Paul makes between the inner man and the flesh. The actual flesh is neither morally good nor morally bad. The flesh is a bundle of appetites and passions which lead to sin only when they have enlisted the mind to plan and execute methods of self-gratification in an unlawful way. That is the reason a demented person is not responsible for his deeds. The mind must have a part in any deed for it to be either morally good or morally evil. Paul had a strong desire to do Moses' law but he could not do it perfectly. He transgressed and sinned at times and those sins remained upon him. He is revealing a picture of himself as under the law and without redemption through Christ.

The good which he could not attain was the absolute good, the morally perfect, the perfection required by the law (Galatians 3:10). Though one sins under the gospel, the forgiveness of his sins leaves him guiltless

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and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

VERSE 19

Here Paul speaks of the hopelessness of the sinner without Christ. This is a picture of the unredeemed man who is not in Christ. What a terrible description of humanity apart from the Saviour. This is almost a repetition of verse 15. That could not be said of Paul as a Christian. See 1 Thessalonians 2:10 for what was true of Paul as a Christian.

VERSE 20

This is a near repetition of verse 17. Paul is picturing the helplessness of the sinner without Christ, without the power of the gospel. The inward man, the spirit, is in contest with the passions of the flesh and is helpless without the gospel. Humanity is helpless to live correctly until the sin problem is solved. All the lofty aspirations go for naught as long as sin dwells in human hearts. This is not a statement of the way it is with Christians. Rather, it is the way it is with everyone on earth except Christians.

Until one is redeemed in Christ, he is still a slave of sin. He will never be anything else, until he is made free in Christ Jesus.

VERSE 21

The *American Standard Version* reads, "I find then in regard of the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present." This is in harmony with what Paul had said about the condition of a person under the law and without Christ. The person endorsed the law but sin hindered him from carrying out what he knew to be right. Perhaps there are really two laws here. One is the law of sin and death ruling in his members. The other is the law of Moses striving to overcome this law of sin and death but not able to do so because of the flesh. The apostle is showing that what the law of Moses could not do, God did through Jesus Christ, through whom He gave the law of the Spirit of life which changed the heart, the affections of man and so overcame the flesh. Paul was unable to free himself from the dominion of sin without Christ.

VERSE 22

Paul proved his delight in the law by his persistent effort to keep it, notwithstanding his constant failure. The inward man is the mind (verses 23, 25), the spirit of man (1 Corinthians 2:11) as contrasted with the

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outward man, the body or flesh. Doubtless, Paul here speaks of the mind, intellect and will of man.

Even the inner man of the sinner is pleased with the law of God, though he does not practice it. If there were nothing good in unconverted man, the good that is in God's law would not appeal to him. (This nullifies man's doctrine of Total Depravity.) Paul's subject here is still the legal Jew. This has been his subject since chapter 2, verses 17-20.

VERSE 23

While the inward man approved of the law, there was another law in his members - the outward man, warring against this law approved by the inward man.

The "law of my mind" is the law of God, the law addressed to the mind. Of course, it is through the mind that God seeks by His law to control the body. Hence, there is a warfare. If the appetites and passions of the body control the person, he is brought into captivity to the law of sin in his members. Verse 14 speaks of this condition as being sold under sin. Such a person is a slave of sin. It could not be said of a Christian that he was sold under sin, brought into captivity to the rule of sin. Here we see the complete helplessness of a person under the dominion of sin and without Christ.

VERSE 24

Paul speaks here of the moral and spiritual death to which the appetites and passions of the body had led. To be sold under sin and to be dead in sin are the same. It was not possible for the Jews to achieve justification, righteousness or holiness under the law before Jesus came. There was no way of escape until Christ is revealed to him. There was no answer to his question, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" until Jesus Christ is revealed to him. Really, the answer to Paul's question he has already given in verses 5, 6 of this chapter. He shows that under grace is a state in which we are "discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter." Can you imagine one being left with all his imperfections under the law, without grace, yearning to do good, but learning finally that the good is beyond his reach? What miserable slavery and wretchedness in which to be left. Yet, that is where the law leaves one.

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VERSE 25

There is no direct answer to Paul's question, "Who shall deliver me?" But, is not the answer in his exclamation, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"? He becomes emotional about Him who is the author of the redemption which he so earnestly desired.

To serve God with the mind must be the same as to worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24). We have here a contrast of two kinds of service - that of Christian and sinner. With the Christian, the mind dominates the life and worship. With the sinner, the flesh dominates the mind.

So the Jews who had obeyed the gospel, but had also wanted to be bound by the law, should be able to see the emphasized difference in being under the law of Moses and that of being free and forgiven by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Under the gospel, we can "walk in the light, as He is in the light...and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Chapter 8

VERSE 1

This opening verse is a conclusion, not from just a single argument, but from all the conclusions Paul has drawn in former chapters. Under Christ we have remission of sins, but we are dead to the law and therefore released from it. We are also dead to sin and therefore cannot continue in it. So this first verse is a summary conclusion from all that has now been established.

There is now no ground for condemnation. So complete are the provisions of the gospel for those who are in Christ Jesus, that there remains no reason why they should be condemned. Paul is not saying that should those in Christ sin, they will not be held responsible for it. But when they sin and repent, they will be forgiven. So it is still true that there is no ground for condemnation.

Those who are in Christ are obedient to Him. Those in Christ are the justified, the saved. Therefore, the only way to be under condemnation would be to willfully neglect to seek remission. If we sin but repent and ask forgiveness, then we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). We have been reconciled (5:10) and thus we shall be saved from wrath by Him (5:9). We have "peace with God" and we stand in His grace (5:1, 2).

The law of Moses condemned those who transgressed it, for no provision was made for the forgiveness of sins. But in Christ Jesus we have forgiveness and are therefore not condemned. But even in Christ we still have personal responsibility for our conduct.

The implication here is that there was condemnation under the law. This does not mean that sin in believers is not to be condemned, but that the gospel does not pronounce condemnation like the law. Its work is to pardon while the work of the law was to condemn. The law never afforded pardon, but the object of the gospel is to free us from condemnation. Now, we are to walk no more after the flesh (Galatians 5:19, 21). One whose purpose in life is to gratify his corrupt desires cannot be a Christian. If one lives to gratify his flesh, he has no evidence of being in Christ. When one walks after the Spirit, he is not condemned. If one lives as the Spirit has directed in the word of God, then there is no condemnation of him.

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VERSE 2

The law could not do what the Son has done; He delivered man from sin. The law was weak because it depended upon the flesh. The Spirit is the author of a law, the gospel, the doctrine of Christ. He is the source of spiritual life; where He dwells there is life. The "law of the Spirit of life" must be the same as the "law of faith" in Romans 3:27.

This law of the Spirit of life freed him. In 7:24 he asked, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In 6:17 he speaks of those who were slaves of sin but obeyed from the heart and were made "free from sin" (6:18). Thus, Paul had been set free from sin and its penalties by that justification which is in Christ by faith. "The law of the Spirit of life" and the "law of faith" are the same. Both affirm that man is justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law.

However, in 1 Corinthians 9:20, 21 Paul wrote of certain persons who were spoken of as "without law," that is, without Moses' law. But of the same persons, Paul said they were "under law to Christ." Thus freedom from Moses' law does not mean freedom from the higher law in Christ. All are under obligation to obey Christ. Paul called such obligations "the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). James called them "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), "the royal law" (2:8), and "the law of liberty" (2:12). Thus, the very gospel itself is a law that we are required to observe and obey upon pain of eternal condemnation if we neglect, refuse, or fail to do so (1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9). We must conclude that "the law of the Spirit of life" is the gospel, the law given by the Spirit through which life comes.

VERSE 3

The law could not do what the Son has done; He delivered man from sin. The law was weak because it depended on the flesh. Man is counted righteous only so far as he personally obeys the law. God took this into consideration when sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus lived a perfect life, showing that the weakness was not in the law but in man himself. Then He offered that same perfect life for sin, making justification possible (Hebrews 10:5-10). Thus Jesus obtained release from the condemnation that rests upon all sinners.

Let us remember that the law of God was holy and righteous and good (Romans 7:12), but men are not righteous (3:10, 23). God is the one

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who "condemned sin in the flesh." Jesus came in the "likeness of sinful flesh." That is, He was flesh (John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14ff). He had the same temptations yet never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15). He had no "wages of sin" coming to Him (Romans 6:23). Thus, God offered His own Son as a "propitiation" or a satisfaction. Thereby God's righteousness was upheld, for the penalty for sin was paid.

Through weakness of the flesh, the law (a perfect law) was not kept, for when it was broken it was powerless to deliver. It could have delivered if it had been perfectly kept. If any under the law had perfectly kept it, he would have been sinless and so uncondemned. This would have been his deliverance. But each one under it broke it, and therefore each one was alike condemned. From this the law provided no escape.

Therefore, God sent His Son in a fleshly, mortal body. Jesus kept His body in perfect subjection and kept it from committing sin. His body possessed the same tendency to sin as other flesh and in the same degree. He was not only sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, but the Father sent Him for sin, to put away sin. It was not for His own sin (He had none), but for the sin of all mankind. "In the likeness of sinful flesh" tells how God sent His Son; "for sin" gives the purpose or reason for His sending Him. Condemnation rests upon sinners and the law of Moses could not free a person from sin and death. But God does this by the mission of His Son who died as a sin offering. Thus in His flesh He condemned sin.

Jesus was made in all things like His brethren and was without sin. This shows conclusively that sin is not a part of man's nature. Human flesh is not sinful in and of itself. If so, the flesh of Jesus was sinful. When Adam and Eve were first created, they had all that belongs to human nature. Sin came into their lives as a foreign element. Sin is no more a part of your nature than dust in your eye is a part of the nature of your eye. The desires, appetites and passions of the flesh so often lead to sin; therefore flesh is called sinful. However, fleshly desires lead to sin only when the mind or heart purposes to gratify the flesh in an unlawful way.

The law of Moses "was weak through the flesh" in seeking to control the flesh instead of the heart. Weakness was in the heart, not in the law. Law would not justify unless one were perfect. And our weakness through the flesh prevents our reaching perfection. We do want to remember that the flesh of humanity is sinful, not from birth or by

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nature, but from the practice of sin. Therefore, Christ's coming into the world was on account of sin, to deal with sin, to provide an atonement for sin, to condemn sin in the flesh. The word "condemn" here is used in the sense of taking away the dominion of sin over men. Jesus condemned sin by living free from it, then offering that body as a sacrifice for sin.

VERSE 4

The word "righteousness" used here means requirement, or as the American Standard Version gives it, ordinance. We do know that the law of Moses required righteousness and that could be fulfilled only by perfect obedience. If this could have taken place, then God would have nothing against a person.

The mission of the gospel is to take sinners and make the righteous or justified. If this is done, then God would have nothing against a person. The thing the law required but could not accomplish, is fulfilled in those who obey the gospel. The gospel accomplishes therefore, what the law would have accomplished in us had there been no transgression of the law. The "us" in this verse is the same as "them that are in Christ Jesus" of 8:1. Now to walk after or according to the flesh means to be subject to the flesh which has a tendency to sin. To walk according to the Spirit is to be obedient to the teachings of the Spirit. We consider ourselves to be dead to sin and thus we do not live our lives in obedience to the lusts of the flesh (6:11-13). Those who walk after the Spirit are considered righteous just as if they had kept the law perfectly.

The word "walk" refers to the manner of life. To walk according to the flesh is to lead an animal life. He lives as if this life were all that is worthwhile. To walk after the Spirit is to keep the flesh under control so as to promote spiritual growth in the service of God.

VERSE 5

Those who are governed by the law of the flesh care for or seek the things that pertain to the flesh. The word "flesh" here means human nature as corrupted, directed and controlled by sin. They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Paul enumerates the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. To "mind the things of the flesh" is to give time and attention to only the things of this life, leaving God and our eternal salvation out of consideration. The word "mind" carried with it the thought of deliberately setting the mind upon a certain thing. With

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this definition, we can see the reason the flesh is called "sinful." This is simply the domination of the flesh by a mind at enmity with God.

Our mind is to be set on the things of the Spirit rather than the things of the flesh. We are to be really sensitive to the things revealed or taught by the Spirit. Also, we are to be challenged to produce in our lives the fruits of the Spirit as set forth in Galatians 5:22, 23.

VERSE 6

Minding the things of the flesh ends in death, but minding the things of the Spirit (who has made known God's will for us) is life and peace. The mind of the flesh is like the reprobate mind of the Gentile (Romans 1:28), the way of thinking which is dedicated to satisfying the lusts of man (6:12; Galatians 5:17). It seeks to "do the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Ephesians 2:3). Such an one is indeed not "dead unto sin" (Romans 6:11).

The spiritual is that which has died to sin and has yielded itself to the service of God. This results in the peace which we have with God in Jesus Christ (5:1).

The carnal mind not only leads us to death (or misery), but it is death itself. Being devoted to the corrupt passions and desires leads to condemnation and despair. The "death" here surely means the penalty of transgression, condemnation and eternal ruin.

"Spiritually minded" means the minding of the Spirit. To submit to the teaching (thus the leading) of the Spirit, to seek those things and views which have been set forth by the Spirit. The result is life. This is opposed to death. The two lives are going in different directions. One is on the way to death; there is no future in it because it is getting farther and farther away from God. To allow worldly things to dominate one's life is spiritual suicide; it is soul destroying. However, the Christ-centered life is on the way to life. It is coming nearer heaven even when it is still on earth.

VERSE 7

The carnal mind is not ours by reason of fleshly birth, but rather is something we assume and cultivate. It is such a mind that has no regard or concern for spiritual and eternal things, but is occupied completely with the earthly life of flesh. This mind is not an endowment of birth, but it becomes such through one's rebellion against God. Paul's teaching

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here is the same as Jesus' teaching regarding two masters in Matthew 6:24. If he decides to serve one, he cannot serve the other. It is simply the soul's right to decide. God has given man the option to serve one or the other. Man has the right of decision, and therefore the mind of the flesh is morally accountable to God. The most wicked of men have the right of decision if they elect to exercise it.

The "carnal mind" here is explained in the marginal reading, the minding of the flesh. Thus Paul says nothing to the doctrine of total depravity. The carnal mind is not something done to us before our birth, but it is something we come to practice ourselves. The carnal mind is something we cultivate by our choice to attend to the flesh. One cannot be obedient to the law of God while attending to the flesh. Therefore one must turn (repent) from attending to the flesh. As long as we are ruled by the flesh, we cannot be obedient to the law of God. The law of God and the evil tendency of the flesh are antagonistic.

While one is devoted to the flesh, he is not being subject to the will of God. This does not mean that one who is living a worldly life cannot turn from it and become subject to the law of God. It does mean that one cannot live for the things of the world and at the same time be subject to the law of God. To live a worldly life, a life devoted to the flesh, is to be in the flesh.

VERSE 8

The reason they cannot please God is because they are constantly sinning against Him. These are controlled by the flesh. They cannot serve the flesh and God at the same time. Galatians 5:19 lists the works of the flesh. If we live in these things we become the enemies of God.

The definition of the man who is in the flesh is the man, any man, who does not have the Spirit of Christ. Man may be wicked but there is enough divinity in him to enable him to exercise the option of whom he wills to serve. To obey and live by the word delivered to us by the Spirit enables us to be pleasing to God. Then we are not in the flesh, not living in rebellion to the Spirit's message; therefore the Spirit dwells in us. It is no longer the spirit of the devil in us but the Spirit of God.

Paul is saying you are not now living after the flesh if the Holy Spirit dwells in you. Therefore, God's Spirit and not the devil's spirit now dwells in you. Unless the law of the Spirit dwells in us and controls us,

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we are none of His. If the law of our flesh rules, then the law of the Spirit does not dwell within us. Not to be in the flesh is not to live according to it, and not to live according to it is not to allow it to control us. We are to yield to the Spirit (as He guides through the word of God). The things taught by Paul are words which the Holy Spirit teaches (1 Corinthians 2:13). Thus the one in whom the Spirit dwells is led about in life by that which the Spirit has revealed (Ephesians 3:5). The Spirit is not dwelling in one who is walking after the flesh or who sets his mind on fleshly things. These Roman saints were living in the body, but they were not fulfilling the desires of the flesh. They were walking in harmony with the law of the Spirit.

VERSE 10

Christ dwells in us when the character of Christ is formed within us (Galatians 4:19). The Holy Spirit dwells in us in the same way that Christ is formed in us. Christ lives in us by "the faith of the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20), and the Holy Spirit dwells in us in the same way that Christ lives in us (Romans 8:9,10). The Spirit of Christ in you is here equated with Christ in you. It must therefore refer to the mind, the disposition, the character of Christ which the Spirit imparts through His teaching.

"The body is dead because of sin." The body is doomed to die physically whether Christ dwells in us or not. The body is dead because on account of Adam's sin, but the Spirit is life on account of the righteousness afforded us in Christ. Our sins are blotted out and our body is no longer active in sin - no longer an instrument of sin.

VERSE 11

The death of the body is at last to be nullified by the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. This will take place when the dead in Christ rise to meet the Lord in the air. The body in which we now live will be restored to life. The restored body will be changed into a spiritual (or deathless) body.

Another view of this passage may be more in harmony with what has been said before. That is, the resurrection of our mortal bodies does not depend upon the Spirit's dwelling in us. The Scriptures teach that the wicked as well as the righteous will be raised. Paul has just stated that the body was dead because of sin, no longer active in sin. But is it to

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remain altogether inactive? Has he not already said that God will make our bodies alive to righteousness? Somehow this giving of life to our mortal bodies connects with the life already given to the spirit. Therefore, it seems that our bodies as well as our spirits shall be made alive to righteousness while we live here.

We are required to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (12:1). So if the Spirit of God dwells in us, not only are our spirits alive to righteousness but our bodies will also be made alive to the service of God (2 Corinthians 4:11). Those Roman Jewish Christians should now be able to see the inability of the law by itself to produce the higher spiritual life. Paul has shown that the gospel provides just such a power as law lacks, to revive and renew the human spirit so as to enable it to mold and master the whole life.

VERSE 12

Attending to the flesh leads to death. Surely God does not will that we follow a course that leads to our own destruction. To live after the flesh is to live a worldly life. But if we are not debtors to the flesh, then what? Evidently we are debtors to our spirits. We are obligated to attend to the things of the spirit. As the spirit controls the body, we must keep our spirits pure. It is the spirit that endures to eternity, therefore we must guard it lest we miss eternal life.

"To the flesh" here may mean to the corrupt propensities and passions. We are not bound to indulge them because the end of such indulgence is death and ruin. But we are bound to live to God and at last to have life and peace.

In this verse, there is an exhortation regarding the two ways to live, and Paul has already fully outlined the consequences. The death here is spiritual because Christians are not exempt from physical death. Therefore he is speaking of eternal consequences. If we live after the flesh, the end is eternal death (Romans 21:8).

VERSE 13

Reference here is to spiritual death because both Christians and those who are not die physically. Here Paul speaks of the same death which he discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

But if we follow the law given by the Spirit of life, we restrain and control the desires of the flesh and we shall live with Christ. We are to

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die to sin (6:11), and those who do, no longer let sin rule over their mortal bodies to obey its lusts (6:12).

In writing to the Colossians, Paul says we are to “put to death, therefore, our members which are upon the earth...” (Colossians 3:5). These sins listed are the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19). These are put to death “by the Spirit” because we allow the Spirit to lead us away from these things (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16-18).

“Live” in this clause is the opposite of “die” in the previous clause. Both are spiritual concepts. To live is to live in fellowship with God. The choice is man’s to live after the flesh and die, or live through the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body and live (Colossians 3:1-7). The word “mortify” in this passage means to put to death, or to destroy. “The deeds of the body” refers to the corrupt inclinations and passions having their origin in the fleshly appetites.

So, Paul is saying “Either your sins must die, or you must.” If you allow your sins to live, you will die. If your sins are put to death, you will be saved. No one can be saved in his sins. Remember Paul’s reasoning about the law and the gospel? In Romans 8:13, he is showing that the gospel has accomplished what the law could not do - the sanctification of the soul, the destruction of the corrupt passions, and the recovery of man to God. We see also that the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy “goes out the window” when we read this verse.

We must remember always that there is to be no relaxation of moral requirements for those who are in Christ. Believing and obeying the gospel and rejoicing in the grace of God, does not cause sin to be any less sin for the Christian. Putting to death the deeds of the body is a daily task of the soul in Christ.

VERSE 14

The Spirit of God operates through the gospel (John 14:16, 17). Nothing is said here as to how the Spirit leads people. However, Paul continues to develop his theme that the gospel is God’s power to save. It must be certain therefore that the Spirit leads through the power of the gospel which has been revealed to us in the New Testament. All the information we need in living the Christian life has been given to us in the New Testament by the Holy Spirit. In this revelation the Spirit has told us how to live, and He also sets motives before us to induce us to

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follow His directions. If the Spirit, independent of the gospel, leads people to become Christians, then the gospel is not God's power to save. So those who are led by the Spirit of God are those who follow the word of God which has been given us by the Spirit of God.

But Paul says that they who are thus led are "the sons of God." We are in His family and we are His children. We are His friends, disciples and imitators. We are a part of the great family of the redeemed of whom He is the Father and protector. We are "the sons of God" (John 1:12; Philippians 2:15; 1 John 3:1, 2) and we are "the children of God" (Matthew 5:9, 45; Luke 6:35).

The term "sons" denotes a legal relationship, one of privilege and of right. "Children" is the term usually used by John and denotes kinship, nature, birth, origin. Strictly speaking, one becomes a "son" by adoption and a "child" by the "new birth."

God is our Father, and we have full assurance in His word that we are His children if we have been born again. Thus we should offer no resistance to His will, but we should follow Him cheerfully in obedience to His word. This attitude will cause us to put to death our pride, subdue our passions, destroy our lust, and annihilate our love for the world. Our Father will not lead us astray. Our peace and happiness will be in yielding ourselves to His will, and in being willing to be conducted along life's way by His strong arm.

VERSE 15

In becoming God's children, we do not enter a bondage similar to that of the Old Testament. Under Jewish law they were moved through fear. So we do not serve God because we fear Him but because we love Him. We serve through a spirit of filial obedience. We are now to render trusting obedience to God.

While we were in bondage to sin before our conversion to Christ, now we rejoice in the spirit of sonship. We are no longer subject to our former fears, but with all sins forgiven and realizing we are God's children, we cry unto Him as our Father.

"Abba" is a Chaldean or Syriac word signifying father or my father. Jesus used this address when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). It denotes an affectionate and endearing pleading with the Father. It also indicates a stressing of the relationship of children and

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father. Paul uses the expression "Abba Father" in Galatians 4:6.

In both of these passages, the expression is preceded by the word "cry" or "crying." This is not only an earnest but a natural expression of desire. Children who cannot speak often vent their desires by crying. Sometimes they can say little but "Father, Father."

The spirit of fear is displaced by a spirit of reverence, trust and worship. No longer are we moved by fear as were slaves, but now as children of God our Father. Surely we can never do enough to show our appreciation and total dependence upon our Father.

VERSE 16

It is by the Spirit that we are able to cry "Abba Father." It is the Spirit that tells us we are God's children. The Spirit tells us through revelation (1 John 5:13). It is by the Spirit of God that we know who the children of God and the children of Satan are. We are "led by the Spirit" in such matters. Based on the testimony of the Spirit, Paul is reassuring his readers of their blessed state as God's redeemed people.

Does the Holy Spirit witness by "a still small voice" directly to the one concerned? Does he witness by giving us a certain feeling which is "better felt than told"? The Holy Spirit tells us what one must do and be to be a child of God, and our spirit of submission shows that we possess the characteristics of sonship. This proves, not only to ourselves but also to the world, that we are children of God. The Holy Spirit revealed the commandments (in the Bible) and also the promise of salvation connected with those commandments. For example: the Holy Spirit said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Now when we have accepted heaven's offer by believing and obeying such a command, then our spirit is also a witness that we are saved and are children of God. The Holy Spirit bears witness "with our spirit," not "to" our spirit, that we are children of God. The only testimony of the Spirit we have is revealed to us in the New Testament.

VERSE 17

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, though they are also servants, serve in the spirit of children, and not in the spirit of slaves. Thus a life of devotion guided by the testimony of the Holy Spirit is double evidence that we are children of God (Matthew 5:16). Then the fruits of sonship are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." But this

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is not an unconditional inheritance. Note the condition, "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

Our future glory is spoken of as a reward for suffering. If we suffer with Christ, for His honor and because of having a good conscience, He promises that we shall be glorified with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). As God's children, we become heirs of His inheritance and joint heirs with Jesus, the only begotten Son of God (1 John 3:2).

Those under the law are not heirs of God's promise (Romans 4:13, 14), but all believers in Christ are heirs of God's promise to Abraham (4:24). Under the gospel only those who suffer with Him will be glorified. To suffer means to deny ourselves (Matthew 16:24), take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23), accept responsibility to do that which we are able to do (Matthew 25:14-30), then we may be glorified with Him (John 17:24; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1).

VERSE 18

Even though we may suffer here as Christians, we are encouraged by the greatness of the reward (2 Corinthians 4:8-12; 2 Timothy 2:11, 12; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Jesus suffered and was afterward glorified. Is He not an example to the people of God? (Hebrews 2:10, 11; 12:1-4; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 4:13). Suffering with Christ is part of being united with Him and precedes being glorified with Him. Even in suffering the Christian can find victory by looking to the glory that will be his. It seems the point here is that the glory far outweighs the present sufferings. The time of suffering is short but the glory and bliss of the reward are eternal. Even though our sufferings may be very real and we may make a great deal out of them, still they are utterly insignificant and not even worthy of mention in the light of the glory which is to be revealed to us. The sufferings are small and short and concern the body only, but the glory is rich and great and concerns the soul and is eternal.

Paul knew what the sufferings of this present time were and he knew what the glory of heaven is (2 Corinthians 12:3, 4).

VERSE 19

"For the earnest expectation" denotes a state of earnest desire, an intense anxiety, an ardent wish. The word earnest in the English may also be translated eager, thus the eager longing or the eager expectation.

"Of the creature" is nearly always translated creation. This is exactly

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the same Greek word as in Mark 16:15. The *American Standard Version* translates this "and preach the gospel to the whole creation." *Weymouth's Version* reads, "and proclaim the gospel to all mankind." Therefore, the words creature and creation are not speaking of animals and plants, but of intelligent beings who had a real interest in the resurrection and glorification of the children of God. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:17, speaks of Christians as "new creatures" or as a new creation.

Again, Paul in Colossians 1:23 uses the word "creature" when he said, "and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven..." Surely then, these expressions mean human beings only and not animals and inanimate portions of the creation.

The future revelation of the glory which will make our sufferings of the present seem as nothing causes this new creation (Christians) to look forward to it with eagerness. Surely Paul speaks of those intelligent beings who had a real interest in the resurrection and glorification of the children of God. Who but Christians are so hopefully interested in the great event here described? Of course, sufferings, death and decay are the common lot of all human beings, but only Christians have the hope and look forward to the manifestation (revealing) of the sons of God.

"The earnest expectation (eager expectation) of the creature (creation)" must be similar to the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). "The glory which shall be revealed in us" which is eagerly awaited in verse 19, must be similar to the adoption or the redemption of our body in 8:23. These terms refer to the events of the judgment day, when Jesus comes to claim His own. On that day all will know with certainty who the children of God are. We have learned that on that day the wrath of God, the glory and the children of God will be revealed (1:18; 2:5; 8:18, 19). It seems that the main design of the passage is to show the sustaining power of the gospel in the midst of trials by the prospect of the future deliverance and inheritance of the children of God.

VERSE 20

The "creature" here is surely mankind. He was made a subject of "vanity," or corruption, death, and decay because of his sin. Mortality and all the miseries of life might be included here also. Because of Adam's sin, we are born into a world of sin and death, thus subject to mortality. Adam and Eve did not leave the garden of Eden willingly.

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They had to be driven out (Genesis 3:24). "Him" means God who subjected man to an existence that would end in death of the body, but at the same time gave him hope of a deathless body in the world to come (Romans 8:23). Genesis 3:15 tells of this wonderful hope which was to be made real by the coming of Jesus Christ and His death for us.

VERSE 21

There is an impurity and infirmity which the creature (man) has contracted because of the sin of Adam and Eve. But he will be delivered from this "bondage of corruption" when he comes into Christ, lives in view of the Lord's coming, dies in the triumph of a strong faith, and welcomes the coming of the Lord. What joy it will be to share in the glorious freedom of God's children! Then there will be no more death, sorrow, partings, and without a stain of sin. "Glorious liberty" or freedom awaits God's children. We shall then be freed from the grave, from bodily infirmity, and from every consequence of sin.

The expression, "bondage of corruption," is proof of which creation Paul meant in these verses. This terminology excludes both the brute and inanimate creations and points at the sons of Adam. Others' statements in this section simply cannot fit animal or inanimate life. Animals cannot be thought of as being in the bondage of corruption nor as having any prospect of ever getting out of it.

What Paul says of the "creation", he is saying of the church. The same things are said of the sufferings, the hope and the final glory of faithful Christians. The last part of verse 21, "into the glorious liberty of the children of God" is rendered by Phillips as "which can only belong to the children of God." Paul had said (verse 18) "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," and the verses just studied are saying amen to verse 18!

VERSE 22

It seems Paul here speaks of the whole human race. He reminds Christians that sufferings, death and decay are not peculiar to Christians but are the common lot of all human beings. Suffering is the common lot of the whole human family. The whole creation suffered from the effects of man's sin, suffering and groaning in its mortality. These pangs of the world cannot be unmeaning. They must point to a coming time of deliv-

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ery when “according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).

VERSE 23

Not only does the whole creation of man suffer and groan, but even Christians who have the fruit of the Spirit groan and suffer within themselves. We who have the first fruits of the Spirit are compared to the creation of verse 22. We must not be the same as the creation. It seems Paul may be saying that “even we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit also groan within ourselves ...” Surely the firstfruits of the Spirit in the Christian dispensation were the miraculous powers conferred upon the apostles. So Paul is reminding other Christians that suffering is the common lot of the whole human family, and that even we the apostles who have all these miraculous endowments of the Spirit, also groan within ourselves on account of our burdens and afflictions, “waiting for the redemption of our bodies.” Thus all mankind, even Christians, even those who received miraculous power and gifts, do suffer and groan within themselves.

“Waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” Surely this refers to the resurrection - putting off corruption and putting on incorruption. The adoption will be final and complete when man possesses his body free of the sentence of death.

VERSE 24

The word “for” shows connection with the preceding verses. In context, this is the hope of freedom from corruption (verse 21), the glory that is to be revealed (verse 18), the adoption and the redemption of our body (verse 23). Christians are subject to corruption, but they hope to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the children of God (verses 20, 21). In this hope we are saved, faith guides and hope stimulates us to patient endurance.

“But hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees?” We do have God’s word to assure us that rich blessings are to follow, but we must continue to believe in what God has promised (Hebrews 11:1, 7). The nature of hope is that there is more to come. “We are saved in hope,” he says. Therefore, we do not now have all that God intends for us to have; otherwise, there would be no need to hope for something. Because we have this hope, we can with patience wait for the future

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redemption of our bodies.

VERSE 25

Without hope we would not endure, we would not strive. Hope anchors our soul to the eternal world. "Hope lost, all is lost." In this hope we bear with patience present labors and delays. Without this hope there could not be the patience which is required to prevent the child of God from falling into discouragement. It is a faithful trusting in "things not seen as yet."

This hope which saves is grounded in the Christian's living faith, but it must also be distinguished from faith. In 1 Corinthians 13:13 we read, "and now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Thus, faith and hope are distinctive in God's way of saving men. With steadfastness or endurance we eagerly await our unseen hope because we believe in the promises of God.

VERSE 26

The word "likewise" implies that something already mentioned also helps. Surely it is our hope (verses 24,25). If we have a strong hope we can meet life's trials, bear them, and be faithful in spite of them. The word infirmities may also be translated weakness. But with all our frailties, if we have hope we can reach heaven at last (Colossians 1:5).

In considering the rest of this verse, we need to remember that when Paul wrote this letter, the written revelation had not been completed and churches were led by the Spirit, by the spiritual gifts which they received through the hands of an apostle. This revelation was attended by miraculous manifestations to confirm the revelation. Spiritual gifts furnished the revelation which was to lead or guide until revelation was completed. The church in Rome had spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-6). The Spirit dwelt in them (8:9). False teachers did not have the Spirit to guide them (8:9). It was the miraculous operation of the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead (8:14). The leading of the Spirit in verse 14 was by the indwelling of the Spirit mentioned in the preceding verses. The witness of the Holy Spirit in the apostolic age was the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit that confirmed the word. Surely the Holy Spirit does bear witness through the written word today, but it must be remembered that before the New Testament was completed the witness of the Holy Spirit was direct in revealing the word and confirming it.

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It seems that the common interpretation of verses 26 and 27 is that when a Christian today cannot find words to express his petition, then the Holy Spirit takes his groanings and intercedes for him to God. The role and work of the Holy Spirit was to reveal the mind of God to man, but it is difficult to understand why God needs the Spirit to interpret man's needs to Him. If it is true that the Spirit takes the groanings of the Christian and interprets them to God today, then this work of the Spirit is confined to the Christian age. There is no indication that the Spirit did this either in the Patriarchal or the Jewish age. But there were people who had burdens before the Christian age. There were those who groaned under their burdens before the Christian age. There were those who prayed under such burdens before the Christian age. In fact, Acts 7:34 is a reference to Israel in Egyptian bondage and they groaned and God heard their groanings. The Holy Spirit did not take their groanings and interpret them to God. May not God likewise hear the groanings of Christians today?

In the apostolic age there was inspired prayer, for indeed how else would one know for what to pray? The Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God for instruction, and the Holy Spirit also revealed prayer (1 Corinthians 14:14). The tongue was a gift (1 Corinthians 12:10). If one spoke in a tongue, it was by direct revelation. If one prayed in a tongue, it was by direct revelation. A prayer in a tongue was an inspired prayer, but inspired prayer was not limited to the one who had the gift of tongues. (See Jude 19, 20). Praying in the Holy Spirit was praying by the inspiration of the Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit revealed the prayer. This harmonizes with the work of the Spirit in revealing God's will. The Roman letter has a good deal to say about these spiritual gifts.

Do we know today "what we should pray for as we ought"? Indeed, we can know because of the revelation by the Spirit of the word and will of God which is now written down! The faith has now been "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

VERSE 27

Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you" (John 16:23). But how shall we learn to ask according to His will? Why, the Spirit will teach that. When those brethren had received the Spirit, they could then teach without error the will of God concerning

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prayer offered to Him. We do not know how to pray as we ought unless someone teaches us. Uninspired teachers could not tell others God's will concerning prayer. But those who were miraculously endowed by the Spirit could tell others God's will about praying. The Spirit revealed God's will concerning prayer to the apostles and thus today we can read that will in the inspired book written by those who were guided by the Spirit.

This interest on the part of the Holy Spirit and our God is made clear as Paul was guided to write in 1 Corinthians 2:10, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." God's will for man has been revealed by the Holy Spirit; therefore, He searches our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is the go-between for God and man so far as making known what God wills us to know. Or we might say, God searches our hearts through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

VERSE 28

We are certain that "all things" God has ever done work together for the good of the saints who are the called according to His purpose. However, in the context Paul has been discussing "the sufferings of this present time" (Romans 8:18), "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain" (verse 22), "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities" (verse 26), and now he is saying "God can make even our sufferings and disappointments work for our good."

This promise is to those who "love God," and who are "the called according to His purpose." "The called" here surely must refer to those who have responded to God's call through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14). He "called according to His purpose." This refers no doubt to His eternal purpose as set forth in Ephesians 1:9; 3:10, 11. From the very beginning God purposed man, foresaw his fall and purposed a redeemer, a plan of redemption, and eternal life for the obedient. God saw the end as clearly as He saw the beginning. So Paul is talking about what God had done, what He does through the gospel, through Christ who knows our hearts. He has shown how hope sustains us, how the Holy Spirit through revelation (the word) assures us.

But, who are those who love God? See John 14:21; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6. God's purpose in sending His Son was to save those who believe on

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Him. Therefore He purposed to save men through His Son. The Son issues the call in Matthew 11:28-30 and those who answer this call are "the called according to His purpose" (his plan) (2 Timothy 1:9).

Surely the response we make to sufferings, sorrows and infirmities should be one of patience, submission, humility, prayer, love, hope, and faith. This will be our response if we "love God." And, who is it that loves God? That answer is found in John 14:15,21.

Those who are "called according to His purpose" are those who are called "in one body" (the church) Colossians 3:15). It is in the church that we see "the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10,11). What Paul is now writing is of God's purposing being kept in silence or in "secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5). "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints" (Colossians 1:26). Thus, God's eternal purpose of gathering the saved of all ages into one body "in Christ" was a design "which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7).

VERSES 29, 30

God's plan for our salvation was predetermined. The death of Christ, the preaching of the gospel, the salvation which is in Christ, and the standard of conduct in Christ have been foreordained. God has predestined that those who are "in Christ" shall be saved, but He has not determined who will and will not be in Christ. But in this verse God predetermined that those who are in Christ should be conformed to the image of His Son (see Ephesians 1:4). Thus the persons whom He foreknew were the persons whom He foresaw would do His will. In the matter of obedience He left them wholly uninfluenced by any predetermining act of His; that is, He left them free. His act of predetermination did not determine their obedience. That was determined by their own voluntary act of obedience. Remember, it is God's plan that one be called by the preaching of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Then these are in the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). Those who answered the call were justified (Romans 3:24; 5:1,9). Some did not answer the call of the gospel

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(10:1,5,16). Those in Christ who have been justified are to be glorified (5:9,10). God has predestined justified people to glory and it is spoken of as if it had already taken place (8:17,18,23,25). God knew from the beginning of man's response to the gospel, and He justifies now on condition of an obedient faith. This does not mean that a person once justified cannot be lost. He is predestined to glory as long as he stands in grace (5:1). Those who are actually called are justified, forgiven and made righteous. These are the ones who in the final day are glorified. So Paul in these verses is viewing the whole process of redemption through Christ.

VERSE 31

It seems Paul is ready to draw some conclusions from the previous discussion.

"These things" must include all of chapter 8 in which Paul demonstrates the many ways in which God is "for us" who are in Christ Jesus. There is no condemnation in Christ (verse 1). We are free from the law of sin and death (verse 2). God gives us life and peace (verse 6). The Holy Spirit testifies that we are God's children (verse 16). Because we are in Christ we are predestined to glory (verse 30). Surely all these things demonstrate that "God is for us."

"Who is against us?" God is indeed for us. Who then is our adversary? What adversary could be a worthy opponent of God? There is none! The state of the person in Christ is solid and secure.

VERSE 32

If God gave the greatest, most precious gift of His Son, He will not withhold any of the lesser things that might be good for us. The all things which He gives us are the all things that work together for our good.

If God would provide the unspeakable gift of His Son, then He could not fail to provide whatever else might be required to accomplish His purpose of redeeming men. All that God is, and has, and does, is for His people. Who would dare fight against us when God Himself is fighting for us?

VERSES 33, 34

"Who can bring a charge against God's chosen?" God is for us as a

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father is for his children, He has chosen us in His Son, He has forgiven our sins. Who under these circumstances can bring and sustain a charge against us? The reply is, no one!

The word "elect" here means picked out, chosen. God does not choose at random, there is a reason for the choice He makes. He chooses or elects all who obey Him regardless of race, social standing, or financial rating.

God justified the obedient ones and no one can bring a charge against his elect that will cause Him to condemn them! Will Christ condemn them? Certainly not those whom God justifies, for He died for them and now makes intercession for them. So only those whom God does not justify will be condemned. All judgment has been committed to Christ our advocate with the Father. We need not be apprehensive: "Who shall accuse you? Shall Christ who died for you?"

VERSES 35, 36

Paul seems to say, "If God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are for us, then we should never fear some lesser power causing us to become separated from God." How could we possibly allow anything on this earth to separate us from our Lord who died for us? Even the worst of temptations should not cause us to be separated from the state into which our Father and Saviour have brought us. In this verse Paul asks if even "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Evidently Paul here refers to "our love for Christ." We are assured that persecution and death did not keep Him from loving us. But the question is, will these sore trials from without cause us to separate ourselves from Him? Since God loved us and Christ died for us, we know they will never separate themselves from us. It is reasonable however, that the suffering we undergo in serving Christ might cause our love to grow cold and even vanish. If we love Christ and our Father as we should, then none of these things will destroy that love, only the condition of our own heart can cause us to cease loving Him (Matthew 24:11,12). Can force destroy a man's love for his sweetheart? Can her parents cool his ardor by forbidding that love? Can obstacles in its way restrain it? But that love can fail! It simply waxes cold of its own accord. He of his own accord departs from his first love.

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The sufferings referred to and to which many have been subjected are not anything peculiar. They have been the lot of the righteous in all ages (Psalms 44:22). So common was this persecution in the days of the psalmist, that they were counted by those that do it merely as so many sheep ready for the slaughter. So whatever happened to us we will not love Him less, and He certainly will not love us any less. Though we may suffer for His name and even lose all for Him, we shall never love Him less.

VERSE 37

The expression "all these things" surely refers to the sufferings and hardships just mentioned (Romans 8:35). When we have successfully endured them we have triumphed over them. Then this victory has even increased our love and brought about a great growth in our character and in favor with God. We conquer through Christ's love manifested in His death as well as His continuing love for us.

The expression "more than conquerors" means a surpassing victory, "to overpower in victory, to be abundantly victorious." Thus, we are drawn closer to Him who enabled us to be victorious over "all these things."

The apostle himself was "more than conqueror." True, he lost his physical life because of his love for the Lord, but think of the many victories we have won because of his great example! What an encouragement he has been to us. Not only by his death did Paul win a great victory, but consider his sufferings as listed by Him in 2 Corinthians 11. The one who cannot be conquered should surely be counted as "more than a conqueror!"

VERSES 38, 39

Surely the things enumerated by the writer in these verses are regarded as hostile to the Christian. It must be obvious that these things can have the effect to separate one from the love of God. Hence the word "life" may mean the hard life we live in the flesh - the burdens, toils and griefs. Paul was convinced that none of the trials and difficulties he endured would ever move him to give up Christ. And he was right!

No power or persecutions can force one to quit loving God. If one quits he does it of his own free will. Love cannot be destroyed by force or by imperial command, but it may grow cold (Revelation 2:4). Love can

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fail. Of his own accord, one can simply depart from his first love. Even though none of the things here mentioned by Paul can rob us of the love of God, we ourselves can forfeit it by becoming unfaithful to Him.

Paul seems to be saying that the sacrifice made for us is so great, the life to be lived in Christ is so satisfying, the promises are so precious, and the reward is so rich that nothing should be able to separate us from this hope!

Chapter 9

In the first eight chapters of this book, Paul has clearly shown that the gospel of Christ is now the message of salvation for all men. This of course included the Jews. But they rejected the Messiah and this pressed hard upon the heart of Paul. So in the next several chapters, Paul will deal with the problem of Israel's rejection of the Christ.

It seems the Jews wondered what would become of the chosen people if salvation is only through faith in Christ and does not involve works of the law. They could not conceive that all were guilty alike before God, that there was but one way for Jews and Gentiles to be saved, and that was by faith in Jesus Christ. They might wonder if one of their own had become the exclusive advocate of the Gentiles. Such of course was not true. Paul had an unabated love for his countrymen and a great regard for their welfare.

The Jews were God's chosen people and they wondered then how the people of Israel could be under the wrath of God. God will show that they were not condemned because they were under the law, but because they had rejected Christ the Saviour.

VERSE 1

"I say the truth in Christ" is a common form of emphasis with Paul (2 Corinthians 2:17; 12:19; Ephesians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:1). The meaning seems to be as one in Christ or in union with Christ. He is saying that what he is about to write is not a lie. His conscience did not condemn him in what he is about to say, and besides what he will write was told him by the Holy Spirit. So in assuring his readers he appeals to Christ, to his own conscience, and to the Holy Spirit that he speaks only the truth.

To emphasize what he is saying, he uses both positive and negative statements. This use is common in the Scriptures. Isaiah said, "Thou shalt die and not live" (Isaiah 38:1). In the New Testament we find, "He confessed and denied not" (John 1:20). Paul realized he was in Christ and therefore under the most solemn obligation to speak only the truth.

VERSE 2

Paul assures them he is telling the truth when he says he has "great heaviness and continued sorrow" in his heart. Surely he refers to the Jews who had rejected Christ. Though from the day of his conversion they had

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persecuted him with relentless hatred, he had a great love for his people. Their rejection caused him constant pain, great grief and continual sorrow.

VERSE 3

Paul uses one of the strongest words to evidence his love for his fleshly people, the Israelites. The word accursed is powerful indeed. Most translations leave the word anathema in the text. It is a stronger term than accursed. Of course such a trade is not possible, but he would have been willing to suffer greatly if it could be the means of their salvation. They were his "kinsmen according to the flesh," but there existed no spiritual kinship between Paul and the nation of Israel. Surely he was willing to suffer the bitterest evils, to forego all pleasure, to endure hardship, and even to offer his life as an offering if it might be the means of saving his kinsmen.

There is a great truth here for us today - if we would save the sinner, we must love the sinner. Moses made a somewhat similar statement concerning the Israelites (Exodus 32:33). How bold and self-denying genuine love can be!

Many scholars believe that the expression "I could wish" in this verse is a hypothetical and conditional expression. Thus the meaning would be, I could wish were the thing allowable, possible, or proper.

VERSE 4

Paul's brethren were descendants of Jacob the son of Isaac who was the son of Abraham. This Jacob God had named Israel. The name meant prince of God or one who contends with God (Genesis 32:28-30). God made the Israelites His children, so we see the word "adoption" in the text. He cared for them and looked after them despite their sins and rebellions against Him. Out of all the nations on earth, God chose Israel to be His children. Time and again, the glory of God was manifested in behalf of the children of Israel (Exodus 34:29-35; 29:43; 40:34,35). These appearances were peculiar to the Israelites. God made covenants with Abraham (Genesis 15:18; 17:2,4,7-11) and renewed them to Isaac (26:24), to Jacob (28:13,15), and to the whole people of Israel (Exodus 24:7,8). Then the law of Moses was given to them. Finally, He bestowed upon them a special honor when He prescribed their service in the tabernacle and the temple. They were the heirs of the promises made through Abraham for the salva-

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tion of the world in the Messiah. Paul has talked about all of this in Romans 3:1, 2.

VERSE 5

"Whose are the fathers" refers to those who were redeemed from Egyptian bondage (1 Corinthians 10:1). Reference is made to them also in Hebrews 1:1; 3:9 and 8:9).

It was a great honor to have such an illustrious ancestry. This nation had given birth to the long-expected Messiah, the hope of the world. Notice though, the "of whom" refers to the Israelites, not the father. Of course it would include both in fact. He was born of Israel and belonged to them. This was a cherished thought indeed of an Israelite (2 Corinthians 11:22).

"Who is over all" may refer to the authority given Him by His Father. Therefore, Paul may be saying that the one with all authority is one of them in the flesh, and has been so designated by God His Father. However, Christ is called "God" no less than ten times in the Greek New Testament (John 1:1; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 1:8; Philippians 2:8; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; and 1 John 5:20).

The fact that Paul uses the word amen strongly indicates reference made to the deity of Christ. Paul wanted so much for his people the Jews to see, understand and believe in Christ's deity. Indeed, Christ is God come in the flesh!

VERSE 6

Paul here speaks of the promises God made to Israel and His faithfulness to keep them. His promises made to Abraham were not intended for all his sons, and just so the promises made to Israel were not intended for all who had descended from Jacob. Ishmael was older than Isaac, yet God said to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." The right to be the children of God and heirs of His promise does not depend upon the mere accident of birth. Isaac was a child of promise, born in accord with the promise, and because of the will of God which the promise expressed.

Therefore the promises of God to the nation of Israel are not being broken, though the Israelites are being rejected for their unbelief and the Gentiles are being saved through their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul had inferred that many of the Jews were lost. The Jews answered, "If this is true, God's word has failed and His promise to Israel is false."

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Paul denies this and insists that not all physical Jews are part of God's spiritual Israel. He has already dealt with this matter in chapter 2, verses 28, 29. Those who realize that circumcision means nothing and that being in Christ means everything are the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16; Colossians 2:10-12). God's promise was made to those in Israel who would accept the promised Messiah. Abraham had many children besides Isaac. He also had several concubines besides Hagar. After Sarah's death, he was married to Keturah. Therefore Paul's statements are valid when he said that mere fleshly connection with Abraham did not make one an Israelite, and that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel."

VERSE 7

This first part is a restatement of what was said in verse 6. Because one is a physical descendant of Abraham does not make him a child of God. He must be an imitator of Abraham's faith (Romans 4:11, 12).

Next, Paul quotes Genesis 21:12. In working out His plans, God had rejected the other sons of Abraham and selected Isaac through whom the promised seed should come. So Paul is saying that God's promise does not now include the whole of Abraham's offspring and that it never did. Then it included Isaac and his posterity only and so now. Thus His word has not failed.

The word called here is equivalent to chosen. God chose only the children of Isaac to be His people and rejected the others. He kept His word and His promise. Now, what if He wills to accept those who believe in Christ even as He chose the children of Isaac? If He rejects those who reject Christ even as He rejected the children of Ishmael? Will He not be faithful to His word? Thus the seed of Abraham to whom the promise was given is the seed of Isaac, not Ishmael. They are those who imitate the faith of their father Abraham (Romans 4:11, 12).

VERSE 8

Isaac was the child of promise; Ishmael was the child of the flesh. Paul is now saying that this arrangement has been reversed. The Jews are the children of the flesh and the church, those who accept Christ, are children of the promise (Galatians 4:21-31). He had the right to choose those who accept Christ as His chosen people just as He had the right to choose Isaac to carry out His purposes. After all, the children of the flesh are not the children of God but the children of promise. Christ is the one to whom the

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seed promises pointed (Galatians 3:16). The promise to Abraham was, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). "In your seed" is equivalent to in Christ for Paul (Galatians 3:16, 19). Those who have rejected Christ have rejected the seed of Abraham and are no longer considered to be children of God. Those in Christ are His "Israel" and "Abraham's seed." Therefore, one now claiming to be a child of God because he was born a Jew is disowned. They are none of His. To be born of the flesh, no matter whose flesh it is, is now no ground of acceptance with God. A different kind of birth is necessary. Those who now believe in Christ are children of promise. All others, no matter from whom descended, will be rejected.

VERSE 9

"For this is the word of promise." "At this time" must have been a time fixed in the angel's mind and understood by Abraham. The promise is the important thing. Isaac's birth conformed to God's promise; Ishmael's birth did not. Christ is the antitype of Isaac and his (along with those who are "in Him") the same preference over all the fleshly descendants of Abraham that Isaac had over his fleshly brothers.

VERSES 10-12

The plan continued in Jacob and Esau, the children of Isaac and Rebekah. It was just one more step in the great plan to bring Christ into the world. All Jews were familiar with these historical incidents. Rebekah had these two sons. To be in the line of the Messiah, God had to choose one and reject the other. All Jews were pleased with the choice of Jacob. Again Paul is presenting facts to show that it was not by natural descent alone that the Jews were reckoned to be children of Abraham. The ones in this lineage were far from being Abraham's only natural descendants. Esau's descendants were cut off, not because of rebellion or a refusal to honor Isaac, but because they were excluded even before the births of Jacob and Esau. Thus it was not by natural descent alone that the Jews were reckoned to be children of Abraham. Many of the Jews were far from being Abraham's only natural descendants. For instance, Ishmael's descendants were cut off. Also, there was a separation in Isaac's immediate family when the Edomites (children of Esau) were cut off.

The choice God made here was not from works but from God. The word "calleth" here is equivalent to chooses. The choice was to arise

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wholly out of God. It was to be determined solely by reasons within Himself. This choice of Jacob had nothing to do with the final destiny of either. It left each free to follow those things which would save them, and to shun those that would condemn just as though the choice had never been made. What men willfully do determines their final doom. If Jacob had better circumstances than Esau, it only increased his responsibility and left the balances of justice level and the possibility of salvation equal. The choice was made before the twins were born, and therefore they could have done anything good or evil. The plan had nothing to do with their free will.

The choosing of Jacob to be the father of the Israelite nation was not based upon Jacob's works. It was simply God's choice. God had the right to determine His plan because He is God.

"Her" refers to Rebekah. God pronounced the temporal fate of Jacob and Esau before they were born. This revelation was made to Rebekah (Genesis 25:23). It did come to pass that the descendants of Esau (the Edomites) served the descendants of Jacob (1 Chronicles 18:12,13); 2 Samuel 8:14; Genesis 25:23).

VERSE 13

God's choice did not determine the eternal destiny of either twin but the way they lived afterward did. God's choice simply determined which of the two, Jacob or Esau, would be the patriarch of Israel. The Bible does not teach that God ever chose any man to eternal death before he was born. God saw the end from the beginning. Therefore, he saw that Jacob would trust and serve Him and that Esau would not. The words "love" and "hate" here mean to approve or disapprove. Thayer says that the original word for "hated" means to love less. The account of this choosing on the part of Jehovah is found in Malachi 1:2,3. On the words love and hate, read the following passages: Genesis 29:30,31; Proverbs 13:24; Matthew 6:24; Luke 14:26.

VERSE 14

"What shall we say then?" It seems Paul is asking what shall we say about that which has been presented in the previous verses. "Is there unrighteousness with God?" Then he answers, "God forbid." No, there is not unrighteousness with God. This quality, unrighteousness, is ascribed strictly to man (Romans 1:18, 29; 2:8; 3:5). It is an accepted truth that God

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is not and can never be unrighteous. Therefore, in His treatment of physical Israel, God could be nothing but righteous. So if there is fault because of the state of Israel, it is Israel's fault, not God's. He was not unrighteous in His choice of Isaac and Jacob.

VERSE 15

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (Exodus 33:19). It seems Moses had grown somewhat discouraged because of the waywardness of the children of Israel and showed a reluctance to go on. Was God's reply a gentle reminder? No one can keep God from showing mercy to whom He will. But to whom will He show mercy? Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy." Thus, all the objections of the Jews would not keep Him from having mercy on the Gentiles when they turned to Him. Surely a kindness to one was no unkindness to the other. He sees fit to have mercy on none unless it is within itself absolutely right. He acted upon this principle in the case of Isaac and Jacob. He chose Isaac because it was in itself right, but in choosing Isaac He worked no ill whatever to Ishmael. And so with Jacob and Esau. His choice of Isaac and Jacob did Ishmael and Esau no injustice and worked no ill whatever to them. Truly, there is no injustice with God. There is abundant proof that it was something in men that entered into God's selection of them.

VERSE 16

"So then it is not of him that willeth." Paul continues to speak about those on whom God wills to have mercy or to be chosen. Therefore being chosen as Jacob was is not determined by him whose will or wish it is to be chosen, nor by his exertion who runs as in a race as if to merit it by excelling others. But it is of God who shows mercy. The mercy is that shown in the special choice made. God followed the counsel of His own will as to whom He would show mercy. The promised seed was Christ and not the Jewish nation as the Jews thought. The Jews willed that it should be otherwise. They would have no Gentile blessed unless he became circumcised and kept the law of Moses. Their striving earnestly (for so the word runneth implies) could not defeat the purpose of God any more than Isaac and Esau could defeat God's purpose to bless Jacob. God decides the condition upon which mercy will be granted. Physical Israel in Paul's day had largely chosen to ignore God's choice.

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VERSE 17

The word "for" shows a close connection with what has just been said. God would show mercy to His people in Egypt, and Pharaoh determined not to let Israel go. His question was "Who is Jehovah that I should hearken unto his voice to let Israel go?" Thus he openly defied Jehovah. He thought of himself as having supreme authority. His determination was to do as he pleased with Israel no matter what Jehovah said or did. Every demand of Jehovah to let them go aroused Pharaoh's determination to keep them. These demands and his attitude toward them served to harden his heart. This shows how Jehovah hardened his heart and also how he hardened his own heart. When Jehovah in His own time and way triumphed over Pharaoh, His power was shown and His name was "published abroad in all the earth." God's demands of Pharaoh stirred his antagonism toward God. Pharaoh was already fitted by character for the place. He was a wicked character to begin with (Exodus 1:8) so the experience did him no injustice. God set him up to be king. As to what he was morally he made himself. God used him as he was, not made him so. He has the right to use wicked men to accomplish His purposes just as He has the right to use good men. A man might make himself wicked but that does not annul the divine right to use him. God used Pharaoh and Christ used Judas. But the use made of them did not determine their final doom. They had fixed that themselves by their own acts. All they were fit for was what they were used for. It results that there is no injustice with God. Thus we have the illustration of what divine power can do to a person who opposes it.

VERSE 18

When God hardened Pharaoh's heart (after Pharaoh himself had hardened it ten times), the very point or thrust is pointed squarely at Israel. Paul announces this in Romans 11:25. The mercy God shows does not determine salvation. It still leaves all free to settle that by their own will and acts. He showed mercy to Jacob. After He had done that, it was no easier for Jacob to be saved than Esau. After He rejected Esau, it was no harder for him to be saved than for Jacob. Faultless justice remains with God. But when one has so corrupted and hardened himself as was true of Pharaoh, let no one charge injustice to God. If He were unjust at all, it would consist in His excessive kindness to the hard heart that never

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responded to it.

God had mercy on Nineveh because of the king's response to the preaching of Jonah, but he punished Pharaoh and Egypt because Pharaoh refused to respond to the message of Moses. God had mercy on the Jews who responded to the preaching of Peter, but He destroyed those who rejected the message of the apostles (1 Thessalonians 2:15, 16).

VERSE 19

The question raised here reminds us of other questions asked in Romans 3:31; 6:1; 7:7. This question, "Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" is raised to alleviate a possible misunderstanding. The discussion to follow will help to answer the question. Had God made Pharaoh the kind of man he was, and if He had hardened his heart contrary to his will, then the questioner would have a point. They might say, "God has no right to condemn a sinner whom He Himself had hardened." That human beings are responsible for what they do is made plain in verse 22 where Israel's responsibility for refusing God's call is sharply stated. God does not make the human family just what they are and then find fault with them for being what He made them. He found fault with Pharaoh for hardening himself and resisting His will. Though the question is far from being unanswerable, it does not really merit a reply.

VERSE 20

One is not to make such an objection against his creator - the creature against his creator, man against God. "Who art thou?" So foolish, so feeble, so short-sighted, so incompetent a judge against the divine one - and yet think to fathom such a depth, dispute such a case. Why that is man replying against God! We are to submit to Him, not reply against Him. We are to lie down under His hand, not to fly in His face or to charge Him with folly. God is our Master and we are His servants, and it does not become servants to answer again, Titus 2:9. So verse 20 is not an answer to the questions in verse 19 but rather a rebuke to those who raise such questions. To raise them is to show a lack of reverence and respect for God. Man makes his own character either according to God's direction or else he makes a character against God's teaching.

Paul would stop the mouth of the objector who implies wrong on the part of God when He bestows favor on some and withholds that favor from others. Should Israel (who was rejected) or Esau say, "Why did you

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reject me?" as though God had done them wrong? Not at all. Now, shall rejected Israel reply to God? Certainly not. God chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael, He chose Jacob and rejected Esau, and the Jews answer, "That is right." First, God chose the Jews and rejected the Gentiles, and the Jews answered, "That is right." Now, if He chooses the Gentiles and rejects you, will you answer, "Wrong"? Therefore, the Jews were stopped from so replying. We have no right to arraign God in His thoughts and to charge Him with unrighteousness and dispute His decisions. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

In no way is Paul affirming that God chooses the eternal destiny of individuals in any sort of arbitrary manner. Man is in no position to argue with God as did the majority of the Jews. God made His choice of a Saviour and a gospel plan of salvation. Stubborn Israel answered back to God and withstood His plan. Therefore, it was the choice of the Jews to rebel against the choice of God and to be cast off.

VERSE 21

This verse is much like the preceding one. The potter certainly has the power claimed - not only so, he has the right. By application, the human race is the clay and God is the potter (Jeremiah 18:1-4). God has both the power and the right over this clay to make from it one vessel for honor and another for dishonor. He has the power and right to do all this and if He does it, who can complain? Can Israel? When Jacob was chosen and Esau was let alone, the letting alone was the dishonor. In this Old Testament parable, Jeremiah shows that the way of God's dealing with Israel was conditional (18:5-10). When we read this, we see the explanation of the expression, "As the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel." The clay is subject to the power of the potter. Israel was in the hand of Jehovah. He will make of it a vessel of honor or dishonor, according to the fitness of the material. Today, God deals with His people according to the proper use or the sinful abuse of their free agency in either doing good or evil in His sight. Thus, men choose whether to conform to or to withstand the will of God.

Isaac and Jacob were made vessels of honor and Ishmael and Esau were made vessels of dishonor because only one could be chosen. Even here their eternal destiny was not being determined. But from these examples, Paul shows that God is just in rejecting national Israel as His favored

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people and accepting instead the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles who have accepted and obeyed Christ. 2 Timothy 2:20, 21 should be read and studied along with this Old Testament parable.

VERSE 22

Our God is not only righteous but also very gracious. He does not wish "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Since He is not willing that any should perish, He is longsuffering and gives the sinner a full opportunity to repent. Thus He was longsuffering with Pharaoh and with Israel. It seems He had almost endless patience with the rebellion and departures of His chosen people. Paul has already spoken of this in Romans 2:4-6. It seems they felt that since Messiah had not yet come, they were in no danger of being destroyed as a nation. But at the time of this writing, the Messiah had come. There now remains no reason for them to exist as a nation of special people. Paul warns them that their doom is as certain as that of Pharaoh, a nation long ripe for destruction. The apostle Peter makes a statement concerning the longsuffering of which Paul speaks (2 Peter 3:14-16). He tells us that the purpose of the longsuffering was to lead to salvation. For His own good purpose God had put up with rebellious Israel. True, they were fitted for destruction. God knew beforehand their end, because He knew they would rebel of their own free will. Of course God did not make these people fit for destruction, they made themselves so and He endured them with much longsuffering. His power would be manifested in their destruction.

VERSE 23

Not only had the Jewish nation long been fitted for destruction, but their arrogant self-righteousness had murdered the Son of God. Not only that but they hunted down Christians and thus became guilty of wholesale murder. God had endured them, not for their sake but that "he might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory." But now that the anointed One has come, no further reason exists for the perpetuation of these people. Paul warned them that their doom was as certain as those whom God had prepared for glory by forgiving their sins in their obedience to Christ.

VERSE 24

Paul continues to speak of those whom God had "prepared unto

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glory." Both Jews and Gentiles whom He called through the gospel, are "the vessels of mercy" mentioned in verse 23. Those whom He called were those who heard, believed and obeyed the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14). These were both Jews and Gentiles, a proof that God had not completely rejected all individual Jews. So He had not broken His promise. Paul and his readers, both Jewish and Gentile Christians, are the ones included in "us." God is equally merciful. He sends to all the same Christ, the same gospel, and presents the same incentives to duty. He bestows mercy only upon those who obey His Son. On all the rest He will one day pour out His wrath.

The Jews had been upset because Paul, a Jew, was going among the Gentiles and teaching that now God puts no difference between Jew and Gentile. Even in the churches there were some who contended that Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law or they could not be saved.

VERSE 25

The verse quoted here is from Hosea 1:10 and is a clear promise of the coming of the Gentiles into the relationship with God as "sons." Those who had not been His people were to become sons of the living God. Paul is showing that these prophecies concerning the Gentiles were being fulfilled in the gospel of Christ. Paul, from Hosea 1:10 and 2:23, is showing two things: Gentiles are to become children of God and only a remnant of Israel is to be saved. It must be apparent to the Jews that their own prophets confirm all that Paul says. There may be an allusion to the church when he says, "and her beloved, which was not beloved." Before the gospel, the Gentiles were "not beloved." Now, they and obedient Jews compose the church, the Lamb's wife. This teaching must have been offensive to the Jews, yet the time had come when it must be stated.

VERSE 26

The Gentiles were not God's children, but now many of them are "children of the living God." Hosea 1:10 speaks of this. The salvation of the Gentiles was foretold by the prophets (Isaiah 2:2; 42:1,6; 49:6, etc.). Jesus preached the same (Luke 24:44-47). "There they shall be called" seems to say that, "There they shall actually be sons of God, and therefore shall be so called." When Paul wrote this letter, this prophecy had already been fulfilled, beginning with Cornelius in Acts 10. The believing Gentiles are

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children of God by faith in Christ. They are included in “all that believe through uncircumcision” (Romans 4:11).

VERSE 27

“Isaiah crieth concerning Israel.” The Jews to whom Paul speaks should have learned from Isaiah that only a remnant of Israel would be saved. Only the believing Jews would be saved. The message of Isaiah 10:22, 23 was given to a rebellious Israel headed for captivity. Isaiah 10:21 says, “A remnant shall return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.” In Paul’s day these could only include those who accepted the gospel of Christ. So, it was the rebellion of Israel, not the inconsistency of God, which caused them to be lost. In spite of all these warnings it was hard for a Jew to see himself as a sinner. Being a Jew was insufficient grounds for expecting salvation.

VERSE 28

“For he (the Lord) will finish the work....” The Lord will execute “this saying,” He will fulfill it. He will do this by actually saving the remnant and rejecting the remainder. He will fulfill this promise and end it quickly. God keeps His promises. Thus the certainty of the destruction of the Jews who rejected Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:15, 16).

VERSE 29

Isaiah 1:9, “Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”

The whole nation of Israel would have been destroyed in captivity had there not been some righteous people in the nation. These few righteous people in the nation were the seed mentioned in this quotation from Isaiah.

Isaiah 10:21, 22, “The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return.”

What God was saying to the Israelites through Isaiah, Paul uses to apply to the Jews of his day who were rejecting the Messiah.

Isaiah had prophesied that only a remnant of Israel should return from captivity. Paul therefore uses this as an argument that only a small part of Israel would be saved. Again he shows that merely being a Jew was insufficient grounds for expecting salvation.

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VERSES 30, 31

The Gentiles did not have the law of Moses and did not try to keep the law of God (they followed not after righteousness.). Yet they have attained to righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Israel had the law, tried to be saved by keeping it, failed through the weakness of the flesh, and thus had not attained to the law of righteousness. They sought righteousness by an outward observance without purification of their hearts by faith. The Gentiles sought it by faith which purified the heart and works by love (Romans 1:16, 17; 3:30; 4:24). When they believed in Christ and obeyed Him, their sins were remitted. Then being free from sin, they were held as just or righteous which was their justification. In Israel's rejection of Christ and in their refusal to accept His proffered mercy through loving, obedient faith, they as a nation were cut off from being any longer God's people.

Paul is an example of the remnant of which the text speaks. Israel professed adherence to the law of Moses but they did not keep that law. Instead of being righteous, they were sinners, transgressors of the law they professed to follow.

VERSES 32, 33

"Wherefore?" or why? Because they expected to gain justification, a right standing with God, by being circumcised and keeping the law of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5), and not by faith in Jesus Christ according to the gospel. They stumbled at the stumbling stone and rock of offense (Luke 20:18). Jesus did not meet their unscriptural conception of what the Messiah should be so they rejected Him. God's cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16) had become a stumbling block to them. But those who put their trust in Christ (the cornerstone) will not be disappointed. We are to build on this stone (Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:6, 7). We are to recognize the stone to be "elect and precious." But because Jesus was not what the Jews expected in a Messiah, they rejected Him. To them He was a stone of stumbling (1 Corinthians 1:23). Those who did believe in Christ were not put to shame as men are when they have been deceived into following a false leader (Matthew 11:6).

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VERSE 1

Even though Paul has just mentioned that the Jews stumbled at Christ through unbelief, he still desires and prays for their salvation. He reaffirms his love for the Jews and thus shows himself an imitator of God "who would have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Would there be a lack of converts to Christ if all our Lord's followers had the deep concern expressed by Paul for his own people? The prayer for Israel is that they might be saved. And, they could never be as long as they rejected Jesus Christ.

Paul had clearly shown the condemnation of the Jewish way, but from beginning to end there was no anger in it. There was only longing and heartfelt yearning for their salvation. Even today, gospel preaching is a pleading with men. Truly Paul spoke the truth in love and so should we. He surely could not pray that they might be saved in their unbelief. Our Lord is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9), and those who follow Him must truly and earnestly desire the salvation of the souls of others.

The salvation of the Jews depended upon their coming to a knowledge and belief of the gospel. This is shown by Paul in his letters to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:4).

VERSE 2

Paul gives his brethren credit for what was commendable, but he also disapproved of all that was wrong about them. The word "zeal" here means ardor in embracing, (Thayer). Israel was not sluggish in religious activities. The word "knowledge" is defined by Thayer at this place as precise and correct knowledge. They had a heated interest in their form of righteousness but did not bother to learn if it were the correct one. They had not understood the purpose of the law nor the voice of the prophets (Acts 13:27). Had they understood, they would have known that Jesus fulfilled both the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:29; 15:6, 9).

It is proven here that religious zeal is not enough to save. The expression, "not according to knowledge," surely means that which is gained only from revelation. Therefore, if our zeal differs from the revealed doctrine, we are not right and are therefore lost.

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VERSE 3

The Jews were not ignorant of the attribute of righteousness which God has. They believed and fully understood that God is a righteous being. So, it was not this of which they were ignorant, but of God's way of making man righteous. The Jews should have subjected themselves to God's righteousness. Actually, the word "justification" could be used in the place of righteousness in this verse. They were ignorant of the way God now justifies sinners, and this means they had not believed in Jesus the Christ and obeyed His gospel (Romans 1:16,17). Therefore the word "righteousness" here is to be understood as commandments (Psalms 119:172). This is clearly shown also in Luke 1:6 and Romans 3:24,25.

One cannot make himself righteous by his own works. He must be willing to accept God's way of making one righteous through Jesus Christ in submitting to His way as set forth in the gospel. (See Romans 3:21-28; 5:18-21).

VERSE 4

The very purpose of the law was to bring men to Christ, Galatians 3:24, 25. If one is not brought by the law to accept Christ, then he has mistaken the end and purpose of the law. Those who claim to follow the law, yet reject Christ, are ignorant of the teaching and purpose of the law. (See 2 Corinthians 3:6-8).

Surely "the end of the law" here means that Christ is the ultimate object of the law. The great and final purpose of it was justification and preparation for heaven and this is realized in Jesus Christ. The law was indeed "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," and in Him we are justified or saved by His blood.

This justification is realized only by one who believes in Jesus Christ. It should be assumed that he who believes in Christ will obey Him. A disobedient belief is not contemplated in the Bible. Surely a true believer will be led to obey the conditions of pardon or justification.

It must be clear that "Christ is the end of the law" here does not mean the abrogation of Moses' law, but it refers rather to the goal or end or fulfillment of the law's purpose. (Of course, as elsewhere taught, the law was abrogated by Christ. But here, He is the goal or fulfillment.) The end or aim of the law was righteousness. The believer in Christ is made righteous and thus the end of the law for righteousness is reached in Christ.

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When one's sins are blotted out, when he is cleansed from all sin, he is righteous; that condition is reached in Christ by those who believe. The end or the purpose of the law was righteousness and that end is reached in Christ by the believer. The phrase, "to every one that believeth," shows that Paul was not speaking here of the abrogation of the law. That is taught abundantly elsewhere.

VERSE 5

Paul's quotation is taken from Leviticus 18:5. Moses' description of the law was that the man which does these things shall live by them. Thus to be righteous on the basis of law, man must keep the law perfectly. But the righteousness of faith talks a different way.

Contrast this with Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous shall live by faith." This is what Paul said in Romans 1:17. None but Jesus ever kept the law perfectly. His faith and obedience reached a state of absolute perfection during His total life on earth. Man cannot keep the law perfectly but he can have faith. Only the doer of the law could be justified (Romans 2:13). Therefore, because all have sinned and because of the "weakness of the flesh," justification by law is impossible (Romans 3:23; 8:2). We have already noted that Christ is the aim or intent of the law for justification to every one that believes. The Jews refused to believe that the Messiah had come and that all the promised blessings were now available to them.

VERSES 6, 7

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12-14 and adapts Moses' words to his own purpose. Moses had just finished giving the Israelites a reading of the law. It seems Paul is saying that the righteousness which is by faith in Christ is attainable. It does not require the impossible such as ascending to heaven to bring Christ down or to bring Him up from Hades. No additional signs are necessary, nor do we now have to hear directly from heaven to have and enjoy this righteousness by faith. Christ has already been here, and in His life and deeds He has supplied all the conditions essential to belief.

Remember when Jesus was on the cross, the chief priests and elders derided Him and said, "Let him come down from the cross and we will believe on him." When He had been on the earth forty days and was ascended into heaven, the Jews would still ask, "Must some of us ascend into heaven or descend into the deep and bring him up from the dead

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that we might believe in him?" All this was simply a declaration of their unbelief. They were actually saying, "We will not believe unless you do what we know you cannot do."

The Pharisees (Jews) knew all about Jesus' resurrection, and they bribed the soldiers with gold to lie about it. What hypocrisy in them when they dare to say, "Bring him up from the dead!" We must conclude that they could have known that He was the Messiah by His teaching, His death, burial and resurrection. Then there was the testimony of inspired and spirit-filled men who could prove the validity of their messages by working signs, wonders and miracles.

VERSE 8

What does justification by faith say? Does it say, "Go into heaven and bring Christ down" or "descend into hades and bring Christ up from the dead"! It says neither of these, but "the thing said is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart."

I believe this refers to the gospel message being preached by inspired men, their believing with their heart, and confessing Him with their mouth. Thus this justification is very near them. The possibilities of their being justified are plentiful and available. All of that was in the word of faith preached by the apostles. Even today, all that is promised and is necessary to our faith in Jesus Christ and His way of justification is found in His holy word.

VERSE 9

"The word of faith" which Paul preached included confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus and believing in one's heart that God had raised Him from the dead. This is a condition of salvation. This is not the only one, for in the next verse, believing with the heart is also made a condition. Likewise in other passages, repentance and baptism are mentioned also as conditions of salvation. This is simply a confession with one's mouth what he believes in his heart. That is, Jesus is Christ and has all authority in all matters religious, and we must hear, obey and follow Him in order to be justified by faith.

VERSES 10, 11

With the heart we believe in order to salvation or justification or righteousness even as the confession is made unto salvation. To believe in

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Christ is to put our full trust in Him, to confess Him is to pledge our allegiance to Him. Salvation now offered in the gospel to all, whether Jew or Gentile, was a great blow to the Jew. It is now "whosoever."

From the book of *Romans*, we see several things which were involved in receiving the gift of salvation. Man must believe in the gospel, the good news of justification in Christ (1:16; 3:22). Man must "die to sin," repentance (6:2, 8), he must confess the Lord Jesus with his mouth (10:9, 10), he must be buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk a new life (6:4). He must then present his members to God as instruments of righteousness (6:13). In none of this can he feel he has earned his salvation. He has, in this course of action, only involved himself in the obedience of faith. This is available to all, Jew and Gentile.

In verse 11, Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16 as he does in the previous chapter (9:33). Christ is either the precious cornerstone or the stumbling stone, depending on whether or not one believes. God's plan had been established and the Jews found themselves withstanding God's plan. The plan of justification by faith in Christ requires the same thing of all men.

VERSES 12, 13

"For there is no distinction" (ASV). This, Paul had said before in 3:22. Only in verse 23, he is saying all are sinners, both Jew and Gentile. As surely as all are sinners, all may avail themselves of the blessings of the gospel. The same Lord is Lord of all who confess Him (10:9, 10; 1:4, 7; 6:23; 8:39). He is "rich" toward all those who call upon Him. They are "not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles" (9:24).

Paul cites a statement from Joel 2:32, "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered..." This involves more than just saying, "Lord, Lord" (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46). Paul himself was urged to "Arise and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord," (Acts 22:16). He had already believed and repented of his sins and is then told to "arise and be baptized." What was all this? It was "calling on the name of the Lord" for salvation.

Peter also quoted Joel 2:32 when he preached the first gospel sermon as recorded in Acts 2. What was the promise? That all who "called on the name of the Lord shall be saved." How many were saved on Pentecost? About three thousand. How were they saved? By calling on the name of the Lord. What did they do in calling on the name of the Lord? They

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heard Peter's sermon, they were "pricked in their heart," and asked Peter what they were to do. They were told to "repent and be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." How were they saved? By "calling on the name of the Lord." Therefore, their hearing the gospel, their believing what was preached, their repenting of their sins, and their being baptized was all "calling on the name of the Lord."

Therefore, if Jews and Gentiles are to be saved by calling on the name of the Lord, then the gospel must be preached to both Jew and Gentile, so they can respond in obedience to the gospel or call on the name of the Lord.

VERSES 14, 15

Paul's question is, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Unbelievers can say "Lord, Lord," but to no avail. Faith is not emotion miraculously produced but is the effect of something heard. Therefore someone had to preach the word so the sinner could hear it (1 Corinthians 1:21; Titus 1:3).

God has ordained that man must hear the gospel in order to be saved. The gospel is His power to save Jew and Gentile alike (Romans 1:16). But how can one hear it unless someone tells him about it? God's answer to the question is a messenger, yes, a preacher, with the message of salvation. Now we know that no one is told directly from heaven what to do to be saved (1 Corinthians 1:21). The inference is that preachers must preach the word of the Lord, for in no other way may his hearers hear Christ.

Paul's answer to all the questions he asked in verse 14 is "they can not." Belief (saving faith) is not a direct gift from God, for it is not independent of hearing. If it were, then Paul's questions are null and void and defeats what he had in mind in asking them.

His questions admit nothing but negative answers. The first of verse 15 surely refers to the original ones whom the Lord qualified and sent out to preach the good news. Preachers today are sent out by the great commission, not necessarily by any church or man. We have the message now in written form and we are exhorted to study it, be filled with it, and go out and tell what we have learned about the gospel and its saving power.

It is said of those who preach the saving gospel, "How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things," (Isaiah 52:7). This expression describes the beauty and grand value of the message of salva-

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tion which is so precious and wonderful to those who accept it.

VERSE 16

At the time of this writing, the gospel had been preached to the Jews in their own land and even in other lands. They had either heard it or had an opportunity to do so, and the same was true of the Gentiles. But still not all had obeyed the gospel. God had afforded them the opportunity of obtaining His mercy, and they had refused. Paul gives emphasis to his statement by quoting Isaiah 53:1, "...who hath believed our report?"

Ancient Israel did not believe the prophets regarding the Messiah, just so the Jews of Paul's day would not believe and obey the gospel in order to be saved. The word "report" here surely means the gospel. It is primarily the report of the prophets respecting Christ and was being reiterated by the preachers of the gospel. The word "all" in this passage surely means both Jew and Gentile to whom the gospel had been preached. God has done His part. He cannot, will not, do their part.

VERSE 17

Though many that hear do not believe, yet those that believe have first heard. The word of God is therefore called "the word of faith." It begets and nourishes faith. God gives but by the word as the instrument. It is not the hearing of the enticing words of man's wisdom but hearing the word of God that will produce faith which will lead one to obey the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Jesus said "the seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). We can know nothing of God, of Christ, or of the Holy Spirit except as it comes through the word of God. Thus we see that faith does not come directly from the Holy Spirit but comes from the Spirit through His authorship of the holy scriptures.

VERSE 18

The word "their" refers to the preachers of verses 14 and 15 of this chapter who were the inspired apostles.

Paul uses another Old Testament reference (Psalms 19:4) as an example of the knowledge of God being universally known. This instance was the knowledge of God through the revelation of nature. The preaching of the gospel began in Jerusalem, next in all Judea, then in Samaria, and finally into the uttermost parts of the earth. All Jews had actually heard or had an opportunity to hear it. They could have believed if they had been so

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inclined. They either refused to hear, or refused to believe (Colossians 1:23).

VERSE 19

“Did not Israel know?” Is it not recorded in their books? Did not their prophets speak of all this? Did they not have full opportunity to be acquainted with this truth? This question is an emphatic way of affirming that they did know. Paul seems to be referring to the fact that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, and that the Jews were to be cast off (because of their unbelief). Even the Jewish prophets had said that the Jews would not believe, and that the Gentiles would. “And, the Gentiles heard and were glad and glorified the word of God.” Thus the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32:21.

VERSE 20

Paul quotes from Isaiah 65:1. “Is very bold” seems to be a comment on the dramatic plainness of the prophecy. Although Isaiah had thus spoken, Israel refused to see. They saw not in Christ their long-looked-for Messiah. They read neither in law nor prophet their impending doom, nor ever once dreamed that the Gentiles were about to become the Lord’s beloved. They were not only blind but were persistent in it.

The Gentiles did not seek after God. They sought neither a knowledge of Him nor the worship due Him. They sought not to please Him. Yet, when Christ was presented to the Gentiles in the gospel, they promptly and gladly responded. Isaiah had said this would be true but Israel refused to see.

VERSE 21

Now Paul refers to Isaiah 65:2. The prophet here sets forth the character of the Jews - they were a disobedient and rebellious people “all day long.” That is, they were this way continually without intermission. God entreated and invited them, was willing to receive them with favor, but they were rebellious and disbelieving. God is represented as stretching out His hand in vain. They rejected Him and He was sought and found by others. But God had not forsaken His people; they had rejected the knowledge of Him.

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VERSE 1

Paul declares himself to be a Jew. He said he was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. One could not be more Jewish than that! He says this to show that God had not rejected all Jews. Indeed, He had rejected the nation of Israel as His peculiar people. This the Lord had told the Jews in Matthew 22:43. It seems Paul is saying that if he, a Jew, could be saved so could the rest of the Jews. He had said in Romans 1:16 that the gospel is God's power to save all that believe, "the Jew first and also the Greek." The spiritual condition of Israel was not hopeless. If God had cast them off because they were Jews, Paul would have been cast off as well. He makes it very clear that the rejection of the Jewish nation had nothing to do with the salvation of individual Jews. God does not withhold salvation from any obedient Jew. True, God did cast off the Jews as a peculiar people or nation but He did not reject the individual Jew. It was not God who rejected them, it was what they themselves did in rejecting God in the person of His Son that fixed their fate. Now Jews and Gentiles are placed on the same footing. The Jews, if they turn from their unbelief, will be accepted. The Gentiles, if they refuse to believe, will be rejected. God deals with both in the same way.

VERSES 2, 3

Paul emphasizes that God has not wholly rejected His people (the Jews). He had rejected Israel as a nation but it is equally certain that He had not rejected all of the Jews. Some declare that this rejection of the Jewish nation is only for a time and that sometime God will restore Israel, as a nation, to divine favor. However Paul is showing that they will never, as a nation, be restored. Every one of them has the same opportunity as the Gentiles to be restored to God's favor and to his Kingdom. They were being rejected because of unbelief in Christ, and so long as this continues, the separation from God will continue. They must cease repudiating Jesus Christ as God's Son and become Christians as individuals, then they can be in His spiritual kingdom, not an earthly one. They will then become Christians as individuals and not as a nation.

The word "foreknow" in verse 2 is often used in the sense of recognize, approve, or accept. God has not wholly rejected His people whom He formerly recognized or accepted as His. He has rejected those who would

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not believe. Those who believe, He still retains. This plan will never be changed so long as time shall last.

The word "wot" here means know. So Paul is asking, "Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:10-18). He is giving them a parallel case from the past. He is showing them that they are wrong when they conclude that God has now wholly rejected His people. This He has never done. Elijah once committed the same error they were committing. He thought that all of God's people, except himself, had forsaken Him. God then showed him how wrong he was. Thus Paul is saying, "And you are too"! During the time of Elijah, which was also the time of Ahab, the apostasy of Israel was so complete that Elijah was convinced that God had no people at all except himself. However God informed him that He had 7,000 who were still faithful.

VERSE 4

No doubt the number 7,000 did not include the women and children which made up their families after the Jewish method of reckoning (Matthew 14:21). God has never rejected any of His true people.

Baal was the principal deity of the Phenicians. Jezebel was a Phenician and sought to turn everyone from the worship of Jehovah into the worship of Baal (1 Kings 16:31-33). As Elijah was wrong, so many in Paul's day were wrong in saying God had cast off all Jews.

VERSE 5

"Even so" is Paul's way of saying that just as true Israel in Elijah's day was not a part of a corrupt nation, the true Israel today has no connection with the apostate nation that murdered the Lord. The "remnant" to which Paul refers must be the 3,000 on Pentecost, and all others who had obeyed the gospel since. The first ones were Jews from Pentecost on down for several years. The number was later extended by the inclusion of the Gentiles. Under this new system of grace, God makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile. No amount of works can blot out sins already committed. Forgiveness is a matter of grace, no matter how many conditions one must fulfill in order to be forgiven. There is no grace when a person merits justification. God had rejected those who were in disobedience to Christ, and He had received he individuals who were in obedience to Him. God elected certain ones because they believed the gospel (Romans 1:16); they had the faith of Abraham (4:12,16). Thus God had

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chosen to save those who believed and obeyed the gospel, and who thus came into Christ whether they be Jews or Gentiles. The remnant is composed of those who had obeyed the gospel.

VERSE 6

Paul now shows that no amount of law keeping can save a person. At best one's law keeping would be far from perfection. If one failed in one thing in law keeping, he was guilty of breaking all of the law. Since one cannot attain to absolute perfection by law keeping, he stands condemned by the law. One cannot be saved that way. He can be saved only by favor or grace. Thus we do not and cannot merit salvation by anything we do. Works by which one merits salvation and commands which one must obey to be saved, are not the same by any means.

Some do not make this distinction and therefore conclude that a sinner must do nothing in order to be saved. The cleansing of Naaman and the giving of sight to the blind man are examples of grace. Though Naaman had to dip seven times in Jordan, it did not make his healing any less a matter of grace. And, the giving of sight by our Lord to the blind man was a matter of grace, even though he had to go wash in the pool of Siloam.

Israel thought that salvation could be earned or merited through their following certain devices of the law. But Paul is showing that neither then nor now nor ever, is salvation earned or merited by man. There is no grace when a person merits salvation. See Ephesians 2:8-10. Paul shows that works of which we might boast, and grace which is unmerited favor are not compatible. He is certain that salvation cannot be by both works and grace. If man's works had been perfect, then there would have been no need for forgiveness. Man would stand justified on his own merit. God has chosen to grant salvation by grace because it cannot be granted any other way. Death is the wages of sin but eternal life is a free gift of God (Romans 6:23).

VERSE 7

"What then?" To what conclusion may we now come? The Jews had sought righteousness by the works of the law of Moses (9:31). Righteousness by the works of the law required perfect obedience to that law, and all had sinned against it. The law could not forgive; it could not make the guilty righteous. They did not find what they sought and that

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was justification. The law could condemn but it could not justify. But God's "election" was an election of grace (11:5). Those who accepted the grace of God in Christ had attained that righteousness (salvation) which the Jews failed to attain. The remnant here is the small number of Jews who believed and were in the church. "and the rest were blinded" (hardened). These are the Jews who were rejected because of their unbelief in Christ. Unbelievers were responsible for their rejection of Christ and His gospel. Israel had a national prejudice against Christ.

VERSE 8

It seems that which is "written" is quoted from Isaiah 29:10; Ezekiel 12:2 and Deuteronomy 29:4. This spirit of deafness and blindness seemed to characterize the Israelites from beginning to end. They had "eyes but not to see" because they did not want to see. God will not compel a person to see against his will, and as they were determined not to see, He leaves them to the blindness they prefer. He provides all of us with eyes but we are responsible for the right use of them. See Matthew 13:14, 15. What Jesus offered was not what they wanted so they turned a deaf ear to His teaching. They would not hear and they would not see, and therefore did not understand.

The words of Deuteronomy 29:4 were spoken to those who had seen with their natural eye the miracles of God by Moses in their deliverance from Egypt through the Red Sea. Though they had seen these wonders, they had not grasped the true meaning and significance. How appropriate to Paul's generation who had witnessed even the greater wonders of Christ but had missed completely the message!

VERSES 9, 10

"And David saith," in Psalms 69:22. David seems to be praying that God will bring misfortune and defeat to his enemies. He says of them, "they gave me gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (verse 21). He also says of them, "they persecute him whom thou hast smitten" (verse 26). Thus those who harden their hearts against God and His plan become the enemies of God and His people. They crucified His Christ and became the persecutors of His people. Therefore Paul applies the curse of David against his people to the rebellious people of Israel.

"Their table" in this passage seems to refer to the feast God made for

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the Jews in His laws and promises. They should have been led to Christ by the law, but they were entrapped by their blind adherence to the law and were caught in a snare or trap. Their rejection of Christ and their blind devotion to the law was their ruin. They had willfully refused to see in Christ their own promised Messiah. Since God will not have men right against their will, He will leave them to their own blindness. Maybe the expression "bow down their back always" refers to the spiritual bondage of Israel. They are still without God and Christ in the world. Therefore in their rejection of Jesus Christ, they can never know freedom from the bondage of sin and the new and better life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

VERSE 11

Two words are contrasted here, "stumble" and "fall". Fall is a much stronger word than stumble. Fall, in Greek and in English, means to be killed. The slain in battle were said to have fallen. It really means to fall forever or finally. Thus when the Jews stumbled, did this mean that they would "perish forever"? Paul says, "God forbid," or by no means. That is, God was not casting them aside as if He no longer loved them. They have access to Christ the same as the Gentiles. In fact, they were offered this salvation before the Gentiles were. But it does mean that if the Jews reject the gospel of Christ, then they are doomed forever. The law was the barrier between Jew and Gentile. That barrier (law) was taken out of the way. It does not exist anymore. Therefore if the Jews reject Christ and His gospel, they are left without anything and are "fallen" forever. God did not design their fall. In fact He had for centuries been preparing them to receive Him who would save both Jew and Gentile. They stumbled therefore at the Lord, and if they reject Him they shall "perish" forever. See Acts 13:46. The reception of the gospel by the Gentiles did provoke the Jews to jealousy, but it was jealousy for Judaism, not for the gospel (Deuteronomy 32:21; Acts 22:17-21). God did not bring about or cause a stumbling and a fall of the Jews in order that they might be cast off forever. To such a thought Paul said, "God forbid." Since they did stumble and fall, salvation is now come unto the Gentiles. Indeed this did provoke the Jews to jealousy. Even the Jews who were the first to obey the gospel, because of their blind loyalty to their race, never manifested any enthusiasm in preaching to the Gentiles. The apostles were in this class with the exception of Paul. It took a miracle to show Peter that he ought to do such

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a thing (Acts 10) and after preaching to Cornelius, his brethren demanded an explanation and an apology for what he had done (Acts 11). Even when the gospel was preached to the Gentiles, it was corrupted and perverted by adding a keeping of the law and submitting to the rite of circumcision (Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1-3; 6:12-14). When his preaching became an offense to the Jews, then he turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:45-48; 28:28). Surely it was God's intention that the salvation of the Gentiles have a positive effect on Israel. Paul always went first to the Jewish synagogue to preach Christ. When he was thrust out by the Jews, he would preach to the Gentiles. Thus indirectly, the rejection of the Jews resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles.

VERSE 12

The rejection or the fall of the Jews resulted in good fortune for the Gentiles in that they had the gospel preached to them. The Jews tried desperately to destroy Christ and His way of salvation which included the Gentiles. If out of this rejection resulted the greatest riches to the Gentiles and to the world, then what "fullness" the conversion of the Jews to Christ would bring to them. How vain and empty are the lives without Christ. What a loss was Israel's in their rejection.

VERSES 13, 14

It seems Paul reminds himself and the Gentiles of his mission to them. He states that he does honor the office or his assignment to the Gentiles. He wanted to convert as many of them as he could, but he could not keep from being concerned about those of his own flesh, the Jews. He wanted so much to provoke them to consider the promised blessings in Christ. Seemingly he did not expect to save the Jews, only some of them. This did not mean he was forgetting the Gentiles. He glorified or honored that ministry but he was drawn to his kin according to the flesh (1 Timothy 4:16). Because the Jews were prone to reject the gospel of Christ did not cause Paul to love them less. He felt the burden of the lost which all of us should feel.

VERSE 15

The Jews were "cast off" only in the sense of their not being any longer the exclusive people of God. This casting off took place when the gospel was made perfect and was preached to Gentiles as well as Jews. This

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enabled all peoples, Jews and Gentiles, to accept Christ in obedience to His gospel and thus become children of God. Now if the Jews would accept the gospel, it would be as receiving one back to life from the dead. When the Jews rejected Christ and His gospel, they became dead in their sins and were no longer alive unto God. The rejection on the part of the Jews resulted in the message of salvation going more and more unto the Gentiles. What a resurrection it would be if the Jews would also hear and obey this message! If the rebellion of the Jews turned out to have such a good result (for the Gentiles), their obedience ought to have an even more wonderful result, even as "life from the dead."

VERSE 16

In Paul's illustration, the first fruit of the dough stands for the entire lump of dough, and the root of the tree stands for the branches. What is true of the lesser is true of the greater. What is true of the part is true of the whole. It seems then, that Paul is saying that if the first converts among the Jews were acceptable to God, the whole nation of the Jews as individuals would be acceptable to God on the condition that they believe in and obey Christ.

The word "firstfruit" is found in Numbers 15:20. Here the Jews were instructed to "offer up a cake" of thin dough to the Lord when they first prepared bread from the new harvest. The remainder or lump was then ready for general use. Surely the "firstfruit" and the "root" both refer to Jewish Christians. Thus the "first portion" stands for the first converts from the Jews to Christ while the "mass" signifies the remainder of the nation. So if the first Jewish Christians were accepted of God, then surely He would accept the whole nation when they too obey Christ.

In the case of the root and the branches, the root is the first Jewish converts and the branches are the Jewish people. If God accepted the root or first converts, then He would accept all of the Jews when they are converted.

VERSES 17, 18

Paul's single fact here is the rejection of the Jews who did not believe and obey Christ, and the entering into spiritual life by the Gentiles when the gospel was preached to them. The only rejection here is of the unbelieving Jews. He shows that the Gentiles were received in among the Jews when they heard the gospel and obeyed it and were by the Lord added to

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His church. "Grafted in among them" is used to denote their becoming converted or becoming Christians. The Jews by being born again entered into the kingdom, and afterward, the Gentiles entered it in the same way. To become a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree was to become a partaker of the blessings of the gospel. The expression "grafted in" simply means being converted to Christ. "Wild olive" is a reference to the inferiority of the Gentiles. The Jews had many advantages by centuries of exposure to God's true commandments. "Among them" does not mean instead of them. The Gentiles were not accepted in place of anybody, nor did their coming into Christ displace or exclude anybody. "Whosoever will may come." There is plenty of room for all and all are invited. "Boast not against the branches" is a warning against having a boastful and inconsiderate attitude. This attitude once marked the feelings of the Jews toward them. "Boast not" against believing or unbelieving Jews. Salvation had come to the Gentiles through the Jews. Jesus declared that "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Our Lord was a Jew as were the apostles and all of the original Christians as well. It ill-behoved the low cultured Gentiles to manifest an attitude of superiority and disdain for the Jews.

We all must realize that our blessings are by the grace of God and not of any merit on our part. God is no respecter of persons and salvation to all men is by grace through an obedient faith. We are saved by godliness and not by godless self-righteousness. We must remember that we do not bear the root but the root bears us. In Romans 3:27, Paul says all boasting is excluded. In that passage he was addressing the Jew who would be justified by works. But in our present verse, he is addressing the Gentile who would gloat over his present position in Christ as a "branch" in the tree. It is only the root that supports the branches with the essentials of life. Christ gives life to all the branches. There is no distinction (3:22).

VERSES 20, 21

Is it true that the Jews were arbitrarily cut off just so the preferred Gentiles might be grafted in? Paul answers with an emphatic "No." It was not for the specific benefit of the Gentiles. It must have seemed a ground for self-esteem and self-gratulation when God cast off His people with whom He made a covenant, so He could receive these "strangers," the Gentiles. This was not what God did at all. He was not just making room

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for the Gentiles, for there was room for both.

The refusal of the Jew was the reason he was cast off. He would not believe. And the only reason He accepted the Gentiles was because they believed. The Jews were out because of their unbelief, and the Gentiles were in only because of their belief. Therefore faith justified no boasting. If the natural branches (the Jews) fell through false pride which brought their unbelief, how much more likely the adopted branches (Gentiles) were to be cut off. He had more reason for fear than for pride. The Gentiles stood by their belief but they did not stand in the stead of the Jews. We stand in the body of Christ just as we would if the whole world had gone in or the whole world had not gone in. The place we hold is our own, not another's. Never were the Jews rejected to make room for the Gentiles. We too might be rejected, and we will be unless we do right. We can become high-minded and over-confident and filled with fear and as exact in our faith and our life as we can be. "If God spared not the natural branches" (the Jews), the vineyard of His own hand, surely then the Gentiles must not expect Him to spare them if they become unbelievers. He will spare neither in unbelief.

VERSE 22

These two qualities, goodness and severity, are apparently contradictory. God dealt severely with the Jews because they fell through unbelief. His goodness would be extended to the Gentile Christians so long as they did not fall through unbelief. The display of either His goodness or severity depends on man's attitude toward Him. The only hope of the Jews was to come back to God through faith in Christ. God's kindness toward the Gentiles will continue, provided they use it properly by continuing firmly in belief and obedience. The verses are surely a death blow to the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy. The possibility of Christians defecting from the divine favor is tersely stated here. The fact of it is proved by the history of Israel and by the spectacular warnings of the Scriptures. God's goodness is conditioned upon our continuing in the faith, keeping ourselves in the love of God (Jude 2). The grace "in which we stand" (Romans 5:2) is ours only as long as we stand in that grace. This saving some by faith and cutting others off, showed the goodness and the severity of God.

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VERSE 23

If the Jews were to "abide not still in unbelief," then they will be "grafted in" again. God is able to graft them in again. The only hindering cause was their unbelief. If there were any preference, it would be to Israel, not to the Gentiles. But there is no distinction as Paul has already noted. The only hope of the Jews coming back was through their faith in Jesus Christ. The rejection of the Jews as individuals is based on their unbelief and will continue only so long as they continue in unbelief. When unbelief ends, rejection ends. There were no threats and no prophecies standing in the way of God's accepting them on the same conditions He accepts Gentiles. Paul has stated that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation" (1:16) for both Jews and Gentiles. No special way is promised for any man. If the Jews would at last turn and believe in Christ, certainly they would be acceptable to God upon His terms, not as Jews but as Christians, for there is no longer any covenant difference whatever between Jew and Gentile in the sight of God. Paul was not speaking of a state or nation being converted, but the conversion of individual Jews. Men do not enter Christ as races, nations, ethnic groups, or parties of any kind. In Paul's day, individual Jews were being grafted in (the "some" in verse 14), and as far as the Scriptures reveal, no one shall ever enter any other way. God will never work any special miracle on the Jews to induce them to believe, nor will He ever increase the power of the gospel for their sake. He will do for them no more than He is doing for the Gentiles.

VERSE 24

Here Paul continues to address the Gentiles and reminds them that they came out of "the wild olive tree" (from among the disobedient nations who knew not God) and were grafted in a good olive tree. Now, if that were possible, then how much more would God graft the believing individual Jew back into His favor? For they would again be the natural branches in their own tree. If God through the gospel could reach and accept a people who had not known God, could He not save those individual Jews by the same gospel? They had once been His people; then, surely, He would receive them again in their obedience to the gospel.

The expression "contrary to nature" refers to the unusual. In grafting, the tame or improved tree is always grafted into the wild or unimproved.

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According to this, the Jews should have been added to the Gentiles, not the Gentiles to the Jews. Yet the latter was the order. It is therefore called grafting "contrary to nature." Nature here is equivalent to custom.

Since the Jews were accustomed to God's dealings, they should have been familiar with the promises of a Messiah and should have recognized and accepted Jesus as such. On the other hand, the Gentiles knew nothing about a promised Messiah. Therefore it was more natural and much easier for the Jews to accept Christ than for the Gentiles. Yet they rejected Him while the Gentiles accepted Him. Still the Jews were invited to be grafted back into the natural tree just as were the Gentiles. But neither can be without believing and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. The rejection of the Jews was based on their unbelief and will continue as long as they continue in unbelief. When unbelief ends, rejection ends. No threats and no prophecies stand in the way of God accepting them on the same condition He accepts Gentiles.

VERSE 25

"This mystery" as used in the New Testament means something revealed rather than something hidden, but it does imply that it had been hidden until it was revealed. A mystery was not known until it was made known. Paul is about to present something that is inaccessible to human reason and can only be known through revelation (see 16:25, 26; 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 1:9; 3:2-5; 6:19; Colossians 1:26; etc.). In this verse Paul is still addressing the Gentile believers to whom he referred in verse 13. That they should "not be wise in their own estimation" is a thought similar to that of verse 18. Paul wanted them (Gentile Christians) to know the mystery alluded to in order to keep them from being puffed up with self-conceit because they had been accepted of God. He did not want them to over-estimate their own importance and have a feeling of contempt for the rejected Jews.

The word "blindness" here and in verse 7 should be translated hardness or hardening. The Greek word *porosis* means the latter. Of course some of the Jews accepted Christ, but by far the greater part of them did not. Thus they had grown hard in heart and feeling. Paul is describing the rejection of Christ and His gospel of salvation by the Jews, and the increased amount of gospel preaching to the Gentiles. He reminds the Gentiles that the Jews could hear and obey the gospel as well as the

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Gentiles. In fact, that is the only way of salvation for both Jew and Gentile. The Gentiles were to remember that God had not elevated them over the Jews, and that now they did not occupy a place of favor over the Jews.

VERSES 26, 27

Paul has just mentioned that the way of salvation had been opened to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. Now he says that the Jews can and are to be saved in exactly the same way as the Gentiles. We have an adverb of manner here; thus, "in this manner, in this way, under these circumstances" will the Jews be saved. The expression, "come out of Zion," refers to our Lord's coming, His atoning sacrifice and, in general, perfection of the way of salvation for all men both Jews and Gentiles. Christ's second advent will come out of heaven, not out of Zion. Paul is not saying that at Jesus' second coming He will save all of the Jews. His first coming brought the gospel; it is complete and unalterable. Jewish unbelief will not be removed by any change in the gospel. If Jews or Gentiles are ever saved, it will be by the gospel. All would be done to save the Jews that was being done to save the Gentiles but no more. The "as it is written" used in verse 26 is taken from Isaiah 59:20, 21. Isaiah 61:1-3 speaks of the coming Saviour to the descendants of Abraham with a way out of their sins. Jews and Gentiles have now been brought under the same covenant for salvation or the taking away of their sins. The expression, "take away their sins" in verse 27 is the same as to be saved in verse 26.

VERSE 28

It seems because the Gentiles were in the gospel and in the church, the Jews turned from it. But God still loves them and is willing and anxious to save them even for the sake of their forefathers. Reference is being made here to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and on down the lineage (Deuteronomy 10:15). But those in this lineage had opposed the gospel from the beginning because it did not meet their expectations, and because it condemned them as sinners and as murderers. When they were told they were no better than the Gentiles, this intensified their enmity. Paul told them in Jerusalem that the Lord had told him to leave them and go preach to the Gentiles, and they said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live" (Acts 22:17-22). No proud Pharisee would think of becoming a member of a body made up

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largely of Gentiles. God had selected Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as fathers through whom the Christ would come and He never repented of that selection. They were still beloved on account of the fathers and not on their own account. The only reason the Jews were rejected was because of their unbelief. "Enemies for your sakes" simply refers back to the gospel being preached more and more to the Gentiles because the Jews were rejecting and opposing it when it was preached to them.

VERSE 29

God's promise to Abraham was that through him and his posterity one would come through whom "all nations should be blessed." God would never withhold His favor from a Jew who would come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ. But even though the whole nation of Israel might oppose it, the will of God would move on to the achievement of His divine purpose. God makes no mistakes and consequently knows no repentance (Numbers 23:19; Ezekiel 24:14; 1 Samuel 15:29). Repentance and regret imply miscalculation (James 1:17). God's calling of Abraham and bringing the Messiah through his lineage is not regretted. When these Jews shall become obedient to His Son, He will bless them with the fullness of salvation. He awaits only the abandonment of their unbelief.

VERSES 30, 31

Reference is made here to the former idolatrous and unbelieving state of the Gentiles. But the gospel was preached to them and they became obedient to it. Because the Jews rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, those who were preaching it turned to the Gentiles. Their hearing and reception of the gospel was in consequence of the Jews having rejected it. Therefore, if disobedient Gentiles were given the opportunity to turn from their sins and be saved, how much more could God's formerly chosen people, the Jews, be given the opportunity of being saved in the same way! God's mercy has been extended to both Jew and Gentiles in that both have the gospel preached to them, and both are saved by believing and obeying this saving message. So Paul says he and others are obligated to preach to Jews as well as to Gentiles for both are under sin. The Jews were disobedient to God in not believing on His Son. Formerly the Jews were obedient and the Gentiles were disobedient. Now the case is reversed. The Gentiles are obedient and the Jews are disobedient. Now the Gentiles "through their mercy" should teach the Jews that they might become obe-

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dient believers and thus obtain mercy. God intended that the Jews should obtain mercy through the mercy of the Gentiles.

VERSE 32

The *American Standard Version* reads, "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all." "All" includes Jew and Gentile, all were disobedient (Romans 3:9, 23; 11:30, 31). Now God wishes to have mercy on "all them that believe" for there "is no distinction" (1:16; 3:22). Those upon whom God has mercy are those in Christ (8:1). Condemnation was universal but so is salvation (5:18). God's mercy is now extended to all equally and without partiality and upon the same terms.

Of course Paul is not saying that God has made sinners out of everybody so He can save the whole human race. But His mercy is extended impartially and under the same conditions to all alike. It is "mercy upon all" in that it is truly available to all. Verse 31 says, "they also may obtain mercy." God counted all as disobedient (3:9). For this reason, He commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30, 31). Christ came to save sinners, not to cause men to be sinners. As universal as was condemnation, so is salvation (Romans 5:18).

VERSE 33

This is an exclamation of awe at the wisdom of God's great plan. Everything in this plan is for the good of Jew and Gentile alike. God even used the rejection of Israel for a good purpose. That is, the salvation of the Gentiles. He uses the salvation of the Gentiles for a good purpose, the provoking of Israel to jealousy. God is not unrighteous. He is just and merciful to all.

"The knowledge of God" here does not refer to what God knows but to what is known or may be known about Him. It refers to the things revealed about Him and His plans. (Read Hosea 4:1; 1 Corinthians 15:34; Colossians 1:9, 10; 2 Peter 3:18). In no passage is reference made to what God knows. No one can know the mind of God except as God reveals it (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). He has infinite resources at His command to effect the salvation of the world.

Those closing verses in this chapter tell us that God is in control and nothing else really matters. We cannot know fully God's ways, and in the degree that they are known they are not fully comprehended. But true

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faith receives all that God does. Our part after all, is to believe God's revealed word to us and receive all that God does in trust and confidence. He will grant eternal happiness to every recipient, provided only that men believe and obey Him. (See Job 5:8, 9; 11:7).

VERSES 34, 35

Isaiah 40:13 is cited in verse 34 and Job 41:11 in verse 35. Man has no right to question the plan of God. Though Israel rejected His plan does not prove that God's plan was faulty. God does not owe man anything. Man cannot do anything to put God in his debt. He chooses the conditions of His mercy. Only the Son of God and the Holy Spirit know the mind of God (Matthew 11:27; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11). God's wisdom does not need human acceptance or approval. The basis of all spiritual thought is not God's need of man but man's need of God. Is God in man's debt? Let him say for what and God shall repay it to him! Isaiah asked, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor hath taught Him?" (Isaiah 40:13). God does not seek information nor ask counsel of man. We cannot purchase His mercy, buy up His love, or merit His salvation. How could man give anything to Him who justly claims all things? (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalms 24:1; 50:12).

VERSE 36

All things are of Him, through Him, and unto Him. We cannot enrich Him by giving Him that which is already His, but we can say with Paul "To Him be glory forever." Through His power all things have been brought into being, and by it they are sustained. All things are for His honor and pleasure. There is no room for self-righteousness, pride or boasting. Man can only praise the wisdom and purpose of God, who through His divine grace has worked a salvation that surpasses the understanding and imagination of man.

Paul's plea is that man should accept God's great redemptive plan, because God is God and man is man. God is the one for whom everything is done.

This chapter closes what has been called the "doctrinal" part of the book of *Romans*. The next chapter begins the practical part of this letter, showing us what we are to do because these things are so. In chapter 12 we shall observe Paul's conclusions concerning acceptable Christian conduct.

Chapter 12

VERSE 1

Paul's is a personal petition here. He employs this word "beseech" a number of times. He used it in 1 Corinthians 1:10 to plead against division and at 1 Corinthians 4:16, asking that they be "imitators of me." He uses it when he appealed to Euodia and Syntyche to "be of the same mind in the Lord." Now he makes his appeal to the Romans that they would "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God..." The *NEB* translates the next part as, "... the worship offered by mind and heart." The *RSV* says, "spiritual worship." The *NASB* says, "spiritual service of worship." Much has been said about serving God from the mind (Romans 1:9; 6:17; 7:25; 8:6). See also 6:13. One cannot present his "members" unless he also presents his "mind" to God.

We are to present our bodies as a "living sacrifice." Christians are to be slaves of righteousness and are to live for God. This is opposed to Old Testament dead sacrifices. Ours is a holy sacrifice because we have been set apart from sin. Therefore we must keep our lives pure. The members of our body are to be "instruments of righteousness" (6:12, 13). The word "acceptable" means well-pleasing to God.

The *ASV* renders the last of the verse as, "which is your spiritual service." The word "present" is the same word as yield in 6:13-19. Thus, Christians are to place themselves at the disposal of God for His service.

The Christian life is a sanctified, sacrificial life. The word "reasonable" refers to our rational, logical and intelligent service. It is logical that we should render this service by reason of the truths already studied in this epistle. The great and loving provision God made and perfected for our salvation obligates us to serve this One who has been so gracious toward us. The word "mercies" denotes the sum of the provisions which God has made in the gospel for our salvation. Each provision is the expression of mercy.

VERSE 2

The *ASV* reads, "and be not fashioned according to this world" (or age). Do not copy the ways and practices of other people. We are thus cautioned not to fall into prevailing ways and practices. This would also ban our drifting into the customs of other religious people. See 1 Peter 1:14, 15. We are to fashion ourselves according to the life and will of our

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Lord. We are to be "transformed." This will entail some radical changes in our thinking and conduct. This is a continual process (2 Corinthians 4:16). This is the only way we can prove to ourselves that the will of God is good, well-pleasing and perfect.

Many things in the world are good, right and proper. But there are also many things that are evil within themselves and other things that are of an evil tendency. We are to shun anything and everything that is inconsistent with the Christian life. These things we learn and know to shun by the continual renewing of our minds. Earnest and sincere Bible study will enable us to know what God's will is and what is good, well-pleasing and perfect.

The world is much with Christians. Though we are not of the world, we are nevertheless still in it and are subject to its fashions and allurements. But we are to reject the apparent sinful things and shun the very appearance of evil and bring our minds into subjection to God and His will. The following passages can be of immense help to us; 2 Corinthians 4:16; 4:4; Philippians 2:5; Colossians 1:17; 3:16. God's way is the good way, His will is the perfect way for men, and the person who tries it shall know it is true.

The word "transformed" means in our English language the same as the word metamorphosis. This is the process by which the caterpillar changes into a butterfly. Thus we can speak of the Christian's transformation into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). The "renewing of the mind" therefore means putting to the test or demonstrating. We are exhorted to put the Christian life to the test and see in experience that it is the best way to live.

VERSE 3

Paul mentioned this particular "grace" in chapter 1 and verse 5, and reference here is to inspiration. Thus by inspiration to "everyone who is among you." This is not like chapter 11 and verse 13 where he speaks only to the Gentile reader or chapter 2, verse 1, where he speaks only to the Jewish reader. Now he is addressing all of the Christians in Rome, Jews and Gentiles. They were not to "think more highly" of themselves than they ought to think. Both Jews and Gentiles had already been warned about this (11:25; 3:9, 27). Even today, we have many things of which we can boast, but we cannot boast in ourselves and please the

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Lord! Some of those brethren had special spiritual gifts. The gift was from God through the Spirit, and this was to cause one to think soberly and not to boast. When one thinks of himself more highly (to have lofty thoughts), the implication is that one looks down on others. They and we are to remember that God has dealt to each one a measure of faith ("has dealt" here means to divide out; distribute). Paul is warning against pride, ambition, conceit, vainglory, and selflove. Christians are to have a new mind by the filling of one's very being with the "mind of Christ," who "made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:5-8). There is no occasion for pride, conceit, arrogance, and self-righteousness, for no one ever deserved salvation.

It should be noted that it is right for one to think highly of himself, but not more highly than becomes a sinner without merit of salvation. Too one should not think so highly of himself as to produce conceit when he compares his own gifts with those of his fellow-Christians.

Paul anticipated a spirit of presumption among the Romans by reason of their spiritual gifts like that which he rebuked at Corinth (1 Corinthians 12,14). None in New Testament times acquired miraculous gifts but they were gifts of God. For them, they were to be thankful. There was no ground for vainglory. These gifts were to be administered for the benefit of the church and not for selfish display and boasting.

Even in the matter of great mental endowments, the endowed must not think too highly of himself, but rather to act as though he is unconscious of his gifts. We must be careful to be fair-minded and not to overestimate our own gifts nor to underestimate those of others. To think soberly is to think sensibly.

VERSES 4, 5

A discussion similar to this is in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and in Ephesians 4:11-16. The church is compared to a human body in which the function of each member, though different, is necessary to the whole body. There are many members but there is but one body. The human body is the illustration of the one spiritual body. All have been baptized into the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12,13). Jesus is the head (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18,24). Each Christian is a member, a part (1 Corinthians 12:27). Each is a member of all other members - "one of another" (Ephesians 4:5). This interrelation with each other should keep

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down pride, selfishness and jealousy.

The word "office" in verse 4 refers to function. Each member of the body of Christ has a function, an office, just as each member of our own body. Each is an essential part of the body. No one member can claim superiority over the others because all are essential. Just so, the church is composed of many members and everyone is essential to its growth and perfection.

We, as Christians, are many individuals; yet in Christ, we compose but one body. Since we compose the body, we are necessarily members one of another. Since our relation to one another is so intimate, none of us can afford to feel proud over another in the same body.

VERSES 6, 7, 8

Our abilities and opportunities are gifts from God. We differ in our capacities and opportunities. In Rome, the members of the church had spiritual gifts bestowed upon them that they might guide and enlighten the whole church. The same is true today of natural abilities. Each gift was given to each person for the good of all. Then there should have been no comparisons, rankings or preferments which are a part of far too many of us.

Any prophecy or preaching and teaching must flow out of the living faith of the teacher or preacher. To do otherwise, the preacher would show himself to be hollow and hypocritical and he would be ineffectual.

"Or ministry" refers to any kind of service undertaken for God's glory in the church. Whatever is done should be done enthusiastically and faithfully.

"He that teacheth" refers to teachers, and they are to be distinguished from prophets, some of whom at least were inspired. As a rule, those called teachers were not inspired. Exhortations, liberality, showing mercy, etc. seem to refer to various Christian duties of both private and personal nature.

We begin to see that it would be unreasonable to give all Christians the same gift as it would be to give all the members of the physical body the same function. Should the ear stubbornly refuse to hear and set up a determined effort to smell or see, it would produce anarchy in the body. Those who had not received miraculous gifts were to be as diligent in what they could do as were those who had gifts imparted to them by the

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Holy Spirit. The acts they could perform were to be done with cheerfulness. Cheer, like love, must be without hypocrisy. It seems the passage would enforce the spirit of contented humility upon the Christians in all their actions. Then there would be no pride and self-exaltation and none would be seduced by envy and thereby fall into bitterness and idleness.

Each church needed all of these gifts but no one person possessed them all. The gifts were distributed by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11) through the apostles (Acts 8:14-19; Romans 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:6). The gifts of exhortation, giving, ruling and showing mercy seem not to have been imparted by the Spirit.

VERSE 9

Their love was to be real and sincere. The word "dissimulation" means false pretense or hypocrisy. We are not to merely pretend to love one another. There is to be no pretended love. Ours is to be an unfeigned love. It is a duty for Christians to love one another with a tender, constant love (2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:18). Hypocrisy is one of the worst vices to which Christians may be addicted (see Matthew 23). Some of our Lord's most vehement denunciations were directed against it.

It seems in this exhortation, Paul has in mind our love for all men and not only to Christians. In verse 10, he becomes more specific in speaking of brotherly love. Therefore we are to love all men. This does not mean that we are to love the ways and words of all men, but every sinner is a potential Christian. If we love such, surely we shall be doing our utmost to lead those people to our Saviour by our love and concern.

"Abhor that which is evil." The word "abhor" means to despise, reject, loathe. In our passage, it also means to shrink from. Amos 5:15 says, "Hate the evil, and love the good." One authority defines "abhor" as to detest utterly. This is the positive and negative side of living for Christ. As Christians, we abhor evil because we died to sin (Romans 6:2), and because we realize that the wages of sin is death (6:23). We cling to what is good because our thinking has been transformed so that we now seek the good, acceptable and perfect will of God (12:2). (See also Hebrews 1:8, 9). Because Jesus loved man, he hated evil. If we love our fellowman, we hate that which is hurtful to him.

The word "cleave" in this verse is significant. The word means literal-

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ly "glues itself" to that which is good. A Christian has no right to be neutral between right and wrong.

VERSE 10

The exhortation to love the brethren is frequently repeated by the apostles. "Let love of the brethren continue" (Hebrews 13:1). "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22).

Our Lord intended that this should be regarded as the badge of discipleship (John 13:35). Again, He intended that the church tie should rival that of the family. We are brethren in Adam according to the flesh, but we are brethren in Christ according to the Spirit. Closer are the ties of the heart than of the body. We love brethren whom we know in our own locality, but we must embrace the whole brotherhood as well. All are in the same family and all became members the same way. Therefore the love of all the other members is our birthright.

The word "preferring" here means to hold in higher regard or esteem; to value more; to like better; to choose over another or others. As Paul says in Philippians 2:3, "...let each esteem other better than themselves." This denotes the esteem in which one Christian should hold another. In the matter of showing esteem or respect, we are to be examples to one another. In matters of giving respect and holding high in estimation, Christians are to strive to outdo each other. Each of us should be more eager to confer honors than to obtain them. We, instead of trying to grasp honors for ourselves, should rather desire to honor and exalt our fellow-Christians. So the brethren in Rome, Jews and Gentiles, were to show proper honor and respect to one another so that harmony might prevail. And so it should be in all places even today.

VERSE 11

Indolence, slothfulness, laziness and idleness have always been condemned by the Lord. Likely, we would arrange it as "in diligence not slothful." Surely a Christian in his avocation would be zealous, enthusiastic, vigorous and strong. But above this and everything else, such qualities should characterize his devotion and service in the church. The opposite of what Paul commanded here is lukewarmness which is disgusting to our Lord (Revelation 3:16). Our Father's eye is upon us, and

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we are accountable to Him for all that we do. How then can we be cold and careless in God's service?

The first part of this verse has been translated by some as "Be not slow in zeal." That is, be not slow to come forward with zeal.

"Fervent in spirit." Here the word "spirit" is equivalent to mind. We are to be ardent in mind, and with marked earnestness, we begin and continue our service to our Master.

"Serving the Lord." The word "serving" really means to be a slave or to serve as one. This signifies that the act of serving is now going on and that it is continuous or is never to cease. So we are to be constant in serving the Lord. Indeed, if our mind is firmly set on serving the Lord, then we shall serve constantly and zealously. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God" (Romans 7:25).

VERSE 12

There is no hope except through industriousness in the Lord's service. Hope sustains us in all our undertakings. The Christians' hope of future bliss brings joy and happiness even when we have trials and persecutions. Patience holds on; it does not quit. Patience is steadfastness or endurance. Then, realizing our dependence upon the Lord, we are led to steadfastness in prayer.

We can be joyful because of hope. Hope is the ground of the joy we have in Christ.

In all the pressures and narrowness of life, we are to be patient. Not a murmur should escape our lips. Not one escaped the lips of our master.

Nowhere is the child of God safe without prayer; nowhere is he in much danger with it. "By patience we possess ourselves; by hope we possess God; by prayer we are able to possess both" (Burkitt). This verse helps us to realize our continuous dependence upon the Lord. We do not always understand the why of some of the happenings in life, but this is not important. What is really important is that we obey our Lord always. This hope is the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19), and enables the child of God to endure whatever storms may come.

VERSE 13

Clinging to what is good means taking care of brothers and sisters in the Lord (Galatians 6:10). Paul emphasized the necessity of giving to less fortunate brethren (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 8, 9). "Better to

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have no coat at all than to have two and refuse to share one with a brother who has none" (Moses Lard).

The word "necessity" here is from a word which means a state of destitution. In this passage the Christian is told to relieve this destitution. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto Jehovah" (Proverb 19:17). Our Lord stated this clearly in Matthew 25:41, 45.

The hospitable person is constantly aware of the needs of others and offers to share in taking care of those needs. Peter said, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Peter 4:9). Surely he meant, Be friendly to strangers without murmuring.

VERSE 14

Persecutions were and are the common lot of Christians. "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution " (2 Timothy 3:12). The Christian's rule of conduct is to ask God's blessings upon the persecutor. This action might cause the persecutor to think seriously about your reaction, and if we could lead him to become a Christian, this could be the greatest blessing of all. The martyred Stephen and our Lord are our faithful examples. The spirit of Christ is to return good for evil (Matthew 5:44, 45). Do good for evil and render blessing for cursing. To do him good is to do what will help him. It is not always what will please him, but what will help him that is best.

The word "bless" means to wish for blessings to be upon those who curse you. "Curse " means to wish that some ill fortune will come upon the persecutors. (Read Matthew 5:11, 12).

VERSE 15

We are to be touched and moved by the emotions of others whether of joy or sorrow. Only the wicked can be hardened against the joys and calloused against the sorrows of fellow mortals. Some feel it is harder to rejoice with others of good fortune than it is to weep over the misfortunes of others. If we will but heed the teaching to abstain from envying, then our hearts can rejoice at the good fortune of another. Brotherly love should so bind us to God's people in full sympathy, that we cannot but "rejoice with them that rejoice" and "weep with them that weep." In the body of Christ, what affects one member affects all of the others. Therefore Paul urges mutual concern among all of the members (1 Corinthians 12:12-26).

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VERSE 16

We are not to think highly of ourselves as though we were better than other Christians. We are to see ourselves as equally important and mutually dependent (Philippians 2:1-4). There is no reason for any member to feel superior to the others because God has the same love for all (Romans 11:32).

There is the admonition to be of the same mind. This does not refer to unity in gospel teaching, but rather to disposition of one toward another. Do not be ambitious to appear to be greater than others. We should observe that a child of God does not condescend when he associates with another member of the family and he should not feel that he does. A Christian is thankful to be in the same family and he has never made occasion to be proud, haughty, and thus above other Christians. Paul's warning is, "Be not wise in your own conceits." That is what one becomes when he looks upon Christian growth as a thing of status, and condescends toward others who have not grown along with him. We are not permitted of the Lord to feel superior to other children of God. We all must allow ourselves to be led along in life by lowly thoughts, lowly ways, and other things that comport with a spirit of humility. Christ was meek and gentle to all men: be like Him!

"Be not wise in your own conceits." Do not be puffed up with a sense of your own wisdom. Overconfidence in self leads to presumption which is offensive to God and man. Most of the failures in business and in religion come from too high an estimate of one's self.

VERSE 17

Return good for evil. When you are wronged, bear it patiently. Jesus said to His Father, "Forgive them..." In the church, we may have grown careless about this very important matter. There is a spirit of getting even by retaliating in kind against one who slights or wrongs us. To try to get even with someone shows our motives to be wholly unmixed with mercy. Returning evil for evil settles nothing, but usually makes bad matters worse. Besides, to return evil for evil puts one in the class of evil doers. "Spite work is of the devil" (Robert L. Whiteside).

God is the one who will pay back every man according to what he has done (2:6). It is God's job, not man's, to repay evil. (Read 1 Thessalonians 5:15).

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We should think about what is good and right in the sight of all men. In the latter part of this verse, the *ASV* reads, "Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men." When we do, we are first of all to make those things the subject of previous thought. Then we shall be much more likely to return good for evil. If the things we do are honorable in the sight of all men, then we are able to exclude anything that is disreputable, dishonorable or detestable in our society. (Read 2 Corinthians 8:21 and Proverbs 3:4).

VERSE 18

Taking vengeance only adds fuel to the fires of enmity and strife. Refraining from this will help to preserve peace both in the body of Christ and with the outsiders. It seems impossible to be at peace with all men. Jesus could not be at peace with all. Teaching the truth boldly, rebuking sin and error makes peace with some impossible. However there are a number of things we can do to promote peace without compromising God's truth. We shall have a lot more peace in the body of Christ if we do what we can, without compromise, to bring about and to sustain peace. Just leave a place for the wrath of God by not avenging yourself. God's wrath is sure (Deuteronomy 32:35). Since God will punish the enemy, then the Christian is to leave vengeance to Him. James speaks of a peace which comes from above, which is in harmony with truth, and is to be sought by us all (James 3:17).

VERSE 19

Those early Christians were suffering from their enemies, but Paul tenderly exhorts them to suffer with patience and leave the vengeance to the Lord. God has forbidden us to take vengeance. Not only is it illegal in any civilized state, but it is contrary to the principle of overcoming evil with good. The punishment of evil doers is a prerogative of God and is not to be usurped by His children. We know He takes vengeance through legal authorities and will surely even everything at the final judgment. He has exclusive jurisdiction in the case and promises to give the just recompense. The "wrath" to which we are to give place is evidently not our own, nor our enemy's, but God's (Proverbs 20:22; 24:29). Let the Lord's anger take the place of yours and let Him avenge you. His mind is unclouded. He can justly judge and He can temper punishment with mercy. The right of punishment belongs absolutely to the Lord and

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in no sense or degree to us. Deuteronomy 32:35, "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense..." We are to overcome evil with good, but if we seek to inflict punishment with our own hands on an enemy, we are overcome of evil because we ourselves become evil. How much better then to give place unto divine wrath.

VERSE 20

The word "but" in this verse shows a strong contrast. In contrast to taking vengeance, the Christian is to help his enemy in whatever way is necessary (Proverbs 25:21,22). The Christian refuses to do anything but to show kindness. We are not to do good to him to see him suffer, but that we might bring him to shame and to repentance. Instead of our taking vengeance, we are to "feed him and give him a drink." This may fill him with shame and remorse and melt down his enmity. This is overcoming evil with good. If we inflict the punishment with our own hands, we are overcome of evil and we ourselves become evil.

The hope is that our good deeds toward him will restore him to his right mind and to his right feelings. Then the evil he has done will burn in him like fire. The end may be his repentance. Your conduct may give you control of his ear, and when you get control of that you may next be able to control his heart. Our motive in thus treating an enemy is also to be the effective discipline of the Christian's own spirit and likewise the subduing of enmity within the adversary.

VERSE 21

We are not to let the evil done us lead us to do evil in return. When we allow ourselves to be provoked to revenge, we will be yielding to the enemy and overcome by that which is evil.

Evil is the weak weapon of the sinner and goodness is the all-conquering blade of the Christian. If evil leads us then we are overcome of evil. When we meet evil with good, we have at least overcome the evil in ourselves if not in our enemy.

Chapter 13

VERSE 1

Nearly all of this chapter has to do with our duties to the civil authorities. Some at that time must have regarded Christianity as antagonistic to human governments.

Paul told Titus to "put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1). Peter also said, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Peter 2:13, 14). It is made clear that there is no essential conflict between the claims of God and those of the state. One can render, and must render, what is due to each (Matthew 22:21). God has appointed that there be civil powers and governments. Therefore every disciple of our Lord is to be obedient to ruling authorities. This is not to say that God appoints governments to do wrong, or that He sanctions wrong in them anymore than He sanctions sin in mankind. God may tolerate governments in doing wrong just as He does men in sinning, but He sanctions neither the wrong nor the sin.

The Jews at this time were especially averse to being subject to the Roman government, and Jews who became Christians would likely hold to their former prejudice against being subject to Rome. Others might feel that since they had confessed Jesus Christ and submitted to His authority, they were not subject to any other government. Hence the need for Paul's plain and emphatic teaching.

We cannot possibly be subject to God and rebel against the government. The exception would be when the government would cause us to violate the will of God. Yet the Christian has no right to resist government as such, or to seek its forcible overthrow even if it is a wicked government. If either the Christian or the government fails to observe God's arrangement, He will execute divine judgment on the offender. Christ Himself honored the state when He ordered the payment of taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:21). He declared that the authority of Pilate was given to him "from above" (John 19:11). He also submitted to arrest, even illegal and unjust arrest (Matthew 26:47-56). He refused to allow Peter to defend with the sword against an outrage and meekly accepted

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the death penalty itself which the state unjustly exacted and which Christ had ample means of avoiding (Matthew 26:53) but did not. He never led a riot, organized an underground, criticized the government or took the part of the Jews against Rome. Jesus Christ was not a revolutionary in any sense of that word today.

VERSE 2

“Whosoever resisteth the power” is in the present tense, therefore means keeps on resisting the power, the authority. They that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. “Withstand” means to oppose. One who does this not only brings upon himself the judgment of the laws but also the judgment of God. And, the word “judgment” here means an adverse sentence. There is no place in the Christian system for rebellion against authority. “The ordinance of God” means what God has ordained or appointed.

Therefore this means that we are to regard government as instituted by God. When the government is established, and if its decisions are not a violation of the laws of God, we are to submit to them. If we violate the laws, we incur the displeasure of the earthly rulers and the displeasure of God and will be punished by Him. If we take a stand against the government and defy the authority of the government, then we bring upon ourselves the judgment of both.

VERSE 3

It must be that the state of God’s ordained institution is effective and successful. Of course failures may be noted, but in the principal part and in the overwhelming number of examples given to us in history, the language by Paul stands unchallenged.

Those who do good have no fear of rulers, but those who do bad have reason to fear. We are to do that which is right, and we shall have no cause to fear the authority of the state. Rather you will obtain from it praise for being a good and dutiful citizen.

We know there are exceptions to this. The Roman authorities later put Paul to death. It must be Paul is laying down principles that would apply to all Christians under established governments in all ages.

VERSE 4

God’s arrangement regarding civil authorities is for the good of the

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Christian, that he may lead a godly and dignified life in quietness and peace (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Since he (the ruler, verse 3) is a revenger to execute wrath on those who do evil, then he is the minister of God. In praising the well-doer and punishing the evildoer, government is exercising its God-ordained function and is to be viewed by the Christian as God's appointed servant to those ends. So the capacity in which they are ministers (or servants) of God is that of "avenger of wrath" against evildoers. Without order in the society, total anarchy would reign in the world. Even long before Moses' law, God said to Noah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6).

"The sword" in this passage is a symbol of power, the power or authority to inflict even the death penalty as is taught in the Genesis passage above. If one does that which is evil, he should be afraid for God intended that through civil law such a one should be apprehended and punished.

The "minister of God" means the servant of God. Thus, the one who bears the sword has the badge of authority to avenge the state. He has been given authority by God and the state to inflict anger (the anger of the state) against the evildoer. The punishment of wrongs is the inflicting of both the divine anger and that of the state upon the evildoer.

VERSE 5

We have two reasons or motives for submitting to the laws of our land. We must obey our laws or the penalty for disobedience will be inflicted upon us. As Christians, we must obey in order to have a clear conscience. Our obligation in this regard is plainly stated in 1 Peter 2:13, 14. So we have a double incentive for keeping the civil law.

The expression "must needs be" means it is necessary to be. It is a matter of high obligation and of necessity to be subject to the civil rulers.

"For conscience sake" means it is of duty to God because He has appointed it and made it necessary and proper. Ecclesiastes 8:2, "I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God."

The government to which Paul asked the people to subject themselves was far from a free, democratic government. The character of the government does not determine whether or not the Christian must be subject to it.

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VERSE 6

Government is the ordained institution of God for keeping order in society; therefore, it deserves the tax support of Christians. We are but supporting our rulers, referred to as God's servants, while they do God's service. They are attending continually upon this very thing. The Christian's duty is to be in subjection to authority as a religious duty. (See Matthew 22:15-22). The government is God's appointment and we should contribute to its support (taxes) as a matter of conscience, because we thus honor the arrangement of God. When we render obedience, respect, courtesy, honor and cooperation to our civil officials, we are doing so "as unto the Lord" and not as unto men.

VERSE 7

This verse leaves no doubt but that the establishment of human government is to be honored, respected and obeyed by Christians. If indeed we do not, then we shall incur God's displeasure. We are exhorted to render to all their dues. This verse but sums up the whole of what has been said in a few short clauses. We are to pay our taxes on property, pay duties on imported goods, cultivate the fear of punishment which will restrain from disobedience, and pay high and sincere respect to our authorities. Indeed if all people were Christians, we would still need civil governments because there are many things that must be done which the church as a body is not authorized to do.

VERSE 8

Thayer's explanation of "owe" is that which is due. Paul is not forbidding honorable debts such as accounts. It seems Paul and Philemon conducted such transactions (Philemon 18). Surely Paul is warning against refusing or neglecting to pay one's debts. It also discourages, maybe forbids, needless spending so as to be unable to pay debts promptly. There is an exception to the foregoing statement. The Christian is obligated to love his neighbor, and this debt is never fully paid. (See James 2:8). To love one another is an obligation always due; it is a perpetual debt. The law is fulfilled by deeds of helpfulness and refraining from doing any harm. "Hath fulfilled the law" does not refer to the whole law but to the part to "love one another." It is that part of the law that relates to me and another. If we love another, we will be certain to fulfill the law toward him. One will not offend or kill or rob those whom he loves.

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VERSE 9

The law is fulfilled by the deeds of helpfulness, but it is also fulfilled by refraining from doing the evil things mentioned in this verse. If we refrain from these evils and love our neighbor as ourselves, then this is fulfilling the law of love. If we love our neighbor as ourselves and treat him as well as we would have him treat us, then this is the real love which is enjoined.

"If there be any other commandment," we shall obey it too. We will obey all commandments regulating our relationship with our neighbor.

"Love thy neighbor as thyself" does not mean as we love God (Matthew 22:37), nor as we love Jesus (Matthew 10:37), but as we love ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). Do your neighbor no harm but always good.

VERSE 10

If we observe the things in verse 9, then the law is fulfilled in the way we treat our neighbor. If one loves his neighbor as he loves himself, then he will not do him any harm but always good. This is real love.

Love does no harm to another, and it is therefore the fulfilling of the law. This simply means the completion or the meeting of the requirements of the law. All of the regard and right treatment of our neighbor because of our love for him is satisfying the demands of the law. If we have the same regard for the welfare and happiness of our neighbor as we have toward our own, then we will work "no ill to our neighbor." Self-love works no ill to self, so neighbor-love works no ill to neighbor.

VERSE 11

Knowing the rapid passing of time and the approaching judgment should cause us to be diligent in preparing our lives to meet God. We do know we live in the "last days," the last age or dispensation of time before the end. This refers to designated time or appointed time. God has set times for certain things to happen in His eternal purpose ("seasons," Acts 1:7). Verses 11-14 here are paralleled by 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, where they are amplified.

It is so important that we obey the teaching given in the first ten verses of this chapter in view of the day that is at hand (See 1 Corinthians 6:6, 8; Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 1:28).

The "salvation nearer than when we believed" is not that of Mark 16:16 but that of 1 Peter 1:5, 9. "When we believed" refers to the time

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when we first became Christians. The word "believed" includes the whole process of becoming a child of God. Because our eternal salvation is nearer, we should be more concerned and active lest we lose our work of the past and joy of the future.

"High time" is simply full time. Now is the time to awaken out of our lethargy and really begin to serve and work in the kingdom, for the good of others and for our own good. The tendency is to be guilty of moral inattention and carelessness. To be fully aroused is to be keenly and thoroughly conscious of all spiritual facts and responsibilities, all truths and possibilities. We do not have enough time to waste any of it. There is a tendency for us to never be as wide awake as we should be (Ephesians 5:14). As time passes, eternal salvation comes nearer.

VERSE 12

Sin and ignorance are both represented as darkness and night. All of us are more or less under the influence of both. Paul writes to people who have just recently seen the light in the gospel of Christ. They are to arouse themselves for all the duties and beauties of the daylight that has dawned upon them. The gospel age is new, daylight has broken, and they are not to sleep in sin any longer. They are free and delivered from sin by the gospel. They are to don the armor of light, having escaped from the darkness. The old pagan darkness has been lifted and the day has dawned for them. Therefore, they are to work and serve in the daylight of time granted to them.

VERSE 13

We are to walk "becomingly as in the day." Christians are in the world but not of it. This chapter has centered on the life of Christians as part of the world.

The word "honestly" in the KJV really means becomingly. This means to live in such a way as to cast a favorable light upon the Christian community. Because we are "children of the day," we know better than to live as if we did not know the truth of God (1 Thessalonians 5:5-8).

The list of sins in this verse aptly describes the pagan lifestyle in first century Rome. (See Ephesians 4:1-3; 17-19, 25-32). Paul is saying that nothing less than Christ-likeness will suffice. The way we are to walk is not in "reveling and drunkenness," not in "lewdness" or "unbridled lust," not in "strife and jealousy."

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The word “becomingly” suggests the beauty and adornment of Christian behavior. The kind not to be ashamed of in broad open daylight. We must be really careful of our conduct, because we live as in the broad light of day where every eye is upon us! Let not a fault be discoverable in us.

We must remember that love does not behave itself unseemly (1 Corinthians 13:5). A Christian should not stumble as if he were walking in the dark, he should walk uprightly as in the day.

VERSE 14

This verse is in contrast with verse 13. We did put Christ on at baptism (Galatians 3:27), but we must continue to “put on” the Lord. He is the “Lord Jesus Christ” and He rules, guides and directs. We therefore submit to His rule and follow Him. With this kind of thinking, we will not be devoting mental energy to satisfying the lusts of the flesh, but to following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The word “provision” is from the Greek word *pronoia* and means forethought. The word “flesh” means the unlawful desires and actions of the corrupt nature (Romans 7:5; 8:5-8; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 2:3).

Our whole exterior life as seen by the world, is to be a reproduction of the temper and conduct of Christ. Plainly, be all that Christ requires you to be, and do all that He requires you to do. Beyond this you cannot go; short of it you must not stop!

Chapter 14

VERSE 1

It is clear that the unity of believers was not to be disrupted by strong views on indifferent matters. Every generation of the church has faced this problem, and divisions have occurred again and again. Many of the things that alienated have been secondary matters, and some have been trivial. Indifferent things are not to be made matters of conscience.

The weak brethren spoken of here may have been scrupulous Jewish Christians. And it seems that the errors of the weak brethren in Rome were in some manner different from a similar group in Galatia and Corinth (Galatians 4:10, 11; 1 Corinthians 8:4). There is no indication that the Roman brethren were going far beyond scrupulous observances in attempting to bind their scruples upon others. Another difference was that the weak brethren are identified as over-strict, and not as those who exercised their liberty in Christ.

Regardless, the sacred fellowship of Christians must not be broken over matters of opinion. None are to reject a brother in Christ over things involving his weak conscience. This verse teaches us to accept him who is weak in belief. Surely this means to accept and hold him in Christian fellowship. The Christian who is weak in his belief is not to be spurned or treated with contempt.

Though they were taught to receive this weak brother, it does not mean he is received because others have accepted and now believe that which caused him to be of weak faith. Whatever his indifferent contention, we can accept and strive to help him without accepting his theories. What is the profit to brethren in the arguing over opinions? Each of us has certain opinions, but let us hold them as opinions and not try to make them matters of faith which all are compelled to accept.

VERSE 2

Here is the explanation of the weakness of a brother. He is weak in that he thinks he should not eat any kind of food but herbs. So it is plainly a vegetarian scruple that Paul is dealing with. Some had made a dietary thing into a religious matter and this was wrong. Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:1-5, that "every creature of God" is good for food. Jesus Himself had made "all meats clean" (Mark 7:19). So either through ignorance or prejudice, these brethren had not received the teaching of Christ

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and His apostles on the matters in question.

VERSE 3

The brother who has no scruples about eating meat, whether clean or unclean according to the Jews or even if it may have been offered to idols, should not despise him who has scruples about eating meat. The word "despise" means hold him in contempt. This then means to consider as nothing or of no value. But because Christ has received this brother, he is in Him and is therefore to be received by his brethren (verse 1). This certainly rules out disfellowship over matters of indifference, but not over matters where God has legislated (1 Corinthians 5:5, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14).

For one to condemn the Lord's servant does not change the Lord's attitude toward him. The Lord is able to make him stand, so long as his opinions do not interfere with his faith or obedience, or he does not try to force his opinions on others.

VERSE 4

God is the judge of all. This prerogative is withheld from fallible men and wisely so. Attitudes which censor and condemn are sometimes found within the family of the redeemed. Judging other Christians is a subject of universal concern in the church. This is also something that we should try harder to eliminate. (See James 4:11, 12). Most of our judging is premature as indicated by Paul's command, "Judge nothing before the time" (1 Corinthians 4:5). There may be some exceptions as being aware of false prophets (Matthew 7:15), and also of evil workers (Philippians 3:2). However when dealing with weak brethren, we must show love and forbearance wherever possible (1 Peter 4:8). Paul's plea is that we refrain from judging the servants of the Lord. We should judge less and love more. One will stand or fall by the judgment of God and not by our own judgments. One can fall away only by the Lord's judgment. We may condemn the Lord's servant, but that does not change the Lord's attitude toward him. If one is faithful to the Lord, God will own and sustain him regardless of his peculiarities or questions concerning which God has given no law.

VERSE 5

The word "esteemeth" here means regards or considers. The esteem-

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ing of this verse does not seem to be the observance of days as a means of salvation which Paul condemned in Galatians 4:9-11. Rather, this esteem for a day is neither a part of God's legislation nor contrary to it. Therefore it seems that the word "esteem" here may carry the meaning of judge. Each is to be fully assured in his own mind. One must have this assurance or conviction else his action would be sin (verse 23).

The days involved here were not set apart for worship by God. These by no means consider the Lord's day or the first day of the week. The Lord's day is not a doubtful or indifferent question. Where God has decided, there can be no doubt. But many thought it well to observe other days, such as the new moon and other days that had been sacred under the law of Moses. Paul is showing the Roman Christians that it is not right to require others to observe unauthorized days. These days were not to be an issue in the church, because the law of Moses has been abolished (Colossians 2:14-16). It was not right to bind Jewish holidays on the church and demand their observance. Those Old Testament days meant absolutely nothing to the Gentile Christians. If a Jewish Christian wanted to continue his rest on the Sabbath he could, but he was not to bind that practice on other Christians who did not regard the Sabbath as a day of rest. One is left to his own conscience in matters of opinion. It must be clear that in Paul's discussion of these matters of opinion, the Lord's appointments were not included. The Lord's day worship is not a matter of opinion or indifference. (See Galatians 4:10, 11). Therefore the Judaizing teachers were not to bind unauthorized days and seasons upon the other Christians (Colossians 2:16). By the same token, the Gentile Christians were not to bind Gentile observances upon the Jewish Christians.

VERSE 6

This verse seems to be an expansion of verse 5. It seems that the Lord's appointments were not included in this discussion. The Lord has set aside our coming together on the Lord's day to eat the Lord's supper, and this observance is not a matter of opinion or indifference. If some decided to devote any other day to study, meditation and prayer, then "let each one be fully persuaded in his own mind." However if the leaders in the church adopted the Jewish holidays and demanded that all members observe them, then they are out of line and without authority

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to so do. (See Colossians 2:16).

Christians then who were strong in faith could eat meats which had been sacrificed to idols, if they did not eat in recognition of idols. They could give God thanks and be approved in their eating. Others who felt they could not do that could go ahead and give thanks for their vegetables, feeling this is what they ought to do and are happy and God will accept their gratitude. Those who are stronger are not to condemn them. Each has in mind the object of serving the Lord. Paul's admonitions have to do with matters of indifference. In such therefore we are to have respect for our brethren. We are not to alienate ourselves from them because they do not agree with us in matters of indifference.

VERSE 7

The important thing while we are here is not the eating or not eating, observing days or not observing days, but in living and being sustained by our Lord. After all we are the subjects of Christ, and we are to live as He has taught and commanded us. His rights overshadow all our individual rights. To live to and for ourselves is forbidden. We are to deny ourselves, and that means we are to do far more than thinking only of ourselves. We must include the Lord and others in our consideration of our actions (1 Corinthians 5:15; Romans 12:1).

To live to one's self is to live solely to serve self, or to make self the supreme end of life. It is to live with no reference to anyone else, not even the Lord. Even in dying we are to have the honor and pleasure of the Lord in view. Our death should call attention to His grace and glory.

So whether one is a meat-eater or whether he is a vegetarian, there is still a common bond - "No one lives for himself and no one dies for himself." In living, one has more than himself to consider, and even in dying his consideration should be that of a good example to others.

VERSE 8

Whether we live or die is not the really important thing here but whether we are the Lord's, living or dying! He bought us with His blood and we are His property; therefore, whatever we do is to be done to His honor and glory.

Neither life nor death can make us cease to be the Lord's. Whatever we do is to be done to the glory of God. Therefore we are not to be guided by our own will or by the will of others, but by His.

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VERSE 9

"...whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (verse 8). Now in verse 9, we are told how we become His. Christ died that He might redeem us with His blood. Thereby He owns us for He bought us back with it. He arose from the dead that He might rule over us and finally save us. Since He is our Lord, He owns us completely and has the power to control us. Christ is now lord of or owns and controls both the living and the dead. Therefore in life and in death we are His, for He is the ruler of both. We do not pass from under His dominion when we die, nor when we shall be raised. Whether we live or die, we are the servants of the Lord.

VERSE 10

Paul seems to go back to the thought of Romans 14:3. Those who differ in matters of opinion are not to despise each other nor to condemn each other. We are not the judge and we are not to put ourselves in the place of Him who is the judge. (See 1 Corinthians 4:5). Where God has not legislated, we are not to judge. Remember, Paul has been speaking of things that are indifferent. We are not to condemn one another in these. God will judge him, and to his own Master he stands or falls. Therefore on untaught or indifferent questions, why do we reject our brother who differs from us? When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, He will judge each one according to His law.

Paul's rebuke is to those who pronounce judgment against their brethren on some unrevealed or indifferent matter. We shall all stand before Christ to whom God has given all judgment. To Him we are all responsible for our conduct and not to one another. Therefore, Paul urges all to refrain from both judging and despising. Each of us should concern ourselves with our own standing in the sight of Him who is our judge. The apostle continues to warn against human pride and conceit.

VERSE 11

This seems to be a quotation from Isaiah 2:9-11. Paul applies the same thoughts to our Lord in Philippians 2:9-11. The Greek word seems to signify the confession of sin rather than the confession of Christ as Lord. The meaning seems to be made clear in our next verse (12). To "bow the knee" is an act expressing homage, submission or adoration. Paul uses this to show that all believers, whether Jewish or Gentile converts alike,

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should give account to Him.

God judges all, hence it is superfluous for the Christian to judge any. It seems Paul is telling the Romans and us, that our judgments are futile and worthless, affecting no one but ourselves; therefore, let us refrain from them. We should be glad we do not have the responsibility of judging since we are so inept at the task.

Let us remember that Paul's injunction against judging was confined to the things he was discussing. We are exhorted to beware of false prophets (Matthew 7:15). Also, we must judge a man to be an evil worker, or we could not obey the command to "beware of the evil workers" (Philippians 3:2). Before the church can withdraw from the disorderly, it must first judge them to be disorderly. Then how could we obey Paul's injunction in Romans 16:17, 18 without judging which men belong to the class he mentions?

VERSE 12

This seems to be the general conclusion from what has just been said. Every man shall give account of himself, and the revealed will of God will be the standard of judgment. There is no place therefore for Christians to interfere with and annoy one another in matters indifferent or untaught by the word of God.

We shall not be asked to give account of others. We must give account of ourselves. Therefore it is without profit to be judging and despising one another here. None will stand or fall by our own judgments. God judges all. Therefore it is superfluous for the Christian to judge any. (See 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 2:16).

VERSE 13

Therefore let us no longer judge one another in these indifferent matters. This consideration works two ways. The weaker brother, who eats only vegetables or insists on keeping holy days, should not judge the brother who does otherwise. God will judge when He requires an accounting from every man (Romans 14:4). Neither the weaker brother nor his meat-eating counterpart should abuse his freedom to abstain from eating meat, or his freedom to eat meat (1 Corinthians 8:9-12).

Our judgment of one another is futile and contributes nothing to the welfare of either. Rather than indulge in this kind of judgment or in despising the weak, we should do all we can to contribute something to

each other's spiritual welfare.

The word "judge" is from a word which has several meanings, one of which is condemn. One brother is not to condemn another regarding these unlegislated matters. Paul's advice is that we think of everything, not as it affects ourselves only, but also as it affects others. There are many things as pleasures, pastimes, habits and customs which are essentially matters of principle and our participation is left to our own judgment. Most of these things are neutral and indifferent; therefore, one can do them or he need not. Either way, we are not to give offense to a brother whether he is the weaker or stronger one. All of our actions are to be guided by the principle of love. We do have responsibilities to others. Why distress another man's conscience in the things which do not really matter? We are free in Christ, but freedom should never be used as an excuse for riding rough shod over the genuine feelings of others. How could we enjoy doing something which brings offense, grief and even ruin to others?

The "falling" in this verse means falling from God's grace, falling away so as to be lost eternally. This consequence could follow the stumbling block or the setting at naught of a weak brother. In this case, the strong one becomes the offender and causes both to be lost. Both the weak and the strong are warned to show love and thus avoid placing stumbling blocks in his brother's way.

VERSE 14

Paul's teaching in this entire section is contrary to his education and prejudice as a Jew. But now he is speaking as one freed and enlightened in Christ. His expression here denotes that he is speaking by inspiration. No kind of food is unclean in fact (1 Timothy 4:4), but it is unclean to the man who believes it is. If one has been taught that something is unclean, then his conscience keeps him from accepting all kinds of meat. However conscience does not determine things to be right or wrong. Our conscience approves us when we do that which we think is right and disapproves us when we do that which we believe to be wrong. Our conscience will not tell us what is right and what is wrong! The Lord does that in His word.

The old Mosaic distinctions are now abolished under Christ. Consequently Christians are at liberty to eat whatever they please. The

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word "unclean" here signifies unclean in the old legal or ceremonial sense. If a Christian regards meat as unclean and yet eats it, the eating has the same effect on him as though the meat were really unclean. By the act he violates his conscience. The effect of his eating the meat is the same as though it were an actual sin. However it is not a sin before God. If one however goes against his conscience, he is untrue to himself - if untrue to himself, he cannot be true to anything.

This was a hard lesson for the Jews. Even Peter had to have a special revelation to convince him that such legal distinctions were no longer in force (Acts 10:9-16). Still Paul is saying one should not go against his convictions. We are to teach such a one what is right, but we should not try to persuade him to do what he thinks is wrong. Conscience is a signal light, but it is controlled by one's own understanding and teaching. It is indicated clearly that one should never violate his conscience.

VERSE 15

Being "grieved" could mean the person may go back into Judaism, or it may mean his conscience is offended, and consequently he is brought to grief (Matthew 27:3-5).

The brother who offended the weak was at liberty to eat the meat, but how could he go ahead and do it and thereby destroy his brother? The offender is not walking in love if he does this. "Do not, for the sake of pleasing thy palate, destroy him for whose salvation Christ parted with His life" (Macknight). One has the liberty to eat the meat, but could he not refrain to save a brother from spiritual death? (See 1 Corinthians 8:11,12). Surely then, our freedom in Christ should not be used to lead a brother into sin and thereby destroy one for whom Christ died. As Christians we should think of everything, not as it affects ourselves only, but also as it affects others. We should never use our Christian freedom as an excuse for rough-riding over the genuine feelings of others. Grieving a brother is the same thing as placing a stumbling block in his way (verse 13).

VERSE 16

"Your good" surely refers to one's liberties such as eating meat. Though eating meat may be good, it should not become an occasion for others to malign those who practice such.

We may do a thing that is good within itself, yet under certain circum-

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stances evil may result from doing it. Thus his good would be evil spoken of. If we persist in doing this, our influence as a Christian would be greatly injured. We are not to use our liberty to provoke blame or censure, for by so doing we lose our power to influence others for good whether they be weak or strong. A bad name has no power in God's kingdom (1 Timothy 3:7; Matthew 5:16).

VERSE 17

After all we need not use our liberty always, for the religion of Jesus Christ does not consist of either abstaining from or in using meat, but in a righteous and peaceable behavior and joy in the Holy Spirit. We should follow after and practice the things that promote peace, and rejoice in following the teaching of the Holy Spirit. These are the things which should be our chief concern. However we do not treat our fellow-Christian right, if in the exercise of our freedom we lead him to do wrong. The righteous conduct of Christians is the important thing.

VERSE 18

Those who promote such conditions as described in verse 17 are well pleasing to God and approved by all right-thinking people. When we realize the importance of righteousness, peace and joy, while we realize the relative insignificance of meat and drink, we will be careful not to harm our brother for the sake of little things. People will in general give their approval to churches which honor the commandment to walk in love, even toward the weak brother. Communities will praise a congregation which has a reputation of loving concern for one another in the congregation itself. The warm fellowship and loving concern of a community of Christians will even lead many to an acceptance and obedience to the gospel of Christ.

VERSE 19

Peace with one another is necessary to the edifying of one another. The word "edify" means to build up in knowledge, faith and right living. We are to have a strong relationship with God, but the "one another" relationships in the body of Christ are very important. We are to have a sound relationship with God, but also a sound relationship with one another. We are to encourage, not discourage, one another.

Therefore let us follow after things that make for peace. The peace of

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the church is worth more to the Christian than the exercise of our personal liberties. The edification of one another should be worth more to us than the satisfaction of our personal desires. Each of us should follow a constructive program of doing the things that produce harmony and love among the brethren. The word "edify" conveys the thought of building up the church instead of tearing it down.

VERSE 20

Do not for the sake of meat destroy the work of God. While all things are clean, it is evil to the one who eats with offense. If a weak brother eats meat while violating his conscience he sins. Therefore others should not urge him to violate his conscience. Then the other side is, we may eat meat or not provided no one is hurt by it, but whenever eating harms another we must abstain. Surely this verse is directed to the strong in faith.

The work of God is the salvation of the weak in faith. All things are clean. So the strong brother does not sin in eating the meat, unless in so doing he destroys a weak brother. This would be evil because he eats with offense. We are not to use our liberty at the expense of another's injury. (See 1 Corinthians 10:27,28,31-33).

VERSE 21

The weak brother will offend his conscience in eating. Therefore the strong brother must choose the proper course of abstinence that his brother may not be tempted. This principle would apply to anything which might involve the disapproving conscience of another. It is good to keep out of anything that might cause another to stumble. Even if many things are indifferent, we can refrain from them for the sake of the weak. Even things harmless within themselves should not become occasions of falling to some who might not see that they are harmless. The proof of a Christian's love is seen in how he exercises his liberty.

VERSE 22

The word "faith" here might stand for conviction. This is directed to the strong in faith. One is not to parade his rights and privileges so as to cause harm to the weak and strife in the church. One must not parade his liberty, because by speaking of it or using it, he wounds the weak and possibly drives them off. The strong can judge all meat to be clean and judge correctly. He can eat it or not as he sees fit. But he must not eat the

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meat if it will injure the weak. If he misuses his liberty, he will bring condemnation on himself. If he holds his persuasion and practices it and causes others to stumble, then he condemns himself. If he is a man strong in the faith, he would avoid causing a weak brother to stumble and thus escape condemnation himself.

VERSE 23

If one eats while believing it is a sin, he is condemned "because he eateth not of faith." "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." The word "faith" here is not the belief of the gospel, but the persuasion that what one does is lawful. If a person acts contrary to his conscience he is to be blamed. If one for popularity or other insufficient reasons overrides his own conscience, he stands condemned. The convictions of our hearts must be respected and honored. We must turn constantly to the word of God to educate and enlighten our conscience. Our conscience tells us it is right to do right, but it does not tell us what is right! God's word will tell us what is right. One may sin believing he is doing right, but he sins in doing anything if he doubts that it is right. If he doubts, then the act is not of faith.

Chapter 15

VERSE 1

At least the first seven verses of this chapter seem to be a continuation of the subject of Chapter 14. Paul has pointed out the danger of the weak brother being led away, even into idolatry, by seeing the strong brother eating meat which may have been offered unto idols. The strong knew there was no God but one, and that an idol is not anything. Therefore he could eat without conscience of the idol. But not all brethren had this knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:7). Therefore the strong are to bear with the weaknesses (infirmities) of the weak by refraining from eating meat that might lead them into idolatry (1 Corinthians 8:10). This must be what Paul was speaking of in 1 Corinthians 9:22. The great lesson here is that the strong are not to live for themselves alone but also for others.

Of course we must understand that this rule applies only to matters that are indifferent. In that which is wrong we have no choice. We must stand for the right. We ought "not to please ourselves," but we ought to have in our hearts the moral good and spiritual growth of our brother. This may not be the easy way, but it is God's way. It is always better to be right with God and suffer, than to be right with men and avoid trouble.

Consider the word "ought" in this verse. This means we have an obligation. This is something that is rightfully owed. The expression "please ourselves" means putting ourselves first or refusing to be considerate of another's weaknesses.

VERSE 2

We are to please our neighbor unto edification. That means "for the purpose of building up" (*Moses Lard*). Thus we seek to please our fellow Christian with reference to what is good for his upbuilding or edification. We "walk in love" (14:15) when we forego our rights to food and drink, so that we may encourage a brother (14:19).

We should understand that there is a limitation upon the meaning of pleasing neighbors. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." We are not to always defer to the whims and wishes of others. The critical issue is always the matter of the weak brother's conscience. When we thus yield, it is not for the purpose

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of confirming him in these matters but for the purpose of teaching him out of them. The key words in this passage are "to edification." (See 1 Corinthians 10:33; 11:1).

VERSE 3

Jesus is always our best example, and He bore the infirmities of others. The good of others was the great characteristic of His life. He bore the stripes we deserved. Just so, we may forego many things to bring spiritual joys to others. If Christ could bear so much for each of us, can we not then bear each other's infirmities? What a supreme example of love and unselfishness our Lord exhibited to a lost world! By comparison, the sacrifices made by the strong brethren in trying to help the weak are extremely weak and trivial.

VERSE 4

Reference is to Psalms 69:9 to which Paul has just referred. These things are written for our instruction and information that we might with patience strengthen those who are weak in faith. Then the strong are to find comfort that they have acted like Christ.

We are to be imitators of our Lord in bearing kindly the "weaknesses of the weak." When we have been faithful in this, then we are comforted in the consolation arising from a sense of doing right and are able to hold to our hope.

VERSE 5

We are exhorted to have the mind of Christ that we might bear with a weak brother, even as He is willing to bear with our weaknesses. What a great need there was that the Jews in the church at Rome not judge the Gentiles as inferior (2:1; 3:9; 3:27), and for the Gentile Christians not to boast because of the rejection of the Jews (11:18). All were justified by faith and not by the works of the law. Because we are the same in the eyes of God, we must treat our brethren like Christ treated men, thinking of others before self.

The word "likeminded" in our text comes from three words which literally say think the same. It means to be on the same side, to support the same cause, and to work toward the same goal. Paul does not demand total agreement, but he prays that they might maintain a deeper unity, a oneness in basic attitude, disposition and mind-set. He instructs them to

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work together because of their relationship to Christ (See Philippians 2:2-5). No one was to feel that he had superior rights over another. As Christ received us, so should we receive or accept one another in spite of the fact we do not all belong to the same race.

VERSE 6

“That ye may with one mind” is the ideal of unity among brethren in Christ. This is a mandatory state of harmony for Christians since it is according to Jesus Christ. That means this condition is according to His will and commandment. The praise and glorification of God should be uncorrupted by strife and division. With “one mind and one mouth glorify God” are expressions forbidding strife and contradictions to mar the praise of God. What a beautiful picture! Such an adoration shows the perfection of God’s work in us. This verse enjoins unity on the believers (See Acts 2:46). It is to be a unity of mind and utterance. If we are united in mind concerning the things of God and Christ, we will also be united in speech in our praise of our Lord.

VERSE 7

If we expect Christ to receive us, we must be willing to receive others in spite of their weaknesses. Surely he does not mean in spite of immoralities or essential doctrinal differences (1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14). The word “wherefore” in this verse suggests the conclusion of the foregoing section. The whole point of the first six verses of this chapter is here expressed, “Receive one another.” The result of such would be unity among believers even of diverse backgrounds in the church. The result would be the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This brings glory to God.

Christ has received both Jews and Gentiles. The least they can do is to receive each other. Since Christ has forgiven us, cannot we overlook the mistakes and errors of the weak? This will surely lessen any strife and division in the church, and the result will be greater glory to God.

VERSE 8

The word “circumcision” here means the Jews. Jesus came from the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. But this covenant and these promises contained blessings for the Gentiles. “The fathers” mentioned here are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the promises

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are found in Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18; 26:3, 4; 28:13, 14. The part referring to Christ is "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Paul makes this clear in Galatians 3:16. Jews and Gentiles share in what has been revealed to them (the gospel) according to the promises made to the fathers. They share and share alike in all of these precious promises. Therefore they should receive each other even as they have been received of the Lord.

VERSE 9

The promise to both Jews and Gentiles is fulfilled in Christ (Psalms 18:49). The promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 was that "all nations of the earth shall be blessed." It seems Paul is here referring to all of these scriptures to show that it had been God's plan down through the ages to include the Gentiles in the blessings of the promised seed. This should show the Jews and the Gentiles that neither had any right to feel superior to the other, and such feeling should promote better fellowship between them.

VERSE 10

This is Moses' prophecy (Deuteronomy 32:43), and it is his last song. In it he foretells that the Gentiles should join in praise and rejoice with his people, the Jews. Paul uses this to explain the mutual benefit of Christ to all. He is cause for joy among all peoples.

VERSE 11

Again the Gentiles are urged to praise the Lord because of their acceptance by Jehovah. This quote is from Psalms 117:1 and it illustrates the right which all peoples have to praise God. They can now praise Him because of their justification in Christ. The Jews should be able to see now that their own Scriptures included the Gentiles, and that they should be able to include them.

VERSE 12

Again the scripture includes the Gentiles in Isaiah 11:1, 10. The peaceable kingdom is present now, simultaneous with the gospel reign of Christ. Jesus is the prince of peace, the gospel is the gospel of peace, the kingdom is said to be peace, and Christians are to be at peace. Paul points out that the Gentiles are included in the kingdom now and that their inclusion is in keeping with prophecy. Even though the Messiah

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came as the seed of Jesse according to the flesh, His ultimate purpose would be the salvation of all the nations.

VERSE 13

This Christian dispensation was ushered in with the double promise of joy and peace (Luke 1:78, 79). The angels announced the arrival of this joy to the shepherds (Luke 2:10). God made a promise, we are to believe this promise, and on this belief rests hope. If the Romans would believe these promises and their fulfillment, then they would stop their judging and despising one another and would be led to accept and love one another in Christ. Also by the power of the Holy Spirit, they were to abound in hope. They can believe everything revealed to them by the Spirit. The Spirit has revealed all we know about God and Christ and the plan of salvation, and proved that revelation by signs and wonders. Thus what has been revealed to us is the source of all our knowledge, joy, peace and hope. There is no joy or peace in being a Jew or a Gentile. Joy and peace come from believing in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). This should open the doors of fellowship to both the Jews and Gentiles.

VERSE 14

Paul encourages the Christians in Rome. It seems he is saying, "You have had some differences, but you are good people." They were already able to admonish one another. Every saint in the congregation is to edify his brethren (verse 2). Paul believes that the Roman Christians will treat one another as he has exhorted them to do. After all, they are full of goodness and are filled with all knowledge and are able to admonish one another. Thus Paul is encouraging them to act properly toward one another so that prejudice, partiality and judgment are destroyed and replaced with love and mutual esteem. Paul never flattered, but he did commend brethren when he had grounds for doing so.

VERSE 15

Even though the church in Rome was doing very well, and Paul confesses that they likely knew already many of the things he has mentioned, he justifies his writing on the ground that he desired to refresh their memory on these things. Peter did the same thing in 2 Peter 3:1ff.

"In some sort" is otherwise translated in some measure. He may be saying that what he had written about the treatment of weak brethren

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was very bold. He may be suggesting that he had gone boldly beyond the information they already had. Regardless of this, we do see and appreciate Paul's courtesy and modesty.

He informs the brethren of his apostolic office, and therefore his responsibility to instruct and remind them of great blessings and obligations which they had. This is the reason that notwithstanding their knowledge and goodness, he feels a responsibility as well as the liberty and obligation to write them and remind them of these truths.

VERSE 16

Paul was chosen as an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Romans 11:13; Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:7). He did his work well and proved that the Gentile converts were as acceptable to God as were Jewish converts, no matter what Judaizing teachers said to the contrary.

The word "minister" here is exactly equivalent to apostle. A minister for the Gentiles is a minister appointed for their benefit, or devoted to their service. For Paul, the converting of the Gentiles was his peculiar work (Acts 9:15). His service in preaching the gospel was a holy, priestly service sanctified by God (1:9; 15:15). His was a legitimate ministry. So, "the offering up of the Gentiles" is acceptable to God because it has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This offering up of the Gentiles may refer to the Spirit's descent on Cornelius and his house as recorded in Acts 10.

VERSES 17, 18

Paul's glorying was not of himself but in his apostleship, and what God had done for the Gentiles through him. He would not dare to speak of anything except what Christ had done through him "for the obedience of the Gentiles" (See Acts 26:16-18). He did not glory in Jewish blood or in anything pertaining to Judaism (Galatians 6:13, 14). Paul would not take credit for any work done by others. We might do well to look at 1 Corinthians 2:2 and Galatians 6:13, 14.

VERSE 19

Christ worked through Paul "by word and deed," by his preaching the gospel and performing miracles to show that God was with him. The signs and wonders confirmed his preaching. So in all of western Asia and eastern Europe, Paul had preached a full gospel, a complete gospel (Acts 20:20ff; Colossians 1:23).

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VERSES 20, 21

Paul's personal desire was not to build upon another man's foundation (I Corinthians 3:6, 10, 11). This also is in keeping with Isaiah 52:15, "... for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." Paul was following the instruction of the prophet (2 Corinthians 10:14, 15). He preached where the gospel was most needed and where there might be a great harvest. Not every place was ripe unto harvest. Paul wanted to go where he thought the need was the greatest. The strongest claim upon Paul was the place where Christ was not known.

VERSE 22

(See 1:9-13). Perhaps one reason Paul had not yet gone to Rome was he had been busy preaching where people had not heard the gospel. Rome had already heard since the church was there at this time. Also his making necessary plans for his trip to Spain may have delayed him.

VERSE 23

Since Paul had preached in Corinth and in other regions round about where the gospel had not gone, he is ready now to go to Spain and would visit the Roman brethren in route. Since the gospel was already in Rome, he purposed to limit his stay to a short visit. Paul had covered the area from Jerusalem to Illyricum (15:19), and this took considerable time. This is not only an explanation of delaying his visit to Rome, but also an apology. No doubt the brethren in Rome knew of Paul and were eager for his arrival.

VERSE 24

Paul wished and even planned to preach in Spain, but there is no record that he ever did. We may wonder, after his freedom from his first trial in Rome, if he may have gone into Spain before he came back to places he had visited before.

His goal at this time was Spain. His stopping over place was Rome. He would like the Romans to "bring me on my way." No doubt this refers to their being his hosts and to assist him in needed ways as he leaves them for Spain. He wanted to be "somewhat filled with their company." He looked forward to being spiritually refreshed by their companionship and fellowship. He did not intend a lengthy visit for he

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wanted to get to Spain as quickly as possible that he might preach "where Christ was not named."

VERSE 25

As eager as Paul was to arrive in Rome, to be refreshed by the Christians there, and then be on his way to Spain, he must first go to Jerusalem on a very important mission. He was committed to the task of delivering some funds which he had raised for the poor saints in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7; 9:1-15). An interesting thing about this mission is that he had stirred up the churches of the Gentiles to make contributions for the poor saints in Judea. The Jews had wished to deny the gospel to the Gentiles, and now good is being returned for evil!

VERSE 26

Note: It had been the "good pleasure" of the Gentiles to contribute their means for the poor saints. They seemed to have taken a collection on the first day of the week over a period of more than a year to supply the wants of the saints. This compassion is surely a feeling and a service to be performed by those who are Christ's (See Galatians 2:9, 10).

VERSE 27

The word "them" surely refers to those of Macedonia and Achaia. There was not only the need to be considered, but also the debt of Gentile Christians who had received spiritual benefit from those same poor. This clearly establishes our obligation to charity. The Gentiles needed to give as the Christian poor of Jerusalem needed to receive. The expression "carnal things" simply means the things pertaining to the flesh or beneficial to it, such as food and clothing (1 Corinthians 9:11; Galatians 6:6).

VERSE 28

"Seal" is a figurative expression for deliver safely. Our word "consign" is a similar figure. This spirit of helpfulness is a peculiarity of the religion of Jesus Christ. This "seal" of the fruit is the love of the Gentile Christians for their Jewish brethren and for the Lord Jesus Christ. When this was finished, Paul proposed to set out from Jerusalem for Spain, and in passing, to visit the brethren in Rome. "This fruit" in this passage was called such because it was the fruit of the benevolence of the churches sending it.

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VERSE 29

How different was his trip to and arrival at Rome from what he expresses here. Surely it must have been in the fullness of the blessing of Christ but what heartbreaking circumstances marked it! Seemingly he had planned to finish delivery of the funds to the poor in Jerusalem, then proceed to Rome where he would visit with the Christians and then go on to Spain. Surely he had planned to preach the gospel there and see men and women become Christians and thus churches being established there. But it seems his plans were never realized.

He was arrested and imprisoned in Jerusalem, went before kings and governors, and then made his appeal to Caesar. He was sent by ship which was wrecked, and finally, between files of pagan soldiers, he walked up the Appian Way. Was it in the fullness of the blessing of Christ? Yes, because Paul would plant the gospel seed in the heart of the pagan empire. From there he wrote letters which would define Christianity for all subsequent ages.

VERSE 30

Paul, with the authority of an apostle, could have commanded the Romans to pray for him. However he always placed himself in the role of a beggar in making his exhortations. He begs, in view of the love that Christ and the Holy Spirit have for them, that they will "strive together with me in prayers to God for me." The word "strive" here literally means agonize or be in great earnestness. This is surely indicative of intense and purposeful prayer.

VERSE 31

The reason for his request of the Romans to be earnest in their prayers is revealed in this verse. He sought deliverance from the unbelievers in Judea. The antagonism of the Jews caused him to have bitter enemies in Jerusalem. Even the Jewish Christians had a very great problem in accepting their Gentile brethren. To accept a contribution from the Gentile churches would be an open act of fellowship, and the Jews seemed unready for that. It is concerning this that Paul asked for the prayers of the Roman brethren (Acts 20:20-22). It seems Paul felt if the Jewish brethren would accept the gift from the Gentile Christians, then this would be the seal of the bond of brotherhood on the part of the Jews. The gift was gladly accepted (Acts 21:17-21).

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VERSE 32

Paul felt if the Jewish brethren did indeed accept his gift, he would be relieved of his anxiety. Then he could go on toward Rome and be refreshed by the brethren there. However, though his service was accepted with gratitude and thanks, he was not delivered. He did go to Rome but not as the joyous man he expected to be.

VERSE 33

The "God of peace" is the God who wills peace among His people, and who sets His face against all who disturb it. Even when we have nothing else, we can still bear our friends, brethren and loved ones in prayer to God. Ephesians 2:14, "He is our peace who hath made both one." He is such a God!

Chapter 16

VERSE 1

The word "commend" was regularly used in letters of recommendation. There is no other mention of this woman in the New Testament. The word "Phebe" (or Phoebe) means bright or radiant. Many think she must have been the bearer of the letter from Paul to Rome. She was a Christian sister from Cenchrea, a port town about nine miles east of Corinth. Paul might have carried the gospel to Cenchrea on his second missionary trip (See Acts 18:18).

The word "servant" is from the word diakonon (Greek) meaning minister or servant. It is the word used for deacons in Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13. There is no evidence that Phoebe was an office holder in the church. Perhaps she was enrolled as a widow indeed and was working full time for the Lord (1 Timothy 5). At least it seems that Phoebe had some task to perform in service to the Lord.

This letter of recommendation was carried by Phoebe to the brethren in Rome. Christians should seek the faithful in Christ for worship and association. Paul's plea or reminder is that the brethren assist her, if she needed such help, in the business that brought her to Rome. Her faithfulness and dependability are in the words, "a servant of the church and a helper of many." Perhaps Paul is sensitive about this matter because of his own experience when he went to Jerusalem and "assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple." But his desire was honored when Barnabas explained "how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:26,27).

VERSE 2

Paul's exhortation to the Roman Christians seemed to be "Help her, for she is a helper." Those who help others always commend themselves to the Lord. The very emphasis of her life seemed to be playing the role of a servant in the church. Is this not our role as well? The exhortation is "receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints." It would be very unbecoming of Christians not to receive one such as Phoebe. A reception "worthy of the saints" would be very warm and appropriate. There should be no strangers in the family of God. We are all sons and daughters of the one Father and therefore brothers and sisters of each other.

VERSE 3

This is the same Jewish couple mentioned in Acts 18:2, 18, 26 who had lately come from Italy. They taught Apollos and they were tentmakers. Paul referred to them as "my fellow-workers in Christ." Now that Aquila and Priscilla are back in Rome, we may be sure of Paul's anxiety to see them again.

VERSE 4

This must have taken place in Ephesus where Paul seemed to be in the greatest danger (1 Corinthians 15:32; Acts 19:23-41). Not only was Paul grateful to Aquila and Priscilla, but all the Gentile churches were grateful to them as well for saving his life. Not only had this couple been effective in saving Paul's life, but they had rendered great service in building up the churches of the Gentiles.

VERSE 5

A congregation of the saved was meeting in their house for their worship together. Likely, the group was not large but it is called a church, a local congregation. Aquila and Priscilla had also housed the church in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19). It seems there was a great number of household congregations. There were those who met in Mary's house (Acts 12:12), in Nymphas' (Colossians 4:15), in Philemon's (Phile.2), and perhaps those mentioned in verses 14, 15 of this chapter. This was simply their way of securing a place in which to meet that they might worship together.

"Salute Epaenetus." We know nothing of this person nor of the others later named. We do know he was among the first converts in Achaia. Epaenetus had endeared himself to Paul.

VERSE 6

"Greet Mary" who had labored much. We do not know under what circumstances nor in what capacity she served, but she labored and this is sufficient. Other versions give a different rendition, "who bestowed much labor on you." Thus she must have been a servant of the church in Rome.

VERSE 7

"Salute Andronicus and Junia" In this chapter, there are twenty-four

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individual names, and of these twenty-four, six are women. Paul has been accused of belittling the status of women in the church, but his appreciation of the work they were doing shines and glows through his words. It is most likely that Junia is a female name. These two were Christians before Paul was. Therefore they must go back to the time of Stephen and must have been in the first congregation, the church in Jerusalem.

Think of all the trials and persecutions in that century, and yet these kinsmen of Paul were still alive and faithful! They and Paul had even been in prison together. When, where, and how these kinspeople were prisoners together we do not know, but God does! The reputation of Andronicus and Junia was well known to the apostles. Perhaps their imprisonments and sufferings were best known to the apostles. We might wonder if perhaps they obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost and soon went to Rome and became the first, along with others, to preach the gospel there. Anyway they may be a clue as to who preached there first of all.

VERSE 8

"Greet Amplias." This man had made himself very dear to Paul. He must have been a most lovely man to be spoken of as he is here. This greeting from Paul also gives us a fuller insight into Paul's real nature and heart. He was great in intellect, ardent in feeling, and tender in affection.

VERSE 9

"Salute Urbane." We know nothing of this man except the compliment Paul paid him by saying, "He was my helper in the Lord." Therefore what a great man he was!

"Salute Stachys." We do know this brother was a man whom Paul loved. His work must have been diligent and his life exemplary.

VERSE 10

"Salute Apelles." He was approved in Christ. Therefore he must have been an obedient and faithful servant of the Lord. No doubt he had been tested many times and had always emerged tried and true. (See James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6, 7).

"Salute the household of Aristobulus." Whether this man was yet liv-

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ing we do not know. At least Paul wished to be remembered to this man's family. He must have remembered the man with love and appreciation.

VERSE 11

"Salute Herodion." This man was also a Hebrew Christian because he was a kinsman to Paul.

"Greet the household of Narcissus." His family were also Christians for they were "in the Lord."

VERSE 12

"Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa." Some believe these two women were twin sisters. Regardless they were engaged in their special labor at the time of this writing. The verb in this passage means to toil to the point of exhaustion, to work to the point of utter weariness. Yet consider the meaning of the two names: "Tryphena" means dainty and "Tryphosa" means delicate. Also consider how hard they worked for Christ and His church!

"Salute the beloved Persis." This is another of those faithful women who must have devoted much time, maybe full time, to the Lord and His people, the church. The credit Paul gave her seems to merit this assumption. Other versions translate this lady's name as "Persida." Indeed Paul had a high appreciation for female excellence and work in the church. How could anyone hold him capable of underrating them?

VERSE 13

"Salute Rufus." Since it may be said that every Christian is "chosen of the Lord," it must be that Paul made a special application of it to Rufus. He must have had a peculiar excellence.

It seems that the mother of Rufus must have shown Paul all the care of a mother, so that he felt for her all the affection of a son.

Paul greets the mother of Rufus as lovingly as if she were his own mother. I am sure the Lord intended that such a loving relationship should characterize His people everywhere and for all time.

VERSE 14

Nothing is known of the people in this verse. Some have suggested that this may be one assembly of the saints in Rome. The expression "and the brethren which are with them" seems to indicate that.

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We are made to wonder at the knowledge Paul had concerning the brethren and the progress of the church in Rome. Though we know nothing about these people, we can be sure they all had an active interest in the Lord's work.

VERSE 15

Five people are mentioned here. The name of Nereus' sister is not given, but both men and women are included in the salutation. Maybe this was a part of yet another congregation in Rome.

This completes the roll of names of perhaps just a few of God's redeemed ones living and serving Rome at this time. We do not know these people, but we do know Him for whom they lived, and for whom they were willing to die!

VERSE 16

This salutation and show of affection had always been common in the East (2 Samuel 20:9; Luke 7:45; Matthew 26:49). It seems it was passed to the apostolic church (1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). Paul is not starting something new, but is insisting that the greeting be holy and sincere. It was to be void of dissimulation as characterized the kiss of Judas (Matthew 26:49). This would apply to all salutations no matter what their form.

It seems this regulation is where this form of greeting is a custom. I do not understand that this form is binding upon people where the kiss is not a custom. However whatever the form of greeting, it is to be done honestly and sincerely.

Doubtless some of the churches knew Paul was planning to stop by Rome on his way to Spain, and they sent greetings to the brethren in Rome. Surely the churches of Achaia had been informed of Paul's purpose to write to the brethren in Rome, and they wanted their greetings to be expressed to the brethren as well.

VERSE 17

The word "mark" means look out for or be aware of. One is to eye them closely and not shut one's eyes to what they are doing. Why? Because they cause dissensions, quarrels and disputes.

"Contrary to the doctrine" means any doctrine which differs from that which the apostles and prophets of Jesus taught (1 Timothy 6:3ff; 2 John 9).

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It is a terrible thing to cause divisions in the body of Christ, but it is no less an offense to countenance or defend divisions. One cannot afford to feel indifferent toward them. Judaizing teachers in Rome seemed determined to convince all Gentile Christians that they had to be circumcised and keep the law, or they could not be saved. So Paul says, "Mark them." Do not close your eyes to what they are doing but turn away from them. (See 2 Corinthians 11:14,15).

The expression "avoid them" is defined by Thayer as to keep aloof from, to shun one.

It surely seems that the expression "and turn away from them" refers to a withdrawal of fellowship. Christians are to keep no company with those who would teach falsely and divide the body.

VERSE 18

Those who cause "divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine" are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ, but are interested only in themselves and not in Christ.

Thayer defines "belly" as the gullet, the throat, or what goes down it, and he explains it to mean to be given up to the pleasures of the palate, to gluttony. Their stock in trade is to utter smooth and fair speeches and deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting (2 Corinthians 11:14,15; Colossians 2:4; 2 Peter 2:3). A divisive person puts on the air of excessive sanctity and uses gracious speech to deceive the innocent and unsuspecting.

The word "simple" does not mean weak-minded, but rather, unsuspecting.

VERSE 19

The faith and the obedience of the Christians in Rome was well known abroad (Romans 1:8). This was cause for rejoicing on the part of Paul as well as other brethren who had heard about it. At the same time Paul wished them to be wise in regard to what is good and innocent as well as what is evil. People who are wise unto good know evil (Hebrews 5:14).

The church at Rome was well known for its obedience and Paul was anxious for their continued obedience. If they allowed false teachers to cause divisions and scandals, they would then have a bad influence over Christians who had regarded them so highly. The pure life, begotten of a

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pure faith, knows best what sin is. Darkness cannot reveal darkness. Paul believed that prevention was better than cure.

VERSE 20

Paul is saying that the God of peace will soon crush and overthrow Satan, the power of evil. The peace of God is the peace of action, of conquest and of victory. There is a kind of peace which can be had at the cost of evading all issues, refusing all decisions, shutting the eyes to things that are crying out to be dealt with. However the peace of God is not the peace which has submitted to the world, but the peace which has overcome the world.

But for the devil, divisions would never exist, and he who becomes a divider of God's children is a tool in Satan's hand for mischief. "crush Satan under your feet" means to put an end to his evil work of inciting divisions and so give victory over him.

The apostle ends the personal sections of his salutations with a blessing.

VERSE 21

The men mentioned here were Paul's associates in his work and were with Paul as he dictated the epistle. Of course Timothy was a very special aide and companion to Paul (Philippians 2:29, 20). Lucius is mentioned in Acts 13:1; Jason in Acts 17:5, 6, 7, 9; and Sosipater in Acts 20:4.

Paul seems to refer to others as kinsmen just as he referred to all Jews as kinsmen in Romans 9:1-3.

VERSE 22

Tertius was Paul's secretary and wrote this letter. It is thought by some that since Tertius sends his own independent greeting to the disciples in Rome that he was personally known to them. Of course we do not know this as fact. Beyond this one line, we know nothing whatsoever of Tertius.

VERSE 23

Greetings are sent from Gaius, the host of Paul in Corinth, and of the whole church there. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, also sent greetings as does Quartus. We do not know who he was except that he was a brother in the Lord. He must have been a man of high standing in Corinth.

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The expression "the whole church" may mean all of the Christians in Rome.

A man named Gaius is mentioned in Acts 19:29 and may be the same individual.

VERSE 24

This is the same as verse 20b. The inclusion of this prayer is thought by some scholars to have been accidental. A number of translations omit verse 24 altogether.

It may be that Paul's fervent love for his brethren and his concern for their peace and prosperity, prompted him to bestow upon them this benediction the second time.

VERSE 25

This ascription of praise sums up the great thoughts of the epistle. This closing paragraph sounds again the opening verses of this letter. He is really pointing back to what has been written just as the introduction points forward to all that is to follow. The book began with a statement that the gospel is the only power of God to save (Romans 1:16) and so it ends. The message of salvation through Christ is here called "my gospel," the "proclamation of Jesus Christ" and the "revelation of the mystery" (1:3, 4; 2:26; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 3:1-6).

"my gospel" in this text means the gospel Paul was preaching. This was that power by which they were to be made firm, and it was communicated to them by preaching. The "mystery" here is anything not known. We are not to confuse this word with mysterious. The mystery was something that was not known until it was made known. It does not mean that the gospel could not be understood but when the time came, the gospel was preached and men could understand, believe, obey and be saved by it. Paul said to Timothy "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16).

VERSE 26

In all the ages before the prophets this secret had been kept. Then it was manifested through the writings of the prophets and is now made known by the commandment of the everlasting God. It was fully disclosed by Christ and the apostles. The mystery fully made known is the gospel respecting Christ. Now it is being made known, by command, to

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all nations (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46, 47). It was made known unto all nations, even every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23), in the first century. The duty of the church is to do this in every generation.

VERSE 27

The glory belongs to God for the great salvation He has bestowed on us by Jesus Christ. Praise and glory is to be ascribed to God through Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17). Such a being as our heavenly Father is worthy of all glory, and it should be offered through the name of His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ. What a fitting conclusion to this great letter from the apostle Paul to the beloved Christians in the city of Rome!

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