

# ROMANS

## INTRODUCTION

God help His preachers to thunder the message to all who would be saved, that they must believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins. This is God's plan for the alien sinner; and it has not been repealed by the dead weight of human opinion denying it. Many will be surprised to find Paul's letter to Roman a glorious affirmation of God's entire plan of justification, indeed, "the whole counsel of God." (James Burton Coffman)

## CHAPTER 1

### THE ETERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL

#### Verse 1

All letters and other written communications, in New Testament times, were written upon parchments and conveyed to their recipients in rolled-up form; and that ancient style of letter required, as a practical consideration, that the signature of the writer be at the beginning.

Up until the time of his conversion, Paul was known as Saul of Tarsus. Saul, on the other hand, means little, and could have signified Paul's smallness of stature.

"Servant of Jesus Christ . . ." The Greek word *doulos*, from which the English translation, "servant," is taken, actually means bond slave.

It means that, as Christ's slave, Paul was entitled to hearing and obedience on the part of all men, the honor and dignity of the owner were inherent in his slave, mistreatment of the slave being legally construed as mistreatment of the owner.

The use of the term bond slave also means that in conscience, doctrine, and conduct, Paul's life was utterly in subjection to Christ.

"Called as an apostle . . ." Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 15 noted, "As a strict official designation, the word "apostle" is confirmed to those men selected and

commissioned by Christ Himself to deliver in His name the message of salvation.”

## **CONCERNING APOSTLES**

The apostles of Jesus Christ constituted the most interesting group of men ever to have lived upon earth. They were men of humble origin, men the world would hesitate to call learned or wise men when measured by ordinary standards, men who were never honored by any university with a degree, or elected to any learned society of intellectuals, men who never wrote any books, who were never elected to any public office, who never became wealthy, and who, with the possible exception of Paul, would never have been remembered by posterity, had it not been for their association with Jesus Christ.

### **Verse 2**

The redemptive gospel Paul preached was the very same system proclaimed and partially unfolded in the Old Testament. By so bold a claim, Paul at once established the principle that any believer of the Old Testament should likewise be a believer of the New Testament. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, p. 7, definition of the gospel is, “It is His joyful proclamation of the victory and exaltation of His Son, and the consequent amnesty and liberation which we may enjoy through faith in Him.”

### **Verse 3**

Christ alone is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the embodiment of all Jewish hopes, the willing sacrifice, the sin-bearer, and the atonement. He and He alone, is the architect of the crucifixion, the deliverer of God’s redeeming word; indeed, He is that Word which was in the beginning with God, and which was God. (John 1:1)

“Of the seed of David . . .” The dual nature of Christ, both His divinity and humanity, are affirmed by Paul in this passage. As for the body that Jesus took when He decided to enter our earth life, it was descended through David. It was only the humanity of Jesus that descended through David. Hebrews 2:14-16 plainly declares that Christ “took hold of” the seed of Abraham, thus affirming that He had an existence before assuming a human body.

#### **Verse 4**

“Declared with power to be the Son of God . . .” The key words in this passage are “with power.”

“According to the spirit of holiness . . .” It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that the gospel was proclaimed, including the good news of the resurrection, which was an essential part of it.

“By the resurrection . . .” “Resurrection of the dead” is the reference to the power of the gospel to awaken into new life them that were formerly dead in trespasses and sins.

“Jesus Christ our Lord . . .” There can be no doubt that Paul accepted Christ as far more than a mere human being. Paul presents himself as the bond slave of Jesus Christ in the very first line of the epistle, here, Jesus Christ is adored as Lord..

#### **Verse 5**

“Obedience of faith . . .” This is the first mention of faith in the Roman letter, and its being mentioned along with obedience is extremely significant. In the very beginning of the letter, he made it clear that, throughout Romans, “faith” should be read “obedient faith.”

“Among all the Gentiles . . .” anticipates what Paul was about to say of the forthcoming visit to Rome.

“For His names sake . . .” applies to the entire apostolic commission, with special emphasis upon the purpose of it, namely, to glorify and honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Verse 6**

W. Sanday, in Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. vii, p. 203, he paraphrased what seems to have been in Paul’s mind when he wrote, “Among these Gentile churches to which I am especially commissioned, you Romans too are called to the same obedience of faith, and therefore I have the more right to address you.”

The “called” are not merely those who hear the gracious invitation, but are a company made up of the ones who obey. In a certain sense, all are called, in the sense that the gospel is for all mankind; and yet, in Paul’s usage of the word, it is applied to those who have responded to the “great invitation.”

### Verse 7

“All who are beloved of God . . .” James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles*, p. 56 wrote, “This epistle being written to persuade unbelieving Jews and Gentiles to embrace the gospel, as exhibiting the only effectual method of salvation, it was fitly addressed to the whole inhabitants of Rome, to the heathens as well as to the Jews and Christians.”

“Beloved of God . . .” here is that great New Testament word for “love,” *agape*. A supreme consciousness of such great love underlies every word of this great epistle and reference of it surfaces in the main body of the letter. God’s great love for man is the reason for the Cross itself, where Christ died for all, “while we were yet sinners (5:8) and even “when we were enemies.” (5:10)

“Called as saints . . .” It is the invariable New Testament teaching that Christians are not merely called to be saints, but they are so. They are called “Saints,” “Holy,” and “Holy Ones.”

Christians in Rome were thus designated out of respect to the ideals they had accepted and were striving to obtain, rather than from any certainty that those sacred ideals had actually been achieved. Yet they were very properly addressed as “holy,” because that was a means of inspiring them to greater purity and of keeping them in constant remembrance of their sacred duties as Christians. This Divine acceptance of the Christian for what he is trying to become, rather than merely for what he is, appears as a dispensation of God’s grace, and is frequently emphasized in Paul’s letters.

It would be hard to imagine a church with more imperfections and outright sins than the church in Corinth; yet, even of them, Paul wrote, “I thank my God always concerning you!” (1 Corinthians 1:4) Moreover, they too, just like the Romans, were “called saints.” (1 Corinthians chapter 2)

“Grace to you and peace . . .” Scholars have noted that Paul’s greeting combines the usual Greek salutation with the customary Hebrew greeting.

### **Verse 8**

“First, I thank my God . . .” His “first” in this place simply means, “The first thing I want to say is . . .” “Thanks to God” is always a good first, no matter what is intended.

“My God . . .” None of the apostles ever wrote, “My Father,” an expression which our Savior evidently reserved for Himself alone, since He taught the disciples to pray, “Our Father, etc.”

“Through Jesus Christ . . .” honors the mediatorial office of Jesus Christ. Upon the great doctrine of the mediatorial office of the Lord Jesus Christ, the New Testament leaves no ground for misunderstanding.

### **CHRIST THE ONE MEDIATOR**

John Wesley, Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, p. 517 wrote, “The gifts of God all pass through Christ to us, and all our petitions and thanksgiving pass through Christ to God.” (John 14:13-14, 16:23, Colossians 3:17, and Hebrews 13:15)

Language could hardly be more comprehensive and emphatic in the description of exactly what communications were commanded to be addressed to the Father “through Christ, “anything . . . whatsoever . . . all things . . . whatsoever you do in word or deed.”

Are there mediators other than Jesus Christ? No, Paul said, “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.” (1 Timothy 2:5)

Even the use of such a formula as, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” is not in keeping with the commandments of the apostles,” nor did any of them ever use such words in a prayer. True, men were commanded to baptize into that sacred triple name; but no man can show any other examples of those holy names thus being subjoined to any other command or petition in the entire Bible.

In this verse Paul expressed his thanks to God “through Jesus Christ;” and there can hardly be any doubt that his doing so was in keeping with the revealed will of God.

“For you all . . .” is the plural of “you;” and the only possible plural of that pronoun capable of including everyone.

“Proclaimed throughout the whole world . . .” It was natural that the faith of Christians so favorably located in Rome should be widely known. Their faith was not something which they held privately and selfishly, but a passionate conviction of which they spoke to everyone who would hear and which they preached as universally as possible.

### **Verses 9-10**

The words “For God is my witness” are actually the highest form of that type of oath defined by Funk and Wagnall’s Standard Dictionary as, “A reverent appeal to God in corroboration of what one says.”

“I serve in my spirit . . .” What men do with their bodies may be observed and reported by their fellows, but what one does in one’s own spirit is known certainly only to God.

Some of Paul’s enemies were willing to suggest that he was ashamed to preach in Rome. It was Paul’s concern for things like that which led him to write so forcibly, calling God to witness, making mention of ceaseless prayers, and assuring the Roman Christians of his sincerity and determination, even at that time, to make the visit—God willing.

“Always in my prayers . . .” The great apostle won many by his preaching, but it is possible that he won even more through his prayers.

“Making request . . .” that he might be permitted personally to visit them, is a prayer which he had been offering for many years.

“The will of God . . .” Paul made it clear that he was praying for it to be God’s will that the projected Roman visit might actually take place. The Lord Himself prayed, “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” (Matthew 26:39); and the prayers of all Christians should always be offered upon the same conditions.

Paul, at last, was privileged to make his journey to Rome. He finally arrived in the city of Rome as a prisoner, subject to the fickle will of Nero, humiliated by a guard and a chain, with no pulpit but a Roman barracks. Only they who bow the head and say, "The Lord willing," shall ever know the real meaning of service to God.

### **Verses 11-12**

Here is the real reason why Paul wanted to go to Rome, namely, that he might establish the church there. Paul saw the advantage that would accrue to the world-wide church by building up, encouragement, and perhaps better organization of Christians in Rome. The church there had elders and deacons.

Not wishing to appear as high and mighty above the band of believers in Rome, did not speak merely of his conferring some benefit upon them, but also of the mutual benefit in which he himself would also share. Paul, after writing the preceding words, sought to soften their impact by mention of the blessing he himself would receive from them.

### **Verse 13**

This verse shows that Paul had planned to go to Rome and that he had been hindered from doing so. R. L. Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 14 made a very significant deduction from the circumstances revealed in this verse, "This shows that he was not guided by inspiration in forming his plans, for the Holy Spirit would not have guided him into forming plans and then have allowed him to be hindered in carrying out his plans. Paul did sometimes form his own plans or purposes which the Holy Spirit did not allow him to carry out."

The guidance of the Holy Spirit in Christian lives does not extend so far as helping them to devise all their plans. There is nothing in such a deduction to deny that the Spirit might help in forming some plans; but there is revealed no way of knowing, for sure, which plans may or may not be attributed to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; hence the necessity, always, for men to pray even as Christ did, "No my will, but thine be done."

### **Verse 14**

The Hebrews classified all men as Jews and Gentiles; the Romans classified the whole world as Romans and pagans; the Greeks included everyone as Greeks or barbarians. There were other dual classifications such as wise and foolish, male and female, freemen and slaves, etc.

Such classifications really mean “us and everybody else!” Paul’s evident meaning is simply that he felt indebted to all men. Nothing that any man had done had laid this burden of debt upon Paul’s heart; but it was what Christ had done for Paul that had made him debtor to all men of all races and nations. Christ had died for Paul, appeared to him, commissioned him as an apostle, saved his soul from sin, and made him an heir of everlasting life. Such a mighty weight of blessing had produced Paul’s feeling of indebtedness, and where is the Christian who does not feel a similar debt.

### **Verse 15**

This verse supports the conclusion that Romans was addressed to all the inhabitants in Rome, and not merely to believers alone, but Barbarians, foolish and, in short all men.

Paul presented himself to the population of that great city of Rome, not merely as the great ambassador, which he surely was, but also as a human brother, a fellow-Christian who had long loved them, prayed for them, and longed to visit them.

### **Verse 16**

With reference to any possible slander to the effect that he was ashamed to preach in the sophisticated capital of the empire, Paul challenged and refuted it with the smashing declaration here.

“I am not ashamed . . . “ Paul’s mention of not being ashamed of the gospel is appropriate, for in the city of Rome with all the trappings of human glory, pride, selfishness, power, and cruelty, also every extravagance of intemperance, vice, and idolatry.



Those fierce Romans had controlled the world for centuries; and, in their lustful exploitation of power, they had shamelessly held all human honor and virtue expendable. Ruthless, unprincipled, power-politicians sat naked and unmasked upon the throne of the Caesars; and, if there had been a place on earth where the gentle teachings of the Son of God were despised, the gospel harlot on the Tiber was that city.

“It is the power of God for salvation . . .” Here is the power to save men from sin, from the inevitable fate of the wicked, and from eternal death. This gospel is power unlimited, eternal, and irresistible within the framework of God’s eternal purpose, and fully sufficient to achieve all that God intended. This tremendous power is primarily the power to save from sin and death.

It is salvation from the wrath of God and eternal death of the soul, a salvation of such a nature that only God could provide it or make it available to men. No human scheme or device could ever be effectual for such a purpose as salvation from sin and death and the endowment of mortals with the glory of eternal life.

“The gospel . . .” What is the gospel? In a word, the gospel is the good news of salvation from the wrath of God due to man’s sin. It is salvation made possible through the death of Christ according to the Scriptures, His burial, and His resurrection on the third day. (1Corinthians 15:3-4)

This gospel of Christ is the sum-total of Divine revelation in the sacred Scriptures, that is, the Bible, and is composed of:

- (1) facts to be believed,
- (2) commandments to be obeyed, and
- (3) promises to be accepted.

Advocates of human error have been very diligent to make Paul’s letter to the Romans a charter of salvation by “faith only.” If the gospel means that men may be saved by faith only, why did Paul write the Thessalonians that the Lord Jesus would execute vengeance upon them that “obey not the gospel”?

The gospel is designed to save men from everlasting destruction from the presence of God and the glory of His power. (2 Thessalonians 1:9) The gospel is

not a message of peace for the disobedient, but a message of doom. (2 Corinthians 2:14-16)

“The power of God for salvation . . .” Whatever power is needed to convert sinful men, all of that power is available in the gospel. Let the gospel be preached; and, as Jesus Himself said, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16)

“To everyone who believes . . .” is a synecdoche, that is, one of a group of related things being mentioned in place of and standing for all of them, and was absolutely not intended to announce faith as the sole condition of eternal life.

Nothing Paul ever wrote was intended to exclude obedience as a precondition of salvation; and, although perfect obedience must surely be reckoned beyond the power of human achievement, the sincere intent to obey and some resemblance of compliance with God’s commandments appears to be absolutely required by such statements as those of 2 Thessalonians 1: 9.

Men are guilty of importing their own theories into Paul’s words. “To the Jews first and also to the Greek . . .” means “to the whole world.” The preference for the Jew, in that he should receive the message first, was just. It was derived from the Jew’s position among the chosen people.

### **Verse 17**

Notice that Paul wrote “from faith to faith.” The notion that Paul meant “faith alone” by this expression should be rejected out of hand, especially in view of the fact the expression “faith alone” never occurs in Paul’s writings, and only once in the New Testament, where James declared “and not by faith alone” (James 2:24)

“But the righteous man shall live by faith . . . “ is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 and is understood as Old Testament support of the principle of salvation by faith, it being the great end of the Christian religion to produce faith in all men, inasmuch as it may be possible. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6); and the statement here that the just shall live by faith is emphasis upon the fact of man’s utter inability to live without it.

The two verses just considered are the theme of the book of Romans namely, God's Eternal Righteousness as Revealed in the Gospel. Immediately upon announcement of this theme, Paul launched into the section vindicating God's righteousness in accounting all men sinners and fully deserving God's wrath.

### **Verse 18**

The wrath of God was upon Jew and Gentile alike, but the Gentiles are that portion of humanity directly under consideration, beginning here and through 2:16. The displeasure of God against the Gentiles resulted not from caprice, or happenstance, but from their unrighteousness and ungodliness. R. L. Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 34 noted that, "Ungodliness is worse than unrighteousness, though not generally so regarded. Our first and primary duty is to God. If we revere God as we should, we will respect His word, His church, and His worship. Those who blaspheme the name of God, or speak lightly of any of His commands are ungodly.

Through passion, or some weakness, a person might do wrong to his fellow man, and then be filled with great penitence toward God for the wrong he had done. Such a one still retained his reverence for God. David did that. He did unrighteous things, but his reverence for God was un failing and always bought him to repentance. The ungodly are not so; they do not take God into account in anything that they do."

"The wrath of God . . ." is a phrase that describes the antagonism between the Creator and all sin and unrighteousness.

"Is revealed . . ." answers to the same word in the preceding verse, thus making the "righteousness of God" and the "wrath of God" antithetical, and both of them to be attributes of the Father.

That wrath of God which is here said to be revealed should not be stripped of its emotional overtones when contemplated by sinful men; for it is obvious that the wrath of God is a personal thing. This wrath is living, active, dynamic, and constantly operational against all evil. God has a score to settle with sin; and some Day He will settle it. Not one little sin will ever be able to crawl by the eyes of the eternal God without either:

- (1) forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ, or
- (2) punished with everlasting destruction from God's presence.

Suppress the truth in unrighteousness . . ." This is a reference to the fact that the pre-Christian Gentile world had the truth and that they suppressed it and denied it through their sins and wickedness. This is a most interesting verse, for it immediately raises the question of just to what extent these ancient Gentiles had "the truth." Certainly, they did not know the truth to the extent that it has now been revealed in Christ; and yet a little investigation will show that they had far more than sufficient truth to make their shameful conduct absolutely unjustifiable.

### **Verse 19**

The argument of this verse is simply that these wicked Gentiles were sinners against the light, not being, in any absolute sense, ignorant of God. They knew God. The Father Himself had seen to that, for it is categorically stated here that God had "made it evident to them."

From this verse, it is certainly known that the Gentile nations were not devoid of light and that there was a manifestation of Himself on God's part to those very nations. Paul is here speaking of "the righteousness of God" in His dealings, not merely with the Jews, but with all mankind. We shall give this significant theme a little further attention.

### **GOD'S REVELATION TO THE GENTILE NATIONS**

In the person of Adam and his descendants for over a thousand years, all the world knew the Lord, received commands as to how He should have been worshiped, and through the patriarchs were in direct communication with the Almighty.

No generation of history had any better knowledge of God than those generations from Adam to the flood. Once again, in the family of Noah, the human race descended in a new beginning from a single source; and again the entire world knew the one true God. From Noah to Abraham, the pure knowledge of God was kept alive in the world.

In the gathering darkness of that long night of idolatry which was about to descend upon the Gentile world, God called Abraham and initiated the device of a chosen people, who would be the custodians of the promise of a Messiah, who would keep alive the true teachings of God, and who were designed to recognize, at last, the Messiah, when He should appear, and present Him to the entire world. This was a service laid upon Abraham, not merely for benefit of the Jews, but looking to the salvation of all men. (Genesis 12:3)

Following the call of Abraham, the Jewish nation itself became a continual witness to the entire Gentile world of the one true God and His truth.

Nor did such glowing witness disappear with the fading of the patriarchal names into history. A great leader of the Jews, Moses, appeared; and through him, God visited the entire Egyptian nation with a whole series of the most astounding miracles of pre-Christian history. All of the plagues were directed squarely against the popular idol gods of the Egyptians. God even gave through Moses a personal message to Pharaoh. (Exodus 9:16)

God in no sense neglected to provide the Gentiles with all the light, they needed, and with far more than they were willing to receive. That God's method of causing His name to be declared throughout all the earth was successful. (Joshua 2:9-11)

The first of the Old Testament prophets was Jonah who carried the message of the one God to Nineveh, the largest city of those times, their king, nobles, and all the people repented and turned to God, the fact of which is attested by none other than Christ. (Matthew 12:41)

Then, there is the testimony to the Gentiles by means of the captivities, first of Israel, later of Judah. Everywhere the Jews went, they took the knowledge of God with them; and there were doubtless many of the Gentiles who learned the truth through this means. Nebuchadnezzar learned the truth from the Hebrews in the fiery furnace; the Medes and Persians learned it from Daniel.

It is extremely significant that a great ruler, Cyrus, commissioned the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem after the captivity, out of respect to his knowledge of God and the words of His prophets. (2 Chronicles 36:22-23)

Throughout the days of the Judges, in an earlier era, there were repeated demonstrations of the power and righteousness of God who not only punished the sins of the heathen world, but those of His own people as well. The good earth itself is thus named as a witness of God's existence and His goodness toward men.

### **Verse 20**

“His invisible attributes . . .” is a reference to God's everlasting power and divinity; and Paul's argument is that invisible things may be “seen“ by the mind. The things that are made, namely, all created objects, are the things which enable the mind to comprehend what no natural eye can see, that is, the power and divinity of God. The very fact that of something's having been made is certain proof of there being a maker.

“For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.” (Hebrews 3:4) Paul's appeal to this argument in this context indicated his utmost confidence in it.

Dr. Andrew Conway Ivy, *The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*, p. 229 wrote, “I have never found a person who when urged could not give a reason why he or she believed in God. The reason has always been to the effect that “Someone” had to make the world and the laws that run it,” or “There cannot be a machine without a maker.” That basic truth is understood by every normal child and adult.” He continued, “The basic unsophisticated and rational thought and belief will always rise again with the birth of every child . . . So compelling is the natural law of the relation cause and effect that the developing mind of the three-to five-year-old child realizes that there must be a Creator.”

“That they are without excuse . . .” There is no doubt that Paul held the wicked ancient Gentiles to be inexcusable on any grounds whatsoever, and particularly he refuted in this passage any possible allegation that they might have been excused on grounds of ignorance.

## Verse 21

Those Gentiles were not ignorant of God, nor was their information limited to that incomplete knowledge that came from the observance of natural phenomena and the existence of a conscience within man's moral constitution.

God had manifested Himself to the Gentiles repeatedly through many centuries; and their knowledge was more than sufficient to make their conduct inexcusable, and to justify the appalling retribution visited upon them through God's darkening of their senseless hearts. This verse must be looked upon as the coffin and grave of any theory that the human race progressively worked its way upward in religion.

John Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 41 quoted Meyer saying, "Heathenism is not the primeval religion, from which man might gradually have risen to the knowledge of the true God, but is, on the contrary, the result of a falling away from the known original revelation of the true God in His works."

It is frightening and sober thought that all of the carnal debaucheries and gross vulgar conduct revealed a little later in this chapter, as marking the wickedness of those ancient Gentiles, should have begun with so mild and apparently innocuous a thing as neglect of worship and failure to give thanks to God.

All men should take this to heart; because forsaking worship or neglecting the giving of thanks might be compared to the pebble cast loose from the top of a mountain that becomes a roaring avalanche to crush a city or a civilization beneath it.

R. C. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 12 described such persons as those ancient Gentiles as men, "Who close their two eyes (worship and praise) for seeing and knowing God, and turn their backs on the light to walk in their own shadow."

"Their foolish hearts were darkened . . ." The soul which turns way from the knowledge of God is active in the turning away, but passive in the resultant descent into vanity and darkness, such a defector from the light becoming, in time, sub-human; because that part of his brain with which he should honor and glorify God becomes atrophied, hardened, and insensible.

## Verse 22

How wise man fancies himself; and, if one hesitates to believe it, let him look in the dictionary and behold that man is listed as “Homo sapiens,” which means the wise one.”

Whether man can bear to hear it or not, man would be just appropriately named if called “Homo Ignoramus!” Without the knowledge of God, man is but “a disease of the agglutinated dust.” On the other hand, endowed with the knowledge of God, man may recognize himself as a son of the Highest, an object of God’s love, a beneficiary of the blood of Christ, and an heir of everlasting glory.

Man, apart from God, is a “fool.” Who am I? Whence came I? What is my destiny? What happens after death? Why is there evil in the world? How can my guilt be removed? What must I do to be saved from the wrath of God?

Man might pretend that he is not concerned with the answers to such questions; but the smoking altars, bloody sacrifices, temple towers, and cathedral spires, along with religious observances of five thousand years, as well as the universal instincts of the entire race of mankind, emphatically declare that man is interested, that he does care, and that the kind of answer accepted becomes the principal motivation of every life on earth.

When a soul turns away from God, there is afterwards no meaningful initiative left to the soul; the great option having been already exercised, the unbeliever is left free to choose only among secondaries, all of which are evil.

## Verse 23

J. Barmby, *op. cit.*, p. 12 observed, “Scripture ever presents the human race as having fallen and become degraded, and not as having gradually risen gradually to any intelligent conceptions of God at all.”

The darkening of man’s intellect was inflicted upon men punitively by God as a Divine judgment against their failure to glorify and give thanks to God, and the execution of that penalty propelled them even further into Satan’s service. The idol worship that quickly followed was doubtless instigated by Satan, his diabolical design being, apparently as follows:



- (1) Satan had won a smashing victory over man in Eden, and by falsely representing God in the image of a man, Satan could fraudulently advertise the debacle in Eden as a victory over God also.
- (2) After Satan's victory over Adam and Eve, God promised that the seed of woman would bruise Satan's head (Genesis 3:15), and that the serpent should go on his belly henceforth forever. How striking, therefore, is the direction taken by human idolatry.

Chester Warren Quimby, *The Great Redemption*, p. 45-46, expressed it, "They got God down on two legs, then down on all four, then down on His belly!"

As to which Gentles were guilty of particular idolatries mentioned here, it is quite evident that the images made like men describe the anthropomorphic gods of the Greek and Roman mythologies, whereas the images of the lower creations of birds, beasts and creeping things were characteristic of the false deities of the Egyptians.

Cattle were worshiped nearly everywhere, as, for example, sacred cows in India till this day. Others were lions, dogs, cats, weasels, and otters. Birds that were worshiped are sparrow hawks, hoopoes, storks, and sheldrakes (wild ducks). Sheep, the hippopotamus, the crocodile, and the eel were also worshiped in certain places, but not in others.

W. Sanday, *op. cit.*, p. 207 wrote, "The sacred serpent Thermapis which served as headgear for Isis had holes in all the temples where it was fed veal fat. Among the sacred beasts, the first place was given to the divine bulls, of which the Egyptians worshiped four."

It should also be remembered that the degradation of the Medieval church followed the introduction of idols into Christian worship. Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 39 commented upon the specious distinction between worshiping a beast or an image, as such, contrasted with worshiping such things as symbols of higher reality, thus, "In such idolatry, the idol, or animal, was, with regard to the majority, the ultimate object of worship. Some professed to regard the

visible images, a mere symbol of the real object of their adoration; while others believed that the gods in some way filled those idols, and operated through them; and others, again, that the universal principle of being was revered under these manifestations. The Scriptures take no account of these distinctions.”

Positive proof that the Scriptures indeed do not take account of such distinctions is found by a comparison of Revelation 19:10 with 22:8-10. In those separate incidents, an angel of God first forbade John to worship the angel, and in the second instance forbade him to worship “before the angel” in such an attitude as even to suggest that worship was being given to an angel.

How vain is the thought that any of God’s creatures, and least of all any such thing as an image of any of them, could enter into or contribute anything toward God’s worship.

An idol is blind, dumb, inert, immobile, helpless, unfeeling, without sense or sensitivity, and subject to decay—how can such a thing be conceived of as a permissible symbol, either of the glorious God or the exalted Savior? Awesome indeed are the consequences of idolatry; and Paul next proceeded to write what those consequences are.

### **Verses 24-25**

“God gave them over . . .” is a statement that occurs three times in the remaining verses of this chapter (verses 24, 26, 28). These dreadful words, three times repeated with increasing intensity, are a kind of litany of the doomed showing how dreadful is the fate of them that are given up on God, that is, handed over to the consequences of their rebellion. In a word, idolatrous worship consistently produced in men the kind of conduct that might be expected of beasts.

Unmentionable perversions, homosexuality, masochism, sadism, and other degenerate practices were among the types of behavior to which God handed over the pre-Christian world. And why did God so do? The answer is in verse

25; it was because “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature, rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen.”

“God gave them over . . .” means more than the mere removal of the restraining hand of providence from the lives of wrongdoers. The sinner thus judged shall be compelled to continue upon the shameful path he has chosen, as in the case of Judas in which he had already given up Christ to commit the treacherous deed already committed in his heart. Another example of the same thing is the case of Balaam who, when he would have turned back from the wrong course, was commanded of God, “Go with the men” (Numbers 22:20).

Once men have consciously put God out of mind and allowed Satan to have dominion in their thoughts, they have at that point entered the downward road, and God Himself will see to it that they go all the way to the end of the road they have deliberately chosen, or, to borrow an old proverb, lie in the beds they have made. This is not to say, however, that God causes men to do wrong; far from it. R. C. H. Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 108 pointed out the difference, “This is more than permission to fall into uncleanness, and it is less than causing this fall. God’s action is judicial. At first, God always restrains by moral suasion, by legal and other hindrances; but when God is completely cast off, when the measure of ungodliness overthrows, his punitive justice hands the sinner over completely to their sins in order to let the sins run to excess and destroy the sinners.”

From God’s treatment of the ancient Gentile world, it might properly be inferred that when the present world has reached a certain degree of rebellion against God, He will loose Satan upon humanity for the same purpose, which could indeed be why such an event as the “loosing of Satan” should be included in the Divine plan. (Revelation 20:3, 7)

Refusing to honor the Father, they found themselves upon a downward escalator, moving them inexorably to lower and lower levels of depravity. If a disaster similar to that which overwhelmed ancient Gentiles is to be averted from the posterity of present enlightened populations of the earth, men must employ themselves whole heartedly in the service of God, striving constantly to

know the Truth, and beholding in it, as in a mirror, themselves as they appear in the eyes of God.

### **Verses 26-27**

“God gave them over to degrading (vile) passions . . .” These words affirm the judicial nature of the penalty enforced upon ancient apostate nations which overstepped the hidden boundary between God’s mercy and His wrath and were “given up.”

In these verses, and preceding, sexual deviation is brought to attention, not merely as sin, which it is, but also as punishment for sin, verse 26 dealing with the female deviate, and verse 27 with the male.

The debaucheries of the depraved are in themselves a punishment well-suited to the crime of turning away from God. The horrible lusts mentioned here, burning with ever greater and greater intensity, descending constantly to lower and lower levels of uncleanness, and, at last, leaving the sinner consumed by an insatiable lust, cause this terminal condition to be one of utter pitiableness and misery. This is what is meant by the statement that such persons receive “in themselves” the reward due justly their conduct.

### **Verse 28**

This is the third time in half a dozen verses, it is written that “God gave them up,” and, in each instance, reference is made to the principle of retribution. God’s giving men was not capricious, but founded upon the righteous premise that such conduct deserved the adverse judgment it received. God gave them up! He delivered them over to a reprobate mind, making their reprobation correspond to the reprobate act of forsaking the knowledge of God. The same thought is expressed in verse 27, where the judgment was mentioned as one that “was due.”

## WHEN GOD GIVES MEN UP

Paul affirmed that for just reasons God gave men up; but that was hardly a new concept. The psalmist noted that in Psalm 81:11-12. The martyr Stephen likewise said that in Acts 7:42.

The extent of man's ruin that inevitably follows when God gives him up, involves the total moral, intellectual, and physical mature of man. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12) The ruin that ensues when god gives man up is fourfold: physical, moral, intellectual, and physical.

The specific sins revealed in Scripture as causing God to give man up are:

- (1) sinning against the light (verse 21),
- (2) refusing to give God thanks (verse 21),
- (3) vain imaginations (verses 21-22) and
- (4) worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator (verse 25); but perhaps these specifics are but facets of a greater sin encompassing all these things namely, that of the deification of humanity.

In these times, men are still deifying humanity in a thousand ways, traveling old forbidden roads to ruin, as witnessed by the widespread neglect of religion and the worship of God, and the increasing secularization of the total life of the people. Wherever men exalt self; wherever men's words are preferred and heeded rather than God's word; wherever images that are "like" men are bowed down to and consecrated; and wherever may be accepted the foolish notion that the solution of man's problems lies within man—there the creature is worshiped and served more than the Creator.

What happens to the worship of God under conditions prevailing after God has given man up?

- (1) There is the conscious neglect of God’s worship, coupled with ingratitude and failure to give God thanks for all His mercies. As a consequence of this, the mind itself is darkened. (Verse 21)
- (2) Next, idolatry ensues with the worship of things more and more abased, first, images of men, then worship of birds, beasts, and finally creeping things—all of this accompanied by sensuality.
- (3) God gives them up to the sensuality they have preferred, with the resultant immorality.
- (4) God gives them up even further to the progressive erosion of the very principle of morality, leading to perversion and depravity of both sexes.
- (5) Finally, God gives them up to complete and irreversible reprobacy of mind, leading to conditions in men that deserve the sentence of death to be executed upon them. (Verses 28-32)

All of the horrors of Gentile paganism began with neglect of the worship of God and the omission of thanksgiving due to the Father, and this surely suggests that such sins are not merely “faults,” but are radical and determinative.

There can be nothing more important for humanity than a willing acceptance of Divine light and the constant love and pursuit of it, coupled with diligent worship, prayer, and thanksgiving, which things will polarize the soul with reverence to its Maker, and perpetuate the knowledge of God upon the earth.

### **Verses 29-32**

There are several such lists of sins in Paul’s writings, 2 Timothy 3:1-8 and Galatians 5:19-21 being two others. In one of these, Paul attributes such conduct to the “corrupted in mind,” and in the other to those practicing the “works of the flesh,” therefore, the same type of sinner is in view in all these.

Griffith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 53 presented as one acceptable classification of these 21 words the following fourfold division of them:

- (1) The first four comprehend general descriptions of evil, but with special reference to property;
- (2) Then come eight words which speak of a disregard of proper relationships;
- (3) These in turn are followed by three words descriptive of general depravity of character; and
- (4) Last of all, there are six words expressive of unprincipled worthlessness of life.”

Thomas Ibid., p. 74 added, “In any case, the list refers to sins of inward disposition and outward act, to sins of thought, word, and deed, to wrong against self, and against neighbor, as well as against God.”

John Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 51 probably had the correct view in the following, “The (death) referred to cannot be reasonably restricted to temporal death. The Greeks themselves taught a doctrine of retribution for the wicked after death, and the apostle must have taken this into account in the statement of that which he credited the nations with knowing.

Furthermore, he is here defining that in which the ordinance of God consists, and he cannot in terms of his own teaching elsewhere confine it to the judgment of temporal death. Knowledge of God’s penal judgment as it issues in the torments of the life to come is recognized, therefore, by the apostle, as belonging to those with whom he is now concerned.”

The wicked persons who were Paul’s subjects here were surely at the bottom of the moral totem pole; but Paul here credits them with the inward recognition that God’s righteous ordinance against their sins was just, or “righteous.”

This shows that the most outrageously wicked are aware of the moral contradiction in their deeds and that they inwardly acknowledge them to be deserving of death; and it is a fair conclusion that such men can have only contempt for a society that tries to explain all criminals as “sickness,” and

excuses the basest of human criminality on the basis that the perpetrator needed “help.”

Sin is not sickness, at least in the ordinary meaning of either word. The type of sin under view here, by the apostle, is an arrogant and murderous rebellion against God and all righteousness, perpetrated by a bold and vicious enemy of all truth and goodness.

## **WHY MEN DO NOT BELIEVE**

There is in the world today a vicious and unreasoning disbelief in the word of God, not merely a disbelief of specific doctrines such as the virgin birth or the resurrection, but a rejection of all truth, a kind of unbelief in capital letters, which infidelity is widely subscribed to and advocated, and which categorically refuses to believe in the supernatural, or in the reality of a personal God. Why is this? It is devoutly believed that the answer lies in verse 21 of this chapter, where Paul declared that “Their senseless heart was darkened.”

A wealth of material on this subject is found in the Scriptures; and it is to those sacred passages that one must go to understand the mystery of unbelief; for, as might have been suspected, the darkened intellect itself would never have fashioned any kind of knife with which to explore surgically the perversity of the fallen intellect. Such a surgical tool is found only in the Bible itself.

“For even though they knew God, they did no honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened,” (verse 21). The plain meaning of this is that in such cases, the mind itself is reduced in capacity, and that truths plainly discernible to the righteous are to the wicked man invisible, not because they cannot be seen, but because he is incapable of seeing them. The agency of Satan has primacy in causing such a condition, but the victim himself must lend his own will to the rejection of God before the punitive hardening takes place; and, without such voluntary acceptance of Satan’s influence as a precondition, the mind cannot be hardened.



Paul wrote the Corinthians that, “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

How did Satan get such a power? It came when men forfeited it to the evil one by willfully turning away from God’s teachings, thus making themselves God’s enemy. Once in the driver’s seat, firmly in control of the unbeliever’s mind, Satan exerts a fantastic power to prevent his ever having faith in the Son of God. And is such a thing happening today? We had better believe it.

Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 86 expressed it, “The blindness abides in all humanity apart from those who believe and are regenerated, whose minds have been renewed by the Spirit of God.”

In the revelation here that Satan blinds certain men, there is the key to how God hardens the rebellious, He permits Satan to have his way with them.

“This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart.” (Ephesians 4:17-18)

Paul’s teaching also shows that the blinded mind, the hardened heart, the crippled intellect, can be recovered; because in the next chapter of Ephesians Paul wrote to them, “For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.” (Ephesians 5:8)

Paul spelled it out in detail, just how such a wonder came about. (Ephesians 2:1-5) This shows that the person willing to do so, through submission to Christ, can overthrow the evil one, reject his domination, and enthrone the Christ upon His lawful place in the heart.

Thus the fault is in men’s will. As long as they will to walk in darkness, there is no power that can recover them. The will has the power to overrule the

intellect; and this is the key that explains unbelief as it occurs among learned and intelligent men.

Christ Himself made unbelief to be, not an act of intelligence, but a choice of evil in the heart. “And this is the judgment that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19) (Note: The word “for” in this verse has the meaning of “because.”)

Thus, Christ Himself is the authority for the conclusion that no man ever thought his way into unbelief, whereas there have been millions who sinned their way into a lack of faith (infidelity).

## **CHAPTER 2**

God’s eternal, intrinsic righteousness is the theme Paul was developing in the latter part of chapter 1 and in the first 16 verses of this chapter, that part of chapter 1 being concerned with God’s righteousness in dealing with Gentiles, and the first 16 verses here referring to another class of persons, the non-Christian Jews.

Paul justified in the first 16 verses of his chapter, the Jews also being included in the universal condemnation, not exclusively upon the premise of their rejection of Christ, although that was enough, but also upon the basis of their negative and inadequate response to God’s revelation in the Old Testament.

The Jews had held, theoretically, to the teachings of the Old Testament, but had not obeyed it, and were just as excessively sinful as the Gentiles and in verse 1 were here declared by Paul to have been guilty “of the same things” as the Gentiles.

In the first 16 verses of this chapter, Paul laid down a list of ten particulars, or principles, upon which God’s judgment of all men will be based.

## PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S ETERNAL JUDGMENT

- (1) Men are self-condemned when they practice what they condemn in others. (Verse 1)
- (2) God's judgment will be according to the truth of the word of God, that is, His revealed word in the Bible. (Verse 2)
- (3) God's goodness to sinful men does not indicate approval of their sins but longsuffering in hope of their repentance. (Verse 4)
- (4) God's judgment of men will be according to their works. (Verse 6)
- (5) God requires obedience of men and will punish disobedience. (Verse 8)
- (6) Greater privilege only entails greater responsibility. (Verses 9-10)
- (7) God is no respecter of persons. (Verse 11)
- (8) Judgment will be according to the light men have. (Verses 14-15)
- (9) Judgment will be according to the New Testament. (Verse 16)
- (10) It will be through Jesus Christ, now constituted judge of all, and according to His word. (Verse 16)

There can be no reasonable doubt that the typical unbelieving Jew was the focus of Paul's attention in this place. No "Christians" of any description whatsoever were under Paul's consideration in these first 16 verses.

### Verse 1

"You are without excuse . . ." is the same condemnation Paul hurled at the Gentile (1:20), and here it likewise to the Jew.

"Practice the same things . . ." is a reference to the long list of abominations catalogued as the shame of the Gentiles in the last chapter (verses 28-32) and those persons here addressed are guilty of "the same things."

The people mentioned here were non-Christian Jews who had refused to accept the Savior, had projected their hatred of Christianity into the second generation, and at that very moment were intent on hunting Paul down and killing him, and who were declared by this apostle a little later in this very chapter to have been profaners of sacred things (verse 22), thieves (verse 21), adulterers (verse 22, impenitent and hardhearted (verse 5).

The question of why, under the circumstances of their wickedness, Paul should have addressed any words at all to them is answered by the fact of the great influence those evil men were having upon Christians, especially those of Jewish background.

Paul here was concerned with destroying the hope of any person who ever thought or thinks that justification can ever come from anything except acceptance of and obedience to the gospel.

“That you judge another . . .” It was the peculiar guilt of those persons here spoken of that despite their wickedness, they imagined themselves to have been the heirs of eternal life because of descent from Abraham. Having so long experienced God’s goodness and mercy, they had come to suppose themselves entitled to it, and assumed that they would be saved regardless of their conduct.

The same temptation exists today when men think to be saved through membership in some group, or the acceptance of some theological doctrine, as for example, salvation by faith alone, or because they have been baptized, or because they attend church, or partake from obedient faith in Christ’s teaching, and that holiness invariably identified with membership in the body of Christ.

“You condemn yourself . . .” Here is the first of the ten principles of eternal judgment outlined by Paul in this passage. The well-known position of the adherent to Jewish privilege as the basis of hope was something like this: “Oh, yes, of course, we deplore such sins as you mention; but you cannot put us in the class with that riff-raff, for we are the children of Abraham. God always looks after us; and we shall be judged upon the basis of who we are, rather than upon what we do!”

The Jewish writings themselves fully corroborate the attitude this attributed to them. For example, in the book of Akedath Jizehak (fol. 54, col, 2), it is taught that: "Abraham sits before the gate of hell, and does not allow that any circumcised Israelite should enter there." (Charles Hodge, Epistle to the Romans, p. 63)

A whole generation earlier, John the Baptist, had warned the Jews against trusting in any such thoughts (Matthew 3:8), but his warning had not been taken to heart. Paul proceeded to refute this type of spiritual arrogance by outlining the true basis upon which God's judgment rests; and the very first of ten principles laid down is:

- (1) Men are self-condemned when they practice what they condemn in others.

### **Verse 2**

In this verse, it is the conduct of men which is condemned. Paul was not speaking of "moralists," either Jewish or Christian, but of bold and arrogant sinners.

"According to truth," or "rightly falls upon . . ." Here is the second proposition of ten principles in God's judgment of men. It will be according to truth," that is, according to what God's word in the Bible teaches, for this is a plain reference to the sacred scriptures which will form the grounds of man's eternal judgment in the last day.

Thus the second of the ten principles is:

- (2) Men will be judged according to the Bible.

### **Verse 3**

Those persons who thought that God's judgment would ever be exercised upon partial and unequal judgments were fantastically wrong. If man cannot escape his own judgment against himself, how could he ever hope to stand before the Holy God? Kenneth S. Wuest, Romans in the Greek New Testament,

p. 40 expressed it, “The Jew certainly thought, in many cases, that the privilege of his birth would of itself assure his entrance into the kingdom (Matthew 3:8-9), this having been practical conviction, whatever was his proper creed.”

It was for the purpose of refuting such widespread errors regarding God’s judgment that Paul sternly propounded the true principles of it in these verses.

#### **Verse 4**

Here is the third great principle of divine judgment:

- (3) God’s goodness to sinners is not a sign He approves of sin but that He looks to their repentance.

The goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, called here “the riches“ of God, have reference to the special privileges of the covenant people, the Jews, who again were answered by Paul in the form of a diatribe, (a bitter criticism).

The argument which was refused is: “God has been very good to us, and therefore we shall continue to expect goodness and favor at His hands.” The argument is false because it is founded on a misunderstanding of the purpose of God’s goodness, which is not to show approval of men’s sins, but to extend to them further opportunities of repentance and to persuade them by means of such goodness.

“Do you think lightly . . .” (“Despise)” means to look down upon” or “to place a low estimate upon,” something of far greater value than is recognized by the despiser. This is exactly what was done by these people, who treated the goodness and longsuffering of God as if it had been a tacit approval of their wickedness, and made it the basis of presumption that they would not be finally condemned.

Of special interest is the revelation here that God’s goodness is designed to lead men to repentance, it being apparent that if God’s goodness cannot lead men to repentance nothing else can.

In this verse there is continued emphasis upon the master theme of Romans, that of the righteousness of God, His righteous judgment being the particular aspect of it considered here.

### Verse 5

“The day of wrath . . .” Thus Paul followed the teaching of the Savior who made repeated reference to “the day of judgment.” (Matthew 7:22; 11:22-24, etc)

“Your stubbornness and unrepentant heart . . .” shows the wrong response to God’s goodness, the purpose of which was to lead men to repent, but which had been perverted by some who had accepted it as tacit approval of their wickedness, and with the result hardness and impenitence in their hearts.

“Storing up wrath . . .” God will reward iniquity. Charles Hodge, *op. cit.* p. 49 noted, “To store up” or to treasure up is to lay up little by little, a store of anything whether good or evil. The abusers of God’s goodness accumulate a store of wrath for themselves.”

### Verse 6

Those who fancy that Paul’s special brand of salvation was by faith without any works at all find here an insurmountable denial that he taught any such thing;

One of the great principals of eternal judgment is that:

4. God will judge men according to their works.

Paul’s reason for so emphatically stating this principle in the beginning of Romans is apparent. Its inspired author was about to write the great dissertation which would stress salvation by faith in Christ, and was about to include many things in it that are capable of being misunderstood and abused.

The great Protestant heresy founded upon the theory of an “imputed righteousness” solely as a result of faith alone contradicts verse 6 in this place as well as countless other plain words of scripture.

Verse 6 makes it clear that on the judgment day every man will be rewarded according to his deeds. Only the good will be saved; and only the bad will be lost. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

## **FAITH AND WORKS**

The New Testament declares definitely and positively that a man is justified by faith and that he is justified by works.

“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

“You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.” (James 2:24)

In the light of the above two verses, it is just as true that a man is saved by works alone as that he is saved by faith alone; but, of course, the word of God says neither thing.

Therefore any proposition to the effect that man is saved, or justified, by work alone, or by faith alone, contradicts a plain statement of the word of God. From the two verses cited, it is revealed as a certainty that the justification of sinners in God's sight is contingent upon both faith and works. Paul brought both faith and works together in a single text addressed to the Galatians, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” (Galatians 5:6)

The doctrine of justification by faith alone was first advocated by Martin Luther; but he ran into what seemed an impossible contradiction of his theory in James 2:24, which was said to have raised some question in Luther's mind for a while regarding the canonicity of James.

The wide spread heresy that salvation “through faith” releases men from the necessity of obeying the Lord's commandments, especially the commands requiring baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc.

And how is the problem solved? Quite simply. Where Paul stated that men are not justified by works, let it be determined which works he meant; and



where James wrote that a man is justified by works, let it be determined what kind of works he meant. It is perfectly easy to discover both. Paul, in his repeated affirmations that men are not saved by works, never had reference to the work of faith; and James never had in mind anything except the work of faith. Paul's teaching was directed against any notion that keeping the works of the Law of Moses could save; or any personal morality apart from Christianity could justify.

Paul's frequent words, to the effect that men are not saved by works, never have reference to the "work of faith" which he himself announced as one of the glories of the Thessalonian church. (1 Thessalonians 1:3)

When James spoke of justification by works, he did not refer to any of the works set at naught by Paul. When James stated that Abraham was justified by works when he offered his Son Isaac upon the altar, that inspired author made it impossible to misunderstand the kind of works that justified Abraham. What kind of work was the offering of Isaac? It was an act of obedience to God's command; had not been that, it would have been murder, hence a work of the devil; and that is exactly the difference that turns upon the question of who commanded a given action. Specifically, this principle applies to every humanly derived innovation in worship and to all human religious ordinances with Divine authority. But for the Christian, the kind of works by which he is justified are, as in Abraham's case, the doing of what God has commanded.

Repentance, baptism, the Lord's supper, etc., are thus not acts of human righteousness, nor works of men in any sense whatever, but are the work of faith.

Men are saved by faith, for they are also saved by the work of faith and will be thus judged eternally, (2:6). Men are saved by faith when they believe and obey the gospel. (Titus 3:5)

This passage is frequently cited in support of the view that such acts of obedience as baptism are not necessary, but the specific reference to baptism in the last clause of that verse proves that the ordinance of baptism, even when

submitted to by believers, is not to be considered a work of human righteousness in any sense. It is a work of faith having been commanded and required of all men by none other than Christ Himself. "Works done in righteousness" is a reference to religious actions outside of God's commands, that is, to works other than those of faith. Note the following passages in the word of God: (Matthew 19:17; Acts 2:38; Philippians 2:12; Revelation 2:6; and James 2:17).

Then may men trust God, believing in Christ with all their hearts, and obey the gospel. No amount of righteous living, or of good works, can place God in the position of owing salvation to any person.

Salvation is the free gift of Almighty God; but it is also conditional, there being revealed in the New testament pre-conditions which must be fulfilled by men in order to comply with the terms upon which the free salvation is given.

Faith is such a pre-condition; and the obedience of faith is another.

### **Verses 7-8**

Here is another unequivocal declaration of a master principle underlying God's judgment, the fifth in this passage.

(5) God will reward well-doing and punish disobedience.

These verses show the manner of God's judging men according to their works. Together, these verses declare dogmatically that well-doers shall inherit eternal life and the disobedient shall receive wrath and tribulation.

"Doing and "obeying" are made to be the basis of being saved, and "obeying not" is established as the basis of being lost; and was no new concept with the apostle Paul. For example read, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.

### **Verses 9-10**

"Who does evil . . . who does good . . ." are affirmed to be the basis of being saved or being lost.

In the previous two verses, the patient seekers of eternal life are contrasted with them that obey unrighteousness; and in these two verses, the soul that works evil is mentioned first and contrasted with him that works good. It is as though Paul had written, “Take it either going or coming, the judgment will be based upon what men do, whether or not they obey the Lord.”

But more appears here in the repeated mention of “the Jew first.” This established the sixth principle of judgment.

(6) Greater privilege will only entail greater responsibility.

The Jew, due to his greater blessings, will actually receive priority in judgment, making either their damnation more severe, or their redemption more glorious than that of others. The same principle was enunciated by the apostle Peter in (1 Peter 4:17.)

#### **Verse 11**

This, of course, is the seventh principle of judgment.

(7) There is no respect of persons with God.

This crystal-clear statement of God’s impartiality hardly needs an interpretation. It simply means that God will judge men on the basis outlined in these verses, upon the basis of their deeds, whether good or bad, and not upon the basis of any fancied exemptions. The Jews will not be able to claim exemption on the basis of his descent from Abraham; and the Christian will be unable to claim exemption because he was a member of the “good old Mother Church!”

Peter’s comment on this same principle is just what one should have expected. He wrote, “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him.” (Acts 10:34-35)

There is no partiality with God . . . “ Kenneth S. Wuest, *op. cit.*, p. 43 said, “Partiality, the fault of one who is called on to requite or to give judgment, has respect to the outward circumstances of men, and not to their intrinsic merits,

and so prefers as the more worthy, one who is rich, high born, or powerful, to another who is destitute of such gifts.” How reassuring it is to know that God will give just judgment, not after the prejudices of men, but according to truth and righteousness.

### **Verses 12-13**

Paul began to deal with a dramatic difference between Jews and Gentiles. In the preceding verses, he had shown that God was no respecter of persons, and that He would judge Jew and Gentile alike upon the basis of their deeds, whether good or bad. Paul continues his argument relative to God’s intrinsic righteousness, he was concerned with showing how, under those diverse circumstances, God’s judgment would still be fair and impartial.

The two great facts with regard to the Gentiles were:

- (1) that they had sinned, and
- (2) they had not received the Law of Moses.

The Gentiles perished anyway because of their dreadful rebellion against God. The Jew, on the other hand, did have God’s Law; but they never kept it. They were still to be judged upon the basis of the law they never kept, the mere fact of their having had it being in no sense a guarantee of a favorable judgment; “For not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”

“Not the hearers . . . “ is of interest and contrasts with “readers of the law.” which might have been expected; but Paul’s terminology was correct because most of the Jews, every Sabbath day in the synagogues , heard the Scriptures read, very few, if any of them, having copies of God’s word in their homes.  
(James 1:22-25)

## **Verse 14-15**

These verses reveal the eighth principle of divine judgment, namely:

- (8) that God's judgment will take into account the light men had or did not have.

Paul never implied in these verses that the ancient Gentiles were all saved, because they had lived up to all the light they had; for he repeatedly made it clear that they did not do that.

Paul's great proposition is that both Jews and Gentiles have failed to achieve any true righteousness, or to be justified in any adequate sense. This was due to the failure of the Jews, who, having the law, treated it as a charm or a talisman rather than honoring it by their obedience; and it was also due to the failure of the Gentiles who were not any more proficient in living up to the light they had than were the Jews. Thus, these two verses are an apostolic enunciation of the great truth that God will judge every man according to the light he has, and not according to the light he has not.

In speaking of these things, so utterly beyond the unaided knowledge of man, it should always be assumed as an axiom that, "God is too wise, to make a mistake and too good to do anything wrong."

## **Verse 16**

The theme of the general judgment on the last day was under discussion; and two more propositions relative to that final scene are added here:

- (9) the final judgment will be according to the New Testament.
- (10) the judgment will be by Christ as Judge.

"According to My judgment . . ." Since Paul was the principal author of the New Testament, the extended meaning of the world's being judged by Paul's gospel is that it will be judged by the New Testament, there being no disunity

whatever between Peter's gospel, Paul's gospel, and Matthew's gospel, etc. It is the entire New Testament that shall confront men in judgment.

“Through Jesus Christ . . .” The fact of the judgment's being “by Jesus Christ” is comprehensive.

- (1) Christ is to be the judge. (John 5:22)
- (2) Christ's word is the basis of judgment. (John 12:48)
- (3) The word of the apostles is also part of the platform of eternal judgment. (2 Peter 3:2)
- (4) All authority in heaven and upon earth belongs to Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20)

My gospel . . .” is simply a term of endearment, such as “my God.” (1:8 John Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 77) suggested, “And when Paul says, “my gospel.” he is reminding his readers that the gospel committed to him, unto which he is separated (1:1), and with which he as identified, though it was truly the gospel of grace, was also one that incorporated the proclamation of judgment for all, just and unjust. Grace does not dispense with judgment. Only in the gospel does this proclamation come to full fruition.”

Right down to the very last word of this section (1:16), the final judgment of all mankind is the theme, with special emphasis on the principles upon which that judgment will be executed.

“The secrets of men . . .” include the inner thoughts, hidden motives, all actions concealed or hidden from others. In fact, the judgment will be of the whole man, as only God sees, knows, and understands him.

By way of summarizing thoughts on these 16 verses (1-16), two things should be kept in mind:

- (1) That the subject treated in this section is that of the final judgment, handled in such a manner by the apostle as to vindicate the

righteousness of the just Judge who shall conduct it, and go reveal the basic principles of God's law that will form the basis of it; and

(2) That the persons to whom this passage was particularly addressed were the antagonistic Jews, who unlike the noble Jews who formed the very first nucleus of Christians (including Paul), were in a state of utmost wickedness and rebellion against God, despite which they still imagined that they would inherit salvation because of the privileges of Judaism. John Murray, *Ibid*, p. 82, expressed it, "We cannot overlook the fact that in this passage as a whole the apostle is concerned with the unbelieving Jew."

### **Verses 17-19 (overview)**

In the following section, Paul pointedly applied the principles just enunciated to those persons he had in mind. They were Jews, that is, certain wicked Jews, and not necessarily all Jews, Paul himself being a noble righteous Jew. The class confronted with these words were those who felt that their knowledge of the law of Moses, the fact of their having been circumcised, their descent from Abraham, and other high privileges which they enjoyed—that all these things would entitle them to be judged upon some other basis than a mere question of whether they were wicked or holy.

### **Verses 17-20**

"Bear the name Jew . . ." would indicate that Paul did not consider the persons here addressed as worthy of so honorable and worthy a name as that of "Jew." The name "Jew" first occurs in 2 Kings 16:6; but after the Babylonian exile it was used frequently. It is thought to be derived from "Judah," the name of the principal tribe of Israel. It was an honored and sacred name. J. D. Murray, *Ibid*, p.82 said, "It was a name associated in the mind of the Jew with all upon which he prided himself."

"Judah" means "praised," being the name given by Leah to her fourth son, because, as she said, "Now will I praise the Lord," (Genesis 29:35). The same

meaning of “praise” is therefore attached to the name Jew and had the highest status among the Hebrews.

None of those ancient worthies were perfect; but their lives as a whole established new bench-marks of character in an age when virtue itself had been almost banished from the earth.

“Having in the law . . . “ Paul began to list the prerogatives that surely pertained to the honorable but were falsely claimed by those whom Paul addressed. They rested in the law, not by keeping its teachings but by glorying in it as a national possession ministering to their pride and conceit, and as having nothing at all to do with their behavior.

“And boast in God . . .” Paul did not mean that any of the things in this list were wrong in themselves, but that they were, like a jewel in a swine’s snout, wrong by circumstance, that circumstance being the wickedness of those boasting in God. They were actually boasting in God in the sense that it was lawful and commendable to do so. True boasting in God is right and proper, as the Scriptures teach. (1 Corinthians 1:3; Jeremiah 9:23-24)

What kind of boasting was it then which Paul enumerated here as reprehensible? It was a vain and empty boasting of wicked men that nourished their conceit that they were something special in God’s sight, and in which they attributed to God an attitude of indifference, or even approval of their sins.

“And know His will . . .” Just as above, knowing God’s will is very well indeed; and it is the solemn duty of every man born to know God’s will as perfectly as possible; but it is a mark of honor to know God’s will, only if the knowledge is accompanied by a sincere intention to do it.

“Approve the things that are essential . . .” J. D. Murray, *Ibid*, p. 77 said a probable meaning expressed here may be, “You have the ability to make accurate moral judgments and to distinguish and appreciate moral values.” That ability was derived from God’s law in which those men had been instructed.



“Confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind . . .” These men were precisely the same kind of persons of whom Jesus said, “They are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matthew 15:14)

Those men might indeed have led the blind and served as the light of the world; but the moral cancer within them negated such an ability. Their minds had already been darkened.

“A corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature . . .” Collectively, the expressions listed provide an excellent picture of the way Gentiles were regarded by the enlightened Jews of Paul’s day. Tragically, the picture is accurate. The Gentiles were indeed blind, ignorant, babes, walking in darkness, an extremely foolish people who desperately needed the wisdom and guidance which properly instructed Jews might have given them

“Having in the law the embodiment (form) of knowledge . . .” identifies the source of all Jewish knowledge and superiority as the Law of Moses. The words strongly suggest Paul’s words to Timothy, “For men will be lovers of self . . . holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.” (2 Timothy 3:2, 5)

The law was absolutely genuine; but when the power of that law had been negated by the sinful rebellion of them that knew it, it was only a mere shadow of the real thing that they had left.

The same principle holds with regard to the gospel itself, wherein is a mighty power to save; but when sin corrodes the life of Christians, they are invariably left holding to a mere form, a feeble shadow of reality.

#### **Verses 21-24**

This devastating blast is a charge of hypocrisy, immorality, dishonestly and general wickedness leveled against the persons Paul addressed. Paul evidently selected the very sins which were most odious to the Jews, at least in theory; for, of all sins of the pagans around them, the Jews particularly detested their idol

worship and their abominable sexual excesses. Theft and blasphemy were also regarded similarly. Therefore, it is amazing that Paul charged them with guilt in all these areas. Although there were doubtless many personal exceptions to the gross wickedness Paul charged against the Jews, the tragedy lies in the fact of its being so generally true of that particular generation. Christ Himself supported Paul's charge of theft. And He said to them, "**MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER**, but you are making it a robbers den." (Matthew 21:13).

The persons charged in Jesus' indictment were none other than the social, religious, and political leaders of the nation. Paul's charge of adultery was supported by all the Old Testament prophets, especially Jeremiah who wrote, "(They) trooped to the harlot's house, they were well fed lusty horses, each one neighing after his neighbor's wife." (Jeremiah 5:7-8)

Jeremiah even went so far as to say that the Israelites had committed adultery "under every green tree." (Jeremiah 2:20)

How strangely perverse is the human heart, which, in the midst of abounding depravity and sin, and while participating in and sharing in the very sins known to be prohibited and abominable, the heart is yet capable of indulging in delusions of spiritual safety and security; and never in history were there any more pitiful examples of such a phenomenon than those persons Paul addressed in these verses.

"You who boast in the Law . . ." This and the following clause, is a pronouncement of guilt upon those people in all points as charged, namely, theft, profanation, adultery, etc.

"For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you . . ." is the pinnacle of Paul's indictment.

### **Verse 25**

Beginning here, Paul discussed circumcision, which was to the Jew, and especially to them here addressed, a refuge of last resort, wherein, if all else failed, he still might claim eternal life as his just inheritance.

Charles Hodge, op. cit., p. 64 noted that, "It is obvious that the Jews regarded circumcision as in some way securing their salvation. That they did so regard it

may be proved, not only from such passages of the New Testament where the sentiment is implied, but also by the direct assertion of their own writers. Such assertions have been gathered in abundance from their own works by Eisenmenger, Shoettgen, and others. For example, Rabbi Menachem, in his commentary on the Book of Moses (folio 43, column 3) says, “Our Rabbis have said, that no circumcised man will see hell.”

Circumcision, as Paul discussed it here, refers to the rite itself, not to the whole law of which that rite was a covenant seal.

While allowing the validity of the rite when used as God intended it, Paul did not hesitate to blast this last refuge of apostates by showing that not even circumcision could do a man any good eternally, if he did not keep the law. They should have been able to deduce no such thing as circumcision could possibly prevent the judgment of God upon apostates.

#### **Verse 26**

The question is: “Who were those uncircumcised people who were keeping the ordinances of the law and which law and which ordinances are meant? F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 130 identified those uncircumcised keepers of the law correctly when he said, “We are to regard the apostle as referring to those many Gentiles converted to the gospel who, all uncircumcised as they were, nevertheless fulfilled the law in virtue of the Spirit of Christ, and thus became the true Israel, the Israel of God.” (Galatians 4:16)

Here then is the instance where uncircumcision had become circumcision, and here is the case where uncircumcision could not invalidate the claims of the righteous.

Many of the Christians of Jewish descent in the early church insisted upon circumcision for Gentile converts, a requirement Paul fought vigorously and never allowed; and it is the shadow of that old controversy that looms here.

Every Christian, though literally uncircumcised, is nevertheless circumcised “in Christ,” in the same sense that he has paid the penalty of death due to sin, “in Christ.” All who are truly “in Christ” thus fulfill the law.

### **Verse 27**

The only way that the law can possibly be fulfilled is “in Christ,” and that mountain fact solidly identifies the “uncircumcision which is by nature” as those Gentiles who had become Christians, the expression “which is by nature” being another way of saying they had been Gentiles. God never required of any Gentile that he should be circumcised. Therefore the uncircumcised Gentile was not violating any ordinance of God by remaining so; but this is nowise the case with so called “unbaptized believers” who in truth do not exist.

No believer can remain a believer in the true sense while willfully continuing in an unbaptized state. May God open men’s eyes to see the truth.

### **Verses 28-29**

The false circumcision would therefore be the circumcision of one whose life showed no regard for the moral values of God’s law; and the true circumcision would be the case of the circumcised person who regarded and honored such values.

Paul was declaring that the only circumcision that could avail the Jew anything was a circumcision honed by a life consistent with the rite.

“By the Spirit, not by the letter . . . “ does not mean that the external rite of circumcision, as commanded by the law, might have been dispensed with by the Jew and replaced by some “spiritual” experience, but simply the external rite alone, without the God-honoring life that was supposed to accompany it, was worthless. The question before Paul in these verses is not a Christian question, but a Jewish one, and to get this all mixed up with baptism, as so many of the commentators have done, is in error.

The legitimate deduction is that; just as there was an absolute necessity under the Law of Moses to combine the external rite of circumcision with a holy life, so there is for the Christian the absolute necessity of combining with the external ordinance of baptism that newness of life which there begins.

There is real danger in supposing that mere outward compliance with the Lord’s commandments, any or all of them, removes the need for true and

genuine spirituality and devotion which are always the hallmark of authentic Christian faith.

W. H. Griffith Thomas, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. 92, summed it up, "While we must ever insist with all clearness and firmness on obedience to the ordinances of God, we must never fail to remember that the ordinances themselves, apart from genuine spiritual disposition of the recipients, never convey or guarantee the reception of grace. Ordinances are visible signs to which are annexed promises. Faith lays hold on the promises, and the signs are the pledges of God's fulfillment of them; but, if there be no faith in the Divine promise, there is nothing left for the ordinance to seal."

The submission to the ordinance is itself a part of the laying hold, for in that ordinance, faith becomes obedient; and the salvation Paul taught in Romans has nothing to do with anything else, other than an "obedient faith." (1:5; 16:26, etc.)

Having at this point completed his argument concerning the sinfulness of all men, Jew and Gentile alike, and having established the broad principles of it, Paul then proceeded in the next chapter to answer some objections to it, employing the device of the diatribe (a learned discussion) as a vehicle for the conveyance of his thought.

### **CHAPTER 3**

In this chapter, Paul answered certain objections that might have been alleged against what he had just written (verses 1-8), brought forward a number of Old Testament references to support the proposition that none are righteous and that justification was impossible either through the Law of Moses or any similar system of law (verses 9-20), and then presented God's master plan of human redemption, as achieved in Christ, and available to all men in Him. (Verse 21-31)

#### **Verses 1-2**

Why be a Jew, or be circumcised? What was the advantage of it? Answer: The great advantage was in their being custodians of the sacred Scriptures. Many other advantages accrued to the Jewish nation as a result of their possession of God's oracles; but rather than outlining a list of such blessings, Paul went to the source of them all and named their custodial possession of the

holy revelation through the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament as their greatest advantage. This teaches that the greatest advantage any person can have is that of knowing God's will.

Paul would return in later chapters of this epistle to a fuller discussion of the peculiar favor of God to the Jews, but, for the moment, this one great advantage was enough to cite.

“Entrusted with the oracles of God . . .” The fact of the Jews having been the divinely appointed custodians of the Scriptures in the pre-Christian ages has the necessary effect of denying the allegations of the Roman Catholic Church, or of any other church, that their opinion of what belongs or does not belong in the Old Testament canon has any weight at all. If one desires to know what writings truly belong in that portion of the Bible called the Old Testament, the judgment of the Jews during apostolic times must be accepted.

#### **Verses 3-4**

“What then . . .?” Is a connective with the previous line of thought. Paul was still addressing himself to the task of meeting Jewish objections; and the background fact here was Jewish reluctance to allow their conduct as fair grounds upon which they would be judged.

Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 70 explained that position thus, “What if we are unfaithful,” says the Jew. “Does that invalidate the faithfulness of God? Has He not promised to be a God to Abraham and his seed? Has He not entered into a solemn covenant to grant His people all the benefits of Messiah's kingdom? This covenant is not suspended on our moral character. If we adhere to the covenant by being circumcised and keeping the law, the fidelity of God is pledged for our salvation. We may therefore be as wicked as you make us out to be; that does not prove that we shall be treated as heathen.”

“Their unbelief . . .” refers to the evil conduct of the chosen people due to their unbelief in God, and is not an indictment of their sin of rejecting the Messiah.

This verse continues in the main line of Paul's theme in Romans, a demonstration of the righteousness of God, that is, of the righteousness that marks God's character; and, therefore, to the insinuation that God would be unfaithful if he refused (on the basis of human sin) to convey eternal salvation to the Jews, the allegation that such a refusal would make God blameworthy—to all such thoughts, Paul bluntly relied, "God forbid!"

"May it never be . . . !" It means, "Certainly not." It is precisely the faithfulness of God that does deny to wicked men the fulfillment of God's promises to them, which promises were from the first and always, contingent upon human faithfulness.

"Let God be found true, every man be found a liar . . ." means, "Let it be obvious that God is true, in spite of the fact that every man may prove to be false." God is eternally true and righteous; and, upon those occasions when God judges men guilty of sin and unworthy of His benefits, it is because they are so.

It was the major premise underlying the great life of Abraham that God will always do right, regardless of human behavior. (Genesis 18:25)

"That Thou art justified when Thou dost speak. . ." The fact under consideration was God's intrinsic righteousness; and here, Paul was disposing of the quibble that, merely because God had promised it, and despite human sin, the Jews were entitled to possess eternal life and Messiah's kingdom; he dramatically refuted such a notion by appealing to the example of so distinguished a Jew as David, the man after God's own heart, who, when he sinned, was under God's condemnation. David acknowledged the justice of his own condemnation (Psalm 51:4), that God might be justified in His words and prevail when He came into judgment.

God is here presented as appearing before men's minds, as in a form of arraignment, and as receiving approval of all that is highest and best in human intelligence. Let all men, therefore, believe in and trust the absolute righteousness of God through whatever uncertainties, perplexities, disasters, sorrows, and tribulations life may bring. (Job 13:15)

## Verses 5-6

Paul had just proved that sin, even though in the best of men, as was the case with David, resulted in a demonstration of God's justice and righteousness. Paul wasted little time on the quibble, disposing of it in ten words.

John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. i, p. 96 said this quibble fitted into the Jewish objection against Paul thus, "If unbelief (as you say) does not make void God's faithfulness, but renders it more conspicuous, or serves to exhibit more clearly the righteousness of God, then God would be unrighteous in inflicting His wrath upon the ungodly."

There is more to this quibble than meets the eye, for it touches upon one of the truly great mysteries, that of how God can overrule sin, which is contrary to His will, and do so in such manner as to bring about the accomplishment of His purpose.

"Demonstrates the righteousness of God . . ." Men of small minds and evil hearts can abuse such a doctrine as God's overruling of sin for good; but if they do, it shall be to their ruin. How does God overrule sin that good may come from it?

### **SIN THAT RESULTS IN GOOD**

People who have been scarred and burned in the pits of sin are generally more conscious and perceptive of God's grace and mercy than those persons who have lived conventionally respectable lives. That might be one of the underlying reasons why the publicans and harlots of Jesus' day entered the kingdom of God before the Pharisees. (Matthew 21:31)

What are some of the ways God overrules sin for the good of His children? Sin increases man's appreciation for the goodness and holiness of God. Men's lives are disciplined through the sorrows suffered because of sin. Through pitiful experience, man learns what he should have known all the time, that God's word is altogether true and faithful, that "the wages of sin is death!" God's teaching regarding sin is verified and confirmed by every sin ever committed, whether by saint or sinner; and this overwhelming verification of the word of



God is a strong inducement to trusting and serving God. Sin also induces sympathy for other sinners on the part of them that sin.

If one becomes a gross sinner, God will make an example out of him. God overruled the sin of Judas to make it serve His holy purpose of Jesus' being offered up during the Passover, thus fulfilling the scriptures.

Verse 6 is Paul's blunt, almost horrified denial of any unworthiness that might be attributed to God for His judgment of wicked men.

### **Verses 7-8**

"Why am I still being judged as a sinner . . ." shows that the addressees are Jewish, for the Christians did not so judge Paul.

"Let us do evil that good may come . . ." Paul here reduced the arguments of Jewish objectors to an absurdity, as it might be paraphrased: "If your method of judging is correct, then why do evil to procure the good that would come of it?"

"Their condemnation is just . . ." was Paul's way of saying, then why not do evil to procure the good that would come of it?"

"My lie . . ." means, "The lie that I am now dealing with," or "our lie," thus identifying himself with the objector for the sake of a more effective rebuttal. Since the passage is directed against Jewish objectors, the thought is, "My lie, that is, my lie according to your view of things!"

"As we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say . . ." is a parenthetical statement; and we are in darkness as far as knowing who made any such slanderous reports against Paul, or upon what grounds they were fabricated.

The gospel Paul preached is abundantly clear and concise in the light of a major portion of the New Testament which Paul wrote; and no reliance whatever should be placed upon the deductions which some have dared to make, basing their deductions, so they say, upon the grounds slanderers had for attacking Paul.

In the next verses (9-20), the Scriptural proof that all men are sinners in the eyes of God is set forth in the form of a number of Old Testament quotations.

The apostle here pronounced a verdict not only against sins, but also against mankind as now constituted, against all men and their systems, even against the Jew with his God-given system, and against the Gentile and their pagan religions, and, in all this, showing how utterly helpless is man, apart from God, in his pitiful efforts to achieve any such thing as justification.

What was so desperately needed was the revelation of God's way really to save men, to make them actually righteous, and to reveal the system of true reconciliation with God.

Emil Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 25 thus expressed it, "And now Paul has reached the stage where he can strike the decisive blow against every kind of human presumption, so that he can crush it before going on to speak of what the whole letter points to: God's gracious act of reconciliation in Jesus Christ."

### **Verses 9-10**

"Are we better than they . . ." is a reference to any supposed Jewish superiority over the Gentiles. This blanket inclusion of all men "under sin" is a far greater thing than a mere charge that every man has committed some sin. Griffith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 102 wrote, "He has charged them with being under sin. The phrase is very striking: "Not merely sinners, but under the empire of sin" (Liddon). It occurs again with equal force in 6:14; 7: 14; and Galatians 3:22.

This is the first occurrence of the word "sin" out of nearly fifty places in chapters 1-8. The various New Testament words for "sin" are deeply significant. The most familiar and frequent of them means "missing the mark;" another means "overstepping a boundary;" another, "falling instead of standing;" another, "being ignorant instead of knowing;" another, "diminishing what should be rendered in full;" another, "disobeying a voice;" another, "disregarding a command;" and another, "willfully careless."

"There is none righteous . . ." was here directed by Paul against the last stronghold of Jewish presumption that of any alleged superiority over the Gentiles. Paul went much farther and listed specific sins of Israel and confirmed each with an Old Testament reference.

This larger list of twelve specifics was presented by Paul in two sections:

- (1) sins against their relationship with God (verses 10-12) and
- (2) sins against fellow creatures (verses 12-18), each class of sins being introduced by the quotation from Psalm 53:3, “There is none righteous, etc.”

### **Verse 11**

Paul here charged the Jew in an area where he might have never supposed himself to be invulnerable; for, all of the sins the Jew considered himself above, it was spiritual ignorance due to a failure to seek God; and yet, right here it was in their own Bible. They neither understood nor sought after God. True, they knew many things; but they had never understood that their entire system was temporary, typical, and comparable to the scaffolding of a building, and due to be torn down when the great antitype was revealed. They had somehow missed the overriding fact that Judaism was not designed to be God’s permanent order of things.

They indeed knew what the Old Testament said of Messiah, but they split the prophecies into two categories, supposing that there would be two Messiahs, one of them the suffering priestly Messiah, and the other the glorious kingly Messiah; and it was that tragic error of not understanding that all of the Old Testament prophecies spoke of the Christ when He came. But that was the fatal error that resulted in utter blindness, in a religious sense, of Israel’s leaders.

They had so cluttered the word of God with their traditions and interpretations that they had ever lost the key of knowledge, which was hopelessly buried beneath the rubbish mountain of trivia regarding tithing of mint, anise, and cumin, and a thousand other things. Thus the great sin here charged, and Scripturally supported against Israel, was their reprehensible ignorance of God’s word.

There is none who seeks for God . . .” The chosen nation who had received the revelation of God and who had studied it so meticulously, were, in all that study, not seeking God at all, due to the lack of any proper motive, and having

forgotten the warning of Hosea, “So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord.” (Hosea 6:3)

Knowing what the Scripture says is one thing; following on to know the Lord is another. Since the Jews were not seeking after God what was the point of all their study? Christ Himself pinpointed the trouble; it was this, that they desired the praise of men rather than the praise of God. (John 12:43)

Christ said, “You are those who justify yourself in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15)

Moreover, they did not seek to glorify God, but only to glorify one another. (John 5:44)

#### **Verse 12**

Because Israel did not understand and did not seek after God, they turned aside to follow foolish and hurtful things, even in many instances departing to follow after the gods of the pagans, thereby becoming unprofitable to God. All of the care and favor that God lavished upon them, with the intention that they should recognize and honor the Messiah when He came, and present Him to the world—all that was lost. They were unprofitable that they lost the key of knowledge, and far from recognizing and receiving the Lord when He at last came, they failed to recognize Him, hated Him, and murdered the Son of God! They were to blame for they did not recognize the Lord.

#### **Verse 13**

The figure of speech here shows how utterly repugnant to God was their unprincipled conduct. The thought is that the words coming from their throats were as foul as any odor that ever came out of an opened grave. Their language and conversation were full of deceit. No credibility could be given to anything that they said. “A generation of vipers” indeed, they were. (Matthew 3:7)

#### **Verse 14**

“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness . . .” Paul was continuing to pile up Scriptures to prove the wickedness of that generation which rejected

Christ. The fact that this class of sins is mentioned at such length in this context shows how important the tongue is as an indicator of character.

### **Verse 15**

“Their feet are swift to shed blood . . .” This is quoted from Isaiah 59:7 and contains the charge of being swift and ready killers. The propensity of the chosen people for committing murder is self-documented in Scripture. “Who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!” (Matthew 23:37) in that amazing passage, Christ documented the long list of murders of the prophets and concluded by revealing to the public a murder hitherto concealed by the Pharisees, and unknown till Jesus revealed it! Christ also prophesied that the same murderous hatred would be vented against the apostles and preachers of the new covenant.

### **Verses 16-17**

These verses are a continuation of the prophecy of Isaiah 59:7f; and here one may see the end result of not knowing and not seeking after God. Turning away from the Father always brings the defector into a destructive and miserable way of life, a way of turbulence, wretchedness, violence, and conflict.

### **Verse 18**

These things are what the Jewish Scriptures say about the Jews. This verse is a quotation from Psalm 36:1, and seems to be presented here as a climax of all the wickedness already documented. Where there is no fear of God in the hearts of men, there is no practical restraint of any kind upon their deeds. The unregenerate man who does not fear God or, for that matter even believes that God exists—such a man quickly proves what a vicious and unprincipled beast the natural man becomes, once he has drifted, or fallen, beyond the reach of heavenly influence. This statement is the final in a list of twelve classes of wickedness charged against Israel by Paul, every one of which he documented by quotations from the prophets of the Old Testament.

### **Verse 19**

“Whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed . . .” Paul was determined to convict the total race of

Adam, and the devastating charges he had just sustained against Israel have the collateral effect of condemning the Gentiles as well. They were admittedly worse than the Jews.

R. L. Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 74 summarized the teaching of this verse thus, “The Jew, readily granted that the Gentile was under the judgment of God, and now Paul proves from the Jewish Scriptures that the Jew likewise was under the judgment of God.”

### **Verse 20**

Why was justification impossible of attainment under Moses’s law? First, no man, as men are constituted is capable of perfectly living up to all the provisions of Moses’ laws, or any other. Moses’ law made no allowance for any violations whatever and provided no means of forgiveness for violators. The Holy Spirit, at that time, not having been provided to dwell in men’s hearts, could not be claimed for either help or encouragement. For these reasons, the practical result of the law was to demonstrate that every man who tried to keep it was a sinner!

Paul was about ready in this epistle to announce a means of justification by which man may be forgiven of his sins, truly possess a genuine righteousness, and claim the inheritance among the saints in light. Before doing so, he evidently felt that it was imperative to remove all notions that any man might have to the effect that he might ever earn, or merit salvation through living a life of strict conformity to the law of Moses.

The ability to merit or earn salvation is simply not in mortal men; and that fact underlies Paul’s extensive argument presented thus far in the epistle with the design of bringing all men to realize their condemnation under God, due to their sin, and to impress upon them the glorious nature of the true means of justification about to be announced.

Justification, as a practical thing, is the equivalent of salvation; but a more precise definition is given by Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 82 when he wrote, “(Justification) is always used in the sense antithetical to condemnation. To condemn is not merely to punish, but to declare the accused guilty or worthy of

punishment; and justification is not merely to remit punishment, but to declare that punishment cannot be justly inflicted.”

The inability of men to achieve a state of justification by means of law should not be held as a reason for despising law, especially God’s law. Emil Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 27 expressed it, “The Law cannot make us righteous, but it can reveal to us what is wrong. Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. This is no small matter. If there still had to be something other than the way of the Law, we do not by-pass the Law to reach this other thing but only go right through the Law. The Law, taken seriously, breaks the arrogance of man; yes, it breaks man himself. But only as someone who is broken, as a person who is thoroughly shaken as someone who has come to the end of his tether, can he understand what has to be said of him now as being the one and all of the gospel message.”

**Verses 21-31** contain Paul’s statement of the “one and all” just referred to above in Brunner’s paragraph on the Law. In Paul’s small paragraph here, one of the most significant revelations is at last announced; the mystery hidden from the foundation of the world is finally declared, that being the device by which God can forgive the sins of men and procure their absolute justification in Jesus Christ. How could even God devise a vehicle for the conveyance of so great a blessing?

How could God be just, that is, accounted by men to be just, while at the same time passing over sins and blessing the perpetrators of sins as if they had never sinned at all, even forgiving them? How could God receive fallen and sinful men unto himself without, in so doing, bestowing a tacit approval of their horrible wickedness, thereby compromising His just government of the universe itself?

The answer to all such questions is embryonically contained in the glowing sentences which make up his small section of Paul’s letter to the Romans.

### **Verse 21**

“But now . . . “ These words are the pivot between the old and the new, the hinge upon which the door closes upon the old and shameful darkness of human history and opens upon the new and living way in Christ Jesus. Paul had

concluded all men under sin, under the judgment of God; but at this point he would announce the means by which Paradise lost may be recovered; he was but to announce the revelation of the mystery hidden before times eternal, the mystery of “how” God would provide forgiveness of fallen men.

Good news indeed it was, the gospel. This gospel (which means good news) was, and still is, provided for all races and conditions of men, without regard to prior privilege, not upon the basis of merit, but upon the basis of God’s gracious favor to mankind, and provided actually by and through the righteousness of Christ.

“Apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested . . .” What is in view in this passage is God’s intrinsic righteousness, not an imputed righteousness at all, the particular proof of God’s righteousness lying in this, that salvation has at last been made available to all men who will receive it.

“Being witnessed by the law and the prophets . . . “ The Old Testament revealed, through a number of types and shadows, the marvelous teachings of the new covenant, there being no less than four distinctive Old Testament witnesses to the identity, character, mission and teaching of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

### **OLD TESTAMENT WITNESS OF JESUS CHRIST**

The four great Old Testament witnesses to Jesus Christ and the new institution He came to establish are:

- (1) the verbal prophecies,
- (2) typical men,
- (3) the Tabernacle in its plan of construction and in various devices within it, and
- (4) the grand ceremonial functions of Jewish religion, such as the Day of Atonement, the Passover, etc.

The verbal prophecies, numbering some 333, foretold the coming of the Messiah in such detail and clarity that hardly any phase of our Lord’s life and character was omitted.



Great typical men in the extensive history of Israel were laid under the burden of setting forth the nature, character, attitude, mission, and even the name of Christ.

The Tabernacle, and later the temple patterned after it, typified the ultimate scheme of redemption as it would be revealed in Christ. For instance the candlestick, typified the word of God, the table of shew bread, the providence of God, the veil the flesh of Christ; the mercy seat the supremacy of God's mercy, and so on.

The religious services, things like the thank offering, the sin offering, the Passover, the Day of Atonement were witnesses providing the most overwhelming proof that can be imagined of the true identity and authenticity of Christ.

The entire national life of the Jews was so totally permeated, pervaded, and infused with the pre-knowledge of the coming Savior, and with such an intensity and profusion as to approach a surcharge! No wonder, then, that Paul who was about to announce to all men the salvation that Christ had made available would have paused at this point to recall that it was all witnessed by the law and the prophets.

## **Verse 22**

It should be noted that "faith in Jesus Chris" appears here while in many other versions of the Bible it reads, "faith of Jesus Christ."

"The faith of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, is indeed a legitimate ground of justification, because Christ's faith was perfect. Moreover the faith of Christ was obedient. It was a perfect and complete obedience, lacking nothing whatever; and therefore the obedient faith of the Son of God, sinless and holy, is the ground and only round of any justification of any such thing as a human being. How then are people saved at all? They are saved "in Christ," having been incorporated into Him, and thus being justified as a part of Him.

The "faith of the Son of God" is indeed the ground of our justification, because that faith is definitely included in the "righteousness of God," mentioned in this verse.

Faith, being an outstanding and conspicuous condition of redemption, is used here as a synecdoche for all the conditions God has imposed and made to be prerequisites of salvation.

### **Verse 23**

This is Paul's statement of the fact of God's justice in making salvation to all who complied with the terms upon which it was extended.

### **Verse 24**

Glorious is the thought that justification in God's sight is now available to all men, not upon the basis of their success in keeping the commandments of any law, nor upon the basis of their having achieved any degree of moral perfection, or even excellence, and not upon the basis of their fulfilling any kind of law whatever, except that of meeting the terms upon which God provided it.

"As a gift . . ." is appropriate, because nothing that man could ever do in a million years of righteous living could ever earn the tiniest fraction of the salvation God gives to men in Christ.

"The redemption which is in Christ . . ." The expression "in Christ" is, in some ways, the most important in all the Pauline writings, where this expression, or its equivalent "in whom," "in Him," etc., is used no less than 169 times.

What does it mean to be "in Christ"? It means to be in His spiritual body, called the church, the body of which Christ is the head, of which He is declared to be the Savior, and which means having a spiritual relationship to Christ. Redemption is not in faith, or baptism, or in anything else except being "in Christ."

## **JESUS CHRIST, INCORPORATED**

The very fact of Christ's having a spiritual body is the concept of its being extra-literal. What kind of body is it?

That it is a community of believers on earth is implicit in the fact that the Corinthians had "by one Spirit" all been baptized "into it." (1 Corinthians 12:13) It includes more than the church is plainly set forth in Ephesians where "every

family” in heaven and on earth are part of it. All the saved of all ages are in it, because only in Christ has salvation ever been possible for anyone.

Christ’s absolute righteousness cannot be separated from Himself and conferred or imputed to others, true righteousness being non-transferable; but it is possible, thanks to the wise provision of God in forming the corporate “in Christ,” for all who will to enter that body, becoming one with Christ. All such then share Christ’s righteousness. It is truly theirs. This is what Paul means by “redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” There are no spiritual blessings anywhere except in Christ.

Who are those who make up Christ’s spiritual body, thus being “in Christ”? The New Testament gives the following clues to their identity.

- (1) They are those who have been born again. Christ’s spiritual body, also called by Christ “the kingdom,” cannot be entered except by the new birth. (John 3:3-5)
- (2) They are those who are the “new” creatures. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Like every other corporation, Jesus Christ, Incorporated, has a seal. (Ephesians 1:13) The true members of Jesus Christ, Incorporated are those who have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. They are also the saved, for the author of Acts declared that, “The Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

The true members of Jesus Christ, Incorporated are the saved, the sealed with the Holy Spirit, the new born, the new creatures. In a word, they are baptized believers in Christ. The reception of the Holy Spirit of promise, in the first sermon of the gospel age, was made contingent upon the repentance and baptism of those who believed. (Acts 2:38)

Baptism is an essential element in the new birth and the “newness of life” which belongs to every person “in Christ” following his being baptized into Christ. (Romans 6:4)

Baptism mentioned three times in the New Testament as an act of obedience that results in the believer’s having a new status, that of being “in Christ.”

(Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27, and 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

From these holy Scriptures, there comes the certain conclusion, then, that faith is not the sum and all of salvation; it was not even so in the case of Christ whose faith and perfect obedience wrought salvation for all; nor can it be supposed that “faith alone,” defined by James as “dead,” can ever avail anything except the eternal disappointment of them that trust in it. (James 2:17f)

The final judgment, only those who are truly “in Christ,” members of that entity called the spiritual body, or, as here, Jesus Christ, Incorporated, can truly be exempted, and that not upon the basis of their faith alone, but upon the basis that Christ actually died for them, and that they died in the person of Christ. That is the thrust of Paul’s thought that Christians have been baptized into His death.” (Romans 6:3)

Jesus Christ, Incorporated is the corporation set up through purchase by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), the device God had planned before all time, and the mystery hidden before times eternal, and now made “known through the church” (Ephesians 3:10), and called the “mystery of the Gospel.” (Ephesians 6:19)

These thoughts are offered in the prayerful hope that man may forsake human theories of salvation, that they might believe and be baptized, as Christ commanded, and give glory to God “in the church” as directed by an apostle. (Ephesians 3:21)

Only the righteous, the perfect, the truly faithful and obedient shall be saved; and there will be no basis for any man to boast of having anything such as that, because such is not in man; but it is in Christ, and those in Christ may through absolute identification with Christ truly say that they are perfect, etc. That is what Paul meant when he wrote, “That we may present every man complete in Christ.” (Colossians 1:28)

It will not be an imputed righteousness, procured by the sinner’s faith, but a real, actual righteousness wrought by Christ, that can save a one as sinful man, and then only if he will die to himself and become utterly one with Christ in

Christ. Paul said of himself, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Before leaving verse 24, the seeming paradox of how God’s grace is free and at the same time all men do not receive it, should be observed. Paul wrote Titus, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.” (Titus 2:11-12)

### **Verses 25-26**

Paul was not promising salvation to all them that believe in Christ, but to those who believe in such a way as to be participants in the “faith of Jesus,” that is, by being in His spiritual body.

“Whom God displayed publicly . . .” These words reveal the initiative of God in the offering of Christ for the world’s sin; God paid the price of human redemption. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

God was not alone in offering Christ; but God, Christ, Satan, the Jews, the Romans, all men and every man participated in it, as detailed below.

### **WHO CRUCIFIED CHRIST?**

In the verse noted above, it is plain that yes, God crucified Christ. It was the Eternal Father Himself who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” (John 3:16); and it was under the broad umbrella of His permissive will that the entire drama of Jesus’ crucifixion was enacted upon the darkened summit of Golgotha. It should never be thought, therefore, even for a moment, that Satan was successful in thwarting the will of God upon the Cross. The Cross was in God’s plan before the beginning; Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8) The very purpose of Christ’s coming into the world was to die for the sins of the world.

God used evil men in the pursuit of their own evil designs, the pride and vanity of Israel, and even the devil himself, as well as the indifference and blindness of the Romans—all these things being made to sub-serve the Divine purpose in Christ’s death, on the cross.

Yes, Christ also crucified Christ, being the architect of His own death. This is clearly stated in Luke 9:30; but, beyond that, all of the details of His crucifixion, involving such things as:

- (1) the charge upon which He elected to receive the death penalty,
- (2) the exact time of His death, and
- (3) the place of His execution, were all specifically chosen by Jesus and ordered in keeping with His gracious will. The consent to die was Christ's alone to give; and He declared publicly, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on my own initiative, I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." (John 10:17-18)

At the very moment when the Pharisees had decided against killing Christ during the Passover, Christ announced to His disciples that He was going up to Jerusalem to die (Matthew 26:1-5), thus bringing it about that His death coincided exactly with the slaying of the paschal lambs on the preparation of the Jewish Passover.

Yes, Satan also crucified Christ. Who but the devil could have contrived the betrayal kiss, or induced a soldier to prick his own fingers gathering thorns for the brow of a man the governor had publicly declared to be innocent. Who but Satan could have inspired the atrocious ugliness, humiliation, suffering, shame, and repugnance that reached such a crescendo upon Calvary?

The Cross must have exhausted the capacity of the devil himself for the heaping up of sufferings upon a single individual; for Satan did not merely contrive, with God's permission, the death of Christ on the Cross, he embellished the torture with every conceivable refinement of sadistic cruelty and humiliation.

In Revelation 1:3, Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, which is the English equivalent of "I am the 'A' and the 'Z.'" Certainly, Satan threw the alphabet at the Master on the Cross:

“A” is for His arrest, like a criminal hunted by the law.  
“B” is for His betrayal by a friend.  
“C” is for His crucifixion and the Cross.  
“D” is for the desertion of His disciples.  
“E” is for the encirclement of His enemies.  
“F” is for His fainting and falling under the weight of the Cross.  
“G” is for the Garden of Gethsemane, scene of tears and blood.  
“H” is for the hall of Herod where they mocked Him.  
“I” is for the inscription above His head.  
“J” is for Judas.  
“K” is for the kiss.  
“L” is for the lies they swore.  
“M” is for the malefactors on the right and on the left.  
“N” is for the nails in His hands and feet.  
“O” is for the order of the governor under which He died.  
“P” is for Pontius Pilate, the priests and the Pharisees.  
“Q” is for the quaking earth that shuddered as the deed was done.  
“R” is for His rejection and the release of Barrabas.  
“S” is for the smiting of His cheek, the spitting and the shame.  
“T” is for the thorns with which they crowned Him.  
“U” is for unjust trials, six in all, unjust, unthinkable, ungodly.  
“V” is for the vituperation (bitterness) of His foes.  
“W” is for water where Pilate washed his hands.  
“X” stands for the great unknown, that Christ on Calvary was the Great Unknown.  
“Y” is for the yells of those who hated Him.  
“Z” is for the zeal of those who slew Him.

Satan perhaps hoping to the very last that he could make death so repulsive to the Son of God, so humiliating, and repugnant to Him, that Christ would simply reject it, call for the legions of angels, abort the mission of redemption, and return to God; in which event, if such a thing had happened, Satan would have thwarted the Divine purpose of human redemption.

The Jews crucified Christ; and, despite the findings of Vatican II, which is said to have absolved Israel of the blame, the Jews themselves, in the person of their highest court, and all the leaders of the people, with the concurrence of the hierarchy and the entire ruling establishment in Jerusalem itself, publicly accepted the blame for it in the cry, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." (Matthew 27:25)

Not even the alleged clearance of Vatican II can wipe that out; and besides, even Vatican II did not absolve the Jews of blame whatever but removed the unjust charge that the Jews alone were to blame. The Jews did crucify Jesus, the nation itself overwhelmingly and officially rejecting Him, and contriving His execution by a cunning combination of political pressure, suborned testimony, and mob violence.

Like Israel, the Romans were not alone guilty, but guilty just the same. Romans and Jews had the same status in Christ's crucifixion as that of two men robbing a filling station and killing the operator, both being guilty, but neither of them exclusively.

Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea. The military might of Jerusalem was firmly in his hands; and the battle flags that decorated the stage of that dark drama on Golgotha were the storied banners of the Roman legions. The official order under which Christ was put to death bore the seal and signature of the Roman government, in the person of the procurator. True, the Sanhedrin had condemned the Lord, but they were powerless to move against Him unless Pilate had allowed it. It was a Roman court of justice, no less than the highest religious tribunal of the Jews, which consented to the Lord's execution.

In a sense, the whole race of men crucified Jesus. In that all have sinned, no one is totally free of blame. The Cross marked the total breakdown of the most



respected institution of all history, Roman justice and Jewish religion alike failing the crucial test.

All men, in the collective sense, are guilty, even the disciples of Jesus, for they forsook Him and fled. The human race in its entirety crucified Jesus. It was my sins, every man's sins, which nailed Jesus to the cross.

Christ was harried to death because of pride, envy and scorn. He was betrayed, not for a million dollars, but for about, twenty dollars of silver. Such petty considerations as social position, political expediency, graft, timidity, lust and indifference—all on a rather small scale; these were the sins that crucified Him. "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Every man conscious of sin knows that he was indeed there.

"As a propitiation . . ." The Greek usage of the word translated "propitiation" applies it to the making of sacrifices to gods for the purpose of mollifying their anger or procuring their favor; but the Scriptural usage of this term is not like that of the ancients. God makes the propitiation but, at the same time, is the one propitiated. God does not need to be reconciled to men, but men need to be reconciled to God, as Paul expressed it, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Some of the meaning lies in the eternal justice that requires punishment of every sin. God's laying upon Christ "the iniquity of us all" was part of the meaning of "propitiation." William M. Greathouse, *op. cit.*, p. 92 noted that, "When we speak of Christ's sacrifice as a, "propitiation," we do so against the background teaching of this epistle that the "wrath of God; is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men." Propitiation means that God found a way to uphold the law and safeguard His justice while extending mercy to a guilty sinner who trusts in Christ. "Expiation" means that in Christ the guilty rebel is forgiven of his sin and cleansed from his demerit."

Propitiation leads directly to the heart of Paul's teaching here; which is simply this, that Christ is the sole ground of salvation. He is the basis of that mercy which outranks the law of God itself. Here too is the basis of the Scriptural teaching that salvation is free, unmerited, the gift of God. Even an obedient faith which must be manifested by all who aspire to receive God's unspeakable

gift of salvation, can never be thought of as adequate grounds of it, the true basis of it being Jesus Christ alone. Christ's perfect faith (as a man), and His perfect obedience, reduced the sum total of human righteousness ever achieved on earth; and since Christ is the God-man, it is nothing less than God's righteousness which is in Christ. Without that perfection of the Savior, there could have been no such thing as salvation for men.

“In His blood through faith . . .” “Through faith” is the efficiency of Christ's blood, or “faith in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.” Moses E. Lard, *op. cit.*, p. 119 commented, “Now the conditional efficacy of His blood seems to me to be the very point the apostle is guarding, by placing “through belief” where it stands. Christ is an atoning sacrifice through belief. Without belief He is not one. We must believe in His blood in order to be transformed by it. This is the fact which the apostle is seeking to protect.”

“To demonstrate His righteousness . . .” Here in the heart of this magnificent passage, a true definition of the kind of righteousness which constituted Paul's principal theme in Romans is delivered. It is the intrinsic righteousness of God.

At the beginning of this verse, Paul mentioned the offering of Christ; and here, in these words, the reason for God's so doing is stated. It was for the purpose of showing, or making known to all men, the righteous character of God as not merely winking at sin in those long pre-Christian ages, in the foolishness of time, God would sacrifice the Son Himself, “Whom He made to be sin on our behalf,” that He might show just what a terrible thing sin is, and to demonstrate that no sin will at last be tolerated by God. Such a view of God's eternal righteousness could never have been known until God gave His only begotten Son.

“He passed over the sins previously committed. . . .” These words have resulted in questions of what is meant.

- (1) Does it mean that the ancients were forgiven of their sins, or
- (2) Does it mean that the sins were “passed over,” in a sense ignored, without adequate explanation of the reason for God's so doing, the position here in that the latter meaning is correct.

There are learned arguments to the effect that God actually forgave the sins of ancients, but Paul's statement that under Moses' law there was "a remembrance of sins year by year" (Hebrews 10:3) disproves that thesis.

It may be well doubted that there was ever any such thing on earth as the forgiveness of sins, prior to the death of Christ; and, even if it should be allowed, as some affirm, that there was forgiveness of sins, prior to the death of Christ; and, even if it should be allowed, as some affirm, that there was forgiveness before Calvary, it would have been on the basis of what God would do on the Cross, in the same way that the forgiveness of men since Calvary is founded upon what God has already done there.

Paul's words show that God's righteousness in passing over ancient sins was grounded in His holy purpose of ultimately paying the penalty of their sins Himself in the person of Christ.

"In the forbearance of God . . ." This phrase proves what was said regarding God's "passing over" the sins of the ancients. In the fullness of time, all would be made plain; but for generations, it must have appeared to many, that God "winked at" human wickedness. (Acts 17:30)

Those long periods of God's forbearance, however, would at last be explained and understood in Christ's death on the cross. There it was perfectly plain that not one little sin would ever crawl by the eyes of the eternal God with the execution of its due penalty. And behold how terrible is the penalty of sin, as demonstrated in the death of Christ. The personal meaning for every descendant of Adam, as revealed in Christ's crucifixion, is that God would exact the penalty due every sin, unless it shall be forgiven in Jesus Christ.

"For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time . . ." This is a repetition, for emphasis of what Paul had already said.

"That He might be just . . ." means "that God might be just in the eyes of men." The death of the Son of God served notice upon all creation that the eternal justice was absolute and that all sin must suffer punishment, unless covered by the blood of Christ.

“The one who has faith in Jesus . . .” Who is the one that “has faith in Jesus”? Such a one is the person “in Christ,” who is dead to himself, walking in newness of life, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and having been baptized into God’s corporate reality, the spiritual body of Christ, and who is, therefore, possessed of a new identity, being no longer his own self, but Christ. Paul wrote, “For me to live is Christ.” (Philippians 1:20)

No person whatsoever may expect salvation upon any other foundation than his total identity with Christ. Only the faith of Christ is sufficient to save any person; and the believer’s faith, which is merely one of the conditions upon which he may become possessor of Christ’s faith, can never justify him, apart from his being in the Lord Jesus Christ, and actually having put on Christ, in the sense of clothing himself with the Lord, and having taken upon him the name of Christ.

As to when a person has such status, the Scriptures are clear. When does the believer put on Christ? “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

When does the believer take the name of Christ? “They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 19:5) “There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

When does the believer enter that “one body: (Christ) wherein is every spiritual blessing? “For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free.” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

How is it stated in the word of the Lord that men are admitted “into Christ”? “All of us who have baptized into Christ Jesus . . .” (Romans 6:3)

How do believers die to themselves and participate in the newness of life in Christ, and when do they begin to do so? “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

When the believer dies through the denial and repudiation of himself and begins to live the new life in Christ, what is such a change called, and how is it

accomplished? “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)

When is the believer sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, indicating that he is truly “in Christ?” “Having believed you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.” (Ephesians 1:13)

If the believer stops short of receiving the Holy Spirit, is he nevertheless a child of God? “However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” (Romans 8:9)

Is not the reception of the Holy Spirit achieved when men believe, and without regard to any other condition? “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

The Holy Spirit “of promise,” mentioned above, has reference to this and proves that it was promised conditionally to believers, the reception of the Spirit being contingent upon their repentance and baptism (they were already believers).

May the Holy Spirit be received apart from the new birth which makes men sons of God? ‘And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father.’ (Galatians 4:6)

The reception of the Holy Spirit is contingent also upon the recipient’s being already a son of God. The Spirit is sent not to make him a son, but because he is a son. The Holy Spirit “of promise” is received only upon fulfillment of the conditions mentioned on Pentecost, the deduction is absolutely mandatory that no person is a Son of God without repentance and baptism.

Any theory of justification by “faith only,” on the sinner’s part is refuted by the above considerations, and countless others. Of supreme significance is the fact that all such things mentioned are, namely, reception of the Holy Spirit, repentance, baptism, putting on Christ, being born again, walking in newness of life, etc., are possible only for those who are already believers. No unbeliever can be baptized, although he might get wet; no unbeliever can put on Christ.

Therefore, all of the above mentioned conditions of salvation are conditions to be fulfilled by believers and are thus conditions to in addition to faith which are anterior to justification, making it impossible to believe that justification is by “faith only.”

Men are saved by their own faith in exactly the same sense that they are saved “by baptism” (1 Peter 3:21), namely in the secondary sense of these things being prerequisite to salvation; true justification “in Christ” being not at all due to anything that the sinner might either believe or perform, but entirely founded upon Christ’s perfect faith and obedience, the true righteousness of God, in Christ.

What, then of the New Testament passages which speak of persons “saving” themselves?

“Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” (Acts 2:40) (KJV)

“Thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.” (1 Timothy 4:16) (KJV)

“Work out your own salvation.” (Philippians 3:12) (KJV)

“Arise, and be baptized and wash away your sins.” (Acts 22:16) (NASB)

All such language is accommodative and has respect to the fact that a person who does indeed perform what God has required does, in a certain limited sense, save himself, no human faith or performance being sufficient of itself to save.

**Verses 21-26** are the theme of Romans; it is the doctrine of salvation “in Christ.” The resolution of the problem of how God can make righteous is determined thus: God Himself, in the person of Christ, entered our earth life, lived the absolutely perfect life, fulfilling all the law of God, and paying the penalty of all sin through death upon the cross. Through God’s regard for the perfect righteousness of Christ, called by Paul “the faith of Christ,” a descendant of Adam, through perfect union with and identification with Christ, can receive the benefits of Christ’s righteousness (the righteousness of God) as his own, not while retaining his identity as a sinner but upon the condition of his dying to himself, clothing himself with Christ, even taking His name, and being faithful, to that new identity “in Christ.”

And what of any who might not remain “in Christ”? Jesus Himself declared, “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up, and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (John 15:6)

It is thus, not merely true that one must be “in Christ” to be saved, but he must also remain “in Christ.” “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” (Revelation 14:13)

To be “in Christ” is to be “in the church.” It is impossible to think of the body of Christ as being anything other than the church, as far as earth is concerned. The book of Ephesians makes it clear that all things in heaven and upon earth will eventually be part of things in heaven and upon earth will eventually be part of that body; but, in the present dimensions of time and place, the church is the body of Christ.

Paul himself made the blood of Christ to be the purchase price of the church. (Acts 20:28)

By any fair interpretation whatever, the “faith only” theory offers salvation without and apart from the church; and that view reduces the crucifixion and shedding of Christ’s blood to the status of a mere murder. There are difficulties in the interpretation accepted here, but these do not touch the essential heart of it, that the church is Christ’s body.

What of the claims of various institutions that they are the church, the true body of Christ? What of the prevalence of so much dead wood in every church? No man can fully answer such questions. The marred image of the church which confronts all who look for the real thing in this generation is pitiful indeed; but the deformities and aberrations are of Satan and not of Christ. The major premise stands that the church is the spiritual body of Christ and that to be in either is to be in both. Only in Christ’s spiritual body is either possible for men to be accounted righteous in God’s sight. Lewis B. Smedes, *All things Made New*, p. 230, expressed it thus, “When we ask what the body of Christ is, we must remember that it is the community committed to the ongoing service of reconciliation in the power of the cross. Within the community, faith is directed to the cross. The life of the community lives is the life styled by the

cross—the sacrificial life of loving service. The cross stands at the center of the reality of the body.”

The final necessity of finding Christ’s spiritual body in the form of an earthly community, the church, is imperative; and the responsibility for finding, to the best of his ability, devolves upon every man, who with bended knee and open Bible must seek and find the Lord.

### **Verse 27**

The glorying that Paul spoke of in this verse is the type of boasting that a man might indulge in if he had always lived an absolutely perfect life, never having committed any sin whatever, and never having violated in the slightest instance any commandment of God. Such a man, if any had ever so lived, might presume that he stood justified in God’s sight, upon the basis of his own glorious record of a spotless life.; but in the first part of this chapter, Paul proved from the Scriptures that all have sinned and have fallen short of God’s glory, and that both Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin and utterly unable to claim justification on the basis of any kind or moral, upright conduct, regardless of any relative superiority over one’s fellow creatures.

True, the Jew might have been closer to God than Gentiles; but, whether from a greater or lesser distance, both are hopelessly separated from God. In verses 21-26, Paul outlined the plan of redemption through which Jews and Gentiles alike might “in Christ” share the benefits of God’s righteousness in Christ; and why is boasting excluded by such a plan? Because it was achieved, not by men, but by Christ, being grounded upon nothing that men might either believe or do, but totally upon the achievement of Christ.

R. L. Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 82 expressed it, “In recognizing one’s self as a condemned sinner, there is cause for humility, but no grounds for boasting. And the greatest ground for humility is the knowledge that an innocent Person died to save me from my folly. Instead of being the proud possessor of a spotless character, I have to rely on “Another” to cleanse me from my own defilement; and this depending on the innocent to justify the guilty is what Paul calls the “law of faith.”



“Of works? No, but by a law of faith . . . “ Here, and in verse 28, there are two laws in view, these being:

- (1) the law of works, and
- (2) the law of faith. Paul’s purpose in bringing both laws into view was to avoid confusion of anything that he had written with the proposition that men are saved without any obedience at all.

What is the law of faith? It is defined thus in the word of God:

A law of faith. (verse 27)

The law of the Spirit of life. (8:2)

The perfect law. (James 1:25)

The royal law. (James 2:8)

The law of liberty. (James 2:12)

I will write My laws in men’s minds. (Hebrews 8:10)

The law of faith is the law of the gospel of Christ and is inclusive of all that men must do to be united with and identified with Christ, as being “in Him,” as well as all that may be necessary to remaining “in Christ”: and being found “in Him” at the last day.

The law of faith, through which sinners believe and obey the gospel, excludes all glorying on man’s part in that it requires the sinner to die to himself, mortify the members of the body, forsake his own identity, and become perfectly united in love with Jesus Christ “in Him.”

The saved therefore cannot glory, for his own works are dead, through the operation of the law of faith, and he lives “in Christ.”

It is true that the law of faith nullifies the glorying through any works at all of the sinner; and even such things as the work of faith are performed under the law of faith, necessary as those things are, cannot be the basis of any human glorying.

## Verse 28

“Works of the law . . . “ as used in the last of this verse, is a reference to the works of the Law of Moses, and is excluded, by the distinction noted in the previous verse, from any reference to the works of the law of faith. Paul wrote of the “work of faith” as follows, “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope. (1 Thessalonians 1:3)

William M. Greathouse, op. cit., p. 95 noted that, “Here (in verse 28) is the basis for the Protestant doctrine of *sola fide*, by “faith alone.” This great Protestant heresy came about from a stubborn failure to heed a number of surpassingly important considerations.

- (1) Both at the beginning (1:5) and the end (16:26) of Romans Paul hurled forth like a great banner at the entrance to a city and of his apostleship was UNTO OBEDIENCE OF FAITH AMONG ALL NATIONS, indicating that wherever Paul spoke of sinner’s faith, it was an obedient faith which was meant.
- (2) “Justification by faith” is not from sinner’s faith, but from “the faith of the Son of God,” there being nothing of the sinner, either of faith or obedience, that can justify him in the ultimate sense.
- (3) Justification “by faith,” in the secondary sense of meaning that a sinner has entered a state of justification, is “by faith” in the degree that faith is required of all who are to be saved; but “faith” in this usage is invariably a synecdoche and does not exclude other conditions of salvation. “By faith of the Son of God” is even a synecdoche, since it was not even Christ’s faith alone that wrought redemption, but His perfect faith and obedience.

Thus it can be confidently affirmed that there are no scriptural examples of “by faith” being used in any other way except as a synecdoche.

- (4) Paul never wrote anywhere at any time that men are saved “by faith alone,” or by “faith only;” and the ease with which commentators use those expressions is absolutely astounding, it seemingly never having

occurred to any of them that the word of God says no such thing. “You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. (James 2:24)

*Sola fide* is thus a clever contrivance of men, nothing but a groundless speculation, added to the word of God and contrary thereunto. Dear as this false theory appears to be to so many, it seems that the crumbling towers of Protestantism should alert some of the blind leaders of the blind to the fact that something is wrong. And what is wrong? Half the world has been taught that they are saved by faith only; and, upon a man’s acceptance of such a proposition, why should he bother with religious chore of any kind? The commentators who glorify *sola fide* should take note of the fruits of it.

R. L. Whiteside, op. cit., p. 83 wrote, “Paul is not contrasting faith and the obedience of faith, but he is contrasting justification by works of law and justification by faith. In chapter 1:5, he speaks of the “obedience of faith”—that is, obedience of which faith is the source and foundation, an obedient faith. When Paul talks about faith, he means an obedient faith. Many have stumbled through Romans without ever recognizing the fact that Paul made that plain in the very beginning of his letter. To make “works of law” refer to the obedience of faith is to enshroud ourselves in a fog of confusion from which we will not be able to emerge with any clear idea of the gospel plan of salvation.”

For one to be justified by the works of any law (except that of faith outlined above) would require that he should have kept it perfectly throughout every moment of his existence; and it is obvious that no man could so procure justification. The great good news of the gospel is that, regardless of universal human inability to acquire justification through perfect obedience of law, God has made the perfect righteousness to be available to all men “in Christ.”

### **Verses 29-30**

Israel’s long familiarity with God constitutes the ground of their reluctance to admit salvation as a Gentile prerogative, and was also the basis of their feeling that God was a tribal, or national, God to themselves alone. Paul here disposed of that bias by two statements:

- (1) Since there is only one God, he is God of both Jews and Gentiles, and
- (2) The salvation God offers to all men is offered upon the same conditions to them all, by faith,” and “through faith” being the summary of those conditions in a magnificent synecdoche.

The expressions “by faith” and “through faith” are a kind of gobbledygook, as rendered in this place. Moses E. Lard, op. cit., p. 126 wrote, “The two expressions should be translated in the same words. In speaking of them, Winer says, “Paul certainly does not have in view a difference of meaning between them.” When we translate, God will justify the Jews by belief and the Gentiles through belief, we bewilder, not enlighten.”

In these glorious thoughts of the great apostle to the Gentiles, one is overwhelmed with the grandeur, holiness, and justice of God’s great scheme of human redemption; nor can the intrusion of any human system, such as *sola fide* take away the joy of thinking these great thoughts after Him. That error should have been imported into this chapter is unfortunate; but it is such an error; that any man may see it and avoid the pitfalls of accepting it. Martin Luther, the great reformer, was the man who, more than any other, was responsible for the error; and an understanding of the circumstances by which he fell into it goes far to explain why it happened.

Moses E. Lard, Ibid., p. 123 wrote, “It was over this passage that Luther made his famous translation, “We are justified by faith only,” which daring act gave rise to that doctrine. But Luther’s act was prompted solely by his aversion to the Papal tenet of justification by works. It is without defense, either from Scripture or philology. I admire Luther’s bold opposition to the error of Rome, but deeply regret the extreme to which it led him. Not that the doctrine of justification by faith only is as dangerous as the Roman position. This I do not hold. On belief in Christ, absolutely taken, it would be difficult in my judgment to lay too great a stress . . . It is only when belief is affirmed to be the sole condition of justification that I put in my demurrer.”

There looms in these two verses a further phase of Paul’s argument that God was righteous in calling both Jews and Gentiles “through the faith.” That is, by

means of the Christian religion, with no regard whatever for any distinctions at all between Jews and Gentiles.

Paul, beginning here and continuing throughout the fourth chapter, had under discussion, not the question of how either Jew or Gentile was justified, but rather the problem of how God could be righteous in wiping out all the glorious privileges of Judaism and saving both Jews and Gentiles, without distinctions between them, in the new system of Christianity.

“Circumcision . . . and the uncircumcised . . .” Paul here shifted to another pair of words expressing the distinction, “Jews and Gentiles;” and he followed this terminology throughout chapter 4, in which these two words are found twelve times. It will be much easier for the student to follow Paul’s meaning in that chapter if the subject Paul was discussing is kept constantly in view. He was not, repeat not, explaining how either Jews or Gentiles are justified, but was still discoursing on how God was righteous in calling both groups to salvation within the framework of Christianity.

### **Verse 31**

The Law of Moses would seem to be the principal one in view, though, as explained below, the principle is not limited to that law alone. Faith cannot avoid any law. The statement, like many in the word of God, is true either in or out of its context.

### **FAITH CANNOT VOID LAW**

- (1) Faith cannot void the Law of Moses.

The ultimate scheme of redemption as set forth in Christianity is the very system foretold in the law and the prophets (1:2), witnessed by the law and the prophets (3:21), and therefore it should not be thought for a moment that the gospel and the faith therein enjoined could have the effect of voiding that great Old Testament system. Rather, that system was fulfilled by Christ and the new institution. The types and prefigurations of the old system were all fulfilled and brought to perfect fruition in the new; and what Paul said of faith establishing law applies with dramatic force to the Law of Moses.

The very justification of every believer stems from Christ's perfect fulfillment of and obedience to that law. He broke not a jot or tittle of it.

(2) Faith cannot void Physical law.

There were miraculous events that suspended physical law, as in the case of Christ's walking on the water; but such things were for the purpose of confirming His word, and must be viewed as the exceptions that prove the rule that faith cannot set aside physical law. The presumed faith of the young man who went to sleep hearing Paul preach did not suspend the law of gravity. They took him up for dead. (Acts 20:9)

(3) Faith cannot void the moral law of God.

The Nicolaitans taught that faith voided the moral law; and Jezebel taught that it was alright for believers to commit fornication. (Revelation 2:6, 20)

Such teaching was false, of course; for faith imposes even stricter standards of morality than those taught under the Law of Moses. Note what Christ said in (Matthew 5:21-22).

(4) 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.

(5) Faith cannot void the law of faith, mentioned by Paul in verse 27 above.

That verse defines the full definition of the law of faith. It requires absolutely, with no exception, that men shall be born again (John 3:5), that they shall believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, be baptized into Christ, receive the Holy Spirit of promise, and abide "in Christ" on pain of being "cast forth" unless they do. Does faith void the law of faith? Indeed no! God forbid, as Paul put it in this verse.

## **CHAPTER 4**

This chapter is a development of the thought expressed in verses 28-29 near the close of chapter 3, that is, the vindication of God's righteousness in calling Jews and Gentiles in one body, that of Christ, with no distinctions between them.

Paul followed throughout this chapter the terminology introduced in those verses, calling the Jews “the circumcision” and the Gentiles “the uncircumcision.”

In this chapter, Paul was not discussing the question of how either Jews or Gentiles are justified; and herein is the explanation of why James in his epistle is thought by some to have contradicted Paul. Their arguments touched each other but were concerned with different objectives. James was dealing with justification and Paul with the righteousness of God.

Abraham, the example Paul cited to show God’s justice in calling the Gentiles, was the possessor of Gentile status himself at the time God called him, in the sense of his having been called prior to the giving of the covenant of circumcision and prior to the giving of the law of Moses. What a beautiful argument.

In effect Abraham, the father of all Jews, was himself without those very things (the law, circumcision, etc.) which the Christians of Jewish background were attempting to bind upon Gentile converts to Christianity; that is, Abraham was without all those things when he was called. The word “when” in verse 10 is the pivot upon which the whole argument was based.

One of the tragic mistakes men have made in the interpretation of this chapter is that of making Abraham to be a type of the alien sinner’s conversion. He is no such thing, as will be shown in the notes below.

Regarding the so-called contradiction between the inspired authors, James and Paul—it simply does not exist. Paul wrote of justification “by faith,” and James justification “by works.” So what? Justification is obviously by both! It would require a statement by one of them to the effect that salvation is by one or the other “only.”

James went so far as to guard against anyone’s ever saying such a thing when he wrote: “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” (James 2:24)

## Verse 1

We construe this first verse as a simple introduction of Abraham, father of all the Jews, who was called before either the law or circumcision was given. Paul was arguing that to require Gentile converts to accept the law and circumcision would require what was not even required of Abraham.

(Note: AB means father, RAHAM means many nations.)

It was perfectly right for God to call all the Gentiles without respect to the law or circumcision, the lack of such being no impediment to their call. Paul was making it obviously ridiculous to require Gentile converts to the faith to submit to a system that was not even a prerequisite for the call of Abraham.

## Verse 2

“By works . . .” is an unfortunate rendition, because the expression seems to take sides in an old controversy, of salvation “by faith only.” Works” simply means the Law of Moses, having no other possible meaning here. James in making Abraham’s justification “by works” (James 2:21), clearly excluded the works of the Law of Moses and identified the class of works he had in mind by naming the offering up of Isaac.

Paul was here emphasizing the fact that Abraham was not justified by the Law of Moses, a truth that should have been obvious, because the law had not even been given at that time.

Despite Paul’s intention in this verse, it has been made the vehicle for some of the wildest theories ever advocated in the history of Christianity, among them being the proposition that Abraham was justified by faith alone without any works whatever. Abraham was not justified by faith alone without any works whatever. (James 2:21)

## FAITH AND WORKS

“By works . . .” in verse 2 means “by works of Moses law.” Abraham was not saved by works of a system not even then in existence. This simple meaning has been distorted by reading “works” in the sense of the stereotyped opposite of “faith only.”



Paul's suggestion here that "if" Abraham had been justified by works of the law, he would have had a ground of boasting toward men is a tribute to the majesty and accuracy of Moses's law.

One cannot fail to be astounded at the millions of words men have poured forth on these verses, alleging and affirming in the most positive and extravagant language that men are "saved by faith alone."

Faith and grace are not identical; and if one is saved by either of them "alone," the other is excluded. Such is the denotation of the word "alone." What mysterious affliction has seized the minds of so many learned men that they cannot understand the simple answers, that they are blinded to the consequences of adding to God's word such a delimitative as "only" or "alone."

The salvation from above does not come to us, we go to it. Christ said, "Come to Me," and not "Just believe, and I will bring it to you."

### **Verse 3**

This is a quotation from Genesis 15:6, introduced to show that Abraham could not possibly have been justified by the law, and even before the covenant of circumcision, Abraham appears in Scriptures as already a believer in God, in fact God's faithful servant, being already reckoned as righteous in God's sight on the basis of obedient faith.

The justification of Abraham (God's reckoning him as righteous) was upon exactly the same basis of the justification of Christians, namely obedient faith. The type of justification he received upon that basis is exactly the kind received by Christians, which is the status of having a covenant relationship with God.

"It was reckoned to him as righteousness . . ." For many years previous to God's reckoning righteousness to Abraham and entering into a covenant that in Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed, Abraham had exhibited an obedient faith in all that God said.

- (1) God called Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 12:1-3); Abram believed and obeyed, not even knowing where he was going. (Hebrews 11:8.)

- (2) When Abram reached Shechem in the land of Canaan, he built an altar and worshiped God. (Genesis 12:6-7)
- (3) Abraham built an altar unto Jehovah and called upon God's name on a mountain between Bethel and Ai. (Genesis 12:8)
- (4) After his journey to Egypt, he returned to that same altar and worshiped God. (Genesis 13:3-4)
- (5) In the encounter with Melchizedek, Abraham appears as a devout and faithful worshiper of God. (Genesis 14:14-24)

All of these events and others show that Abraham's faith was an obedient faith, which is the only kind of faith that can lead to any kind of justification.

That Abraham was already an obedient believer in God when the reckoning of righteousness to him took place is seen in the very verse cited by Paul here. (Genesis 15:16)

The justification of Abraham in Genesis has to be retrospective; and the faith which God counted to Abraham for righteousness was not faith apart from obedience, but faith demonstrated by Abram's prompt and unqualified obedience in all that God commanded, covering a period of many years prior to Genesis 15:6.

#### **Verse 4**

This verse is a simple statement of the truth that if one's hope of salvation is based upon his having kept the law of Moses perfectly, then such a person could claim that God owed him salvation; and it would not be an virtue of God's grace at all in such an event.

Some of the false deductions that men have thought they derived from this verse are:

- (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 opposites.
- (4) That obeying the gospel makes man his own Savior.

Let us note each of these.

That salvation does not depend upon any human effort. If this were true, all men would be saved; and, if human effort as a precondition of salvation is not involved, why did Jesus teach that many men will be lost? (Matthew 7:13-14)

It is a fact that no amount of human effort can earn salvation; but no person with even a causal knowledge of the Bible could possibly have the impression that salvation is unconditionally bestowed upon the entire human race. If so bestowed, it would be universal; but Christ spoke of the narrow gate and the broad way leading to the destruction of many.

That there is nothing anyone can do to be saved. If such is true, what did Peter mean by, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." (Acts 2:40) A multitude of people heard Peter preach the first sermon of the gospel age; and at the end of it, having believed all that Peter preached, and thus having believed in Christ, they cried out, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) Wouldn't it have been a wonderful opportunity for Peter to have said, "There is nothing you can do to be saved"? But he said no such thing, but this, "Repent and let each of you be baptized." (Acts 2:38)

That faith and works are opposites. On the other hand they are intimates; and James declared that faith cannot even exist apart from works, except in a barren and dead condition, insufficient to save. (James 2:14-26) Faith without works is dead, useless for anything, much less for salvation.

Upon the basis of such considerations, men ought not therefore to impute any teaching to Paul in this place that would make his words say that God will impute righteousness to any person who will not obey Him, to the persons who simply do nothing except believe.

That obeying the gospel makes man his own Savior. This confuses two truths:

- (1) That when one has done everything that he can, it does not merit salvation, and he is still an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10),
- (2) That obeying the gospel is a condition Divinely imposed and made prerequisite to salvation; all who do not fill this condition will be lost

(2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; therefore in a sense, but only in a sense, men will save themselves when they obey the gospel. (Acts 2:40)

We have already seen that Abraham's justification is in no way parallel to the alien sinners' justification. Therefore, to the degree that this verse applies in any way to Christians, the thing in view is their continuing justification as members of Christ's body—all Christians standing in continual need of forgiveness, due to the universal inability to live the perfect life. If here is any application of these words to children of God, it must pertain to their status as Christians in covenant relationship with God (as Abraham the prototype was), their "faith in Christ" being the basis of their continual justification, and not their success, or, as more likely, their failure in keeping all the holy commandments.

### Verse 5

"The one who does not work . . ." is a reference to one who rests from any thought that he could merit salvation by keeping the Law of Moses. It is not a reference to one who will not obey the gospel of Christ.

"But believes in Him who justifies the ungodly . . ." is a reference to obedient faith. "Believes" is another example of the synecdoche, in which one of a related group of actions stands for all of them. What is significant is the omission of "only" or "alone" as a qualifier.

"Does not work . . ." in this verse and verse 4 are terms Paul used to describe "keeping the law perfectly." Neither of these terms has any reference to obeying the gospel, and the primary steps of obedience such as repentance and baptism.

To understand Paul's teaching, a comparison with James, chapter 2, is necessary. 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 fail to believe, to exclude faith, or the work of faith, is to fail of justification.

Paul pointed out that Abraham was not justified by the works of the law but by faith. 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; and the teachings

of those two inspired writers harmonize perfectly, as a careful attention to what they really wrote easily shows.

“One who does not work . . .” is thus a reference to that person who knows that he is not capable of living a life of sufficient holiness to merit eternal life, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ; but who believes in Christ, obeys the gospel, his faith “in Christ” (faith manifested as a member of Christ’s body) thereupon being accounted to him as righteousness.

A great deal of the exegesis on this chapter is devoted to a single end, that of removing Christian baptism as a valid precondition of redemption in Christ. The sacred ordinances belittled and set at naught on the grounds that it is a work of human righteousness, is no way related to salvation.

Baptism is, in one sense, a work of faith, a thing commanded by the Head of our holy religion; but in another sense, it is a work of Christ Himself.

Jesus “made and baptized more disciples than John” (John 4:1); and yet the same passage reveals that it was not Jesus, but his disciples, who were physically baptizing people. The same is true today; Christ baptizes those persons who faithfully submit to the ordinance, even though the physical administration of the ordinance is accomplished by other disciples of the Lord. Thus, any notion that baptism is purely a work of human righteousness is false.

Some who would make a sinner’s baptism to be “works,” and thus exclude it as a precondition of salvation are strong to insist that faith is not “works” and the sole condition of salvation, but faith itself is a work of faith, in exactly the same sense as baptism.

Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans, p. 109 wrote, “But faith considered as an act, is as much a work as prayer, repentance, almsgiving, or anything of the kind. And it is as much an act of obedience to the law, as the performance of any other duty.”

Therefore, if obeying the gospel and being baptized should be classed as “works” in any derogatory sense, then the same thing applies to faith, Christ Himself making it a “work.” He said, “This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” (John 6:29)

Thus, of both baptism and faith, the Scriptures teach that they are “works” in the sense of being things men must do in order to be saved; and both are, in a higher sense, “the work of God,” having originated with God, therefore, absolute coordinates, a fact that made it possible for Jesus to say, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16)

Of all the preconditions of entering a covenant relationship with God, these being faith, repentance, confession, baptism (obedience to these conditions bringing the believer into Christ), baptism is less of a work than any of the others.

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, p. 82 wrote, “Baptism has fewer of the qualities of a work than either faith or repentance. Faith is an act of the heart, the soul, the inner man—something the man does. It is a work . . . So of repentance. “Believe” and “repent” are both active—both done by the subject. The person baptized gives himself up into the hands of the administrator, and is buried out of self, to be raised up in Christ, and, as a servant of God, to “walk in the light as He is in the light.” (1 John 1:7) When a man dies, and his friends take his body and bury it, no one would call it a work of the man buried. This is the true type of him who is baptized. Baptism is a work of God performed upon the man baptized through God’s servant to bring him dead in trespasses and sins into the state of life with God. The life is imported through faith, turns from sin in repentance, and puts off the body of sin in baptism.”

### **Verses 6-8**

Having already shown that Abraham was justified by an obedient faith in God, Paul next introduced David’s remarkable pronouncement with apparent emphasis on the fact that David spoke of justification as something imputed or reckoned, rather than as something earned or merited. The terms translated “iniquities,” “sins” and sin are said by R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle*, p. 296 to regard three characteristics of sin, namely, “rebellion,” “missing the mark” and “turning deliberately aside.”

Nothing in David’s statement (Psalm 32:1) suggests any basis of justification; and, therefore, the point of Paul’s bringing this Scripture forward lies in 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 salvation as the Jews. But the Jew might have replied, "Oh yes, but we are circumcised." Paul then proceeded to deal with that. It will be noted that the classical diatribe method of discourse was used by Paul throughout.

### **Verses 9-10**

Paul here dealt with the stronghold of Jewish objection to Gentle admission to Christianity, an objection not offered by unbelieving Jews, for they did not care, but by the Jews who had accepted the faith of Christ but were insisting on a continuation of the rite of circumcision, not only for themselves but also for Gentile converts. It has already been noted that the Jews attributed near-miraculous powers to that rite, their learned teachers declaring unequivocally that no circumcised person would ever be in hell. But Paul here showed that Abraham was justified a full thirteen years before the rite was given. The evident deduction intended by Paul was that since Abraham was justified so long before circumcision was ever commanded, it is not illogical to expect that the uncircumcised (Gentiles) should also partake of God's salvation in Christ. Thus, Abraham was truly the father of the faithful, Jews and Gentiles alike, circumcised or uncircumcised.

### **Verse 11**

Abraham's prior justification before either the law or circumcision is the logical reason advanced by Paul to prove that Gentiles could be admitted to the faith of Jesus Christ without regard to circumcision or Moses' law.

The blessing to "all the families of the earth" was promised in His seed, that is, "in Christ." (Galatians 3:16) But the Jew had so glorified Moses' law and the rite of circumcision that they unconsciously, but erroneously, identified both with Abraham. Paul was at great pains to explain that law and circumcision had absolutely nothing to do with the great promise of salvation to all the seed of Abraham, which the Jews had mistakenly supposed to be themselves only.

The great error of the Jews was therefore in misunderstanding the number of the noun “seed” in the great promise to Abraham; it was singular, and they thought it was plural! It pays to find out exactly what God said.

What about the Law of Moses, and its alleged connection with the promises to Abraham’s seed “in Christ.”? Paul continued, “The law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.” (Galatians 3:17)

Of what value, then, was the law; and why did God give it? Paul answered thus, “It was added because of transgressions . . . until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.” (Galatians 3:19)

Thus the Law of Moses expired by limitation when Christ came. The law was given only “till the seed should come;” and therefore, salvation, “in Christ” by-passes the Law of Moses completely.

The very identification of Abraham’s seed (in the plural sense) also by-passes the law of Moses, Abraham’s children being, not those of fleshly descent, but those redeemed “in Christ,” as Paul explained in another place. (Galatians 3:27-29)

“The Father of all who believe . . . “ shows that all of the saved are children of Abraham, both Jews and Gentiles, called here circumcision and uncircumcision.

The faith that saved Abraham, the great patriarch, was an obedient faith. Therefore, it is only by a disregard of what the word of the Lord says that one might receive such a proposition as this. Wm. M. Greathouse, *op. cit.*, p. 103 said, “All Paul had to say about circumcision he would say equally about baptism.”

There are of course, certain resemblances between baptism and circumcision; but the differences are extensive.

- (1) Circumcision did not bring the Jew into covenant relationship with Christ. A person born in the fleshly line was per se of the children of Abraham; but Christians are of the seed of Abraham only if they have been baptized.



- (2) Baptism is “for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38); but circumcision was never anything like that.
- (3) At that time Abraham was justified without circumcision, the rite did not even exist, but came thirteen years later. Therefore, Abraham’s justification without performing a rite he had never heard of, is a false parallel to a Christian’s alleged justification with baptism, a rite which he has heard of, and to which he is commanded to submit by none other than Christ Himself.

What, then, did Paul mean? James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles*, p. 73 explained it thus, “To this example, the apostle appealed with great propriety... because Abraham, being the father of believers, his justification is the pattern of theirs. Wherefore, 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; and were much to blame in pressing those rites on the Gentiles as necessary to their salvation, and in consigning all to damnation who were out of the pale of the Jewish church.”

It is absolutely clear that Paul was dealing with a perplexing problem that persisted in the apostolic age, and that was the efforts of Christians of Jewish background to graft circumcision and law-keeping onto the coattails of Christianity. It was with that problem that Paul dealt in this chapter; and justification by faith only is nowhere in it.

- (4) A fourth distinctive difference between baptisms and circumcision is in the initiative performing the rites.

Circumcision was performed upon babies of eight days in age, without either their knowledge or consent; whereas baptism is never Scripturally administered except upon one who is of accountable age, believes with all of his heart in Christ, confesses his faith, repents of his sins, and presents himself as a candidate for the administration of the ordinance of God, the initiative for his baptism thus coming from the believer himself, and not from the administrator or anyone else.

A completely new system of redemption in Christ made circumcision obsolete.

### **Verse 12**

“Who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham...” These words mean “who have an obedient faith like Abraham.” Abraham’s faith was a faith that walked after God’s commandments.

Gentiles (or others) who would participate in the promise of salvation God gave through Abraham are here identified as those who “walk” in the steps of that faith, which is a way of saying they must have an obedient faith as did Abraham.

The word “walk” is a reference to obedience and it cannot fit into the theories of salvation by faith alone.

It is admitted by all that Christians are saved by the same kind of faith Abraham had, before circumcision and the law; and a further study of the steps of Abraham’s faith will reveal that obedience was coupled with it, and that it was by obedient faith that Abraham was justified.

### **THE STEPS OF ABRAHAM’S FAITH**

Now the Lord said to Abraham, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives, And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you: And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing." (Genesis 12:1-2)

There are three things discernible in the steps of Abraham’s faith, these being:

- (1) leave something,
- (2) enter something, and
- (3) become something.

The same essential steps of faith must be followed today by those who would be saved.

- (1) Leave something. What a sorrow must have swept over Abraham’s heart as he turned his back for the last time upon the battlements of U!

How fond and tender must have been the farewells of Abraham as he kissed his loved ones goodbye forever, placed his life in the care of God, and set his face toward an unknown destination!

Abraham did not shrink from leaving all behind. He obeyed God. If he had not done so, God would have chosen another for the office of which he called Abraham.

Those who would follow the Lord are commanded to “leave all” that they have (Luke 14:33), and to subordinate the love of the father, mother, brother, sister, son, or daughter (Matthew 10:37), and to follow Christ even unto death. (Revelation 2:10)

James and John left their nets and Zebedee their father; Paul left the honor of the Sanhedrin; they “left all and followed” Christ. (Mark 10:28)

Likewise, men today must forsake the dead past, leave all their yesterdays, and follow the Lord. For men who have never left anything, who have never intended to leave anything, not even their sins, and who stubbornly remain in the world, accepting utterly the world’s value judgments, wallowing in its excesses, and being fully identified with the world—for such men to think that they have the faith of Abraham is blindness.

- (2) Enter something. God spoke to Abraham of a “land that I will show you,” and God’s plan called for him to enter that land. Did Abraham obey? “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8)

And, did Abraham actually enter that land? “And they set out for the land of Canaan, and they came to the land of Canaan.” (Genesis 12:13)

And what if Abraham had demurred, had decided that he could believe only without obeying, and returned home?

For those who will walk in the steps of Abraham's faith, there is something for every man to enter, no less than there was for Abraham. All who aspire to walk after the steps of Abraham's faith must enter into the rest which is in Christ.

"For we who have believed enter that rest." (Hebrews 4:3)

They must enter into the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Son of His love. Failure to enter the kingdom is forfeiture of eternal life. The verse cited above from Hebrews shows who may enter, "We who have believed;" and Christ Himself explained how the entering is accomplished, "Unless one is born of the water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

Entering the kingdom is equivalent to entering Christ, in whom is "every spiritual blessing" (Ephesians 1:3); and the Scriptures repeatedly affirm that one is baptized "into Christ." (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27)

But, what of him who fancies that he is walking in the steps of Abraham's faith while neglecting or refusing baptism, thus refusing to enter the kingdom? Abraham entered! Have we?

- (3) Become something. In all of God's plans for men is the heavenly intention that they shall not merely do certain things, but that they may become a blessing."

God said to Abraham, "You shall become a blessing." Likewise, the person walking in the steps of that faith of Abraham will have a lot of "becoming" to do. He is to *become the salt of the earth and the light of the world*. (Matthew 5:13-16) He is to *become heir of all things, joint-heirs with Christ*. (Romans 8:17) He is to *become a citizen of heaven*. (Philippians 3:20-21) He is to *become a messenger, bearing the good news to all men*: "Go preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16:15-16) He is to *become an example of the believers*, "in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12) Abraham became a blessing; those who walk in the steps of his faith will do likewise.

To walk in the steps of Abraham's faith is to believe in the Lord Jesus with all the heart, repent of transgressions, obey His everlasting gospel by being

baptized “into Christ’ for the remission of sins, thus entering the kingdom of light and leaving the kingdom of darkness receiving also, at last, the crown of life that fades not away. Anything less than this is not walking in the steps of Abraham’s faith.

### **Verse 13**

“The law . . . is here a reference to Moses; law. The promise . . . is the new element under consideration in this verse. Previously, in this chapter, Paul had shown that Abraham’s righteousness had been reckoned to him upon the basis of an obedient faith, prior to the giving of the law, and that even circumcision was only a seal of the righteousness that he already had; and here Paul showed that the great promise to Abraham, defined as “the promise . . . that he 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 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; 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, it refers to all of the redeemed under both the old and new covenants.

### **Verses 14-15**

This is a continuation of the reasoning of the previous verse. The worldwide inheritance promised to Abraham was destined to be fulfilled in the singular seed, Jesus Christ, as indicated in Psalm 2:7-8 and Hebrews 1:2.

R. L. Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 194 noted, “This promise of worldwide inheritance was not made to Abraham through righteousness of the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Paul had shown the Judaizing teachers that Abraham was not righteous by law, but by faith. Now he shows briefly that the promise of the Messiah was through righteousness of faith, and not through the righteousness of the law.”

“They that are of the law . . .” refers to persons who desired to be justified by keeping the Mosaic covenant, and more, wanted to bind it on the Gentiles as

well. If keeping the Law of Moses was the means of becoming heirs of God's promise, faith as a basis for it was voided. 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.

"The law brings about wrath . . ." is but another way of saying that all anyone ever got out of keeping the Law of Moses was condemnation, due to violation of it. The statement that there is no transgression where there is no law is an inverted way of saying that the only way to avoid human transgression would be through having no law at all. Of course, this does not imply that there ever was a people who had no law.

### **Verse 16**

"Be in accordance with grace . . ." The most basic thing of all, regarding the salvation which Almighty God has provided for His erring human children, is the fact of its derivation, in the last analysis, from the unmerited favor bestowed upon them by the Heavenly Father.

When he angels sinned, no salvation was provided for them; and God certainly did not owe salvation to men; and it was contrary to all precedent that any was provided. The fact that men, as such, cannot merit this generous treatment at the hands of God is absolutely axiomatic. Of course, they cannot. Therefore, what an incongruous thing it would have been though such a device as the Law of Moses, especially since that law was only a temporary device anyway, and applied to a tiny fraction of earth's population, and not even they kept it!

Therefore the promise was made to Abraham. Abraham obeyed! Abraham's obedience is not emphasized in this chapter, although stated clearly enough; but it is most certainly a part of the total picture.

The reason that Paul did not stress obedience here lies in the fact that even Abraham's obedience was not perfect, as, for example, in the matter of taking Terah with him, therefore, his obedience in any perfect sense could not have been made the ground of God's promise, but his obedience was indeed sufficient to exhibit and prove his faith.

That obedience was not excluded from the definition of Abraham's faith as the ground of his justification is implicit in two things.

(1) Paul did not say that it was Abraham's faith alone.

The commenters certainly have no trouble finding that word, their exegesis being filled with it from one end go the other, which only points up the significance of that fact that never, not even once, did Paul use such an expression as "faith only" or "faith alone."

(2) The second consideration is this: The obedient nature of Abraham's faith appears in the twelfth verse where those who shall inherit are described as those who will "walk in the steps of Abraham's faith."

"(The seed) . . . which is the law . . ." is a reference to those faithful Jews who believed God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, such as Zacharias, and countless others of the old institution, who also are part of the extended spiritual seed which includes many nations, peoples, and tongues.

### **Verse 17**

Upon the occasion of God's making the land covenant, sealed by circumcision, with Abraham, God made mention of another covenant previously made with Abraham, and used the past tense to show the previous covenant had nothing to do with the covenant of the land and circumcision about to be made.

God's use of the past tense, "Have I made you," proves that the previous covenant was distinct from the land covenant about to be made in the immediate future, and also indicated that the previous covenant (the great promise) was fulfilled by Christ the Savior of the world.

R. L. Whiteside, *Ibid.*, p. 106 wrote, "The law of Moses, which the Judaizing teachers were so zealously seeking to fasten upon Gentile Christians, has nothing to do with the promises, or covenant, to make Abraham the father of a multitude of nations.

"A father of many nations have I made you . . ." At the time God said these words to Abraham, the birth of Isaac was still far in the future, and those "many

nations” existed only as a promise of God; but God had promised them and, therefore, did not hesitate to speak of them as already born. God speaks of the future as though it were past.

### **Verse 18**

Paul in these words was showing the quality of Abraham’s faith. Abraham was old, and Sarah’s womb was dead, but he believed God, believing that, indeed, he would become the father of many nations.

Genuine faith accepts what God has said, no matter what considerations of human wisdom and experience seems to nullify it. Such is Abrahamic faith.

“So shall your descendants be . . .” (Genesis 15:5) This verse recorded God’s commandment for Abraham to number the stars, saying, “So shall your descendants be.” Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans*, p. 37 wrote, “The existence of faith in God’s promise is completely clear only where God’s promise runs counter to human expectation and calculation. Whether one really relies on God’s word is not supported by any rational basis, but where, on the contrary, it is opposed to what one must consider probable on the basis of reason.”

Abraham truly had such faith.

### **Verses 19-21**

These three verses are a restatement in depth of what Paul had already written in verse 18, and are a further elaboration of Abraham’s remarkable faith, wherein he believed God, contrary to every earthly consideration against it, and did surely receive the fulfillment of all that God had promised.

“Giving glory to God . . .” is further enlightenment upon the spiritual attitude of the great patriarch. It was a faith that staggered at absolutely nothing that God either promised or commanded.

It was an obedient faith, an obedience that went even so far as offering his son Isaac upon the altar, the very son through whom the promise of many nations had been prophesied.



Despite certain lapses, however, the faith of Abraham could never be called disobedient, or non-obedient. The so-called “faith” of people who reduce baptism and spurn membership in the church, and then claim that they are being saved according to the “faith of Abraham,” is actually without anything that even remotely resembles the faith of Abraham.

### **Verse 22**

“Therefore also . . .” gives the reason why Abraham’s faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness, the reason being that Abraham truly believed, despite all human considerations to the contrary, the reality of which was not merely assumed upon Abraham’s assertion that he believed, but which 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. Abraham’s obedience was not perfect, it was quite good enough to prove his faith. That obedience was the only ground upon which even God evaluated the faith of Abraham. (Genesis 22:11-12)

Abraham’s faith justified him at that point in time when it was proved to be genuine, and that was in the instance of offering up Isaac. God said, “Now I know;” and this is fully equivalent to saying, “Before this, I did not know!”

### **Verses 23-25**

“Who believe in Him who raised Jesus . . .” It is not mere faith on the part of Christians that Jesus Christ lived, but also that He is the sin-bearer, that He is the propitiation for sin, that in Him alone is the righteous ground for the plenary discharge of all human transgression—it is faith in Christ as “my Redeemer” that marks the genuine faith. Inherent in this is the conviction that Christ died for us while we were yet in our sins.

“And was raised for our justification . . .” The last two verses of this Chapter, bring the reader’s mind to rest upon Christ, as man’s only Savior with special emphasis upon His death and resurrection. Emil Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 39 noted, “Only in Christ Jesus does that inheritance in which Abraham believed become a reality; for only through Him, by His atoning death and victory over death and the grave, are all nations included in the history of redemption that began with

Abraham and the setting apart of Israel. And only the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which is the center of the message of Christ, makes manifest the meaning of God creating life out of death." What Abraham experienced was indeed a beginning, but yet only a beginning, of what Christ's Community experiences in the realization of the divine promise of inheritance.

Paul's mention of both the death and resurrection of Christ in these verses shows how intimately the two are joined to form the solid ground of human forgiveness and justification.

All that happened to the Jewish fathers happened unto them "for our example," (1 Corinthians 10:11); and all the shadows and prefigurations of the old covenant are now fulfilled in the new institution, which is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this great chapter, the relationship between the faith of Abraham and that of Christians was brought forward by the apostle Paul, the great design of his doing so being that he might prove that Gentiles were just as entitled to salvation as Jews, and that God's eternal, intrinsic righteousness was in no way compromised by the calling of the Gentiles.

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 were utterly different from the tests required of sinners who would become Christians, therefore, what Abraham did to prove his faith before God cannot stand in any manner as an indication of what men must do now to prove their faith in God's sight.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter Paul will truly vindicate the righteousness of God in the vigorous arguments presented in this chapter. The first eleven verses will show the righteousness of God in the use of human sorrows and heartaches as disciplines leading to ultimate glory, and not to be understood as evidences of God's indifference; and in the remaining verses, He will show that the disastrous consequences of Adam's transgression had been more than offset by a righteous act of God Himself through the giving of the Beloved for man's redemption, the

latter action of God not merely counterbalancing Adam's disastrous behavior, but transcending it to infinity.

Remember, Paul's subject matter in the entire epistle to the Romans is not any new method of salvation, but the inherent righteousness of God. The problem of how God can be righteous in allowing the tribulations and death that are the badge of all mortality, is the focus of the first paragraph, verses 1-11. The question of God's righteousness in causing death to pass upon all men as a result of the sin of only one man is the problem discussed in, verses 12-21.

### **Verse 1**

"Justified by faith . . ." has the meaning of "justified by an obedient faith." Both at the beginning and ending of Romans, Paul defined "faith" in the sense of its being "the obedience of faith." (1:5, 16:26)

"Obedience of faith" must be understood as included in Paul's salvation "by faith." The following example from Paul's writings shows how and when faith makes one a child of God. "For all you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:26-27)

Faith saves one by leading him to accept forgiveness of sins in God's appointed institution, the spiritual body of Christ; and salvation is accomplished when faith becomes obedient to the degree of causing him to be baptized into Christ, and to put on Christ.

David Lipscomb, Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, p. 92 expressed it, "To be saved through faith in Christ Jesus, to be baptized unto remission of sins, to be baptized into Christ, and put on Christ, all mean exactly the same thing."

Paul went so far as to define exactly the point in the time sequence of the believer's obedient actions when his salvation actually occurs. (Romans 6:17-18)

Thus, a man is saved "by faith" when he obeys the gospel and not before. Baptism for the remission of sins on the part of a true and penitent believer is

salvation “by faith.” If that is not true, how could Christ have said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved?” (Mark 16:16)

“We have peace with God . . . “ should read “Let us have peace with God.” The difference turns upon two very similar Greek words, *echo-men* and *echomen*, the later meaning “we have” and the other meaning “let us have.” The application of this principle will; resolve the question of “faith” vs, “faith only,”

“Peace with God . . .” means that the fierce rebellion against God is no longer within the heart; the war is over and man has submitted to his Maker; and the ensuing new status changes everything. God is angry with the wicked every day.

Paul described the Gentiles in their state of rebellion as “children of wrath.” That wrath pertains to every man who has not come into the inheritance of peace with God in Christ.

## **CHRIST AND MAN’S PEACE**

Peace is the great legacy of Christ to them that love and obey Him. This peace, is like every other spiritual blessing, is in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

“And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)

This marvelous peace is exactly the blessing which troubles man's most needs and so incessantly seeks, even if his seeking is but an unfilled subconscious longing after it. The insatiable desire for that heavenly peace is never abated until men rest in Christ. In the great invitation (Mathew 11:28-30), Jesus spoke of the rest men would find and of the rest that He would give; and both are what Paul referred to here. (5:1)

Note the various ways in which men strive vainly for that peace—a peace which God is willing and ready to give them when they turn to Him.

- (1) Men seek peace by moving to the suburbs, planting a garden, and building a hedge, only to discover that peace is not a commodity that any realtor can sell.
- (2) Some seek it by going to a psychiatrist, only to learn that no psychiatrist can convey to another the peace that he does not himself possess.

- (3) Some seek peace through the ardent advocacy of this or that social system, or by participation in campaigns for the alleviation of alleged human woes; but it would be just as reasonable to suppose that one could cure twenty causes of measles by putting them all in the same room, as it is to suppose that any scheme for better housing, for example, could cure the agony of human beings whose wretchedness is due to their sin and not to their circumstances.
- (4) Others seek peace by means of the bottle, needle, and the pillbox; but the reliance upon such pitiful devices cannot evoke some miraculous genie, as in Moslem mythology, that can pour the oil of peace upon turbulent waters of the raging storms that trouble the hearts of men. Alcohol, narcotics, and drugs produce death instead of life, hell instead of heaven, agony instead of peace.
- (5) Still others seek peace through the pursuit of the pleasures of life, only to find as sage, philosopher, and poet alike have found that peace comes not from pleasures.
- (6) And some even think to find peace by means of human achievement; but efficacy for the impartation of peace to the human soul is not found in any such device.
- (7) Yet another device has commended itself, throughout history as being a source of peace for troubled men. It is a sacerdotal arrangement, in which a human contemporary is given a special kind of dignity in which such a one is elevated to a position of alleged sanctity, and then commissioned as an agent to procure peace and grant it to his fellow mortals.

It is time that men should be reminded again that: “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for all.” (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

As for the old superstition that any man can absolve another of his sins and impart any peace worth having, it is hereby affirmed in the light of that Word

that lives forever and ever, that the Scriptures teach no such thing. “Only God can forgive sins!” (Mark 2:5)

“Through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” The way of receiving that peace is plain. The source is Jesus Christ. It may not be procured, therefore, through men.

“By faith . . .” The emphasis in this commentary on “the obedience of faith” is not intended to diminish in any manner or degree the true necessity of wholehearted, unreserved faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is still the strong man that carries the little child Reason upon His shoulders. Faith is part of the foundation of Christianity; and without faith, it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)

When oppressed, the advocates of the “faith only” position will often fall back upon the presumption that if one truly believes, he will also obey. Opposed to that presumption is this statement from the New Testament. (John 12:42=43)

The Lutheran error of supposing salvation to be by faith only, sprang from overlooking the biblically stated truth that many people did “believe on” the Lord Jesus Christ but, through love of the world, refused to follow Him. As to the thesis, then, that true faith automatically includes obedience, it is utterly disproved by the lives of millions in every age. It is interesting to note that Christ said, “If you love me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15); He did not say, “If you have faith in Me, you will keep my commandments,” the latter being categorically untrue. Precisely in this, then, is the outrage of teaching that salvation is “by faith alone.” Far from leading men to obey the gospel, that false doctrine is actually made the ground and excuse of millions for not obeying it!

## **Verse 2**

Justification was said to have been through Christ; peace with God is through Christ; and here it was declared to be Christ through whom there is access by faith into this grace. The state of grace, or favor, into which Christians have access through faith, is that of the kingdom of God. (Philippians 3:20)

“Through Whom . . .” as used by Paul has exactly the same sense of “in Christ,” and refers to the state of being united with Christ in His spiritual body.

“Introduction by faith . . . “ means entry into; and, as to just how the access of believers into the state of grace is accomplished

Moses E. Lard, Commentary on Paul’s Letter to Romans, p. 155 said, “This access would normally take place in baptism. (Commenting on Alford’s remark, Lard continued. This remark was doubtless made in view of the following: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5). To be in the kingdom is certainly to be in “this favor.”

“Obtained our introduction” or “access.” as used here, is a big word with reference to Christian privilege referring to the ability of Christians to come boldly into the very presence of God for such purposes as offering worship, prayer, thanksgiving, or praise.

Christ actually appears as a sponsor and advocate of sinful men who have been justified “in Him,” and are thus members of His spiritual body.

“Grace in which we stand . . .” James Macknight, op. cit., p. 81 noted that the mention of “grace” here shows that it is a different blessing from “peace “ mentioned in verse 1 saying, “It is the gracious new covenant which Christ procured for mankind, and which is the source of their peace.”

“In which we stand . . .” is reference to the firm and sure establishment of the Christian hope in Christ, the same being not a precarious and uncertain position at all, but one of the uttermost security and confidence.

“We exalt in hope of the glory of God . . .” is a reference to the hope of eternal life, this great hope being a consequence of the security in Christ and a fountain of that peace which blesses the heart of the Christian.

Paradise lost can be Paradise regained! It is indeed a just and benevolent God who, although allowing the snake in Eden (in service of His own wise designs), stepped into the breach with the Remedy when man sinned, and that not upon any emergency or makeshift basis, but in perfect harmony with the plans God had made before times eternal.

The basis of the glorying mentioned in this verse is the existence of something far down the corridors of the future, being the hope of the glory of God, which is

but another way of saying the second coming of Christ, when He shall appear in His glory to judge the living and the dead.

God's intrinsic glory will at last, be discovered and demonstrated to all men at the time when "the books" are opened, and when all men appear before the judgment of the throne of God. The majestic glory of the Father on high must ever be a subject of the greatest interest to Christians; and the hope of seeing God at last and of seeing our Pilot "face to face"—such things must be included in the meaning of "hope of the glory of God." The implication of Paul's words here are profound. He must certainly meant to include eternal life, ultimate union with God, and the eternal felicity of the redeemed in Christ, as composing the ground of the "rejoicing" of the faithful in Christ.

#### **Verses 3-4**

The basis of the glorying considered in the preceding verse was revealed as the ultimate glory which Christians shall share with God Himself in the final day.

W. Sanday, Elliott's Commentary on the Whole Bible, p. 223 wrote, "The Christian's glorying is not confined to the future; it embraces the present as well. It extends to what would naturally be supposed to be the very opposite of a ground for glorying—to the persecutions that we have to undergo as Christians."

What Paul wrote in these verses with what he wrote in verse 2 reveals a circle: hope-tribulation-steadfastness-approval-hope, thus showing that the attainment of the glorious final hope depends upon the soul's response to tribulations. What a sacred light this sheds upon the sorrows and disciplines of the Christian's earthly pilgrimage! All of the misfortunes, sorrows, calamities, and bitter disappointments of life are not meaningless tragedy to the Christian, but are luminous through their connection with the ultimate goals of faith in Christ.

The great utility of Christian tribulations is that it does for the child of God what combat does for the soldier, making him to be no longer a novice, but a veteran. Paul's stress of the required Christian response to tribulation is further proof that faith, in order to save, must be active and obedient.



The eternal God could prevent human suffering; but He does not do so, not through caprice or indifference to human misery, but because even the sufferings and tribulations of life are designed to contribute to the development of the child of God, leading at last to the full realization of his hope of the glory of God.

### **Verse 5**

The reason that the Christian's hope does not put to shame is because of the love of God in Christian hearts, shed abroad through the agency of the Holy Spirit which was (past tense) given to Christians upon the occasion of their being baptized into Christ. (Acts 2:38f) The true ground of that hope is not being the glorying of man through various tribulations, nor even their love of God, but rather God's great love to them, the latter being proved by Paul's description of that love in the following verses.

### **Verses 6-8**

“While we were still helpless . . . “ means while we were yet sinners, as shown by a comparison of the first and last clauses of these three verses. What a commentary on the true condition of the sinner is this, that for all of his vaunted power, established and reinforced by every worldly device of wealth, authority, and position, the sinner is “yet weak” until he shall find his true strength in Christ.

“At the right time . . .” recalls the fact that the visit of the Dayspring from on high was nothing impromptu, but was the fulfillment of God's purposes of the ages. Even before the foundation of the world, the plan of redeeming men through the death of Christ was clearly formed in God's eternal purpose.

“Christ died for the ungodly . . . “ This is credible only because it is true, for it never could have entered into the mind of man that such a thing was possible till the unspeakable event itself appeared upon Golgotha. What is meant by “the ungodly”? The answer is, evil and unrighteous men filled with every work of Satan—such were the beneficiaries of the blood of the Master. The ungodly are those who practice lawlessness, idolatry, profane swearing and impiety, disobedience of parents, murder, adultery, false witness, indifference to God,

atheism, pride, vanity, and selfishness—to mention only a few characteristics of the ungodly! For people like that Christ died!

“For one will hardly die for a righteous man . . . “ Adam Clarke, Commentary, Vol. VI. p. 68 wrote, “Such cases may be considered merely as possible: they exist, it is true, for romance; and we find a few rare instances of friends exposing themselves to death for friends.”

“God demonstrates His own love . . .” indicates that the “love of God” mentioned in verse 5 is God’s love for men, not their love of God. The contrast between “righteous man” and “good man” verse 7, according to Griffith Thomas, op. cit., p. 150 is, “To show the difference between one for whom, as upright, we have profound respect, and one who is also beneficent and elicits our love.”

“Christ died for us . . .” is the statement of the grandest truth in inspiration, it being the glory of humanity that Christ would die to save men. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, quoted by Joseph S. Excell, *The Biblical Illustrator*, p. 364 wrote, “Shout it, or whisper it. Print it in capitals, or write it in a large hand. Speak it joyfully; it is not a theme for sorrow. Speak it firmly; it is an indisputable fact. Speak it earnestly; for if there is a truth which ought to arouse all, a man’s soul, it is this. Speak it where the ungodly live; and that is at your own house. Speak it also in the haunts of debauchery. Tell it in the *gaol* (jail); and sit down at the dying bed and read it in a tender whisper, “Christ died for the ungodly!”

The purpose of these three verses is to show how firm is the basis of Christian hope, such being grounded upon the fact of Christ’s dying for men, even at a time when they were ungodly, and thus manifesting a greater love than any ever known on earth apart from this.

## **Verse 9**

The wrath and judgment of God, mentioned in earlier chapters, must be understood in the light of God’s great love for men, a love great enough to give the only begotten Son, and in such a manner providing a way of escape from the judgment of wrath against sin. Thus, Paul was still pursuing his master theme of God’s righteous character.

Griffith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 152 wrote, “It is very striking that after verse 1, all mention of faith is suddenly dropped until chapter 9:30, (6:8 does not really apply). This omission is all the more remarkable because of the prominence of faith up to this time, the verb having appeared at least five times and the substantive twenty-seven.”

This very significant fact is another indication that Paul’s major thesis is no justification by faith, as so many have supposed.

The thrust of the apostle’s words in this verse is to the effect that because Christ died for men while they were yet sinners, it follows that He will continue to bless them, now that He is no longer dead but enthroned at the right hand of all Majesty and power, and especially in view of the fact that those erstwhile enemies have renounced their rebellion against God and have become His servants. It will always be necessary that men approach God in the “obedience of faith.”

#### **Verse 10**

“Saved by His life . . .” suggests the many things revealed in the New Testament that Christ is at the present time doing on behalf of the redeemed. He daily adds to the church those who are being saved (Acts 2:47); helps those who are tempted by providing a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13); provides mercy and grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16); makes intercession for His own (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24); is expecting till all His enemies become the footstool of His feet (Hebrews 10:13); and He is, in fact, reigning over all things. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26)

#### **Verse 11**

Despite the awesome fact of God’s wrathful vengeance against sin, and the terrible judgment that awaits wicked men, the thought of God is a matter of rejoicing for Christians, because God has given them reconciliation in Christ.

In the matter of glorying, therefore, these eleven verses have come full cycle. The Christian life is a joyful life, not only because of the ultimate happiness in heaven, but because of present blessings as well; and not the least of present blessings is reconciliation through Jesus Christ. The ransomed soul is no longer

at war with its Creator, no longer terrified at the very thought of a righteous, sin-punishing God, but a member of the Father's own family.

### **Verse 12**

The righteousness of God's character needed the apostle's attention in another area, that being in respect of that incredibly awful truth that because of only one man's sin, and only a single sin at that, death had passed upon the entire race of men.

H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 144 wrote, "Nowhere does the Divine Book undertake to tell us all about everything. It undertakes to tell us truth, and to tell it from God; but it reminds us that we know in part," and that even prophecy, even the inspired message is "in part." (1 Corinthians 13:9)"

One of the most difficult questions related to the study of the Bible is situated squarely in this incredible thing that through only one person's, and that only in a single instance, death came upon every one of earth's teeming population. What a vast consequence for such a little rebellion!

The eternal righteousness of God who created and maintains such a system is in no way compromised by the way the system works. It operates according to God's wise design; and the Father's true righteousness. Paul vindicated at once, showing that, in the same manner that death came upon all through Adam, Christ, the second Adam, has brought life and salvation to all.

H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 69 wrote, "Adam, the first was federal head of the old race. Christ risen, the Second Man, and the last Adam, and all his descendants were involved in his ruin. The new creation stands eternally secure in Christ, and all who have received life from Him are sharers in the blessings procured by His cross and secured by His life at God's right hand."

"Death spread to all men, because all sinned . . ." does not mean that every person ever born commits sin in exactly the same way as Adam. The heathen, the innocent, and the incompetent suffer the penalty of death, because the entire status of earthly life was altered by Adam's transgression, and all men

partake of Adam's penalty. Even the Savior, perfectly innocent though He was, through His entry into our life incurred its penalty.

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

How truly marvelous is the absolute righteousness of God. No thoughtful person could find fault with the justice and fairness of such a Governor of Creation.

### **Verse 13**

In the pre-Mosaic period sin was not imputed; how then can it be said that “sin was in the world?” F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 212 wrote, “Even during the time that elapsed down to the giving of the law sin was in the world (as evidenced by the fact that all died); now sin is undoubtedly not reckoned in the absence of law. Nevertheless, that did not prevent sin from reigning during the interval between Adam and Moses, which proves certainly that it was imputed in some measure.”

Man was created in God's image, but it is stated of Adam that when he fathered a son, “(Adam) became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image. (Genesis 5:3) The significance of this appearing in the fact that Adam, through sin, had effaced the Divine image, which he bore previously; consequently, the contamination of the natural man was transferred through every birth ever recorded on earth. Thus it was that death that reigned from Adam to Moses and until now, except upon those who live in Christ.

Note: It is not intended here to lend assent to the doctrine of original sin. It was not Adam's guilt that was transferred, because the Savior Himself described the innocence of little children. (Matthew 18:1-10)

Enoch and Elijah did not pass through death, but were translated—these two exceptions to the universal penalty of death standing alone and isolated in the sacred text. Why here were these two exceptions is not revealed; but they have the practical effect of teaching that death would not have come to Adam and his posterity except for the fall in Eden.

## Verse 14

Both Adam and Moses are types of Christ, but here the focus is upon Adam. Adam was the great progenitor of the human race; Christ is the spiritual head and father of all that are saved. Adam brought shame and death to all mankind; Christ has made possible the salvation of all mankind. Adam's bride, Eve, was taken from his side while a great sleep was upon him. Christ's bride, the church (in a figure) was taken from the side of Christ while the sleep of death was upon our Lord, as evidenced by the blood and water that came forth from the thrust of the Roman soldier's spear. (1 John 5:6)

Satan seduced and deceived the bride of Adam; and in the long, wretched story of the historical church, it is evident that Paul's fear of the same fate for the bride of Christ, was more than justified. (2 Corinthians 11:3) It is clear, therefore, that Adam is to be considered as a type of Christ, more in the instance of contrasts than in similarities. Adam's one sin contrasts with Christ's entire life of perfect holiness. Death for all which followed Adam's disobedience contrasts with life for all which followed as the consequence of Christ's obedience.

## Verse 15

The first clause appears to mark a contrast between "a sad effect and a happy effect," or the contrast between "just recompense and free grace." In the second clause, there is plainly a contrast of numbers, that is, a contrast in quantity. An objection against the view, that a contrast of quantity is intended is lodged in the fact that death through Adam was universal; how then could Paul's "much more" be applied to the consequences of Christ's achievement?

The problem is resolved in this, that except for the success of Christ's earthly mission, the human family would long ago have terminated. Therefore, It is most fitting to grant a greater quantity to the beneficial work of Christ than to the destructive work of Adam. Every man ever born on earth since Jesus Christ owes his physical existence, as well as his spiritual hope, to the Savior; for if

Christ had failed, there would no longer have existed any righteous basis whatever for the continuation of the race of men.

### **Verse 16**

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

### **Verse 17**

Continuing the presentation of the contrasts between the two Adams, Paul here noted the contrast in the quality of the consequences deriving from the actions of each. The reign of condemnation deriving from Adam was through death; the reign of righteousness deriving from Christ was through life. Life is more than death, “much more!” Furthermore, the life in Christ reaches ultimately an eternal status.

In the next two verses, Paul would state the great conclusion which he had in mind as far back as verse 12, by which he did not state until he had laid the logical ground of it in the intervening paragraph, which although not set apart by marks of parenthesis, is, despite that, truly parenthetical.

“The gift of righteousness . . .” The Greek text says, “An act of righteousness” meaning, of course, God’s act of righteousness.

There are striking contrasts in this chapter.

- (1) There is the contrast between the two Adams;
- (2) There is the contrast between the two reigns;
  - (a) that of sin and death and
  - (b) that of grace and righteousness; and

also the multiple contrasts heralded by Paul’s five successive “much mores.” (verses 9, 10, 15, 17, and 20)

- (1) Contrasted with the fact that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, is the truth that we are “much more” saved by His life.
- (2) Contrasted with our sinful condition, we are “much more” saved by Christ in our state of reconciliation.
- (3) Contrasted with the fact that worldwide condemnation resulted from one man’s sin, and that only in a single act, “much more” did the grace of God reach out to cover all the sins of all the men who ever lived.
- (4) Contrasted with the reign of death through one (Adam), “much more” shall Christians receive abundance of grace through God’s righteous act in the one (Christ).
- (5) Contrasted with the abounding of sin because the law came in, the abounding of grace “more exceedingly.”

These five “much more’s” loom like mountain peaks and are suggestive of the great “I AM’s” of the gospel of John.

### **Verse 18**

So then as through one transgression, there resulted condemnation; through one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life to all men. This is a terse way of saying that, just as through one act of Adam all men received condemnation, just so, through God’s one righteous act (of sending Christ), came the justification of life.

Just as a single act of Adam resulted in universal death to all mankind, so God’s one righteous act of giving His only begotten Son, the second Adam, brought life to all men, physical life to all since He came, and eternal life to all who believe and obey Him.

What a righteous thing it was for God to provide a means to recover the lost inheritance of Paradise!

H. A. Ironside, *op. cit.*, p. 75 wrote, “A life is offered as a free gift to all who are involved in the consequences of Adam’s sin, which life is the eternal life manifested in the Son of God who once lay low in death under the sentence of condemnation, but arose in triumph, having abolished death, and now as Head



of a new race, imparts His own resurrection life, a life with which no charge of sin can ever be linked, to all who believe in Him.”

This is the “new creation” of which Paul frequently wrote. “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away, new things have come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) Let it be noted that the new life is specifically limited to them that are “in Christ.”

The gift of God, which is Christ with all that He means, is here said to be “unto all.” Are all therefore saved? Paul wrote Titus saying, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” (Titus 2:11-12)

The fact here and in Titus, is the availability of salvation to all men, and this has no reference to their actually possessing it.

Richard A. Batey, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, p. 75, has a wonderful exposition of how the act of Christ reversed the consequences of Adam’s act of rebellion. He wrote, “Adam desired to be like God, knowing good and evil, and disobeyed God. In the desire to be like God, Adam transgressed the limits of his creaturely existence . . . . On the other hand, Christ who did not count “equality with God a thing to be grasped” (Philippians 2:6), emptied Himself and assumed the form of man, the creature and servant.”

Pride always has been and always will be the great temptation of man. It was by pride that Satan himself fell; it is pride that goes before destruction, that leads the procession of the deadly sins, and that sets up the barriers across every pathway, whether of thought or action, that leads to life.

### **Verse 19**

This is a restatement, for emphasis, of what Paul had just written; but as Griffith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 158 noted, there is a significant addition to the thought: “One point in the comparison is still incomplete. Adam’s sin has not been contrasted with Christ’s obedience, but with the cause of that obedience. It is now shown that these effects were wrought by means of Christ’s obedience, the exact contrast of Adam’s disobedience.”

Fittingly, in view of all that Paul had written, touching upon justification through the “obedience of faith,” he brought dramatically to the foreground in this, the climax of his thoughts in the connection, the obedience of Jesus Christ. Implicit in this is the great fact that only by a perfect faith and a perfect obedience is it possible to attain justification in the sight of God; and how, then, may men have such perfect faith and obedience available to them unto justification? Only “in Christ” that is, by being dead to themselves, by forsaking utterly their old identity, and by perfect identification with Christ, being in Him,” and thus being saved by His perfect faith and obedience, and not by their own.

It is absolutely impossible to transfer righteousness from one person to another is profoundly true. It is not by transferring the righteousness of Christ into sinners that God justifies and saves the lost, but by transferring the inners into Christ! The sinner dies to himself, effaces himself utterly, dies to sin, puts off the old man, and enters Christ, thus having a new identity “in Christ,” with the consequence that the perfect faith and obedience of Christ, called Christ’s righteousness, are thereupon his, actually his; for, in a very real sense, he is Christ. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who saved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

The Lord did not see fit to enlighten men on how those dying in infancy are saved. Why? It was absolutely unnecessary. Human beings, however, are loathe to let a thing like that alone; and men have not hesitated to illuminate the void on this question with their own peculiar darkness.

It has already been noted that verse 19 is so constructed as to void its application to infants; but men have thrust that meaning into it anyway, and then have perverted it to teach, as in the epitaph, that men do not have to obey to be saved! Every falsehood has feet of clay; and the unwritten words in the epitaph are that.

If heaven’s by faith, they still cannot appear!” But appear they will. God has His own way of saving the innocent, and there is utterly no need to be concerned with it, since it has not been revealed in Scripture.

## **Verse 20**

Here is the fifth of the great series of “much more’s.” Paul used “law” here without the article; but the translators are correct in supplying that article, for it cannot be doubted the Law of Moses was Paul’s subject, not merely here, but everywhere this term is mentioned in Romans. The abounding of sin which followed the giving of the law was the subject of this word of Lyth in *Biblical Illustrator*, op. cit., p. 431 who wrote, “The wise physician often gives medicine to bring the disease from within to the surface, and make it abound, so to speak, with a view of driving away the disorder, and so enabling health to reign in the system of his patient.”

The connection here between the giving of the law and the abounding of sin cannot be construed as teaching that God’s intention was to increase sin. Robertson L. Whiteside, op. cit., p. 126 noted, “God did not give laws for the purpose of making people worse sinners, but to restrain people from wrong and guide them in the right way. There is this, however, the more things law prohibits, and the more things it requires, the more points there are where we may violate the law. In that way, law may increase the number of sins.”

There is a perversity in men that violates laws merely because they are laws. It would appear that the entrance of law caused sin to abound

- (1) by focusing attention upon things prohibited,
- (2) by actually multiplying the number of violations, and
- (3) by making men more conscious of the fact that they were violators.

## **Verse 21**

Sin is personified in this verse and represented as a heartless and cruel monarch ruling pitilessly over its victims in death, meaning that sin brings death to all that are contaminated by it.

## **Chapter 6**

Proceeding in the same line of argument, and without so much as getting his breath, Paul poured out a few paragraphs that explode completely any

interpretations of his doctrine of justification by faith, as a justification that came without submission to the ordinance of baptism.

The apostle suddenly spoke of that rite, not as something added, but as an ordinance that all Christians of that era honored, thus making it absolutely certain that justification by faith cannot mean justification without baptism. That is the fact which looms so starkly in this chapter and which gives such a phenomenal pause as they suddenly confront it.

Baptism is part of the foundation doctrine of Christianity; and thus the mention of it in chapter 6 would be misplaced if that chapter is not dealing with foundations.

In this chapter, as throughout Romans, the grand theme continually in view is the righteousness of God's character. The righteous God requires that representatives of His kingdom on earth be righteous.

The doctrine of justification by faith is Scriptural; but the perversion of this to mean justification by faith alone is to be rejected. It never seems to strike such advocates as inconsistent that the meaning of the word "alone" cannot be so restricted. If it is truly by faith "alone" that men are saved, of course, morality, being something other than faith, is also unnecessary!

J. Leslie Dunstan, Protestantism, p. 43 said, Luther, however, made "alone" to apply less extensively when he wrote, "But you ask how it can be that faith alone justifies, and affords without works so great a treasure of good things, when so many works, ceremonies, and laws, are prescribed to us in the Scriptures. I answer: "Before all things, bear in mind what I have said, that faith alone, without works justifies, sets free, and saves."

Luther's statement clarifies the fact that the "ceremonies" of the Christian faith, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, were classified by him as being among the so-called "works" that have nothing to do with salvation.

Thus, very sharply defined, appears the old conflict between the word of God and the word of man. Luther, in many respects, was one of the greatest men of the past millennium; and that he should have fallen into such an error provokes some further reflection upon it. Martin Luther well knew that such ceremonies

as baptism and the Lord's Supper were connected in the word of God with salvation, as for example when Jesus Himself said that, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved, but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:53-54)

How then could Martin Luther have rationalized his position that salvation is procured without such things? He did so by supposing that faith includes such observances. If that supposition of Luther's had been the truth, then his doctrine would have been true, and it may be presumed that the apostles would have pointed it out and used the same terminology Luther used. That such indeed was the ground of Luther's false conclusion appears in the following statement made by him. J. Leslie Dunstan, *Ibid.*, quoting Luther wrote, "On this ground, faith is the sole righteousness of a Christian man, and the fulfilling of all the commandments."

But faith is not the fulfilling of all the commandments; and there are Scriptural examples of faith that were fulfilling of none of the commandments. Thus, from John's gospel, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." (John 12:42-43)

Thus, Luther's definition of faith is untrue, being contradicted by none other than an apostle, who declared that certain Jewish rulers "believed on" the Lord Jesus Christ and were yet unsaved. The word translated "believed on" has exactly the same meaning as the word of which Martin Luther said that this "alone" procures salvation; but it did not for those rulers mentioned by John.

There is the glaring fact that the Scriptures nowhere either affirm or even imply that faith includes the keeping of the commandments. Luther, not the word of God said that.

All of God's commandments are righteousness, and that none of them may be by-passed with impunity. Sins there will be, ah yes; but repentance and prayer are the bannisters on either side of the bridge of life; and these will preserve the true Christian through the temptations of life unto eternal glory.

### **Verse 1**

The objection Paul was about to answer here was founded upon allegations based upon a perverted understanding of justification by faith. Some of Paul's hearers and readers had concluded that as long as a Christian had faith it made no difference at all what kind of life he lived, such a position arising from a misunderstanding of justification by faith, which they had understood to be "faith only," just as some still misunderstand it.

### **Verse 2**

It was pointed out by the apostle in previous portions of the letter that the basis of man's justification is that of his being "in Christ," dead to self and possessor of a new identity, that of Christ Himself, being one with Him. It was absolutely unthinkable that such a person could think of continuing the old sinful ways.

"We who died to sin . . ." Whatever does that mean? It cannot mean that temptation to sin has ceased. Neither does it refer to repentance, nor to any other subjective or inward change wrought by the gospel in Christians themselves. Three times in this chapter it is stated that Christians are dead or have died, unto sin. (verses 2, 7, 11)

A careful reading of verse 11 shows what is meant, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Christ died to pay the penalty of sin; and the person who is truly "in Christ" therefore died unto sin "in the person of Christ." This was exactly the thought expressed by Paul, thus, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died." (2 Corinthians 5:14) Christians are thus dead to sin in

exactly the same way that they are said to be dead to the law, namely, “by the body of Christ.” (verse 7:4)

David N, Steele, *op. cit.*, p.46 expressed this same conviction of what it means to be dead in sin when he wrote, “That we “died to sin” is a phrase that frequently appears in the Pauline epistles in different forms, and uniformly alludes not to an inward deliverance from sin, but to the Christian’s objective relation, or to his personal standing before God in the vicarious work of Christ; it means that we are legally dead to sin in Christ.”

That this analysis of the phrase, “dead to sin,” is correct is further corroborated by what Paul said of Christ, that “He died to sin once.” (verse 10) Christ abolished the legal penalty of sin by His death. Also, Paul said, “For he who has died, is freed from sin.” (verse 7)

David N. Steele, *Ibid*, also wrote, “The justification of the Christian is thus based on his co-dying with Christ; that is, we are said to have died when Christ died, and to have done what Christ did. The words undoubtedly mean a co-dying with Christ, in that one corporate, representative died; that is, they mean that we were one with Christ in His obedience unto death, as we were one with Adam in his disobedience.”

All of this underscores the importance and absolute necessity of being “in Christ,” that is, being baptized into Him, being made legally a part of Him, putting Him on, making His identity ours, coupled with the putting away of the old man.

The grand argument of these first two verses is that justification involves the putting away of the old man and the discontinuation of the practice of sin.

### **Verse 3**

This verse is proof that justification by faith, as possessed by those Christians to whom Paul addressed Romans, included baptism. Not a single one of them was ever justified without it; for Paul wrote, “All we who were baptized.” Paul’s focal purpose in this paragraph was to stress the fact that Christians who were dead to sin should not continue to live wickedly; but the manner of their being dead to sin necessarily brought the ordinance of baptism into his thoughts with

the consequence that many of the most positive teachings concerning that ceremony were included in this letter. In this verse, Paul explained how it is true that Christians are dead to sin, and when they became so.

Baptism being the ordinance which brings men "into Christ," as stated here and in Galatians 3:26-27, and through means of the unity with Christ thus effected, the Christian actually enters the spiritual body of Christ, thus making it true that "in Christ" he is dead to sin, since Christ died. That is the thought here expressed by "baptized into His death," making the sinner dead to sin is a mighty act; and, as Kenneth S. Wuest, Romans in the Greek New Testament p. 96 expressed it, "Paul now proceeds to show how this mighty cleavage was effected. He says that it was brought about by God's act of baptizing the believing sinner into Christ so that the person would share His death on the Cross, which identification of the believing sinner with Christ in His death, brought about the separation of that person from the sinful nature."

Note: Wuest's view of baptism as an act of God is correct, as a comparison with John 4:1-2 proves, thus making it impossible ever to classify baptism as a work of human righteousness. It is a work of God because God commanded it and because it is administered in God's name by God's servants. Nevertheless, in as much as this cannot be done except with the consent and submission of the believer, there is a sense in which baptism is an act of the believer himself.

The diligence of men to avoid the significance of baptism as a part of God's plan of redeeming men, in the sense of bringing them into a status where they may receive redemption as God's gift, is evidenced by such as the following statement by William M. Greathouse, *op. cit.*, p. 130, "Nevertheless, a doctrine of justification by grace through faith necessitates a distinction between initiation into the spiritual body of Christ and identification with the visible body through baptism."

But there is no difference! It is by the one baptism (Ephesians 4:5) that believers are baptized into the one body (1 Corinthians 12:13); into Christ (as here), into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20); into His death (as here), and into the kingdom of God (John 3:5). The false theory that one might indeed be in some mystical form of the



body of Christ and not be in the visible body of His church was explicitly untenable by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as quoted by Greathouse, op .cit., p. 138, “It is impossible to become a new man as a solitary individual . The new man means more than the individual believer. It means the Church, the Body of Christ; in fact it means Christ Himself.”

The New Testament writer Luke expressed it, “And the Lord was adding to their number (the church) day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47) Luke’s statement justifies the deduction that if one has not been added to the church, neither is he saved.

Why should men have decided that baptism has nothing to do with salvation and then have set about shouting it out of the New Testament? Why has God permitted it? Is it in order that people who do not truly love God may have some rational platform to support their rebellion? Why should not every man who believes in God and Jesus Christ accept and obey the holy teachings on this subject?

Christ Himself made the baptism of “all nations” (Matthew 28:18-20) to be the urgent and invariable mission of His church throughout ages; and no logic can support the view that Christ included a “non-essential” in the great commission. What human vanity it is to suppose that men have the right to take it out! Ten thousand angels swearing that baptism is not necessary to salvation could not make it so.

#### **Verse 4**

“We have been buried . . .” refers to immersion as the action known as baptism in the apostolic age. This single verse of the Holy Scriptures is alone sufficient to show immersion as the original Christian baptism; and no man can misunderstand it without extensive help.

Baptism in the age that knew the Lord was by immersion.

The true meaning of Paul’s phrase “dead to sin” must not be confused with being “dead in sin.” The person dead in sin is yet unsaved; the person dead to sin (through being in Christ) is saved. The Scriptures do not teach that

Christians are baptized to prove that they are dead to sin, but in order to be “in Christ,” and therefore truly dead to sin “in Him.”

“That as Christ was raised from the dead . . . “ Having shown that the baptized believer, upon his being thereby united with Christ, is then dead unto sin, Paul at once went a step further by pointing out that Christ rose from the dead to a higher type of life, and appealed to this as an analogy of the Christian’s rising from the watery grave of baptism to “walk in newness of life.”

“In newness of life . . .” is a reference, not merely to the upright morality and integrity of the Christian pilgrimage, but also to an entirely new status that pertains to him following his union with Christ in baptism. The old man has been renounced, the old identity repudiated, self has been slain; and the Christian is, in a sense, no longer his old self, but “is Christ.” (Galatians 2:20)

The newness of life is made possible by the reception of the Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13)

It is imparted after the believer’s repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38f), and as a consequence thereof. Does this newness of life mean that the possessor of it cannot sin? No. The evil nature of man, his old self, is dethroned through conversion to Christ, and the rightful sovereign of the soul, who is Christ, is enthroned instead of the old man. The will of man, however, still free, can reverse the decision.

Kenneth Wuest, *op. cit.*, p. 95 explained, “When the believer sins, the dethroned king, the evil nature mounts to the throne, with the consequent dethronement of the Lord Jesus. Such a procedure cannot go on often, nor indefinitely, for God puts a curb upon such a thing by sending suffering, chastening, and the Christian is made miserable by a guilty conscience and the indwelling Spirit who is grieved at such conduct . . . God has adjusted things in the Christian’s life that, while he remains a free moral agent capable of choosing between obeying the Divine-nature, or the evil-nature, yet preponderance of his choices are Godward . . . Hence the impossibility of the Christian’s sustaining habitually the same relationship to the evil nature which he sustained before he was saved.”

Wuest's analysis is a good explanation of why the Christian cannot continue in sin that grace may abound. To be alive spiritually in Christ Jesus is to "walk in newness of life;" and what a difference there really is. Prior to their salvation, men are without hope or promise, alienated from God, children of wrath, walking in darkness, hateful and hating one another; but in Christ, one is part of an utterly new creation. He is truly born again. Old things have passed away; behold all things are made new!

### Verse 5

This is a further allusion to Christian baptism. The overall meaning is clear. Paul was making a comparison between the death and resurrection of Christ, on the one hand, and death to sin and rising to walk in newness of life, on the part of Christians.

"In the likeness of His resurrection . . . is a reference to the wonderful new spiritual life of Christians, such being required by the argument, and not the eternal resurrection at the last day. Thus Paul was still pressing the requirement of holy living on the part of Christians; and that fitted into his comprehensive theme of God's righteousness by refuting the proposition that the holy and righteous God would tolerate a community of His alleged children on earth living lives of sin.

"For if we have become united with Him . . ." The big word here is "if." Not all shall partake of that new life, for not all will be planted in the likeness of Christ's death, that is, not all will be baptized.

God's mighty act of redemption does not consist in transferring the true righteousness of Christ to sinners, but in transferring sinners "into Christ," making them legally one with Christ; that is, causing them to be in Christ's spiritual body, and thereupon being justly entitled to claim Christ's righteousness as their very own.

The sinner actually participates in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. We die to sin through absolute denial of ourselves and renunciation of our evil nature with its pride by being baptized into Christ, that action

constituting the death of our old identity, because by that action we have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27)

It is in that legal sense of being dead to sin through the body of Christ (since we are in Him, we died with Him) that Paul was speaking earlier; but at this point He spoke more of the demise of the old man, which is death to sin in a different sense. The believer is transformed through God's creative act within Him, having been born again, the old man dying and being replaced by the new man in Christ.

Emil Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 49 wrote, "We have been baptized into the death of Jesus. That means we enter into His death in faith, not only as a death on our behalf, but as our death. He has not only died for us, but He died in our place; His death was really valid for us, and this sentence of God executed upon Him for our salvation we allow to be executed upon us. We surrender ourselves into His death; we are crucified with Him; we sacrifice our old hitherto sinful life to this death, letting the old man be buried with Christ."

If one really wishes to know why men do not wish to be baptized and why every device ever known to human intelligence has been exercised in a fruitless effort to get baptism u of God's plan, let him read Brunner's words again.

Death to sin has a double aspect in this chapter, meaning in fact two things.

- (1) It is the legal death to sin, which is the status of being dead to sin "in Christ," a legal state that one enters in the act of baptism, the baptized believer being dead to sin in the same way that he is dead go the law "by the body of Christ."
- (2) It means the crucifixion of the old man, the utter and final rejection of s self, what Jesus called "denying" one's self, renouncing the old identity, repudiating the old system of value-judgments, mortifying the members of the fleshly body, etc.

This is called the personal death to sin. The first aspect of being dead to sin is accomplished in one formal, dramatic, act of conversion to Christ; but the second aspect, the personal death to sin, cannot occur in one blinding burst of light, but is a growth process, as correctly analyzed by W. Sanday, Elliott's

Commentary, p. 227, when he wrote, “If so surely as we have grown into, become cojoined with (this) metaphor is taken from the parasitic growth of a plant, but applied to natural growth, not “planted together with” as in The American Version. The idea would correspond with the growth of a bud or graft regarded as part of the stock in which it is inserted, but without reference to the operation of budding or grafting.

Sanday’s comment upon, “If we have been planted,” shows that dying to sin is a growth process. Unlike the legal death to sin which is accomplished dramatically, this is a continuing process and, in a sense never completely accomplished on earth. The glaring error often met with regarding the believer’s death to sin is that of making it some kind of subjective change to sin wrought within the believer himself prior to becoming a Christian. Impossible! The death to sin, in the personal sense properly begins with the repentance of the believer and his denial of himself as preliminary to his baptism; but as every young Christian quickly finds out, the old man is far from death at that point!

The Holy Spirit’s employment of the growth metaphor in this sense clearly shows the truth. Successfully crucifying the old man requires a lifetime of devotion and Christian service; and it cannot ever be done at all without the believer’s first achieving a legal status of deadness to sin, though his conversion to Christ.

## **Verse 6**

Both aspects of the Christian’s death to sin are visible in this. It is a precious kind of knowledge that enables the Christian to do away with the body of sin, which is the old man, and that knowledge is the consciousness that we have already been endowed with a legal status of deadness to sin through our being “in Christ” and therefore legally crucified with Him. For a soul to have any success at all in living above sin, there must first be achieved a state of innocence, providing a fresh start. This is accomplished in conversion to Christ, wherein all past transgressions are forgiven, and the soul is endowed with the absolute and perfect righteousness of Christ through the heavenly mechanics of his having been, through his conversion, inducted into Christ, being part of

Christ, “in Him.” This is the purging “from his old sins,” as Peter called them. (2 Peter 1:9).

What an electrifying challenge! What an incentive to holy living! What a joy to the soul! What a burst of heavenly sunlight in the soul that is instantly endowed with absolute perfection “in Christ!”

Before leaving these verses where the dual aspect of the believer's death to sin is in view, there needs to be cited a solid Scriptural proof that the personal aspect of our death to sin is a growth process going on long after the believer has become a child of God.

Paul wrote the Colossian church, composed of baptized believing Christians and said, “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immortality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also walked, when you were living in them . . . Put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.” (Colossian 3:5-8)

Thus the personal aspect of death to sin presents a constant challenge; but thank God it is indeed possible of achievement through the Christian's righteous legal status in the Lord.

### **Verse 7**

Something new is added here. Justification, far from being accomplished by faith only, is also dependent upon the believer's death to sin, in the sense of being “in Christ.”

“For He who has died . . . “ This is another way of saying, “He that believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins is justified.” No others need apply!

### **Verse 8**

How enlightening is the fact that after all Paul had written of faith in preceding chapters, when it comes down to speaking of the Christian's justification and his hope of living eternally with Christ above, it is not faith which is mentioned , but dying with Christ. This does not imply that faith is not

required, but shows that faith consummated by baptism into the death of Christ is the determinate.

Paul's tremendous "if" is hurled into the consideration of man's salvation, thus stressing the conditional nature of human redemption, one of the conditions being stressed in this verse of dying with Christ, in the sense of being baptized "into Christ."

"We shall also live with him . . . is a pledge reaching into the eternal world.

### **Verse 9**

Christ's resurrection was not like that of Lazarus, or the daughter of Jairus; because Christ died no more, the power of death having been completely broken by Him. In consequence of this astounding victory, Paul hailed Jesus Christ as, "The King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God . . ." (1 Timothy 1:17)

One who does not believe that Christ lives forever and "dies no more" does not believe that Christ at all. Paul certainly believed in Christ as a supernatural being, identified with the one true and only God Almighty.

Only a supernatural being could be able to procure and deliver mortals any salvation worth having. The predicament of humanity resulting from the fiasco in Eden is of such a pitiful and disastrous nature that only God could provide the remedy, and even God, only to such an awful cost to Himself in the giving of His only begotten Son.

### **Verse 10**

Christ's death unto sin was to pay the penalty due to sin, and the uniqueness of that event is expressed in the word "once," or "once for all," as it reads in the Greek. The Greek word is *hapax*.

The finality of Christ's sacrifice for sin precludes any such thing as the daily sacrifice of the mass, or, for that matter, any kind of an offering whatever that might be proffered by men. The true sacrifice for sin is Christ, who offered Himself and that only once, the same being once for all and forever.

"He lives to God . . ." stresses the unity of Christ with the Father. Christ is called "God" no less than ten times in the Greek New Testament.

## **Verse 11**

This is one of the boldest and most daring statements imaginable. Paul had already explained that by reason of the Christian's being in the spiritual body "in Christ," he was thereby a participant in God's righteousness, was legally dead to sin having died "in Christ" when he died, and as a consequence of such a heavenly arrangement was possessed of a status of absolute innocence and justification.

Christians are not merely dead to sin in Him, but are upon the throne of God in Him, as well! Being "alive unto God" in this verse answers to Christ's "being alive unto God" in the preceding verse. What an exalted view of the Christian's Christ-identified life! It staggers the imagination itself.

It's vastness as an inheritance, is a legacy of such extravagant dimensions and a treasure of surpassing value. No human description is capable of portraying the tiniest fraction of its true worth and glory. But all of that weight of glorious inheritance shall ultimately belong to the Christian only if Christ continues to reign in his heart and his identity with Christ is not effaced though sin.

## **Verse 12**

The Christian has a king; that king is Christ who reigns in his heart. Satan desires to dethrone Him and put the monster of sin back in control of life's inner citadel; for, make no mistake, sin indulged makes sin the king instead of Christ.

## **Verse 13**

The encroaching power of sin must be continually thwarted; not only must sin be kept from seizing the inner monitor of life with the consequent dethronement of the true Master; but Christians themselves, through a firm and decisive assertion of the will must, through the power of the indwelling Spirit, take charge of the body particularly, commanding its members in such a manner as to preempt their services to God and to deny it to evil.

This view of the Christian's relationship to his body is instructive. The inner person has authority over the body and the mind. Although it is the body in focus here, the mind is also an "instrument" no less than members of the body;



and all such instruments are used at the direction and according to the will of the true person, which, in the Christian, is the seat of the inner reign of Christ in human hearts.

R. L. Whiteside, p. cit., p. 137 wrote, “All sins come from the heart, or spirit, of man; and it is absurd in the extreme for anyone to claim, as some do, that the body of a regenerated man may sin, but his spirit remains pure and sinless. Certainly the body, being merely an instrument, is not responsible for the sin; and if the spirit of the regenerate is not responsible for the sin, it would seem that a regenerate man is not in any sense responsible of any wrong that he does!”

That there is indeed an inner seat of control in man, the essence of the person itself, and having authority over both mind and body, is seen in the following, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” (Proverbs 16:32)

This shows that there is an essence of the human person that has rule over the spirit; and from this it is certain that the same essence has final authority over the whole man, both in mind and body. In human creation, that essence has the shape of a throne and is so arranged that the person himself cannot sit upon it but must merely submit to the government enthroned there, there being only two candidates for that seat of control, Satan and the Lord Jesus Christ, or, as Paul has said here, Christ and sin. The great endowment of the person itself is in the ability to choose the occupant of that throne.

#### **Verse 14**

This verse brings into view the ability of the Christian to survive inevitable lapses of a sinful nature. Justified, absolutely, through identity with Christ and being in fact “in Him,” the Christian's sins are truly banished forever. And what about the inadvertent slip, the occasional misstep, the conduct of one not truly himself? Even that cannot give sin its old place on the throne; “For you are not under law, but under grace.” The forgiveness available to the child of God, “in Christ,” is a constant.

“But if we walk in the light and He is in the light, as He Himself is in the light we have fellowship with one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. “ (1 John 1:7)

“Cleanses” is present tense, and it means that the Christian is being forgiven and justified every moment of His life! Thanks be to God, that we are under grace instead of Law!

Triumph over sin is simply not something which the Christian, alone, can achieve; and this verse shouts the true basis of his triumph. The Christian might lose specific battles to sin, but the war has already been won, not by the Christian but by the Lord. Gone forever are the old hopelessness and helplessness that dogged the steps of them that were under the law; now, for all who will accept it, grace has been provided.

The remedy for all the sins ever committed or that ever could be committed has already been given. The Holy Spirit has promised and will be received by them that obey the gospel. (Acts 2:38ff) The Savior Himself is interceding at God’s right hand for the Christian; and the community of the Lord’s children on earth, “called the church, are daily praying for and exhorting one another.” What a glorious status to have, that of being under grace instead of under law!

The statement that Christians are not under law was one that Paul dared not leave dangling, but immediately gave it his full attention.

### **Verse 15**

Sinning, persisted in, dethrones the Christ from the heart, and, far from being an encouragement to sin, grace is the most effective ground ever revealed for the discouragement of it.

Kenneth S. Wuest, *op. cit.*, p. 109 wrote, “What then? Shall we sin occasionally, because we are not under law but under grace? “Away with that thought!” W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, p. 175 spelled out the contrast between this and verse 1 saying, “The wording of the question is seen to differ. “Shall we continue in sin?” (Verse 1)—“Shall we sin?” (Verse 15) . The former state deals with a permanent state, and the latter with an isolated act. The apostle had already shown that the justified believer would

not be able to continue the life of sin . . . He has now to show that he will not even commit a single act of sin.”

In the last analysis, God’s children are those who act righteously, and the sons of the evil one are those who act unrighteous. Thus, the conduct of men is the final criterion and determination of what they are and where they will spend eternity.

Whomever men obey, whether Christ or Satan, that one whom they obey is their God. Oh, but we are justified by faith! Indeed yes; but as Dyke quoted J. Exell, *op. cit.*, p. 445, “If free justification turns out on trial not to save a man from his sins, but to encourage him in it, then it turns out to be a cheat, like all other gospels or recipes for working deliverance which men have ever concocted or experimented with before Christ and after Him.”

David Steele, *op. cit.*, p. 50 wrote, “Every man belongs to the master whom he willingly serves, whether sin or righteousness. If we are “obedient slaves” to sin, we are not saved; but if we yield ourselves “obedient slaves” to righteousness, we prove ourselves to be true believers, and therefore truly saved. If a man can live at peace with sin, he has no peace with God. He is not justified. If a man voluntarily sins, on the pretext that he is not under law but grace, it is proof that the grace of God is not in him.”

## **Verse 16**

Faith is not the only thing required for salvation. Paul’s extensive writings, regarding salvation by faith may in no sense, therefore be construed as diminishing or omitting the requirement of obedience in all who hope to be redeemed. Paul’s gospel is emphatically that of “the obedience of faith” (1:5); 16:26), and not, as foolishly thought by some, salvation by “faith alone” but men are tenacious where their theories are concerned, and thus it remains to soften the impact of a sentence like this, Oh, that is not talking about justification at all, but about sanctification—so the quibble runs; but, so what? Sanctification itself, which is personal holiness, is categorically stated in tones of thunder in the word of God, to be, itself, a quality in the believer’s life, “without which no man shall see the Lord!” (Hebrews 12:14) Thus, as regards the practical question of whether a man is saved or lost, justification and sanctification may indeed be

separated in theory and distinguished by this or that shade of meaning; but all such discriminations are distinctions without any difference. The man who is not sanctified to the extent of obeying God rather than Satan has not been justified, either making it an obvious fact that he was never saved without either.

Sin is obedience of the evil one, as contrasted with righteousness, which is obedience to Christ. It is true of all men, even saved, regenerated, Christian men, that it, through exercise of free will, they shall elect to serve the devil, they inevitably become in such transgressions de facto servants of Satan.

This cannot mean, however, that the indulgence of sin has lost any of its dangerous consequences for humanity; because with every sin, with every temptation yielded to, and in every transgression, the spiritual life of the child of God is weakened and eroded, with the ever-lasting possibility that, through dalliance with sin, the Christian may become “entangled therein and overcome.” (2 Peter 2:20)

### **Verses 17-18**

Moses E. Lard, Commentary on Paul’s Letter to Romans, p. 213 wrote, “Paul did not mean, “Thank God you were servants of sin,” but, “Thanks to God that although you were slaves of sin, etc.” What Paul did not say in this verse is also significant in another instance. He did not say, “Thank God that . . . you believed,” but, “Thank God that . . . you became obedient,” proving that whatever was said of either faith or obedience was never intended to exclude the other. Certainly, obedience mentioned here cannot be thought of as excluding faith; why then should faith ever be thought of as excluding obedience?

Two expressions in these verses are of particular interest: “from the heart” and “that form of teaching.” We shall notice each.

“From the heart . . . “ is a reminder that all obedience and submission of God’s will must flow out of a believing and loving heart, truly polarized with reference to the Creator, and which, without any reservation and in utter willingness, responds to the will of God. Philip the evangelist who expounded the terms of the Christian gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, responded to the

eunuch's question thus: "If you believe with all your heart you may." (Acts 8:37, margin).

The confession of faith in Christ and the believer's immediate baptism into Christ were clearly connected in Paul's mind, such being evident in this verse; and it may be assumed that this prompted his injection of the words "from the heart" into this passage.

"That form of teaching . . ." which Christians are said to have obeyed and which delivered them into a state of freedom from sin can be nothing if not a reference to baptism mentioned by Paul only a moment before. The great features of the Christians gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4); and Paul had already shown in his chapter that by the means of believer's baptism into Christ, they are therefore dead with Him, buried with Him, and risen with Him. This, together with the overtones of the confession in this verse, makes it a certainty that Paul here had reference to baptism. Let it be considered that the only way in which the gospel (death, burial, and resurrection of Christ) can be obeyed is through obedience to some distinctive form of it, or pattern of it. "Go preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved". (Mark 16:15-16) If baptism is not used in this passage as synonymous, in a sense, with gospel, how could Christ have commanded the gospel to be preached and something else to be obeyed? Thus, baptism indeed is a form of the gospel, and precisely "that form of teaching" Paul spoke of here.

"Having been freed from sin . . ." Obedience to the "form of teaching" delivers the believer out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, and that in this action (baptism) he is freed from the bondage of sin and becomes a bondservant of Christ. Some versions have omitted "them" and have somewhat softened the impact of Paul's teaching in this verse; but the idea remains in the text anyway.

Justification of the believer in Christ therefore takes place then, when he obeys from the heart that form of teaching, that is, when he is baptized.

Thus, apostolic authority has truly enlightened man as to the moment when his faith saves him, that being the exact time when his faith leads him to be baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins.

“Being made free from sin, as used here, is a vast and comprehensive thing, and the application of it to personal holiness would make a claim for baptism that cannot be true, personal holiness not being something that is delivered in consequence of baptism; but the formal justification of the sinner as then having a new identity “in Christ” and being fully and irrevocably justified with reference to all past sin—all that is accomplished in baptism. It is in the act of baptism that the believer changes masters, kingdoms, and destinies.

Adam Clarke, Commentary, Vol. VI, p.79 noted that, “The Greek expression for “being made free from sin” is a term that refers to the manumission (setting free) of a slave.”

The ancient ceremony of manumission was one in which the slave’s chains were actually cut by a smith, the anvil and chisel actually being brought into the church where such ceremonies were often held; and it was the slave’s legal status which was thereby changed, and not his personal natural. In the light of this, Paul’s use of such a word is impossible of application to the personal nature of Christians as affected in their sanctification. As noted above to construe baptism as an ordinance related to sanctification rather than justification, is to endow the ordinance with something not in it.

As a conditional act required for the legal and formal justification of a believer, it is God’s appointed command; but as a deliverer of holiness in the form of a changed nature, it will disappoint all who rely upon it for any such thing. Even “the newness of life” that follows baptism, and cannot begin without it, is not a result of baptism but of the believer’s new status and the indwelling of God’s Spirit in his heart.

It is not the nature of the believer which is changed in baptism, but the all-important status.

### **Verse 19**

Paul continued in these words to plead for personal righteousness on the part of every person who had named the name of Christ, the last clause of this passage being a commandment for the disciple to move toward that personal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14) This personal holiness is what is usually meant by sanctification. It was the legal justification of the believer which took place upon his baptism into Christ.

Just as it was unthinkable that a free slave would keep on working for his old master, so it is unthinkable that a Christian would go on serving Satan after being delivered from the bondage of sin through his faith and obedience to the gospel.

“Servant . . . “ used in this chapter, means “bondservant” or “slave.” It should never be forgotten that Christians are indeed slaves of Christ in the absolute sense of the word. They were purchased by Him when they were sold unto death under sin; He redeemed them, and they owe Him absolute and total obedience. They may not hesitate at anything Christ commands.

### **Verse 20**

The servant of one master is not expected to obey the commands of another. Whereas the disciples were formerly slaves of sin, and were at that time regarded as free of performing any righteous duty; just so, now the disciple is a slave of a new master, Christ; and it would be an incongruous thing, wholly abhorrent and repugnant to a sense of what is right and proper, for the Christians to serve the old master through committal of sin.

### **Verse 21**

Here is another inducement for the disciples to proceed in the development of holy lives (a growing process). Think of sin objectively, what good is it anyway? What fruit comes of impiety and licentiousness, except death? The so-called pleasures of sin; what are they except the fever of passion-torn souls?

The prior behavior of the Christians while still in sin was such as they were ashamed of, and this testimony enough to the fact that becoming Christians involves a reversal of the life-style. It is this dramatic fact that has been edited

out of current editions of Christianity. In addition to the essential worthlessness, shame, and lack of gain in sinful living, there is the final and overwhelming consideration of “death,” God’s sentence against sin. Thus Paul continued his plea for Christians to live like Christians are supposed to live.

### **Verse 22**

“Now having been freed from sin . . . “ refers to the justification of the believers which was accomplished by God upon the condition of their believing and being baptized into Christ; but there is also another sense in which the Christian must be “free from sin,” namely in this, that he shall also be free from the practice and pursuit of sin, which is “sanctification” as Paul defined it here. And how does that come about? “Your fruit . . .” meaning the holy and righteous deeds of Christians is unto sanctification, meaning that it ends in sanctification, or produces sanctification, the true end, of course, as Paul stated, being “eternal life.”

The view of Christian baptism that would dissociate it from justification and connect it with sanctification does violence to the whole corpus of the word of God. The ordinance of baptism has nothing to do with sanctification, because no ceremony, however sincerely complied with, can change human nature. Millions of baptized believers will testify that holiness in their lives was no automatic result of their submission to this holy commandment. How then does baptism save? Only in this, that it is a Divinely imposed condition of the primary justification involved in the sinner’s transfer out of Satan’s dominion into that of Christ.

Therefore, baptism connects with sanctification only in the fact that without it, justification does not exist, and sanctification cannot even begin. The preposterous notion that justification is accomplished through faith alone, and that baptism has something to do with sanctification, is unsupported either in the sacred text or in the experience of believers.

But isn’t baptism the new birth? Yes, of course, in the sense of its being necessary thereunto, and an integral part of it, being specifically that “water” of which men must be born (John 3:5); but the new birth is not of water only, but



of the “Spirit“ as well. These dual elements in the new birth relate justification and sanctification as follows:

- (1) The water of the new birth (baptism) is the condition upon which justification is dependent; and the Spirit (the Holy Spirit of promise) is the instrument of God in the believer’s heart which leads to his sanctification.

The fruit of the Spirit is given in Galatians 5:2, 23, and such fruit of the Spirit constitutes sanctification, being in fact exactly the same “fruit” Paul mentioned in this verse. The differentiation being made here is that the baptismal element of the new birth is retrospective, looking to the washing away of past sins (and having nothing whatever to do with producing holiness in the nature of the Christian afterward), and that the Holy Spirit element in the new birth is prospective, looking to the fruits of sanctification unto eternal life, as here.

- (2) This is not to say that there are two new births, there being only one, but to note that it was not being born “of the water” alone that Jesus made prerequisite to entering His kingdom, but also being born “of the Spirit.”

The two elements are so closely joined that it is proper to speak of both as constituting the new birth, the reception of the Holy Spirit in Christians’ hearts being itself conditional upon their baptism. (Ephesians 1:13) But, when baptism as an isolated element of the new birth is considered, the retrospective nature of it must always be understood. On the other hand, when baptism is mentioned as a synecdoche standing for the new birth, it also has a prospective function in that it leads to the impartation of the Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13)

### **Verse 23**

“The wages of sin . . .” Paul did not say the wages of great sins, or of some sins, but the wages of “sin” is death. Such unsatisfactory wages of sin, it seems, should make sin a very unprofitable employer, and long ago have resulted in the cessation of all sin, but not so. True, if the full account of sin’s wages should be posted and paid at the end of every day, there would doubtless be far less sinning. It is the “buy now, pay later” aspect of the penalty of sin which

commands it as an attractive employment for many, but this verse is a warning that payment is certain, and that “death” is the *quid pro quo* of sin. “This for that!”

Such a word as “wages” also carries the information that the sinner will work for what he gets, that he therefore deserves it, and that the “wage” finally paid are exactly what he undertook to receive by his indulgence of sin. This conception of sin as the sale of one’s self is found also in the Old Testament, where is recorded the charge of Elijah against Ahab. “You have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord.” (1 Kings 21:20)

Thus every man who consents to the practice of sin is selling himself not for anything valuable or beautiful, but for the rottenness of death.

“Death . . . “ used here means far more than physical death, though it includes that also. Spiritual death is part of the wages of sin, but even that is not the final payment. Beyond the present sphere of time, there looms the mystery of the “second death.” described in Scripture with words so dark and dreadful that the mind draws back from contemplating them. Mortal man is not capable of knowing fully what the ultimate fate of the wicked will be; but every man should heed the warnings of it revealed by the Holy Spirit.

“The free gift of God . . .” comes from the translation of a word *charisma*, which indicates the type of gift in which there can be no thought of the merit of the recipient. Thus, it is no merely the gift, but the free gift of God. If God had imposed a million conditions of salvation, and if man fully complied with them all, his obedience could not place God in the position of a debtor regarding the free gift of that salvation. Still, this glorious truth should never be confused with the error that salvation is unconditional, for it is not. “Free” indeed it is; “unconditional” indeed it is not. How is that true? Jesus explained thus, “When you do all the things which are commanded you, say, “We are unworthy slaves, we have done only that which we ought to have done.” (Luke 17:10)

James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles*, p. 88 saw in the use of the expression “free gift” a reference to such a thing as; “A donative; because being freely bestowed, it may be compared to the donatives the Roman generals, of their own good will, bestowed on their soldiers, as a mark of their favor.” This view of

Macknight's is especially appropriate in the fact that such donatives were indeed "free gifts," but in no wise unconditional, the generals not bestowing such favors upon any except "their soldiers." Thus, although the soldier did not earn the donative, he qualified as a recipient through his faithful service as a soldier of the general giving the gift.

"Eternal life . . ." is so magnificent a conception of so wonderful and comprehensive a gift as to be in its ultimate glorious essence something that lies beyond the perimeter of finite understanding. So unspeakably beyond all powers designs for his beloved human children. Eternal life will have the quality of possessing all that is best and joyous in the present life, with none of the impediments, and will be the ultimate reality of which the present life is only a type or shadow.

"In Christ Jesus our Lord . . ." To miss the significance of these words is to miss everything Paul was teaching. At the end of each chapter (5 through 8), Paul returned to this expression, suggesting the recurrence of the mighty theme of a symphony, the intention of the apostle plainly being that of preventing the Christian's forgetfulness, either of the source of such blessings, or the personal status of the believer "in Christ" which alone makes Him eligible to receive them

"In Christ" the Christian is dead to sin, alive unto God, justified, redeemed servant of righteousness, and has the hope of eternal life. The apostle John said, "And the witness is this that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (1 John 5:11)

The following exegesis of Moses E. Lard, *op. cit.*, p. 197 reads, "It is proper here to add that immersion is not the only means of transition into Him. We believe into Christ, as well as we are immersed into Him, and the former just as certainly as the latter. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life." (John 3:36) To be immersed and to believe are similar verb forms, with identical significations. Neither excludes the other, and both are alike essential to the end. We do not pass into Christ by immersion alone, nor by belief alone. We pass into Him by the two jointly, and by neither separately."

Thus, there should be no marvel, that Jesus declared that, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16)

Faith and baptism are both prerequisite to justification, or being “in Christ,” which is the equivalent of it.

## Chapter 7

This chapter relates closely to what Paul had already written, especially with reference to the Law of Moses; and the problem to which he addressed these words was that of the inordinate attachment of many Jewish Christians to the law, and their determination to bind certain provisions of it upon Gentile converts to Christ. This great problem, perhaps the greatest problem of all that confronted that age of the church, was of overriding consequence anywhere it surfaced; and Paul was certain that it would surface in Rome. The great apostle, more than any other, was responsible for divorcing Christianity from Judaism.

Three times Paul had already indicated the severance of Christian faith from its Judaistic parent.

- (1) In 3:20-24, he had elaborated the truth that no flesh can be justified by the law, that the law and the prophets themselves had foretold the new faith, and that God’s grace had provided free and full redemption “in Jesus Christ.”
- (2) In 5:20-21, he had shown the temporary nature of the law, given primarily to expose sin, making it “abound,” and that it was not true life at all but the means through which sin reigned in death.”
- (3) In 6:14, Paul flatly declared that Christians were not under law at all, but under grace (a synecdoche for the entirely new system of Christianity.)

These three considerations of the relationship between the Law of Moses and Christianity make up the subject of the entire seventh chapter.

Paul took them one by one and in the reverse order, proving the first (verse 1-5) that Christians are not bound in any sense whatever to the Law of Moses, next showing how the law made sin abound (verse 6-13), and then demonstrating why no flesh could be justified by the law (verse 14-25).

### Verse 1-3

These three verses have a bearing upon the Christian doctrine of marriage. Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 220 said, “The doctrine concerning marriage, which is here incidentally taught, or rather which is assumed as known by Christians and Jews is that the marriage contract can only be dissolved by death. The only exception to this rule is given by Christ (Matthew 5:32) unless indeed Paul (1 Corinthians 7:15) recognizes willful and final desertion as a sufficient ground of divorce.”

Regarding divorce, the holy scriptures teach that marriage is dissolved:

- (1) by death,
- (2) by adultery, and
- (3) by desertion, the latter not being strictly considered as another ground, beyond that given by Christ, but rather as prima facie evidence of the existence of ground—(2) that of adultery.

Bearing in mind Paul’s purpose in this paragraph of showing that Christians are no longer under Moses’ law, the thrust of his words is simple and dramatic. In the Old Testament, God represented Himself as being a husband to Israel and the relationship between them and God as a marriage contract (Jeremiah 31:32; Ezekiel 23). That marriage contract is no longer in force, for God died to Israel in the person of His Son upon Calvary!

That really nullified the relationship between God and Israel. Thus God is represented as a husband whose death has broken the ties that bound Him to the wife Israel, not merely leaving Israel free to be united to another (Christ), but also leaving the old ties (the Law of Moses, (etc.) without any meaning or validity all!

Israel’s wanton rebellion against God had come at last to full fruit when Christ Himself was slain by them; and therefore, as far as the whole system of Judaism is concerned, it has exactly the same status as a marriage contract after the husband’s funeral.

Christ as God risen from the dead is married to another, the new bride being His church (Ephesians 5:22-23; what a preposterous thing it would be to suppose that the new wife should abide by the terms of the marriage contract of the old wife.

It was the annulment of God's marriage contract with Israel through the death of Christ that abrogated and terminated that entire system, finally and irrevocably.

The death of Christ (God come in the flesh) meant that all things whatsoever that pertained to God's relationship, with Israel (viewed Scripturally as a marriage contract), including the Law of Moses, circumcision, the sacrifices, and the whole theocratic system perished on the cross of Jesus and was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea; and don't forget to include the Sabbath day in all that.

God was free of all prior obligations resulting from the covenants with Israel, free to be married to another; but this meant that Israel was also free of any further obligation or benefit in the law.

#### **Verse 4**

In the relationship of the new institution, or church, to God, it was utterly incongruous to suppose that any of that old system pertained to the new relationship, in view of the total rejection of Christ by the old institution. Christians, whether of Jewish or Gentile descent, had nothing, either of benefit or blessing, in the old system. For Jewish Christians, Christ died to annul their old contract with God; thus they were free to be united with Christ as a portion of His bride the church, this being the import of the words, (that you should be joined to another."

Under the law, Christ Himself was made a curse (Deuteronomy 21:23); and the epic fact of Jesus' suffering "without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12) symbolized the total dissociation of Jesus Christ together with all spiritual blessings in Him from everything connected with the law of Moses. How utterly unthinkable it was that true believers in Christ should have any regard for a system that crucified Him, making Him a curse, and casting Him without the camp and beyond the

pale! The most astounding failure of the Law of Moses was seen in that very thing, that at last it cast forth upon what amounted to the city dump, the holy Christ Himself, thus finalizing and sealing forever the utmost incompatibility between the Law and Jesus Christ.

“To be in Christ” is to be absolutely beyond and apart from the law and everything in it. Christians, all of them, Jewish and Gentile, are recipients of unbounded freedom in Christ who rose from the dead, to bring forth fruits of righteousness in Him.

### **Verse 5**

In the flesh . . . “ refers to the nature of the Mosaic covenant, primarily one of flesh. It was the connection of the chosen people with the flesh of Abraham, and the rite of circumcision, which was a mark in the flesh, that Paul had in view. It should be noted that Paul was not here contrasting two methods of salvation in Christ, as sometimes alleged, but was contrasting life under the Law of Moses with the life of faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter said, “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” (Acts 15:10)

The inability of the Mosaic system to give the worshiper any valid victory over sin was due:

- (1) to the fact that no forgiveness was possible;
- (2) that there was no impartation of the Holy Spirit; and
- (3) that there was utterly no justification in the keeping of its precepts. No wonder that Peter referred to it as a yoke of bondage.

### **Verse 6**

“But now we have . . . ‘ shows that Paul was here identifying himself with the Jewish Christians to whom he addressed this gospel.

“Newness of the Spirit . . . not in boldness of the letter . . . “ These phrases refer to the life “in Christ Jesus” on the one hand, and to life under Moses’ law on the other. “Oldness of the letter” is a reference to exactly the same thing that

was signified by the use of “in the flesh” in the preceding verse. In this paragraph, “flesh” means the covenant of the flesh, or the Law of Moses, and has reference to living after the lusts of the flesh.

W. Sanday, Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, p. 230 said, “The true reading runs thus, “But as it is, we were (we are) delivered from the Law, having died to that wherein we were held. In the act of our baptism which united us to Christ, we obtained a release from our old tyrant, the Law.”

### **Verse 7**

“Is the law sin . . .?” Paul here identified what law was his subject by appealing to the tenth commandment in the Law of Moses. Paul here (verses 7-13) expounded further the manner in which the Law of Moses made sin “abound” (5:20-23).

Also, Paul had mentioned again, only a moment earlier that the law was wrought forth “in our members to bring forth fruit unto death;” and in the next few verses Paul more fully explained what was meant. To be sure, he had not meant God’s law was sin. However, there was a way for sin to take advantage of it.

W. Sanday, *Ibid.*, p. 231 said, The perverseness of human nature is such that the mere prohibition of an act suggests the desire to do that which is prohibited. The act when done is invested with the character of sin which it hitherto did not possess. It becomes a distinct breach of the law, where previously there had been no law to break.”

Before the giving of the Law of Moses, there were doubtless many who desired their neighbor’s ox, or his donkey, or his wife; but that was, at that time, a violation of no known law, the inward desire of forbidden things having never been prohibited prior to the Law of Moses. Paul here stated, of that very sin, that he would never have known what it was except the law had said, “You shall not covet.”



### **Verse 8**

This verse identifies sin in the human heart as the primary cause of violating God's law. Human nature being what it is, the very existence of law, given a rebellious heart in men, becomes the occasion of sin "abounding."

### **Verse 9**

"Once alive apart from the law . . ." has reference to a state of innocence, or unconscious morality, as yet without instruction and not condemned, which condition may be assumed as a description of Paul's childhood innocence; but, after being instructed in the law, that is, "when the commandment came," sin revived in him, and he fell into the deadness of transgression again.

Significantly, the last two clauses show that the state of innocence was merely relative; sin had been there all along, from the date of accountability, but more or less dormant. Seizing the occasion of the commandment, sin leaped up and thrust Paul through with all manner of violations; as a result of which, he became consciously guilty and subject to the penalty of eternal death, that being the import of, "I died."

### **Verse 10**

"And this commandment . . ." is another synonym for Moses' law; and by such an expression as this, that the law is "unto life," he wished to soften the impact of what he had said about the law bringing death and causing sin to abound. Paul had the utmost respect for the old law. Who but himself could have said that he "had lived in all good conscience" with reference to it?

Paul here recognized the holy purpose of that law God gave through Moses; and the holy purpose of the law was not the thing Paul here denounced; it was the practical application of it, due to the perverseness of human nature. The law had indeed been given to men, that they might keep it and live. They were unable to do it; and thus they found, as did Paul, that it was not "unto life," but "unto death."

### **Verse 11**

The reaction of sinful men to God's commandments is not due to the evil of the commandment but to the evil of human hearts. The sinful mind falsely

represents God's commandments as being opposed to human freedom, to human interests, and as being barriers to legitimate human desires and needs.

Regarding the manner in which the commandment becomes an occasion for sin, Robertson L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to Saints in Rome*, p. 153 said, "Concerning the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God said to Adam and Eve, "You shall not eat of it." By his lying speech, Satan deceived Eve. He did not deceive her by means of the commandment, but he took the commandment as an occasion to approach her, and deceive her into believing that it would be greatly to her advantage to eat the fruit. Death was the penalty for that disobedience. Hence, the devil seized the occasion, or the opportunity, presented by the command, and his artful speech deceived her, and by the command slew her."

### **Verse 12**

The Law of Moses was holy because it came from God, righteous because of the justice of its precepts, and good because of the benefit intended for mankind through the Father's giving of it. Again, from the homely wisdom of Robertson L. Whiteside, *Ibid.*, p. 155, he said, "A good law is not to blame, if people disobey it and bring punishment upon themselves."

If there had been any doubt whatever of which law Paul spoke in this chapter, it would have been resolved in this. Of what other law could it ever have been said by an apostle that it was holy, righteous, and good?

This overriding fact must be kept in view for a clear understanding of this chapter, where Paul was speaking of the Law of Moses and its ineffectiveness as a power to enable men to live above sin.

C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 140 noted, "Often when Paul speaks of "law," the word might be paraphrased, "The Old Testament System of Religion." This equivalence is valid in the present chapter.

### **Verse 13**

The objection Paul addressed being this, "Paul, you have praised the law as righteous and good; but since it has brought death, how can you say it is good?"

Paul's answer was his favorite "God forbid." Certainly not! The fault was not with the law but with the sin of human hearts.

The exceedingly sinful and destructive nature of sin is supremely exhibited in this, that through deceit, seduction, and falsehood, sin (here personified) induces the sinner to break God's commandment, thereby using the commandment which had been given and was intended solely for man's good, to become the instrument of the sinner's death, thus (in a figure) slaying the sinner with God's own commandment, death ensuing from the penalty inherent in the broken commandment.

#### **Verse 14**

Paul here began consideration of a third element in the Law of Moses that made it an absurdity to accept the law as binding upon Christians, that being the fact that justification was absolutely impossible under that system.

Paul's experience as a Christian is the last thing that could be considered as the topic here. "I am carnal, sold into bondage to sin . . ." Are such words as these any fit comment of any child of God who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ?

To refer these words to Paul's status as a Christian, or to the status of any other Christian, is to torture the word of God. Paul had just finished saying that Christians are "dead to sin" and alive unto God" in Christ Jesus (6:11); and to apply these words to Christians is to contradict what had just been stated.

What was Paul's meaning? The fact that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this chapter provides the most eloquent proof possible that the conflict noted in the following verses resulted, not from any Christian experience whatever, but from the tragic efforts of truly noble souls (of whom Paul himself was numbered) who had diligently sought to please God under the old institution.

All of the commentators who have applied the latter words of this verse to the redeemed in Christ have misunderstood the apostle. But, pray tell how can it ever be accepted as fact that a true Christian, one forgiven of all past sins, endowed with the Holy Spirit (conspicuously not mentioned here), dead to sin alive to God, risen with Christ, walking in newness of life, possessing all spiritual

blessings “in Christ”—how can that person be spoken of as “sold into bondage to sin”? Never!

What Paul was speaking of here was a past condition. He was speaking of the fruitless struggle of noble souls under the Law of Moses who, despite their efforts, found no justification themselves. “THEN” is the word that flies like a banner over this part of Romans. True, it is not spoken here, but it is more than implied; it is demanded by the antithetical “now” that opens the eighth chapter.

Note: A great deal turns upon the proper understanding of this passage. Is not an inconsequential or indifferent matter, whether or not the miserable struggle outlined here applies to Christians or to Jews under the law. The advocates of false teaching, if permitted to preempt this passage through distortion of its meaning, use it to shore up the crumbling structure of their theory. For example, Charles Hodge, *Ibid.*, p. 217 said, “It is plain, therefore, that Paul here means by the law, the will of God as a rule of duty, no matter how revealed. From this law, as prescribing the terms of our acceptance with God, Christ has delivered us. It is the legal system, which says, “Do this and live,” that Christ has abolished, and introduced another, which says, “He that believes shall be saved.”

In these astounding words of Hodge, the scandal of the “faith only” heresy is concisely stated.

Christ is represented not merely as abolishing His own terms of entry into the eternal kingdom, but as introducing “another” system. And what could that be? “He that believes shall be saved!” Of course, that is nothing but a misquotation of Christ’s words as follows, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16)

Certainly, Christ never said, “He that believes shall be saved,” Hodge said that! Such a deduction is the noisome bubble that rises to the surface of the pond, betraying the rotten carcass on the bottom.

It is the view of making this passage a description of Christian experience that is novel and opposed to thought which prevailed for centuries before Martin Luther and the doctrine of justification by “faith only.”

Unless a person is prepared to throw the rest of the New Testament away, along with most of Romans, he simply cannot base a doctrine of salvation “by faith alone” on this epistle.

### **Verse 15**

Under the Law of Moses, wherein was no promise of forgiveness and no impartation of the Holy Spirit, the best of human intentions fell short of the worshiper’s intentions, to say nothing of the absolute perfection required by the law. The worshiper under that system was powerless to attain any success in doing either what he wished to do, on one hand, or in refraining from what he did not wish to do, on the other hand.

### **Verse 16**

This is an appeal to the conscience as a witness that God’s law is holy and good, as affirmed in verse 12. When men violate God’s law, the inevitable feelings of guilt are sufficient evidence that the law is spiritual and holy.

C. K. Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 63 wrote, “The very fact that I am unhappy about my own deeds confirms that the law is just and good. Is the law sin? Certainly not; it is confirmed by conscience.”

### **Verse 17**

In using the conscience of the inner man to affirm the justice of the law, Paul raised another problem which C. K. Barrett, *Ibid*, paraphrased thus, “We find man in a state of rebellion against God, and under sentence of death. For this unhappy situation, the law is not to blame; but neither, it now appears, am “I” for I agree with the law and disapprove of the sins I commit. Who then is to blame?”

Paul answered that problem by stating that it is not my real self who does evil works but sin dwelling in me. This fact of a person’s acting out of character is seen in the inspired words of the Master relative to the prodigal son, of whom it was said that, “When he came to himself, etc.”

It is in this verse that the theory of applying these words to Christians relies on the fact that the conscience, or inner self, of the person spoken of approves of

God's law; but again, there is enough of the Divine image left in every man, regardless of how reprobate, to produce this inward approval of God's law. That Paul was still speaking of the noble Jew under the law is still evident, as attested by Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans*, p. 63, "Of course, Paul speaks of this contradiction in man, of him who is under the Law, who does not know Christ. Only he who disrupts the order of the verses can deny this."

And yet it is also a fact that there is an inward conflict in every man, as proved by the pangs of conscience upon wrongdoing; but the inward conflict in Christians is fantastically diminished and cannot be thought of in the terms as used here. That there is in the child of God, even the best and truest, disturbing echoes of the old conflict is certain; and it may even be that Paul here fused the consideration of the two conflicts (the savage one under the law, and the far milder one for the Christian, speaking in a certain sense of both of them.

Through his greater knowledge as a Christian, Paul was dealing here with the inward conflict of the legal Jew in terms of the way it actually was, rather than in terms of the legal Jew's perception of it.

### **Verse 18**

Paul in this verse did not deny to man under the Law of Moses any intention of doing right, for the power "to will" is allowed; only the ability to deliver on the good intention is denied. Here it is well to note some of the distinctions which theologians like to make when discussing such a thing as will. C. K. Barrett, *Ibid*, p. 65 wrote, "When Luther and Calvin deny a good will to man under the Law, they understand by it something entirely different from what is meant here."

It is exactly in this, taking "will" to mean what Paul clearly did not mean, that the "converted Christin" is imported as the subject of this passage.

Emil Brunner, *Ibid.*, wrote, "The Gentile as well as the atheist knows something of this delight in the good, this approval of the Law, even though he answers a thousand times that he does not believe in God. We are not here concerned with the atheist; but one thing is clear: just as Paul does not entirely deny the Gentile the knowledge of the Law, so he also does not deny him a

certain delight in the Law, a certain approval of it; in which case, the Gentile, of course, does not know whose law it is. Paul the Christian knows.

### **Verse 19**

This knowledge of what it means to be out of Christ and under the Law of Moses is imparted to us, not from the standpoint of the intellectual pagan, but from the viewpoint of the great Christian apostle who saw much more clearly than any unregenerate man could have seen it, just what an awful state of wretchedness and misery must ever pertain to the man who is unredeemed, who is not “in Christ.”

Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no way by which even the best intentioned of the unregenerate could exist in any other state than the one depicted here. That wretchedness, truly considered, is the perfect description of every man who is out of Christ, whether or not he might be less or more aware of it; and it is also a description of the true state of every Christian who for any reason whatever failed to abide “in Christ.”

Think what a terrible description of humanity apart from the Savior this passage presents. It is a picture of humanity unable to do what is approved and desired to be done, and at the same time a humanity condemned to the “practice” (yes, that is the word) of things which are acknowledged to be undesirable and reprehensible even by the victims themselves.

Note: If this is not a good description of our own sinful generation which has turned away from God to walk in their foolish ways, where is there a better one?

### **Verse 20**

Humanity is helpless to live correctly until the sin-problem is solved. This verse, far from being a statement of the way it is with Christians, is the way it is with everyone on earth except Christians.

Sure, the unregenerate has certain nobilities pertaining to all men created in the image of God, effaced and eroded though that image is; but the power to live the type of life that would be acceptable go the inner conscience of the victim himself is simply not in him, for, until he is redeemed in Christ, he is still a slave of sin; and he will never be anything else till he is made free “in Christ Jesus.”

This verse has the effect of softening somewhat the condemnation of sinners: it is not really they, but the evil master whom they serve who “does” the sin. How pitiful it is, then, that any should continue in sin! This fits the words of the Lord Himself whose favorite word for sinner was the term “fool” or its equivalent.

Thus the Savior spoke of the foolish builder (Matthew 7:26), the foolish virgins (Matthew 23:2), the fool whose soul was required of him that night (Luke 12:20) and the foolish disciples who did not believe the prophets (Luke 24:25). Even in the Old Testament, the denier of God is called “the fool!” (Psalm 14:1)

This verse is one of the great ones in all the word of God. While not denying that the unregenerate man (particularly those under Moses’ law) have certain knowledge of what is right and wrong and possess certain characteristics of nobility, since persons are absolutely incapable of overcoming sin. They are carnal, sold under sin, servants of evil one, subject to the reign of sin in their mortal bodies; and the power to rise above their wretchedness can be imparted to them only if they shall receive the Lord Jesus Christ, die to sin, through union with Him; and then only may they rise to walk in newness of life. It is the unspeakable victory of the Christian that he has the power to say “NO” to sin.

Absolutely nothing has ever been more hurtful to Christians than the allegations of so-called Christian teachers to the effect that the child of God “cannot help sinning,” this verse itself being quoted as teaching that! God forbid. It is true that the unregenerate cannot help it; but the child of God can live above sin, not in any absolutely perfect sense, of course, but practically.

Adam Clarke, Commentary, Vol. VI. p. 79 wrote concerning this verse, “We find here that here is a principle in the unregenerate man stronger than reason itself; a principle which is, properly speaking, not of the essence of the soul, but acts in it as its lord, as a tyrant.”

To this student of God’s word, the allegations of expositors to the effect that the awful conflict depicted here, with its inevitable fruition in sin and failure, is the norm of Christian experience, to be owned by all as the state of being Christ’s disciples, then the Christian redemption is a farce. Why? The person described here is a practicing sinner. “I practice!” The elements of good will,



knowledge of the law, approval of good and abhorrence of sin—these attributes mentioned in this passage refers to the elemental endowments of all human life; and Paul’s teaching here showed that not even the existence of such inherent attributes could deliver from the practice of sin; only Christ can do that!

### **Verse 21**

The law spoken of here, which compels the unregenerate to do evil, is the rule of Satan in the soul of the unredeemed. Regardless of whatever high ideals and aspirations may be in the unregenerate heart, as long as Satan is the master within, evil will continue to be present. Not even the knowledge of God’s good law can change the bondage to which the sinner is sold. Christ can make him free, but nothing else can,

C. K, Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 149 and other commentators identified the controlling “law” which bound the sinner to sin as “self-righteousness;” and Adam Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 90 thought it was, “Any strong and confirmed habit, under the influence of which the man generally acts.”

The more reasonable identification of that force which binds the unregenerate to the mast of sin would be to refer it to Satanic power over the unsaved. After all, the great force of evil in this world is personal. Self-righteousness and bad habits are deplorable; but here is a power of evil mentioned in this verse which is beyond all such things, and from which man, alone, is utterly incapable of extricating himself.

### **Verse 22**

This is said to be the verse, beyond all others, which shows that Paul was speaking of Christians in this passage; but a glance at chapter 2:17-20 reveals that the legal Jew is still the exclusive subject. In fact, Paul’s description of the legal Jew in that passage is even more flattering than his description here, where a relatively mild, “I delight in the law of God” is used.

“The inward man . . .” does not mean regenerated man, or the regenerated portion of a man, since it is of the unregenerate that Paul here spoke. Adam Clarke, *Ibid.*, stated, “The inward man as used here means the mind without

regard to the state, whether unregenerate or renewed. To say that the inward man means the regenerate part of the soul is supportable by no argument.

### **Verse 23**

This “different law” is generally identified somewhat as follows: The nobler type of unregenerate, knowing about God’s law, approving of it, and deciding to live by it, has only himself to rely upon, because he does not know Christ. Regardless of his efforts, he cannot attain salvation, or even a free conscience. His life is rendered ineffectual through powerful human passions, and the frequent indulgence of them, which, from repeated gratification, have grown into the status of “a law” or rule of conduct for his life.

The mention of a “waging war” against the sinner requires that personal intelligence be understood as a part of the conflict, and that consideration points squarely at Satan.

The tremendous figure of speech employed in this verse is that of the investment, siege, capture, and destruction of an ancient city, all of this being implied by such a term as “waging war.” Every soul is surrounded with evil.

The opposition is not merely tacit, or theoretical, but it is warfare. Great engines of destruction were deployed against ancient cities; and so it is with every soul. Great battering rams, catapults, excavators, and demolishers of every description are brought forward by the enemy to do battle against the soul.

It is a cruel, heartless, contest. In the verse before us, the soul resisted the siege, but to no final effect; it was taken by storm. The city fell; the habitants were carried into captivity and made the permanent slaves of the enemy. Such is the awful and inevitable fate of every soul which is not saved “in Jesus Christ.” In Christ indeed is victory; out of Him there is nothing but frustration, defeat, slavery, and death. No wonder that Paul cried out in the following verse with a cry that voices the agony and despair of unsaved humanity!

### **Verse 24**

This is the cry of every man who is not saved. It is the agonizing cry of the world, especially of the benighted populations of the pre-Christian ages. Victory is impossible until Jesus came. The Law of Moses was indeed a beautiful and

spiritual law, but it did not provide men with the power to keep its noble precepts.

This failure was due to the fact that the great Enabling Act of man's redemption had not been taken place. The Savior had not come. In every case, and without distinction, all fell short of the glory of God; all failed to acquire holiness; all were unable to achieve justification, sanctification, righteousness, or holiness.

It was truly a night of sin and death, during which the wretchedness of that disastrous defeat in Eden was communicated to every man that ever lived. Hopelessness, despair, shame, misery and death—what a legacy of the reign of the evil one—and then Jesus came!

“The body of this death . . .” The besieged soul resisted only to be overthrown. He was captured, enslaved, borne away in sorrow; but that was not all. He was chained to a dead body!

Bruce, Clarke, and others have explained the metaphor thus, “There seems to be here an illusion to an ancient custom of some tyrants, who bound a dead body to a living man, and obliged him to carry it about, till the contagion from the putrid mass took away his life!

The body of death, to which every unregenerate is chained is that of his own unregenerate nature. Acceptance of the gospel of Christ, though obedient faith, cuts the chains that bind men to their former selves, enabling them to be born again. After conversion, the sins that men commit do not remain upon them and bind them, as formerly, but are cleansed and forgiven continually during the Christian pilgrimage. (1 John 1:7)

### **Verse 25**

“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ . . .” stands as the answer of the agonizing question of the previous verse respecting delivery from the body of death.

If there had been no answer, there would have been no reason to thank God; and this outburst of praise, somewhat like a stroke of lightning, illuminates the darkness of this terrible chapter, and permits a fleeting glance at all that Paul

was about to say in the eighth chapter. But before proceeding to that, Paul was about to state formally, once more, the conclusion so carefully derived from the discourse in this chapter namely this, that, regardless of how the unregenerate might serve God with his mind, unless he has found refuge in Christ, he is yet chained to the body of death, and in consequence of that, he would serve the law of sin with his flesh.

## **Chapter 8**

This great chapter is, in a sense, the heart of Romans, being a shout of victory contrasting with the wail of despair which closed the seventh chapter, the transition from the bleak and depressing condition of the unregenerate there, to the enthusiastic and joyful optimism of the eighth chapter, being signaled by the adverb “now.” “There is therefore now no condemnation.”

Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans*, p. 69 commented, “With a sharp turn, Paul now breaks off reflections on man under the Law; again, a “now” stands here as the signal of the new train of thought.

### **Verse 1**

Seven times already in this letter, Paul had stressed the significance of being “in Christ.” Faith (3:26); redemption (3:24); peace (5:1); rejoicing in God (5:11); abundance of grace and of the gifts of righteousness (5:17); being alive unto God (6:11); and eternal life (6:22); all mentioned by Paul as blessings available to man “in Christ,” and nowhere else.

The expression “in Christ” opens and closes this chapter, and no understanding of Paul’s gospel is possible without emphasis upon this concept.

What does it mean to be “in Christ”? Lewis B. Smedes, *All Things Made New*, p. 86 wrote, “Incorporation into Christ means in practice, incorporation into the church. The church is the social organism which forms Christ’s earthly body now . . . Being in the church incorporated into it by baptism. The Christian is in Christ Himself.”

Paul stated that this conception in his declarations that men are baptized into “one body: (which is the church) (1 Corinthians 12:13), and that all Christians are likewise baptized into Christ.” (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26-27) Of course being

“in Christ” means far more than mere enrollment in an earthly society that calls itself a church. Being truly “in Christ” means having been born again, having believed with all the heart, having received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13), walking in newness of life, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, in short, it means having become a partaker of the salvation Christ came to deliver.

No man is an island; and since it is true that, from the very beginning, God added to the church those that were being saved (Acts 21:47), it is axiomatic that one not in the church is not saved either. This verse does not fit in with modern man’s passion to be relieved of any obligation toward the church; but it is nevertheless the viewpoint of the word of God.

The Scriptures affirm that Christ gave His blood for the church. (Acts 20:28) If men may truly be saved without the church for which Jesus shed His blood, then the death of Christ upon Calvary is reduced to futility.

“No condemnation . . . “ refers to man’s justification, defined negatively as a state wherein there is no condemnation. The ground of justification is the perfect righteousness in Christ; and it includes the perfect faith and obedience of Christ, in whom the righteousness of God truly exists; and the availability of the righteousness of Christ for the salvation of sinners does not derive from some magical transfer of Christ’s righteousness to them in consequence of the sinner’s faith nor of anything else that the sinner might either believe or do; but it derives from the fact of the sinner’s being transferred into Christ Jesus where the righteousness is. Briefly, salvation is not procured by the transfer of righteousness to the sinner, but by the transfer of the sinner into Christ.

## **Verse 2**

“The Law . . . “ as used here, has troubled the commentators especially those who were concerned with removing the concept of law from Christianity and making it a system of “faith alone.”

There are indeed rules, regulations, commandments, and ordinances connected with faith “in Christ” that are in the fullest sense of that word, “the law of God.” The new system of Christianity is here called “the law of the Spirit of life

in Christ Jesus;” and, although a law of liberty, deliverance, and freedom from bondage, the requirements of it may not be ignored, but must be observed.

Thus freedom from Moses’ law does not mean freedom from the higher law “in Christ.” All men are under obligation to obey Christ. Paul called such obligations “the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:20; James called them “the perfect law of liberty” (1:25), “the royal law” (2:8), and “the law of liberty” (2:12).

Thus the very gospel itself is “a law” that mortals are required to observe and obey upon pain of eternal condemnation if they neglect, refuse, or fail to do so. (1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9) Any and all of the commandments of Jesus Christ are components of that “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” which Paul mentioned here.

Christ said, “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:19)

If then Christianity is, at least in part, a system of law, what about the question of legalism? Who is a legalist? A legalist is one who obeys the rules and regulations of Christianity, at least to some extent, and then falls into error of supposing that he has thereby merited salvation, and as a result of such an error develops an attitude of self-righteousness similar to that of the ancient Pharisees.

The practical use of the term “legalist” today is as an epithet hurled at persons who reject the heresy of salvation by “faith only.”

There are two laws in view in this verse, the Law of Moses from which men have been liberated through Christ, and “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” There is a sharp contrast between these two laws, one being called the law of sin and death, the other being referred to as the law of the Spirit of life. On the very first day that the Law of Moses went into effect, three thousand souls disobeyed it and were put to death. (Exodus 32:28) On the very first day the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus went into effect, three thousand souls heard the word of God, believed in Christ, repented of their sins and were

baptized for the remission of sins, thus being saved. (Acts 2:37-47) Three thousand died at the unveiling of the Law of Moses; three thousand were saved at the unveiling of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 153, paraphrased this verse, “For the religion that is made possible in Christ Jesus, namely, that of the life-giving Spirit, liberates from the old religion which is abused by sin and leads to death.”

“The Spirit of life . . .” is the Holy Spirit, because no other spirit could it be said that such is the Spirit of life. He is the blessed Spirit, a member of the godhead, who takes up residence in Christian hearts in consequence of their being sons of God (Galatians 4:6), and in fulfillment of the apostolic promise of such an indwelling to all believers who will repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. The residence of the Holy Spirit in Christian hearts is not for the purpose of making them sons of God, but in consequence of their already being so.

### **Verse 3**

The Law of Moses could not make men perfect, due to the weakness of men themselves in being unable to live according to its tenets. There were also certain other limitations in that ancient divine law, there having been no provision for the impartation of God’s Spirit to help men, and no absolute forgiveness, there having been a remembrance of sin made again every year, even after observance of the ceremonies which typically “removed” them.

The law could not extend justification to men except upon the premise of perfect obedience, and the weakness of all flesh prevented such a thing from ever occurring.

“God did sending His own Son . . .” Jesus came into the world to fulfill the whole will of God, to obey God’s every word of commandment, and to “fulfill all righteousness.” Christ’s faith was perfect; His obedience was perfect. In Christ therefore, is the righteousness which alone can save man.

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 143 wrote, “Jesus Christ came as the perfect embodiment of obedience to the law of God, and with

the purpose of inspiring others with the same spirit and leading all who trust in Him to the same obedience from the heart to the law of God.”

“In the likeness of sinful flesh . . .” The apostle did not declare that Jesus came “in” the sinful flesh, but “in the likeness” of it, the significance of this lying in the fact that our Lord’s flesh was not sinful, but only like the flesh of sinful men, their flesh being sinful, not from birth, but through the practice of sin.

Perhaps men may never know why it was so absolutely necessary that God should become a man in the person of Christ, down go the very last details of conception and birth, and with all the normal attributes and characteristics of men, even to the suffering of weariness, pain, and death; but the fact of that necessity is apparent, not merely in the act of incarnation itself, but in all of the typical and prophetic representations of it, for example when Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, the healing serpent being like poisonous ones! (Numbers 21:8) But why did Paul use such an expression as “the likeness of sinful flesh,” an expression found nowhere else in the word of God?

John Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 280 provides a plausible explanation, “He is using the term “likeness” not for the purpose of suggesting any unreality in respect to our Lord’s human nature. That would contradict Paul’s express language elsewhere in this epistle and in his other epistles. He is under the necessity of using this word here because he uses the term “sinful flesh;” and he could not have said that Christ was sent in “sinful flesh.” That would have contradicted the sinlessness of Jesus for which the New Testament is jealous throughout.

So the question is, “Why did Paul use the term sinful flesh, when it is necessary to guard so jealously the sinlessness of our Lord’s flesh”? He is concerned to show that when the Father sent the Son into this world of sin, of misery, and of death, He sent him in the manner that brought Him into closest relation to sinful humanity that was possible for Him to have without becoming sinful Himself. He Himself was holy and undefiled—the word likeness guards this truth. But He came in the same human nature; and that is the purpose of saying “sinful flesh.” No other combination of terms could have fulfilled these purposes so perfectly.”



Note: “The flesh of humanity is sinful, not from birth or by nature, but from the practice of sin.

”For sin . . . “ is Paul’s way of stating the purpose of Christ’s coming into the world. It was on account of sin, to deal with sin, and to provide atonement for sin, to condemn sin in the flesh.

“He condemned sin in the flesh . . .” does not mean to condemn the man who sinned, the Law of Moses having been far more than sufficient for such a purpose as that, but to condemn sin in the sense of taking away its dominion over man, stripping sin of its power to hold the entire race of man captive in sin.

The law of God to the effect that sin deserved the penalty of death could not be thrust aside and merely ignored; the penalty had to be executed; and, in the weakness and sinfulness of humanity, there appeared to be no hope whatever that this penalty could be removed by the actual living of a pure and holy life. thus, it was necessary that if the penalty should be enforced and at the same time humanity spared, it was mandatory that the Holy One should descend from above and pay it Himself upon their behalf. That is what Jesus did!

Emil Brunner, p. cit., p. 68 said, “God’s Son had to assume the sinful flesh (the likeness of it) in order to be able to bear and take away its burden. Godhood and manhood had to be in an incomprehensible manner united in it so that God’s law could really be fulfilled.”

#### **Verse 4**

The great purpose of Christ’s redemptive act was this, that man might keep all the law of God. The purpose of salvation in Christ was that He was concerned with the enabling of men to observe all of God’s commandments in a true spirit of love and obedience, such becoming possible through the means here presented, walking after the Spirit and not after the flesh.

“That the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us . . . “ shows that God’s purpose with reference to His commandments has been invariable from all eternity, and that God’s purpose has not been diverted or diminished with regard to those who are called Christians. The manner of fulfilling God’s commandments, however, has undergone a marvelous transformation in the

new covenant. Whereas under the Old Testament regime, attention was directed to specific commandments of “thou shalt not” do this and “thou shalt” do that under the New Testament system, the believer in Christ lives a life of love and harmony with the Spirit of God.

“Who do not walk according to the flesh . . .” Paul did not teach that all flesh is by nature and from birth sinful. Robertson L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to saints in Rome*, p. 170 said, “Human flesh is not sinful in and of itself; if so, the flesh of Jesus was sinful . . . Christ had in His nature all that the word “man “ implies. “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same,” (Hebrews 2:14). “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren.” (Hebrews 2:17) If Christ’s brethren were born sinful and He was born sinful and He was not, then He was not like them in all things. But as Jesus was made in all things like His brethren and was without sin, it shows conclusively that sin is not a part of man’s nature. When Adam and Eve were created, they had all that belongs to human nature. Sin, is no more a part of man’s nature than is dust in the eye.”

The word “likeness” has led some to suppose Christ partook of a human nature that was only similar to that of men, the dissimilarity being in that all other men possessed a sinful nature and Christ did not. Such cannot be true because the author of Hebrews described Christ as one, “Tempted in all points as we are, and yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

Now if Christ’s very nature had been different from that of other men, it could not have been true that he was tempted as men are tempted.

“Not walk according to the flesh . . .” as used here has reference to living in such a manner that the fleshly lusts, appetites and desires are the goals of life. That person who makes the satisfaction of temporal, bodily, social and animal instincts the end and all of living is walking after the flesh.

### **Verse 5**

Kenneth S. Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, p. 130, may be translated literally, “For those who are habitually dominated by the flesh put their mind on things of the flesh.” Wuest, also noted that the word “mind”

carries with it the thought of “deliberately setting the mind upon a certain thing.” From this, it is clear that “walking after the flesh” means deliberately shutting out from the mind all other considerations except those related to animal, bodily, social and temporal needs and desires. In such a definition appears the true reason why the flesh is called “sinful.” It is not because of inherent or natural contamination, but it is due to domination of the flesh by a mind at enmity with God.

Again, from Tertullian, *loc. cit.*,: “Therefore the apostle says that “sin dwells in the flesh,” because the soul by which sin is provoked has its temporary lodging in the flesh, which is doomed indeed to death, not however, on its own account, but on account of sin.”

Once the stubborn soul of man, the inner man himself, as distinguished from the flesh, has become reconciled to God through faith and obedience to the gospel of Christ, and has received the Holy Spirit of promise, such a person is then endowed with a whole new set of values. He is born again! Thus the man walks “in newness of life.” This transformation from the old state to the new is here identified as “minding the things of the Spirit;” but Paul also identified the same condition as that of permitting the mind of Christ to be in the believer. (Philippians 2:5f)

### **Verse 6**

“The mind set on the flesh . . . “ cannot be thought of as identifying the mind with the flesh, that is, the substance of the flesh. Tertullian, *Ibid.*, p. 579 cautioned, “The carnal mind must be referred to the soul (as distinguished from the flesh), although ascribed sometimes to the flesh (as here), on the ground that it is ministered to by the flesh and through the flesh.”

The “mind” that Paul had in view here is the rebellious and perverse spirit of man’s inner self; and the meaning is not primarily that physical death is caused by such mind (though, of course, it can cause that also), but that a state of death derives from and automatically accompanies such a mind, a condition called death, in trespasses and sins.” (Ephesians 2:1) In a simplistic view, man’s entire trouble lies in his inmost mind. Who is in charge there? If the inner throne is

occupied by Satan, sin and death reign. If Christ is on the throne, life and peace reign.

### **Verse 7**

C. K. Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 158 noted, “(The mind of the flesh) means a mind from which God is excluded.”

This verse should be understood in the light of certain basic facts. There is a part of authority within every person; it is the essential “I” whose choices and decisions determine destiny. Not merely the body, but also the intelligence itself are both subject to this essence of the person. This inner throne of personal authority was designed by the Creator for His own occupancy, and is so created that the “I” itself cannot occupy it; although it is possible for the “I” to dethrone God and turn the occupancy of the throne over to Satan.

This means that every life is under the authority of God or that of Satan. Man was so created that it is impossible for man himself to be the captain of his soul, his very nature requiring that the ultimate authority of his life shall belong to either one of two masters, and only two, God or Satan.

When Paul spoke of the “mind of the flesh” in this verse as being at enmity with God, he referred to the mind of one who has put the Lord off the inner throne of his life.

It is true that Satan deceives men into the vanity of believing that they might indeed get rid of God and “live their own lives;” but it is a delusion, for in the very act of refusing God the adoration that is rightfully His, the person becomes automatically a *de facto* servant of the devil.

This intelligence subordinated to Satan instead of God was called “the mind of the flesh” by Paul here, because such a mind no longer has any regard or concern for eternal things and is occupied completely with the earthly life of flesh.

Paul’s teaching here corresponds exactly with that of Jesus regarding two masters. (Matthew 6:24) If one decides to serve one, he cannot serve the other; but in the teaching both of Paul and Jesus, the question of the soul’s right to decide, is never for an instant doubted.

The right of decision is never removed from man, no matter what his sins are; and therefore the “mind of flesh” is morally accountable to God. The wickedest of men have the right of decision if they elect to exercise it.

### **Verse 8**

“Of the flesh” is here a reference to the condition that exists when the soul rejects its Creator, sacrifices all hopes of immortality and of the eternal world, and decides to make the present life of flesh its one and only concern.

### **Verse 9**

This verse defines the person who is “in the flesh.” He is the man, any man, who does not have the Spirit of Christ. The real human delusion is to the effect that there are really three kingdoms, God’s, Satan’s, and ours. But ours apart from God is not ours at all, but Satan’s. It is really that simple! Man, by the very nature of his creation, is free only to the extent of being able to choose between good and evil, between God and Satan. Jesus called them the narrow way and the broad way. (Matthew 7:13-14) It is the most priceless endowment of life on earth. Man was created in God’s image; and, although sin has eroded and defaced the sacred likeness, enough divinity remains in every man regardless of how wicked he is, to enable him to exercise the option of who he wills to serve.

The ability to establish an acceptable pattern of behavior in the sight of God is therefore dependent, first of all, upon a person’s decision. Once the right decision has been made by hearing and obeying the gospel invitation of Christ, God sends His Holy Spirit into the lives of His children, thereby enabling them to live “in the Spirit.” Such a new manner of life frees them from “the mind of the flesh” and embarks them and sustains them upon the right pathway.

## **THE INDWELLING SPIRIT**

Throughout the New Testament, the fact of the indwelling Spirit of God is emphasized. The first promise of the gospel is that believers in Christ who repent and are baptized for the remission of sins shall “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38f)

The degree of impartation of this glorious gift is only a portion but marvelously sufficient. Paul called this partial infusion of the Holy Spirit “the earnest

of our inheritance.” (Ephesians 1:13-14) This gift is ample to supply the child of God with all the help he needs, but it is not enough to make him independent, either of the community of believers or of the word of God. The limited nature of this impartation should ever be remembered. The Holy Spirit within Christians is not a full measure of prophetic, healing, and discerning power, such as that enjoyed by the apostles of Christ.

When does one receive the indwelling Spirit? The Scriptures are very plain with reference to this.

- (1) It occurs “after listening to the message of the truth,” (Ephesians 1:13)
- (2) It comes after men have believed in Christ, (Ephesians 1:13)
- (3) The indwelling begins after believers have become sons of God and as a consequence of their being so, (Galatians 4:6) and
- (4) The blessed Spirit is promised as a gift contingent upon and following the believer’s repentance and baptism, (Acts 2:38f).

Emil Brunner, p. cit., p. 68, with reference to how the life of the Spirit is achieved said, “It is nothing less than being in Christ.” It may be accepted as absolutely certain, therefore, that the Holy Spirit never enters a believer for the purpose of making him a son of God, and he, in fact, never enters any persons whomsoever except those who decide to serve God and obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The results of the indwelling of the Spirit in the hearts of God’s children are also spelled out in Galatians 5:22-23, where such results are defined as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. Certain things as miracles, gifts of prophecy, and speaking in tongues are not included.

There are many misconceptions regarding the Holy Spirit in Christians’ lives, perhaps more than with regard to any other major doctrine of the Bible. Some of these are:

- (1) That the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a commandment of God; on the other hand, it is not a commandment at all but a promise.

- (2) That the Holy Spirit is promised to all believers; on the contrary, He is promised to all believers who repent and are baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38f).
- (3) That the Holy Spirit baptism was promised to all Christians; but this promise was to the apostles alone. (Luke 24:49)
- (4) That the Holy Spirit is imparted to make men sinless; yet Peter sinned after he had received even the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- (5) That the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a subjective experience within men's hearts; to the contrary, it was a visible and outward manifestation of God's power, as exemplified by the two New Testament examples of it at Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius.
- (6) That the baptism of the Holy Spirit is followed by speaking in tongues on Pentecost, after the power of His Spirit came upon them, the kind of tongues manifested there was nothing like the incoherent, unintelligible jabber of the so-called "tongues" affected today.
- (7) That the Holy Spirit must work directly upon an unbeliever before he can obey God; but this is wrong if any other type of work is expected beyond the preaching of God's word, there being absolutely no New Testament example of any conversion in which the convert did not first hear the word of God preached and then upon believing it, obey it.

### **Verse 10**

"If (since) Christ is in you . . ." is exactly synonymous with several other Pauline expressions such as: being "in Christ," the Spirit "dwelling in" Christians, and "having the mind of Christ." (Philippians 2:5) These expressions may not be perfectly differentiated, for they all refer to the saved condition.

"The body is dead because of sin . . ." emphasizes the truth that the redemption in Christ does not remit the sentence of physical death upon all men. The body of the holiest Christian is dead (that is, under sentence of death), even as it is with all.

F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 214 said this, "The primeval sentence still holds sway there; the body is deathful still; it is the body of the Fall; but the Spirit of life. He is in that body, your secret power and peace eternal. "Because of righteousness" (means) because of the merit of your Lord, in which you are accepted, and which has won for you this wonderful Spirit of life."

### **Verse 11**

In the preceding verse, Paul mentioned the body; as being sentenced to death, due to that portion of the primeval sentence being still operative, even upon Christians; but even the death of the body is at last to be nullified by the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. Such a nullification will take place when the "dead in Christ" rise to meet the Lord in the air. The resurrection itself, in this verse, is made to depend upon the indwelling of the Spirit, for it is promised, "If the Spirit . . . dwells in you."

The resurrection of Christ appears here as a pledge of a similar resurrection of Christians, a resurrection of their "mortal bodies," just as Christ's mortal body was raised and recognized by His disciples. Thus salvation is more than merely saving the soul, although that is likewise glorious; but this teaches that body and soul alike will participate in the ultimate glory of eternal life. The great connection between the resurrection of Christ and the ultimate resurrection of His disciples is the blessed ministry of the Holy Spirit in Christian hearts, and thus appears the absolute necessity of the Spirit's residence in Christian hearts. This verse, along with verse 9, compels the conclusion that if one does not have the Spirit of God in his soul, he is not a Christian, not in Christ, not saved, and is not in any sense Christ's.

### **Verses 12-14**

"Under obligation, not to the flesh . . . !" Indeed no; they are debtors to the Spirit and are charged with the responsibility of even putting the flesh to death, in a figure. These verses form an exhortation regarding the two ways to live, the consequences of which Paul had already fully outlined. To live after the flesh is death; to live after the Spirit is eternal life.



“You must die . . .” has reference to more than physical death, for Paul had already noted in verse 10 that Christians are not exempt from that; therefore, it is of eternal consequences that he spoke of here. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, p. 517 was impressed with the contrast between the words “live” and “die,” and he said, “Men even think that they are really living when they give way to the flesh, whereas in reality they are heading straight for eternal death.”

Significantly, there is no relaxation of moral requirements for those who are in Christ. Believing and obeying the gospel, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and thereby rejoicing in the grace of God, do not for a moment cause sin to be any less sin for the Christian. Mortification of the deeds of the body is the daily task of the soul in Christ.”

William M. Greathouse, *Beacon Bible Commentary* p. 174 commentated, “It is important that we try to grasp just what Paul means here. He is most certainly not advocating ascetic mortification, which is based upon the idea that the body is a weight upon the soul. Paul is not positing any Hellenistic body-soul dualism. As we have seen, the body (*soma*) is the soul expressed concretely. What the believer is obligated to do, if we may borrow Oswald Chambers’ happy expression, is to sacrifice the natural for the sake of the spiritual. By the Spirit, we are to reckon that the members of our body are dead to sin and that we are alive unto God.” (6:11-13)

### **Verse 15**

“A Spirit of adoption . . . “ is doubtless another expression referring to the Holy Spirit, so-called here because of the appropriate contrast with the “spirit of bondage” which marked their lives in the service of Satan. Christians are sometimes called “bond-slaves” to Christ; but here their status is compared to that of children adopted by a loving father. The point of the admonition forbids fear. If God’s children will love Him and be faithful to Him, there is absolutely nothing that they need to fear. The first fruits of the indwelling Spirit are love, joy, and peace; and it is unbecoming of a child of God to manifest a spirit of bondage and fear. After all, he is God’s child! As a child of God, the Christian should live a

life of joyful anticipation of those eternal benefits which are so emphatically promised in the word of God.

“*Abba!* Father! . . . “ *Abba*” is the Aramaic equivalent of “Father;” and thus the expression literally means “Father, Father.” C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 164 was impressed with this verse, The very fact that you can address God as *Abba* proves that the Spirit is at work among you, and that you are God’s children.”

The proof that God’s Spirit is actually working in men does not depend upon some outlandish manifestation but upon simple things like the willingness to address God as Father in prayer, the willingness to sing His praises in public assemblies, the willingness to attend public worship and to maintain public identification with God’s children in the church. It is clearly in such ways as here and in countless so-called ordinary ways, that proof of the indwelling Spirit is manifested in Christians.

#### **Verses 16-17**

“If indeed we suffer with Him . . .” “If” the child of God is faithful, even to the point of suffering with Christ, then, but not otherwise, shall he truly inherit eternal life.

Again from Emil Brunner, op. cit., p. 73, “We are still only adopted; we have not yet taken over the inheritance. We have been appointed heirs apparent of eternal life and its fulfillment, but we do not yet enjoy it. We have the full assurance of future glory, but we are not yet out of the life where there is suffering and fighting. Indeed a definite suffering actually belongs to true discipleship. Whoever does not take up his cross and follow Him, cannot be His disciple. (Matthew 16:24f) He who does not want to suffer with Christ cannot share in His glory. The way of the Christian is not a path on the heights but down below. The way on the heights is in heaven, not on earth.”

“Children of God” emphasizes the dependence of the redeemed upon their Savior. They are not full grown, but are children; they cannot make it “on their own.” They are adopted, they are not heirs in their own right, and further, it is not as sole heirs, but as joint-heirs with Christ that they shall inherit, their ultimate inheritance.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit . . .” is brought into view in these verses has occasioned some extravagant language by commentators. John Wesley, Sermons, Vol. I, p.115-116 said, “The witness of the Holy Spirit” is an inward impression on my soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I , even I, am reconciled to God.”

## THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Nothing associated with the Christian faith has been the occasion of more uncertainty, confusion, and misinformation, than has the function of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does indeed witness with believers, for this is the plain affirmation of the verse before us. It is not of the fact, but of the manner of the witness, that we are concerned here.

Griffith Thomas, Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, p. 128 wrote, “This is the true witness of the Holy Spirit, not something dependent upon our own but that which is objective to us, and fixed, the word of God.”

Paul wrote, “The Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city saying that bonds and afflictions await me.” (Acts 20:23) Here the witness of the Holy Spirit consisted of a message in words spoken. Note: that in Acts 21:10-11 that the Holy Spirit did not witness “in” Paul but “to” him, and not by any such things as subjective feelings, dreams, impressions, or premonitions. The Holy Spirit’s witness came to him through words intelligibly spoken, dramatically illustrated, and plainly identified as being, not the words of Agabus, but the words of the Holy Spirit. That is the only kind of witness of the Holy Spirit that is worth the attention of the child of God.

These two New Testament examples of the Spirit’s witnessing to men justify the conclusion that such witness is accomplished in two ways:

- (1) through the words of a living prophet known to be true and authentic, and
- (2) through the words of the Bible, authored by the true and authentic prophets and inspired men of previous ages. In view of this, how does

the Holy Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. It is the affirmation of the verses before us.

The Holy Spirit said, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.” The witness of the Holy Spirit, in one particular, is that verse in the New Testament. (Mark 16:16) Now, when the spirit of a man has accepted heaven’s offer by believing and obeying such a command, then the spirit of such a person is also a witness that he has believed and obeyed God, and is therefore saved. Thus it comes about that the Holy Spirit bears witness, not “to” our spirit, merely, but “with our spirit” that we are children of God.

The witness of the Holy Spirit is available to all men who are able either to hear or read the word of the Lord. If one wishes to know what the witness of the Holy Spirit is with reference to such a question as who is, or is not, a child of God, let him read what is written. There is the true witness of the Holy Spirit.

Paul’s subject in these verses (14-16) was not how to become a Christian, but how to remain so. It is a misuse of this passage for one to declare that, “Since I feel that I am led by the Spirit, I know I am a Christian.” Before the blessed Spirit will enter and dwell in any heart, its possessor must already be a Christian. No man who is not “in Jesus Christ” can possibly be host to God’s Spirit. It is because you are sons” that God sent His Spirit into men’s hearts. (Galatians 4:6)

### **Verse 18**

Despite the fact that Christians are beneficiaries of the blood of Christ, heirs of everlasting glory, and destined at last to live in that upper and better kingdom where all the problems of earth shall be solved in the light and bliss of heaven, there is a present and urgent sorrow in the flesh. Paul had revealed a moment before that the child of God might expect no exemptions but must suffer throughout the days of mortality; and therefore, by way of encouragement, he emphasizes as a motive for patience in such sufferings, their triviality, as compared with the ultimate glory of the children of God, a glory which they shall not merely see, but a glory in which they shall actually participate.

The time of such glorification of the redeemed will be at the second coming of Christ and following the judgment of the final day. That far-off reality is here

made a motive of patient endurance of sufferings and tribulations. William M. Greathouse, *op. cit.*, p. 179 expressed it saying, “Sufferings then belong to this present age, between the advents of our Lord. Glory belongs to the age to come. As Moffatt puts it, sufferings are a mere nothing when set against the glory that, “The Lord shall be revealed in us.”

### **Verse 19**

The word “creation” in this verse is exactly the word in Mark 16:15 and in Colossians 1:23, where, in both places it means “human beings:” only, and not animals and inanimate portions of the sub-creation; nor does there appear to be any good reason why the same restricted meaning should not be understood here.

That the brute and inanimate creation is not here spoken of, but mankind, is evident from the hope of emancipation from the “slavery of corruption” held out in verse 21 and the contrast introduced in verse 23.

Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 270 says, “The word creation, as used here, means the race of mankind as distinguished from Christians.”

### **Verse 20**

There are three statements in this verse:

- (1) the creation was subjected to futility,
- (2) not of its own free will, and
- (3) but because of Him who subjected it, in hope.

“Futility . . .” describes the wretchedness, sufferings, disappointments, frustrations, futilities, and general tragedy of mortal life in a state of separation from God, due to man’s sin.

“Not of its own free will . . .” is understood by some commentators as meaning “not due to any act of its own;” but that interpretation confuses the reason of the subjection with the execution of the deserved punishment of man’s rebellion. The reason for the subjection was certainly due to man’s willful and rebellious act; but the execution of God’s sentence upon man for that rebellion was no part of man’s will, but contrary to it.

“Him, who subjected it in hope . . .” is reference to God, who alone had the authority and power to subject the creation to vanity, and also the option of totally destroying man because of sin, or subjecting him in hope of his redemption. The master plan of God called for the exercise of the latter opinion.

#### **Verse 21**

The first clause here is the expression of God’s hope for fallen man. The corruption here ascribed to the “creation” as well as God’s hope of its redemption, and of its becoming partakers of the liberty of the glory of the children of God are statements that simply cannot fit animal or inanimate life. No animal, for example, would be thought of as being in bondage of corruption, and not having any prospect of ever getting out of it.

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 98 wrote, “In the resolution that, on account of the obedience of the second man, even the heathens themselves shall be set free from the bondage of the grave, and those who believe be brought into full possession of the happiness which belongs to the children of God.”

#### **Verse 22**

“The whole creation . . .” means all mankind, the word “creation” being the same as that used in all of these verses. Here the metaphor is that of the labor room in a hospital, only without modern anesthetics.

John Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 332 wrote, “For we know that all mankind, all of them, groan together, and unto this day are in pain, as a woman in labor, to be delivered out of the uneasiness of this mortal state,”

Emil Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 75 noted, human beings are not asked if they wish to suffer, they must do so, “No one is asked! . . .” This expectation of the creature is different from the hope of Christians. (In their case) it is an apathetic, unconscious waiting, a waiting for something better, yet uncertain of its goal. But it is expounded by the apostle according to its true nature. What men actually mean without knowing it, is the goal in Christ which has been given to mankind; divine son-ship, freedom, Divine adoption, participation in the glory of God.”

No adequate description of the groaning of humanity is possible; but all men are aware of it. Millions of hospital beds are freighted with agony and despair. The struggles of humanity are like the frenzy of a savage caught in a vicious trap. Tears stain every face, and blood lies upon every threshold. The problem of daily survival presses upon the hearts of millions who are snarled in poverty, grounded in the mud and filth of human sin, facing a life of ceaseless want and toil, and augmenting their wretchedness, is the soul-fever of aching desires which agitate their minds, stifling the nobler impulses, and condemning the unfortunate to the pursuit of goals which agitate their minds, stifling the nobler impulses, and condemning the unfortunate to the pursuit of goals which, even if attained, turn to dust and ashes in their hands. And to climax all that tragedy of agitation and failure, the very bodies of all men, after attaining some little strength for a day, wither and descend into the rottenness of the grave.

#### **Verse 23**

“Also we ourselves . . . “ Not even Christians are exempt from the consequences of Adam’s transgression. Universal sighing is also our lot.

“Our adoption . . . “ even that is by no means final but must be waited for. The adoption will be final and complete when man possesses his body, free of the sentence of death, thus empowered truly to participate in the glory of God.

The blood of Christ is sufficient to redeem; the love of God for His children will finally prevail; and the ancient promise of God will be fulfilled when “the ransomed of the Lord” shall indeed enter into His presence “with songs of joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isaiah 35:10)

#### **Verse 24**

Hope belongs to the Christian’s status, and is a prerequisite, of his salvation, no less than faith and love, all three, in fact, being mentioned as a trinity of Christian requirements in 1 Corinthians 13:13; and most significantly, faith does not climax that series; love does!

## Verse 25

This verse explains how we are saved by hope, because, without hope, there could not be the patience which is required to prevent the child of God from falling into discouragement.

The Christian's salvation is a "faithful trusting in things not seen as yet." Hope is far more than a mere wish that something might exist or be possessed; it is a valid claim, supported by faith, and grounded in confidence that the Lord is able to keep "that which I have committed to Him" against that day. (I Timothy 1:12)

## Verse 26

There are two intercessors for the Christian:

- (1) Christ at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 7:25), and
- (2) the Holy Spirit within the Christian himself.

Thus there are two sources of encouragement open to the Christian:

- (1) the blessed hope within himself, and
- (2) the help of the Holy Spirit.

This entire arrangement supplies both human and Divine encouragement to the child of God. "We do not know how to pray as we should . . ." does not mean that Christians have no knowledge of prayer; but as Moses E. Lard, Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans, p. 277 noted, "Our weakness and ignorance in this life are so great that in many respects, possibly as a rule, we know not what we should pray for as we ought. We want many things, and it may be, pray for them, which, were they granted, would prove our greatest misfortune; while we do not want, and never ask, for many things which would be our greatest blessings. Here then is ignorance of what we should pray for; and, as to how we should pray, I imagine we are equally at a loss. Confessedly then, we are weak and need aid."

"With groaning too deep for words . . ." is a reference to the dimly perceived and partially understood longings or the redeemed soul which are impossible for the Christian to frame into articulated petitions to the Father, but which needs,



though inadequately understood, are nevertheless understood by the Spirit of God who transfers such inexpressible yearnings of the soul to the Throne itself. This identification of the groaning mentioned here with the believer's inadequacy, rather than with any insufficiency of the Holy Spirit, follows the thought of John Locke, p. cit., p. 333 when he wrote, "Such therefore, are our groans, which the Spirit, in aid to our infirmity, makes use of. For we know not what prayer to make but the Spirit itself lays for us, our requests before God."

Therefore, when the Christian's prayers have reached the boundary of language as a vehicle for the conveyance of thought, when such prayers become more of a heavenward sigh than a formal utterance, then the Christian may know that the inward Intercessor is fully able to convey the soul's true desire to the Throne.

### **Verse 27**

The identification of the Holy Spirit in this verse indicates personality, from the consideration of his having a "mind" and also unity with God from the consideration of His access to the Father and the absolute harmony of His actions with "the will of God."

The spirit's intercession is not for all, but for the saints, the latter word emphasizing that the help of the Holy Spirit is available only for them that already have the Spirit within.

### **Verse 28**

"All things . . ." includes all sufferings, sorrows, infirmities, and everything else of a discouraging and calamitous nature which might befall God's child on earth. "For good . . ." cannot mean earthly prosperity, success, bodily health, or any other purely mortal benefit, but is rather a reference to the eternal felicity of the soul.

"Work together for good . . ." speaks of a situation in which God is surely at work on the Christian's behalf, but it also speaks of a situation in which the saved person's reaction to life's woes is a controlled response.

The reaction of the child of God, or his response, to the ills of mortal life must be one of patience, submission, humility, prayer, love, hope, and faith. Even

adversity of the severest kind must be made to yield its precious fruit in the heart of the Christian.

“Those who love God . . . “ identifies the persons who shall receive the blessing of having all things work together for good on their behalf, this identification being further pinpointed by the last clause, “them that are called according to His purpose.” Who are the people who love God?

Christ said, “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments . . . He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is, who loves Me.” (John 14:15, 21)

Christ’s apostles stressed the same truth . . . “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” (1 John 5:3) This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. (2 John 6)

“Who are called according to His purpose . . .” At this point, the great Biblical doctrines of calling, and foreknowledge, begin to emerge. These great teachings point toward God, upward and heavenward, and are like massive mountain peaks reaching up into the clouds, the summits of which extend far beyond the boundaries of human vision.

Moses E. Lard, *op. cit.*, p. 280 said, “Those who are called” is simply another mode of designating the saved. It and the expression “those that love God” are descriptive, not of different persons, but of the same. The two clauses also express important facts in their lives.”

Who are the called, and how does the calling occur? Paul gave the answer thus, “He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

In one sense, the totality of human kind are called by the gospel, as indicated by Christ’s express command that the Divine call should be proclaimed to “the whole creation;” but the phrase “according to His purpose” delimits the persons here spoken of to them that fulfilled God’s purpose through their affirmative response to the call.

“Called according to His purpose . . . means to be called “in one body (the church) (Colossians 3:15), and that “through the church” there might be made

known “the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ephesians 3:10-11)

Paul here did not speak of individuals as such, but of the whole body of the saved. That body, composed of the whole number of the redeemed, is indeed called and foreordained to eternal glory; but of an individual person, it must be said that he is called from before all time and predestinated to everlasting life, only if his affirmative response to the Divine call has brought him into union with Christ, and if he so continues.

God’s eternal purpose of gathering the saved of all ages into one body “in Christ” was a design “which God predestined before the ages to our glory” (1 Corinthians 2:7, which must be identified with “the mystery of God.”

A further word from Moses E. Lard, *Ibid*, p. 281 on this is, “We now have but little difficulty explaining the clause: called according to His purpose.” In the prothesis all things pertaining to man’s redemption were set before God, and among them His predetermination that man should be called by the gospel, to which salvation He called you by our gospel.” Hence, to be called according to God’s purpose, prothesis, is to be called by the gospel. It is therefore not to be called by some secret impulse of the Holy Spirit. We are absolutely free to accept or reject; and, accordingly, as we do this or that, we shall be saved or lost.”

### **Verse 29**

“For whom He foreknew . . .” The only thing meant by the word “foreknew” in this verse is that God knew in advance all that would happen.

There is no reason at all why this thought should trouble men, but it does. Men invariably suppose that by God’s foreknowledge of an event, He thereby became the cause of it, thus leaving no place for the freedom of the human will.

A man knows an event took place in the past; and yet his knowledge cannot be viewed as causing an event to happen. God’s knowledge of the future is just like that, only covering a different period of time; and His eternal knowledge of what will happen cannot be viewed as the cause of those future events nor as imposing any responsibility upon God for their occurrence. That Almighty God

did actually know everything that would happen from all eternity is a fact totally beyond human comprehension, but the Scriptural teaching of this fact is indisputable.

“Predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son . . .” What is meant by “predestined?” God predestined men to be conformed to the image of His Son, the meaning being obviously this that the destiny of every man ever born on earth was that he should obey God and be conformed to the image of God’s Son. “Predestined” has special reference to the plan of God, His intention, the objective He had in view when man was created.

Phillips' translation of this place catches its meaning perfectly, “He planned, in His purpose of love, that we should be adopted as His own children through Jesus Christ.”

That this is exactly what Paul meant is plain from what he wrote in Ephesians, “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.” (Ephesians 1:5)

God’s plan for every man ever born was that he could love God and be conformed to the perfect image of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. To such a glorious end, God “predestined him,” every man.

If God had predestined only a few men to receive such an inheritance, such an act of discrimination would have been unjust; and it may therefore be set aside as preposterous that God showed any such partiality. Once more, the master theme of this great epistle, God’s righteousness, is in focus in the words here, where Paul’s meaning is that even the Gentiles were included in God’s loving plans.

If all men are thus “predestined” by God to be Christians, why are not all saved? God gave every person the absolute freedom of his will, and any man can therefore accept or refuse the destiny to which God called him.

It is such a broad frame of reference that man was destined to be a Christian, meaning that his true happiness, not merely hereafter but now, is best served by his conformity to the image of God’s Son. It was for that purpose that God made

him, and every one of the more than seven billion cells in his physical body bears the imprimatur of the Holy Spirit. No wonder the “wages of sin is death!”

The meaning of “predestined” raises only one question, while answering many others, and that regards the reason why Paul restricted the meaning of “predestined” in this place, apparently making it applicable to those who actually became Christians. F. Godet, *op. cit.*, p. 323 clears that up saying, “(First, let it be remembered that Paul was here speaking of those who were called.) All alike are seriously called. Only it happens that some consent to yield to the call, and some refuse. This distinction is indicated by Jesus in the saying, “Many are called but few are chosen.” (Matthew 20:16) The chosen in his passage are those who accept the call . . . those not accepting the call, remain called and nothing more, to their condemnation. In the epistles, the apostles addressing Christians, do not require to make this distinction, since the individuals they address are assumed to have answered the call from the very fact that they have voluntarily entered the church.”

In exactly the same manner, Paul’s reference to God’s having “predestined” certain ones to be Christians may not be restricted to mean that such was not the destiny of all men, for it is.

It appears that the true meaning of Paul in his verse is that God predestined every man ever born to be a Christian, that such a destiny, or plan, was in God’s original purpose before the world was, hence a pre-destiny, making Paul’s word here (predestined) to be exactly correct and appropriate. If only all men could realize that they are, and were from all eternity, destined to serve Christ, such appearing in Scripture as the sole reason for their creation, what an incentive would be provided for them to turn to the Lord. To be sure, a man can live against his destiny (the freedom of the will took care of that); but, if he does, he will get hurt (and God will take care of that!).

“Conformed to the image of His Son . . .” is another expression that means “becoming a Christian,” but there is a specific reference also to the Christian’s being transformed into the image or likeness of Christ, in mind, character, obedience, and all other qualities and virtues of the soul; but it does not end

here. Finally, the children of God will be raised from the dead in the true likeness of the risen Savior.

John wrote, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as what we shall be. We know that if He should appear, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

### **Verse 30**

The predestined include all men, although many refuse their destiny; the called includes all men, although many shall not heed it; the justified are they alone who through the obedience of faith are transferred into Christ, in whom alone justification is possible; and the glorified are those finally redeemed above.

God’s eternal purpose from times eternal, before the world was, determined that His Son, Jesus Christ, should lead an innumerable company of the redeemed out of earth’s populations, that those should be made righteous through perfect identification with Christ, as being truly “in Him,” identifiable as His brethren, conformed to His likeness, and obedient to His will, this summing up all things in Christ being precisely the thing foreordained to happen. That body of Christ, the church, is destined to eternal glory, and to be presented before the throne of God’s glory in exceeding joy in absolute perfection; and all hell shall not prevent it, such having been foreordained from all eternity. All this is said in the New Testament regarding predestination refers to this eventual triumph of the redeemed “in Christ,” absolutely nothing whatever being able to forbid or prevent it. The predestined are those found “in Christ;” and the fairness and justice of this is inherent in the right of “whosoever will” to enter that company destined for eternal glory.

### **Verse 31**

Seeing, as just stated, that God’s eternal purpose relative to the redeemed in Christ is absolutely certain of fulfillment, how solid and secure is the state of the person in Christ. “In Christ” is absolute safety, the only mortal concern of the Christian having to do, not with any doubt or uncertainty of final glory, but only with his being “in Christ” and remaining so. Given the integrity of that relationship, salvation for the child of God is a certainty. For the person in

Christ, it is an unqualified fact that God is “for” him, with all that implies. God appears in this verse, not as a detached or disinterested judge, but as a helper, protector, and benefactor.

Paul wrote, “For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13)

### **Verse 32**

The great gift is that of God’s only Son; and surely the love that provided such an unspeakable gift could not fail to provide whatever else might be required to accomplish His purpose of redeeming men, the particular things apparently in view here being whatever earthly encouragement and provision might be necessary to the achievement of the Christian’s ultimate salvation to the uttermost.

### **Verses 33-34**

John Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 335, paraphrased these verses saying, “Who shall be the persecutor of those whom God hath chosen? Shall God who justifies them? Who, as judge, shall condemn them? Christ that died for us, yea rather that is risen again for our justification, and is at the right hand of God making intercession for us?”

### **Verses 35-36**

In this and following verses, Paul mentioned the things conceived of as hostile, and hindering to the Christian’s life.

“The love of Christ . . . “ refers not to our love for Him, but to His love for us.

The expression “Just as it is written” was his way of saying, “This is just our lot, exactly as the scriptures teach.”

### **Verses 37-39**

All of the calamities mentioned here were suffered by Paul himself, despite the fact of all things working together for good for Christians, the hardships and sufferings they endure prove that no exemption from life’s sorrows has been provided for them.

The Christians of that age suffered far more than other groups of mankind; and, due to the natural discouragement arising from such extraordinary sufferings, there was a constant temptation for the Christians to fall into doubt and discouragement, or grow cold in their love for the Lord, or to acquire deep feelings of guilt arising from a view of their hardships as being caused by their sins. It has ever been the tendency of troubled individuals to become depressed and doubtful.

Paul emphasized the fact that all guilt was been removed through the death of Christ, that condemnation of God's children is impossible. God himself is "for them." What a shout of victory is this passage!

"Height . . . depth . . . ." These words represent the height of prosperity and the depth of misery. "Life . . . ." in this context must mean the hard life they were called upon to live in the flesh, with its boundaries, toils and persecutions.

If an angel were to try to hinder them, such would be impossible, but if the word should be understood of Satan's angels Matthew 25:41, the meaning is the same. Not even Satan's angels may finally hinder the child of God.

R. L. Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 193 pointed out that the possibility of apostasy is not what Paul was teaching here. He wrote, "All things mentioned are things without. Nothing is here said of what corrupting influences may do to the heart. No powers of persecutions can compel one to stop loving God; if he quits, he does it of his own accord. Love cannot be destroyed by force of imperial command, but it may wax cold. Some even depart from their first love. (Revelation 2:4) Paul recognized that people depart from the faith, but he was persuaded that no evils coming on us from without could destroy the love of God."

It is God's love for man, not the other way around, that Paul primarily had in view here.

"In Christ Jesus our Lord . . ." is the final word of this flourishing burst of eloquence; and it brings the mind back to the major proposition underlying all that Paul wrote, which is this, that salvation is "in Christ" alone, and that the totality of the Christian's hope derives from the fact of his having been baptized



into Christ (the only Scriptural baptism being that of a true believer who is penitent), and from the presumption of his continuance herein “in Christ, unto death.”

Paul wrote many things, but the expression “In Christ” or its equivalent is the theme of all that he wrote, being mentioned no less than 169 times. Paul never left it out! Here is the point where his mind always came to rest.

## CHAPTER 9

With this chapter, one section of Romans ends and another begins. The eighth chapter concluded Paul’s outline of the complete acceptance of the Gentiles into God’s kingdom. He extended to them the most extravagant assurance of their justification and providential support leading to their ultimate glorification in the presence of God Himself, such blessings being far superior to anything ever known before, by either Jews or Gentiles; and now that Paul had finished speaking of those good things, the thought of his own people, the Jews, in their condition of rebellion against God and of rejecting the Messiah, pressed upon his heart.

The Jews, who should have been the first to receive those great blessings, and who should have led all the world in their acceptance of them, had, through their leaders, rejected the Savior; and the great majority of them had followed the blind leadership. Paul’s overwhelming emotion of grief and sorrow bursts though in the moving words of the first paragraph (verses 1-5). This and the two following chapters deal with the problem of Israel’s rejection of the Christ.

This chapter may be outlined thus:

- (1) Paul skillfully introduced the problem of Israel’s attitude of rejection toward Christ, affirming His love of His own nation, and showing his appreciation of what God had done through them. (verses 1-5)
- (2) God’s ejection of Israel, due to their rejection of the Messiah, was shown to be consistent with God’s promises and His sovereignty. (verses 6-24)

- (3) The rejection of Israel was specifically foretold by the Jewish prophets. (verses 25-29)
- (4) Conclusions from this line of reasoning. (Verse 30-33)

Paul's subject, the rejection of Israel and the calling of the Gentiles, was repugnant as any that could be imagined for Jewish minds, and this necessitated great skill and tact on his part daring to launch into a discussion of it. Paul's discernment, knowledge of God's word, and skill in presenting such painful disclosures, is apparent in every line.

### **Verse 1**

Paul here spoke in the most dogmatic and convincing manner possible, thus emphasizing the utmost accuracy and solemnity of what he was about to say.

"In Christ . . . in the Holy Spirit . . ." These terms are synonymous, a person never being "in Christ or the Holy Spirit unless he is in both.

### **Verses 2-3**

Paul had more than sufficient reason, if he had been of a mean and vindictive spirit, to hold bitterness against his Jewish kinsmen because of their unrelenting persecutions and harassment of his ministry and apostleship. Forty of them, on occasion, had bound themselves with an oath to not eat or drink till they had murdered him; and emissaries from the Jews in Jerusalem had dogged his every step on the mission field. They had preferred charges against him before kings and governors; and despite all this, his love for Israel was undiminished.

Moses E. Lard, op. cit., p. 292 wrote, "His countrymen had repudiated Christ; that was the fact which caused His grief and sorrow; that any person should do this is painful enough; that one's own kin should do it is exquisitely so. The apostle does not yet name the fact that gave Him pain, but conceals it till he can bring it out with better effect.

"I could wish . . ." is the key to understanding verse 3. Paul's grief was like that of Jesus who "had compassion on the multitude" (Matthew 9:6), and like that of Moses who said, "Blot me out of your book, I pray thee" (Exodus 32:32); and yet it was not possible for Paul to do the thing which he mentioned, nor

should his statement here be viewed as a true expression of what he actually desired to do. That this was true appears from God's response to the similar request of Moses. The Lord said, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book." (Exodus 32:33)

That Moses truly felt such a desire and expressed it to God in prayer is a Scripturally authenticated fact; and we may credit Paul with exactly the same emotion here. How great is such love!

"Anathema . . ." or "separated," is used only five times in the New Testament. It means "accursed" and implies eternal death as well as physical death.

#### **Verse 4**

Paul mentioned such things as these to show his appreciation for the position that Israel had indeed enjoyed in God's plan of redemption. Paul loved Israel, and the fact of his becoming a Christian had not diminished this love nor his appreciation, for the part Israel had in bearing witness to God's will on earth.

"Israelites . . ." is an extension of the word "Israel" which means "prince of God," or "one who contends with God." This God-given name implied more than membership in the covenant race, imputing to them status as God's children, but the son-ship of Israel was of an inferior kind, compared to that of Christians, although sufficiently significant to stand as a type of the latter.

"The adoption . . ." refers to the son-ship of Israel. In a very real and paternal manner, God made the Israelites His children and looked after them, despite their sins and rebellions, until the purpose of bringing in the Messiah was realized.

"The glory . . ." might not refer to any specific thing, such as the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, or the halo that glowed upon the face of Moses, but would seem to signify the prosperity and progress of Israel through the long centuries of their enjoyment of the providential care and blessing of the Almighty.

“And the covenants . . . “ The plural takes into account the many covenants that God made with Israel, especially including the one called in Hebrews “the covenant,” or “the first covenant,” (Hebrews 9:1)

“And the giving of the Law . . .” brings into view the exceedingly impressive events at Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given.

“And the service of God . . .” refers to the entire liturgical and sacerdotal system of the Hebrews, especially the great religious ceremonials connected with occasions such as the Day of Atonement, the Passover, etc.

“And the promises . . .” These were that great body of testimony looking to the advent of the Christ, and the hope of universal redemption in Him.

### **Verse 5**

“God blessed forever!” The objections that men have to this rendition, stem not from critical reasons, nor from gradations in the meaning of Greek words, but from theological reasons on the part of some who are reluctant to admit identification of Jesus Christ with deity, notwithstanding the fact that Christ is called “God” no less than ten times in the Greek New Testament. Objections to the obvious meaning here allege that Paul nowhere else makes such a statement of Christ’s deity.

“Whose are the father’s . . .” No people ever had more distinguished ancestors than the Jewish patriarchs.

Three great religions, like streams coursing down from some mighty mountain and finding their issuance in various oceans, descend from Abraham; Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians all alike, hailing Abraham as their father. Paul truly appreciated the heritage that was his and Israel’s in such distinguished progenitors of their magnificent race.

“From whom is the Christ as according to the flesh . . .” Even the Savior of all the world was a descendant (in the fleshly sense) from Abraham.

“Christ who is over all . . .” This expression thunders the message of the deity of Christ. Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 300, wrote with reference to the words “over all.” “There is but one interpretation of this passage which can, with the

least regard to the rules of construction be maintained. The words, "over all" mean "over all things," not "over all persons," being neuter, and not masculine (as in Acts 10:36 and 1 Corinthians 15:28). It is supremacy over the universe that is here expressed . . . Paul evidently declares that Christ, who, he had just said was, as to his human nature, or as a man, descended from Israelites, is, in another respect supreme God, or God over all, and blessed forever."

"Amen . . ." Amen, was used to affirm Paul's dogmatic reference to the deity of Christ. The world-shaking truth had just been uttered; and that truth could not possibly have been anything other than a statement of the deity of Christ. (Matthew 25:31-32; Matthew 19:29) It is no exaggeration to say that hundreds of New Testament passages carry the mandatory meaning that Christ is God come in the flesh! Amen!

### **Verse 6**

Paul had not yet spoken plainly that Israel, through their rejection of Christ, was at that time itself rejected by God. Paul stressed the fact that not all of Abraham's children were Jews, that some were associated with Israel who were not really Israelites in the true sense.

### **Verse 7**

Abraham had many children besides Isaac, their number running perhaps into the hundreds, since he had a plurality of concubines, besides Hagar; and after Sarah's death he was married to Keturah.

All of the sons of Keturah and Hagar were among the "sons of Abraham" but were not so reckoned among the Jews, hence the validity of Paul's reasoning here to the effect that mere fleshly connection with Abraham did not make one an Israelite.

Paul was preparing to announce God's rejection of Israel from being a favored nation, because of their rejection of Christ, and Paul knew the vehemence with which the Jews in general would reject such an idea. He knew the grounds on which they would base their utter rejection of such a concept, the principal one

being that they were the children of Abraham, to the exclusion of all others, and that they alone were heirs of the great promise to Abraham.

Both Christ and John the Baptist had addressed themselves to that same adamant Jewish position. They trusted in being Abraham's seed, the Rabbis going so far as to say no circumcised person could ever enter hell, regardless of life or character.

It was Abraham's spiritual seed, as distinguished from his mere posterity, who were to receive the blessing and who were the legitimate heirs of the Abrahamic promise.

To the Jews of Paul's day, any suggestion to the effect that God would reject Israel would have been vociferously refused on the ground that such a rejection of themselves would have brought God's word to naught, hence Paul's introductory proposition that "It is not as though the word of God has come to naught." Paul would show that, on the contrary, the word of God itself taught both the rejection of Israel and the calling of the Gentiles.

The specific argument from this verse is that, just as God had rejected Ishmael who was a son of Abraham, so God was also free to reject the Jews of Paul's day (for due cause, of course) although they too are Abraham's sons (as was Ishmael), the determination being something other than fleshly descent.

### **Verse 8**

With what deliberate caution Paul approached the dreadful announcement he was obligated to deliver to his beloved kinsmen! Just so it is today, Paul was saying, not merely the fleshly children of Abraham are His seed, but the children of the promise, this reference to the promise pointing to Genesis 12:3, where not Jews only, but "all the families of the earth" were to be blessed.

"Children of promise . . ." has in view the fact that Isaac was not born in the due course of nature, but in respect to God's promise, which was providentially fulfilled when both Abraham and Sarah were long past the age of child production. (Galatians 4:28; 3:29)

Paul's argument was that, just as Ishmael did not inherit, through a literal son, the Jews of Paul's day might not inherit, unless their claim was founded on something else, other than fleshly descent from Abraham. Only those who received and accepted God's promise to Abraham of the Seed which is Christ, and honored and obeyed Him, now that He had appeared upon the earth—only those persons (the Christians) were the true children of Abraham and heirs according to the promise.

### **Verse 9**

Isaac was the child of promise; and Paul here left nothing unsaid with reference to it, citing the very passage that recorded God's promise. (Genesis 18:10) Christ is the antitype of Isaac; and therefore Jesus Christ (along with the spiritual seed who are "in Him") has the same preference over all His fleshly brothers. God's righteousness, the great theme of Romans, was ever before Paul's mind; and his purpose in these verses was to show that God's actions in the calling of the Gentiles and rejection of Israel was in no degree blameworthy, but righteous. Even the rejection of Israel as favored nation and the admission of Gentiles to the kingdom of God did not, in any sense whatever, exclude Jews, the only injury to them in such actions being the destruction of their sinful pride. All of the marvelous blessings of the kingdom of Christ were available to all Jews and Gentiles alike, without preference, and upon the same terms; and the blessings and privileges of the new kingdom were far superior in every way to anything the Jews had enjoyed under the old system.

### **Verses 10-13**

This passage details another restriction upon the identification of who are, or are not, children of Abraham, all of the posterity of Esau being cut off, despite the fact that they were not merely children of Abraham, but of Isaac as well; and their being cut off did not derive from some visible reason for it, such as a rebellion, or refusal to honor Isaac; they were totally excluded even before the birth of Jacob and Esau.

It is important to note exactly what the Lord said with reference to the election of Jacob and deference to Esau. "And the Lord said to her, two nations are in your womb; and two peoples shall be separated from your body; the one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23) There is no problem whatever regarding what God did. The problem lies in the reasons men suppose God had for doing it. God's sovereign act of choice between Rebekah's twins took place before their birth; but God's decision was absolutely not capricious. Paul had already pointed out the God "foreknew" all men; and that foreknowledge on the part of God is revealed in the above citation from Genesis to have been the reasonable and righteous basis of God's election of Jacob.

God foreknew everything concerning the unborn twins, but He chose to tell Rebekah a part of what was foreknown.

First, two different kinds of people were about to be launched into the stream of history, one weak, the other stronger. In the light of such knowledge, could God have chosen the weaker? And what is meant by "two manner of people? Esau's life quickly followed the pattern God had foreseen. He was a profane and immoral person. (Hebrews 12:16) Thus, Esau was rejected and Jacob chosen because of God's foreknowledge of what would take place in the lives of both of them.

Nothing in the election of Jacob and the exclusion of his brother, had any bearing at all upon the eternal destiny of either, each individual having still been left free to choose the direction of his life; but it was concerned primarily, if not indeed totally, with the building of the nation of the covenant people.

It appears impossible to view Paul's words here as teaching that God determines the destinies of men before they are born, as taught by some. For example John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ii, p.25, stated, "We are compelled, therefore, to find in this word, a declaration of the sovereign counsel of God as it is concerned with the ultimate destinies of men."



Esau was rejected because of what God knew he would become and of what Esau's character would produce in the lives of his posterity.

“Not because of works . . .” means “not of fleshly descent.” If the election was “not of works,” what was it of? It was of the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God. David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 172 has further thought on the meaning “not of works.” “It was not on account of works of their own that either might do, but Jacob would trust God and obey Him. Those who do this, God always selects as His beloved.”

“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated . . .” was not written of Isaac's sons before they were born, but centuries afterward, this being a quotation, not from Genesis, but from Malachi 1:2f. God's foreknowledge of what the people of Edom would become was proved to be accurate by the sins and excesses of that people who came, in time, to deserve the denunciation recorded by Malachi.

Jacob and Esau as individuals were not the principal concern of the election, but the nations which they would produce. Despite that, the election had to begin with individuals. R. L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on Paul's Epistle to Saints in Rome*, p. 199 said, “The selection of Jacob was the selection of a people rather than an individual.”

If Esau had been made the patriarch instead of Jacob, Israel would never have continued long enough to deliver the Messiah to mankind. God's choice did not determine the eternal destiny of either twin, their subsequent lives determining that; but God's choice did determine which would be the patriarch of Israel. The idea is here rejected that God ever chose any man to eternal life or death before he was born.

## **Verse 14**

Paul's great theme of God's righteousness was never far from his thoughts. Upon the uniformly wicked populations of earth, God has elected to show mercy to those who have accepted through obedient faith the mercy which is freely offered to all; but the salvation of those thus receiving God's grace does no

injustice to the wicked, those who do not obey the truth and are therefore lost. Paul explained why in the next verse.

### **Verse 15**

This quotation is from Exodus 33:19 and it affirms the sovereign right of Almighty God to save whomsoever He will.

This quotation from Exodus simply does not teach that God capriciously chooses some and rejects others after the manner of a totally blind man separating a box of black and white marbles in a cellar at midnight without any light!

There is abundant proof in God's word that it was something "in men" that entered into God's election of them. For example, God elected Abraham, and why? If God is to be understood as either rational or just, there has to be a reason why. Human intelligence demands to know what it is; and the gracious and righteous God designed to reveal to His human children just what the reason was: "For I have chosen him (Abraham), in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." (Genesis 18:19)

In this passage of God's word, God stated His reasons for the choice of Abraham. God knew that Abraham would command his posterity after him, that they would keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, "That the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken to him," the latter clause being a dogmatic affirmation that without the qualities God foreknew in Abraham, the fulfillment of the promise would have been impossible. Thus they greatly err who fancy that it "was nothing in" Abraham that entered into God's election. That there was indeed something "in" Abraham that formed the basis of God's just and righteous act should have been assumed, even without the statement of what it was; but such is the perversity of human thought that it is even denied after the statement of it!

Going a bit farther, this example of why God chose Abraham is clearly applicable to the rejection of Esau. God saw in him a different manner of people from Abraham, making the fulfillment of the promise through Esau an utter impossibility; and that is something “in” Esau that resulted in God’s rejection of him. The insinuation that God “discriminated” against Esau capriciously is ridiculous.

And to carry this postulate even further, in every case of election, there has to be an element in the elected that distinguishes him from those not elected; and to deny this is to make election to be a totally immoral and capricious thing, unworthy even of men, much less of God.

### **Verse 16**

Paul’s words were still being directed at the Jews, primarily. They supposed that they were entitled to salvation, and that God owed it to them. The nation as a whole and the Pharisees are conspicuous examples of it. They were wallowing in an arrogant of self-righteousness that Paul struck down in the considerations brought forward here. No man merits salvation. Salvation is the gracious outflowing of God’s love, grace and mercy that makes salvation possible for any person whomsoever.

### **Verses 17-18**

The most careful attention should here be directed to what is not said by Paul in this appeal to Exodus 9:16. God did not say to Pharaoh that He had raised him up in order to destroy him, or to drown his army in the Red Sea, but that God had raised him up for the purpose of showing His power in Pharaoh and of having God’s name published throughout the earth.

If Pharaoh had submitted to God’s will, God’s name would have been demonstrated in Pharaoh just as gloriously in that manner as it was in the manner of its actual occurrence. Pharaoh had the free choice of obeying or not obeying God; but God had purposed, either way, to use him as a demonstration of God’s power and a means of publishing the Divine name all over the world;

but the choice of how this would come about remained with Pharaoh until he was hardened.

What happened to the king of Nineveh, following the preaching of Jonah, should be remembered in the connection here. Both Pharaoh and the ruler of Nineveh heard the word of God, the one by Moses, the other by Jonah. Nineveh received mercy, but Egypt did not. God had a perfect right to spare one and punish the other; but it is a falsehood to allege that God's doing so was capricious and unrelated to what was in the two monarchs or to their response to God's word.

Pharaoh repeatedly trifled with God's word, agreeing to obey it, breaking his vow to obey it, giving his promise and changing his mind again and again. The king of Nineveh on the other hand, called his whole nation to sackcloth and ashes, leading the way in penitence himself, with all of his royal court. A mere glance at the two monarchs reveals why one was spared, the other not.

There was a dark and threatening shadow of doom for Israel in Paul's introduction of the case of Pharaoh whose repeated trifling with God's word had resulted at last, in God's judicial hardening of the evil monarch's heart (after Pharaoh himself hardened it ten times!).

This was exactly what God had done to Israel, and the awful knowledge of it was almost breaking Paul's heart. The thrust of that terrible word "hardened" at the end of verse 18 was pointed squarely at Israel; and Paul would announce it formally in 11:25. Because the dreadful truth would be thundered in the oracle of the eleventh chapter, Paul would continue to build the logical foundation leading up to it; and it cannot be doubted that herein lies the purpose of bringing Pharaoh into these verses.

### **Verse 19**

Human beings are responsible for what they do appears plainly enough in verse 22, where Israel's responsibility for refusing God's call is sharply stated.

## Verse 20

Man has no right to arraign God in His thoughts and to charge Him with unrighteousness and dispute His decisions. The creature is in no sense a judge of the Creator.

God is altogether righteous, holy, and good; and that, whatever of His decisions may appear to men as otherwise, the fact of their righteousness and justice remains unimpaired. It was a part of the honor of Abraham that he had such a conviction of God's righteousness. In that patriarch's great intercessory prayer for Sodom, he prayed, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:25) Abraham's prayer was founded in the deepest of inner convictions that God is good and righteous.

Jesus Himself expounded this same principle in the parable of the talents, wherein the one-talent man viewed God (his lord in the parable) as "a hard man." (Matthew 25:24) God's response to that accusation was the expulsion of the wicked and slothful servant.

Paul taught here that any allegation to the effect that God would condemn a sinner that God hardened Himself can originate in none other than a wicked heart.

## Verse 21

Paul taught here that man has no more right to question God than a pot has to criticize the potter; but here is exactly where the problem lies. Man is not a pot, and he does diligently strive to understand the workings of the Divine government; and it is precisely because of such human strivings, that in the works, like in Romans, were provided by the Spirit of God.

The bearing of this analogy on the Jewish question, still in the forefront of thought was stated by F. Godet, *op. cit.*, p. 353 when he said, "The lump represents the whole of humanity . . . Let not Israel therefore say to God, "Thou hast no right to make of me anything else than a vessel of honor; and Thou hast

no right to make of that other body, the Gentiles, anything else than a base vessel.” It belongs to God Himself to decide, according to His wisdom.

The hardening of Israel and God’s rejection of that nation from having any further place as a favored portion of humanity is the great announcement Paul was leading up to, as noted by John Locke, Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, p. 342, where he wrote, By “the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction” (mentioned in verse 22) he manifestly means the nation of the Jews, who were now grown ripe, and fit for the destruction He was bringing upon them. And by 'vessels of mercy' he means the Christian Church gathered out of a small collection of convert Jews, and the rest made up of Gentiles, who were together from thenceforward to be the people of God in the room of the Jewish nation, now cast off, as apparent in verse 24.”

Paul’s use of the analogy of honorable and dishonorable vessels from the same lump is a parallel argument and supplemental to the judgment of Pharaoh, both being applicable to the hardening of Israel, already a fact, and the subject throughout this whole section of Romans. John Locke, *Ibid.*, applied the example of Pharaoh to Israel, saying, “How darest Thou, O man, to call God to account, and question His justice, in casting off His ancient people, the Jews? What if God, willing to punish that sinful people, and do it so as to have His power known and taken notice of, in the doing of it: (for why may not God raise them to that purpose, as well as He did Pharaoh and the Egyptians?) What, I say, if God bore with them a long time, as He did with Pharaoh, that His hand might be the more eminently visible in their destruction; and that also, at the same time, He might with the more glory, make known His goodness and mercy to the Gentiles.”

### **Verses 22-23**

“Much patience . . .” God’s almost endless patience with the repeated rebellions and departures of the chosen people is the burden of the Old Testament and the theme of many a prophetic message. In a sense, God was trapped by the promise of the Messiah’s revelation through the seed of Abraham, which holy intention necessitated the preservation of the covenant

people (regardless of what they did) until the Messiah should at last appear. The Jews had absolutely no doubt whatever of the validity of the promise of the Messiah; and their leaders were accustomed to stabilizing the people and allay their fears and apprehensions in the presence of any threatened calamity by saying, "The Messiah has not come, so we are safe!" They also extended this confidence to a state of resumption in regard to their sins.

God judicially hardened the ten northern tribes and cast four-fifths of the whole Jewish nation into the ash can of history, but not even that quelled the overconfidence and self-righteousness in which Israel continued stubbornly in a course of sin against God.

But the Messiah had indeed come at last; and, upon Israel's rejection and murder of the Anointed One, no further reason existed for their perpetuation. God hardened them, as indeed they were already hardened for generations; and Paul was warning them in this letter that their doom was as certain as that of Pharaoh.

"Prepared for destruction . . ." Israel rejected Moses, their great deliverer, murmured against him, despised the manna, fainted in the wilderness, cried for a king like the nations around them, went a whoring after the gods of the Canaanites, slew God's prophets, despised His mercies, and at last slew the King Himself when He came. Such a nation had long been ripe for destruction; but, as noted above, God was, in a sense, "stuck with them" until Jesus came.

There was absolutely nothing unjust on God's part in His rejection of Israel and the calling of all men (including Israel, of course) in Christ.

### **Verses 24-25**

Verse 24 concludes the long question that began back in verse 22 with the words, "What if . . . ?" The import of this long interpretation is, "Who should think it extraordinary, or something to wonder about, that God would at last reject that nation which had so long been rejecting Him." Paul at this point proceeded to show, by the question of a number of prophecies that just these

very things, the calling of the Gentiles and the rejection of Israel had been exactly foretold by God's prophets. The verse quoted here is from Hosea 2:23, and can be understood in no other way except as a promise that Gentiles will finally become God's people.

### **Verse 26**

This prophecy is also from Hosea 1:10 and is a clear promise of the coming of the Gentiles into the relationship with God as "sons." Hosea made this development to lie in the future, as it indeed was when he wrote; but under the preaching of the gospel this had already begun to be fulfilled, the letter to the Romans itself being proof that the Gentiles were indeed called "sons of God," thus making them to share in the highest and holiest blessing life on earth has ever afforded. How incredible it seems that Israel's leaders did not heed these prophecies, nor even the fulfillment of them taking place at that moment before their eyes. But Paul was by no means finished; he would pile prophecy upon prophecy.

### **Verses 27-29**

The first two verses of this passage are from Isaiah 10:22-23. "For though your people O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return. A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness." For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land." Paul used Isaiah's prophecy that only a remnant of Israel should return from captivity as an argument that only a small part of Israel would be saved. All of this fitted perfectly into Paul's reasoning that merely being a Jew was insufficient grounds for expecting salvation.

Paul next quoted Isaiah 1:9, "Unless the Lord of hosts had left us a few survivors (remnants) we would be like Sodom, we would be like Gomorrah." Charles Hodge, *op. ci.*, p. 328 commented on the actual meaning of this expression is interesting, "As the word "host" is used in reference to any multitude arranged in order, as of men an army, of angels, of the stars, or of all the heavenly bodies, including the sun and moon, so the expression "Lord of



hosts” may mean Lord of armies, Lord of angels, Lord of heaven, or of the universe as a marshaled host . . . It is most probable, therefore, that God is called Lord of hosts being equivalent to the Lord of the universe.”

Of particular significance, it seems, is the root meaning that clings to the expression “arranged in order.” God is always to be understood as a God of order; and, as Paul said in another place, “God is not the author of confusion.” (1 Corinthians 14:13)

H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 257, explained Paul’s use of Isaiah’s words in this place, thus, “Here again is a first and second incidence of the prophecy. In every stage of the history of sin and redemption, the apostle, in the Spirit, sees an embryo of the Great Development. So in the woefully limited number of the exiles who returned from the old captivity, he sees an embodied prophecy of the fewness of the sons of Israel who shall return from the exile of incredulity to their true Messiah.”

### **Verses 30-31**

Concerning the meaning of “righteousness” as repeatedly used in this place, Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 329 declared, “The word “righteousness” as expressing the sum of the Divine requisitions, that which fulfills the law, retains its meaning (throughout).”

These two verses state the conclusion from previous arguments, to the effect that the incredible has happened. The Gentiles whose history had been one long, miserable story of debauchery, godlessness, and shame, but whose debased condition was here rather mildly stated by Paul as following “not after righteousness.”

Here is proof that the Gentiles had attained to an acceptable degree of righteous living; there had truly been a transformation in their lives. On the other hand, Israel, despite their possession of Moses’ law and their pride in all the privileges and prerogatives of the covenant people, described here as “following after a law of righteousness,” had nevertheless failed to attain any

acceptable degree of godly living. They “did not arrive.” The Gentiles did! The reason why Israel failed, Paul would explain in the next chapter; but the thing in view here is that in the 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. Of course, any Israelite was still eligible, as were all men, to accept and obey the gospel of Christ, Paul himself being an outstanding example of the remnant that did so. Yet no Israelite, as such, was received into that kingdom of Christ, in which all such distinctions as Jew and Gentile, male and female, Greek and barbarian, bond and free, etc., were blotted out, and all men considered as “one” in Christ Jesus.

### **Verse 32**

For the meaning of “As it were by works” see under verse 11, where it means “not of fleshly descent,” the Jews thinking to have salvation through fleshly descent from Abraham.

Any attempt to view “works” here as the efforts of the Jews in keeping the Law of Moses is incorrect. The total unrighteousness of the vast majority of that nation, called in Scripture “worse than Sodom,” and worse than the northern tribes, makes any such interpretation of “works” here to be absolutely untenable. The Law of God given through Moses is precisely what they did not keep.

“They stumbled over THE STUMBLING-STONE . . . “ refers to their rejection of Christ; and for a full discussion of this subject, see verse 33.

### **Verse 33**

This quotation is a fusion of two passages from Isaiah.

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed. (Isaiah 28:16) “Then He shall become a sanctuary; but to both the houses of Israel a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 8:14)

The stone in both verses is the Lord Jesus Christ. The great significance of Paul's introduction is that Israel would stumble upon it. It was foretold in the most dramatic form that "both houses of Israel would find this precious corner stone, not only a rock of stumbling and offence, but a gin and a snare."

### **CHRIST THE LIVING STONE—1 Peter 2:3-8**

A stone is among the most interesting things on earth; and every stone has a life story. The same exciting story is everywhere a stone is found. That lump of lava that cooled only yesterday, as geologists count time, was boiling hot for five hundred centuries. Those flat pebbles on the beach were machined and polished by ocean waves and tides, not merely of centuries, but of millenniums. A grain of sand has a history that staggers the imagination.

It is little wonder, therefore, that the sacred writers seized upon such a metaphor as that provided by the stone, in order to convey eternal truth concerning Jesus Christ; for Christ is many kinds of stone, as a glance at the Scripture text just cited quickly reveals. Christ is the living stone. Like a meteorite, Christ is a visitor from another sphere.

Christ the living stone from on High came from above and beyond our poor earth to bring redemption and eternal life to men. Like the diamond, Christ is exceedingly precious and is "the same yesterday, today and yes, forever."  
(Hebrews 13:8)

- (1) This living stone is the foundation stone as Isaiah said. He is the foundation of all that is good and desirable in human civilization. Especially of the church, He is the foundation.

"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is, Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11)

What is built upon Christ will endure. If men would only build upon the living stone, they would no longer be discouraged by the collapse of all that they build elsewhere.

- (2) This living stone is a tried stone, as stated in both Testaments. He was in all points tempted as men are. (Hebrews 4:5) The fact of our Lord being tried brings to the Christian supreme confidence in two important particulars, (a) the infallibility of Christ, and (b) the perfect sympathy He has for His children.

We know that He cannot fail, for He has already been tried and tested, and we know that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

- (3) This living stone is a precious stone (1Peter 2:7). He is precious by any standard of determination, precious because of His beauty, because of the hope He brings, and precious in every way.

Whatever criteria men have ever used to determine value, or the quality of being precious, all of them are exhausted in Christ. He is unique, there being none other. He alone provided salvation. The ties of the heart's highest and best affection attain their ultimate strength in Christ.

- (4) This living stone is a corner stone. (Isaiah 28:16) In Christ law ended and grace began; in Him God submitted to His deepest humiliation and humanity attained its greatest exaltation; in Him time and eternity struck hands together; in Him the Old Testament was fulfilled and the New Testament established; in Him the righteous shall be glorified and the wicked frustrated; He is a savor of life unto life in them that believe and a savor of death unto death in them that believe not; in Him is the corner of all human destiny, those of the left departing from His presence forever, and those on the right entering into His joy forever!
- (5) This living stone is a growing stone. In the dream of the mighty king of Babylon, centuries before Christ was born, he saw a little stone cut out of a mountain without hands, which struck the kingdoms of this world upon their feet of clay, overcame them, ground them to powder, and grew till it filled the whole world. The growing stone is Christ. This growth will continue to grow, and it will not cease until the kingdoms of this world has become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.  
Amen.

- (6) This living stone is a refuge, or sanctuary. “And He shall be a sanctuary.” (Isaiah 8:14)

“And each will be like a refuge from the wind, and a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry country, like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.” (Isaiah 32:2)

Christ is our rock and our Redeemer; blessed be the name of the Lord. In his concept of Christ as a sanctuary, or refuge, it is well to remember that none ever enjoyed a refuge in a sanctuary without being in it.

- (7) This living stone is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. It was this particular aspect of Him that prompted Paul’s introduction of this metaphor into this part of Romans. Christ’s being foretold as “a rock of stumbling,” by Isaiah was a prophecy of Israel’s rejection of Christ. And how did they stumble on Christ? Peter explained it thus, “They stumbled at the word, being disobedient.”

Man stumbled upon Christ (and they still do), accounting His commandments as “hard sayings” (John 6:60); men stumble through pride which is offended at the lowliness of Jesus’ birth, and draw back from following one born in a stable, laid in a manger, nursed under the palms of Egypt, schooled in a carpenter’s shop, attended by fishermen, mocked by the soldiers in the common hall, crucified between two thieves, and buried in a borrowed grave. Christ has ever been, in such things as those, a stumbling stone to the proud.

Paul said, “But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both the Jews and the Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24)

- (8) This living stone is also the rejected stone. The Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem was the builder who rejected the Christ, who is the head of the corner. May all men labor in all their lives, day and night, in prayers

and devotions, in patient waiting and loving service, that they might avoid at whatever cost, the folly of rejecting the living stone.

## **Chapter 10**

In the previous chapter, Paul vindicated the righteousness of God, showing the justice of His rejecting Israel and taking up the Gentiles, and including them along with the Jews and all men, as beneficiaries of the gospel of peace; and in this chapter, Paul stressed the fact that the rejecting of Israel as a nation for having any further covenant, as a nation, with God, had not affected in any manner the status of Jews as individuals, who exactly like all others, are called to enjoy the privileges of redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Verse 1**

“Brethren” . . .” is here an address to the disciples in Rome, to whom the book of Romans was written; and “them” is a reference to Israel, the great majority of whom had rejected the Lord and were thus in a lost condition. Paul’s prayer was to the effect that Israel should accept the gospel, not that they should be saved in unbelief. This second reference to Paul’s emotional desire for the salvation of Israel is different from that at the beginning of chapter 9, because here there is a specific reference to his prayers on their behalf.

### **Verse 2**

What made the loss of Israel so tragic was the fact that they were actually a very zealous and God-fearing people, superior in every way to the Gentiles, whose godlessness was the shame of all nations. W. Sanday, Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, p. 244 stressing the character of the Jews said, “They had a zeal of God . . . The Jew knew the Law better than his own name . . . The sacred rules punctually obeyed . . . The great feasts were frequented by countless thousands . . . Even the Hellenized and Alexandrian Jews under Caligula died on the cross by fire and the Palestinian prisoners . . . died by the claws of African lions in the amphitheater, rather than sin against the Law, etc.”

It would take volumes and libraries to recount the heroic zeal of the Jews which finally culminated in the bloody sorrow of Masada. When all hope was cut off, Yigael Yadin, *Masada*, p. 12 wrote, “Rather than become slaves to their conquerors, the defenders—960 men, women, and children—there upon ended their lives at their own hands. When the Romans reached the heights next morning, they were met by silence.”

How fitting it was that Paul should have here paid his tribute to the nobility and zeal of that wonderful people, who were, until they rejected the Christ, God’s chosen people.

“But not in accordance with knowledge . . . “ is a reference to far more than Israel’s rejection of our Lord and their failing to recognize Him as the Messiah. It was such a knowledge that failed to take account of the spiritual nature of God’s word. (Matthew 22:29) (Matthew 15: 6, 9)

Thus the Jewish ignorance of God’s word extended to the very heart of it, which they had so corrupted with human tradition and so glossed over with their own interpretations that many of the plainest precepts were counter-manded. The failure of Israel about to be mentioned in the next verse refers not merely to their rejection of Christ (which they also did), but to their failure to keep even the commandments of the Law which they acknowledged, preferring their own traditions and precepts instead of it.

### **Verse 3**

“God’s righteousness . . .” as used here means “God’s Commandments. The inference in this verse that Israel should have subjected themselves to God’s righteousness requires the righteousness be understood in the sense of commandments. This, of course, is no unusual meaning in Scripture. For example, it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth that, “They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.” (Luke 1:6)

The conclusion is justified that the great failure of Israel was in the substitution of their own religious devices and commandments for those of Divine origin.

“They did not subject themselves . . . “ means that Israel had not obeyed the gospel; but their disobedience had not begun with refusing the gospel. It begun when the vast majority failed to achieve any semblance of the righteousness of Zacharias and Elizabeth, a failure which was grounded in their human traditions and doctrines which they preferred to the commandments of the Lord, this being, of course, the great failings in religion today. Hundreds of churches have devised their own systems without regard to the New Testament, and frequently in opposition to its plainest teachings. Therefore, the sin of many today is the same as that of ancient Israel. Stressing their own precepts, walking in their own traditions, doing it all their way, they simply do not obey the teachings of Jesus.

“Their own (righteousness) . . .” is not a reference to Israel’s seeking salvation through observance of the Law of Moses, but to their reliance upon their own religious ceremonies and commandments which they had substituted for God’s true commands. Such works of the Israelites were the “works of human righteousness.”

#### **Verse 4**

“End of the Law . . .” does not refer to the abrogation of Moses’ law (though of course it was abrogated by Christ), as amply taught elsewhere), but to the goal, end, and fulfillment of the law’s purposes. H. A. Ironside, Lectures on the Epistles to the Romans, p. 127, pointed out, “It is true that the law ended at the cross, but it ended at the cross regardless of whether one believes or disbelieves. The end of which Paul here speaks is attained by those who believe in Christ, 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. When a man’s sins are all blotted out, when he is cleansed from sin, he is righteous; the condition is reached in Christ by those who believe . . . The modifying clause, “to everyone that believes,” shows that Paul was not speaking



of the abrogation of the law; that is taught abundantly elsewhere. And it was abrogated for all, believers and unbelievers alike.”

“For righteousness . . . The end, or aim, of the law was to produce righteousness; but the only person who ever lived to achieve perfect fulfillment of the law was achieving that righteousness, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Verse 5**

This quotation from Leviticus 18:5 is further indication that the “righteousness” in view here regards keeping God’s commandments.

The mountain fact concerning Christ is that, He indeed kept the law perfectly, His faith, and obedience reaching a state of absolute perfection for every second of His total life on earth. That is what God requires to save any man. That is the righteousness which alone can save; and it is available to men “in Christ;” the great device of God’s redemption plan being not that of transferring righteousness into sinners, but that of transferring sinners into Christ, where the righteousness is.

### **Verses 6-8**

When Christ came, the Jews at first, impressed by His miracles, were inclined to receive Him; but they were repelled by the obscurity of His birth, the humility and meekness of Himself and His disciples, and the denunciation which He heaped upon them because of their sins. They had expected a mighty Prince, exalted in splendor, riding roughshod over all of His enemies and restoring the glory of their earthly kingdom.

But when Jesus foretold the ruin of their sacred temple, the dispossession of their state, and the treading down of Jerusalem itself, their minds revolted from Him completely.

Therefore, the conclusion of all Israel (including the disciples themselves, at first) was negative regarding Christ. No dead man, they thought, could ever be

the Messiah, or bring about the glorious deliverance which they expected. It was squarely against that prejudice that Paul directed these verses.

John Locke, *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Saint Paul*, p. 347 wrote, “Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? That is, to bring down the Messiah from thence, whom we expect personally here on earth to deliver us. Or, Who shall descend into the deep,” that is, to bring up Christ from the dead, to be our Savior. You mistake the deliverance you expect from the Messiah; there needs not the fetching of Him from the other world to be present with you. The deliverance by Him is a deliverance from sin that you may be made righteous by faith in him . . . The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith, or the doctrine of the Gospel which we preach.”

“Who will ascend . . . who will descend . . .” These questions are the taunts of unbelief. The Jews had said, “Let Him come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him.” (Matthew 27:42)

The taunting question regarding His coming up from the grave grew out of the fact that, when Jesus rose from the dead, He did not appear to His enemies at all, but only to His disciples. The reference to bringing Christ down from heaven was an echo of the disbelief that refused to see in our Lord the miracle of the incarnation. Putting the cavil all together, we may understand the enemies saying, “All right, if Jesus is the Messiah, bring Him down from heaven, or up from the grave, and let Him lead our nation in throwing off the yoke of Roman bondage.”

The Jewish hierarchy seemed perpetually unaware that any such thing as an earthly kingdom was not in God’s plan at all. Even the kingdom they had once possessed was not of God’s will, but only of God’s permission. (1 Samuel 8:7)

Thus, the past glorious kingdom of Israel was not of God’s choice, but theirs; and their sin in seeking it was finally the sin that blinded their eyes to the true King when He came. It was that earthly kingdom that was the ceaseless undoing of Israel. Their evil kings led them repeatedly into rebellion against

God; and the lives of many of their kings, as Solomon's for example, were lives of shameless debauchery.

No miracle such as going to heaven and back was needed in order for men to know God's will. God had already given at Sinai the vital commandments for Israel; and, in Christ, the gospel had already been provided for all men.

The Pharisees knew all about the resurrection, and they bribed the soldiers with gold to lie about it. What depths of hypocrisy, therefore was in their taunt, "Bring Him up from the dead."

### **Verse 9**

This verse contains, "doctrine of the gospel" as stated in the foregoing verse. Significantly, it is a pairing of confession and faith as coordinates among the conditions of salvation, that is primary salvation, or pardon from "old sins" (2 Peter 1:9), such as takes place in conversion to Christ.

Faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are all Divinely imposed conditions of salvation, none of them outranking any of the others.

"Confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord . . . "is a reference to the confession of faith preceding one's baptism into Christ, as in the case of the eunuch. (Acts 8:37)

David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 190 and following, expressed thus, It is necessary that at every step of the religious life, even after he has grown old in the service of the Lord, with the mouth confession must be made unto salvation, and with the heart he must believe unto righteousness. He must live and walk through faith unto the end. It is just as necessary that confession of Christ should be made at all times, or Christ will not own us."

### **Verse 10**

"For . . ." is translated from the Greek word "*eis*", which means "for" in the sense of "In order to receive." Attention is called to two other New Testament passages where the same "*eis*" is involved: "This is My blood which is to be shed

on behalf of many “for” the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28), and “Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ “for” the forgiveness of your sins.” (Act 2:38)

In the New Testament, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are all categorically said to sustain exactly the same relationship to salvation, being “unto” it, meaning that they are all, and all alike, Divinely imposed preconditions required of men, upon the fulfillment of which God gives them justification.

“Unto” relates the blood of Jesus Christ to remission of sins, in the sense of being no remission of sins without it. This in no sense equates the blood of Christ with the primary steps of obedience leading to justification, because the blood of Christ is the causative and enabling factor making it possible for men to be saved, thus not resembling in any way the primary steps of obedience; but in one sense, the sense of being absolutely necessary and prior to man’s salvation, the first principles of the gospel (faith, repentance, confession, and baptism) are actually placed in the same time sequence leading to salvation as the blood of Christ, all of which, and each of which, are the *sine qua non* of salvation.

In the passages before us, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are clearly and emphatically presented as coordinates with identical functions, which are made absolutely certain by the manner of these significant pairings in God’s word.

When the Scriptures state that Christ shed His blood “for” the remission of sins, it would be impossible to construe that as meaning that He did so “because man was already saved!” Identically with that, men believe, repent, confess, and are baptized, not because they are already saved but “in order to” be so.

“Repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

“He who believed and has been baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16)

“Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.” (Acts 2:38)

“With the heart man believes. . . . with the mouth he confesses . . . resulting in salvation . . . (verse 10)

“Repent therefore and return that your sins may be wiped out.” (Acts 3:19)

All of the conditions mentioned in these pairs collectively are absolute requirements laid down in the word of God as being necessary in order to receive salvation.

In teaching that these are preconditions to be fulfilled prior to salvation, it is the primary justification that is meant. Upon the individual’s believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized, he is brought through such a response “in Christ,” making him a child of God whereupon he receives the Holy Spirit in consequence of his being a son. (Galatians 4:6) This is not the final condition either of his sanctification or of his final justification at the last day, for that is also contingent upon his remaining “in Christ,” “quenched not the Spirit,” and being found “in Him” at the end of life.

All of the conversions recorded in Acts of the apostles make it clear that there was only one way by which people became Christians in that first age. Without exception, all heard the word of God, all believed in Jesus Christ, all repented of their sins, and though it is not mentioned that all confessed Christ, necessary inference includes it and all were baptized into Christ.

That is still the way to become a Christian. The widely received, illogical salvation-by-faith-only contradiction of the word of God should not be permitted to deceive anyone. “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” (3:4)

C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 200 wrote, “Confess with the mouth” . . . “may be a baptismal confession.” The point that Paul was making bearing that the message of salvation is nigh unto men.

## **Verse 11**

This verse is the occasion for the “faith only” advocates to repeat the doctrine they have imported into the book of Romans. “Confession with the mouth” is

something different from faith and is extravagantly more than enough to prevent its being dismissed. If faith and confession is the same thing, why (?) is it written that, “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him; but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” (John 12:42-43)

When faith and confession are viewed as two distinct preconditions of salvation, there is no surmise at all; there is no guesswork or speculation. Paul viewed them as distinct conditions and here mentioned them separately, even putting confession first, which he would not have done if it had been merely something that went along with faith, and making exactly the same statement concerning one that he made of the other.

Verse 11 is thus Paul’s way of saying that a Christian (a believing, penitent, confessed, baptized member of the body of Christ) shall not be put to shame. “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38)

### **Verses 12-13**

Can it be believed that calling upon the Lord without faith, repentance, confession, and baptism would avail anything? Oh, but one says this implies faith. Of course it does, and all of the other things required in becoming a Christian are also implied. But error dies hard; and the allegation immediately appears that none but believers can call upon the Lord.

That is why Ananias said to Paul, “Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” (Acts 22:16)

The argument here is that it takes more than calling on the name of the Lord to be saved, if such calling on His name is understood otherwise than inclusive of the preconditions of salvation we have been discussing.

The proof is as follows, “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord did we not prophecy in Your name and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” (Matthew 7:21-23)

“And why do you call Me, “Lord, Lord” and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46)

“No distinction . . .” These are the words that antagonized Israel, whose people had been so long accustomed to a distinction in their own favor as the chosen race of God. Paul had already made it clear that the favored position of Israel had perished in their rejection of Christ; and here he made it plain that Jews, as individuals, were by no means excluded from the new institution but were acceptable in it upon the same terms that applied to all others. The thrust of “Whosoever shall call,” is that “You Jews also may become Christians and receive God’s blessing.”

### **Verses 14-15**

Two of the big words Paul had just used were “no distinction” (verse 12) and “whosoever” (verse 13), and these amply supported his position of extending the gospel to all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, on the same terms. This great leveling of all men before God and considering them as one race lost in sin was offensive and repugnant to Jews, causing a deep resentment against Paul.

These verses are the enabling charter of every true missionary labor on earth. God’s answer to the wretchedness of earth’s sin and squalor is a messenger yes a preacher, with the message of redemption authenticated by the Name.

“And here is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

“How beautiful are the feet . . .” From heaven’s viewpoint there is nothing more beautiful than the message-bearer of God’s merciful offer of salvation to men. Hope for lost and fallen humanity does not derive from anything that man

can do for himself, nor from anything that he might either build on earth or hurl out into space. Nothing that man can send up into heaven can save him, for it is God's message alone that can cleanse his sins, break the chains of his bondage, and endow his spirit with love and hope. How pitiful, ineffectual and utterly inadequate God's plan appears to dim eyes of mortal men. Save the world by preaching? Ridiculous. Paul himself acknowledged this when he wrote, "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21)

Churches should cease their striving after new methods, novel devices, and so-called "modern approaches" to saving men's souls. There is only one way: preach the word!

"How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard . . ." has the significant implication of making Christ the one heard in his preachers and also the one believed.

The preacher must preach the word of the Lord, for in no other way may his hearers hear Christ. The preacher who preaches the opinions of himself and his fellow mortals to the near exclusion of the scriptures fails in a double category:

- (1) his audience does not "hear Christ," and
- (2) he forfeits the dignity that belongs to the faithful messenger.

### **Verse 16**

"They did not all heed the glad tidings . . ." It is the undeniable reference to "obedience" which the advocates of salvation by "faith only" would like to edit out of this passage. The word "heed" means "to obey."

Just as ancient Israel did not believe the prophets regarding the Messiah, that He should be a man of sorrows and "acquainted with grief, despised and rejected of men, "just so the Jews of Paul's day would not "believe and obey" the gospel in order to be saved."



## Verse 17

Coneybeare and Howson, *Life and Letters of Saint Paul*, pp. 306, 524, translated this verse, “So, then, faith comes by teaching; and our teaching comes by the word of God.”

“Word of Christ . . .” instead of “word of God” does not alter the meaning; the word of Christ and the word of God being identical. Jesus said, “For I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.” (John 12:49)

The only thing capable of producing faith in human hearts is the word which receives its authority from God and has as its subject the life and work of Jesus.

It is what God has revealed which, alone, can carry conviction to the human heart; and one can only deplore the amazing scarcity of Bible reference in modern pulpits.

“Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ . . .” This means that faith does not come directly from the Holy Spirit, but comes from that Spirit through His authorship of the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Spirit does not enter the heart of man to produce faith, that being the appointed function of the word of God.

The Spirit enters our heart’s after we have believed (Ephesians 1:13) and after we have become sons of God (Galatians 4:6).

“Hearing” refers to the sense of hearing, and should not even be understood as excluding “reading.” for a deaf person still might learn the word of God through reading it, as a blind person might learn it through yet another sense, that of touch.

## Verse 18

“But I say, surely they have never heard, have they?” Paul had just said in verse 16, “They have never heard . . .” This is not a contradiction. The meaning

there is that they had not all obeyed, and here the meaning is that they certainly had heard.

“The ends of the world . . .” translates a Greek expression which means literally, “the inhabited earth.”

### **Verse 19**

Just as verse 18 was concerned with whether or not Israel heard, this one addresses itself to the question of whether or not they knew. The answer in both cases is affirmative. The particular truth Paul here credited them with knowing was that God would call the Gentiles into His favor, at last producing jealousy and anger on Israel’s part. Thus not merely the fact of extending the favor to the Gentiles is in view, but also the anger and jealousy of Israel that would result from it. Paul’s quotation of Moses in this place (Deuteronomy 32:21) was the equivalent of appealing to the supreme court of Jewish authority, for the Jews respected no authority as higher than that of the great lawgiver.

Paul’s method in this place, as so frequently throughout the epistle, is that of the diatribe, in which theoretical questions are raised—as if from a hearer, and then refuted. The objection dealt with here might be stated thus, “Well, perhaps Israel did not know that the Gentiles were to be called.” But, of course, they did know. Beginning with the great promise of Abraham that in him “all families of the earth” should be blessed, and coming right on down to the words spoken by Moses, as well as the warnings of all the prophets, the Scriptures bore ample testimony to the calling of the Gentiles. God had repeatedly apprised Israel of what He would do.

### **Verse 20**

The passage Paul here quoted is from Isaiah 65:1 and reads thus in the Old Testament, “I permitted Myself to be sought by them who did not ask for Me, I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, “Here am I, here am I, to a nation which did not call on My name.” (Isaiah 65:1)

“Them” in this verse refers to the “Gentiles” which means “nations,” and a nation not called by God’s name could have no other signification than that of “Gentile.”

Paul’s purpose of introducing this text was to present the startling contrast between the attitude of the Gentiles who welcomed the gospel, and that of the Jews whose disobedience and gainsaying was scandalous. This verse shows the attitude of the Gentiles, the following verse that of Jews.

### **Verse 21**

God’s anger with Israel was not due merely to their disobedience, but also to the high-handed and arrogant manner of it. Their conduct was called “gain-saying” in Paul’s quotation; but in the passage from which he quoted, their state is defined as; “A people that provokes Me to anger continually to My face . . . which say, I am holier than thou . . . and have blasphemed Me upon the hills . . . and walk not after their own thoughts.” (Isaiah 65:1-7)

It was that same quality of arrogant presumption, which Christ repeatedly pointed out in His parables, as in the marriage feast, where they made light of it (Matthew 22:5), or as in the parable of the husbandman who said, “This is the heir; come let us kill and take His inheritance.” (Matthew 21:38)

Despite all the presumptuous wickedness, the loving attitude of the Father is seen even here in Paul’s denunciation of it, where the figure is that of a loving Father with outstretched hands, pleading for His rebellious children to return. And yet, there is a limit to the patience, even of God; and before this letter was finished Paul would prophetically announce a fate of Israel that was worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, or that overwhelmed Pharaoh in the Red Sea. (11:25).

Israel was totally to blame for the rejection and hardening that would fall upon them like an avalanche.

The dreadful task committed unto Paul in the necessity of announcing the fate of Israel was not discharged lightly on his part. He carefully marshaled the

Scriptures of the Jewish prophets and record the tragic record of their rebellion and obtuseness from their own inspired writers, showing how they had been forewarned, protected, favored, and tolerated again and again in all manner of rebellions, and how, at last, it was not merely just for God to reject them, but it would have been an injustice on God's part not to have done so!

John Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 64 wrote, "Verse 21 brings us to the termination of the condemnation. We may well ask what then? Is this the terminus of God's loving kindness to Israel? Is verse 21 the last word? The answer to these questions, chapter 11 provides."

The eleventh chapter will indeed provide the answer regarding Israel's fate as a nation, but the fate of every Israelite, as an individual, is not revealed in God's word, but will be determined, like the fate of all others, but the individual's response to God's gracious offer of salvation through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no separate plan for Jews, any more than there is for Australians or Canadians.

## **CHAPTER 11**

This extremely interesting chapter concludes Paul's burden of revelation, concerning the Jews. What is called the Jewish problem dominates the entire epistle, especially in its relation to the master theme of God's rectitude; but beginning in chapter 9, Paul began to lay the ground for the revelation of the mystery concerning Israel which was finally stated formerly in 11:25.

The key facts which Paul had already established regarding Israel are:

- (1) they are not all Israel who are of Israel (9:6), making it clear that there are and always have been two Israel's,
  - (a) the external Israel, the state, the nation, the visible Jewry on earth.  
and
  - (b) true Israel, called "His people." that is God's people, children of the promise, the seed of Abraham, the people whom He foreknew;

- (2) the external Israel God had rejected and hardened, as extensively prophesied by their own prophets, and as just punishment for their rejection of God, climaxed by their stumbling on Christ; and
- (3) the true Israel are now the redeemed in Christ, but such a fact excludes no one; “For WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.” (10:13).

The three important facts about Israel should be kept in view.

For centuries the two Israel's had been almost indistinguishable, there being no sharp separation between them, but Paul showed in the beginning of this chapter that the separation had been made, with the true Israel continuing as Christianity, and the “rest” (verse 7) hardened, the latter being the whole of external Judaism. Paul devoted most of the remaining verses to explaining the relationship between the two Israel's by the use of several comparisons, and then dramatically stated the mystery in 11:25.

### **Verse 1**

“God has not rejected His people . . . .” “His people” refers to the true Israel, not the nation, which certainly had been cast off, there being then “no distinction” (9:12) in the sight of God between either Jews or Gentiles. Paul guarded against confusing the people here mentioned with external Israel by saying immediately that it “the people whom He foreknew (verse 2) who were not cast off. Many make the mistake of supposing this to mean that God had not cast off the nation.

Paul refuted that allegation that God had cast off His people by appealing to his own conversion as proof of the validity of God's promise; which fact demonstrates what Paul meant. Paul was not saved through his membership in the Jewish nation at all, but as an individual obedient believer in Christ, such salvation also being available to all who ever lived since Christ came (Jews and Gentiles alike), and upon identical conditions.

Kenneth S. Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, p. 186, said, “The covenant of God with Israel, having been national, shall ultimately be fulfilled to them as a nation; not by gathering in merely individual Jews or of all Jews individually, into the Christian Church—but by the restoration of the Jews, not in unbelief, but as a Christian believing nation.”

Now Paul alleged his own redemption as the fulfillment of God’s promise not to cast off His own people, but Wuest and many others do not accept Paul’s premise. Why? They have incorporated into their reasoning a major premise which is false, that being the opinion that God’s covenant was with a nation, state, or race of people. This is not true at all. God’s covenant was with the spiritual seed of Abraham, as Paul showed extensively in chapter 9, where he proved that the promise never was to the fleshly seed of Abraham, but to the people “whom He foreknew.” the spiritual seed.

God’s covenant was never with the state, or kingdom, of Israel, nor with any of their kings, as such. Even the Davidic kingdom was not the earthly state but the spiritual kingdom, upon the throne of which, even now, Christ indeed reigns.

The thought that God ever had any covenant with the ancient kingdom of Israel, in the sense of their state, through any of their kings, is repugnant. The very existence of their line of kings was contrary to God’s will, existing with His permission, but not with His approval. (1 Samuel 8:7) It was precisely in the events there recorded that Israel “rejected God” from reigning over them; and the great historical rejection of God by the fleshly Israel, in their irrevocable repudiation of God as their king and the elevation of one of themselves to rule over them, was the pivot upon which all their later apostasy turned. The Solomon Empire which they so ardently desired to be restored with its earthly glory was the concept that totally blinded them to the Christ, and which still blinds many as to what is meant by God’s “people.”

Ezekiel plainly declared the sins of the southern kingdom to have been “more than” those of the kingdom that disappeared (23:16), even declaring that Judah’s sin exceeded that of both Samaria and Sodom. (Ezekiel 16:47)

Why should God have annihilated Sodom and Samaria and have spared Israel whom God Himself declared to be worse than either of them. The reason why God did spare fleshly Israel in preference over the ten tribes, until the historical fulfillment of their mission as flesh-bearers of the Messiah, and the reasons why fleshly Israel is still spared, contrary to all apparent righteousness, appears in the revelation of the great mystery of 1:25. But the fantastic notion that the true Israel now has, or ever will have, any identification with that fleshly remnant is contrary to the Scriptures and to all reason. Moses E. Lard, Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans, p. 345 observed that, "The nation most certainly was cut off, deservedly. As a nation God cast them off; but at the same time, He has retained many individuals in His love, because of their belief in Christ."

## **Verse 2**

God's promise of blessing to Israel was always founded upon the premise of their remaining faithful to God. The people God foreknew were those who would be faithful, the elect, the spiritual seed.

Moses E. Lard, *op. cit.*, p. 346 was very near the meaning of these first three verses writing, "That God has rejected Israel as a nation is indisputable; and equally certain it is that He has not rejected them all. What is true then, and all that is true is, that He has not wholly rejected His people."

In Lard's analysis, however, there is a failure to make the sharp distinction that is needed, due to the confusion of "nations" with "people." It is not true, exactly, as Lard stated it that, "God has not "wholly rejected His people," but it is as Paul said, "God has not rejected His people," meaning that He has not rejected any of them.

The case of Elijah (1 Kings 19:10) was here brought forward by Paul to demonstrate that God's "people" during the period of the monarchy were not the state, or nation, in any sense, but were the faithful spiritual seed, whom God had not cast off, and never will cast off.

The apostasy of Israel was so complete under Ahab during the days of Elijah, that Elijah was convinced that God had no people at all except himself. Ahab, the head of the Jewish state, had murdered the prophets of God, overthrown the worship of God, and led the nation into total rebellion, as a nation, against God, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Samuel that Israel, through their demand of a king, had indeed rejected God from reigning over them. (1 Samuel 8:7)

The existence, along with Elijah, of 7000 faithful persons as the true Israel during those terrible days when Jezebel sat on the throne in Jerusalem was revealed to Elijah by the Lord for his encouragement; but the existence of the true Israel even at that time was totally separate and apart from the nation, as such, for the nation was God's unqualified enemy.

### **Verse 3**

Was such a nation the people of Israel? God forbid. The people of God were that pitiful remnant with Elijah, and God had not cast them off.

### **Verse 4**

"Seven thousand men . . ." does not include the women and children which made up their families, after the Jewish method of reckoning. The true Israel numbered at least 20,000 or more, and possibly much more, if "seven" should be understood as a sacred number. They err greatly who think Paul was there concerned merely with showing that God had not rejected "all of His people;" for God in fact had rejected none of His true people. Paul was showing that throughout Israel's history, "They are not all Israel who are of Israel" (9:6), that being the key to making any sense at all out of what is stated here in Romans.

Significantly, the separation between the two Israel's, the true and the fleshly, were not the result of some whimsical "eternal decree" of God, choosing some and rejecting others; but it was based solidly in fundamental and profound differences between the true and the false. Paul stated the basis here as the fact that the true Israel "had not bowed the knee to Baal."



Of those who will obey God's gospel, or refrain from bowing the knee to Baal, as in those days, it was God's eternal decree that such persons are His people whom He foreknew."

Moses E. Lard, *Ibid.*, p. 349, wrote, "Obedience is man's own free act, to which he is never moved by any prior election of God. Choosing, on the other hand, is God's free act, prompted by favor and conditioned upon obedience. This obedience, it is true, God seeks to elicit by the proper motives; but to this He is led solely by the love of man, and never by previous choice. True Scriptural election, therefore, is simple, intelligible thing, when suffered to remain unperplexed by the subtleties of men."

### **Verse 5**

The wretched apostasy under Ahab was a fit illustration of that same Israel (after the flesh) which in Paul's day had not merely murdered the prophets, but the Christ, and had made the temple a den of thieves and robbers, who had decided to kill the true King and take His inheritance for themselves, after the resurrection of the Lord, bribed witnesses to deny it, and sought with stones and bloodshed to exterminate the church of God itself from the earth!

"There has also come to be at the present time . . . " is Paul's way of saying that, just as the true Israel in Elijah's days was in no way part of the corrupt nation, just so then, at the beginning of the Christian era, the true Israel had no connection whatever with the hardened and apostate nation that murdered the Lord. Then as now, Paul was saying, God's true people are of a different order, after the election of grace. They are the people who have accepted the gospel, have been baptized into the body of Christ, thus being Abraham's true seed. (Galatians 3:29)

"A remnant . . . " means a part of fleshly Israel. And who were they? They were the 3000 souls who obeyed the gospel at Pentecost. The original church of Christ was almost totally Jewish, including the Twelve, and many others of that first period.

Paul's argument here is crystal clear. God's keeping the covenant with Israel always had meant, and never meant anything else, keeping the covenant with the spiritual seed, the righteous remnant, the true Israel, not the other.

### **Verse 6**

“No longer on the basis of works . . .” means “not of fleshly descent.” The great objection to Paul's preaching the gospel of Christ, on the part of old Israel, had to do with his categorical rejection of all the elaborate ceremonial of Moses' law, to which the fleshly Israel tenaciously clung, not in the sense of keeping it, but in the sense of making it a device of their own glorification; and, upon such a basis, they denied that salvation could be extended to Gentiles. Further, the glaring fact that Paul had just shown that the righteous remnant, both in Elijah's day and presently, had obeyed the gospel, and the equally glaring fact and even notorious fact of the fleshly Israel's thinking that salvation could be “earned.” Salvation was never, either then, nor previously, nor now, nor ever, something men could earn or merit.

R. L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to Saints in Rome*, p. 226 said, “There is no grace when a man merits salvation. Works by which a man merits justification and commands which one must obey to be saved are distinct matters. It is unfortunate that many cannot, or will not, see this distinction. “Because of this, they conclude that a sinner must do nothing in order to be saved; but a man has no real understanding of either works or grace if he thinks that a sinner's complying with the terms of salvation causes him to merit it. Many things are of grace and are yet conditional. Is anyone so simple as to think that Naaman's healing from leprosy was any less a matter of grace because he had to dip seven times in the Jordan River? Is any so blind that he cannot see that Jesus' giving sight to the man born blind was any less of grace because he was required to wash in the pool of Siloam?”

### **Verse 7**

“That which Israel is seeking for . . .” Refers to fleshly Israel's “seeking” God and His approval, a thing which they did not truly seek at all, for if they had truly sought the Lord, they would have found Him, as one of their great

prophets said, “And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

Israel did not seek God in the sense of truly believing in Him and walking as He commanded, but by the pursuit of their own righteousness. Thus the “seeking” in this sense of what they really should have done and not in the sense of what they actually did.

“Those who were chosen obtained it . . .” refers to the true Israel who feared God and honored Him in their lives. Specifically, these were the righteous remnant, as distinguished from the nation.

“And the rest were hardened . . .” This is past tense and refers to the nation in its entirety after the separation of the true Israel which was accomplished by the preaching of the gospel.

The co-mingling of the two Israel's had continued right up till the ministry of Jesus Christ, as witnessed by the fact that Zacharias and Elizabeth (part of the true Israel) were truly serving God within the institution of the Law of Moses, and that Jesus Christ Himself was born under the law and submitted to it in perfect obedience. But with Pentecost came the preaching of the gospel to all nations; and thereafter the separation of the two Israel's was complete.

What appears to be the true Israel, called here “the rest,” were hardened. The true Israel had accepted Christ, and the total fleshly Israel was hardened. The totality here should be distinguished. It would have been incorrect to say that all Israel was hardened, for the spiritual Israel, until then co-mingled with the fleshly Israel, was not hardened; but the “rest” of that co-mingled Israel, meaning all of that fleshly Israel, were the ones hardened.

The two Israel's in this verse emerge clearly under two designations, “the election” being the true Israel, “the rest” being the fleshly Israel. The election received God’s blessing through the obedience of faith. The rest received it not through unbelief, rebellion, and self-hardening, terminating firmly in God’s judicial hardening. The fact of fleshly Israel’s culpability in their terminal condition is stated by Christ in Mathew 13:14-15.

It was Israel's closing of their eyes against the light that made them guilty; and, given that conduct on their part, God did indeed harden them. The same condition is appropriately called "blindness" by the sacred writers. Paul also called it a "strong delusion" and a "working of error." (2 Thessalonians 2:11)

There are three centers of participation in the hardening, or blinding (spiritually) of men who choose to be saved and close their eyes and ears against the truth, these being:

- (1) the wicked himself,
- (2) Satan, the god of this world, acting permissively under the will of God, and
- (3) God Himself who wills that the willfully wicked shall be blinded, or hardened, in their condition.

### **THE HARDENING OF ISRAEL**

Biblically, God's judicial hardening of the reprobate is extensively illustrated. The entire antediluvian world, Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, Jericho and their 32 kingdoms displaced by the Jews, Babylon, Nineveh, Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida are all examples of kingdoms and cities that fell under God's judicial sentence of hardening, and to these must be added the kingdom of Israel as made up of the ten lost tribes. What happened when God hardened such peoples? They were destroyed with cataclysmic destruction and fell never to arise again, eternal death also apparently being included in their doom. To this list of great cities and kingdoms, the Scriptures add the names of various individuals who were hardened, such as Pharaoh and Judas Iscariot.

Something of the nature of judicial hardening and how it occurs was captured by the discerning words of R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. 617 where he wrote, "Ten times Exodus reports that Pharaoh hardened himself; then, only in consequence of this self-hardening, we read ten times that God hardened this self-hardened man. In each instance, ten is the number of completeness. Even the hardening by God's agency is not complete at once; it follows these stages, permissive, desertive, and judicial, only the last being final and hopeless. The door of mercy is not shut at once upon the

self-hardened so that they crash into the locked door with a bang. We might close it thus. God's mercy closes it gradually and is ready to open it wide again at the least show of repentance in answer to His mercy; and, is ready to open it wide again at the least show of repentance in answer to His mercy; and, not until the warnings of the gradually closing door are utterly in vain does the door sink regretfully back into its lock."

Pharaoh is the outstanding Biblical example of hardening, because of the details revealed in the Scriptures, and the fullness of the description of it. The utmost significance of Paul's pointed reference to Pharaoh (9:17) is seen in his application of that example to the hardening of Israel. The citation by the apostle is alone sufficient to justify the assumption of Israel's judicial hardening in a manner like that of Pharaoh, but there are other considerations that make it absolutely certain, as follows:

- (1) There is the Savior's statement that the prophecy of Israel had been fulfilled in Israel. (Matthew 13:14-15)
- (2) There is the express declaration of Scripture that Israel's conduct was every bit as bad as that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jeremiah 23:14), and even worse than that of Samaria (Ezekiel 16:47), all of which other people were hardened and destroyed; and there can be no doubt that the thing alone which prevented the same fate for Israel was God's plan of bringing the Messiah through their race.
- (3) Christ formally sentenced Israel to hardening and death in some of the most dramatic words ever written, in Matthew 23:37f.

The city of Jerusalem itself was consigned to the torch, the pestilence, and the sword, to famine and death, to the heel of the invader and the dashing of her little ones against the stones, a sentence so terrible that Christ wept as He uttered it; and it was all the more tragic and pitiable because it came of their own willful hardheartedness.

The Lord said, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."

- (4) Not merely the destruction of the great Jewish capital was announced by Christ.

The religious hierarchy that governed the people were called a generation of vipers, the Lord promising that upon them would come the blood even of previous generations which had slain the prophets. He announced the destruction of their temple and the dissolution of their state and flatly declared that they should be trodden under the foot of the Gentiles for a period of time.

- (5) In the analogy with Pharaoh and his changing his mind ten times, hardening himself repeatedly, Israel measured up fully in comparison with it. Their rebellions were so frequent, so willful, so arrogant and extensive that the entire Old Testament is required for the outline of them.

God indeed hardened Israel through necessity that the promise of the Messiah through them should not fail; but upon their rejection of Christ and murder of the King himself, the cup of wrath overflowed.

### **Verse 8**

Paul here quoted Deuteronomy 29:4 which reads. "Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear." This was spoken to a generation that had witnessed the miracles of God through Moses in their fantastic deliverance from Egypt through the Red Sea. The thrust of the words here is that although they had indeed "seen" such wonders, in the sense of stimuli on the retina of the eye, they had not grasped the true meaning and significance.

There was doubtless another point in Paul's introduction of this passage from Deuteronomy describing the lost generation of the wilderness. They themselves were another outstanding historical example of God's judicial hardening and destruction.

### **Verses 9-10**

Paul brought this forward from Psalm 69:10 for the purpose of further proving from the Scriptures that the hardening of Israel had long been foretold by the word of God.

“Let their eyes be darkened . . .” is a clear reference to hardening.

“Snare . . . trap . . . stumbling block . . .” John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. II, p. 74 said, “Thee words are closely related, and precise distinctions of meaning are not to be pressed.”

That “their table” is to be made such, is a reference to the fact that the very devices which God had provided, by which Israel should have been restrained and purified, such as the Law of Moses and all of the religious institution, (those very things) became the occasion of their fall, not through God’s fault at all, but through their abuse of sacred privilege.

“Let their table . . . is also suggestive of what Jesus said regarding the temple, “Behold your house is being left to you desolate.” (Matthew 23:38) This indicates that even Divine things set up by God Himself, if perverted and debased to serve human ends’ lose all their sanctity, thus being no longer God’s but “theirs.”

“Bend their backs forever . . . “ refers to the perpetual nature of the sentence imposed upon Israel, not referring exclusively to their being perpetually subjected, but to the endurance of the hardened condition finally imposed.

## **Verse 11**

This verse is admittedly difficult because of the uncertainty of just what is meant by the pronoun “they.” In view of there being two Israel's in view throughout this portion of Romans, it may not be amiss to refer the first “they” to fleshly Israel and the second “they” to the true Israel.

A paraphrase of what Paul’s thought here probably was is thus: Did fleshly Israel then stumble so completely as to involve even the spiritual Israel also in their fall? God forbid. Just the opposite happened, because their fall has greatly advanced the conversion of Gentiles, thus provoking the old Israel to increased acts of violence against the faith, through their jealousy.

Such appears to be the thought of this verse. Allow God’s word, “fall,” to mean anything else, or anything different from total and final apostasy and hardening of fleshly Israel; and the result will be all kinds of wild speculation about fleshly, or national Israel and God’s supposed ultimate plans for them.

“To make them jealous . . .” is read as emulation by many commentators; but the word “provoked” does not go with that thought at all. What is intended is the explanation of why fleshly Israel should have been so murderously vindictive against Christians of the Pauline age, not even the savage persecutions of Roman emperors exceeding it in fierceness.

“By their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles . . .” Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 361 said, “The rejection of the gospel on the part of the Jews was the means of its wider and more rapid spread among the Gentiles, as clearly intimated in several passages of the New Testament.”

Charles Hodge, *Ibid.*, p. 362 also said, “If Jews, for example, had made up the principal body of the primitive church, they would have proved a hindrance by their efforts to clog up the gospel with the ceremonial observances of the law, and such things as circumcision, abstaining from certain meats, and many others.”

## **Verse 12**

The first two clauses are parallel, “transgression” and “failure” meaning the same thing, and “riches for the world” and “riches for the Gentiles” having reference to identical results of the fall and the loss of (fleshly) Israel. Paul brought forward a rich new idea bearing upon the hardening of Israel which is in the word “loss.”

C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 214 said, “Paul uses a word which in strict etymology is derived from a verb meaning “defeat.” Some commentators translate this verse saying, “Their defeat has led to the wealth of the Gentiles.”

R. L. Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 230 especially stressed this, observing that, “The Jews were defeated in their efforts to destroy Christ and His teaching by crucifying Him.”

The defeat of the Jews in their opposition to Christianity was complete and extensive. Their efforts did not stop with the crucifixion of Christ, but extended to savage persecution and martyrdom of the earliest disciples, and included the most sustained and destructive opposition to the spread of Christianity upon the



mission field; and their opposition did not really desist until God's sentence upon Jerusalem was summarily executed by the legions of Titus and Vespasian in 70 A.D.

"Their fulfillment . . ." Upon these words "many" have built the platform containing a great superstructure of future events, including a projected return in the future of the old fleshly Israel to a spirituality and obedience. Note: "The Bible teaches no such thing."

R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 695, understood this verse as expressing thus: "Paul does not say, "If their fall was or is world riches, and their loss was or is Gentile riches, much more will be or shall be their fulness in the future, at the millennium, or before the world ends." This is obviously untenable. What he writes is that already then (at that time), the Jewish fall and loss should be considered the world's and the Gentiles' riches. Paul asks, If that is true, "By how much more" must not the fulness of salvation attained (already) by the Jewish remnant (the true Israel) be likewise considered the world's and the Gentile's riches, especially because their fulness (conversion) is void of the least trace of Jewish exclusiveness."

"Fulness . . ." is thus a synonym for conversion to Christ. How vain and empty are the lives without Christ!

### **Verses 13-14**

Instead of Paul's thought having to do with some vast ingathering of fleshly Israel at some future time, it is concerned with the near impossibility of saving any of them at all. This verse certainly does not envision any wholesale conversion of Jews in Paul's day or at any other time.

"If somehow I might move to jealousy . . ." should still be viewed as producing enraged opposition. The meaning of jealousy derives from the connotation of "provocation." This "provocation" was not produced in Paul's brethren, else he would have used the word, but in his "flesh," which is a plain reference to the fleshly Israel. Whether or not it was Paul's intention to arouse bitter opposition, that was surely what resulted for this understanding of "jealousy" is that it hardly seems a proper motive for becoming a child of God.

“I am an apostle of Gentiles . . .” Moses E. Lard, *op. cit.*, p. 359 suggested this meaning of these words, “As I am your apostle, I make bold to tell you Gentiles that both the fall and loss of Israel have proved blessings to you. Whatever they are to Israel, to you they are gain.”

Perhaps Lard’s thought should be expanded to include the mention of “fulness” thus: “And if even their loss is your gain, think what the conversions of a few of them can mean; and with that in view, I am ready to provoke all of them in the hopes of saving some.”

### **Verse 15**

What was Paul saying? He had just mentioned the possibility of saving a few Jews; and it was of them that he said, “What the receiving was, but life from the dead!”

Every Jew Paul converted was viewed by him as one baptized out of a cemetery. The hardened, judicially condemned and sentenced nation (fleshly Israel) was morally and judicially dead. Yet even from that nation, some were being saved, and the converts were indeed as life from deadness!

“If their rejection be the reconciliation of the world . . .” is a reference to the previous verse. Note: The future tense is not in this verse at all except by the gratuitous indulgence of translators who add the words, “Shall be.” This is their word, not Paul’s.

It’s too bad that Jesus didn’t know about all the wholesale conversion of Jews out of fleshly Israel that our translators boldly say, “Shall be!”

### **Verse 16**

Here are two simple parallel metaphors, both meaning exactly the same thing, which is, that since God had so graciously accepted the first Jewish converts, all Jews who would accept the Lord would likewise be accepted.

“First piece of dough . . . “ refers to Numbers 15:20, in which passage the Jews were instructed to “offer up a cake” of their dough to the Lord when they first prepared bread from the new harvest. After the sacrifice of that first

symbolical portion of it, the remainder, or lump, was considered to be ready for general use.

C. K. Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 216 agreed that the first piece and the root in this verse: “refer to Jewish Christians.” It should be particularly noted that nothing is said in this verse about the “whole lump” being holy, nor “all the branches,” being holy. F. C. H. Lenski, *op. cit.* p. 703 noted this omission thus, “Paul does not write “the whole lump . . . all the branches,” which he might have done, but avoided doing so as not to shift the emphasis and thus afford an occasion of misunderstanding.”

### **Verses 17-18**

“Some of the branches were broken off . . .” is a reference to pruning, the implied thrust of such an illustration being “and men gather them into bundles and burn them.” This is a metaphor of old fleshly Israel. And what of the branches not “broken off?” They are the true Israel, the spiritual seed, who accepted Christ, and formed the first community of believers in Christ. (Acts 2:5-10, 22)

“You being a wild olive were grafted in among them . . . “ is impossible of misunderstanding. Because the only thing in five thousand years of recorded history into which Gentiles could have been “grafted in among” Jews is the church of Christ, established on the day of Pentecost. The grafting did not take place that day, for it was some time before the early church got around to accepting the full import of the world-wide nature of the gospel.

“Grafted in . . .” means converted to Christ. “Wild olive . . . “ is a reference to the inferiority of Gentiles, generally, in comparison with the more cultured and perceptive Jews.

“Among them . . .” never could mean “instead of them,” as asserted by some. The Gentiles were not accepted into God’s church in place of anybody, nor did their coming in displace or exclude anybody.

The great error foisted off upon this verse is that the church built by Christ was but a continuation of the old Jewish “church” which, of course, had infants in it; and by such a device, it is quite easy to premise an infant membership in

God's church now; but the church of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is not a continuation of anything, but an altogether new thing. (1 Corinthians 5:1; Ephesians 2:15; Galatians 6:15 and Hebrews 12:24)

Christians are not connected in any way with the old Jewish lump, but are a "new lump." (1 Corinthians 5:7) Here have been cited but a few of many passages which teach the total severance of Christianity from Judaism. Paul himself cut the umbilical cord that bound the infant church to the body of its parent, Judaism.

"Became partakers with them . . ." Exactly here surfaces what was probably an underlying motive of the first magnitude leading to the production of this epistle with its almost extravagant emphasis of salvation's being "by grace" as contrasted with all human merit. This was Paul's warning to the Gentile Christians not to fall into the same foolish and fatal error that had destroyed the old Israel.

Paul's warning was not heeded. During the subsequent centuries, especially in the Dark Ages, the hatred of Christians for Jews and their vigorous and relentless persecution of the once chosen people, extending even down into our own times, constitutes some of the blackest chapters of church history. The un-Christian conduct of the Christians toward Jews surpassed anything the Jews ever did to them.

"The rich root . . ." Salvation had come to the Gentiles through the Jews, Jesus Himself having pointedly declared that "Salvation is from the Jews." (John 4:22) Our Lord was Jewish, as were the apostles and practically all the original Christians.

That the pagan-bred, low cultured Gentile, reeking with the stink of Bacchus and Aphrodite upon them, through his conceit at having been accepted as a child of God, should already have begun to manifest an attitude of superiority and disdain for the Jews, is a consideration demanded by Paul's introduction of these warnings here. What a pity they were not heeded, except possibly, for a little while.

The Gentiles should have recognized that their blessings were of the grace of God and not of any merit on his part, but the general failure of men of all ages to comprehend this, and the specific failure of the Gentiles to grasp it, a failure exactly like that of the Jew, were doubtless the underlying reason why Paul diligently strove in Romans to prove the absolute unworthiness of all men, and to establish the golden premise that salvation is of grace through an obedient faith, as positively distinguished from all human merit.

Alas, the Gentile Christians, proud and boastful of their hope of heaven, fell into the trap of supposing that they deserved it, whereas the truth was that they deserved it even less than the Jew whom he came to despise, disdainfully ignoring the truth that neither he nor the Jew could ever be saved except upon the basis of God's unmerited love and favor.

#### **Verse 19**

This was the Gentile's way of saying, "God prefers me to the Jews; He broke them off and put me in their place."

#### **Verse 20**

How instructive! Admitting, of course, that branches had been broken off, as the Gentiles indicated in his boasting, Paul would not emphasize the fact that God broke them off, but shifted the emphasis to the fact that it was Israel's unbelief which had been the provocative cause.

"You stand only by your faith . . ." means that the Gentile had not been accepted in place of anyone, and that it was not his merit at all, but God's grace that enabled him to stand.

The Gentile's place in the church was due to the unmerited favor of God and came to him following his faith and obedience of the gospel, but, even so, being absolutely underserving of so great salvation.

"Do not be conceited, but fear . . ." is an eloquent warning, founded upon the long history of Israel as God's covenant people, who, at last, had forfeited it all through unbelief; and the argument is that, "If it could happen to them, it could happen to you."

## Verse 21

In the event that Gentiles should manifest the same qualities of unbelief and obduracy which marred the life of fleshly Israel, the consequences for them will be the same.

This verse shows that exactly the same principles of God's judgment are applied to Jews and Gentiles alike with impeccable impartiality.

## Verse 22

Preeminent among all of the attributes God has revealed concerning Himself, the quality of His everlasting goodness stands out, not in the sense of being more than other qualities of God, but in the sense of being more frequently stressed and emphasized in the word of God. God's attribute of invariable righteousness undergirds the blunt warning here; and that warning is: all of the Father's promises to sinners saved by grace are conditioned upon their continuation in His loving service. When even an angel sins, God will not ignore it. The possibility of Christian's defecting from the Divine favor is tersely stated here. The fact of it is proved by the history of Israel, by God's dispossession of the fallen angels, by the spectacular warnings of the Scriptures, and the ultimate impossibility of any sin's being able to stand in God's presence.

"Otherwise you also will be cut off . . ." These words are addressed to Christians, Spirit-filled, bona fide sons of the Highest; but this verse thunders a condition, "If you continue in His goodness!"

Richard Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 164 wrote, "Nor may we leave out of sight that all forgiveness, short of that crowning and last act, which will find place on the day of judgment, and will be followed by a blessed impossibility of sinning any more is conditional—in the very nature of things, so conditional, that the condition in every case must be assumed. Whether stated or not that condition being that the forgiven man, continues in faith and obedience."

"Severity of God . . ." is another of the Divine attributes, but the minds of men are reluctant to dwell upon it. It was the loving and faithful God who swept the whole earth of the antediluvian race, and it has already been noted

extensively in this chapter that when sin and rebellion reach their point of no return, God hardens and destroys.

The severity here mentioned derives from the righteousness and justice of Him who is angry with the wicked every day, who abhors evil, and who must punish all who deserve it.

“God’s kindness . . .” is beyond the capacity of man to understand it. It is a goodness that loves men, even in their sins, gave the Beloved for their rescue, and waits in longsuffering patience upon man’s repentance, not willing that any should perish, but desiring salvation of all.

### **Verse 23**

The wicked who believe and obey will be saved, regardless of who they are; the righteous who sin to defection shall be lost, no matter who they are.

The possibility of Israel’s return is stated here, but it is conditioned upon the cessation of their unbelief. Paul here 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 Israel (ah, there is that tragic word “if”), at last worn out with frustrations and dead hopes of some other Messiah’s ever arising to aid them, shall at last turn and believe in Christ, they would certainly be acceptable to God then, as always, upon God’s terms, not as Jew but as Christians, there being no longer, in the sight of God, any covenant difference whatever between Jew and Gentile.

It must not be thought, however, that any such thing as a state or nation could ever be converted. Men do not enter Christ as races, nations, ethnic groups, or parties of any kind. Paul did not enter the church on the basis of his being a Hebrew of the tribe of Benjamin; he entered as a believing, penitent, and baptized sinner saved by grace. No one, so far as the Scriptures reveal, shall ever enter in any other way.

### **Verse 24**

“A wild olive tree . . .” is an apt metaphor of the Gentiles who had continued for uncounted generations in pagan debauchery, without the knowledge of God

in any degree comparable to that of the Jew. The Jew and Gentile nature has proved to be difficult and slow of transformation is attested by the experiences of missionaries all over the earth till this day.

If the Jew accepts Christ, he much more readily assimilates the great spiritual truths of the gospel, such being the meaning of “how much more.”

“Contrary to nature. . .” Men do not graft a wild olive into a good one, but vice versa. But the unbelievable had happened; Gentiles had been grafted into the spiritual Israel, exclusively identified since Pentecost as the church of Christ.

Grafted into . . .” is the Pauline metaphor for “conversion.”

“Their own olive tree . . .” In no actual reality can it be said that the institution of the body of Jesus Christ is “theirs,” in the sense of belonging to fleshly Israel; and Paul could not have had anything of that kind in mind.

Paul in this verse was still dealing with the problem of emerging self-righteousness among the Gentiles and their haughtiness toward the Jews; and these words of Paul here are a reminder to Gentiles that all of the origins of Christianity are Jewish.

The burden of the apostle’s thought here is Jewish excellence, as compared with Gentiles which he stressed in order to diminish and restrain the rising vainglory of Gentile Christians. For generations, the Jews had lived under God’s law, heard the prophets, believed in the coming of the Messiah, and lived in daily hope of His appearance; but no such advantages had pertained to Gentiles. Therefore, if the Jew should decide to become a Christian, he would certainly be a better one than the average Gentile. Thus, Gentile pride is throttled by Paul’s emphasis upon the natural superiority of the Jew, due to long privilege under God’s covenant.

“How much more . . .” is Paul’s way of saying, “You Gentiles are nothing to brag about as Christians; if the Jews were grafted in again, they would show you!” The tragedy of ages is that so few have done it. It is not correct to read this verse apart from the “if” which dominates both this and the preceding one.



## Verses 25-26

“This mystery . . .” A mystery in the New Testament means something revealed, rather than something hidden, but implies that it had been hidden until revealed. The term is appropriate, however, because, even when God reveals a mystery, the knowledge of it still appears arcane or enigmatical, due to man’s imperfect understanding. This is especially true with the mystery revealed here.

What is the mystery that Paul revealed? That Israel was hardened? No, for this had been open knowledge since the mystery of Christ. Was it that only part of Israel had been hardened? No, because the separation of the two Israel’s, the true Israel and the hardened Israel, had been in view for a whole generation. Was it that the hardening of Israel was scheduled to terminate? No, for that is not stated, either here or elsewhere in the word of God. So that is not the mystery.

What, then, is the mystery? It is that hardening has befallen Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. Paul here knocked down the conceit of the Gentiles by the declaration that God had spared hardened Israel. They would not be destroyed in the final sense at all, nor would they disappear. God here spared, or announced through Paul that He had spared, harden Israel for a period of two millenniums (at least) upon the earth.

It is impossible to understand this chapter without focusing upon that problem of Gentile pride and conceit which dominates the thought in Romans and which was concisely stated in verse 25 as the reason for the revelation of the mystery: “lest you be wise in your own estimation.” Now, what was there in this revealed mystery to allay the conceit of Gentiles glorying against the Jews? It was the thundering fact that God had spared hardened Israel from the fate hitherto inseparable from the hardened; and Paul’s phrasing of this announcement was equivalent to saying, “The Jews will be here as long as any Gentiles are being saved.”

Paul brought dramatically to the spotlight in this that there was a fullness, or completion, in view for the Gentile; even the saving of the Gentiles was not to be thought of as something inevitable and eternally continuing. The Gentiles

under God's favor would run their course, just like the Jews; and in their "fullness" one must read the time when the Gentile position up stage center in God's favor will be no more, and for the very same reasons that removed Israel from that favor.

"Fullness . . ." speaks of something else also. The fullness of the Gentiles is not the whole of God's concern (Where are you, conceited Gentile?) In the same breath, Paul said, "So all Israel shall be saved . . ." The very fact of their being "saved" identifies Israel here as the spiritual Israel. And what Paul was saying was that when the Gentile harvest had been reaped, that reaping, or fullness, is the means by which the determination of the whole body of the redeemed from earth shall at last be concluded.

God's precious harvest of the earth shall be concluded. Or, as Paul stated that very truth, "So (in that manner) all Israel (the entire spiritual Israel of Jews and Gentiles and whomsoever) shall be saved. A final blow, a *coup de maitre*, to Gentile pride is in "all Israel," "All Israel, here said to be the Gentiles themselves who have been saved and brought into the spiritual Israel (!). They themselves are Jews (!), spiritual seed of Abraham.

God could find no way of saving a Gentile, except by making him a Jew (in Abraham through Christ). If such a thought as this could not kill Gentile, what could?

"Until the fullness . . ." This is sincerely thought by many to mean that the hardness will cease at whatever time is indicated by "until;" and, in all fairness, the word could mean that, and often does, as, for example, when it written that Joseph knew not his wife Mary "until" she brought forth her firstborn son and laid Him in the manger. (Matthew 1:25)

This verse simply does not tell what will happen after the fullness of the Gentiles is come in; the most probable event to follow that is the loosing of Satan for a little season, and then the end. When the Gentiles have run their course in God's favor, as fleshly Israel have already run theirs, what, except the end, may be logically expected?

“And thus all Israel shall be saved . . .” has been treated here as reference to the spiritual Israel, it being the conviction that both the Israel's which dominated Paul's mind throughout the epistle are in view in these two verses, being designated here as the hardened Israel (verse 25) and the saved Israel (verse 26).

Paul expounded throughout this letter the teaching that salvation is only in Jesus Christ, through union and identification with Christ, and by no other means whatsoever.

The people who would be saved must believe and obey Christ, God making no distinction between Jews or Gentiles. Paul was saying, “all Israel will be saved:” and the only example in the context of any salvation having occurred is that implied in the fullness of the Gentiles, a reference to gathering God's people out of the nations into the spiritual Israel and summing up a single “all Israel” in the sense of spiritual Israel.

### **Verses 28-29**

Who are these designated here as “enemies for your sake”?

We are shocked that the true Israel (the redeemed portion of Jacob) should here be called “enemies.” How is this true? Just as Christians on both sides of nations at war are technically enemies, so it is here. Part of the true Israel, through birth and environment, was then and continues to be, co-mingled with the old Israel. There are some of every generation of fleshly Israel that fall into this category. But within that environment they are environmentally enemies of the truth, having been identified with the enemies of the gospel from birth, and afterward, by upbringing and education; but, despite this, there are some of that old Israel in every generation who are of the true Israel, who are of “the election” and the “righteous remnant and therefore beloved for the Father's sake” and being the true seed of Abraham, no less than Christians from among the Gentiles; but they become so only by obeying the gospel. They, upon their acceptance of the gospel, claim the inheritance that is theirs as “children of the promise.” God has not abrogated His promise to that Israel. The true Israel has been separated from the fleshly Israel, but the inalienable right of every soul born into this world to decide which way his soul shall go, whether or not he

will be of the true Israel, is not contravened. The physical descendants of Abraham in the national entity known as Israel, or scattered throughout earth's populations, as individuals are not lost and doomed through the accident of their birth, any more than others, the final right of choice still belonging to every man alive.

Some of the old Israel are still being saved, the same as in Paul's day, and the same as in Elijah's day. Therefore no fatalism is taught in the revelation here regarding the hardening of fleshly Israel.

To clear up any confusion, the separation of the two Israel's which came about in the events connected with the rise of Christianity simply reversed the situation that had existed prior to the first advent of Christ. In those days the Gentiles were hardened, and the Jews were the covenant people; but even under that condition, individual Gentiles now and again forsook the wickedness of their world, and were received into the true spiritual seed of Abraham, Ruth the Moabite being a conspicuous example.

Now, the opposite situation prevails, and again and again, individual Jews accept the Lord and claim their rightful inheritance as true sons of Abraham in Christ. The hardening of the Jewish institution has not affected the sovereign right of any man, Jew or Gentile, to obey the gospel and be saved. That the earthly organization called Jewry, and including the state of Israel, shall ever be saved as such, in the light of the Scriptures, appears to be an absolute impossibility, in the same way that it was impossible under reverse conditions before Christ for any state like Babylon or Rome to be accepted as such into the benefits of God's redeeming covenant.

"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable . . ." The gifts and calling of God are the great promise of God to Abraham that in him "all the families" of the earth shall be blessed with eternal life, such promise never having been confined to Abraham's fleshly posterity alone, and never having included all of them, but only that portion of them who were Abraham's kind of faithful and obedient people, the "spiritual seed" as they are called.

But the institution, or establishment, of Israel flatly rejected any thought that God's blessing should be extended to Gentiles; and the very mention of God's

will in that regard precipitated the great riot in the temple which led to Paul's imprisonment, the enraged Israelites crying that, "It is not fit that he (Paul) should live." (Acts 22:22) The establishment had not merely murdered the Christ and suborned lying witnesses to deny the resurrection, they launched a campaign of eradication directed at the entire following of Jesus Christ, stoned Stephen to death, plotted to kill Paul, and sought by every possible means to thwart the preaching of the gospel on the mission field, Paul himself being precisely on that kind of mission of destruction when he was converted.

What a glorious onward thrust of God's will is envisioned by Paul in these words! The whole nation of Israel might oppose it; but the will of God moved inexorably to the achievement of the Divine purpose.

### **Verses 30-31**

In previous times, the establishment of the Gentile nation was the hardened and any among them who were saved faced the necessity of forsaking their establishment and uniting with the covenant people. That unavoidable "preference" which belonged to Israel has now been wiped out, for now it is they who must forsake their establishment and unite with the "spiritual seed" in Christ, the Christian religion being, in a sense, an establishment belonging to the Gentiles.

God has equalized His treatment of Jews and Gentiles.

"Also now . . ." are big words here. They mean even as it was once with Gentiles, so now it is with Jews. How about those here said go have obtained salvation from someone's disobedience? Representatives of this class in the pre-Christian ages were that larger number saved because of the covenant's resting with Israel, thus making it easier for Jews to be saved than Gentiles. It is now harder for Jews to be saved, just as it was once harder for Gentiles to be saved, because it is their establishment which is now hardened.

There is still another sense in which some are saved by the disobedience of others. We have already seen that the hardening of Israel was the event which sent preachers of the word to the Gentiles. When they rejected Paul, he said, "We are turning to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46)

Now what did this mean? It meant that whatever remnant of the fleshly Israel were of the “spiritual seed” were totally reliant upon Gentile preaching for their salvation.

Certainly, the old fleshly Israel, the establishment intent on destroying the Christian faith, would never have preached it to them in a thousand years. The disobedience of hardened Israel triggered the extension of the gospel to Gentiles, whose preaching of it was then available to the “spiritual seed,” making it a fact that it was the disobedience of hardened Israel that brought salvation to the Gentiles, as well as to their own remnant of the “spiritual seed.”

“Because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. . .” The mercy shown to the Gentiles had its inevitable overtones in the conversion of certain Jews of Israel, who, without the Gentile ministry, could never have known the truth.

### **Verse 32**

“Shut up all in disobedience . . .” means that with the hardening of Israel, God has thus hardened or “shut up” the whole world unto disobedience, the Gentiles in pre-Christian ages, the Jews now, in order that His mercy might be extended to all, equally, and without partiality, and upon the same terms, namely that of being “His people” whom He foreknew”—the children of the promise,” the true seed of Abraham.

“Mercy extended to all” has reference to that mercy’s being extended impartially, and under the same conditions, to all alike. Everyone on earth “may” receive it, in the sense that he has permission and is invited to receive it. This aspect of meaning is quite clear in verse 31, where it is said, “They may now obtain mercy,” not “will obtain mercy.” “Mercy upon all” has reference to God’s invitation and permission, not to any fiat of arbitrarily saving everybody. Christ Himself stated that few shall be saved. (Matthew 7:13-14) This does not compromise the fact that God’s mercy is “upon all.” Attempts to make this verse teach universal salvation are denials of the entire corpus of Christian truth.

### **Verse 33**

From this verse to the end of the chapter, Paul traced the Divine record of God's dealing with humanity throughout all previous history and spelled out in the most concise and logical manner possible the fairness and justice of God's treatment of the Jews and Gentiles alike, with the conclusion stated in verse 33, that God had shut up all unto disobedience and that He had provided mercy for all, the two "all's" there being the measure of God's absolute justice and righteousness.

Paul terminates of this section of the epistle with such a warm and eloquent confidence to all the saved. Paul understood such things better than any other who ever lived, stated his absolute trust and confidence in the inscrutable ways of God, whether men understand them or not. God is in control. Nothing else really matters.

He who gave His Son to die for men will grant eternal happiness to every possible recipient of it, provided only that men, believe and obey Him.

### **Verse 34**

God's ways are higher than men's. His wisdom does not need human acceptance or approval. God's actions derive from considerations resident in Himself and have no reference to men's acceptance or rejection of them, and they are determined apart from and beyond any human factor whatever.

### **Verse 35**

Once more, Paul found a text from the Old Testament to be made the vehicle of his thought. "Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine." (Job 41:11)

Behold the true status of human and Divine relations. God is all in all. Not God's need of men. But their need of God is the basis of all spiritual thought.

### **Verse 36**

John Locke, Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Saint Paul, p. 359 noted, "This emphatic conclusion seems, in a special sense, to regard the Jews, whom the apostle would hereby teach modesty and submission to the overruling hand

of an all-wise God, whom they are very unfit to call to account, for His dealing so favorably with Gentiles. His wisdom and way are infinitely above their comprehension, and will they take upon them to advise Him what to do? Or is God in their debt? Let them say for what, and He shall repay it to them. This is a very strong rebuke to the Jews, but delivered, as we see, in a way very gentle and inoffensive, a method which the apostle endeavors everywhere to observe towards his nation.”

It must be remembered that Paul himself had lived in constant jeopardy of his very life for holding the views proclaimed here. The brutal beatings he received, the harassment before kings and governors, the imprisonments, the brutal purpose of slaying him, the whole evil tide that surged against his noble life—all that must indeed have bruised him. But thanks be to God, in such bruises, the full fruit of his matchless intellect in the discernment of the profoundest questions ever ordered with reverence to God’s dealings with men was brought forth unto perfection and made available to the men of all ages in the epistle to the Romans. Here indeed was one in Christ!

## **Chapter 12**

The doctrinal section of Romans concluded with the great doxology of the last chapter; and, following the style of other Pauline letters, as in Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians, etc., Paul next presented for his readers various practical applications of the holy gospel to their daily lives.

It may be doubted if there is a more influential chapter in the New Testament for determining what is acceptable Christian conduct, this being due not to the superiority of these inspired words over others, but due to the fact of their having been read so frequently in public Christian assemblies. Many a rural congregation throughout the world has had for its chief Sunday enlightenment the reading of this remarkable chapter by some member of the congregation, especially in those situations where the services of a full-time minister were not available.



## Verse 1

How magnanimous is that authority which, having the power to command, stoops to plead for mortal compliance with God's will! Kenneth S. Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, p. 204 wrote, "I beseech (urge) you . . ." means "I beg of you, please. . ."

"To present your bodies . . ." The body here is from the Greek word *soma*, meaning the physical body.

"A living and holy sacrifice . . ." contrasts the slain offerings of the old institution with the living sacrifices for the new. The sacrificial lamb, slain upon countless pre-Christian alters, was an eloquent and instructive type of the Lord Jesus Christ; but, when Christ came and died for man's sins as the type indicated He would, there followed the resurrection of Christ from the dead, a fact incapable of being prefigured by the slaughter of a lamb. In lieu of the old sacrifice, therefore, God ordained that the Christian himself be presented as a living sacrifice, dying to sin, buried with Christ in baptism, and rising up to walk in newness of life. (6:1-4)

It is evident that, in the Father's wise design, the Lord Jesus Christ is the focus of all true religion, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament alike. Every true Christian is himself a presented sacrifice witnessing to the great facts of the Christian gospel.

Richard A. Batey, loc. cit. was correct in saying that, "This living sacrifice can best be understood in terms of dying and rising with Christ. (Romans 6: 1-11)

The believer indeed presents his body for baptism this being an important element in the new birth itself and thus accomplishes a sacrifice which requires the volition and assent of the whole person; but the presenting does not end at the baptistry. There is also the formal and faithful representation of the body in public corporate worship, regularly throughout the Christian's probation.

Now, as in Job's day, "When the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (Job 1:6), the sons of God still present themselves before the Lord in the Lord's Day assemblies of the church (and other times also), a duty which Christians are categorically commanded not to neglect. (Hebrews 10:25)

The body is the chief instrument of the person and is to be presented to God through service to humanity, by preaching, teaching, ministering, and helping men, and not merely for some space of time, but throughout life.

“Holy . . .” modifies sacrifice; and, since the sacrifice in view is the body (*soma*), this amounts to an affirmation that the body, as such, is not evil. Paul noted in another place that the same body was, actually the “temple of the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 6:12-20) Such teaching prohibits the view that the body is itself sinful or evil.

“Acceptable to God . . .” is the pledge of inspiration that believers presenting themselves in the manner indicated shall indeed be accepted by God and blessed in so doing.

W. Sanday, Ellicott’s Commentary on the whole Bible p. 251 wrote, “The Christian sacrifice must be holy and pure in God’s sight; otherwise it cannot be acceptable to Him.”

“Which is your spiritual service . . .” This “refers to the mind,” and is an essential element of the meaning here.

Let a man employ his mind, his reason and intelligence in the contemplation of one fact alone, namely, that God created man; and then let him ask if it is reasonable or not, that such a being as God could have created man with such a nature as to make him happier in the service of the devil than in the service of God!

## **Verse 2**

“This world . . .” is not a reference to the physical geography of the planet, but is spoken of the natural habits, desires, and value-judgments of the natural man, the natural man being man apart from the loving guidance of his Maker.

Significantly, both the mind and the physical body, in these two verses, are seen as consciously controlled and directed. Therefore even the mind, which is often thought of as that portion of the person which does the controlling, must itself be brought into subjection to God.

That inner monitor of life does indeed have control over both mind and body is seen the Old Testament. “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. (Proverbs 16:32)

Whatever it is that rules man’s spirit, that essential center of human control is the seat of all authority over human thought and behavior.

Man is so created that the inner throne of life may not be occupied by himself, because it was made for God’s occupancy, God being Spirit in nature; but, alas, due to the fall in Eden, Satan, also spiritual, has been allowed by man to occupy the place intended for God. This throne, the inner monitor of the total life, must be occupied either by God or by Satan. Man may fancy that he may take the throne himself; but if he does, his very act of dethroning God has brought him under the sway of evil and elevated Satan to the seat of authority in his life. There are, thus, not three potential occupants of the soul-center, but only two.

That is why God’s classification of human kind is always dual, and never otherwise. Thus, such metaphors as the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the chaff, the wise and the foolish, those on the left and those on the right, God and Mammon, etc., appears so prominent in scripture.

Man has a natural bent toward evil, thus giving Satan an advantage in seizing control of the person, which always happens shortly after man reaches an accountable age; but every soul ever born yet retains enough of the image of God within to enable the soul to dethrone the evil one and enthrone the rightful Occupant. This is done by believing and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. This change of masters within is the enabling charter, the validating act, which enables the renewing of the mind which Paul here commanded; but if cannot be accomplished in an instant. That is why the command is here given to Christians who were already baptized and risen with Christ to newness of life. (6:1-10) After justification, which took place in the new birth, there is a growth process by which the mind is truly in a state of being renewed throughout life. Through the disciplines of prayer, study, worship, and meditation the inward man is gloriously renewed, as long as the true Occupant is maintained upon the proper eminence within. It was of this that Paul wrote, “Though the outward

Man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4: 16)

When Satan is on the throne, the mind itself is not free, but subservient to evil, all of the highest gifts of intelligence being absolutely denied by Satan.

It was of such persons that Paul wrote, “The god (Satan) of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:4)

The renewing of the mind is not possible except through the maintenance of God upon that inner throne which monitors all human activity, physical and mental. Under many different expressions in the Holy Scriptures, the description of this Divine inner Control is presented. Here are some of them: (Philippians 2:5, Acts 2:38f, Colossians 1:27, James 4:5, 2 Corinthians 6:16, and Colossians 3:16)

“That you may prove . . .” indicates that the soul which does indeed allow God to take over in his mind will enjoy the most overwhelming proof imaginable that such a state is the highest destiny of man, being in perfect harmony with the good and acceptable will of God. God’s way is the good way. His will is the perfect way for men; and the soul that tries it shall know it is true. His own experience will demonstrate it.

### **Verse 3**

Even after Christ is enthroned in the heart, the old mental habits and value-judgments of the natural man are prone to reassert themselves, these being the most persistent and pernicious of human sins. The body is relatively easy to bring under control; but the pride, ambition, conceit, vainglory and self-love of the mind can only be driven out by the filling of the personality with the “mind of Christ.” (Philippians 2:5f)

In this verse, Paul was still dealing with the problem of getting a new mind into Christianity. Salvation is the gift of God, and only that, even though no one may receive it while spurning the conditions upon which it is freely given.

“Not to think more highly of himself . . .” It was the primary sin of Israel that they fell into the thinking prohibited here, a lapse which led at last to their tragic hardening. In Chapter 11, Paul strongly warned against the same violation in the Gentiles, and that warning is in view here. (11:18-20)

### **Verses 4-5**

These verses touch upon the same view of the body of Christ that Paul outlined in 1 Corinthians 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, where it is declared that there “is but one body.” All Christians are part of the same entity.

Since Christians are all members of one body and therefore intimately joined in one communion and fellowship with each other, the savage competition for honors and preference should give place to loving concern on the part of every member for every one of the others. The various gifts, abilities, and “offices,” of functions, as distributed among the members of Christ’s body should not become the occasion of jealousy, envy, and deprecation on the part of the “have nots,” nor should arrogance, pride, conceit, and self-importance mar the attitude of the “haves.”

“In Christ . . .” is a key phrase, as often noted here in the book of Romans. Those alone who have been “baptized into Christ” are truly in Him; and this does not overlook the absolute necessity of faith and repentance also. Can it really be said of any man who will not be baptized, as Christ commanded all men to be—can it truly be said of such a man that believes (!) in Christ? Let every man answer that for himself.

### **Verses 6-8**

In these verses, Paul enumerated, with appropriate admonitions, some of the various gifts of Christians, the over-riding sentiment being that whatever one does in Christ’s service, it should be discharged with true faith in God who provided the ability to do it, and with the intention of doing it perfectly as possible, and especially without reference to odious comparisons, rankings, and preference which appear so generally in the patterns of human behavior.

“In his serving . . .” technically means the service of a deacon in the church; but the word is used more generally to include even the work of the apostles themselves, as indicated by Paul’s word “our “ in this verse. It refers to any kind of service undertaken for God’s glory in the church; and the instruction is that whatever is done should be done enthusiastically and faithfully.

“He who teaches . . .” refers to teachers as distinguished from prophets, some of the latter, at least, having inspired, whereas teachers, in the sense here, are not; although they must be understood as being faithful students and expositors of the sacred word.

1 Corinthians 12:28, lists the proper ranking of “apostles, prophets, teachers, gifts of healings, miracles, helps, governments, and divers kinds of tongues.” It is of surpassing interest that “governments” which receive such inordinate rankings among men are actually near the bottom. And as for “various kinds of tongues,” that was the lowest thing in the church! That Paul intended in that passage to rank these things consciously, is proved by the repeated use of such words as first, second, third, etc. The Christian teacher is third in this echelon, being outranked only by the inspired apostles and prophets.

“Exhortation, liberality, shows mercy . . .” are references to various Christian duties of a private and personal nature, the exhortation being that grace, humility, faith, simplicity, and consideration for others should always mark the services of them that have in mind to please the Lord.

The suggestion of “cheerfulness” as an accompaniment of showing mercy is most appropriate, since many a merciful or charitable deed has been nullified by the grudging and censorious manner that accompanied it.

## **Verse 9**

Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 395 noted that, “The love intended by this verse is probably love to all men, and not to Christians exclusively; as, in verse 10, brotherly affection is particularly specified.”

Hypocrisy is, of all vices, one of the worst to which Christians may be addicted. The most vehement denunciations of the Master Himself were directed against it. (Matthew 23)

Hating evil and loving good are not separate and distinct virtues, but part and parcel of each other. No man ever hated evil without loving good, or vice versa. Again, from Charles Hodge, *Ibid.*, p. 396, “The words rendered to abhor and to cleave to are particularly forcible, and express the highest degree of hatred on one hand, and of persevering devotion on the other.”

### **Verse 10**

The word for “love” in both this and the preceding verses is *agape*, meaning love in its most comprehensive and selfless qualities. There are two qualifying words which are added here as specifically applicable to members of the Christian family and the kind of love they should bear each other. It is all that the other is, and more. These qualifying words are *philostorgio*, meaning the kind of affection that exists in a family, and *philadelphia*, literally meaning brotherly love.

J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *The Standard Bible Commentary* p. 498 described it as, “(Like that) of an animal for its offspring, a parent for his child, a near relative for his close kin. Its use here indicates that the church tie should rival that of the family.”

“Give preference to one another . . .” carries the connotation of setting an example and taking the lead in the honoring of others. Instead of coveting and trying to grasp honors for one’s self, the Christian should rather desire to exalt his fellow Christian’s, even taking the lead in the conveyance of such honors to them. David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles* p. 226 stated it, “Instead of waiting for others to honor us, we should lead them in the manifestation of esteem and respect.”

### **Verse 11**

A lazy Christian is a contradiction of terms. Having been saved from the guilt and ravages of sin, the Christian is man at the zenith of his best powers. Strength, zeal, enthusiasm, vigor, and the full thrust of his total energy should distinguish the Christian's performance in business, trade, profession, study, artistic creation, or in everything else that he pursues as a vocation; and, above everything, such qualities should characterize his devotion and service in the church.

### **Verse 12**

R. C. Bell, studies in Romans, p. 138 wrote, "Our difficulty lies not in comprehending but in obeying."

The glorious hope of the Christian is more than enough to flood the soul with rejoicing, even in the midst of abounding disappointments, provided it is kept in focus by the mind. This hope is the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19) which enables the child of God to endure whatever storms may come, but not, however, without prayer. Prayer is the breathing of the redeemed soul, and the cessation or neglect of it will smother and destroy spiritual life.

### **Verse 13**

"Contributing . . ." refers to the giving of money or supplies and is the constant duty of every Christian, the first priority in such sharing of God's gracious gifts going to Christians, rather than to the world generally.

"The saints . . ." Griffith Thomas, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans, p. 341 wrote, "Its simple meaning is "belonging to God," and refers invariably to our position, not our condition, to our standing in Christ, and not to our actual state. It is most unfortunate that the word has been so frequently associated with exceptional holiness, when it means nothing of the kind, but only the actual fact that from the first moment of conversion every Christian soul is consecrated and devoted to God. The needs of God's people were great when



these words were written; and we know how keen Paul was in encouraging the Gentiles to help their poorer brethren in Jerusalem.

“Practicing hospitality . . .” in the Greek is “pursuing hospitality; and , as F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans; p. 436 said, “We are not to confine ourselves to according it when it is asked, but we should ever seek opportunities of exercising it.”

#### **Verse 14**

Love is thus revealed as the Christian weapon against evil itself, the heavenly device by which evil itself may be overcome by good, that being the great thought with which the chapter concludes.

#### **Verse 15**

This teaches the community of mankind. The Christian does not exist in a state of isolation and indifference to the fate of others, but, like his Holy Master, has compassion; being involved in and moved by the emotions of others, whether of joy or sorrow. Only the wicked or the thoughtless are calloused against the joys and sorrows of humanity; and, if one permits himself to become hardened against concern for fellow mortals, he thereby forfeits the likeness he might have had for him who wept at the grave of Lazarus, had compassion on the multitude, and replenished the wine at the wedding of Cana.

#### **Verse 16**

This verse is a prohibition of partiality and respect of persons within communities of Christians. The development within congregation of small groups of the allegedly elite, the formation of inner circles of preference, the stratification of churches along social, economic, or other lines of demarcation—these and all similar separations are evil.

Every member of the body of Christ is a sacred person, every Christian the brother of every other Christian; and God knows no aristocracy in His holy church except that of loving service.

“Do not be haughty in mind” or as some versions read, “Set not your mind on high things . . .” The high things mentioned here are the so-called high things which constitute the difference between the preferred and neglected Christians, things like wealth, privilege, education, social grace, power, office, and position in the world. Not setting the mind on such things means not being influenced by them and not allowing them to be the basis of one’s attitude toward his brothers in Christ.

“Do not be wise in your own estimation . . .” This admonition was implied in 11:25, being there a reflection of the sternest warnings against this vice earlier in that chapter, and here it is stated imperatively, having its immediate application to that form of conceit which allows petty little human arrangements of a “pecking order’ among the sacred fellowship of the redeemed as the basis upon which some associations are cultivated, and others neglected.

### **Verse 17**

‘Evil for evil . . .’ The child of God may not set himself to “get even” with another, nor retaliate in kind against any who might slight or wrong him. The one who receives the Lord upon the inner throne of his life and yields to the Divine will, will return good for evil, bless them that curse, and do good to them that spitefully use him.

“Respect what is right in the sight of all men . . .” is a restriction of Christian conduct to exclude anything held to be disreputable, dishonorable, reprehensible, or detestable by human opinion in society as a whole, or as officially expressed through the regulations imposed by government. All illegal activity is forbidden, being here condemned and proscribed, whether or not the law may be based upon absolute truth, the mere fact of a thing’s being illegal under the laws of the state being sufficient disqualification to deny it as permissible for a Christian. Gambling, for example, will never be permissible for any Christian, as long as it is illegal in fifty states.

Things that are tainted in the popular view of society as a whole are not for Christians, regardless of the specious logic which would deny this. John Murray,

The Epistle to the Romans Vol. II, p. 138 is correct in underscoring this verse as an additional principle of Christian behavior, “For the first time in this chapter, this type of consideration appears namely, the need for maintaining a deportment that approves itself to men. The close parallel, “For we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men” (2 Corinthians 8:21), points up this consideration.”

### **Verse 18**

This instruction to be at peace with all men is conditioned upon the objective possibility of being so.

Christ taught that men should give the cloak also, go the second mile, turn the other cheek, and avoid conflict by any honorable means whatsoever. What a shameful contrast is the conduct of some persons, allegedly Christian, who are ever spoiling for strife, and who, far from avoiding it, actually seek and enjoy all kinds of confrontations that lead to bitterness and confrontation.

### **Verse 19**

Vengeance is not a Christian prerogative, this being true for a number of reasons, such as:

- (1) God has forbidden it,
- (2) it is illegal in any civilized state, and
- (3) it is contrary to the Christian principle of overcoming evil with good, the latter being the master strategy against evil. The punishment of evil-doers is a prerogative of God and may not be usurped by His children.

“Vengeance is Mine, and retribution. in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them.” (Deuteronomy 32:35)

In Deuteronomy, the emphasis is upon the occurrence of some disaster, accident, or calamity to check the evil-doer, with the implication that God's agency might cause such to occur; but here Paul's thought pointed to the function of the magistrate and the legal system as the agency through which God will execute vengeance upon wrongdoing which is exactly the subject Paul is about to take up in chapter 13.

To punish evil-doers is God's prerogative; let Him do the punishing in His own way. God may, for sufficient reason, bring disaster upon a sinner, as surely implied in the Deuteronomy passage cited. Also, the final judgment is another theater of God's vengeance upon the wicked. The fact of God's taking vengeance is here revealed, as in the Old testament; and at least three manifestations of that vengeance are visible:

- (1) in the matter of direct providence (the case of Herod in Acts 12),
- (2) through legal authorities, and
- (3) at the final judgment.

There are also possibly other ways in which God executes vengeance which lie totally beyond our human knowledge or understanding.

### **Verse 20**

This is an amazing Scripture. The writer once heard of a woman involved in bitter quarrels with her husband. Seeking counsel, she was asked, "Have you tried heaping coals of fire on his head?" She replied, "No, but I tried a skillet of hot grease!"

She like many others failed to realize that Paul here used a figure of speech, a style of rhetoric often found in the sacred Scriptures. Richard A. Batey, *op. cit.*, p. 157 noted, "The original meaning of this figure of speech has been lost, but Paul suggests that the enemy will burn with shame for his abuse of one who loves him."

Paul, throughout this chapter, has consistently elaborated the strategy of overcoming evil with good, the same being the ancient strategy of the Lord, announced centuries earlier in the book of Proverbs, saying, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” (Proverbs 25:21-22)

The motive of providing food and drink for an enemy cannot be that of increasing his punishment, nor for aggravating his guilt, the true purpose, or motive being the effective discipline of the Christians’ own spirit.

### **Verse 21**

Here appears the real reason for extending kindness to enemies. If the child of God should retaliate in kind for all acts of enmity against himself, he would shortly find himself engaging in all kinds of shameful and wicked conduct. To prevent such an unwholesome development, the servant of the Lord must launch a counter-attack, returning good for evil, and deploying good actions against the evil actions of the enemy.

This verse is the grand strategy of God with regard to human evil. The natural man finds himself living and operating in a world where one rotten apple can make a barrel of good apples rotten; but the spiritual man, having the mind of the Spirit, proceeds upon the premise that one good apple might make a barrel of rotten apples sound!

## **CHAPTER 13**

The great need of Paul’s revelation of the proper Christian attitude toward the secular state derived from a number of very important considerations. The whole Jewish nation groaned under the yoke of Roman tyranny, longed to escape it, and had participated in a number of bloody insurrections against Roman authority.

At the very moment Paul was writing Romans, practically the whole Jewish nation was preparing its final insurrection which was destined to culminate only a few years later (70 A.D.) in the destruction of Jerusalem by Vespasian and Titus.

The question of submission to a government like Rome was the most burning question of the day. The Christians themselves were widely regarded as a Jewish sect, were known to acknowledge supreme allegiance to the Messiah, and were easily confused with the extreme nationalistic movements among the Jews. Paul himself was mistaken for the leader of an insurrection by the military tribune himself (Acts 21:38). It was extremely important that Christian behavior should conform to a strict pattern of respect and submission to the lawful government. Otherwise, the whole Christian movement might have been swallowed up in the overwhelming destruction of Israel, then impending, and so soon to be accomplished.

Also, there was certain Christian practices which might have led them easily to despise the state. In all legal and civil disputes, Christians were encouraged to bypass the pagan courts of justice and settle, as far as possible, all such questions among themselves. (1 Corinthians 6:1ff) They did not participate in the public festivals and ceremonies given over to the deification of the emperor, and might, therefore, have been suspect as enemies of the government.

### **Verse 1**

The state itself, no less than God's church, is a Divine institution, existing by God's permission and authority, and absolutely necessary for the continuity of the race of men upon the earth; and it is the unqualified duty of the Christian to submit to it, except in those situations where doing so would break the commandments of God.

Unbridled human nature is a savage beast that lies restless and uneasy under the restraint imposed by the state, being ever ready, at the slightest opportunity, to break its chains and ravage the world with blood and terror.

Paul's revelation that the state is "established by God," and is an effective instrument of the holy will is not a new doctrine invented by Him to ease the Christian community through a difficult political period, but it is an essential element of Jesus' teaching.

## **CHRIST AND THE STATE**

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36) His kingdom lies, for the most part, within a sector totally removed and separated from the secular state, that institution being also "ordained of God" but charged with a different function, that of preserving order upon earth. Christ Himself honored God's ordained institution.

Christ 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. It is true that His holy teachings had the profoundest influence upon the course of history, and it was always as leaven and not as dynamite that His influence worked.

In the New Testament, there was never any hint of Christians organizing any kind of campaign to change or nullify laws. That some laws were unjust was clear to all; but Paul sent a runaway slave back to his Christian master. (Philemon 1:17)

There is no suggestion here that the evil laws of Rome may be justified, nor the evil laws of any other state; but, in the light of Christian acceptance of such laws under the direct guidance of Christ and the apostles, the conclusion is demanded that the constituted government must be viewed as "ordained of God" and entitled to Christian obedience.

To that affluent host of Christians in present-day America, let it be thundered that they must not now allow the submerged torrent of blood, lust, and anarchy to break through. This may be prevented by their love, support, honor, and prayers of the present government, and by the necessity of their voting in a

manner consistent with their prayers, to the end that the government may be able to survive the assaults being made upon it by the forces of evil.

Present-day Christians are the privileged heirs of the greatest earthly inheritance ever known in the history of the world, a fact that angers Satan. Don't throw it away, or allow some revolutionary to rape you intellectually and rob you of it. Death and destruction shall reward you if you turn your back upon the teachings of the Savior and cast in your destiny with the secessionists.

### **Verse 2**

Jesus Christ our Lord never disobeyed any law, nor did He ever advocate civil disobedience, or any other kind of disobedience. Jesus said, "I did not come to abolish, (the Law) but to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17) This verse teaches that breaking the laws of human governments is equivalent to breaking God's laws, because such laws are also of God's will and authority.

### **Verse 3**

It is a comment upon the effectiveness and success of the state as God's ordained institution that such a statement stands as truth. There has hardly been a state in history where the private exercise of Christian faith has been the object of government hatred and punishment.

### **Verse 4**

The word rendered "it" in this verse could be translated "he" to make it personal, for only a person could be spoken of as bearing the sword. The person in view, therefore, is the policeman, the legally constituted arm of human government, making the law-enforcement men of cities, states, and nations to be every whit as much "ordained of God" as any minister of the gospel. A gutless namby-pambyism has come to characterize far too many Christians of this age, who naively and stupidly suppose that police departments are dispensable, that love can just take everything, and that our own enlightened (?) age does not need the old fashioned relics of barbarism, such as policemen and jails. The policeman also is God's man and that without him there is nothing.



Capital punishment is clearly allowed to be a legitimate prerogative of human government, by Paul's statements here. Those states which have yielded to the naive "do-gooder-ism" of the present age by abolishing the capital penalty will eventually pay the price of their foolishness.

Present-day lawgivers are not wiser than God, who laid down such penalties and enforced them in the Old Testament dispensation. True, the Ten Commandments says, "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13); but the same God who said that also said, "The man shall surely be put to death." (Numbers 15:35)

There is difference in the two Hebrew words, *ratsach* and *harag*, the latter meaning "put to death," and the other meaning "murder." Murder is, of course, forbidden; but the imposition of the death penalty by government is not forbidden. Note: Taking the gun out of the policeman's hands is the surest way to make all men victims of the lawless.

### **Verse 5**

There are twin reasons for the Christian's observance of society's laws; first, as a matter of conscience, it is a sin for him to break the law; and second, in order that he might not incur the legal penalty of lawbreaking. The preeminent consideration is that of pleasing God, as Peter expressed it, "Submit yourself for the Lord's sake to every human institution." (1 Peter 2:13)

### **Verse 6**

Being part of the institution "ordained by God," which is the state, they partake of the dignity and authority pertaining to it, and are entitled to obedience, respect, courtesy, honor, and the cooperation of all Christians, who, in the discharge of such obligations, are doing so "as unto the Lord, and not "as unto men," for such is the commandment of the Scriptures.

### **Verse 7**

Had there been any doubt, up to here, that the total establishment of human government is to be honored, respected, and obeyed by Christians, upon pain of

God's displeasure if they fail, it would have been effectively removed by this blanket inclusion of "all." Peter's words, already referred to, are, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution: whether to a king as the one in authority; or to governors as sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondservants of God. Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." (1 Peter 2:13-17)

Before leaving this section of Romans which details the relationship of the Christian to his government, one other consideration needs emphasis. Such is the attractiveness to the masses of mankind of the idea of overthrowing governments which they consider unjust or oppressive, that even Christian ministers sometimes make a distinction between obeying "good" governments and "bad" governments, actually suggesting in their specious logic that it is all right for conscientious and well-intentioned activists to go forth and pull down the government if they think it is bad. No. a Christian is prohibited from any such role, nor may he even "resist." (13:2)

Paul commanded Christians to obey civil laws, honor policemen as ministers of God, pray for the establishment and insisted that the total arm of human government be respected, honored, and obeyed.

It is a sin for a Christian to engage in the projected overthrow of an earthly government, despite any faults of injustices that might either correctly or falsely be ascribed to the state they would overthrow.

### **Verse 8**

William M. Greathouse, Beacon Bible Commentary p. 253 said, "This means do not continue in a state of owing any of the obligations referred to in verse 7, but fulfill them and discharge them. There is only one debt of which you can never get rid of—the debt of love."

The discharge of all debts and the keeping of all commandments is summed up in the one word of a man's loving others as he loves himself. This applies to all commandments of a social or man-ward nature. Paul made this nice distinction by quoting only man-word obligations in his next statement.

### **Verses 9-10**

The Christian life is realized, not by an item tabulation of commandments kept or broken, but by a conscious filling of the heart with love toward others, a fulfillment, made possible only by the sacred enthronement within, of the Holy Spirit.

This passage does not teach that if one loves his neighbor he has license to break any of the commandments, but that truly loving one's neighbor will positively restrain from any sinful action against one's neighbor. This is profoundly true and means that the first and uppermost concern of God is that human hearts should indeed overflow with love to mankind, such love making it impossible that specific evil deeds in the social spectrum could be committed.

### **Verse 11**

"To awaken from sleep . . ." can be sleep from either lethargy or sin. "The day," verse 12, is in the sense of Christ's coming judgment upon Jerusalem was "at hand," and only a little over a decade removed from the time Paul wrote this letter.

Paul's reference to Christ's coming, and such expressions as "the day is at hand," applied to the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the judicial coming of Christ in that epic event. There is no ground for supposing that Paul was ignorant to the point of confusing the judicial coming with the final coming.

### **CONCERNING SLEEP**

Paul's mention here of a spiritual condition called "sleep," and his call for men to awaken out of it, provide strong emphasis upon the dangers of such stupor.

The person who sleeps is in a state of insensibility, not knowing anything that

is going on. It is also a state of inactivity. The sleeper is doing nothing, all activity being suspended. Many a soul has been lost while its possessor slept. A thousand examples from history could be brought forward to show what a disastrous thing sleep may be.

(1) Some sleep the sleep of Jonah, an unrealistic sleep.

He went aboard a ship putting out to sea, descended into the bottom of the vessel and went to sleep. Not even the mighty storm which descended upon them aroused him. What a perfect picture is that of a man who will not face reality!

Many a sinner is sleeping the sleep of Jonah. Sin is a roaring tornado all around. It reaches out to destroy; it tosses to and fro; but men give no heed. They are asleep. (13:11; Ephesians 5:14)

(2) Some sleep the sleep of the weary, as did the disciples Peter, James and John in the Garden of Gethsemane.

They were tired. That tremendous week in Jerusalem had been enough nearly to overwhelm them. The tired fishermen of Galilee were not accustomed to being stretched out in such an endurance contest as that which marked the Lord's final week in Jerusalem.

People tire of the ceaseless struggle, become worn out with the dull routine, and, numbed by the deadly monotony, they fall asleep; but, while they nod Judas is making a deal with the high priest; and, in a little while, the soldiers will appear to lead the Lord away. Of such, one can hear the Master say, "What, could you not watch with me one hour?"

(3) Some sleep the sleep of presumption, like Samson upon the knees of Delilah.

There was a man who knew all the dangers, but slept anyway. He could always rise to the occasion. He could always go out and "shake himself as at other times," so he thought, and was therefore contemptuous of the danger.

Many today sleep like that. They know the folly and peril of the neglect of prayer, study, and worship; they know how deadly the sting of sin is; but they sleep." "I know! I know the truth!" they cry, but they sleep anyway; and, while they sleep, there comes inevitably the hour when it is too late, and for them, as for Samson, they are led away to the blinding irons and the mill and the work of a donkey till life is ended.

(4) Some sleep the sleep of the sluggard. (Proverbs 24:30-34)

These are they who are going to be saved tomorrow, who plan to stir themselves in a convenient season, who fully intend to obey the Lord, but not now.

(5) Some sleep the sleep of Eutychus, the sleep of the injured.

Eutychus fell out of the third story window during one of Paul's sermons and was taken up for dead; but Paul said, "His life is in him." It might be concluded that he was merely unconscious due to the fall. It is of that kind of sleep that we speak.

Spiritually, some have sustained near-fatal injuries and continue in a state of sleep. Gross sin, terrible disappointment, the traumatic experience of church division or some other catastrophe has left them insensible through spiritual sleep, and they must be aroused or perish.

(6) Some sleep the sleep of the foolish, the negligent, or careless.

Jesus' parable of the tares sown in the wheat emphasized that such a disaster took place "while men slept." (Matthew 13:24-25)

Someone just went to sleep when he should have been on guard. Many sleep like that. Parents sleep while the devil is seducing their children. Some young people sleep, thinking that they have many years in which to make their peace with God; but, while they sleep, they are taken away.

(7) Still others sleep the sleep of spiritual death, as did certain Christians in Corinth. (1 Corinthians 11:30)

“Some sleep . . . “ is a euphemism for death, the sleep from which one does not awaken till the sound of the trumpet and the gathering of the hosts for judgment.

Some are already so far gone into such a fatal sleep that they cannot hear the cries of loved ones, nor the message of the gospel, nor the roar of the waves of Jordan.

The sleep of those Christians had been induced by their neglect of the Lord’s Supper and public worship, which shows how easily men may slip into such a deadly sleep.

May all the sleepers be aroused by the call of the apostle’s words that ever stand, upon the sacred page, “Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine upon you.” (Ephesians 5:14)

“Salvation is nearer to us than when we believed . . .” is far from being a statement that it was, even at that time, “near” in the sense of soon. This is invariably true of all, that salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Every man’s salvation is nearer as life unfolds; and for every man, it is sealed and assured, when his faithfulness has been manifested even unto the end. Writing to Timothy, in the last of his apostolic messages, Paul said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Significantly, even in that last statement, Paul did not indicate the he expected the immediate second coming of Christ.

“That day . . .” as discreetly used here, leaves the time element of when it will occur absolutely out of sight.

## Verse 12

Paul's imagery here still refers to sleepers waiting too long to rouse out of slumber. They were such as had slept long past the normal time of awakening. It was not merely dawn, but daylight had fully burst upon them. This metaphor applied with specific force to the lifting of the long night of pagan darkness which had wrapped the world in woe. Paul was saying that darkness was lifted years ago; the glorious daylight of the gospel is already shining. There are Christians, of all places, in Rome itself! The old sins and debaucheries of the pagan darkness must be cast off.

The armor of light was available for all who would receive and wear it. Ephesians 5:14 quoted in verse 11 contains the words, "Christ will shine upon you." This does not mean at the judgment, but right now! Thus, "day" in this passage, having reference to the same time, means "at the present time, in the gospel age.

"The armor of light . . ." is one of Paul's favorite metaphors for the gospel of Jesus Christ, which he called the "whole armor" in Ephesians 6:13-17. Paul made the "whole armor" to be the truth, or the gospel of salvation.

## Verse 13

"Let us behave properly as in the day . . ." suggests the beauty and adornment of Christian behavior, which is of a kind not to be ashamed of in broad open daylight, contrasting sharply with the Gentile debaucheries usually committed at night and therefore called the works of darkness in verse 12. Deeds that are becoming to Christians are those of virtue, integrity, faithfulness, purity, and love. It was becoming of Christ to fulfill all righteousness. (Matthew 3:15)

"Carousing and drunkenness . . ." refers to riotous and boisterous conduct, such as undisciplined behavior that follows indulgence in alcoholic beverages.

"Strife and jealousy . . ." refer to the animosities of men inflamed with liquor, sated with vice, and living the life of debauchery

## Verse 14

This verse reads that Christ Himself is to be put on by Christians. J. Barmby, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 18 (ii), p. 392 observed that, "Christians are said to have already put on Christ in their baptism; here they are exhorted still to do so. There is no real contradiction; they are but exhorted to realize in actual life the meaning of their baptism."

"Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts . . ." refers to the investment of time, preparation and money in such a manner as to allow or facilitate the gratification of fleshly lusts. When one thinks of the countless pleasure palaces, and other hideaways bought and provided for no other purpose than that of facilitating the fulfillment of fleshly lusts, the apostle's wisdom in forbidding such investments to Christians is evident.

## CHAPTER 14

In chapter 12, Paul deals with the various moral obligations, in chapter 13, with political obligations and in this chapter with reciprocal obligations of church members to each other regarding differences of opinions.

The ability of the Christian fellowship to survive in situations where strong differences of opinion tends to disrupt unity required that specific instructions be given to the problem of containing within the sacred fellowship contradictory views, not on matters essential, but upon matters indifferent.

This problem has confronted the church of every generation, and divisions have occurred again and again over things secondary, or even trivial.

Verses 1-12 of this chapter give instructions for the over-scrupulous Christians who made indifferent things a matter of conscience; and verses 13-23 outline the instructions for the proper employment of Christian liberty.

There is a marked difference between the problems here discussed from the similar problems of the Galatians and Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 4:10-11)



Those Christians scrupled at eating meat sacrificed to idols, whereas those addressed here did not eat meat at all and apparently drank no wine, verse 21. There is a possibility that the various days esteemed as sacred differed to some extent from the Sabbaths and festivals of the Jewish institution, and quite possibly included some days or festivals esteemed sacred by the pagans.

Contrasted with such a firm attitude there is the fact that Paul made little if any effort in this chapter to correct the errors of the weak brethren, and withheld any denunciation of them comparable to that hurled at the Galatians, giving the strongest emphasis to containing the problem within the boundary of Christian love, rather than taking up the task of rooting out the error. This latter fact goes far to establish the fact that the errors of the “weak brethren” in Rome were in some manner different from the similar group in Galata and Corinth.

The most surprising thing in this chapter is that the “weak brother” is identified as the over-strict one, and not as the one who exercised his liberty in Christ.

### **Verse 1**

The sacred fellowship of Christians must not be broken over differences of opinion regarding things indifferent or secondary. Christ has received all Christians, and the least they can do is to receive each other. How utterly unlike Christ is the bitter and vindictive rejection of a brother in Christ over things involving his weak conscience! Paul’s teaching here clearly demands the conclusion that a Christian can be wrong about some things, and yet entitled to full fellowship.

The weak brethren in view here were plainly wrong about their vegetarianism, but were to be retained in fellowship despite this.

“But not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions . . .” is translated in several ways; and perhaps the Holy Spirit chose words with a broad range of meaning in order to include a number of ideas.

The weak brother should be received, but in such a way as not to make his petty scruples the rule of the congregation, and not for the purpose of disputing with him, concerning, those scruples, and not for the purpose of subjecting the weak brother to any pressure with regard to changing his scruples. He should be accepted, and loved, scruples and all!

### **Verse 2**

Thus, it is plainly a vegetarian scruple that Paul was dealing with; and there is no evidence, as some fancy, that they had become so merely by the efforts to avoid eating meat sacrificed to idols.

It goes without question that they were wrong in making such a dietary thing into a religious matter; but they had evidently done so. Paul taught that “every creature of God is” good for food (1 Timothy 4:1-5), and Jesus Himself had made “all meats clean.” (Mark 7:19)

The nature of the weakness of those brethren is thus inherent in the fact that, either through ignorance or prejudice, they had not received the teaching of Christ and His apostles on the matters in question. This was a serious weakness; but, in fairness, it must be noted that the apostles themselves had difficulty receiving the full light on this question. Peter, for example, long after Pentecost, still insisted that he had never eaten “anything uncommon or unclean,” indicating that he still kept to the scruples of Judaism. (Acts 10:14)

It has always been an easy error for men to fall into the notion that they might attain heaven on the basis of a certain kind of diet.

### **Verse 3**

What a natural thing it was for the Christians of strong faith to set a low value upon a brother with all those silly scruples! How easy it was for the scrupulous to judge others as “liberal” and condemn them for not accepting the more strict behavior!

With some Christians thus tempted to set at naught some of their brethren, and others tempted to judge their brethren, the holy fellowship was in danger of being ruptured; and Paul moved to prevent yielding to either temptation upon the consideration that God had received both classes.

There is a further echo in this chapter of the Jewish-Gentile relationship, since the Christians of Jewish background were far more likely to be the scrupulous than were those of Gentile training. Thus, in all probability, their differences were reinforced by racial thoughts and might easily have resulted in division if Paul's instructions had not been provided.

#### **Verse 4**

The presumption of one Christian judging another overlooks the fact that God judges all, a prerogative categorically withheld from mortal, infallible men, and wisely so. No man is capable of accurate judgment. Judging the conduct of other Christians is a subject of such universal concern within the church that the collateral Scriptures applicable to this question should be remembered here.

### **ON JUDGING OTHERS**

Jesus said, "Do not judge lest you be judged" (Matthew 7:1); and, while upon the earth, not even the blessed Son of God Himself judged men, saying, "I did not come to judge the world but to save the world." (John 12:47)

This is not a prohibition of discerning other men's actions, but of presuming to utter a condemnation, break the fellowship, or disturb the unity of the church.

Any Christian might lawfully make a private, personal, and tentative evaluation of another person's conduct; but he is forbidden to pass judgment, in the sense of stating an opinion, announcing a conclusion, or otherwise making such an appraisal known of others. The trouble with judging is that it breeds a reciprocal adverse judgment from them that are judged, thus multiplying and proliferating all kinds of bitterness, recriminations, and vindictive hatred.

“Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law; but if you do judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you to judge your neighbor?” (James 4:11-12)

Judging fellow Christians tends to freeze them in the line of conduct judged; whereas, by the exercise of patience and forbearance, their undesirable conduct might, in time, become relaxed and changed due to growth and development.

In the warmth and fellowship of Christian service many Christians find the grace to grow and develop strength; and it should be remembered that every Christian begins as a babe in Christ.

NOTE: Robertson L. Whiteside, A New Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to Saints in Rome P. 271 cautioned saying, “This injunction against judging must be confined to such matters as Paul was discussing. How could anyone beware of false prophets, unless we first judge them to be false prophets? (Matthew 7:15). And we must judge a man to be an evil worker, or we could not obey the command to “beware of evil workers.” (Philippians 3:2) Neither could we obey Paul’s injunction (16:17-18), without judging which men belong to the class he mentions?”

“Servant of another . . .” is an appeal to an earthly situation in which one does not meddle in the business of judging the servants of other men; and thus, how much more appropriate it is for Christians to refrain from judging the servants of the Lord? The power of the Lord to make a man stand, despite his errors, is seen in the strength of believers to remain faithful to the church, a strength which comes only from the Lord, and a strength which exists in some instances coupled with all kinds of weakness, errors, and even sins.

## **Verse 5**

Many Christians of Jewish background had faithfully observed the Sabbaths, festivals, and celebrations of the Jewish institutions from childhood, and

therefore counted such occasions more holy than others, continuing to mark and observe them after their acceptance of Christianity, in such a manner “regards one day above another.”

Gentile Christians, on the other hand, more easily accepted the Christian teaching that all time is holy, every day of the week being sacred to the child of God; and thus, in that way, he esteemed “every day alike.”

The teaching of this verse does not relax the commandments to observe the Christian assembly, observe the Lord’s Supper and lay by in store “on the first day of the week.” Nor does “regards every day alike” authorize the Lord’s Supper to be observed on just any day. Paul was dealing here with an utterly different question, that of the Jewish holy days, such as various Sabbaths. The Galatian churches had taken up such observances and were vigorously condemned for it. (Galatians 4:10-11)

“Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind . . .” is an appeal for conscientious conduct on the part of every Christian. The man who violates his conscience, as well as the person who might have influenced him to violate it, are both guilty of sin in such a transgression, as pointed out by an apostle. (1 John 3:20)

Thinking that a thing is right cannot make it so; but thinking that a thing is wrong can indeed make it so for him who thus thinks.

## **Verse 6**

No man may actually suppose that all of his opinions are accurate; but any Christian may walk before the Lord in purity of intention and conscience. One of the glorious facts of Christian service is that God judges Christians with more regard to their sincere purpose than with reference to the degree of perfection in their attainment.

### **Verse 7**

In a sense, every man is his brother's keeper. Paul meant here that whatever a man does, or however he lives, it is his relationship to the Lord that determines all. Not merely such things as eating, not eating, observing day, or not observing days, but the life itself is sustained in a holy sense of belonging, not to one's self, but to the Lord.

### **Verse 8**

Life has many tedious and toilsome duties, but everything the child of God does is done in service to the Lord. Even death itself here appears in a new dimension, for Christians are the Lord's even in death. Paul himself lived in daily contemplation of death, living a life that was constantly threatened and in jeopardy every hour. He was the Lord's, not merely in life, but in death as well. Every child of God may claim the same legacy. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

### **Verse 9**

Any system of philosophy or religion that operates only during man's mortal life is worthless at last. The distinction of Christianity is that the Savior is Lord of life and death, both alike lying totally within the perimeter of His omnipotent love and power. In such a sovereignty as Paul expressed here concerning Christ, He partakes of the godhead, as He himself said, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:32)

Life and death are viewed in Scripture as two states of existence, both of which are under Divine authority and control.

### **Verse 10**

Paul's question shows not merely disapproval, but wonder and incredulity that men could be so oblivious to their own need of mercy in the impending judgment, and so unreasonably conceited as to busy themselves with judging their fellow Christians. Thus, in this another instance, looms the large problem which is never very far out of sight in this entire epistle namely, that of human

pride and conceit. In fact, careful study of Romans shows quite clearly that practically all of it bears on this very thing.

William M. Greathouse, *Beacon Bible Commentary* p. 280, observed, “We are responsible to Christ; we shall appear before Him, there is therefore no place for uncharitable judgments or self-righteous exclusiveness between Christian men.”

“The judgment seat of God . . .” What an antidote for conceit that is! This is the same as “the judgment seat of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 5:10) The direction of the thought here through the twelfth verse is: stop judging your brother, for God will judge him and you!

### **Verse 11**

This quotation from Isaiah 45:23 was frequently in the apostle’s thoughts, as, for example, when he wrote the Philippians, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10-11)

R. C. H. Lenski, *the interpretations of Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* p. 830, he observes: In neither Isaiah nor here nor in Philippians are “every knee” and “every tongue” restricted to the godly. Paul cites the passage here where he speaks only of Christians; but that means that what the Lord said about every knee to God and confess Him signify only that at the time of the last judgment all men shall acknowledge Him as God; in more detail, “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The final judgment will be a day of overwhelming sorrow for rebellious and wicked men; for Christ’s second coming shall not be realized by some universal blossoming of social peace and good will among men, nor by the emergence of some more noble and just society, but it will be a day of terror and remorse. (Matthew 24:30)

## **Verse 12**

With this verse, Paul ended one phase of teaching regarding weak brethren and strong brethren and passed to a consideration of the more comprehensive doctrine of Christian liberty and the proper exercise of it.

## **Verse 13**

Paul here included himself, not as a confession of guilt in the matter of the judgments he was condemning, but in order to make a more delicate and persuasive appeal to his readers. R. C.

R. C. H. Lenski, *loc. cit.*, noted, “Expectations against wrong are in place for all of us, if for no other reason, then at least that we may keep on avoiding wrong.”

Lenski also has a very dramatic translation of this verse, thus, “But rather make this your judgment not to place a stumbling block or a deathtrap for your brother.”

In this, and to the end of the chapter, Paul spoke of the proper use of Christian liberty. Having shown that it is sinful to judge fellow Christians concerning things immaterial and unessential, he proceeded to show how the governing principle in such forbearance is that of love for men who are beneficiaries of the blood of Christ, who have been redeemed from sin and made to stand in the body of Christ Himself.

It is no trivial matter to cause a brother to stumble. The “falling” here means falling from God’s grace, falling away from the eternal inheritance, and falling so as to be lost eternally.

## **Verse 14**

Paul did not here place himself upon either side of such a question and refrained utterly from making it a matter of faith. It was all a question of knowledge, and the weak brother simply did not have sufficient information, a deficiency that Paul sought to supply, not through any arrogant pronounce-



ments of his own, but by humbly calling attention to the things he had received from the Lord.

There are no “elite” in Christ’s kingdom, whether from distinctions of knowledge, power, wealth, office, or anything else. All are one in Christ.

James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles*, p. 128, paraphrased this verse saying, “I know by the light of reason, and am persuaded by revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ, that there is no kind of meat unclean naturally. Nevertheless, to him that believeth certain kinds to be unclean, to that man they are unclean; and he will sin if he eat them, either to indulge his own taste or to gain the favor of others.”

### **Verse 15**

With regard to how the weak brother may be grieved, Wm. M. Greathouse, *op. cit.*, p. 262 wrote, “For one thing, it will pain his overly sensitive conscience to see you do what (however wrongly) he regards as sinful. But the real damage occurs when he is emboldened by your example to do what he believes God has forbidden him to do. He who eats with a bad conscience is a waverer who is condemned by his doubts.”

“You are no longer walking according to love . . .” is a serious charge. The Christian’s credential of the hope of glory lies specifically in this, that he shall love the brethren.

“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. “ (1 John 3:14)

The so-called fault, therefore, of setting a brother at naught, is no minor thing, but a mortal sin. Stated here in the negative, “You are no longer walking according to love,” this vice of not loving a brother was positively stated by John in the very next verse, thus, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” (1 John 3:15)

Paul was in complete harmony with John and all the apostles in denouncing a lack of love as a fatal offense. “Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died” shows the fruit of a loveless attitude. It will destroy a fellow child of God. Paul wrote the same to the Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 8:11-12)

“Destroy,” in this verse is therefore synonymous with “weak” (“perish”) in the admonition to Corinth. These warnings teach emphatically that a brother’s soul may be lost because of a loveless attitude on the part of some “strong” Christian, who by such a lack of love, himself incurs the penalty of sinning “against Christ.”

### **Verses 16-17**

The sin against Christ through a lack of love among Christians is an evil that reaches far beyond the congregation itself, bringing into dishonor and ineffectiveness the missionary outreach of the church, and actually resulting in blasphemy of outsiders against the Christian message.

Paul here shifted the thought away from the individual consequences of setting at naught and judging the brethren and directed it to a consideration of the harm to the entire church which resulted from such violations of the principle of unity and love.

When Christians are divided and viciously attack each other over such things as clothing, hair styles, dietary habits, etc., outsiders certainly make sport of their Christianity.

“Joy” here is a subjective condition within the hearts of Christians, and from this it is likely that righteousness and peace are likewise subjective and refer to the righteous behavior and inward peace of children of God.

The sacred privileges of the kingdom and the blessed fruit of the indwelling Spirit of God are of such surpassing benefit that any adjustment of the strong Christian’s behavior to accommodate the conscience of the weak is a trifle indeed.

The great concern is not the exercise of liberty in such matters as food and drink, but the holy joy of the sacred communion of the fellowship in Christ.

### **Verse 18**

In the two previous verses, Paul had in view the evil speaking of outsiders against the church which violated the principles taught here; here the approval of men in general is promised to churches which honor the commandment to walk in love, even toward the weak brother.

John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 195 wrote, "We may not rightly restrict the approval in view to those who are of the household of faith. The damage which befalls the church through inconsiderate conduct of strong believers has its repercussions in the judgments of those outside; and the good name of the church as the community of love and concord should be maintained so that adversaries may not have an occasion to speak reproachfully."

Nothing is so capable of endearing a congregation to the community at large as a reputation of loving concern for one another in the congregation itself.

Many have been won to an acceptance of Christianity through the glowing warmth of a true fellowship of loving concern among a community of Christians.

### **Verse 19**

The admonition of these words demands that a true Christian follow a constructive program of doing the things that produce harmony, induce fellowship, and lead to fuller appreciation and love among the brethren. Instead of channeling all of his activities along the lines of what is personally pleasing to himself, the genuine Christian must so order his behavior as to make it a constructive and positive force of building love and harmony within the sacred body of the church, consciously directing all of his words and deeds to that end.

"Building up of one another . . ." The root from which this word comes has reference to construction, as in the erection of a building, being related to the word "edifice," and thus conveying the thought of building up the church,

instead of tearing it down. Everyone should ask themselves, “What am I doing to build up the church?”

### **Verse 20**

Even if a Christian may conscientiously do certain things (eating meat is here only an example), he should avoid doing so under any circumstance that might jeopardize the conscience of others. A parallel case is seen in Paul’s word to Corinth. (1 Corinthians 10:27-29)

### **Verse 21**

A present-day application of this requires that no Christian, even if he is convinced that he may drink wine, should ever do so in a situation offensive to the conscience of brethren who hold that it is a sin to do so.

The wine of Paul’s day bore little resemblance to the burning liquors which today are sold under such a label. The mention of drinking wine is the first in this chapter and shows that the problems in view here were somewhat different from those of Corinth and Galatia.

### **Verse 22**

“Have as your own conviction before God . . .” is a vindication of the strong in their possession of Christian liberty.

They truly enjoy this liberty in God’s presence and are not called upon to surrender it; but, of course, they must not flaunt it to the discomfiture and destruction of the weak.

“Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves . . .” The idea here is, “Happy is the man who does not condemn himself by overriding his own conscience to test things he inwardly believes to be wrong.” There is a type of person who may be unduly influenced by what is held to be popular and who may thus go beyond his conscience in order to conform to the behavior pattern of others.

## Verse 23

Once again, Paul affirmed the supremacy of a good conscience. Doubters, who, through a desire to be popular, or other insufficient reasons, might override their own consciences, stand condemned. If one has been brought up to believe that certain things are wrong, being hereby in conscience opposed to the doing of them, he cannot merely wave such scruples aside. But, if such knowledge and faith are not in him, the old prohibition stands for him; and he may not go beyond them and thus involve himself in condemnation.

“Whatever is not from faith is sin . . .” Where the conscience is in doubt, the definition of proper conduct must be made on the basis of what the word of God says; and, lacking any clear knowledge of what the word says, or, if knowing it, lacking full confidence and faith in it, the person is bound by his scruple.

F. Godet, *op. cit.*, p. 464 commented, “What a man cannot do as His redeemed one and in the joy of His salvation, must not be done at all. Otherwise this act, of which faith is not the soul, becomes sin, and may lead to the result indicated in verse 20, “The total destruction of God’s work in us.”

R. C. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 169 wrote, “Who can read this chapter without realizing that Christian doctrines are of unequal value, and that big and little things should never exchange places? Men must not make things tests of fellowship which God does not make conditions of salvation; because, in so doing, they reject those whom God receives and make divisions in the church over trifles. To separate believers from unbelievers is right, but to separate believers from other believers is wrong. Blessed is the Christian, who keeps Christian things in Christian proportion.”

In the light of the solemn admonitions of this great chapter, how shall we behold the divisions among brethren over such matters as supporting a radio program, teaching the bible in classes, supporting orphan homes, etc., except as tragic examples of failure to heed the warnings of the Holy Spirit?

## CHAPTER 15

The first 13 verses of this chapter continue without interruption the argument of the previous chapter regarding the problem of weak brethren; but with one thought leading to another in typically Pauline style, there is first a summary of the arguments already presented, followed by an especial appeal to the example of Christ, an example foretold in prophecy, and with some statements of the apostle concerning the use of the Scriptures and the peace and joy of believing, concluding the section.

With verse 14, the final section of the epistle begins, wherein Paul wrote a number of personal things concerning himself, his plans, reasons for his hope of coming at last to Rome, also including a request for the prayers of the Christians of Rome upon his behalf.

### Verse 1

This is a recapitulation of all that was said in chapter 14 but sheds additional light upon the obligations of the strong toward the weak through the use of the word “bear,” which is used here, not in the sense of endure, but in the sense of carry.

John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. II. p. 197 commented, “Bear” is not to be understood in the sense of “bear with” frequent in our common speech but in the sense of “bear up,” or “carry.”

The strong have a definite responsibility for the weak and the obligation to see that they make it. He must, in a sense, carry them in a manner like that of a strong man carrying a little child. In no instance must his personal liberty as a Christian be allowed to interfere with duty toward the weak. The claim which the weak brother has upon the aid and encouragement of the strong is based upon his redemption in Christ and may not be rejected by the strong.

## Verse 2

These two verses exhibit the positive and the negative statements:

- (1) we should “not just please ourselves;”
- (2) we should “please his neighbor.”

However, there is a limitation upon the meaning of pleasing neighbors, for Paul wrote: “If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10)

Therefore, it is not right that the Christian should always defer to the whims and wishes of others, not even of believers, the critical issue always being the matter of the weak brother’s conscience; and even when deferring to him upon that basis, the requirement is that such a yielding to his scruples should be practiced not merely for the purpose of confirming him in them, but for the purpose of teaching him out of them. The last two words here, “his edification,” provide exactly the guidelines that are needed.

Wm. M. Greathouse, Beacon Bible Commentary, p. 267 wrote, “The neighbor may be pleased to his hurt, so Paul adds that he must be pleased for his good to edification.” To afford him pleasure that does not build him up is not for his good.”

One may safely follow the rule Paul observed himself in this situation. Paul wrote, “Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.” (1 Corinthians 10:33; 11:1)

## Verse 3

This quotation from Psalm 69:9 is an appeal to the supreme example of love and unselfishness exhibited by the Savior of the world. If Christ had been willing to please men, rather than God, He could have avoided the bitter hatreds that fell upon Him; but His living for the glory of the Father caused the enemies of God to heap all of their scorn and opposition upon Him.

## **Verse 4**

This verse has left a mighty impact upon the minds of all who ever contemplated it. The immediate application of the first clause in this verse is to the things written in Psalm 69.

The patience of the Old Testament heroes of faith provides strong encouragement for Christians who must struggle with many of the problems and situations which confronted them. It is a mistake, therefore, for Christians to confine their studies to the New Testament alone.

## **Verses 5-6**

The God “of patience and of comfort” is also the God of hope, and the apostle threw in another doxology a little later (verse 13), hailing Him so.

“Of the same mind with one another . . .” is the ideal of unity among brethren in Christ, a state of harmony which is mandatory for Christians, since it is “according to Jesus Christ,” according to His will and commandment. The purpose of such unity is that the praise and glorification of God should be uncorrupted by strife and division.

“One mouth” and “one accord” are expressions forbidding that strife and contradictions should mar the praise of God by His children, and demanding that absolute unity should be the badge of their loving service.

## **Verse 7**

The same ground of appeal is stressed here that was stressed in the preceding chapter, namely, that since Christ has received us all as Christians, the least that we can do is to receive each other, at the same time being willing to overlook the mistakes and errors of the weak, just as Christ has forgiven us. Such a toleration of weakness and errors, with special reference to things unessential and secondary, will inhibit strife and division in the church and result in greater glory to God.



## **Verses 8-9**

“Circumcision . . . “ means the Jews; and the confirmation of “the promises given to the fathers” refers to God’s sending, at last, the Messiah, the true seed” promised to Abraham. The long discussion of the relationship of Jews and Gentiles to God in earlier chapters of Romans came vividly to Paul’s mind.. He returned to the fact of God’s purpose of containing both Jews and Gentiles in one body in Christ.

C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 273 wrote, “The coming of Christ may be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, He came to vindicate God’s promises which had been made with Judaism. On the other hand, He came that the Gentiles might be included with Israel among the people of God. As the Jews glorify God for His faithfulness, so the Gentiles will glorify Him for His mercy.”

## **Verses 10-12**

These three quotations from Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, and Isaiah 11:10, all make mention of the Gentiles further strengthening Paul’s biblical evidence presented for the purpose of showing that God’s purpose always had envisioned the redemption of Gentiles as well as Jews.

“Hope . . .” The closing doxology of this section on the strong and weak brethren (next verse) begins with the expression, “Now the God of hope.”

## **Verse 13**

The Christian era was ushered in with the double promise of peace and joy.

“Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit shall visit us . . . to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.” (Luke 1:78-79).

The joy was announced by the angel of the Lord to the shepherds, “Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people.” (Luke 2:10)

Such a glorious peace and joy are available from no other source than the life of faith in Jesus Christ. These priceless endowments of the soul are the Christian's badge of eternal inheritance, his true credentials of heavenly citizenship, and his impregnable defense against all the tribulations and temptations of life. Having peace with God and the joy of the Spirit in his soul, the Christian is redeemed indeed.

Wilbur S. Smith, *Therefore Stand*, p. 272 wrote, "As a result of such a redemption accomplished with such a sacrifice, the hearts and minds of Christians may forever be kept with the peace of God that passes understanding. There is absolutely nothing at in all the biographies of unbelievers, or rationalists, or modern skeptics, which can present any testimony to the reality of peace and joy in the human heart, promised in the New Testament."

Wilbur S. Smith, *Ibid*, p. 476, devoted a full chapter to the exposition of this verse; and the paragraph regarding the means of procuring peace and joy has this: "This joy can come only through believing, and I pray for you, brothers and sisters, never be drifted away from the child-like faith in what God hath said. It is very easy to obtain a temporary joy and peace through your present easy experience, but how will you do when all things take a troublous turn? Those who live by feelings change with the weather. If you ever put aside your faith in the finished work to drink from the cup of your own inward sensations, you will find yourself bitterly disappointed. Your honey will turn to gall, your sunshine into blackness; for all things which come to man are fickle and deceptive. The God of hope will fill you with joy and peace; but it will only be through believing. You will never have peace and joy unless you do. If you once begin to say, I am a saint; there is something good in me, and so on, you will find joy evaporate and peace depart."

One must stand at the foot of the cross, and this is only another way of saying that one must accept and obey God's terms of justification, entering the body of Christ; for it is "in Christ" that all spiritual blessings are bestowed (Ephesians 1:3): and let none think to receive them by any other means than that of being found "in Him." Tragically, this expression which occurs, no less than 169 times,

in Paul's writings seems to have gone through many minds without having made any impression at all!

“By the power of the Holy Spirit . . .” is Paul's reminder that only God's children , the baptized true believers “in Christ” who have received the Spirit as a consequence of their son-ship shall ever possess this joy and peace.

#### **Verse 14**

Just having devoted a large section of his letter to questions regarding the maintenance of unity and love in the congregation, Paul believed the Christians in Rome were full of goodness and able to handle all such problems themselves without any special admonitions from him.

R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. 877 wrote, “All knowledge” does not mean all possible knowledge, nor does it suggest that the Romans had nothing more to learn; but that they had all necessary knowledge so that they could proceed safely and securely.”

“I myself also . . . “ Others had brought information to Paul, regarding the Roman church, but because of Paul's high opinion of such information, he was convinced of the truth of their favorable report of the Christians in Rome.

#### **Verse 15**

This is a continuation of the tactful remarks begun in verse 14 and allows for the fact that the Romans might be assumed already to know many of the things he had written; but he justified his writing on that ground that he desired to refresh their memory of those things.

The same device was employed by Peter who wrote, “This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you, in which, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.” (2 Peter 3:1-2)

“On some points . . . “ is capable of two meanings:

- (1) that of declaring such portions of the epistle as that dealing with weak brethren (14:1—15:15 were bold, and
- (2) that of suggesting that he had boldly gone beyond the information they already had.

### **Verse 16**

Moses E. Lard, Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans p. 440 wrote, "The word "minister" is a sacerdotal term borrowed from the temple service and denotes: "to officiate as a priest," or perform priestly duties; but that it is used here in any peculiar sense growing out of that circumstance is not apparent. It means simply to minister, or execute the functions of an apostle."

When God called Israel out of Egypt He promised that, "If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenants . . . you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation . . ." (Exodus 19:5-6)

But, when such a status was offered to all of Israel, the chosen people were not ready for the privilege, and thus it came about that Levi and his tribe alone took the honor representatively. (Exodus 32:36)

All Christians, therefore, are priests unto God, and there is only one high priest, the Christ Himself, at God's right hand. He made the great atonement and is now enthroned with the Father Himself, and is the "one mediator" between God and man. (1Timothy 2:5)

In this new Israel, all are sons in the Son, and all are priests in the Priest; and never in the New Testament is there any hint or suggestion of anything that could be analogous to Levi or Aaron.

Of further interest in this connection, it should be noted that the gospel is not offered as a sacrifice to God, but preached to men, the offering being the response of men themselves who present their bodies after the manner Paul commanded in 12:1. Thus, it is not the preacher, even though an apostle, who offers men to God; men offer themselves. From this, it must be plain that

“ministering the gospel of God” can only mean preaching it; and any concept of Christianity that would establish a priestly office for the purpose of “offering up the gospel” or any such thing is erroneous.

“Sanctified by the Holy Spirit . . . was commented upon by James Macknight, Apostolical Epistles, p. 131 who wrote, “According to the law, the sacrifices were sanctified or made acceptable to God, by being salted and laid on the altar by the priest” but the Gentiles were made acceptable to God through the Spirit of God, as affirmed in this verse, that Spirit being sent by God into their hearts in consequence of their son-ship through faith and obedience. (Galatians 4:6) Thus, in the new Israel, no priest is needed to salt the offering. Paul performed no such service for converted Gentiles; he did not give them the Holy Spirit; and, whatever examples there are of the Holy Spirit’s being given through “the laying on of the apostles’ hands.” It was still God, and not the apostles, who gave it.

### **Verses 17-18**

“I have therefore . . . means, “I do have the right to tell of things God has done through me.”

Such a right derived from Paul’s desire to enlist the aid and encouragement of the brethren in Rome for his projected missionary journey to Spain. If they were to aid Paul, they were entitled to know of Paul’s success; and, therefore, Paul had a right to speak of the success God had given him.

“Obedience of the Gentiles . . . in word and deed . . .” brings into view the true definition of Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith. It certainly was not the “faith only” of Protestant theology, but the “obedience of faith” as affirmed at the beginning and the end of this epistle. (1:5; 16:26)

If Paul had entertained any part of the theory of salvation by faith only, he could never have written anything like this verse. The Gentiles were obeying God! Indeed, does anything else really matter?

”By word and deed . . .” is usually edited out of this, as having no reference to Gentile obedience. The obvious connection with the Gentile “obedience” leaves the overwhelming impression that they apply to the type of Gentile obedience which had been induced by Paul’s preaching.

### **Verse 19**

J. W. McGarvey, *The Standard Bible Commentary*, p. 539, suggested that men should, “Note the calm, sane way in which Paul speaks of his miraculous powers as a seal of his apostleship, both being mere accessories to that all-important task, the preaching of the gospel.”

“As far as Illyricum . . .” This province, under Rome, was part of Macedonia, but it cannot be certain that Paul preached there.

“I have fully preached the gospel of Christ . . .” may be taken to mean that Paul had declared the full counsel of God, that his preaching had thoroughly covered the great area he had mentioned, and that the full charge of his energies had been utilized in its accomplishment.

### **Verses 20-21**

This is a further point in Paul’s legitimate recommendation of himself to the church in Rome, namely, that he had not preached in those areas where others had already preached the gospel, but had sought out the places where the truth had not been taught.

Paul had deliberately undertaken to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the entire world which he knew, evidently believing that every city on earth should hear the gospel once before any should hear it repeated. This was a wise plan and, as J. W. McGarvey noted, “Had Paul’s example been followed what needless overlapping of missionary effort might have been avoided. Sectarianism has caused and committed this sin, and it has been especially reprehensible where it has been done to foster points of difference that are matters of indifference as it is where factions of the same sect compete in the same field.”

Robertson L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on Paul's Letter to Saints in Rome*, p. 288 wrote, "Till the gospel was preached to them no tidings came to the Gentiles. Paul was sent to open the eyes of the Gentiles to turn them from darkness to light, that they might see. (Acts 26:14-20) Hence, those who had never heard were made to understand."

### **Verse 22**

Paul's apology for not already having fulfilled his purpose of visiting Rome is here made to include the fact that he had been in the business of preaching the gospel to people who had not heard it; and, of course, Rome had heard it, as evidenced by the company of true believers to whom this epistle was directed. Paul welcomed the opportunity to preach in Rome and visit with the disciples there.

### **Verse 23**

This does not mean that Paul was no more welcomed to preach in the great theater of his long and triumphal labors in the gospel, but that, under the rules Paul had laid down for himself relative to preaching the gospel only where it was not already known, he had used up all of the opportunities of the kind he sought. Therefore, he had projected the mission to Spain, including Rome as a necessary way-station, where he planned to request their aid and assistance.

Paul could look at a map of Europe with the conviction that there was not a virgin field left in it, except for Spain.

### **Verse 24**

Did Paul ever go to Spain? None can say, actually, that he did; although it is allowed that he certainly might have done so. Charles Hodge, commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 442 wrote, "Whether Paul ever accomplished his purpose of visiting Spain, is a matter of doubt. There is no historical record of his having done so, either in the New Testament, or in the early ecclesiastical writers; though most of those writers seem to have taken it for granted. His

whole plan, was probably deranged by occurrences in Jerusalem, which led to his long imprisonment in Caesarea, and his being sent in bonds to Rome.”

“Be helped on my way . . . refers to a custom among early Christians of accompanying visitors for a part of the journey when they were departing. The Christians of Ephesus for example, when Paul was about to leave, “Fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way to the ship.” (Acts 20:37-38)

“When I have first enjoyed your company for a while . . . “ does not imply any limitation of the intensity of Paul’s anticipated pleasure of seeing the disciples in Rome, but accepts a limitation upon the endurance of it. Paul’s projected visit was to have been a passing one, not designed for any great length of time.

#### **Verses 25-26**

Paul could not, even at that time, go on unto Rome, for he was committed to the task of delivering the funds which he had helped to raise for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

This noble concern for the poor on the part of Paul was not an occasional or expedient thing with him at all. On the occasion of that confrontation in Jerusalem with Peter, James and John, the harmonious communique which closed the disputation was summed up thus by Paul, “(They) gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I was eager to do.” (Galatians 2:9-10)

Richard A. Batey, p. 183 implied that there was a disapproval of Paul’s fund-raising wrote, “There is a note of pathos in the fact that this apostle who proclaimed so eloquently God’s acceptance apart from works should seek to secure his own place among the Jerusalem Christians with his collection for the poor.”



Two things of great interest challenge the attention in such a remark as that just quoted. Paul did not preach acceptance “apart from works” but apart from “works of the law of Moses” and “circumcision.” Paul’s position being exactly that of James, that the “obedience of faith” is always absolutely required.

Paul’s fund-raising for the poor was not a mere strategy of Paul’s to try and win favor in Jerusalem. He accepted the mission of aiding the poor in that city upon the basis that the Gentiles “owed” it to them. (Verse 2)

Paul had long advocated, encouraged, and promoted the collection for the poverty-ridden Christians in the great Jewish capital.

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, perhaps the greatest preacher ever to set foot on earth; and he was not above the prosaic business of asking the brethren for money, not for himself, but for others.

“For the poor among the saints in Jerusalem . . .” identifies the object of Christian charity from the viewpoint of apostolic Christianity. It was not the “poor in Jerusalem, but the poor saints in Jerusalem,” who were the objects of this charity.

Admittedly, where here is ability and opportunity to aid the alien poor, it may indeed be a righteous and effective work of the church; but, as regards the obligation, that begins with the household of God. the Gentile Christians of the ancient Roman Empire were not laid under the tribute for the purpose of helping to support the relief load in the city of secular Jerusalem; and, likewise, the church of the present time should plan some nobler work than that of merely carrying the bed-pan for a sick society, a role to which some sociologists would restrict the holy mission of the church.

### **Verse 27**

Paul’s collection for the poor, therefore, was initiated and executed, not solely out of respect to the needs of the poor Christians in Jerusalem, but also because of the debt of Gentile Christians who had received spiritual benefit from those same poor.

The Gentiles needed to give, as much as the Christian poor of Jerusalem needed to receive. The filial bond uniting them as members of the one body in Christ was the basis of Paul's plea for the Gentiles to give, as well as the basis of the right of the Christian poor to receive.

### **Verse 28**

To whom was the fruit sealed, the donors or the recipients? The answer lies in determining whose fruit it was; and there can be no way of making the bounty taken up for the Gentiles to be the fruit of the Jerusalem poor. It was, on the other hand, the fruit of Gentile Christianity.

The so-called case of communal practice mentioned in Acts 4:32-35 was not really such a thing as communism at all. It was an effort of the Christian community to meet a tremendous need, upon an emergency basis, of the vast throng in Jerusalem for that first Pentecost of the Christian era, many of whom had remained in Jerusalem past the normal time of departure in order to hear the preaching of the gospel.

### **Verse 29**

This verse arouses emotions of sorrow in the heart. Paul did indeed arrive at last in Rome, and none can deny that it was in the fullness of the blessing of Christ; but what dramatic and heartbreaking circumstances marked it! How different Paul had hoped and intended!

Paul had in mind a great thing. He planned to finish delivery of the money to the poor in Jerusalem, then proceed to Rome, preach there and enjoy the company of the famous Christian community of the great capital for a brief season, and then he planned to be off for Spain where new victories of faith would be won, more churches established, and more territory won for the Master. Paul's plans, as made, were never realized. He was arrested and imprisoned in Jerusalem; there was a diabolical plot to murder him; there were tedious delays, dangerous journeys, confrontations with kings and governors during the years of his imprisonments; then, there was an appeal to Caesar, a

shipwreck, a poisonous viper on his hand; and, at last, up the Appian way he came, wearing a chain, as an animal is chained, and walking between the files of pagan soldiers!

During the years ahead of him in Rome, Paul would plant the gospel seed in the very heart of the pagan empire; that seed would germinate and grow, and at last shatter the mighty empire of the Caesars into fragments. There he would write the letters which, more than those of any other mortal, would define Christianity for all subsequent ages. There he would indeed teach not merely Spain, but twenty centuries of the generations of mankind.

There he would seal with his blood the truth and sincerity of his matchless life of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Verse 30**

Paul was well aware of the dangers and difficulties that lay ahead, especially in Jerusalem; and his is an earnest, heartfelt plea of the prayers of his fellow Christians. Only God could protect Paul from those enemies whose vigorous hatred made Jerusalem place of extreme hazard for Him.

There were holy reasons for that trip to Jerusalem, reasons of the greatest magnitude and importance, not merely for Paul, but for the church of all ages.

### **Verse 31**

Paul had a double concern, not merely his own safety, but the attitude of the church members themselves. Would they be willing to accept the collection which he had gathered through the expenditure of so vast a measure of time and energy? If they did not, it would jeopardize the unity of the church and possibly destroy the Gentile missions he had worked to establish. No wonder he prayed to God and asked others to join. What if racial prejudice in Jerusalem had caused the poor Christians to say, "We will not touch a gift from Gentiles"! In such a disastrous response, Paul's gift of tears, blood, sweat and money would have been in vain. No wonder he prayed that they would accept it!

God had indeed heard his prayers. The Christian poor accepted the bounty of their Gentile brethren, the enemies were foiled, and Paul's life was spared.

### **Verses 32-33**

“That I may come to you in joy . . .” refers to the projected acceptance on the part of the poor Christians in Jerusalem of the bounty provided by the Gentiles. If they accepted it (which they did), Paul would be relieved of anxiety on the score and would come “with joy.”

“Now the God of peace be with you all . . .” Paul had asked them to pray for him; and some have thought that Paul here prays for them, not a long prayer, but one so rich and full of meaning that its single petition includes all others.

Of course, this is a beautiful thought; but there are strong reasons for taking another view. This is another doxology, among many in this epistle; and a doxology differs from a prayer in three important particulars:

- (1) it is addressed to men, and not to God;
- (2) it does not contain or advocate any request or petition for the forgiveness of sins; and
- (3) it is not offered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **CHAPTER 16**

This chapter continues the final remarks which began at 15:14, in which there are numerous personal references to Christians in Rome from Paul and other Christians associated with him, with a concluding warning against divisive teachers, and a magnificent doxology. No less than 24 persons were saluted by name, plus household groups of Aristobulus and Narcissus plus the mother of Rufus and the sister of Nereus.

## Verses 1-2

### CHURCH LETTERS

The first two verses here are an apostolic example of what is called today a “church letter,” or letter of recommendation borne by a Christian transferring from one place to another.

Paul’s purpose of “joining” the Jerusalem congregation was realized through the intervention of Barnabus, thus setting the great example which would require every child of God to make it his first order of business, upon a change of residence, to “join himself to the disciples” in the new location.

Why do Christians often neglect the duty indicated here?

- (1) They fear the new location is only temporary, or hope it is, and therefore hesitate to give full participation in the work and worship of a new congregation.
- (2) Some hesitate out of a sense of loyalty to the old congregation, not realizing that loyalty to the old one is best expressed and proved by ardent loyalty to the new one.
- (3) Others do not wish to be obligated in a new congregation and seize the chance to “float around” for a while without forming a stable relationship.
- (4) Still others are just weak Christians who do not have sufficient power to pursue the life of faith, apart from the encouragements of the old situation; and a change of residence for such weak disciples can be, and often is, the occasion of their permanent loss.

“Servant of the church . . .” The term “servant” in some translations is translated “deaconess” in later versions of the New Testament, and is often alleged as proof that a separate order of female deaconesses existed in the early church. If that was true, why did Paul address the church at Philippi with a

greeting of “the elders and deacons” without reference to deaconesses?  
(Philippians 1:1)

There are no instructions given in the New Testament for the appointment of women as deacons; and, since there are instructions for the appointment of both elders and deacons, his omission is conclusive.

Diakonos, the Greek word Paul used here, means “servant” and is usually so translated, being the same word used of policemen by Paul in 13:4, also being translated as “minister.”

“The church which is at Cenchrea . . .” indicates how extensively the early evangelists had carried out their work. The town of Cenchrea was the eastern of two seaports, the other being Lecheum, which served the city of Corinth. Cenchrea was about nine miles from Corinth.

“Receive her in the Lord . . .” means to receive her as a faithful Christian, or member of the body of Christ, and means far more than a mere perfunctory or courteous reception. She was commanded to be received in a religious manner and from religious motives and to be given whatever assistance she required, the expression “worthily of the saints” applying to both the type of reception the church was to give and the quality of the reception Phoebe was entitled to receive.

### **Verse 3**

“Priscilla” is the diminutive form of the name Prisca and was probably the term used by her close friends and associates. (Acts 18:2)

Amazingly, she is mentioned first, even ahead of her husband, and first of all those whom Paul was about to name. From this it has been concluded that she was more active and successful in Christian work than her husband Aquila.

There were doubtless very good reasons why this couple should have headed the list of all who Paul desired to salute in Rome, and some have supposed that

Prisca was of the Roman nobility; but we cannot believe that anything of that nature would have carried any weight whatever with Paul.

“My fellow workers in Christ Jesus . . .” This couple were citizens of Rome, where Aquila was engaged in tent-making; and its being written that they “were tentmakers” shows that Priscilla also had an active hand in the business. In 49 A.D., the emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome; and thus it came about that Prisca and Aquila opened up a tent-making business in Corinth, where, in the providence of God, they became acquainted with Paul and were converted to Christ.

They aided Paul in the work of evangelism in Corinth; and, when Paul transferred his labors to Ephesus, they evidently followed him there (Acts 18:18) and were eyewitnesses to the turbulence and violence that resulted from his preaching there.

When the edict of Claudius was lifted, Prisca and Aquila returned to Rome, as proved by the salutation here; but still later as W. Sanday, *op. cit.*, p. 278 observed, “They seemed to have returned to Ephesus.” (2 Timothy 4:19)

### **Verses 4-5**

Paul here declared that he actually owed his life to this couple and that this laid the whole brotherhood of Gentile churches under a debt of gratitude to Prisca and Aquila for having saved Paul’s mission to the Gentiles.

”For my life risked their own necks . . .” is perhaps the basis of the colloquial proverb regarding “sticking out one’s neck.” Here on the sacred page is the shining record of a Christian couple who did stick theirs out, and, in so doing, saved Paul’s Gentile mission and stored up for them an eternal reward.

“Greet the church that is in their house . . .” A congregation was meeting regularly in their home for the purpose of Christian worship; and, although the group was probably not very large, it is called a church, that is, a local congregation.

“Greet Epeanetus my beloved . . . “ Two facts regarding this person catch the attention:

- (1) that he was converted in Asia (probably at Ephesus) while Paul was there, and
- (2) that his name is here closely listed with those of Prisca and Aquila.

### **Verse 6**

Nothing is known of this diligent Christian woman but what is said here; and even this is not absolutely clear, due to the question of who was the beneficiary of her labors; but whether it was upon Paul or upon the saints in Rome that her labors were expended, it is the degree and diligence of those labors which are brought to view here. “Much labor” indicates work sufficiently heavy to produce weariness and fatigue.

### **Verse 7**

“Junias,” a name like the English “Jean” is either masculine or feminine; but the coupling of both names here signifies that both were men. R. C. H. Lenski, loc. cit. said, “Junias,” a man, not Junia (Julia), a woman, wife or sister of Andronicus.”

“My Kinsmen . . . “ as applied here to Andronicus and Junias, and others in this chapter, is frequently alleged to mean racial or Jewish kinsmen, rather than a family connection with Paul; but, if that view is correct, why was not this word applied to Prisca and Aquila who were also Jews? This consideration alone is enough to justify understanding this as a reference to some of Paul’s family, perhaps cousins or uncles. Moses E. Lard, *Commentary on Paul’s Letter to Romans*, p. 456 agreed with this, thus, “They were Paul’s real kin, according to the flesh, and not his kin merely in the loose sense of being of the same tribe or nation.”



“My fellow-prisoners . . .” reveals a truth not otherwise recorded in the New Testament. When, where, and how were these kinsfolk fellow-prisoners with Paul? God knew!

“Who are outstanding among the apostles . . .” is a reference to the reputation of Andronicus and Junias who were known and respected within the circle of the twelve apostles themselves.

The reasons for these kinsmen of Paul’s being so favorably known among the twelve apostles probably were lodged in the sufferings they had undergone, as mentioned here, and in the fact of their having been such a long while faithful members of the church, having preceded Paul in their acceptance of Christianity.

“Who also were in Christ before me . . .” “In Christ . . .” is used here as the equivalent of being a Christian and shows that none were ever considered Christians by an apostle unless that had been baptized into Christ, that being the manner he himself had stated to be the way of entering Christ. (6:1-4)

### **Verse 8**

Nothing could possibly give a keener insight into Paul’s noble and affectionate nature than the epithets applied to various persons in this list. What a noble loving heart it was that took the trouble to remember Ampliatus with this warm expression of love, and that in the face of the fact that there was apparently nothing very distinguished about his Christian service! Paul loved him because he was “in the Lord,” therefore beloved of the Savior; and is that not enough? If, after all of life’s trials and tribulations, we may find ourselves loved of the Lord—that alone is everything!

### **Verse 9**

It is manifest here that Urbanus was not Paul’s fellow worker, but ours.” That is, of the whole Christian brotherhood, particularly that of Rome; but Paul claimed him in the sense of being a part of the brotherhood Urbanus served. Stachys, on the other hand, was personally known to Paul and honored in the

same manner as Ampliatus above. F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 492 gave the meaning of these two names as “Urbanus, meaning citizen, and Stachys, meaning ear of corn.”

Note: Our word “urban” is similar to Urbanus. Both of these names, which seem to be of the character of nicknames, might be roughly translated as “City Boy” and “Ear of Corn,” and may therefore be viewed as the names of persons who were then, or had been, slaves.

### **Verse 10**

No one can say what test or trial was endured by Apelles that he should have won so favorable an accolade as that here bestowed by an apostle, whatever it was, it must have gained wide publicity among the Christians of that age, for it appears here that Paul had heard of Apelles, but was not personally acquainted with him. Paul’s act of singling him out for such a salutation shows that his faith had distinguished him in Rome.

“Greet those who are of the house of Aristobulus . . .” James Macknight Apostolical Epistles, p. 135 noted, “He and Narcissus seem to have had, each of them, a numerous family of slaves and others, some of whom were Christians, and the fame of whose virtues had reached the apostle.”

W. Sanday, *op. cit.*, p. 269 wrote regarding these persons, “Aristobulus, a grandson of Herod the Great, was educated and lived in a private station in Rome. From the friendly terms on which he stood with the Emperor Claudius, it seems likely that, by a somewhat common custom, his household may have been transferred to the emperor upon his death. In that case his slaves would (continue to) be designated by such a term as we find in the Greek (that is of the household of Aristobulus).”

If such opinions of the scholars should be allowed, as it appears they should be, this and the following case of Narcissus go far to identify the Christians said to have been “of Caesar’s household.” (Philippians 4:22)

## Verse 11

The household of Narcissus is here to be understood as only that portion of them who were Christians, that is , “in the Lord,” with the necessary inference that "household" as used in these verses has reference to a much larger group than would have been the case if it had referred only to the Christians.

## Verse 12

Richard A. Batey, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, p. 186 observed that the first two names are of twin sisters, described as, “Those workers in the Lord . . .” Paul may wish by this description to point out that although their names were 'Dainty' and 'Delicate'—for this is what their Greek names mean—they were like 'iron butterflies' in their labors for Christ.”

Nothing whatever is actually known of these three Christian ladies singled out for special greetings from Paul since this is the only place they are mentioned in the New Testament.

“Persis the beloved . . .” All three names in this verse are feminine, but there are marked differences in the way Paul presented them, the present tense being used for the labor of the twins, and the past tense for the work of Persis. “The beloved” designates only Persis, not the twins.

“Who has worked hard in the Lord . . .” as translated by C. K. Barrett, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 284, “Who labor in the Lord” means “who toil in the Lord,” meaning to work as a Christian but not necessarily to do “Christian (that is, “church”) work.”

“Toiling in the Lord” is here used of persons who in all probability, were slaves in the establishment of Nero; and their duties must be understood as having been an arduous and nearly ceaseless, but their performance of every duty was in the spirit of being “unto the Lord;” and so their work was sanctified by their membership in the body of Christ. So it is with every person whose work, of whatever nature, is done in a spirit of loving submission to the will of God. “And

whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”  
(Colossians 3:17)

### **Verse 13**

This Rufus, the son of Simon of Cyrene, is the one who bore the Savior’s cross. (Mark 15:21)

Note: Coneybeare and Howson, loc. cit., commented, “Saint Mark (15:21) mentions Simon of Cyrene as “the father of Alexander and Rufus;” the latter, therefore, was a Christian well known to those for whom Saint Mark wrote, and probably is the same here mentioned. It is gratifying to think that she whom Saint Paul mentions here with such respectful affection is the wife of that Simon who bore the Savior’s cross.”

“A choice man in the Lord . . .” is not a reference to anything such as the doctrine of election, but simply means “one of God’s choice men.”

“His mother and mine . . .” was very probably intended by Paul as a warm, personal, and respectful recognition of a gracious Christian woman who had treated him as a son and had aided and encouraged his marvelous work; but there is another possibility that cannot be omitted from consideration. When Paul became a Christian, it is possible that his own parents rejected him, and that he was adopted by the mother of Alexander and Rufus. The total absence from Paul’s writings of any mention of his parents, and the known custom of the Jews holding a funeral for apostates from Judaism (funerals of the living dead, in their view), and withal, Paul’s plaintive cry, “For whom I have suffered the loss of all things . . . that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8) All these things suggest a family crisis when Paul was converted to Christ.

There certainly exists the possibility that when Paul became a Christian, he was cast out by all of His immediate family, though not by all the kin (as evidenced in this chapter; and, in view of such possibility, there could well be more implied by this tender reference of Rufus’ mother than merely a warm personal compliment.

### **Verse 14**

These persons, all men, along with other Christians who were doubtless associated with them, formed some kind of a Christian community in Rome, perhaps another house-hold congregation rotating their meeting places in the homes of those singled out for salutation, or a group in some geographical area of the great city, or other.

### **Verse 15**

Here again, five more people re mentioned. Julia was usually a feminine name, and the bearer of it might well have been the wife of Philologus, though not likely his sister, in view of Paul's use of that word a moment later.

This was another group of Christians in Rome; and the impression is received that here was another household congregation. Prisca and Aquila were able to provide a place in their home as a regular meeting place for all the services of their group, being obviously more able than most others to do such a thing.

This roll of names, so sacred to the Christian religion, is here completed; and it is no mere list of dry syllables, for these are among God's redeemed ones from this earth.

### **Verse 16**

The salutation here is not that of Paul, as he had said, "Kiss everyone for me," but the salutation of the members themselves for one another with a sacred kiss of Christian love. Such a kiss, upon the brow, or cheek, sometimes on both cheeks, or upon the hands, was a common form of salutation in ancient times. It was brought over into Christianity by apostolical commandment and continued for many centuries, prevailing as custom in many places yet. The sacred kiss as an affectionate greeting conveyed an evidence of mutual love, respect, honor, and equality, and was evidently used by Christ and the apostles themselves, hence the odium that attached to Judas' use of such a greeting to betray the Son of God.

"All the churches of Christ . . ." refers to Christians wherever in that period of time, and especially to the congregations founded by the apostle Paul. Each community of believers was separately designated as a church of Christ, and all of them together were called collectively, the churches of Christ.

### **Verse 17**

This, and through verse 29, form an apostolic warning against false and divisive teachers whom Paul expected to trouble the unity and harmony of the church in Rome.

"I urge you brethren . . ." means "I beg of you, please." "Mark them . . ." means "identify them," "watch out for them," and "be on your guard against them." Robertson L. Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 296 commented, "Do not shut your eyes to what they are doing, nor make excuses for them, nor for any others who cause divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to the gospel, but turn away from them. This means that the brethren should have no fellowship with them."

Apparently, at the time Paul wrote, the leadership of the congregations in Rome had been able to preserve unity; and Paul's admonition here was given to strengthen their hands and warn them against heretical teachers already operating among the churches and sure to reach Rome in time.

### **Verse 18**

The contrast here is between what the false teaches are and do on the one hand and what they pretend to be and claim on the other hand. Pretending to serve Christ, they serve themselves alone, "belly" as used here being a reference to all of the carnal and fleshly desires. They were able speakers, with a ready flow of eloquent words; and impressive rhetoric and oratory were their stock in trade. Their deceitfulness and wickedness were masked and guarded with every possible camouflage of pretended piety and devotion.

Intent upon causing division as a means of drawing away disciples after themselves, these false teachers are Satan's attack forces (the shift to present tense is to focus on the problem as it still exists, not merely for the times and

places known to Paul, but for all times and places, including the present now and here.

### **Verse 19**

The threat of evil teachers and their seductive operations was pointed out by Christ Himself (Matthew 7:15-23), and the Savior's description of such persons is still the fountain source of the true knowledge concerning them. They are wolves in sheep's clothing, being recognizable principally by their fruits.

The minister, or other teacher, who scatters the flock is a wolf, regardless of his pretensions. His sheepskin garb and pretended piety cannot disguise his true status as an enemy.

"Innocent in what is evil . . . seems a little ambiguous as applied to Paul's argument here and has been explained in various ways; but its manifest reference to a desired reaction against the wiles of false teachers gives a clue to the false teacher's modus operandi, which was invariably grounded in a pretended superiority of knowledge and intelligence.

Paul wrote, "But I am afraid lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be lead astray, from the simplicity and sincerity of devotion to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3)

The boldness of the false teacher is always evident in his blunt rejection of valid truth coupled with an arrogant charge of simple-mindedness against those who hold and believe it.

The following verse, with its reference to bruising Satan under their feet, dramatically recalls that scene in Eden where God foretold such a bruising, a thing also clearly in Paul's mind in the verse just cited, above, and in which primeval event there existed the same element of the false wisdom still being promised by Satan and his workers.

Satan promised Eve that she should be "as God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5); but the unfortunate mother of all living would have been wiser to

have remained simple to the wisdom Satan offered. This is the thrust of Paul's word here.

### **Verse 20**

The bruising of Satan is not something here promised for the remote future, but is a triumph over him to be won immediately and speedily by the Roman Christians who would have the effectual aid of God in maintaining the unity and peace.

John Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 236 said, "God of peace" in this place clearly has reference to God's maintaining peace in the church, because of its particular relevance to the bruising of Satan. The previous verses have in view the division caused by Satan's instruments. It is God who bruises Satan and establishes peace in contrast with conflict, discord, and division. He is therefore the God of peace. The assurance given in this verse is the encouragement to heed the admonitions. Each element is significant. God will crush Satan; He will crush him under the feet of the faithful; and He will do it speedily. The promise of a victorious issue under girds the fight of faith."

The bruising of Satan is not something here promised for the remote future, but is a triumph over him to be won immediately and speedily by the Roman Christians who would have the effectual aid of God in maintaining the unity and peace of the Christians when they would be attacked by false teachers. The entire thrust of this whole passage is not forward to the eternal judgment, but retrospective to Genesis 3:15.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you . . ." is another of the numerous doxologies in Romans.

### **Verse 21**

This and the next two verses contain the greetings sent by Paul's kinsfolk, his other fellow-workers, their host, and Paul's amanuensis, there being no less than eight of these. Timothy, of course, was usually with the apostle when circumstances permitted it, and a great affection existed between them.



The last three names in this verse are those of Paul's kin, of whom practically nothing is known.

### **Verse 22**

"Tertius" means third, many Roman names having been formed from the ordinal numbers, such as Primus, Segundus, Tertius, Quartus, Quintus, Sextus, Septimus, Octavius, etc. This Tertius was Paul's amanuensis the person who transcribed Paul's dictation. He customarily wrote a few lines at the end of his epistles with his own hand as a kind of signature. However, Galatians was written entirely by him as he said, "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand." (Galatians 6:11)

Tertius was a Christian and Paul honored him by asking that he write his own salutation to the brethren in Rome, which he did in these few words.

### **Verse 23**

This Gaius is doubtless that Gaius whom Paul baptized with his own hands (1 Corinthians 1:14), and in whose house he was a guest when Romans was written.

Erastus was the treasurer of the city of Corinth, being therefore a man of consequence and power in that metropolis.

"Quartus the brother . . ." is here mentioned alongside the treasurer of the city, and with the same dignity and tenderness.

**Verse 24** is the same as verse 20b.

### **Verses 25-27**

"My Gospel" must not be understood as anything different from the gospel taught by the other apostles of Christ, with special reference to the great body of truth upon which Christianity is founded.

"Mystery . . ." in the Scriptural from of reference means a great truth, hidden and unknown for a long time, and at last revealed. The great mystery

comprehends many lesser ones such as the calling of Gentiles, the hardening of Israel, the incarnation, the mystery of Christ and His church, and many others.

That the mystery was hidden before times eternal, as stated here, shows that all of the details of God's great plan were clearly defined in God's eternal purpose before the world itself was created.

“For long ages past . . .” This expression refers to the eternal ages before creation.

“But now is manifested . . .” means that the mystery has been revealed, at least to a far more comprehensive degree than formerly; but it would doubtless be a mistake to conclude that the revelation of it is total, even now. Paul himself said of this mystery that it, “Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles, etc”.  
(Ephesians 3:5)

“But now is manifested . . .” means that the mystery has been revealed, at least to a far more comprehensive degree than formerly; but it would doubtless be a mistake to conclude that the revelation of it is total, even now.

“By the Scriptures of the prophets . . .” shows that the mystery was embryonically revealed in the prophetic messages of the Old testament (as for example, the matter of the calling of the Gentiles); but the complete understanding of those oracles did not arrive until the Savior appeared upon earth.

“The commandment of the eternal God . . .” is Paul's appeal to the authority of God Himself, as the complete justification of His opening the doors of salvation to the entire Gentile world.

“To all the nations . . .” refers especially to Gentile nations, but also means “all” in the a total sense of that word, no exclusion of any kind of Jews or of anyone else, being in it. These words show that the mystery included preeminently the preaching of salvation to all nations.

“Leading to obedience of faith . . .” The mystery was definitely not a brand new way to be saved by faith only, as some think; but by Paul’s definition here, it included the preaching “leading to obedience of faith.” This expression, “the obedience of faith,” standing here at the close of the epistle, is the same with which Paul opened this magnificent treatise. (1:5)

Paul made this principle: **THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH**, to be an underlying foundation of everything taught in this epistle; and Paul did so by the double placement of these words, like two mighty pillars, the Jachin and Boaz, in the porch of the temple of Solomon, so that all who enter the study of Romans might more readily discern what is taught.

“To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”