

# THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

A Survey by James Garrett

## INTRODUCTION

Even though every passage in Scripture enjoys plenary inspiration, each has its unique place in God's revelation of Himself and His will. Matthew, for example, cannot replace Acts; Revelation cannot replace Genesis. Romans occupies a very unique doctrinal role in Scripture. One of the most important aspects of Romans is its thorough and ordered presentation of the theology of salvation.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate Romans' influence on modern history, both sacred and secular. The Protestant Reformation was born as a result of Martin Luther's study of the doctrine of salvation as it is presented in Romans. In 1515, as preparation for teaching a course on Romans in the seminary at Wittenberg, Luther translated the epistle from the Greek into the vernacular of the German countryside. The Romans course was scheduled for the winter of 1515-1516, followed by a course on Galatians in the winter of 1516-1517.

Somewhere along the way, the phrase in Romans 1:17, *The just shall live by faith*, brought a spiritual truth to Luther that was to dominate the rest of his life. For many years, Luther had sought to find peace with God through meritorious deeds. When he grasped the truth that salvation is an act of God's grace, and is appropriated by faith, his life was transformed.

In his Bible, following 1:17, he inserted the German term, *allein*, meaning, *only* or *alone*. From that time on, Luther proclaimed a *faith only* doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

On October 31, 1517, (popularly called, "the birthday of the Protestant Reformation") he posted the Ninety-Five Thesis on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. It was the custom to nail a thesis on the door of the church when someone wanted to challenge all comers to a debate on the issues contained in the posted thesis. Luther's theses were a criticism of the indulgence system. Western culture was altered, permanently, by Luther's launching of the Reformation.

**Personal note:** My own experience and Luther's are quite similar. The Christianity in which I spent my childhood and youth was a religion of laws, "thou shalt nots" and "thou shalt." I lived in a constant state of guilt because of my failures. The translation of Romans was one of the assignments given in my second-year Greek class in seminary. While translating the epistle, I comprehended at a heart level that salvation was based on the mix of grace and faith, demonstrated in obedience, rather than perfection of performance. I had read Romans many times in English. The process of translation planted the truth in my heart. For the first time in my life, I found peace. It was only later that I learned of Luther's experience. (JWG)

On May 24, 1738, after evening prayers at St. Paul's Cathedral in London, John Wesley, who at the time was a High-Church Anglican, attended an informal meeting of an Anglican society on Aldersgate Street. At the meeting, someone read aloud Luther's preface to his *Commentary on Romans*.<sup>2</sup> With abrupt suddenness, Wesley experienced something similar to what Luther had experienced. Wesley recorded the incident in his journal.

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<sup>1</sup> Lutherans sprinkle babies (which they call baptism), and since the Lutheran doctrine of salvation declares that salvation is by faith alone, they believe that in that rite, the baby sovereignly is given the gift of faith, although the infant is too young to realize this. Years later, at about 13 years of age, the children are confirmed, at which time they profess their faith in the atoning work of Christ. See *How Does Faith Play a Role in Infant Baptism* (LCMS-Baptism-FAQ-03-21-2016.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> For the text of Luther's preface to his *Commentary on Romans*, see ADDENDA A

"About a quarter before nine, while he (Luther) was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."<sup>3</sup>

Luther's doctrine of salvation by faith alone, gripped Wesley, launching him into his life's work.

### ROMANS INFLUENCE ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

The influence of this epistle on the First Century Church is seen in its apparent influence on the writers of the New Testament who penned their documents after Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Peter was aware of Paul's letters, in that he described Paul's epistles as being in the same class as the Old Testament. (II Peter 3:15-16).

*and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, <sup>as</sup> also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:15-16)<sup>4</sup>*

Peter's acquaintance with Paul's Epistle to Rome is seen the many allusions to the Epistle that Peter displays in his First Epistle. A striking example is seen in a comparison of Romans 9:32-33 with I Peter 2:6.

In Romans 9:32-33, Paul quoted the Septuagint Version of Isaiah 28:16. Peter repeated Paul's line of thought, even to the point of quoting Isaiah 28:16. Paul quoted Isaiah rather loosely, rather than word for word. He omitted portions that seemed superfluous to his point.

Peter, following Paul's line of reasoning, quoted Isaiah 28:16. Peter quoted Isaiah more carefully than Paul, yet he began the quote according to Paul's loose rendering.

- Isaiah 28:16 in the Septuagint begins,  
*Behold, I lay into the foundations of Zion a stone*  
ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐμβαλῶ εἰς τὰ θεμέλια Σιων λίθον (*idu ego embalo eis ta themelia Zion lithon*)
- Paul, loosely quoting this passage, wrote (Romans 9:33)  
*Behold, I lay in Zion a stone*  
ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιὼν λίθον (*idu tithaymi en Zion lithon*)
- Peter, following Paul's line of argument, began his quote by using Paul's free quotation of Isaiah (I Peter 2:6)  
*Behold I lay in Zion a stone*  
ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιὼν λίθον (*idu tithaymi en Zion lithon*)

Commenting on the similarities between Romans and I Peter, Sanday and Headlam state,<sup>5</sup>

"In I Peter 2:6, there is a quotation from the Old Testament with the same variations from the Septuagint that are found in Romans 9:32.<sup>6</sup> Not only do we find the same

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 13, of John Wesley's Journal for May 24, 1738

<sup>4</sup> The Greek, rendered, *the rest of the Scriptures*, is τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς (*tas loipas graphas*), literally, *the rest of writings*. The presence of the definite article τὰς, rendered as, *the*, indicates a particular group of writings to which the apostle was referring.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. William Sanday, D.D., LL.D., Rev. Arthur C. Headlam, D.D., *The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons) 1896, pp lxxv-lxxvi

<sup>6</sup> The verse to which S&H refer is 9:33 in our present-day New Testaments. S&H cited the Wescott & Hort Greek text. In W&H the placing of the verses in the margin, rather than in the

thoughts [in both Romans and I Peter], such as the metaphorical use of the idea of sacrifice (Romans 12:1; I Peter 2:5), and the same rare words, such as *suschematizesthai* (συσχηματίζεσθαι),<sup>7</sup> and *anupokritos* (ἀνυπόκριτος),<sup>8</sup> but in one passage (Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17) we have what must be accepted as conclusive evidence, [i.e.], the same ideas occurring in the same order... St. Paul works out a thesis clearly and logically; St. Peter gives a series of maxims for which he largely is indebted to St. Paul."<sup>9</sup>

The following passages in I Peter appear to be modeled on Paul's thoughts and words:<sup>10</sup>

Romans 9:25	I Peter 2:10
Romans 9:32,33	I Peter 2:6-8
Romans 12:1	I Peter 2:5
Romans 12:2	I Peter 1:14
Romans 12:3,6	I Peter 4:7-11
Romans 12:9,10	I Peter 1:22
Romans 12:16-18	I Peter 3:8,9,11
Romans 13:1,3,4,7	I Peter 2:13-17

Of course, it is possible that the Holy Spirit led Peter down the same path of theological thinking and presentation as He did Paul, but most students of this issue consider Peter to have relied on Paul.

### AUTHORSHIP

A book or a portion of a book is said to be, "genuine," if it were written by the one to whom it is attributed. There is almost universal agreement, even among the most liberal theologians, that Romans is "genuine." Paul is the author.<sup>11</sup> Even before the close of the canon, this epistle was considered to be Scripture, penned by Paul.

The documents produced by the church leaders of the first generation following the death of the apostles, display the authors' knowledge of Romans. Clement of Rome's First Century Epistle to the Corinthians, has so many quotes from Romans that it would be difficult to list all of them. Second Century writers, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Marcion, Irenaeus, quote this epistle. From the first, Romans was recognized as being written by Paul and having apostolic authority.

text, and not printing the verses as paragraphs, this could be the reason for the difference between W&H's citing the verse as 9:32, rather than 9:33.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 12:2; I Peter 1:14. The term means, *to conform*. These are the only instances of this term in the New Testament

<sup>8</sup> Romans 12:9; I Peter 1:22. Paul uses this term (an adjective meaning, *sincere*) three other times in his epistles (II Corinthians 6:6;

I Timothy 1:5; II Timothy 1:5). James uses the term one time (James 3:17). An adjective meaning, *sincere*.

<sup>9</sup> The statement, "In I Peter 2:6, there is a quotation from the Old Testament with the same variations from the Septuagint that are found in Romans 9:32," is only partially true. After the opening phrase, Paul and Peter differ from one another, and both of them differing somewhat from the Septuagint.

<sup>10</sup> For passages in James, Hebrews, and Jude that resemble Romans see ADDENDUM B

<sup>11</sup> There are questions concerning the textual integrity of a few passages. When significant issues are involved in the uncertain integrity of a passage, we will address the matter when that passage is being studied.

## PLACE AND DATE OF ORIGIN

The place from which Paul wrote Romans and date of the composition can be determined with a high degree of certainty. Internal evidence in Romans, coupled with facts from Acts and Paul's two letters to Corinth, can be harmonized with secular dating to give us the information that we need.

### The Place

Several things lead to the conclusion that Paul wrote the epistle while he was in Corinth:

1. Phoebe was the one who carried the epistle to Rome (Romans 16:1-2). She is described as "a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." Cenchrea was the port city for Corinth.
2. Paul's host while he was writing Romans was Gaius, who sent greetings to the Roman Church (Romans 16:23). A Gaius is mentioned as being a member of the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 1:14).
3. Erastus, treasurer of the city where Paul was residing (Romans 16:23), is another brother who sent greetings to the Romans through Paul's epistle. In II Timothy 4:20, Paul mentions an Erastus, whom he left at Corinth, naturally enough if it were his home.

NOTE: There is a pavement block in Corinth with an inscription stating that it was laid at the expense of Erastus, Commissioner of Public Works of Corinth. Paul's statement that the Erastus who sent greeting to the Church at Rome was the city treasurer, makes highly probable the conclusion that this is the same Erastus who laid the pavement block in Corinth. (the Greek terms describing Erastus in Romans 16:23 are, ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως [*ho oikonomos tays poleos*] of which the literal translation is *steward of the city*.)

Considering this internal evidence, it seems quite obvious that Paul was in Corinth when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans.

### Date

Statements in Paul's letters to Corinth and his letter to Romans, concerning the collection of the offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem help to set the date of the composition of Romans. When Paul wrote his two letters to Corinth, the collection of the offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem as an uncompleted task.

*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;* (I Corinthians 16:1-3)

Chapters Eight and Nine of II Corinthians also picture the offering as still being in process. In contrast, Romans 15:22-28 refers to the collection of funds as having been completed.

*For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you; but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you I go to Spain-- for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while-- but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.*

By comparing these statements in Paul's Corinthian letters with his statement in Romans, it becomes apparent that Romans was written after the Corinthian epistles.

Thus, if Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, and the writing took place after both of the Corinthian epistles had been written, we turn to the Acts account of Paul's journeys to see if any period fits these conditions.

An ideal fit is seen in Paul's three-month visit to Corinth during his third missionary journey (Acts 20:2-3). Based upon the chronology of Acts, the described visit would have occurred in the early months of AD 58. Thus, with a high degree of probability, we consider AD 58 to be the date of Paul's writing the Epistle to the Romans.

### ROME AD 58

The population of Rome in AD 58 was about 800,000. Much of the population consisted of people from the provinces who had moved to the capital city. The slave population, consisting of people from all races, was significant. Many of Rome's inhabitants lived in multistoried apartment complexes, similar to present-day "high rises."

Nero had been Caesar for four years. The city was in a five-year period of immense prosperity and peace.<sup>12</sup>

There was a large, very prosperous, Jewish community in Rome. The prosperity of this community is seen in their funding the erection of a synagogue in Jerusalem, which they could attend when making pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

### THE ROMAN CHURCH

The origin of the Roman Church is obscure. Scripture does not describe its founding. Roman Catholicism contends that the Roman Church was established by Peter and that he was the first Bishop of Rome, occupying that role for twenty-five years. This view is based on traditions that developed around 170 A.D.<sup>13</sup> There is stronger evidence that Peter visited Rome after the church existed and that he died there on a date that cannot be determined with certainty.<sup>14</sup>

One factor that mitigates against Peter's being the founder of the Church at Rome is an understanding that he and Paul had concerning their spheres of ministry. Paul's sphere of ministry was among Gentiles, whereas Peter's sphere was among the circumcised.

*But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised*

*(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),*

*and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. (Galatians 2:7-9)*

Another factor is that in the epistle, Paul greets fifty people by name. He knew Peter. The fact that Peter is not mentioned in any of Paul's greetings to individual members of the Roman Church indicate that Peter was not present in Rome when Paul wrote the epistle.

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<sup>12</sup> For an overview of Rome and its history preceding Nero's reign, see ADDEDUM C.

<sup>13</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3.3.3

<sup>14</sup> As a result of my research (JWG), AD 68 is the date that seems most reasonable to me.

### **There are many opinions concerning the possible origins of the Church at Rome**

Some have suggested as a possibility the dispersion of the Jerusalem Church, which was caused by Saul's persecution (Acts 8), i.e., that some who fled Jerusalem went to Rome. One problem with this view is Acts statement that the Jerusalem Christians were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. There is no record of their going beyond these confines.

Ambrosiaster, a Fourth Century writer,<sup>15</sup> and probably a member of the Church at Rome, attributed the birth of the church to the presence of Jewish and Gentile converts who had made Rome their home. He stated that these converts had not seen any miracles, nor had they seen any of the apostles, thus contradicting the idea that the Apostle Peter founded the church.

In all probability, some *visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes*, (Acts 2:10) were among the 3000 who were baptized on Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Sooner or later, most of these would have returned to Rome. It is reasonable to assume that this was the origin of the Church in Rome. We should note among those to whom Paul sends greetings in Romans 16, some clearly were Jews, in that Paul describes them as his *kinsmen* (Romans 16:7, 11).

The three great cities in which Paul spent the most amount of time - Antioch, Corinth, and Ephesus - were three of the four cities in the Empire with which Rome had the greatest intercourse (Alexandria was the fourth). A constant stream of migrants moved from the eastern provinces into Rome. Since Paul knew so many members of the Church at Rome (Romans 16:3-16), in keeping with the opinion just expressed, a natural assumption is that many who had come into Christ through the preaching of Paul, later immigrated to Rome.

Although they may not have known each other, the natural lines of fellowship between Christians would have brought them together to form house-churches.

Prisca and Aquila were two of Paul's closest companions (in Corinth [Acts 18:2] and Athens [Acts 18:18-19]). Since Romans 16 reveals that they had a residence in Rome, there is no reason to reject the possibility that they were instrumental in the founding of the Roman Church.

Considering all of the possibilities, an honest person must admit that the origin of the Church at Rome cannot be decided with any degree of certainty.

Paul considered his sphere to be the Gentiles (Romans 1:5-15) and Rome fell within that sphere; thus, he desired to minister in Rome.

*For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; and thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written, "they who had no news of him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand. "*

*For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you; but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you...*

(Romans 15:18-23)

Paul understood his calling to be that of a pioneer. He was not called to build on another man's foundation, but whose foundation existed in Rome, must remain obscure.

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<sup>15</sup> Ambrosiaster wrote a commentary on Paul's epistles between 366 and 384. His commentaries were in Latin and among the most important Latin transcription of the Scriptures before Jerome.

## ANALYTICAL OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE

As he did in most of his epistles, along general lines, Paul divided Romans into two sections.

- Chapters 1-11 contain theology: *what we are to believe*.
- Chapters 12 -16 are practical: *how we are to live*.

### I. THE FUNDAMENTAL THESIS 1:1-17

- A. The apostolic greeting 1:1-7
- B. Introductory references to the writer's feelings and purposes as they relate to the Roman brethren 1:8-15
- C. Statement of the fundamental thesis of the epistle 1:16-17

### II. THE UNIVERSAL NEED FOR SALVATION 1:18-3:20

- A. The condition of the Gentile world 1:18-32
- B. General considerations applicable to both Jews and Gentiles 2:1-16
- C. Direct reference to the sinful state of Jews 2:17-29
- D. The superior privileges of the Jews, yet no superiority over the Gentiles in their moral condition before the Law 3:1-18
- E. The decisive result of the foregoing discussion, setting forth the moral condition of all races before the Law 3:19-20

### III. THE JUSTIFICATION OF BELIEVERS, PROVIDED BY THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS. 3:21-5:11

- A. Exposition of justification by faith apart from legal works as the only possible justification 3:21-31
- B. Evidence from the Old Testament that justification is by faith, apart from works 4:1-8
- C. The blessings of grace are conditioned on obedient faith and are available to all races 4:9-25
- D. The fruits of justification by faith, resulting from the work of Christ 5:1-11

### IV. GOD'S POWER FOR SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST, MANIFESTED IN THE COMPLETE DELIVERANCE FROM SIN AND DEATH, CULMINATING IN GLORIFICATION. 5:12-8:39

- A. The provision of salvation through Christ is coextensive with the ruin that resulted from Adam's sin 5:12-21
- B. Grace is no encouragement to sin 6:1-14
- C. Although not under a legal dispensation, believers are under obligation to obey standards of godly morality 6:15-23
- D. The need to be under grace and not under law 7:1-6
- E. The relation of law to sin 7:7-12
- F. Being under grace, rather than law, is essential to the continued life and peace of the believer 7:13-25
- G. Advantages and blessings of those who are in Christ and thus, freed from sin and death 8:1-17
- H. The hope of glory, secured by Christ, sustains the redeemed through all trials 8:18-30
- I. The believer's triumphant assurance, based on the greatness and constancy of God's love 8:31-39

- V. THE PRINCIPLES THUS ESTABLISHED, JUSTIFY GOD'S DEALING WITH JEWS AND GENTILES 9:1-11:36**
- A. Paul's deep sorrow over the Jews 9:1-5
  - B. Refutation of false claims and vindication of God's dealing with the Jews 9:6-13
  - C. The absolute freedom of mercy as vindication of God's dealings with the Jews 9:14-18
  - D. Divine sovereignty accompanied with longsuffering as a vindication of God's dealings with the Jews 9:19-29
  - E. The true cause of the rejection of the Jews and the acceptance of the Gentiles 9:30-33
  - F. The contrast between unattainable legal righteousness and the righteousness that comes through faith 10:1-13
  - G. The disobedient, whether Jew or Gentile, are without excuse, since the Gospel has been announced to all 10:14-21
  - H. A remnant of Israel will be saved through election of grace while the rest are rejected because of their blindness 11:1-10
  - I. The rejection of Israel not irrevocable 11:11-24
  - J. The prophetic announcement that there will be a final restoration of Jews into divine favor 11:25-36
- VI. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS GROWING OUT OF THE FOREGOING DOCTRINAL EXPOSITIONS 12:1-15:13**
- A. Exhortations concerning Christian duties 12:1-8
  - B. Exhortations to love and the various manners in which love is exemplified 12:9-21
  - C. The duty to obey civil authorities 13:1-7
  - D. Morality and the law fulfilled through love 13:8-10
  - E. Exhortation to holiness in view of the nearness of eternity 13:11-14
  - F. Christian freedom and tolerance in matters of opinion 14:1-12
  - G. The law of brotherly love takes precedence over personal feeling 14:13-23
  - H. Christ's example- modeling love through self-denial for the good of others 15:1-13
- VII. CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE, INCLUDING PERSONAL COMMENTS AND GREETINGS 15:14-16:27**
- A. Personal comments, including reference to Paul's labors and plans 15:14-33
  - B. Introduction of Phoebe 16:1-2
  - C. Salutations addressed to believers in Rome 16:3-16
  - D. Warning against those who cause divisions 16:17-20
  - E. Salutations from Paul's companions 16:21-23
  - F. Concluding doxology 16:24-27
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## THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

### Notes and Comments

As we proceed into an exegesis of Romans, we quickly agree with Peter's assessment of Paul's epistles, which we quoted earlier, ... *Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand...* (2 Peter 3:16)

Portions of this letter are difficult to understand and require serious investigation of the language used by Paul, and what he meant by the terms he used. We will endeavor to be as careful as we can in our exegesis and willingly admit when we encounter statements that can have more than one meaning that we must leave the matter in the realm of opinion.

#### I. THE FUNDAMENTAL THESIS 1:1-17

##### A. The apostolic greeting 1:1-7

*Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,*

*through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;*

*to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

In each of Paul's epistles, the salutation fits the specific epistle. For example, in Galatians, where Paul is arguing against the heresy of Judaizers, he argues that the doctrine which he brought to the Galatians came directly from God. In his salutation to the Galatians, therefore, he began by declaring that his apostleship was the result of divine sovereignty and that his doctrine had been received from Christ Himself.

*Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead... (Galatians 1:1)*

*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ... But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased<sup>16</sup> to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,<sup>17</sup> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. (Galatians 1:12, 15-17)*

In the Roman epistle, Paul's began by presenting an explanation for why he should be involved in the Church at Rome. As noted earlier, his realm was ministry to Gentiles, and Rome was in that sphere. His explanation, consisting of several clauses, resulted in one of the longest sentences in the Bible - 93 Greek words and 126 English words in the NAS. If all of the qualifying clauses are removed, the sentence reads,

*Paul, to all that are in Rome; grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This is the style of greeting with which letters were begun during this era. (Note how similar this is to the salutation of Claudius in his letter to Felix, recorded in Acts 23:26ff, *Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings*).

### Several Greek terms in these verses require our attention.

In order to gain a full understanding of what Paul is saying, it is important to spend time examining the Greek terms that Paul employs in this introduction. Important theological statements are made through these terms. We will explore these terms and their relevance to the point that Paul is making.

#### Verse 1

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

The three terms that Paul used to describe himself are worth noting.

#### **The apostle's name.**

Paul first appears in Scripture as Saul (Acts 7:58) and was known as Saul of Tarsus (Tarsus being the city of his birth; Acts 9:11, 30; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3). Saul is a Jewish name which means, *asked*. The transition from his use of the Hebrew name, *Saul*, to the Roman name, *Paul*, is recorded in Acts 13:9, when Barnabas and Saul were just beginning their missionary journeys. They began their itinerary at the island of Cyprus. The proconsul of Cyprus was Sergius Paulus, described in Acts as a *man of intelligence* (Acts 13:7). Some have argued that Saul became Paul because of the conversion of this powerful Roman (Acts 13:12), who bore the name, *Paul*.

Others have argued that since the name, *Paul*, means, *little*, that this was his nickname because he was small of stature.

A more probable explanation is found in the practice of the Jews who were Roman citizens, to give their children both Jewish and Roman names (Paul's father was a Roman Citizen; Acts 16:37; 22:25-28). Since Saul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, it would make sense for him to begin using his Roman name, *Paul*, rather than his Jewish name, *Saul*.

#### **Paul's self-description.**

The term rendered in the NAS as *Bond-servant* and rendered in the KJV and NIV as, *servant*, is the Greek term, δοῦλος (*doulos*). The Greek term means, *slave*.

"Several Greek words refer to some sort of servanthood. Each term has a special emphasis. The King James Version translators did not distinguish between the various terms, but rendered all of them, "servant," thus obscuring important biblical insights. For example, there is a very great difference between a *diakonos*, the general term for "servant" (possibly for hire), and a *doulos*, a "slave."

Most modern translations make a distinction between the various Greek terms, but some of these have tended to soften the impact of *doulos*, by rendering it, *bond-servant*.

To the Greeks, the term meant, "slave." The free Greeks saw the role of *doulos* as something to scorn. For example, one reason the Greeks looked down on the Persians was because they were not free, but after the manner of *douloi*, they were subject to *despotai* (those who own slaves). In his article on the term, *doulos*, Kittel says, 'Hence, we have a service which is not a matter of choice for the one who renders it, which he has to perform whether he likes it or not, because he is subject, as a slave to an alien will, to the will of his owner.'"<sup>16</sup> (excerpt from James W. Garrett, *The Doulos Principle*, [Doulos Press, Tulsa, Ok 1999])

In the Old Testament, *servant* is one of the Messianic designations (Isaiah 53:10-11). The prophets also were called, *My servants, the prophets* (II Kings 9:7; 17:13; Jeremiah 7:25; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Ezekiel 38:17; Zechariah 1:6).

<sup>16</sup> Gerhard Kittel – translated by Geoffrey Bromley – *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume II (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1964, page 261

In each of these Old Testament passages, the Hebrew term is עֶבֶד (*hyebede*), meaning, *slave*.<sup>17</sup>

Reflecting the use of the term, *slave*, in reference to Old Testament prophets, Paul possibly used the term, δοῦλος, here, not only as a slave of Christ in the general sense, but also with some degree of an official title. He was writing on the same plane as the Old Testament prophets. This would imply that the message that he had to bring was not his own, but that of His Master, who was the source and authority under which he served.

### Paul's credentials

*Called to be an apostle*: The term rendered as, *called*, is *kletos* (κλητός), an adjective derived from the verb, *kaleo* (καλέω), "to call." The words, *to be*, are not in the Greek text.<sup>18</sup> Because of this, some have argued that the description should be rendered, *called an apostle*, indicating that this referred to what people called him.

In English, we have several uses for the verb, *to call*, *i.e.* "I called him on the phone," "I call him Billy," etc.

The Greek term, κλητός, is more restrictive in its meaning. The term refers to one who is invited or summoned. It does not refer to the bestowing of a label.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the context, in which Paul is presenting his authority *and* his reason for writing to Rome, demands that the terms be rendered, *called to be an apostle*, or *called as an apostle*. To say that some merely called him an apostle, would not achieve Paul's purpose in making this claim.

It is interesting to note that Paul never refers to himself as, *the apostle Paul*. He never used the term as a title but in a functionary sense (note the difference between "Carpenter Bill," and "Bill, who is a carpenter").<sup>20</sup> His identity was not in a title, but in who he was in his relationship with Christ Jesus and the role to which he was called.

The term rendered, *apostle*, is an anglicization of the Greek term, ἀπόστολος (*apostolos*). The term means, "one sent with a commission" (the verb form is, ἀποστέλλω).<sup>21</sup> It can be used in a generic sense, *i.e.*, anyone sent to do anything... "please carry this pail of water to the horses." In the New Testament, it is used both in the generic sense and in a technical sense.

An example of the term's being used in a generic sense is Philippians 2:25.

*But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger* (Greek: ἀπόστολος) *and minister to my need;*

Epaphroditus had been commissioned to take money to Paul – that was his *apostleship*, to be Philippi's monetary courier.

<sup>17</sup> With the exception of three times in Jeremiah, this Hebrew term is rendered by the Greek term, δοῦλος, in the Septuagint.

<sup>18</sup> Note that most English versions italicize, *to be*, indicating that the translators added these words.

<sup>19</sup> William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich translation of Walter Bauer's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Fifth Edition (Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press) 1979, page 436

<sup>20</sup> Rom. 1:1; 1 Co. 1:1; 2 Co. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1

<sup>21</sup> Some contemporary preachers and teachers will state that the term means, "sent ones." This is incorrect. Should the reference be to sent ones, the Greek term would be a derivative of πέμπω, meaning, "to send."

The technical use of ἀπόστολος in the New Testament refers to that special group commissioned by Jesus Christ to represent Him in the establishment of the Church. One requirement for those called to that role was their having seen the post-resurrection Jesus and could testify to His having ascended into heaven (Acts 1:7-8, 21ff).

Paul, who encountered the resurrected and glorified Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6) described himself as one who was *untimely born* into this group. He defended his right to the role of apostle in several of his writings (examples: the first two chapters of Galatians and I Corinthians 15:1-11).

### **His divinely-given mission**

*Set apart for the Gospel of God:* The term translated, *set apart*, is *aphorismenos* (ἀφορισμένος), which has the sense of "to select from among others." It has this sense in the Septuagint's rendering of Leviticus 20:24 and 26, *I am the Lord your God, who has set you apart from the nations.*

In Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit instructed the leadership council of the Antioch Church, *Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*

Although the event recorded in Acts 13 was the formal beginning of Paul's apostolic ministry, it was not the time of Paul's consecration to Gospel ministry.

- Paul wrote to the Galatians, *But when He who had set me apart (ἀφορισμένος), even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace... (Galatians 1:15),* indicating that the separation was from the moment of his birth. This is reminiscent of Jeremiah 1:4-5, *Now the word of Yahweh came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."*
- When Jesus sent Ananias to present the Gospel message to Paul and to baptize him into Christ, he told Ananias, *Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;* (Acts 9:15).

Paul had been set apart unto the Gospel of God from the time of his birth. However, the *setting apart* was not actualized until the Antioch Church laid hands on Barnabas and Saul, formally setting them apart for the work, then releasing them to go out and fulfill their call.

This is the New Testament pattern. God ordains and calls. The Church, however, has a responsibility to confirm the *setting apart*. This is *ordination*.

These three terms, *doulos, kletos, aphorismenos* (δούλος, κλητός, ἀφορισμένος), emphasize the Scriptural doctrine that human ministers are but instruments in the hand of God.

A true minister of Christ has no initiative or merit of his own. He serves because

- God has called him
- God has set him apart
- All that he does, he does in obedience to his Master

## The contents of the Gospel preached by Paul

### *Unto the Gospel of God*

- The particular function for which Paul had been set apart was the preaching of the Gospel.

- I Corinthians 15:1-4 contains Paul's description of the **elements of the Gospel**:

*Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...*

- In Romans, Paul focuses on the **results of Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection**, resulting in the good news, the glad tidings... the Gospel.

### Verse 2

#### ***Which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures:***

As explained in the following EXCURSUS, the *Holy Scriptures* referred to the Old Testament.

#### EXCURSUS

#### What is "Scripture"?

The term, *Scripture* occurs fifty times in the English language New Testament. The Greek term so rendered is, *graphe* (γραφή), which simply means, *writings*. The term refers to any thing that has been written. There is no term in the Greek language whereby what we call Scripture is distinguished from any other writing.

The origin of the term, *Scripture*, in our English Bibles is Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible.<sup>22</sup> The Latin term for a writing is *scriptura*. When translators of the English Bible began translating the Greek text into English, they often used Jerome's Latin terms for what the translators considered to be sacred things (they interpreted before they translated). Many examples could be cited.

Thus, when we read the word, *scripture*, in our Bibles, we are encountering a term that in Greek means, *writings*, without any indication that any special writings are being described. How then, can we know that the term, when found in the apostolic writings, refers to the literature that we call, *the Bible*, and not just some secular writing, or for that matter, everything that is written?

Sometimes, there are identifying modifiers. Romans 1:2 is an example of an adjective identifying the writing to which Paul refers as being a special group of writings.

*which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy writings.*

The term, *holy* (ἅγιος - *hagios*), defines which writings.

Sometimes, the indicator is not so obvious. For example, II Timothy 3:16 often is cited, as evidence of the Holy Spirit's authorship of Scripture.

<sup>22</sup> In 382 Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome, the leading biblical scholar of his day, to produce an acceptable Latin version of the Bible from the various translations then being used. His revised Latin translation of the Gospels appeared about 383. His Latin translation of the entire Bible (both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament) was completed in 405. For a thousand years, the Latin Vulgate was the standard Bible in all countries, regardless of the native language of the region.

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness,*

The Greek text simply states, *all writing is inspired by God.*

On what basis can we claim that Paul is referring to any special group of writings? The preceding verse in this passage identifies the writing to which Paul refers.

*and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings<sup>23</sup> which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (II Timothy 3:15)*

Verse 16 is a continuation of the thought presented in verse 15, which has the qualifying term, *sacred* (*hieros* - ἱερός), distinguishing the literature to which Paul refers from literature in general.

It would be absurd to conclude that the term, *γραφή*, when used in the New Testament, would refer to all writing, such as Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, or Homer's *The Iliad and the Odyssey*, or Adolph Hitler's, *Mein Kampf* or the Marx/Lenin document, *The Communist Manifesto*.

Obviously, even when there is no defining Greek term accompanying *γραφή*, the term in the New Testament always refers to that particular body of writing that we call the Old Testament.

### **Verse 3-4**

***Concerning His Son, born of a descendent (literally, of the seed) of David, according to the flesh:<sup>24</sup> who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,***

Several terms in these two verses require our attention.

- Of great theological significance is the term rendered, *born*. The usual terms for *born* are, *gennao* (γεννώω) and *tikto* (τίκτω).

The term used here is *genomenou* (γενομένου) which is the aorist, middle, genitive, masculine, singular, participle of *γένομαι* (*genomai*). This Greek term denotes transition from one state or mode of existence to another. This is an extremely important point in understanding Christ's identity. The term often is translated, *became*.<sup>25</sup>

This sense of transition from one state to another is consistent with Paul's statement in Philippians 2:6-7:

*who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of men.<sup>26</sup>*

The term rendered, *taking*, in Philippians 2:7, is the same term Paul used in Romans 1:3, *γένομαι* i.e., *became* (*became the form of a slave*).

<sup>23</sup> The term in verse 15 is *γράμμα* which is from the same language family as *γραφή*

<sup>24</sup>For a list of important passages that refer to the Messiah's identity and His lineage, see ADDENDUM D

<sup>25</sup> Paul used the same term in Galatians 4:4, *But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law...* The term rendered as *born*, is *γινόμεαι*, i.e., *became*.

<sup>26</sup> Two terms in this passage are of importance. The first term, rendered as, *form of God*, and, *form of a slave*, is the term, *morphe* (μορφή), indicating, *essence*. The second term, rendered as *likeness of men*, is, *σκayma* (σκήμα), referring to outward appearance.

The essential point of Philippians 2:7 and Romans 1:3, is that the Son of God, who was/is Divine, took the form of humanity. This truth is clearly declared in the prologue to John's Gospel.

*And the Word became (ἐγένετο)<sup>27</sup> flesh,<sup>28</sup> and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

- The term rendered as, *declared* (NAS) is the participle of ὀρίζω (*horidzo*), which in its primary usage indicates marking off boundaries or defining something. Thus, Paul uses the term to describe Jesus, as the one who by his resurrection, is defined as, or marked off as, *the Son of God with power*.

Jesus is the *Son of God* in a way that no one else ever has been nor ever will be. John 3:16 calls Jesus, God's *only begotten Son* (KJV NAS). The Greek term translated, *only begotten*, is *monogenes* (μονογενής). It means, *unique, the only one of its kind*, i.e. *sui generis*. This is the term that is used when parents speak of their only son or daughter, if they have only one child.

- The King James Translators, when casting about for a tidy way to translate the term, arrived at *only begotten*.
- The NAS kept the KJV rendering, with a side note, stating that the literal rendering of the term is, "*unique only one of His kind*."
- The NIV translators opted for *his one and only Son*, which fits the general use of the term in New Testament times.

In the New Testament, the term, *Son of God*, (*o uios tou theou* - ὁ υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ), is not applied to anyone other than the historic Christ.<sup>29</sup>

John uses the plural term, *children of God* (*tekna tou theou* - τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ) for believers:

John 1:12-13 *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

In addition to John, three other New Testament writers use the plural to refer to believers.

Matthew and Luke:

- Matthew 5:9 *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called **sons of God**.*
- Luke 20:36 *for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are **sons of God**, being sons of the resurrection.*

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<sup>27</sup> Indicative, aorist, middle voice, of γένομαι.

<sup>28</sup>The term translated, *flesh*, in the expression, *according to the flesh*, is the Greek term, *sarx* (σάρξ). The term often is used for the *human nature*, not just for *flesh*.

<sup>29</sup> In the English Bible, only Luke 3:38 contains this title in reference to someone other than Jesus Christ, *the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God*.

It is important to note that the word, *son*, is not in the Greek text of Luke 3:38. Neither is the term in any of the other verses of this passage. The Greek text merely says a person's name, then *of* and his ancestor's name.

In order to make the passage easier reading for English readers, the translators added *son* seventy-six times in Luke 3:23-38. All of those on the list preceding Adam were *of* followed by that individual's father's name. Since Adam was created, he was *of God*, not, *the son of God*. Throughout the New Testament, the term, *Son of God*, is reserved for Jesus Christ.

Paul:

- Romans 8:14 *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*
- Romans 8:19 *For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.*
- Galatians 3:26 *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

NOTE: The expression, *Son of God*, is not used in Scripture for the Logos (the everlasting third member of the Godhead) apart from the incarnation. There is no passage of Scripture in which the term is used of the Second Member of the Godhead until the birth event in Bethlehem.<sup>30</sup>

This causes us to speculate whether or not the term, *Son*, is applicable to the Second Member of the Godhead prior to the virgin birth.

**From this analysis, it is clear that:**

- The New Testament views Jesus Christ as the *monogenes*, the one who is uniquely the Son of God, *the Word that became flesh*;
- Believers, having received the spirit of adoption as sons, are children of God (Romans 8:15-16). No believer is **THE** Son. All believers are **A** son, by adoption.

*The spirit of holiness*, as it is used in this verse, poses a question. Note that the KJV and NAS do not capitalize the word, *spirit*, whereas some of the modern English (ESV, NIV, RSV, etc.) versions do so.<sup>31</sup> Which is the best rendering?

There is a play on words in this passage:

- *According to flesh* (*kata sarka*- κατά σάρκα) of verse 3,
- is contrasted with *according to spirit of holiness* (*kata pneuma agiosunes* - κατά πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης) of verse 4.

The definite article, *the* is missing in the Greek text of both verses.<sup>32</sup> When the Holy Spirit is referred to in Scripture, the term, *Spirit*, always is preceded by the definite article, indicating a specific spirit, i.e., *the Holy Spirit*.

The absence of the definite article, seemingly indicate that the nature of Christ is referenced to by the expression, *spirit of holiness*, rather than, the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> For a list of forty-three verses that contain the expression, *Son of God*, in reference to Jesus, see ADDENDUM E

<sup>31</sup> The NIV has a footnote on these terms, “Or, *who was as to his spirit*.”

<sup>32</sup> I have researched the various Greek manuscripts available to me and have not found the definite article in any of them. It is of interest to note that in this instance, most English translations departed from their usual practice of italicizing terms that were not in the text, but were added by the translators for clarity. Here, they did not do so, but added, *the*, without textual warrant. Their failure to do this here, indicates that they interpreted, rather than translated this expression in this verse.

<sup>33</sup> Hebrews 9:14 presents an exegetical situation, similar to the one in this passage. Contrasting the blood of bulls and goats with the blood of Christ, Hebrews states, *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* To what does *the eternal Spirit* in Hebrews 9:14 refer? The definite article before *eternal spirit* is missing in this passage: *dia pneumatos aioniou eauton prosenekēn* (διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν). Literally, the Greek states, *through spirit eternal himself did offer*. The

Paul is emphasizing the two aspects of Christ's being – His fleshly origin and His spiritual nature.

When Jesus died on the cross, the dead body was placed in a tomb. His spirit, which inhabited the body, departed from the body, as is true when any human being dies. On the third day after the entombment, His spirit reentered the body and both body and spirit came out of the tomb. His body, from that time onward, was of a different character than before (the term often used to describe his post-resurrection body is, *glorified*). The resurrected body could pass through a solid door, but still displayed the characteristics of a flesh and blood body. The scene described in John 20 makes this clear.

*When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

*And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (John 20:19-20)*

*But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*

*And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:24-28)*

The absence of the definite article, prior to the noun, *spirit*, in Romans 1:4, would indicate that the term refers to the spirit of Jesus, reentering the body, resulting in the resurrection.

Thus, Paul is describing Jesus' human origin, *of the seed of David, according to the flesh* when He came forth from the womb of Mary,

AND

what one could call his rebirth, when, by the power of His spirit, which is a *spirit of holiness*, He came forth from the tomb.

*The resurrection from the dead.* Again, the Greek here is very interesting. *ek anastaseos nekron* (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν). The preposition that begins the expression, *ek*, primarily means "exit" or "emission out of." This term is used a number of ways. Two of the uses are temporal (*from the time of coming out*) and causal (*growing out of coming out, on the basis of coming out, because of coming out*).

The second of these, causal, best fits the context.

absence of the definite article would lead us to conclude that the Holy Spirit is not referenced in this expression. Two understandings of Hebrews 9:14 are possible:

- Christ, having/being an eternal spirit, was able to perform the whole work of atonement, not merely dying on the cross but passing through that death to present Himself before God.
- A more probable understanding, considering the context (and the absence of the article), is that the words express the spiritual nature of the sacrifice, which gave it eternal validity. It had superior efficacy to the blood of bulls and goats because it was not merely of the flesh, but it was spiritual in nature.

In his sermon to the Athenians, Paul stated, *because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.*" (Acts 17:31)<sup>34</sup>

Based on this understanding, the best rendering of *ek* in this passage is causal, *on the basis of*, or to shorten the translation, the single word, *by*, will suffice.

The term, *anastaseos* (ἀναστάσεως), i.e., *raising Him*, is singular.

The final term, *nekron* (νεκρῶν), is genitive plural, meaning *of dead people* (the translators indicate this by adding the definite article, "the" before the word, "dead").

Literally, the expression reads, *by a resurrection of dead persons*. It is important to note that *ek* does not relate to *nekron*, but to the expression, *anastaseos nekron*. If *ek* had been joined to *nekron* the expression would mean that Jesus was resurrected out of the midst of dead people, He was separated from out of them.<sup>35</sup>

*Anastaseos* and *nekron* coalesce so closely in this verse that they join together to have the force of a compound word, thus giving us the rendering, *by a dead-rising* (i.e., a resurrection such as that when dead persons rise).<sup>36</sup>

NOTE: A few exegetes have explained this expression to mean that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God because He, during his earthly ministry, demonstrated that He had the power to raise the dead. This is an innovative explanation and goes against the understanding of the passage throughout the history of the Church. For that matter, Jesus is not the only one who has raised the dead, for example Elijah restored to life the widow's son (I Kings 17:17ff). Thus, His raising people from the dead would not be irrefutable credentials concerning His Divinity.

The best understanding of this phrase, is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself, was the crowning evidence that He is the Son of God.

- In spite of all that his enemies could do to keep the body in the grave, He came out of the tomb, never to die again. Every other person who was resurrected, eventually died again. Jesus is the exception.
- Furthermore, there was no human agent involved in bringing about the resurrection. In all other records of someone's being resurrected, there always was a human agent involved in the miracle.
- The resurrection was a result of the power of Jesus' spirit of holiness, something that no other being possessed.

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<sup>34</sup>Peter wrote, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* (1 Peter 1:3)

<sup>35</sup>In the opening of Paul's speech in Acts 26:1-8, he declared that he was contending for the promise to the fathers, and that involved the resurrection from the dead. In Luke's record of the closing statement of the speech (Acts 26:23), the exact word order is used as is seen in Romans 1:4: *that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.* "

<sup>36</sup> See Sanday & Headlam, page 10; James Denney, *The Expositors New Testament*, Volume II (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans' Printing Company) 1976, page 586; Kenneth S. Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans' Publishing Co.) 1955, page 16

Paul considered the resurrection of Christ to guarantee the resurrection of God's Church. This is displayed in his First Letter to the Corinthians.

*Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;*

*and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.*

*Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;*

*and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (I Corinthians 15:12-19)<sup>37</sup>*

### **Verse 5**

***through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake,***

Paul was very aware that he had been saved by grace. He had been an enemy of Jesus Christ, even to the point of causing Christians to be put to death (Acts 26:10). Yet, Christ took the initiative and saved him. Paul never forgot from whence he had come and what the love of Christ had done for him. (Acts 22:4-5,19-20; 26:10ff; Philippians 3:6-11; I Timothy 1:12-16; etc.)

*To bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles*, was Paul's apostolic commission. The Greek term translated, *Gentiles* (ἔθνος), literally is *nations*. Even though Paul always felt an obligation to preach first to the Jews (Roman 1:16, etc.), he realized that the Gentiles were the special burden that Jesus had put upon him.

As noted earlier, he and the other apostles understood Paul's commission to be, primarily, among Gentiles (Galatians 2:7-10). This is a part of Paul's explanation why he wanted to preach in Rome.

*Obedience of faith* refers to the obedience that is the result of belief.

*For His name's sake*: In mid-eastern cultures, one's name involves the person and all of his characteristics. The conversion to *Christ* (the name itself) would bring honor to Christ and commend the Gospel to others.

### **Verse 6-7**

***Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.***

***To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father the Lord Jesus Christ.***

The Greek term rendered as, *called*, in both of these verses is the term, κλητός, discussed earlier – meaning *to be invited*, or, *summoned*.

Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul stated,

2 Thessalonians 2:14 *And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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<sup>37</sup> Jesus' resurrection was representative of the resurrection that all will experience. Christ is the first-born of the dead (Colossians 1:18). Jesus is seen as a representative of all who will be resurrected. The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees the resurrection of His Church at the last day.

Three views are held concerning those who are called of Christ:

1. One view holds that everyone who hears the Gospel is called of Christ, but only those who obey are chosen.
2. The other view is that only those who obey are called; God exercises sovereignty in the hearts of certain ones so that they accept the Gospel, this constitutes an irresistible call.
3. There is a middle ground, one developed by Jacob Arminius<sup>38</sup> and later adopted by Wesley. Arminianism advocates *prevenient grace*. According to this view, God does a work of grace in a person's heart that enables the individual to respond to the Gospel, but does not compel one to do so. One is called when that work of grace occurs.

We will comment on these positions as we move through the epistle, but suffice it to say, Scripture uses the term, *called*, elsewhere to refer to those who are in God's Kingdom.

- Jude 1 *Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:*
- Revelation 17:14 *"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."*

*Called as saints:* As noted, the term called, κλητός (*kletos*), is the term described above.

Therefore, the best rendering is *called to be saints*.

The word rendered as, *saints*, is *hagios* (ἅγιος) which frequently is rendered as, *holy*. The basic meaning of the term is *separation*. When applied to created things (things or people), it means that they are set apart for God.

Grace (*charis* - χάρις) carries the idea of unmerited favor. It is given not because the recipient has any right or claim upon it, but because of the generous heart of the giver.

Peace (*irene* - εἰρήνη) In Hebrew, this is the word, *shalom*, which was the most comforting word in the Hebrew vocabulary. The customary greeting among the Hebrews always included, *shalom*.

- Grace encompasses the sum of the blessings given by God.
- Peace is the blessing experienced by man because of God's grace.

*God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is a strong affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ. It would be blasphemy to put any name but Jesus in this phrase.

Note that throughout Scripture, there is a consistent distinction between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who hold to the Oneness Doctrine (which was held by some of the pioneers of the Charismatic Movement) find it difficult to explain away this consistent distinction.

## **B. Introductory references to the writer's feelings and purposes as they relate to the Roman brethren 1:8-15**

### **Verse 8**

*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.*

Note that Paul's thanksgiving to God is transmitted through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the great Mediator and our High Priest.

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<sup>38</sup> Dutch theologian (1560-1609). Arminius was a Calvinist who modified his views and developed the doctrine of prevenient grace..

- Colossians 3:17 *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*
- Ephesians 5:20 *always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;*
- Hebrews 13:15 *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*
- 1 Peter 2:5 *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

This is the consistent biblical pattern. Jesus is not the object of our prayers, but the one who conveys them to God the Father.<sup>39</sup>

*Because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world*

The fact that the reputation of the Roman church was widespread, makes it obvious that the Roman church had been in existence for some time.

The expression, *the whole world*, does not mean the entire globe. It refers to the portion of the globe known by those who were citizens of the Roman Empire, chiefly, the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

### **Verse 9-10**

***For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.***

*In my spirit:* True service to God takes place in one's spirit (*pneuma* - πνεῦμα). All true worship must come from one's spirit: *God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.* (John 4:24)

The spirit of man is that which is made in the image of God. This is what makes man different from the animals. A cow cannot pray or worship because it does not have a spirit that allows it to have affinity with God.

The word translated, *serve* (*latreuo* - λατρεύω), refers to a service that carries a sense of worship and sometimes is translated, *worship*.<sup>40</sup> The English word, *liturgy*, is derived from this term and its cognates.<sup>41</sup>

*In the preaching of the gospel of His Son*, is the sphere in which Paul's spirit served. Since he used the term, λατρεύω, Paul was stating that as he faithfully preached the Gospel, he did so with a sense that he was worshipping Christ. This brings to mind Paul's exhortation to the Colossians, *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.* (Colossians 3:17)

*God... is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers...*

The Greek reads, literally, *at my prayers*, or *at the time of my prayers* (ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν *epi ton proseuchon*). The terminology suggests a regularly scheduled regimen of prayer. The Jews had set times of prayer, each day, even as the Muslims do today. It is possible that Paul sought to continue that practice throughout his life. Paul's prayer life must have been amazing, considering all of the people and churches that he had on his heart.

<sup>39</sup> See ADDENDUM F for a discussion of the Pattern of New Testament Prayer.

<sup>40</sup> Bauer, Arndt, & Gingrich, page 467

<sup>41</sup> Λειτουργέω, λειτουργία, λειτουργικός, λειτουργός, etc,

- 1 Corinthians 1:4 *I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus*
- Ephesians 1:16 *do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; (ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν at my prayers)*
- Philippians 1:4 *always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,*
- Colossians 1:3 *We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,*
- 1 Thessalonians 1:2 *We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; (ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν at my prayers)*
- 2 Timothy 1:3 *I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day*
- Philemon 1:4 *I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers (ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν at my prayers)*

*making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.*

The Greek for *now at last* is difficult to render in English. There is a suggestion of surprise or relief that the desired thing has been reached as soon as it has. A suggested rendering is, *if somehow, now, after all this waiting*. For a long time, Paul had wanted to visit Rome. The possibility of doing so was becoming a reality.

Acts 19:21 *Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."*

In the expression, *by the will of God*, Paul lays stress on the fact that all of his movements are in the hands of God.

### **Verse 11 - 12**

***For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.***

Paul looked forward to his visit to Rome because his association with them would be a two-way blessing.

This two-way blessing that flows between believers is one motivation for believers to be frequent in their meetings. Hebrews 10:25

*not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*

### **Verse 13**

***And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.***

The Greek says, literally, *I do not wish you to be ignorant, i.e., not knowing*. Paul wanted them to know that he had planned to visit them but that he had been prevented (Romans 15:22-23; similar to Acts 16:7)

### **Verse 14**

***I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.***

*Barbarian* is the Greek term, *barbaros* (βάρβαρος). This the term that the Greeks used for all non-Greeks. It has an interesting origin. They said that the languages of the surrounding nations

sounded like, "bar, bar, bar." So, they named all non-Greeks, "barbarians." Paul, writing to the Greeks in Corinth, reflects this in I Corinthians 14:11 *If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.*

Paul did not recognize any racial or intellectual barrier in his ministry of preaching the Gospel.

### **Verse 15**

***Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.***

The KJV translates literally, the idiomatic expression in the Greek, *as much as in me is*. This carries the force of what Paul is saying, rather than the tame, *for my part*.

## **C. Statement of the fundamental thesis if the epistle 1:16-17**

### **Verse 16**

***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***

This verse repeats the thought of verse 14 – no intellectual or racial barriers existed in the proclamation of the Gospel.

Several of Paul's statements in his letters to Corinth convey the same idea. For example,

*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (I Corinthians 1:21-24)*

The Jews wanted a powerful Messiah who would free them from the Romans and any other dominant world power.

The Greeks, who were admirers of philosophy, considered the message of a crucified young man to be foolishness.

Paul did not hesitate to preach the same Gospel message, regardless of the identity of his audience.

Paul followed this plan of *to the Jew first*, by going to the local synagogue (when there was one) to begin his evangelistic activity in a city.

Of importance is the term rendered, *believes*. The word is a present, active, participle of the verb, πιστεύω (*pisteuo*), which literally states, *the one who is believing*. This language refers to an ongoing belief, a way of life, not just an isolated event of being convinced of a truth.

### **Verse 17**

***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "but the righteous man shall live by faith."***

There has been great debate over this verse. Most serious commentaries devote many pages discussing the terms in this verse. The two difficult expressions are,

- *the righteousness of God*
- *from faith to faith.*

Does the *righteousness of God* refer to a characteristic of God Himself, or does it refer to the righteousness God has imputed to believers?

The quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 presents this ambiguity.

A mere study of words is not a sufficient means of finding the answer. Even so, it is helpful to understand the meaning of the terms.

The term, *righteousness*, is a translation of the Greek word, *dikaioσune* (δικαιοσύνη). The term, *righteous*, is a translation of *dikaioσ* (δικαιοσ).

Both of the terms, *dikaioσune* and *dikaioσ*, carry two basic ideas (a) right behavior and (b) justice. The resulting idea is that a righteous person is one who lives in accordance with the laws of God and man.

To the Jew of Paul's day, righteousness was the highest moral ideal, the principle of all action and the goal of all effort. Unfortunately, the Jew went the wrong way to attain it. For the Jew, the Mosaic Law took up the whole sphere of righteousness. The Law was approached as a code of law, more than an expression of the will of God. As a result, obedience to the Law became more formal and mechanical. The way to righteousness seemed to be through precise obedience to the smallest tenet of the Law. The true spirit of the Law was missed.

When the Pharisee/lawyer asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment in the law, expecting Him to quote one of the Mosaic legal tenants, Jesus, quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, pointed to the spirit behind the law,

*And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"*

*And He said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment.*

*The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

*On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 22:35-40).*

In the Scriptures, the expression, *the righteousness of God*, frequently refers to an attribute of God. This is indisputably the meaning of the expression in some portions of this epistle (Romans 3:5; 3:25), but the same ambiguity encountered here exists in other statements in the epistle (Romans 3:21, 22; 10:3).

Paul's quoting Habakkuk 2:4, *but the righteous man shall live by faith*, to prove his point, not only causes the ambiguity, but when we read the full quote, it resolves the issue.

The passage in Habakkuk is not describing an attribute of God, but the attribute of one who is pleasing to God, *Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.*

This would force us to conclude that the *righteousness of God* in verse 17 refers to the righteousness imparted to those who possess faith.

In a parallel passage in Philippians, the thought of imputed righteousness is quite explicit.

*and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, (Philippians 3:9)*

With this background, we must conclude that the passage refers to righteousness as something imputed to man. The reason that the Gospel is efficacious is because it first reveals the righteousness of God, as contrasted with mankind's moral failures. When a person grasps this and is brought under conviction, then hears the good news of God's offer of salvation, and believes and accepts the offer, that person is deemed righteous in God's eyes.

Coupling verses 16 and 17 together, without the defining clauses and expressions, we see that it states the following:

- The Gospel of Christ reveals to us the good news that God has paid the price for our sins.
- Those who believe and accept this gift from God are deemed righteous in God's eyes.
- Diligent keeping of a code of Law will not bestow this righteousness.

This was a revolutionary concept to the Jew and a foolish concept to Greek philosophers.

The expression, *from faith to faith*, refers to how God works. God is the source, faith is the condition.

Again, Greek terminology is interesting here. The Greek term translated, *faith*, is a rendering of the noun, πίστις, which basically means, *belief* or *trust*.

Saving faith always is expressed in Scripture by the preposition, *eis* (εἰς), which carries the idea of "into;" *eis* indicates motion. Thus, John 3:16 literally states, *whosoever believes into Him*.

The belief so described is not just intellectual acknowledgment, but a belief that moves one into a relationship.

In the verse before us (v 17) the Greek reads, *ek* (out of, from, or as a result of) *pisteuos eis* (into) *pistin* (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν). Thus, a literal rendering would be, *as a result of belief into belief*.

The idea being communicated in these verses is that,

- when a sinner hears the Gospel and its message that the righteousness of God is imparted to an individual on the basis of the saving work of Jesus, and
- a hearer *believes* the message,
- the individual then is ready to *enter into a faith relationship* with God.
- That faith relationship then becomes an expanding faith.<sup>42</sup>

This is consistent with what is seen in verse 16, *the one who is believing* – a continual condition.

## II. THE UNIVERSAL NEED FOR SALVATION 1:18-3:20

### A. The Condition of the Gentile World 1:18-32

#### Verse 18

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

Wrath and mercy spring from the same motive – God's love for those made in His Image. God does not hate men, but He hates sin. God loves sinners, but he hates the sin that destroys them.

*Revealed from heaven...* The Jews spoke of three heavens.

- The first heaven was the area inhabited by the birds.
- The second heaven was the celestial heaven, where the stars dwell.
- The third heaven was the dwelling place of God. This is what Paul referred to in II Corinthians 12:2, *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven.*

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<sup>42</sup> Some have sought to make the expression, *from faith unto faith*, refer to a number of things, i.e.,

- from believing the Old Testament to becoming a believer in the New Covenant;
- moving from immature faith to mature faith;
- a person of faith preaches the Gospel, and this produces faith in the hearer;
- from the embryonic church in Jerusalem, to the world-wide faith as a result of the Great Commission; etc.

None of these, take into account the flow of thought in the two verses as presented in the discussion above.

The heaven referenced in verse 18 is the throne of God.

Psalm 11:4 *The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.*

*Revealed* - God's displeasure is revealed in the consequences of their sinful behavior. The main consequence, as noted in verse 24, is that God removed His restraining hand.

*All ungodliness* refers to lack of reverence. *Unrighteousness* and *ungodliness* would encompass the whole range of sin.

The sense of the rest of the verse is that these wicked people, by their lives, suppress or oppose the truth concerning God.

### **Verses 19-20**

***because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.***

*God made it evident to them.* The Gentile world had some light. They did not have a clear revelation, as did the Jews.

In the beginning, there was primeval revelation. Adam lived 900 years and we can be certain that he spoke to his children about the Garden of Eden, etc. Certainly, Eve didn't stay quiet. Noah had this revelation and he lived 950 years.

The creation is charged with God. His power is evident in the sun, the moon, stars, and the earth. The Gentiles, who had the tradition of truth from their ancestors, and the testimony of creation, were without excuse for exchanging the truth for a lie.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, the Gentiles are considered to have had the truth of God in their mind, but the Gentiles refused to know God.

### **Verses 21-23**

***For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.***

The first step downward was their failure to adore God and to worship Him. There is a lesson here for every society that does not glorify God.

*Nor give thanks*, indicates the sin of ingratitude. This is one of the basic sins of heathenism. Ingratitude appears in more than one biblical catalogue of major sins (see II Timothy 3:2).

*Foolish hearts* (ἄσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία) literally is "stupid hearts," or "undiscerning hearts." The heart is the most comprehensive biblical term for the human faculties.

### **Verses 24-25**

***Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For 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*, is a rendition of the term, παραδίωμι (*apodidomi*), which carries the idea of *handing over*, or *giving something up*.

God removed His restraining hand from those herein described and let fallen nature take its course.

### Verses 26-27

*For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.*

Homosexuality and lesbianism are self-worship in its most basic form. Historically, when a society begins to install worship of the creature in place of worshipping the Creator, homosexuality and lesbianism begins to flourish. Women are the last to be affected by the decay of moral behavior. Thus, when Paul says, *even the women* (KJV - which better conveys the Greek than the NAS), he was giving evidence that all virtue has been lost.<sup>43</sup>

In the statement, *receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their behavior*, Paul asserts for the third time in this passage that the moral degradation was the penalty for forsaking God.

### Verses 28-32

*And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*

*Did not see fit* is the rendering of the word, (*edokimasan* [ἐδοκίμασαν]). The term refers to something that is rejected after testing. The idea is that they had acknowledged God, but then decided that they would reject acknowledging Him and follow the basest impulses of fallen human nature.

Again, for emphasis, Paul states, *God gave them over*. God said, *if that's what you want, have it your way and watch what happens when I remove My Restraining hand*.

In these verses we have the blackest catalogue. The meaning of the terms is so obvious that there is little need to comment on them, except to make us aware of each item.

*Worthy of death* refers to the penalty of death, prescribed by Yahweh, in the law of Moses.<sup>44</sup>

*Not only do the same, but give hearty approval to those who practice them*. This is as low as one can get. Not only does the depraved individual plunge to horrible depths, himself, but also encourages, or perhaps is entertained by, these abominable behaviors in others.

### **B. General Considerations applicable to both Jews and Gentiles 2:1-16**

In this paragraph, Paul demonstrates that judgment is according to actual guilt, not according to race. Then he shows that the purpose of God's long-suffering is that men may come to repentance. This is a Nathan-like paragraph (II Samuel 12)

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<sup>43</sup> The term rendered, *women*, is not the term usually used to refer to women γυνή (*gune*). The term Paul uses in this passage is θήλυς (*thelus*) which emphasizes the sexual identity – *female*. The same is true of the term he uses for men. Rather than using ἀνὴρ (*aner*), which is the term usually used for man, Paul used the term, ἄρσεν (*arsen*), which emphasizes, *male*.

<sup>44</sup> For example, same-sex intercourse: Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; disobedience toward parents, Deuteronomy 21:18-21

### Verses 1-3

*Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*

*And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.*

*And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?*

These verses must not lead us to believe that it always is wrong to exercise judgment. God commands us to exercise judgment in certain situations, using our discerning faculties and our knowledge of the truth.

- I Corinthians 6:4-5 The Church is to replace a secular court, to adjudicate disputes between members.  
*If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren...*  
Such adjudication requires judging.
- Matthew 18:15-17 is similar to the command in I Corinthians 6:4-5  
*And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.*
- I Corinthians 5:13 commands the Church to judge a wicked member and, after judgment, to cast out the wicked member.  
*For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.*
- II John 9-11 commands the judgment of and the shunning of false teachers.  
*Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.*
- I Corinthians 10:15 Paul urges them to judge his teaching  
*I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.*

Even so, there is a human tendency to condemn in others the very sins to which we are prone, while not seeing the presence of these sins in ourselves. Paul's warning in these verses is in harmony with the warning recorded in Matthew 7:1-5

*Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.*

*And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?*

*You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

God's judgment is based on reality. Condemning sin in others does not help us to escape judgment - it insures it.

In these verses, as well as elsewhere in his epistles, Paul emphasizes that no one can escape the judgment of God.

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

(II Corinthians 5:10)

*for it is written, "as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God."* (Romans 14:11-12)

NOTE: In this section, we must not be hung up on the various views of judgment. Some dispensationalists have seven judgments. The picture in this section is a general truth, like the parable of Jesus in which He pictured some on the left and some on the right (Matthew 25:31-34).

#### **Verse 4**

***Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?***

God is not in a hurry to punish. He delays punishment to give more time and opportunity for repentance. The verb translated, *leads* (ἀγχει - *ahgei*), in the statement, *leads to repentance*, is a verb of continual action. It implies effort.

The aim of God's goodness is to achieve a person's repentance. The long suffering of God has for its goal the repentance of man. Peter describes God's heart in His being patient towards sinners,

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance... and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you... (2 Peter 3:9, 15)*

Paul's own heart reflected the heart of God. As he wrote later in this epistle,

*I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.*

*For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises... (Romans 9:1-4)*

#### **Verse 5-6**

***But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, <sup>6</sup> who will render to every man according to his deeds:***

*The day of wrath* reminds us of the Revelation 6:16 description of the *wrath of the Lamb*. In the Old Testament there is frequent reference to the *Day of Jehovah*, which always looked forward to judgment. Sometimes that judgment came immediately, but it always was a foretaste of a final judgment. In that day there will be a marvelous manifestation of God, fearful for some but joyous for others.

If the judgment were on the basis of meritorious works, everyone would end up in hell. No one can be saved by his morals, but no one can be saved without morals. James describes this as showing our faith by our works (James 2:14-26)

**Verses 7-10**

*to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;*

<sup>8</sup> *but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.*

<sup>9</sup> *There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,*

<sup>10</sup> *but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Note that this passage Paul employs a literary device known as an inverted parallelism. The first and fourth are parallel. The second and third are parallel.

Verses 7 & 10 give the promise

Verses 8 & 9 give condemnation

**Verses 11-16**

*For there is no partiality with God.*

*For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;*

*for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.*

*For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.*

The beginning words of this passage, *there is no partiality with God*, echo the words of Peter, recorded in Acts 10:34-35,

*And opening his mouth, Peter said: "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.*

One of the most difficult things about this epistle is to determine when Paul is referring to the Mosaic Law and when he is referring to law in general (a legal system).

- When the word, *law*, is used without the definite article, it refers to the character of a legal system.
- When the article is used, it refers to something known, i.e., the Law of Moses
- Sometimes, *law* without the article is used for the Mosaic code as an example of law.

In this passage, clearly the law to which Paul refers is the Mosaic Law.

The Gentiles did not have the Law of Moses and, therefore, were to be judged accordingly. Yet, the Gentiles were accountable for abusing the light that they did have.

The implication of these verses is that if anyone perfectly kept the law that he had, he would be acceptable to God. The message of this section (1:18-3:20) is that no one ever has done so.

That God would judge the world was an old idea, but the idea that God will judge the world through Jesus Christ (as God's deputy) was a new idea.

Jesus will judge us in harmony with this paragraph. How has an individual responded to the light that he had? Certainly, the people of Noah's day will not be judged on the same basis as those of us who have heard the Gospel.

### C. Direct reference to the sinful state of the Jews 2:17-29

#### Verses 17-24

*But if you bear the name "Jew," and rely upon the Law, and boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,<sup>a</sup> corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,*

*you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?*

*You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?*

*You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?*

*You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?*

*You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?*

*For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," just as it is written.*

These verses constitute the indictment.

1. *bear the name, "Jew"* - boastfully
2. *rely upon the Law* - They relied upon the Law not by obeying it, but by trusting in the fact that they had the Law.
3. *Boast in God* - a perversion of what could have been a correct and godly boast. If that boast is motivated by our own sense of emptiness and a correct understanding of His excellence and our faith in His promises, then it is a godly boast. However, if it arises out of a false understanding of our relationship with God, thinking that we are His favorites, then it is a wicked boast. Jeremiah wrote,
 

*Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, "declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)*

Paul echoed Jeremiah in a New Testament setting,
 

*But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)*
4. *Know His will* - The Jews did have superior knowledge of God's will. However, having this did not constitute grounds of acceptance.
5. *Approve the things that are essential* - Being instructed out of the Law, they had understanding, this was one of their privileges, but not a ground of acceptance.
6. *A guide to the blind...a teacher of the immature* - Again, they were boasting in the sense that they were people of privilege.
7. *Having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth* - The term translated, *embodiment*, occurs only here and in II Timothy 3:5. In the Timothy passage, the term is used to describe a sham. However, in Romans 2:20, the term is used in reference to a true embodiment. The Old Covenant was divine revelation. Again, the Jews were using the fact that they possessed this as a ground of acceptance by God.

Paul here strikes at the Jew. He accuses them of violating the commandments of the Law, even while they insisted that the world should come under the Mosaic Law.

A climax of sarcasm is reached in the question, *You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?* A prohibition in the Law stipulated that the Jews did not have a right to appropriate the gold and silver from destroyed idols.

Deuteronomy 7:5 *But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.*

Deuteronomy 7:25-26 *The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. And you shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned.*

Note that when the Ephesian silversmith, Demetrius, had raised a riot against Paul and his companions, the town clerk sought to put down the disturbance. One of the clerk's arguing points was that Christians did not disturb temples. *For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.* (Acts 19:37)

*For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," just as it is written. God brought this indictment during the Old Testament era.*

Ezekiel 36:20 - 23 *When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, "These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land." But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.*

2 Samuel 12:14 *However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.*

Paul gave a similar warning to Christians.

Titus 2:5, 8, 10 *to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored... sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us... not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.*

### **Verses 25-29**

***For indeed circumcision is of value, if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.***

***If therefore the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?***

***And will not he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?***

***For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.***

***But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.***

These verses contrast one who has kept the covenant with a right heart toward God, versus the one who has kept the covenant outwardly, without a right heart. The Mosaic Covenant did not just deal with mechanical obedience. There was an emphasis on a contrite heart. There always was "an Israel within Israel."

Deuteronomy 10:16 *Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more.*

Jeremiah 4:4 *Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My wrath go forth like fire and burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds.*

Jeremiah 9:26 *Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the sons of Ammon, and Moab, and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart.*

Ezekiel 44:7 *when you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to profane it, even My house, when you offered My food, the fat and the blood; for they made My covenant void-- this in addition to all your abominations.*

1 Samuel 16:7 *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

Acts 7:51 *You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.*

Philippians 3:3 *for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,*

Romans 9:6 *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;*

Even though the Jews were descended from Abraham, many of them behaved like heathens. A heathen Jew, even though circumcised, would not come under God's favor. A Gentile who kept the tenets of the Law, even though not circumcised, would come under God's favor.

Paul makes a statement that would have been revolutionary to the average Jew - that the life of a good Gentile would sit in judgment against a bad Jew.

Verse 29 is a play upon words. *But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.* The name, *Judah*, from which comes the name, *Jew*, means, *praise*. (Genesis 29:35; 49:8)

#### **D. The Jews had superior privileges, yet they had no superiority over the Gentiles in their moral condition before the Law. 3:1-20**

**In Verses 1 - 8, Paul answers objections to what he has just written.**

##### **Verse 1-2**

*Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?*

*Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.*

The Jews had many advantages. Paul refers to these again in 9:4-5.

*Oracles of God* is a term used many times in the New Testament, referring to the Old Testament Scripture.

**Verses 3-4**

***What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?***

***May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, And mightest prevail when Thou art judged."***

God's character cannot be changed, regardless of what man does. God always is true. He cannot be false.

*May it never be* is rendered, *God forbid*, in the KJV. The Greek term is *me genoito* (μή γένοιτο). It is the strongest possible negative. It is used fifteen times in the New Testament, fourteen times by Paul. Twelve times Paul uses it to keep people from making a false inference from his argument.

Paul proceeds to show that all men are false and untrue. He quotes Psalm 51:4 in the Septuagint, the wording of which is somewhat different from Psalm 51:4 in our English Version Bibles.

**Verse 5**

***But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.)***

The unbelief of the Jews highlighted the faithfulness of God. That being true, someone might offer the idea that man's unrighteousness, in contrast to God's righteousness, causes glory to God. If that is true, why is God angry?

Paul answered the objection by saying that man's sin may make God's goodness conspicuous by the manner in which God deals with sin, yet no one can sin to the glory of God. A criminal might rob banks and give a thousand dollars to a poor farmer or leave several hundred dollars in the collection plate of a church, but that still is not to God's glory. Ends cannot justify means.

Note that Paul says *I am speaking in human terms*. This is how the foolish would reason.

**Verse 6**

***May it never be! For otherwise how will God judge the world?***

Once again, Paul used the strongest negative in the Greek language - *me genoito*. Paul considered the fact that God will judge the world as a fixed fact. The first element in all religions, whether they are true and false, is that God will judge. The present society has moved away from this truth.

Genesis 18:25 *Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?*

Hebrews 6:2 *of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*

Acts 17:30 - 31 *Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.*

That the world will be judged in righteousness is as certain as the fact that Jesus came forth from the grave.

**Verses 7-8**

*But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.*

In these two verses, Paul is using an *argumentum ad hominem*, i.e., the Jews viewed him, as an apostate. If through his becoming an apostate Jew God is glorified, why is Paul still being judged as a sinner?

He again argues that the end cannot justify the means. Those who use wicked means, even for a good thing, are damned (*their condemnation is just*).

**Verse 9**

*What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;*

In Chapter One, Paul charged the Gentile world

In Chapter Two, Paul charged the Jewish world

**Verse 10-12**

*as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one."*

These three verses describe the state of sin. Paul cites Psalm 14:1-3, in the Septuagint, but not word for word. It is a paraphrase. Sometimes, the New Testament writers differ from both the Hebrew and the Septuagint.

There were some individuals who kept the Law (Luke 1:6 – Zacharias & Elizabeth; II Chronicles 34:1-2 - Josiah). The fact that there were those isolated instances of individuals who kept the law, is not a contradiction of Paul's assertion. Paul is making a general statement concerning the general state of mankind – all races, citizens of all nations, were characterized by ignoring the standards set forth by God. No race or nation was exempt from the charge.

**Verses 13-17**

*"Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,"*

*"The poison of asps is under their lips";*

*"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness";*

*"Their feet are swift to shed blood, Destruction and misery are in their paths,*

*And the path of peace have they not known."*

In these five verses, Paul cited the Septuagint, Psalm 5:9, Psalm 10:7, and Isaiah 59:7-8. This is a rather comprehensive description of sin. The first two verses address sinful words. The final section addresses sinful deeds.

**Verse 18**

*"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Paul quotes the Septuagint's Psalm 36:1, which describes the ultimate source of sin.

This section of the epistle underlies all that has preceded. Paul has presented from the Jewish Scriptures the confirmation that all are under sin.

**E. The decisive result of the foregoing discussion, setting forth the moral condition of all races before the Law 3:19-20**

**Verse 19**

*Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God;*

The term, *the Law*, can mean the Mosaic Law, found in the Pentateuch or the Old Testament revelation as a whole. Here are two quotes, the first from Psalms and the second from Isaiah, which are described as in the Law. Neither of these is in the, Pentateuch, i.e., *the Law*.

John 10:34 *Jesus answered them, (quoting Psalm 82:6) "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?"*

1 Corinthians 14:21 (quoting Isaiah 28:11-12) *In the Law it is written, "by men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the lord.*

### **Verse 20**

***because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.***

Justification on the basis of meritorious works demands perfect obedience to law. Paul points out that Law can open one's eyes to his sin (knowledge of sin), but law cannot remove it.

## **III. THE JUSTIFICATION OF BELIEVERS, PROVIDED BY THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS 3:21 - 5:11**

### **A. Exposition of justification by faith apart from legal works as the only possible justification 3:21-31**

#### **Verse 21-22**

***But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;***

*But now* refers to the Christian age.

The use of the terms, *righteousness* and *justification* are used with different meanings in the various passages of Romans. Here, righteousness is used in the sense of God's being the author and man's being the recipient.

The ultimate righteousness of God is *Manifested* in the work of Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel.

*Witnessed* through the whole range of Messianic prophecies and the Gospel of faith in Jesus Christ.

The effect is redemption, and the condition is faith for anyone, of any race, who comes to Christ in faith.

Paul continually reiterates that the ground before the cross is level – there is no distinction from the standpoint of sin, nor from the standpoint of grace, mercy, and faith.

Faith is the only condition.

#### **Verse 23**

***for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,***

*All have sinned*, is aorist tense, so the literal rendering is *all did sin*. There is no statement concerning lifestyle, etc., but a simple statement that every person has committed sin.

*Fall short of the Glory of God* refers to failing to receive God's approbation/approval.

Our Lord Jesus made a similar statement in reference to those who for fear of men did not confess their faith in Him, *for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.* (John 12:43)

The word translated *glory* in Romans 3:23 and *approval* in John 12:43 are the same word, *doksa* (δόξα)

**Verse 24**

***being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;***

Literal translation: *being declared righteous freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

There is nothing that we can do to earn this justification/being declared righteous. We must comply with certain conditions, which are discussed throughout this epistle.

It is a gift – Jesus paid the price for the gift when He went to the cross and paid the penalty for the sins of humanity – then He said, COME AND GET IT!

Each person must act to receive the gift. It is not imposed or forced on anyone. Our Lord said, *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.* (Matthew 11:28-29)

If I stood before you and said, “Here is a check for \$1000.00. Come here and I will give it to you so that you can deposit it into your bank account.” If you did not proceed to take the check from my hand, and deposit it into the bank, you would not have the gift. However, merely taking the check from my hand and putting it into the bank would not constitute having earned \$1000.00. It would be a gift, the reception of which required action on your part.

**Verses 25 - 26**

***whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

The term rendered, *propitiation*, is the Greek term, ἱλαστήριος (*hilastayrios*). Throughout the Old Testament Septuagint, this is the term used for the *mercy seat*, on top of the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark and its mercy seat were inside of the sacred room where only the High Priest could go, and he, only once each year. Each year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest went into this sacred room, with blood from the sacrifice just offered, and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat.

Paul declares that the cross of Christ is the new mercy seat, and, rather than being hidden from view inside a sacred room, this mercy seat was displayed publicly, on Calvary, as Our Lord shed His blood for our sins. Hebrews, Chapter 9, is an elaboration of this truth.

*Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.*

*For there was a tent prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place.*

*And behind the second veil, there was a tent which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant. And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*

*Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship, but into the second only the high priest enters, once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.*

*The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time.*

*Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.*

*But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

*For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

*And for this reason, He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance ....*

*For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;*

*nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own.*

*Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.<sup>7</sup>*

*And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:1-15, 24--28)*

**This is the very heart of the whole matter. The ground of our salvation is the blood of Christ.**

The expression, *Passed over*, does not mean that God ignored sins or that sin in some manner was remitted prior to the cross. The term refers to God's not exacting on the human race the full punishment for sin – but he passed over it, looking ultimately to the cross of Christ.

The cross was necessary. Apart from the cross of Christ, God could not forgive sin. To do otherwise would be to violate His character.

In the cross, atonement for sin was achieved. The justice of God had expressed itself.

The sacrifices presented under the Mosaic Covenant, were in anticipation of the completion of the sacrifices on Calvary.

When Our Lord was sacrificed on the cross, those who had faithfully participated in the sacrifices of the Mosaic earthly tent, wherein was the Holy of Holies, received what they had sought in those blood sacrifices.

Instead of the pagan idea of making an offering to appease an angry god, the God presented in these verses is a God of Love. Because of His love for us, God offered a propitiation – His only begotten Son.

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

This truth will be stated over and over throughout Romans.

**Verse 27-30**

*Where then is boasting? It is excluded.*

*By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.*

*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law*

*Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.*

Jesus addressed the folly of boasting of one's religious attainments in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

*Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer.*

*The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, "God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get"*

*But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!"*

*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:10-14)*

Paul declares that there is no room for any human claims of merit. In an interview with the Washington Times, Michael Bloomberg, after discussing his smoking cessation, anti-obesity pushes, and his opposition to the NRA, stated, "I am telling you, if there is a God, when I get to heaven I'm not stopping to be interviewed, I am heading straight in. I have earned my place in heaven, it is not even close."<sup>45</sup> Paul declared that such boasting is totally shut out from God's plan. The only salvation available is available by the law of grace and faith, not by works.

The only appropriate response is humble thanksgiving for God's grace, which He has extended to all of fallen humanity. There is not a plan of salvation for the Jews and another for Gentiles.

**Verse 31**

*Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.*

Once again, Paul uses the strongest negative expression in the Greek language, μή γένοιτο - *me genoito* literally, *let it not be*.

Later, in Chapter 7, Paul wrote, *I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."* (Rom 7:7)

The fact that God is God and that the moral law of God in the Law of Moses is an expression of His Character, is the principle that drove the Law. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was the result of man's inability to live up to that principle. The cross was necessary, if God's love were to have its desire – a race of beings, made in His image, with whom He will spend eternity.

**B. Evidence from the Old Testament that justification is by faith, apart from works 4:1-8****Verses 1-3**

*What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?*

*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God.*

*For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."*

<sup>45</sup> <https://washingtontimes.com/news/2014/apr/16/michael-bloomberg>

As evidence for the necessity of faith, Paul cites Genesis 15:6, *Then he believed in Yahweh; and He (Yahweh) reckoned it to him as righteousness.*

### **Verses 4-8**

*Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."*

The contrast between faith and works does not refer to the works that spring out of faith. True faith, results in good works. Paul wrote,

*not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* (Ephesians 2:9-10)

Misunderstanding this distinction is what has caused some to view James as contradicting Romans and Galatians.<sup>46</sup>

*But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.*

*You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.* (James 2:20-24)

Interestingly, both Paul and James use Genesis 15:6 as a proof text.

Paul argues against meritorious works, whereas James describes a faith that works.

Works are not an efficient causation, but an instrument of faith.

NOTE: Faith, misunderstood, can become works. We are not saved by faith, as if faith were the ground of salvation. We are saved by the work of Christ. Faith looks to Christ, not to faith, as the ground of salvation. Faith viewed otherwise is shamanism.<sup>47</sup>

### **C. The blessings of grace are conditioned on obedient faith and are available to all races 4:9-25**

#### **Verses 9-16**

*Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness."*

*How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;*

*and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them,*

*and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.*

<sup>46</sup> In his introduction to his translation of the Bible into German, Luther, called James, "A right strawy epistle," in comparison to the writings of John, Peter, and Paul.

<sup>47</sup> This is similar to some who speak of the "power of prayer," or that someone is "susceptible to the influence of prayer." It is important to remember that the God who hears prayer is the power and that prayer is a supplication for Him to demonstrate His power in the situation for which prayer is offered.

***For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.***

***For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.***

***For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,***

When Abraham heard and believed the words of blessing and promise, it was reckoned to him as righteousness – before the institution of circumcision.

Using Abraham as both an illustration and as evidence for the point that he is making, Paul declares the universal application of the truth that justification comes by faith.

These verses also assert the necessity of faith. Without faith, circumcision became just an empty religious rite.

The same is true of our immersion, which Paul declared is the New Testament version of circumcision.

*and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in immersion, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12)*

One can choose to be immersed and it can be no more than just a religious rite. One enters the water a dry sinner and comes out of the water a wet sinner, unless the element of faith and repentance are in the heart of the one being immersed.<sup>48</sup>

*Heir of the world* reminds us of the many promises made to Abraham. Not only was he promised many descendants (Genesis 17:5-6; 22:17), but also that one of his descendants would bless the entire world (Genesis 22:18). Although Abraham did not understand this blessing, it was a remote promise of the work his descendant, Jesus of Nazareth.

### **Verse 17**

***(as it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.***

This is one of the favorite verses of the Faith Formula teachers. Note, however, that it is not the faith of Abraham that calls into being that which does not exist. It was/is God who calls into being that which does not exist.

Also, Abraham's faith was based upon a very specific promise of God. This is far different from people who "believe God for...XXX," when God has not made a specific promise concerning the matter involved.

### **Verses 18-22**

***In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be."***

***And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;***

***yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,***

***and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.***

***Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness.***

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<sup>48</sup> Acts 2:38ff

*Hoped against hope*, is an oxymoron. There was no hope, but Abraham believed God's promise and as a result, a child was born to him and Sarah.

NOTE: Abraham did not waver in unbelief. Abraham was right in his faith, but sometimes he was wrong in his assumptions. Genesis 22 continues the account of Abraham's faith. Genesis 22:1 begins the narrative by stating that this was a test. What was the test? Abraham had been promised by God that his descendants would be as many as the stars of heaven, that they would bless all nations, and that this would be accomplished through Isaac's descendants. Then, came the test – God told Abraham to kill Isaac as a sacrifice.

Hebrews 11:17-19 informs us that Abraham thought that God might raise Isaac from the dead, but God worked it out differently and Isaac was not sacrificed (Genesis 22:9-13).

Even though Abraham's sacrificial knife was stopped in the moment of its descent, the sacrificial knife was not withdrawn from Jesus Christ, the antitypical Isaac.<sup>49</sup>

### **Verses 23-25**

***Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.***

*Not for his sake only was it written...but for our sake also* i.e., those to whom God will credit righteousness, if they believe as Abraham believed. This episode is an example of why it is to the Christian's benefit to study all of the Old Testament.

The fact that Abraham was justified by faith is recorded in Scripture as a perpetual testimony to the true method of justification before God.

Therefore, *those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead* shall have faith credited as righteousness.

The cross and the empty tomb must hang together. One without the other is meaningless. The atonement was not completed in the death of Christ. The victory over death was achieved in the resurrection. The sacrifice on Calvary was taken into the true Holy of Holies at his ascension (Hebrews 9).

## **D. The fruits of justification by faith, resulting from the work of Christ 5:1-11**

### **Verses 1-2**

***Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.***

*Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, refers to the fact that God now is at peace with those justified by faith in Christ's redemption. The expression refers to a relationship, as if hostility between two adversaries has been removed.

This peace is not the result of anything that we have done, nor anything that we could do. It is *through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Both the mercy and the justice of God are expressed through God's gift of propitiation. With that propitiation, God's justice is satisfied, and His wrath is

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<sup>49</sup> We have to give a lot of credit to Isaac for the Mt. Moriah episode. A strong young man could have escaped.

turned away. This whole section is dealing with propitiation, reconciliation, and the removal of the wrath of God.<sup>50</sup>

The word translated, *introduction*, in the NAS, is translated, *access*, in the KJV and NIV. Both are proper interpretations of the word, *prosagoge* (προσαγωγή). The place that the believer occupies is a place of *grace*, and the state of grace is manifested in *justification*. The believer is ushered into this state by Jesus Christ, on the basis of faith in Him and His atoning work.

*In which we stand* is reminiscent of two statements written by Paul in his Corinthian letters:

I Corinthians 15:1 *Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand...*

II Corinthians 1:24 *Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.*

The state of grace is not a precarious state. Not only is there firm ground upon which to stand but the help of God is there to assist in standing.

*And we exult in the hope of the glory of God...* The expression can refer either to the glory that God possesses or to the glory that He gives. In either case, it refers to the blessed state of the believer who will share in Christ's glory. Believers appropriately rejoice in the exaltation and blessedness secured for us by Christ.

### **Verses 3-4**

***And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;***

Since our relationship with God is changed, our relationship with everything is changed. One of most striking changes is the believer's response to *tribulation*.

The Greek term in our passage, of which tribulation is a translation, is *thilipsis* (θιλίψις), which means, *a pressing, pressing together, or pressure*. The New Testament was the first Greek document to use this word as a term for suffering. Christians were the first to think of themselves as being like olives or grapes, being pressed down in a vat so that their joy ran out like oil or wine.

When an unbeliever suffers, the devil is having his way with one of his own. However, when a Christian suffers, it is only by God's permission.<sup>51</sup>

This tribulation produces *perseverance* or *constancy*. Faithfulness to truth and duty, in the midst of trials, produces strength and firmness in us, which results in *proven character*. The Greek word translated "character," is *dokime* (δοκιμή) which carries the idea of *trial* (2 Cor. 8:2), *evidence or proof* (2 Cor. 13:3), and *approbation* (James 1:12).

When going through a trial, if we are surrendered to God, the inner strength that comes from the Holy Spirit and the manner in which we are enabled to endure, produces a "well tested faith." This well tested faith produces *hope*, which is based on our justification through Jesus Christ.

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<sup>50</sup> Romans 5:9

<sup>51</sup> Note that Satan was only able to persecute Job to the degree that God allowed (Job, chapters 1&2) Also, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.* (1 Corinthians 10:13). The term rendered, *temptation*, in this passage is *πειρασμός* (*peirasmos*), which refers to an *experiment, an attempt, a trial, a proving, an enticement*.

Our immediate response to suffering should be,

- Have I wandered from His path? Is my suffering corrective suffering (Hebrews 12:5ff)?
- Second, we should ask Him to use our suffering to form the image of Christ in us (I Peter 1:6-7 and Philippians 1:6)
- Then, we might ask Him to use our suffering for His glory and His honor. God chooses for some of His children to suffer for reasons of His own, entirely apart from any sin in their lives, or without any apparent constructive purpose. Those so chosen, do grow in grace and in the knowledge of God as a result of their experience, but God ultimately achieves a victory in the battle with Satan when a believer remains faithful in the midst of suffering. Job is an example of such exemplary suffering.

### **Verse 5**

***and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.***

The tense of the Greek verb translated, *poured out*, refers to a present condition, resulting from a past action. Every redeemed believer has received this pouring of the Holy Spirit into his heart.<sup>52</sup>

It is because *God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us*, that we have this assurance. As is seen in the following verses, it is not our love for God, but His love for us that is our assurance.

Note that the *love of God* has been poured out into our hearts, *through the Holy Spirit who was given to us*. Thus, it is not by the examination of some external evidence, but by an inward assurance that we are beloved of God. *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children* (Romans 8:16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:14). There is experiential evidence. The individual who has received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, can testify to his/her experiencing that indwelling presence.

### **Verse 6**

***For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.***

The thought of the previous verse flows into this one. We are the objects of God's love, *for* Christ died for us.

We were helpless -there was not one thing that mankind could do to achieve redemption - and Christ acted on our behalf *at the right time*. This is the same thought as expressed in Galatians 4:4 *But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law* (compare Ephesians 1:10; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 1:3; John 5:4).

It would have been natural for Paul to write, *Christ died for us*, since he had written, *when we were powerless*. However, instead of, *us*, he wrote, *for the ungodly*, to emphasize the free nature of God's gift of love.

The Greek term translated, *for*, in the expression, *for the ungodly*, is *huper* (ὑπέρ). In this and similar passages, the meaning is, *in the place of* (2 Cor. 5:15, 20-21; Galatians 3:13; Philemon 13). Christ died in the place of the ungodly – i.e., He died instead of the ungodly.

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<sup>52</sup> The tense of the Greek verb, in very passage in the New Testament that speaks of the *filling of the Holy Spirit*, always uses a tense that indicates an ongoing process. The filling of the spirit is an ever-flowing fountain, in the heart of the believer, not a reservoir.

**Verses 7-8**

*For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

These two verses describe more fully God's love for our sinning race.

- A righteous person is one who keeps all of the tenets of law. Such an individual may not have any heart for people, but he/she does cross every "T" and dot every "I." No one would die willingly, as a substitute for such a righteous person.
- A good person is one who would be known as being good and kind. Perhaps someone might die for a good man.
- The free nature of God's gift of love is seen in that we, in God's eyes were far from being good; we were not even righteous; we were sinners, ungodly enemies of God.

God makes His love for us conspicuous (*sunistemi* - συνίστημι - literally, "demonstrates") by sending His Son to die, not for righteous men or good men, but for sinners.

**Verse 9**

*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*

This is an *a fortiori* argument. If Christ died for His enemies, He surely will save His friends (which is what we become through faith).

*Justified* in this sentence, refers to reconciliation and restoration to favor with God.

**Verse 10**

*For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

This verse is a restatement of verse 9, as if Paul wanted to make certain that the Romans got the point. The word, *enemies*, ἐχθρός (*exthros*) not only describes humanity's unredeemed moral character, but humanity's relationship with God, prior to salvation. Fallen human nature, by its very nature, rebelled against God.

**Verse 11**

*And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

One paraphrase of this verse, which brings out the best sense of what is being said, is, *We shall not only be ultimately saved, but even now we glory in God.*

### **III. GOD'S POWER FOR SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST, MANIFESTED IN THE COMPLETE DELIVERANCE FROM SIN AND DEATH, CULMINATING IN GLORIFICATION. 5:12-8:39**

#### **A. The provision of salvation through Christ is coextensive with the ruin resulting from Adam's sin 5:12-21**

**Verses 12-14**

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned --for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.*

*So death spread (death came NIV; death passed KJV) to all men* is a translation of *dielthen* (διήλθεν), which means, *made its way to each individual member of the race.*

What type of death is referred to in this verse?

The flow of thought in Genesis makes it apparent that physical death was the penalty that mankind experienced as a result of Adam's sin.

Genesis 2:16-17 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."*

Genesis 3:19 *By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return. "*

The death that reigned from Adam to Moses was physical death.

We die because Adam sinned. A man may die because he is shot, but if he is not shot, he still will die someday. We inherit the consequences of Adam's sin, not the guilt. If a man commits murder and is convicted, his family experiences many consequences of that conviction, but not the guilt of the crime. So it is, with Adam and the human race.

In this passage we have an example of Paul's passion when writing. Often, when he is writing about a subject, another thought comes to his mind and he interrupts what he has been writing and injects the thought that interrupted his previous line of reasoning.

In this passage, Paul breaks off his thought just after he wrote, *because all sinned.*

- The KJV demonstrates this by putting a parenthesis around the verses that follow, *all sinned*
- The NAS and NIV indicate this by putting a dash after *all sinned.*

Even when Paul returns to his train of thought in verse 18, he does not fully return. As stated earlier, this style is seen often in Paul's writings. He was a very passionate writer.

The gender of the terms in the passage and the syntax does not allow this expression to be tied to what has just been said. Paul was starting to say something and then was captured by the thought of how Adam and Christ are juxtapositioned. So, the expression, *because all sinned*, just hangs out there by itself.

Different views have been held, concerning the statement, *all sinned.*

The Greek fathers, for the most part, took *hemarton* (ἡμαρτον) in its usual sense of *sin*. They interpreted Paul to say, *all sinned in their own persons and on their own initiative.*

Calvin, Luther, and others, add the preposition, *in*, i.e., *in Adam*, as if Paul had written, *all sinned in Adam*. They would argue that Paul broke off before he finished what he was writing and if he had completed the sentence, he would have written, *in Adam*. Therefore, all committed sin when Adam sinned.

Those who hold this view compare this to the passage in Hebrews 7:9-10, in which all physical descendants of Abraham are pictured as having paid tithes to Melchizedek, when their father Abraham did so.

*And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.*

There are three views presented by those who contend that some sort of guilt attaches to every human being because of Adam's sin.

- *Augustinian Realism* states that all of us were in Adam when he sinned and so all of us committed sin. As a result, all of us bear the guilt of Adam's sin. Every infant is born with the guilt of sin already upon his soul.
- *Federal Theory* states that Adam sinned as our representative. Since he represented us, all of us are guilty of his sin. The difference between *Augustinian Realism* and the *Federal Theory* is that in the former all mankind actually committed sin, whereas in the latter we sinned through our representative.
- *Original Sin* holds to the view that we did not actually sin, but that we inherit the guilt of sin from our parents.

The result of all three of these views is the belief that a newborn baby is guilty of sin and something must be done to save him from hell. This is the source of the practice of infant immersion. Roman Catholicism, seeking to deal with this issue, holds to a doctrine of *limbo*, where infants who die without the proper rites, etc., go to await the judgment and heaven.

The three views above, all of which arrive at the same point (that we are born with the guilt of sin upon us and therefore barred from heaven), has many things that stand against it.

One of the chief arguments against it is Jesus' statement concerning the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

*But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

As quoted, the wording in the NAS and the NIV is, for *the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these*. The KJV renders the Greek, literally, *of such is the kingdom of heaven*.

An important point is the Greek term rendered, *children*. The term is παιδίον (*paidion*), which refers to *little children* or *infants*. It is rendered literally, *little children*, in the KJV and NIV.

Jesus said that those in the Kingdom of heaven possess the qualities of the little children. How could this be if little children were guilty of sin?

Other arguments against the view that we are born with the guilt of Adam's sin upon us, point out that Scripture teaches that we will be judged for deeds done in the flesh (several which we already have noted), not for any guilt that we have from conception.

In opposition to the Original Sin variations, many Protestants hold another view, one that agrees with the Jewish view of Paul's day.

Sanday and Headlam summarize how Jewish theology views the effects of Adam's fall:

1. The Fall of Adam brought death not only to Adam, but also to his descendants;
2. The Fall of Adam not only brought sin into the world but also the tendency to sin;
3. In spite of this, the individual human does not lose his personal responsibility.<sup>53</sup>

Alfred Edersheim, the great scholar and historian of the Jewish people, states,

"So far as their opinions can be gathered from their writings, the great doctrines of Original Sin and of the sinfulness of our whole nature, were not held by the ancient Rabbis."<sup>54</sup>

Sanday and Headlam point out that even though Edersheim is correct, there are "approximations," especially in the Fourth Book of Ezra and the Apocalypse of Baruch.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Sanday & Headlam, page 136

<sup>54</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. I, eighth edition, revised (New York, Longmans, Green, and Co) 1896, page 165

In these verses, Paul agrees with Rabbinical thinking. He implies that each person inherits the sin-nature, but that no one can shift the responsibility for his behavior from himself. In summary, Paul states,

- Both sin and death existed before the Law (before Moses).
- However, since there was no law imposing the death penalty for sin, those who died prior the Law did so for a reason other than their personal sin.
- Adam sinned in the face of a death penalty. God said, "If you... you shall die."
- Between Adam and Moses, there were some who never broke a law in the sense that Adam broke a law (one which bore the death penalty), yet all died.

*Who is a type of Him who was to come*, refers to Adam and Christ. Adam, the first representative of the human race, prefigured the Great Representative, whose coming was in the future. Thus, Jesus is called *the Last Adam*.

1 Corinthians 15:22 *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*

1 Corinthians 15:45 *So also it is written, "The first Man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*

Sanday & Headlam present an excellent, and expanded paraphrase of verses 12-14

“12 The description just given of the Work of Christ, first justifying and reconciling the sinner, and then holding out to him the hope of final salvation, brings out forcibly the contrast between the two great Representatives of Humanity-Adam and Christ. The act, by which Adam fell, like the act of Christ, had a far-reaching effect upon mankind. Through his Fall, Sin, as an active principle, first gained an entrance among the human race; and Sin brought with it the doom of (physical) Death. So that, through Adam's Fall, death pervaded the whole body, of his descendants, because they one and all fell into sin, and died as he had died.

13 When I say 'they sinned' I must insert a word of qualification. In the strict sense of full responsibility, they could not sin: for that attaches only to sin against law, and they had as yet no law to sin against.

14 Yet they suffered the full penalty of sin. All through the long period which intervened between Adam and the Mosaic legislation, the tyrant Death held sway; even though those who died had not sinned, as Adam had, in violation of an express command. This proved that something deeper was at work: and that could only be the transmitted effect of Adam's sin. It is this transmitted effect of a single act which made Adam a type of the coming Messiah.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Verses 15 – 17**

***But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.***

***And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.***

***For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.***

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<sup>55</sup> Sanday & Headlam, page 137

<sup>56</sup> Sanday & Headlam, page 131

The results of the disobedience of the first Adam are contrasted with the results of the obedience of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ.<sup>57</sup> Adam's act was one of self-indulgence. Christ's act was one of self-sacrifice.

- Because of the sin of Adam, everyone dies. Death came from the one deed.
- The *free gift* came in response to millions of sins. The *free gift* is a gift of love. The *free gift* not only undoes the results of the one sin of Adam (physical death), but also offers the gift of eternal life to all who will accept the gift.
- Therefore, the *free gift* is described as *much more*, in comparison to the results of Adam's sin.

### **Verses 18 – 21**

*So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*

*For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

*And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

If we are to grasp, accurately, what the apostle is stating in this passage, we must determine the definition of terms, as Paul used them in this passage. In order to do that, we must follow the basic principle of Scripture exegesis – context.

#### **EXCURSUS**

**A basic tenet of Scriptural exegesis is that each word of Scripture must be interpreted in its context.**

The first context is the verse in which the term occurs.

Next is the chapter in which the verse occurs.

Next is the book in which the chapter/verse occurs.

The final context is the entire corpus of Scripture.

The context of the entire corpus of Scripture requires us to understand three key terms in this passage as:

- *Condemnation* refers to death.
- *Righteousness* refers to God's act in Christ's sacrifice.
- *Justification* has both a specific and general meaning in this passage.

If, in this passage, condemnation meant eternal damnation, then justification would have to mean eternal, universal salvation: *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*

A survey of the entire corpus of Scripture does not allow this understanding.

The doctrines of Universalism and Ultimate Reconciliation must ignore clear passages of Scripture or, through some unusual gymnastics of reasoning, find a means of explaining away such passages as Mark 9:43-48; Matthew 25:41, 46; Luke 16:24; Revelation 20:11-15<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> I Corinthians 15:45

<sup>58</sup> The doctrines of Universalism and Ultimate Reconciliation became a leading feature of some of the teachers in the early Charismatic Movement. For a study of these doctrines, see ADDENDUM G

The term, *justification*, in this section refers to "balancing the books," so to speak, primarily in the matter of Adam's sin, which resulted in death. Jesus' resurrection overcame, for the whole human race, the consequences of Adam's sin. Everyone, saint and sinner, will be resurrected. In addition to the removal of this consequence, Paul declares that the eternal consequence of our individual sins also can be undone.

The results of this free gift, in its relationship to our individual sins, is conditional. The foundational condition is faith in the justifying work of Jesus, as revealed in the Gospel.

#### CHRIST'S FREE GIFT

WITH RESPECT TO:

Adam's Sin

Unconditional

The Many (the human race: v15)

WITH RESPECT TO:

Personal Sins

Conditional

Many Offenses (personal sins: v 16)

- When the effects of Christ's free gift are co-extensive with the sin of Adam, the effects are unconditional. This only encompasses our physical death and resurrection (John 5:28-29).
- The effect of Christ's free gift goes further than this. His atoning act encompasses the sins of each individual. This is the *much more* of verse 15. This free gift benefit is conditional.
- Verse 18 *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men*, does not refer to the conditional aspects of the free gift, but to the unconditional undoing of the consequences of Adam's sin - death.
- Verse 19 *For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous*, throws us back to verse 12, referring once again to the sin of Adam. Through Adam, the pernicious disease of sin entered the human race. Through the sacrifice of Jesus, many will be made righteous. The *many*, are those who respond in faith to the message of the Gospel.

VERSE 20 WORD FOR WORD RENDERING: *And law came in, in order that superabound the trespass, and which superabound the sin, the grace did overabound,*

Note that in this passage the first term, related to law, is the term, *trespass*. A trespass is not possible unless there is a law or a code for a person to trespass. Thus, when the law was given, humans began trespassing, i.e., committing acts of disobedience. Hence, when law came in, trespass abounded.

Note that in this verse, the term, *sinned*, occurs after the term, trespass – indicating that trespass becomes an obvious sin when there is a law to trespass.

Thus, even though mankind sinned, prior to the giving of law, it was not clear that such behavior was a sin, until the giving of a law, which made the sin apparent. For example, there may be dust and dirt on the furniture in a room, but it is not seen until sunlight is allowed into the room, which then makes the dirt apparent.

In the same fashion, law was not given to force us to sin. The Law did and does increase our knowledge of right and wrong. It also increases our consciousness of our failure.

That being true, our recognition of the horrible state of our sinful souls causes us to be stunned by the abounding grace of God toward us. The more we are aware of sin, the more we are aware that grace is needed to overcome our sinful state.

*that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Sin reigns over a mortuary. The subjects of sin's empire are dead, in every sense of the word: morally, spiritually, and doomed to die physically.

The reign of grace is made possible by the gift of righteousness, which the Christian receives through the mediation of Christ. This grace presents the possibility of eternal life, which becomes reality, not just a possibility, when the condition of faith and response to that faith is manifested.

## **B. Grace is no encouragement to sin 6:1-14**

### **Verses 1-7**

*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been immersed into Christ Jesus have been immersed into His death?*

*Therefore we have been buried with Him through immersion 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.*

*For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.*

Paul's declaration that sin results in God's responding with Divine grace, causes him to again address the accusation made against him earlier, that he was encouraging sin so that grace could abound - *let us do evil that good may come* (3:8).

In response, he once again cries out, *me genoito* (μή γένοιτο), the strong negative outcry that he uses so frequently in Romans.

Paul realized that his own teaching, if pressed to its logical conclusion, was open to this charge. He repudiates this thought by showing how this train of thought is immediately nullified by another more basic thought, the mystical union of believers that begins with one's immersion.

*Or do you not know that all of us who have been immersed into Christ Jesus have been immersed into His death?*

Paul assumes that every believer has been immersed. Otherwise, his argument makes no sense.

He asks, rhetorically, "How can a dead man practice things that require a living body? If we died to the world of sin when we were immersed, then we are dead to that life - so how can we live in it any longer?"

Because there has been a departure from the New Testament practice of immersion (the evangelical practice of asking Jesus to come into one's life and then pronouncing someone saved without immediately baptizing, etc.) immersionists often have used this chapter to argue the necessity of immersion.

Although this is a legitimate use of this chapter, Paul is not arguing for the necessity of immersion. He assumes that every believer has been immersed. In the New Testament, there was no such thing as an un-immersed believer. As soon as someone accepted Christ, immersion happened immediately.

The New Testament is filled with references to immersion as the event in which we enter into a relationship with Christ.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul pictured immersion and faith as virtually one event, rather than two, the event that made believers sons of God.

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26 –27)*

In Colossians, Paul expressed the very same thought that he is expressing in Romans. That in immersion, the old man is buried, and the newborn child of the Kingdom is brought forth out of the waters.

*having been buried with Him in immersion, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)*

Peter agrees with Paul's assessment, that immersion is integral to salvation.

*And corresponding to that, immersion now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:21)*

These are but three examples of many that could be cited from Acts and the Epistles.

Again, we encounter the importance of the Greek preposition, *eis* (εἰς), indicating motion from one place into another, *all of us who have been immersed into Christ Jesus have been immersed into His death.* The believer is immersed *into* Christ.

What Paul is asking in this passage is, "Don't you understand what happened to you when you were immersed?" This refers to the very deep significance of immersion.

We would do well to cast aside the term, *baptism*, and consistently use the term, *immersion*, for that is what the Greek term means. Immersion was practiced, universally, in the early church. Today, the Greek Orthodox Church immerses infants, because Greeks can only understand the term *baptisma* (βαπτίσμα) as immersion.<sup>59</sup>

Around 120 A.D., the *Didache* was compiled from documents written decades earlier. The *Didache* (Also known as *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*) describes church life and gives instructions concerning church government, liturgy, etc. Since it seems to be a compilation of documents that were written over a number of years, we cannot be certain about the age of any portion of it. Chapter Seven describes in detail how the church administered immersion at the time that the document was written. The *Didache* did make allowance for an extreme situation in which a pool of water was not available. This was quite pertinent for the Christians of that era, since many were imprisoned, and conversions took place among the prison inmates.

*Now concerning immersion. Immerse as follows.*

*When you have rehearsed the aforesaid teaching: Immerse in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you do not have running water, use whatever is available. And if you cannot do it in cold water, use warm water.*

*But if you have neither, pour water on the head three times - in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And prior to immersion, both he who is immersing and he who is being immersed should fast, along with many others who can. And be sure that the one who is to be immersed fasts for one or two days beforehand.*

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<sup>59</sup> The verb is *baptizo* (βαπτίζω)

Three interesting things are apparent.

- First, the writer of the *Didache*, considered immersion so important that it was to take place in spite of circumstances.
- The second thing that is apparent is the idea that the immersion of Christ in the Jordan River should be duplicated to the degree possible.
- The third thing is that this was written at a time when traditions and ceremonies were being added to the pure teaching of the Gospel. In the New Testament, there is no period of fasting, etc. People were immersed immediately, without any great instruction as a prelude. Therefore, we are not able to say for certain how ancient is the portion of the document that speaks of pouring water on the head three times. It may have been something that developed later and was added to the document.

The practice of *clinical immersion* also developed in the early centuries. This occurred when someone who was too sick to be carried to a water receptacle, accepted Christ. Those who attended the sick person brought in buckets of water and poured them over the new convert, who probably was going to die. The idea was to make it as much like immersion as possible.

Later, when a sacramental view of immersion developed (the sacramental view is that the water itself has supernatural qualities), the important thing was to get holy water on the person for his/her spiritual cleansing. Infant immersion and sprinkling met the requirements of administering holy water.

This, of course, does not fit the New Testament picture at all. People were immersed in any water available (the Ethiopian eunuch, for example: Acts 8:36ff). The 2000-year history of Christian immersion is a very interesting topic, but this is outside of the scope of our present study. ADDENDUM H contains three historic documents describing immersion as the method of baptism in the Bible. ADDENDUM I contains a historic document illustrating the definition of the term βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), which translators, instead of translating the term, Anglicized it as *baptize*.

The expression *walk in newness of life* is a very clear expression. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

A man is not in Christ because he is a new creature. He is a new creature because he is in Christ. John 3:5 is the figurative expression of what is expressed realistically in Acts 2:38:

- John 3:5 *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*
- Acts 2:38 *And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Some have sought to separate "water" and "spirit" as two separate births, in John 3:5. The Greek says, *gennethe ex udatos kai pneumatos* (γεννηθηῖ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος). There are no definite articles separating the elements in this phrase. Thus, being *born of water and spirit* is a single birth, which consists of two ingredients. This is like saying, "I made mortar out of water and mud." All of the early post-biblical documents consider this statement in John 3:5 to refer to immersion.

It is important to understand that water and spirit are not strictly coordinate. Water is not an actual spiritual agency in the second birth. It is only a symbol.

In every true spiritual birth, there is a negative and a positive, a renunciation of the past as well as a new life created. Immersion represents a rejection of the past and an acceptance of a new future in Christ. Water is a symbol of that which cleanses from sin; the Spirit is that which gives new life.

Note that when Ananias came to present the Gospel to Saul of Tarsus, he spoke of immersion (water) as the cleansing from sin.

*And now why do you delay? Arise, and be immersed, and **wash away your sins**, calling on His name.* (Acts 22:16)

Titus 3:3 -5 expresses this idea also:

*For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,**<sup>60</sup>*

From these passages it becomes apparent that in the act of being immersed, the convert should consciously reject the past, expressing his/her death to the past in a symbolic burial. Coming up out of the water symbolizes a resurrection, in which the believer is a newborn spiritual creature, possessing the Holy Spirit.

Immersion involves the whole being. Both one's flesh and his spirit had been used in serving sin. Both flesh and spirit are involved in the act of immersion in which one is immersed into Jesus Christ.

### **Verses 8 - 11**

***Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.***

***For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.***

How did Christ, *die to sin*? He was sinless.

Before Jesus went to the cross, He faced temptation. Hebrews 4:15 states,

*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

After His resurrection, he was never again subject to temptation.

*Consider yourselves* is an important expression. The Christian must continually say to himself "I am dead to sin – I buried the old man in the watery grave of Christian immersion."

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<sup>60</sup> In Ezekiel 36:25-27, God speaks in a figure and uses the same combination of water and Spirit, although not referring to immersion, in his description of how He will make Israel acceptable to Him again. *Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.*

### **Verses 12 - 14**

***Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.***

***For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.***

Flesh, per se, is not sinful. Paul labels ascetic doctrine, a doctrine of devils.

*But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.*

*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; (1 Timothy 4:1-4)*

Paul clearly indicates that the enjoyment of flavor, the enjoyment of the physical relationship in marriage, and the enjoyment of other pleasures of the flesh are not sin.

However, in these verses from Romans, Paul points out that when these impulses lead us down paths forbidden by God, they become sin. Furthermore, when these desires begin to control us, rather than our controlling them, they become lust, and consequently sin.

Underlying the point that Paul makes in these verses is the fact we can do almost nothing, apart from using our bodies. Each of us is in control of whom we allow to rule our flesh – either Satan and sin, or God and righteous living. It is the inner man that is sinful.

- The sinful inner man submits his flesh to the use of sin.
- The godly inner man submits his flesh to the use of God.

*For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.*

Prior to our entering into Christ, law was the standard that ruled us and judged us. The motivation of one who is under law, is to faithfully obey the law. The law has an identity of its own.

After we enter into Christ, that law no longer is the standard for us. The free gift of God's grace, through Christ, is the motivating force of our lives. Paul wrote to the Galatians,

*For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them."*

*Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith. "*

*However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"- - (Galatians 3:10-13)*

Those who are *in Christ*, have their minds transformed (Romans 12:2), and, as Peter wrote, Christians look to Christ as the example of attitude and conduct.

*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

Albert Osborn's well-known prayer song, *Let the Beauty of Jesus be seen in Me*, expresses the heart of one who has been transformed by the Spirit of Christ.

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,  
All His wonderful passion and purity  
Oh, Thou Spirit Divine,  
All my nature refine,  
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.*

The transformed Christian's prayer is, *Oh Lord, transform me so that those who meet me will be meeting Jesus.*

### **C. Although not under a legal dispensation, believers are under obligation to obey standards of godly morality 6:15-23**

#### **Verse 15-16**

***What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?***

Once again, Paul confronts the possibility that his line of thought could bring people to a false conclusion and, once again, he cries out, *me genoito* (μή γένοιτο).

Christians are not under a religious legal system. However, this does not mean that there is no moral standard for Christians and that standard reaches beyond the flesh into a person's thought life, as well as one's behavior. This is clearly taught by Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>61</sup>

A basic choice that everyone has in life is a choice of masters. It may seem paradoxical, but when one submits himself completely to Christ, without any reservation, that person has complete freedom.

Another thing that is certain is the fact that sin always pays off, although the coin with which he pays is death *you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death...*

#### **Verse 17**

***But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,***

The Greek of the first clause of this verse states, *and thanks to God, that ye were slaves of the sin*. The KJV renders the clause literally. This is an elliptical statement.<sup>62</sup> The NAS and the NIV interpret before translating and convey the ellipsis by adding the term, *although*. God is not thanked that they were servants of sin, but that they changed their heart.

*Form of teaching*: The word, *form*, is the same word that is in 5:14 (τύπος- *tupos*). It has reference to a mark or an impress that is made by a blow. It also can refer to a tool that makes a pattern, or a mold.<sup>63</sup> Many understand this to be applicable to immersion as a summary of the

<sup>61</sup> Matthew Chapters 5-7

<sup>62</sup> A word is omitted, but the meaning of the sentence is clear.

<sup>63</sup> (1) literally *blow*; by metonymy, the impression made by the blow *mark, trace* (Jn 20.25); as a figure formed by blows of the hammer or chisel *image, statue* (Acts 7.43); as a small-scale form designed to be copied *pattern, model* (Acts 7.44; Heb 8.5); (2) figuratively; (a) of teaching or writing *form, content* (Rom 6.17); (b) of behavior *example, pattern, model* (1T 4.12); (c) as a person or event serving as a prophetic symbol to prefigure a future person or event *type* (Rom 5.14) Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Vancouver, BC, Trafford Publishing) 2005 entry 27139

faith or teaching, which they received. To obey by being immersed, is to obey the form (immersion) that was delivered to them.

*From the heart* is very important. Hypocritical or surface conversion is a waste of time.

### **Verses 18 - 23**

*and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

*I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.*

*For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.*

*For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*

*Therefore, what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.*

*But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Paul calls their intellectual weakness of understanding, a *weakness of your flesh*. He acknowledges that the illustration that he is using is inadequate, but he has been accommodating himself to their intellectual limitation. The people are familiar with slavery and so he has used this as an illustration.

The term, *wages*, in verse 23 (ὀψώνιον-*opsonion*), is a military term.<sup>64</sup> The death to which Paul refers is the final wage of sin, spiritual death. What a contrast! The *wage* of sin is death. On the other hand, the *free gift* is eternal life.

### **D. The need to be under grace and not under law 7:1-6**

#### **Verse 1**

*Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?*

The KJV and the NIV overlook the particle, ἢ (*ay*) which begins this section (rendered as, *or*, in the NAS). The particle implies that what comes next is in reference to the preceding context. It refers back to 6:14

6:14a *For sin shall not be master over you*, is worked out in 6:15-23.

6:14b *for you are not under law, but under grace* is worked out in 7:1-6.

A good paraphrase of this opening phrase would be, *surely you know this - that the regime of Law has come to an end and that Grace has superseded it.*

In this section, Paul uses the term, *law*, with a wider connotation than the Mosaic Law. Although mindful of Mosaic Law, he is dealing with a wider application of the principle of law. Paul is writing to brothers who know the law. They know that death frees a person from the law. Some have made the mistake of trying to make an allegory of this section, i.e., the husband represents something, the wife represents something, etc. This is a mistake. This is an analogy, not an allegory.

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<sup>64</sup> literally, as a military technical term for what is appointed to soldiers to buy food *ration* (*money*), *allowance*, *pay*; more generally (*subsistence*) *pay*, *wages*, *expense money* (Lu 3.14; 1C 9.7); metaphorically, as pay for serving as a Christian soldier *money to live on* (2C 11.8); figuratively, of the compensation for serving sin *reward*, *end result* (Ro 6.23) Friberg, entry 20248

When someone dies, the laws of this life no longer apply to him. He is free from paying taxes, etc.

#### **Verses 2 - 4**

***For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.***

***So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.***

***Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.***

Paul illustrates the truth by stating that when a woman's husband dies, she no longer is bound by law to her husband (the Greek says that she no longer is bound by the *law of the husband* - τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἀνδρός - *tou nomou tou andros*). So, she is free to find a new mate.

Paul bounces back and forth in this illustration. He begins by saying that when a person dies the law no longer has jurisdiction over him. Then, he references *the law of the husband* - when a woman's husband dies, she is free from the law. Then, he bounces back to the person dying as being freed from the law.

This section continues the thought expressed in Chapter 6. In all of this, Paul is making the point that the Law no longer has a place in the life of the believer, because the old man died in Christ as exemplified in immersion.

Therefore, the believer is free to be joined to another, the resurrected Christ, in order to bear fruit unto God. The fruit which the Christian, wedded to Christ, is to bear, is a reformed life.

#### **Verse 5 – 6**

***For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.***

***But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.***

The former marriage – wedded to the Law – bore the fruit of death. The new marriage should be as fruitful as the old one, but the fruit will be different. The former life had no higher goal than the gratification of the senses. The new life is permeated by the Spirit.

#### **E. The relation of Law to Sin 7:7-12**

***What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."***

***But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.***

***And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died;***

***and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;***

***for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.***

***So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.***

Paul again wants to make certain that no one draws a wrong conclusion from an illustration that he has just used, and so he cries out once again, *me genoito* (μή γένοιτο).

Paul called the Law holy, righteous, and good, stating that only through the law did he know what was sinful. He would not have known that coveting was a sin, if the Law had not so defined it.

The expression, *produced in me coveting of every kind*, can be understood in two ways.

- It can be understood to mean that the law made Paul aware of how many types of covetousness were at work in his heart.
- The other understanding would be that "forbidden fruit" always is appealing. The sinful nature of man hungers for sin. That is a characteristic of a sinful nature. So, when something is defined as sin, that creates within the sinful nature a hunger for whatever has been labeled sin.

Both of these understandings are true, and we must leave it at that.

Paul's statement, *And I was once alive apart from the Law*, also must remain somewhat uncertain in its reference. We cannot be certain if Paul is referring to a time in his life when he was not aware of the Law, or is he speaking rhetorically, as if there were a time when he did not have the Law as a part of his life.

The point that Paul makes is that before the Law (any law), even though a person may sin, his/her conscience is free, because nothing is defined as evil.

#### **F. Being under grace, rather than law, is essential to the continued life and peace of the believer 7:13-25**

##### **Verse 13**

***Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.***

What an unusual expression apt expression, *sin might become utterly sinful*, which some have paraphrased, *the exceeding sinfulness of sin*. Sin is shown to be exceedingly wicked and powerful if it can use the good law to accomplish its purposes.

Although somewhat oblique to the point Paul is making, there comes to mind the episode in Luke 20: 19ff, in which the enemies of Jesus, knowing that He would teach the truth regardless of the consequences, sought to ensnare Him through his truthfulness.

When sin uses the holiness of the Law to entice people to sin, this is the sinfulness of sin.

##### **Verse 14**

***For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.***

The Mosaic Law was given through the Holy Spirit. Paul affirmed this point when he wrote to Timothy concerning the text of the Old Testament, *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

(II Timothy 3:16)

Therefore, the Law has the character of its origin. The Law is spiritual.

The idea behind the term, flesh *sarkikos* (σάρκικος) denotes the material of which human nature is composed and as such is vulnerable to all of the temptations which act through the fleshly nature.

**Verses 15 - 20**

***For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.***

***But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.***

***For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.***

***For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.***

***But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.***

The term rendered, *understand* in the NAS and NIV, is rendered, *approve*, in the KJV. The Greek term is γινώσκω (*ginosko*). This term conveys the idea of, *to come to know, to learn, to realize* – some sort of cognitive action or quality.

Paul says that he does not understand himself. To paraphrase, “I don’t why I behave like I do, other than the fact that sin dwells in my fleshly nature.” Paul is describing a situation in which a person acts somewhat blindly, instinctively - a not fully conscious agent, i.e. *I do not know/understand* – an inner force that he cannot resist takes the decision out of his hands.

Because Paul does not approve of what he does (which violates the Law), then that means that he approves of the Law – which by inference, means that the Law is good.

Paul does not say that he is not responsible, but that his sinful behavior was not the result of his higher self, or resolving self, that acted in ways that violated the Law.

**Verses 21 - 25**

***I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.***

***For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.***

***Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?***

***Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.***

Paul describes the conflict that is experienced by everyone who holds to principles but finds himself/herself failing to live up to these principles.

This section has been an area of intense debate. Does Paul refer to his experience before he became a Christian, or does this describe his ongoing life?

- Could Paul have written *For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man*, if he were unregenerated?
- Could he have written, *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death*, if he were regenerated?

Here are the two opposite views concerning this question.

The argument for Paul's describing his time of life before conversion, goes as follows:

1. The context (vs 22-24) - How much has Paul said about the Savior in these verses? Nothing.
2. Verses 5 & 6 give us this same contrast (before and after conversion).
3. Verses 8:1 and 7:25 describe the condition of a person who is under grace; such a one is not wretched.

4. 6:14 states that under grace sin does not have dominion over us.
5. Would Paul plea, "I am wretched, come and obey the Gospel and join me in wretchedness"? No, Paul is arguing from the point of view that this is how he would feel if he still were under the Law.

The argument for Paul's describing his experience after conversion moves in many directions.

1. One consistent argument is that it is consistent with the ongoing struggle experienced by every honest believer. In the New Testament we have the example of Peter and Barnabas at Antioch, who sought the approval of men, rather than God and were rebuked by Paul (Galatians 2:11ff). Other examples could be cited.
2. Another objection to the view that Paul was describing a pre-conversion man is that to take these verses as referring only to a pre-conversion individual would require us to accept the view that absolute perfection of character was imparted to the believer by his conversion.<sup>65</sup> Although I know that those who believe this are abroad, I never have seen anyone who exemplifies this doctrine (JWG). Also, 1 John's provision for sinning believers belies this state. Writing to Christians, John stated, *If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:8-9)

It really is not necessary for us to come down on one side or the other of this argument. Paul is contrasting the difference between a person who is under the law (miserable) and one under grace (at peace).

#### **G. Advantages and blessings of those who are in Christ and thus, freed from sin and death 8:1-17**

The Eighth Chapter of Romans has been labeled, "The Triumphant Hymn of Hope."

This chapter is an expansion of *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (7:25a). It describes the inner character and quality of the Christian life, from its beginning to its end, described elsewhere by Paul as *hid with Christ in God* (Colossians 3:3).

The dissertation works gradually up through the calm exposition of verses 1 - 17 to the more impassioned outlook of verses 18 - 30, to the magnificent climax of verses 31 - 39.

##### **Verse 1**

***There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***

This opening statement is a conclusion drawn, not from a single premise, but from all of the conclusions reached in the previous sections. It is a conclusion from conclusions.

The condemnation spoken of in this verse is *katakrima* (κατάκριμα), which refers to legal judgment. This ended for the Christian at the time of his conversion.

This verse describes life after justification, the life that is *in Christ* (note that this is the preposition, *en*, which refers to one's location, rather than *eis* which refers to movement from one place or state to another). The *in Christ* state has freedom from condemnation, by a process to be explained more fully in verse 3.

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<sup>65</sup> There are some who hold to this view, i.e., that there is a state of sinless perfection available for believers in which they cannot sin. This is the view of the Nazarene denomination -see <https://nazarene.org> ARTICLES OF FAITH .docx ARTICLE X – Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification.

Of course, this does not mean that if those in Christ commit sin, they will be free from any responsibility for it. Each Christian is responsible for his sin, and is responsible for repenting and thus being forgiven (I John 1:5-9; 2:1). For those seek to live this way, there is no ground for condemnation.

Note that the KJV adds to verse 1, the phrase, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. The source of this phrase is the result of the manuscript that the KJV translators used in 1611 AD. The collection of manuscripts available today make apparent that this phrase was not in Paul's document. It was added some centuries later.

### **Verse 2**

***For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.***

*The law of the Spirit of life* refers to the authority exercised by the Spirit.

In the last chapter, there was a free use of the word translated, *law* (*nomos νόμος*). In this chapter, especially in verse 23, *law of my mind* and *law of sin*, the term does not refer to a code, but an internal authority guides and controls the believer.

We might illustrate this by the term, "the law of gravity," which produces and controls the behavior of matter. Thus, the law of the Spirit of life produces life.

The genitive case of the Greek expresses the effect wrought. The sense of this expression is, *The Spirit brings life because the Spirit essentially is life*.

This authority of the Spirit, operating through the Christian's union with Christ, has set him free from the authority exercised by sin and ending in death.

*The law of sin and death* harks back to 6:14, *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace*.

Psalm 32:1 *How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!* Paul has been making the point, that this blessed condition could not be obtained under the Law, because no one had been able to keep the law, perfectly.

### **Verses 3-4**

***For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***

*For what the Law could not do...* The Law could not do a number of things:

1. The Law could not provide a perfect sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 9 & 10)
2. The Law could fully reveal the sinfulness of sin. That was revealed, fully, at calvary.
3. The Law did not provide a perfect example. There were many good men, under the Law (Moses, Noah, etc.), but the perfect example was in Christ Jesus.

*Weak as it was through the flesh...* Romans 7:12 is basic: *So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good*. However, humanity was and is weak, and that weakness was/is an occasion for sin.

*God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh...* Psalm 51:5 states, *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me*, referring to the sinful stock into which all of us are born. Flesh is not inherently sinful, but every human sins. Christ was the exception – He was incarnated in a human body. but He had control over that body (Hebrews 4:15).

*Condemned sin in the flesh...* Christ did this in two ways:

1. He condemned sin in the flesh by way of contrast. Even as Noah (Hebrews 11:7; Matthew 12:41-42), by living a righteous life condemned those who lived in his day, so the perfect life of Jesus condemns all of us, by contrast.
2. He condemned sin through His redeeming work:
  - 2 Corinthians 5:21 *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
  - 1 Peter 2:24 *and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds, you were healed.*
  - Isaiah 53:4 *Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.*
  - Romans 6:14 *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.*
  - Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

#### **Verses 4-8**

***in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***

***For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.***

***For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so;<sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.***

What "spirit" is referred to in this chapter? There is a great question as to whether the term should be capitalized. If the term refers to the redeemed human spirit, the contrast is between one whose spirit is in control, versus one whose flesh is in control.

There are some verses in this chapter in which the term, spirit, requires capitalization, for example verse 26. If verses 4 & 5 are lower case (the human spirit of those in Christ), the human spirit would be following the lead of the Holy Spirit and this arrives at the same place as one would if the word were capitalized. The Holy Spirit is the guiding force.

***In order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled...*** The Law required righteousness. As has been demonstrated in the previous sections, only those who come into Christ occupy a position of righteousness – not because of their perfect obedience to law, but because of their sin's being covered by the blood of Christ.

***For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.***

It is important that in the expression, *setting their minds on things of the flesh*, Paul is using flesh in an ethical sense.

- He does not mean, for example, that a man who has worked hard all day and comes home hungry is minding the things of the flesh when he craves food.

- Neither, for example, is he speaking negatively about being conscious of what promotes good health. Note his advice to Timothy, *No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments* (1 Timothy 5:23).

The emphasis here is consistent with Paul's constant advice to the churches that Christians must be mindful of how they lived. Here are some of his exhortations:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:1 - 8 *Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*
- Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.*
- Galatians 5:16 - 26 *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.*
- 1 Corinthians 3:3 - 4 *for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?*

### **Verse 9**

***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.***

This is one of the most important statements in the Bible.

In answer to the question, "Are you saved, and if so, how do you know," the Bible's answer is, "I have the Holy Spirit." One who has the Holy Spirit, knows that he has it. Otherwise, so many statements in Scripture are meaningless.

For example, when Paul was arguing with the Galatians the case of salvation by faith, rather than works, one of his arguments was that they had the Holy Spirit. This they knew. So, he asked, "How did you get it?" If there had been any uncertainty on their part that they had the Holy Spirit, his argument would have been powerless.

Galatians 3:1 - 5 *You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you*

*receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain? Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?*

Here are some more illustrative verses:

- John 14:17 *that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.*
- Acts 2:38 *And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
- Ephesians 1:13 - 14 *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*
- Ephesians 4:30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*
- 1 Thessalonians 4:8 *Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*
- 2 Corinthians 1:21 - 22 *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.*
- 2 Corinthians 5:5 *Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.*

If the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is essential for salvation, how can we know that we have the Spirit? One answer is the character of one's life. Galatians 5:16-26 is a key passage.

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*

*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.*

Note that this passage Paul makes a contrast between *deeds* and *fruit*.

- the *deeds* of the flesh (Greek: ἔργον [ergon] literally, *works*)
- the *fruit of the Spirit*.

It is of note that Paul did not write, *fruits*. The fruit is singular. There are not different *fruits of the Spirit*. There is a single fruit, and Paul describes its characteristics. This is like saying that the fruit of the McIntosh Apple tree is red skinned, with a white inner body, and seed at the core. So, if these characteristics are present in the life of a believer, then this is one evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Are there other evidences? Some would make tongues an evidence. Tongues cannot be an evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life for several reasons:

- Tongues exist in many heathen and heretical religions. For example, Mormons speak in tongues. In Corinth, tongues was a feature of the pagan worship services in the city of Corinth, and that is one reason that some of the Corinthian Christians wanted them banned from the church service. Paul had to say to the Corinthians that if the tongues were motivated by the Holy Spirit, that they were OK (I Corinthians 12:1-3), and that speaking in tongues should not be forbidden (I Corinthians 14:39). So, tongues cannot be an evidence because the source might be some spirit other than the Holy Spirit.
- Paul stated that the Corinthians had the Holy Spirit (for example I Corinthians 12:13). However, he emphasized that even though they had the Holy Spirit, not all who had the Holy Spirit spoke in tongues (I Cor. 12:30).<sup>66</sup>
- Paul went further to state that if they were craving an abundance of tongues in their service, they were asking for the sign of God's displeasure. In I Cor. 14:21-22, Paul quoted Isaiah 28:11ff. In this Isaiah passage, God accused the inhabitants of Jerusalem of being unbelievers. One of the signs that God had judged them for their unbelief would be the presence of people overrunning their land who spoke foreign tongues. In a curious argument, Paul indicated that the abundance of tongues in a service was a sign that God had judged them as unbelievers. So, tongues may or may not be evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Since it is uncertain, it cannot be an evidence. Tongues can be the sign of something other than the Holy Spirit.

Another manifestation/evidence of one's having the Holy Spirit is a longing (an inward groaning) for the resurrection and the final dwelling with God, as described in verse 23, *And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

The verses considered in the previous section describe a Spirit-occupied life as one that is holy and an expression of Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Galatians 2:20).

Although feelings never can be a measure, because they are of the soul, still they are an element in the evaluation. One who possesses the Holy Spirit will sense, at least in a general way, the Presence of God (although there may be times when "the heavens seem as brass"). Romans 8:16 clearly states this, *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*

This mirrors Paul's description of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:14

*who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

The word rendered, *pledge* (NAS), *earnest* (KJV), *deposit* (NIV), is ἀρραβών (*arrabown*).

Thus, as our lives give evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and we are conscious of a living relationship with God, we can have assurance that heaven will be our eternal home – God has deposited the Holy Spirit in us as a guarantee.

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<sup>66</sup> When asking a rhetorical question in Greek, the person asking the question begins it either with a μή (*may*) or an ού (*ou*). If the question begins with a μή then the questioner is emphasizing that the answer is, *of course not*. If the question begins with an ού, the answer is, *of course*. Since Paul begins these rhetorical questions in I Corinthians 12:30 with a μή he is stating that it is obvious that not all Spirit-filled believers speak/pray in tongues.

**Verse 10-11**

*And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.*

This is the logical conclusion resulting from what the facts just presented.

NOTE: The closing phrase of this verse is uncertain in the available manuscripts.

- Some manuscripts have, *dia ton enoikoun autou pneuma* (διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦν αὐτοῦ πνεῦμα), in which the noun, participle, pronoun, and article are in the accusative. This would be translated, *on account of*, or *because of His Spirit's dwelling in you*.
- Other manuscripts have, *dia tou enoikountos autou pneumatos* (διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτοῦ πνεύματος), which has the noun, the participle, the pronoun, and article in the genitive. This would be translated, *give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit's dwelling in you*.

The accusative indicates that because of the indwelling Spirit, God will resurrect or bodies.

The genitive indicates that the Holy Spirit is the agency whereby that resurrection will occur.

The evidence on either side of the issue is fairly equal.

Those who follow the KJV, for the most part have accepted the evidence for the accusative.

More recent scholars have tended toward the genitive, but not adamantly.<sup>67</sup>

As far as the point being made, neither wording is preferable over the other. The prominent idea is that since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life, life will be where the Spirit dwells.

- We are born into the world by natural birth;
- we are born into the Kingdom of God by spiritual birth;
- we are born into the Everlasting Kingdom by supernatural birth of the resurrection.

*Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.* (John 5:28-29)

**Verse 12 - 13**

*So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

The devil and his fleshly enticements have not done anything to cause us to be obligated to them.

On the other hand, because of the sacrifice of Christ and the free gift of the Holy Spirit, we are obligated to God – He has acted on our behalf.

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<sup>67</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, who was on the committee the editorial committee of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament, comments on this question, "Remembering that in the Pauline corpus the weight of B when associated with D G (as here) is quite considerably lessened, a majority of the Committee preferred the genitive case, on the basis of the combination of the text-types, including the Alexandrian (§ A C 81), Palestinian (syr/pal Cyril-Jerusalem), and Western (it/61? Hippolytus)." Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Society) 1971 page 517

### Verses 14 - 17

*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

*For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"*

*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.*

Many popular contemporary teachers have stated that the term, *Father*, is formal, and *Abba* is an affectionate expression, similar to, *daddy*. This just isn't true.

- *Abba* (אַבבָּא) is the Aramaic term for father. Aramaic was the language spoken by the Palestinian Jews.
- *Ho Pater* (ὁ πατήρ), is the Greek term for father. Greek was the language spoken throughout the Roman Empire as well as by most Palestinian Jews.

Both of these terms express the same intimacy with one's father, regardless of which language one is using.

This brings home to us the fact that Christianity had its birth in a bilingual people. Some scholars are of the opinion that we would do well to not render this, *Abba, Father*, but just translate both terms as a single term, *Father*, or, for intensity, *Father! Father!*

The first use of the dual terms is found in Mark 14:36, in which Jesus prays, *And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt."*

The biblical scholar, J.B. Lightfoot, thinks that Jesus used only the word, *Abba*, in his prayer and that Mark added *o Pater* as an interpretation, since his Gospel was written for the Gentile Roman world (as indeed it was).

The only other passage in which the dual terms are used is in Galatians 4:6. *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*

Lightfoot has the same explanation for this passage. He argues that Paul is interpreting the term, *Abba*, for his Gentile Galatian readers. According to this argument, the same would be true for Romans 8:14.

There is much to commend the view that this dual terminology is the result of the intense nature of prayer in all three passages.

- Jesus' prayer is a very intense prayer. In His intense plea to the Father, being colloquial in both languages, Jesus spontaneously repeated the word, *Father*. It is of note that among the limited resources that we have of Jewish Christianity, the only examples of the use of these dual terms, is when the writer is commenting on the prayer of Jesus, recorded in Mark 14:36. In no other cases is the dual term used in this body of literature.
- In Paul's two uses of the dual term (Romans 8:14; Galatians 4:6), the same would be true. In both Romans and Galatians, the word, *krazomen*, (κράζομεν) is a very strong word describing a loud irrepressible cry. In both Galatians and Romans Paul slips into the first person, *we cry*. He is caught up in the prayer at the very moment in which he is writing, and he cries out, *Father! Father!* First, in his native Aramaic tongue, *Abba*, then in the literary language of those to whom he was writing, *Ho Pater*.

Be that as it may, both terms are of equal value, in expressing intimacy with one's father.

*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God* (verse 16) completes the flow of thought from verse 15 into 16 that the reason that we cry out *Father, Father*, is because the indwelling Holy Spirit, is bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Three proofs that we are children of God are given in these verses:

- Verse 14      We are led by the Spirit of God (this includes the revelation in Scripture)
- Verse 15-16   Our own spirit witnesses with His Spirit
- Verse 17      We suffer with Him

The concept of being heirs and joint-heirs must not be pressed beyond the scriptural intent. Joint-heirs, does not mean that we will be Deity. We always will be poor sinners, saved by the grace of God. Because of His Grace, we will be joint-heirs of the beauty, joy, and marvels of heaven.

*If indeed we suffer with him*, calls to mind Paul's statements to Timothy, *It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him* (2 Timothy 2:11) and *indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (2 Timothy 3:12).

#### **H. The hope of glory, secured by Christ, sustains the redeemed through every trial 8:18-30**

Throughout this section, Paul emphasized that there is no legitimate reason for one to refuse to accept and obey the Gospel or to fail to remain faithful to his Lord as long as he lives.

##### **Verse 18**

***For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.***

What a magnificent statement!

If we live for Christ, somewhere along the way, there will be suffering of one type or another. Paul suffered greatly, because of his commitment to Christ. Yet, he wrote this magnificent statement. Home with Christ is beyond our ability to express. No redeemed person in heaven will want to return to earth, nor will he be sorry that he endured suffering because of his faith. If the believer will be continually mindful of this fact, it will be a source of strength in the time of trial.

##### **Verses 19-23**

***For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.***

***For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.***

***For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.***

***And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.***

What is the meaning of the word, *creation*, in this section?

- Some consider the term to refer to the physical creation, the universe.
- Others consider the term to refer to humanity.

The problem with viewing this as humanity is that the conclusion, *creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God*, would imply universal salvation. As noted earlier, since such a view is biblically unsound, humanity cannot be the meaning of *creation*.

In these verses, Paul personifies nature, in the same manner as is seen in Isaiah 24:4, *The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers...*,

Paul's language reflects Peter's description of the birth of new heavens and a new earth.

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.* (2 Peter 3:10-13)

All of creation, the earth, planets, stars, etc., were in some way effected by the entrance of sin into creation. In God's time, these will not be annihilated, but the elements will be melted and renovated. In this renovated creation, only righteousness will dwell. The disease of sin will be absent.

*And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

In heaven, there will not be any disembodied human spirits. We will have some sort of a body with which to express ourselves. Note that the resurrection is described as the event in which our adoption as sons takes place. Thus, we have seen the figure of adoption used to describe two events in the life of the believer:

1. Our entrance into the family of God at conversion (8:15);
2. Our entrance into the glorified family of God at the resurrection (8:23).

In Romans, Paul pictures our entrance into the first level of the heavenly family by being resurrected from the watery grave of immersion (Chapter 6). He here pictures our entrance into the glorified family by our bodies being resurrected from an earthen grave.

### **Verses 24-25**

***For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?***

***But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.***

The Greek word, *elpis* (ἐλπίς), translated, *hope*, carries the idea of something more than just an object of longing or a wish. It carries the idea of certain expectation. Faith and hope are almost synonyms. We are convinced, without a doubt, that the thing hoped for will happen.

Since we are in a state of hope, while in this present life, then it follows that we have not come into the fullness of redemption.

The *aurist* tense is used here, literally: *we were saved by hope*. The implication is that from the moment of our salvation, perhaps even one of the motivations for our accepting the Gospel, was this hope.

### **Verses 26-27**

***And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;<sup>27</sup> and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.***

Kenneth Hagin has argued that the groaning of verse 26 refers to tongues.<sup>68</sup> This really is a stretch. The Greek term translated *too deep for words* (NAS), *that words cannot express* (NIV), *which cannot be uttered* (KJV), is *alaletos* (ἀλάλητος).

ἀλάλητος is the result of the term that means to speak, *laleo* (λαλέω), and the prefix, α.

This prefix is used in Greek in the same way as we use it in English (e.g., a **moral** person versus an **amoral** person [one who does not have morals]).

This term conveys the idea of something that is not uttered or something that cannot be uttered.

Thus, Paul is describing a silent groaning, something that cannot be uttered.

This poses an interesting question.

- Does the Holy Spirit intercede for us in a deep way that we might not even be aware of, doing so with an intensity that is beyond expression? That is the most natural way of understanding these verses.
- Or does the Holy Spirit produce in us some sort of inner groaning that defies being put into language.

The second of these does not fit what these verses say, because the believer himself is not within the purview of the statement. The Holy Spirit is described as both the source and the vehicle.

This does not mean that we should not, with great intensity of spirit, intercede for others, even as Paul had an intense prayer life in which he experienced anguish for the various churches and individuals in them.

There is a blessed assurance in this statement. We do not know what we should pray for nor how to pray about it. We are so limited by our perspective. The Holy Spirit knows what and how, and He acts accordingly. All of his prayers are in line with God's will.

### **Verse 28**

***And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.***

Few verses have been of more comfort to believers of every generation than this verse. Yet, at the same time, this verse has been the source of many questions.

Our idea of *good* is not always God's idea of *good*. All things are not in themselves good. For example, sin is not good, but God can make the wrath of man to praise Him. Furthermore, we can profit from the mistakes of others, as well as our own mistakes.

The principle of context is very important here and one context to consider is the audience to whom Paul is writing. Paul is writing to a persecuted people and he assures them that all is for good.

In Paul's own life there is an example of what most would consider to be evil to be *good*.

*And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself!*

*Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*

*And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."*

*Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

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<sup>68</sup> Kenneth Hagin, *Seven Reasons Why Every Believer Should Speak in Tongues*, <https://www.rhema.org>

*Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.* (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

Note that God did respond to Paul's prayer for deliverance. His answer was, *No – and – there is a higher purpose for what you are suffering, than just the tragedy of your suffering.*

Another perspective is presented by Tertullian in his treatise, *Apologeticus*, written in the summer of 197 AD.

Tertullian was demanding that Christians be treated like all other sects in the Roman Empire. In the document, he wrote, *Plures efficimur, quitiens metimur a vobis: semen est sanguis Christianorum*, which has been liberally and apocryphally translated as "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church"<sup>69</sup>. A more literal translation is, "We multiply when you reap us. The blood of Christians is seed,"

Indeed, as the Roman Empire executed Christians and threw them to the beasts in the amphitheatre, many Romans became sickened by what they witnessed, and some were so impressed by how Christians faced death that this caused them to examine the origin of the Christian's faith. Indeed, this worked for the good of the Kingdom and for the good of the coming generations.

### **Verses 29-30**

***For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.***

These verses are at the heart of the controversy between those who advocate the doctrine of free will and Calvinism's doctrine of foreordination/predestination. Below we summarize the two views, as they are presented by recognized proponents of each view.

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### **CALVINST VIEW OF FOREORDINATION & PREDESTINATION**

The following is a summary, containing many direct quotes, from Charles Hodge, one of the classic defenders of Calvinism (Hodge, Charles, *Romans* [Wheaton, IL, Crossway Books, 1993 reprint of the 1835 original] pages 256 - 267)

*Called according to His purpose...* The word for *called*, (*kletos*- κλητός), first noted in 1:7, never is used in the New Testament for those who are only the recipients of an external invitation to the Gospel. It always means, "effectually called"; that is, it always applied to those who are **really brought to accept the blessings to which they are invited**. Note the following passages:

I Corinthians 1:23 -24 *but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* (Here contrasting the "true Christians" with others)

Jude 1 *Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:*

I Corinthians 1:2 *to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:*

The word, *called*, is used in the same sense as, *chosen*. This is evident from its use in phrases such as *called to be an apostle* (1 Corinthians 1:1; Romans 1:1) and *called to belong to Jesus*

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<sup>69</sup> *Apologeticus*, 50:13

*Christ* (Romans 1:6). This is equivalent to Isaiah 48:12 *Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called* (Israel was chosen from among the nations)...see also Isaiah 42:6; 49:1; 51:2.

Therefore, the people who love God are those whom God has chosen and called by His grace to participate in the Redeemer's Kingdom. This call is not because of the merits of men, but *according to His purpose*...who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything that we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time:

II Timothy 1:9 *who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,*

Ephesians 1:11 *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,*

Romans 9:11 *for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls,*

Paul has two reasons for introducing the clause in Romans 8:28: first, to show that the reason that some men love God can be attributed only to His sovereign grace; and second, that if men are called according to the eternal purpose of God, their salvation is secure. Through this second idea, the clause is associated with the following verses, which really contain the message of the chapter. That the calling of men does secure their salvation is proved in verses 29-30.

Those whom God has called are called in line with a pre-settled plan and purpose of God. Those whom He calls he had previously predestined. All of the different stages of our salvation are included in this plan of the unchanging God. If we are predestined and called, we shall be justified and glorified. Thus, all things must work together for good to those who love God, for the plan of God cannot fail; those whom He has called into this state of reconciliation, whom He has made to love Him, He will certainly bring to the final glory prepared for His people.

The term, *foreknow*, and *know*, are used with three different meanings, all of which apply to this passage. The word may mean "to know beforehand." It also may mean, "to approve," in the sense of having special affection. A third meaning would be "to select."

The last two ideas are consistent with this passage. They speak of the general idea of preferring. That is, those whom He loved and selected. Here are parallel thoughts:

Romans 11:2 *God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?)*

I Peter 1:20 *For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you*

II Timothy 2:19 *Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, " The Lord knows those who are His, "and," Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness. "*

John 10:14 *I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

Acts 2:23 *this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

1 Peter 1:2 *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.*

Therefore, the idea obviously is that those whom God especially loved, and by loving in this way, He distinguished or selected them from the rest of mankind. Both of these ideas can be expressed in a single term, *elected*. Those whom He *elected* He predestined, etc.

It is evident that "foreknowledge" expresses more than to know in advance. On the other hand, it expresses something different from "predestination." This is seen from the sentence, *Those God foreknew, He also predestined*. Predestination follows and is based upon foreknowledge. If we look over a number of objects, we fix our gaze and our mind on a few that we choose. These are chosen to the neglect, or the rejection, of the others. The second step is to choose the objects for the proposed plan. God looks on fallen humanity and fixes on some whom He predestines to salvation. This is foreknowledge.

*He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son.* To predestine is to destine or appoint beforehand. Note Ephesians 1:5: *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will*; and Ephesians 1:11: *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will*,

Every time predestination is mentioned, it is clear that the reason for the choice does not lie in us. We are chosen in Christ, according to the free purpose of God. This is a *fore-ordination*, a determination that existed in the Divine Mind long before the event and even before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4 *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him*). When this occurs in time, it shows the eternal purpose of God, and it executes the plan of which it forms a part.

The purpose for which God chose and predestined us is *to be conformed to the image of His Son*. The predestined will be like the Son of God in character and destiny (Ephesians 1:4, again). See also the following:

Ephesians 4:24 *and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth*.

1 Corinthians 15:49 *And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*.

Philippians 3:21 *who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself*.

I John 3:2 *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is*.

"I remark here in passing," says Olshausen, "that according to Paul's doctrine... God does not foreknow those who by their own decision will become holy, but He Himself creates that decision in them."

The reason for all of this is *that he might be the firstborn among many brothers*. The purpose in the salvation of men is not that men should be holy and happy, but that to all of the principalities and powers the glory of the Son might be demonstrated. He will stand as chief and head of countless multitude that through Him are made sons of God.

Therefore, *and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified*.

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?* (vs 31). The final salvation of the foreknown, chosen, predestined, called, and justified, is guaranteed.

These will be preserved from apostasy and any deadly sins. That is the goal and essence of salvation. So, any who do turn to apostasy or return to sin, were not foreknown, predestined, chosen, etc. This is the sense of the final verses of the chapter.

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### NON-CALVINIST VIEW OF FOREORDINATION AND PREDESTINATION

The following is a summary, containing many direct quotes, from Moses E. Lard, advocating the free-will doctrine. (Lard, Moses E., *Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans* [Cincinnati, Ohio, Standard Publishing Co., 1875] pages 279 - 285)

Note: In presenting this view, we will not repeat the Scriptures that are cited, or implied. Most of them are printed or referenced in the section on Calvinism. I make the assumption that the student is familiar enough with these to not require their repetition. -JWG

No passage in the New Testament has given rise to more extended controversy than these three verses (Romans 8:28 - 30). It would not be true to say that no good has come of this strife, but the evil of the strife has outweighed the good. In studying this passage, we must try to discover what was before the apostle's mind when he penned it.

The clue to the entire meaning of the passage is the clause, *to those that are called according to His purpose*. *Those that are called* and *those that love God* are the same people, those who are saved.

*Called according to His purpose*...What do these words mean?

The word rendered, *purpose*, is the word, *prothesis* (πρόθεσις), is a noun derived from the verb, *protithemi* (προτίθημι). The noun means, "a placing", or "a setting before." In this verse, the term refers to God's placing things in front of His mind, so as to see them distinctly. It is a mental seeing.

It may be assumed that this *prothesis* occurred far back in eternity, long before time and man. It occurred when the vision of man first arose in the Divine Mind.

What things were placed, or set before, in this *prothesis*? Man, including this world with all that in any way pertains to it, from his conception on, to say the least, until his glorification. God set before Him the whole human race with its entire destiny. All that man is or shall be stood before God - sin, redemption, glorification - all were naked and open to His eye.

It was there that the Logos was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20) to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, and from that moment onward, He was viewed as slain. There, the whole Gospel was ideally perfected. In a word, the whole of time, with all that shall transpire in it, was in vision as completely before God as it will ever be in fact when it is past.

In the *prothesis*, each man was as distinctly before God as saved as lost, as he will be when judgment is past. This was not because God decreed that this man should be saved or lost, but because, leaving each man free to choose his own destiny, he could and did clearly foresee what that destiny would be, as though He Himself had fixed it by unchangeable decree. To assume that God must foreordain what a man's destiny would be in order to foresee it, is a profound absurdity.

It was the complete view of the future, seen in the *prothesis*, that enabled Paul to say so confidently, *all things work together for good to those who love God*.

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. Hence, to be called according to God's purpose (*prothesis*) is to be called by the Gospel. It is not to be called by some secret impulse of the Holy Spirit; neither is it to be called "effectually" or "ineffectually," as some Calvinists phrase it. It is simply to be called by hearing the Gospel. This call, each person is free to accept or reject and by so doing, be saved or lost.

*For whom He foreknew...* refers to knowing before some date or period. This took place simultaneously with the *prothesis* and was a part of it. When God set before Himself the entire human race, long before any man existed, He foreknew. He foresaw in the *prothesis* that certain ones would choose to obey Him, and certain ones would not. Those who chose to obey Him, or His Son, would comply with the conditions of justification and be saved. These were the ones whom He *foreknew*.

*Foreknew* must be taken with a qualification. It must denote more than just being cognizant of something, because God, in the sense of cognition foreknew everyone. Therefore, it denotes both knowing and accepting. In Scripture, "to know," is one of the expressions that means acceptance or approval. Note the use of the term in Matthew 7:23, *And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*

*He also predetermined* at the time that He foreknew, and predetermined the people whom He foreknew. All this occurred at the *prothesis*. Those whom he foreknew were the ones whom he foresaw would do His will, whether before or after Christ. These are the redeemed. This did not occur because God predestined them to obey Him; they were left free to choose and it was because he foresaw them making this choice that He predestined them.

*He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son*, is a reference to the resurrection. When the *prothesis* was before God, He foresaw that certain individuals would become His children. These, in purpose, He accepted. He determined that in the resurrection, their bodies would be same as the glorified body of His Son. As the Son was predetermined to be like humanity before He went into the grave, so the redeemed were predetermined to be like the Son after they came out of it.

*That He might be the first-born among many brethren...* Christ is the firstborn from the grave and to Him therefore belong the honors of the firstborn son. Among those is the honor of giving the form of His glorified body to all of the redeemed.

*and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.* He did not call these in any special sense or in any special way, neither did He call them and not others (such is neither stated nor implied). Before Christ, He called them by the preaching of the prophets and other righteous men. After Christ, men are called by the Gospel. He called everyone, but the group on which this verse focuses are the ones who responded to the Gospel. This is one reason for Judgment Day. In that Day, God will be vindicated, so to speak, from the charge of being arbitrary or of some partiality. All must be called to enable God to foresee who would accept Him and who would not.

*He called* was God's act. This is what He did in carrying out His predetermination, but after doing this, He paused. Those called accepted the call, not because they were called differently from others, but because they responded differently. What took place *prophetically*, far back in eternity, is precisely what is now taking place every day under Christ.

The two great errors into which many expositors have fallen:

1. Foreknowledge assumes that God predestined in an unalterable way every act of human life.
2. The terms, *called, justified, glorified*, are spoken of actual human beings whom God chose for reasons within Himself, totally apart from any responsibility on the part of humans.

These errors limit God. They limit His foreknowledge to what He predestined. They assume that God could not foresee the course of events in human history, including the response of individuals to His call, but could only see the outcome that he predestined.

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**I. The believers triumphant assurance, based on the greatness and constancy of God's love 8:31-39**

**Verses 31-34**

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*

*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*

*Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.*

In response to what has just been written about believers, Paul calls attention to important truths.

*If God is for us, who is against us?* If God is for us, as He certainly is, who can defeat our glorification? Nothing can succeed. This is an affirmation of verse 28, which declares that all things will work together for our good.

*His own son (tou idiou hion- τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ)*, His Son in a sense in which He has no other son. This is a synonym for John 3:16 (*ton huion ton monogene - τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ*), already discussed in the opening verses of Chapter One.

*Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies...* The *elect* or *chosen* is not referring back to the *prothesis*, but to the "here and now believers" who are in Christ. A charge made against God's elect will not succeed, for God is sure to acquit. Should the charge be false, it will not be allowed. Should it be true, God's child will repent and be forgiven. Of one's accord, he may fall away and thus bring about his own ruin, but another cannot do it.

*who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.*

The thought conveyed in this statement is,

- Who is He who condemns?
- Christ alone could do it,
- and He certainly will not do it, because He died for us and now pleads before God to prevent our condemnation.

What an overwhelming and blessed truth!

### **Verses 35-39**

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "for Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.*

*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It is impossible to imagine anything more assuring than this passage. When a child of God is overtaken by hardship, there often is the feeling that God has forsaken him. Not so!!!

Our sufferings are short-lived. We not only live through them, but we live forever beyond them. Should we die as a result of our sufferings, we are crowned with immortality and eternal life. All of this is achieved through Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us.

With the conclusion of Chapter Eight, we come to the end of the grand argument that, up to this point, has been running through the book:

- God's love for all humanity
- God's grace and mercy toward all humanity
- God's amazing provision for humanity by surrendering his beloved, only-begotten Son, to the horrible death on a cross to provide for the atonement of our sins and the assurance of heaven for those who will, in faith, accept the truth of what God has done in our behalf.

## **IV. THE PRINCIPLES THUS ESTABLISHED, JUSTIFY GOD'S DEALING WITH JEWS AND GENTILES 9:1-11:36**

### **A. Paul's deep sorrow over the Jews 9:1-5**

*I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.*

*For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

Note the extreme transition that Paul makes from the triumph of Chapter Eight to the sorrow in the opening of Chapter Nine. This mixture of joy and sorrow is consistent with the Christian life. It would be difficult to express the depth of sorrow more forcefully than Paul does in these verses.

Those for whom Paul experienced this deep sorrow were those who had declared him to be their enemy.

*For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,*

The term translated, *accursed*, is *anathema* (ἀνάθεμα), which means, "devoted to destruction." It is interesting that the word is derived from the word *anatheyma*, (ἀνάθημα), which means, "that which is devoted to God." In the Septuagint, the translators needed a word to use for the Hebrew that meant, "devoted to God for destruction." The term, *anathema*, is the one that was

chosen. Thus, in the New Testament, the writers of which used the Septuagint, this term is used for destruction (Galatians 1:8,9; I Corinthians 16:22).

Paul's use of two Greek terms, *autos ego* (αὐτός ἐγώ), expresses great intensity. Both of these terms are first-person singular, and each of them refers to *self*. The fact that Paul used two terms, both referring to self, indicates that Paul was saying, *I, even I, myself...were accursed...*

Just after writing that *neither life, nor death...nor any other created thing shall separate us from the love God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Paul poured out this extreme prayer, wishing that he would be separated from Christ if that would save the Jews.

Paul's spiritual family was the Church. His physical family was physical Israel.

This reminds us of Moses prayer in Exodus 32:32, *But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin-- and if not, please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written!* Both Paul and Moses were speaking the language of the heart, not the language of reasoning and reflection.

*who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

Paul's grief for Israel arises not only from his personal relationships, but also from his consciousness of their privileged position in the Divine economy.

*To whom belongs the adoption as sons*, recalls Exodus 4:22 - *Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, " Israel is My son, My first-born.*

*The glory* can be taken in a general way, but it also recalls the many times that there was in Israel the visible manifestation of God's glory.

Exodus 24:16-17 *And the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountaintop.*

Exodus 16:10 *And it came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*

Exodus 40:33-34 *And he erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

1 Kings 8:11 *so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.*

Numbers 7:89 *Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him.*

Exodus 25:22 *And there I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.*

Leviticus 16:1-2 *Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died. And the LORD said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.*

*The covenants* would refer to the many different covenants that God had made with the Israelites and their ancestors.

The expression, *who is over all, God blessed forever*, requires interpretation to determine whether or not the reference is to God the Father or to Jesus Christ. Elsewhere in his writings, Paul never applies the term, *theos* (θεός), i.e., *God*, to Christ. Paul reserves the term, *theos*, for God the Father.

Thus, the best punctuation and rendering of this clause would be:

*whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh.  
God, Who is over all, be blessed forever. Amen.*

The deity of Jesus Christ is not in question, here. Paul and the rest of the New Testament writers clearly affirm Christ's deity, using a variety of terms and statements, without applying the term, θεός.

Some New Testament writers do apply the term, θεός, to the Christ. A clear example is in the prologue to the Gospel of John: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*  
(John 1:1, 14)

#### **B. Refutation of false claims and vindication of God's dealing with the Jews 9:6-13**

In this paragraph, Paul points out that God's promises do not bind Him to include all of Abraham's descendants in the promises.

He also demonstrates that God's choice is not based on merit, but that God's only obligation is to be true to Himself.

##### **Verses 6-8**

*But it is not as though the word of God has failed.*

*For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants*

*but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named."*

*That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.*

Paul used Hagar and Sarah as an allegory, here.

- Jews in the flesh were typified by Ishmael.
- The spiritual descendants, whether Jew or Gentile, are typified by Isaac.

There is an Israel within Israel, thus all Israelites are not embraced in the promise.

Paul is coming at the truth that he declared in 1:16, from a different direction - that there is not one way for Jews to enter the Kingdom and another way for Gentiles to enter the Kingdom.

##### **Verses 9-13**

*For this is a word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son."*

*And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;*

*for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls,*

*it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."*

*Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*

Paul continued to emphasize that the selection was not made on the basis of merit.

NOTE: The term, *hate*, in verse 13 is used the same way that it is used in Genesis 29:30-31 (Jacob didn't hate Leah, she was, however, less loved) and in Luke 14:26 (we are not to hate our parents, but to regard our love for them as secondary to our love for Christ).

God's promise to Abraham did not bind Him to include all of Abraham's descendants in the Messianic promise. The Messiah was to come through the line of Jacob.

Jacob's line was not chosen on the basis of merit, but on the basis of God's sovereignty.

There also is the possibility that the choice was based on God's foreknowledge - this was a conditional choosing. God in His foreknowledge knew the right man to choose.

*it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger.* was fulfilled in those periods of time when Edomites (descendants of Esau) were subject to Israel.

Looking back, Paul could see that God chose Israel as an instrument of His worldwide redemptive scheme. The Messiah would come into the world through Israel, and thus, all nations would be blessed.

**D. God's absolute freedom to extend mercy to whom He chooses, and to do so for His purposes, is displayed in His dealings with the Jews.9:14-18**

**Verses 14-16**

*What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!*

*For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*

*So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*

God is sovereign and free. The free sovereignty of God is in harmony with His total actions. He is free to have mercy on any whom He chooses.

Even though God's choice does not depend on a meritorious *willing* or *running*, Scripture often declares that conditions are required for God's compassion and mercy to be extended. No doubt Paul was familiar with the promises of God spoken through the prophets, concerning God's compassion on those who manifested repentance and remorse over their sins.

*Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*

*Isaiah 57:15, 20 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite...But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud.*

**Verses 17-18**

*For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."*

*So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.*

Paul references Exodus 9:16 in which God, through Moses, declared to Pharaoh, *But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.*

In spite of Pharaoh's negative response to God's miracles, God permitted Pharaoh to remain in his position of power until God's divine purpose was fulfilled. If Pharaoh would have responded to the miracles in a positive way, this also would have demonstrated the power of God.

Throughout Exodus Chapter 19, the statement is made that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh. How and why did God do that?

The same heat cooks meat, dries sand, hardens clay, melts wax, etc. The same Gospel effects different people different ways. Some it hardens and some it softens.

This is how God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God presented a command. God spoke the truth. The truth and the command produced a hard heart in Pharaoh.

**D. God's sovereignty and His long-suffering vindicated His dealings with the Jews 9:19-29**  
**Verses 19-21**

*You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"*

*On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?*

*Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?*

Paul points out that the attitude of the question - *Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?* - displays the wrong attitude. When anyone questions the wisdom of God, something is basically wrong, with the questioner.

Paul recalls the parable of the potter and the clay in Jeremiah 18:1-12. Some have understood Paul's illustration to indicate that those to whom he referred did not have the freedom to choose their behavior or the consequences thereof. Based on the account in Jeremiah, this is a flawed conclusion. In the Jeremiah passage, the clay, representing the people of Israel, did have a will.

*The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh saying, "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I shall announce My words to you."*

*Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.*

*Then the word of Yahweh came to me saying, "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares Yahweh. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel."*

*At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it;*

*if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.*

*Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it;*

*if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.*

*So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, "Thus says Yahweh, Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds. "'*

*But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.'*

God is sovereign, but He always is true to Himself which requires a conditional response to His initiatives.

Nineveh's response to God's initiative is another illustration of this truth.

- Jonah preached doom to Nineveh. Nineveh repented and God extended mercy.
- Nahum later preached doom to unrepentant Nineveh and Nineveh was destroyed.

Nowhere in the Bible is God pictured like an oriental despot who condemns and saves, just to show His power. His inherent longsuffering displays His desire that all men might come to repentance.

Once again, we note II Peter 3:9

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

### **Verses 22-24**

***What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?***

***And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,***

***even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.***

The purpose of God's long-suffering is to give more time for the recalcitrant to come to repentance, not so that there will be time for more people to go to hell.

The proper understanding of long-suffering makes it difficult to accept the Calvinist position.

Recall that 2:4-5 stated,

*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,*

The kindness of God leads to repentance. This indicates action and effort on God's part, but man must respond. The hardening of the heart is the result of a decision by man.

*Prepared for destruction* is the Greek term rendered, *prepared*, is *katertismena* (κατηρτισμένα), i.e., *to men, to fit, to prepare*. This is either the passive or the middle form of the verb, *katartidzo* (καταρτίζω). Since the middle and passive are spelled exactly the same for this verb, one cannot tell from the term itself which sense is being stated. Here is the difference between the middle and passive:

- Passive: God prepared them for destruction
- Middle: They prepared themselves for destruction

This a situation similar to that described in those who were, *given over*, in Romans 1:18-24. The vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction, were so prepared by their unrepentant hearts and God gave them over to that condition.

The point made in these verses is that although God's righteous anger might lead Him to make His power known, God's inherent kindness overrode his righteous anger and caused Him to delay and to bear with those who had become objects that deserved His wrath.

**Verses 25-29**

*As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"*

*"And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."*

*And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;*

*for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly."*

*And just as Isaiah foretold, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."*

In these verses Paul quotes the Old Testament to give additional force to his argument, concerning God's sovereignty and His longsuffering.

Paul cites two of the prophets: Hosea and Isaiah.

The principle expressed in the changing of the names of Hosea's children (Hosea 1:3-11; 2:21-23) is the same principle that brought the Gentiles into the promise.

The *remnant*, described in Isaiah 10, referred most immediately to those who returned from the captivity, but the term was not exhausted by that event. The true *remnant* encompasses the redeemed of both Jew and Gentile and culminates in the remnant from all nations found in heaven.

The final verse in this paragraph quotes Isaiah 1:9.

**E. The true cause of the rejection of the Jews and the acceptance of the Gentiles 9:30-33**

*What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;*

*but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.*

*Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,*

*just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."*

These verses clearly distinguish between the Gentiles acceptance of the Gospel and thus attaining righteousness by faith, whereas, the Jews, for the most part, tried to attain righteousness by law and failed.

**F. The contrast between unattainable legal righteousness and the righteousness that comes through faith 10:1-13****Verses 1-4**

*Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.*

*For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.*

*For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*

*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Paul returns to the theme of his deep sorrow over Israel's being lost. This verse is another reason for rejecting the Calvinist view. Paul would not have prayed for the salvation of someone already predestined to Hell. If he had done so, it would have been an empty exercise.

*Zeal for God* is the language that the Jews would have used to describe themselves.

*In accordance with knowledge* refers to an ethical knowledge of God. The basic Greek term for *knowledge* is γνῶσις (*gnosis*). The term here is ἐπίγνωσις (*epignosis*), which implies a more perfect or complete knowledge. The term is used especially for a godly person's knowledge of God.

Sadly, in spite of all of the opportunities that the Jews had, they misunderstood God.

τέλος (*telos*) is the term rendered as, *end*, in the statement, *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

τέλος is used in Scripture to communicate three ideas:

1. Completion or fulfillment
2. Aim, or goal
3. Termination or cessation

Termination is the best understanding of the term as Paul uses it here. In Christ, the Law as a method of achieving righteousness, has been done away with.

Ephesians 2:15 *by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,*

Colossians 2:14 *having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

### **Verses 5-13**

***For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.***

***But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."***

***But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart "-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,***

***that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;***

***for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.***

***for "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved."***

In these verses, Paul described the two methods of obtaining righteousness. He used familiar Old Testament verses, verses which had become so familiar to the Jews that they were proverbial.

*For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness*, is a quote of Leviticus 18:5, which also is quoted in Galatians 3:12. Paul paraphrased the Septuagint, to fit the rest of the passage.<sup>70</sup> The way to escape condemnation under a system is to comply with that system.

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<sup>70</sup> English translation of the Septuagint *So ye shall keep all my ordinances, and all my judgments, and do them; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord your God.*

*But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down), or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." is based on Deuteronomy 30:11-14.<sup>71</sup>*

Who could go to heaven and bring Christ to us or who could go into hades and bring Christ back from the dead that we may be saved? No one! The Gospel is feasible and accessible.

The term translated, *word*, in this verse (*the word is near you...the word of faith*) is the Greek term, *rhema* (ῥῆμα). The sense of this term is that of something spoken or communicated. The idea is that the Gospel is spoken by the preachers (*the word of faith which we are preaching*) and in response, the hearers declare that they accept that word as true.

*that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

These verses declare the immediate accessibility of salvation, corresponding to the statement, *The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.*

Again, Paul paraphrased a statement from Isaiah, *the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.*

Isaiah wrote, *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). The term rendered, *disturbed*, is *καταίσχύνω* (*kataiskuno*) which means, *to be put to shame.*

Paul continually emphasized the point, that there is but one way to salvation, *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him;*

*Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved,* is a quote from Joel 2:32.

In his Pentecost sermon, Peter used the same quote in his sermon (Acts 2:21), which resulted in 3000 people's being immersed into Christ (Acts 2:41) – thus, launching the Gospel age.

Christians were known as those who called upon the name of Christ (I Corinthians 1:2; Acts 9:14)

From these verses, and the statements elsewhere in Scripture, we see that the beginning of the Christian life has two sides:

- *Internally* it is the change of heart, i.e., faith in the Gospel message, which leads to righteousness (the position of acceptance before God). "Leads to," is important terminology.
- *Externally* it is the confession of Christ crucified, which begins by verbalizing that faith, and then completing that confession and trust by being immersed into Christ.

As we noted in Chapter 6, Paul assumed that every believer had been immersed, or else his argument in that chapter made no sense.

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<sup>71</sup> English translation of the Septuagint *For this command which I give thee this day is not grievous, neither is it far from thee.* <sup>12</sup> *It is not in heaven above, as if there were one saying, Who shall go up for us into heaven, and shall take it for us, and we will hear and do it?* <sup>13</sup> *Neither is it beyond the sea, saying, Who will go over for us to the other side of the sea, and take it for us, and make it audible to us, and we will do it?* <sup>14</sup> *The word is very near thee, in thy mouth, and in thine heart, and in thine hands to do it.*

Based on the fundamental principle of context, how do we harmonize these verses with the many New Testament verses that indicate that salvation involves immersion?

The Scriptures state over and over (many of which we noted earlier) that those who are saved are immersed into Christ.

First, one thing is clear. To base one's salvation only on the fact that one has been immersed is the same thing that the Jew did who based his righteousness on the fact that he was circumcised.

Currently, many ask converts to pray the sinners' prayer, then tell them that they are saved and that is all that they need to do. This practice violates clear commands of Scripture.

First of all, failing to immerse converts is to disobey Christ.

*And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,*

*"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)*

Jesus clearly commanded His disciples to make disciples from all nations, and that the manner in which disciples are to be created is to first immerse them, then to teach them. Of course, this presupposes the proclamation of the Gospel to which the future disciples would respond and then be immersed, then taught.

Another interesting and related episode is recorded in Acts 16. The Philippian jailer was so stunned by the events that he witnessed that he, no doubt having heard about the preaching of the apostles, asked, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

*and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

*And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household."*

*And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.*

*And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was immersed, he and all his household. (Acts 16:30-33)*

Note that when he asked what he must do to be saved,

- he was told to believe.
- Then, the apostles presented the Gospel, i.e., what he was to believe.
- Then he, and all of his household, immediately were immersed.

Even though he was told to believe, and he and all of his household would be saved, the process was not complete without immersion. No doubt the apostles included immersion as a part of the presentation of the Gospel, otherwise, how would he have known what relevance immersion had to his salvation.

This episode is consistent with every post-Pentecostal salvation narrative in the New Testament. To not follow this pattern, is to follow a humanly-devised pattern of salvation.

Thus, based on the context of the corpus of Scripture, the pattern displayed is one in which a person hears the Gospel believes it, is willing to confess that belief, and then completes the process by being immersed into Christ. To do otherwise is to ignore the full presentation of the salvation pattern in the New Testament.

**G. The disobedient, whether Jew or Gentile, are without excuse, since the Gospel has been announced to all 10:14-21**

**Verses 14-15**

*How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?*

*And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?*

*And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

*And how shall they preach unless they are sent?*

*Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"*

Paul referenced two Old Testament passages:

Nahum 1:15 *Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace! Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; Pay your vows. For never again will the wicked one pass through you; He is cut off completely.*

Isaiah 52:7 *How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*

The Nahum passage is part of a prophecy in which God promises that Judah never again would be punished by the Assyrian nation (God later would use Babylon to punish Judah).

The Isaiah passage is one in which God states that Babylon would not be the continual master of Judah. This also is a Messianic passage.

**Verses 16-18**

*However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?"*

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

*But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have;*

*"Their voice has gone out into all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."*

This is a quote from Isaiah 53:1. There was some rejection of Isaiah's message in his day, but the ultimate rejection was of the Messiah.

As presented here, faith is not a miraculous gift, but *faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*. Faith is believing and trusting in the truth proclaimed.

*But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."*

Paul quoted the Septuagint of Psalm 19:4 *Their voice is gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.*

Paul is making the point that Jewish ignorance is inexcusable. In the first six verses of Psalm 19, the psalmist declares that creation testifies to God's glory. Verse 4 states that the sun calls men to God. This is a note of the universality of the call, in that the sun shines over all of the earth.

*The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.*

*There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world.*

*In them He has placed a tent for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat. (Psalm 19:1-6)*

Paul's use of Psalm 19 raises a question.

- Does Paul accommodate the Psalm in a literary flourish,
- or is there some literal manner in which the sun calls people to Christ?

Paul seems to accommodate Psalm 19, declaring that as the sun has touched every part of the creation, so the Gospel has gone everywhere. This is similar to Paul's statement in Colossians 1:23, *...if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.*

### **Verse 19-21**

***But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they?***

***At the first Moses says, "I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you."***

***And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I was found by those who sought Me not, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me."***

***But as for Israel He says, "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."***

What is it that Israel didn't know? The clause is parallel with *have they not heard...* and since there is no hint of any change of topic, it must be the same, i.e., the message concerning the Messiah. From the very beginning of the history, Hebrew prophets had warned them of the divine plan and tried to pull them away from mere religious observance.

Paul quoted Deuteronomy 32:21

*They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.*

The Jews had provoked God with idols. Moses prophetically looked to the time when Gentiles would be included in His Kingdom, and thus, be a provocation to the Jews.

The citation of Isaiah is Isaiah 65:1.

*"I permitted Myself to be sought by those 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.*

God did not control the Israelites as one would control a robot. The Israelites had a free will. Even though it was God's desire was to have the Israelites as His people, they consistently rejected Him.

In this section, Paul makes the following points as to why the Jews are responsible for their rejection.

- |    |          |   |
|----|----------|---|
| 1. | 9:30-33  | they sought the wrong way – a legal system of works           |
| 2. | 10:4     | the failed legal system was abolished in Christ               |
| 3. | 10:5-10  | the new way is feasible and accessible                        |
| 4. | 10:11-13 | the universality of the Gospel – offered to Jews and Gentiles |
| 5. | 10:14-21 | they had opportunity  |

We must be impressed with Paul's knowledge of, and his recall of, the Hebrew Scriptures. Also, his seemingly immediate recall and his interweaving of them into his deliberations. The citations in this section are numerous. Note that Paul cites every major section of the Hebrew Bible.

Isaiah is the dominant section cited. Here are the citations in order

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Isaiah 29:16        | 7. Isaiah 52:7        |
| 2. Isaiah 8:14         | 8. Isaiah 53:1        |
| 3. Leviticus 18:5      | 9. Psalm 19:4         |
| 4. Deuteronomy 30:12ff | 10. Deuteronomy 32:21 |
| 5. Isaiah 28:16        | 11. Isaiah 65:1       |
| 6. Joel 2:32           | 12. Isaiah 65:2       |

#### **H. A remnant of Israel will be saved through election of grace while the rest are rejected because of their blindness 11:1-10**

An overview of the flow of Paul's presentation in this section:

In Chapter 9, he speaks of God's sovereignty

In Chapter 10, he speaks of Israel's sin

In Chapter 11 he speaks both of God's sovereignty and Israel's sin. The sin of Israel became an opportunity for the salvation of all mankind.

##### **Verses 1-5**

*I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!*

*For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

*God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.*

*Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?*

*Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life."*

*but what is the divine response to him?*

*"I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. "*

*In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.*

This chapter plainly teaches that in a sense, Israel was cast off (verse 15, 20, 23). However, God did not cast off anyone just because he was a Jew. Paul argues that if the Jews *in toto* had been cast off, then he would have been too.

On Mt. Carmel, Elijah was the only functioning prophet of Jehovah. He saw all as lost, then God told him that there was a remnant.

In Paul's day there was a remnant, as prophesied by Isaiah - an Israel within Israel. This remnant was composed of those who had believed the Gospel that Paul preached and had embraced the Messiah.

*His people whom He foreknew* declares that even as God knew in Elijah's day that scattered throughout the twelve tribes of Israel, there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. In the same manner, by His foreknowledge, he saw those who would be born in each generation and which one's would respond to His message and accept it.

Therefore, God graciously chose to offer salvation to those whom He knew would accept it.

**Verse 6-10**

*But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;*

*just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day."*

*And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them.*

*"Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever."*

Once again the emphasis on grace.

Quoting Isaiah 29:10, Isaiah 6:10, and Psalm 69:23. The preaching of the Gospel is the occasion of stumbling for many.

**I. The rejection of Israel is not irrevocable 11:11-24****Verse 11-12**

*I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!*

*But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.*

*Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!*

The purpose of the stumbling was not in order to cause them to fall. It was not God's intent that the Jews should become hardened.

However, they did stumble, but not in a way that would keep them from repenting.

The fact that they did reject the Gospel hastened the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

An example of this is seen in Paul's visit to Corinth. As was his custom, when he first came to Corinth, Paul preached in the synagogue, but when the Jews opposed him and his message, he went to the Gentiles.

Acts 18:6 *And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles."*

Paul always preached to the Jews first, when he entered a city to plant a church.

*To make them jealous* involves emulation, not anger.

If the fall of the Jews resulted in the conversion of the Gentiles, how much more glorious will be the conversion of the Jews.

**Verse 13 – 16**

*But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles.*

*Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.*

*For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

*And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too.*

These two opening verses are somewhat parenthetical. Paul interrupts his flow of thought and then returns to it in the next verse.

From this statement, it is clear that Paul expected most of his readers to be Gentile. The dominant constituency of the Roman Church was Gentile. Note that in the long exposition on

the Jews (almost two and one-half chapters), the Jews always are spoken of in the third person. However, in the half chapter that follows, the Gentiles are spoken of in the second person.

Paul moves from exposition into exhortation and begins to address the believers in the Roman Church. There is no word in this section for Christians who were Jews.

Paul did hope that, in some manner, his preaching to Gentiles would result in the salvation of some Jews.

*Life from the dead* refers to the spiritually dead Jew, who through accepting the Gospel would become a living spirit.

Paul saw that the conversion of the Jews, as a whole, would be a tremendous influence on the world. Think of the good that would come if every rabbi in Israel became a Christian.

And if the first piece of *dough* be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too.

The two figures, *first piece* and *root* are emphasizing one truth.

Paul is arguing, since Abraham was justified by faith; doesn't it follow that his descendants, the Jews, could be accepted by faith in the same manner as their progenitor, Abraham?

#### **Verse 17-18**

***But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.***

Paul addressed Gentile Christians who despised Jews, both unbelievers and believers.

This is a clear statement against antisemitism.

This rebuke brings to mind the Corinthian Church, which had many new converts who were carried away by a feeling of excessive confidence, partly on the grounds of race and partly because they thought that they understood mercy.

They were full of contempt for Jewish Christians and the Jewish race. Paul uses this opportunity in his letter to rebuke this attitude. He tells the Gentile Christians that all of their spiritual strength comes from the stock onto which they have been grafted. They are grafted onto a stock whose roots are the patriarchs and to which the Jews belong by virtue of their natural birth.

#### **Verse 19-21**

***You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.***

A Gentile Christian might argue that he is of more value than the Jew, because the Jew was cut off from the tree to allow him to be grafted in.

Paul admits that the branches were broken off so that Gentiles might be grafted in, but he then reminds the Gentile that there were conditions on which he was admitted. He argues, "Don't be high-minded, but fear. If you trust in your merit instead of showing faith in Christ, you will suffer as the Jews, because of their self-confidence and want of faith."

**Verses 22 - 24**

*Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.*

*And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.*

*For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?*

Paul summed up his argument by pointing out the two sides of the Divine character.

- God is full of goodness and loving kindness, which He demonstrated in His action toward the Gentiles. That goodness always will be shown if they trust in God's grace and goodness and do not begin to trust in their own merits.
- On the other hand, the severity of God is shown in how God has responded to the Jews who trusted in themselves.

God can, and will, show the same severity toward Gentiles who cease trusting in God's goodness and begin to trust in themselves (through pride in race or any other element).

NOTE: The grafting of the Gentiles onto the root of the cultivated olive tree is totally unnatural.

- The way that grafting of olives takes place is a graft from a cultivated olive tree is grafted onto a wild trunk. The result is an abundant production of olives.
- If a wild olive branch is grafted onto the trunk of a cultivated olive tree, then the production is very sparse.

So, Paul is emphasizing how unnatural was the grafting of the Gentiles (wild olive branches) onto the cultivated root.

Therefore, they should realize how unusual was God's action toward them and they should be grateful and humble, rather than boastful. In this figure, the restoration of Israel would be an easier process than the call of the Gentiles.

The purpose of this section (Romans 11:11-24) is to exhort the Gentiles to be careful to continue in the kindness that God has shown to them, and to avoid becoming boastful of their position.

**J. The prophetic announcement that there will be a final restoration of Jews into divine favor 11:25-36**

**Verses 25-27**

*For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;*

*and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,*

*"The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.... and this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."*

Many views have been presented concerning the interpretation of this passage. The challenge faced in this section is the challenge that is faced with any interpretation of unfilled prophecy. We may think that we are understanding it, but God also may surprise us.

In English, we use the term, *mystery*, to describe something that is incomprehensible. The Greek term, μυστήριον (*mustehrion*), on the other hand, refers to something that could not be known

except by revelation. That revelation has been given and thus, the truth which once was hidden but now is known with an absolute certainty.<sup>72</sup>

*Lest you be wise in your own estimation*, refers to their imagining that it is in any way through their own merit that they have been accepted. Instead, it has been a part of God's eternal purpose.

*Hardening in part* reiterates what Paul has emphasized throughout this chapter, but he now adds a new element:

- the fall of the Jews is only partial.
- the hardening is only temporary and that the limitation in time will end when the *fullness of the Gentiles has come in*.

expresses the same truth uttered by Jesus in Luke 21:24,

*and they will fall by the edge of the sword,  
and will be led captive into all the nations;  
and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

*The fullness of the Gentiles* conveys the idea of the full-completed number. This refers to the Gentile world as a whole, just as in verse 12 *their fulfillment* (literally, *their fullness*) refers to Jewish nation as a whole.

*Has come in* (Greek: *eiselthe - εἰσέλθῃ*) came to be a technical term used in Scripture for entering into the Kingdom of God or the Divine glory and life (Matthew 7:13, 21; 18:8; 23:13; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 13:24).

*And thus, all Israel will be saved*, reiterates what Paul stated earlier, referring to the Jews' being roused to jealousy by the Gentile world's coming into the Kingdom.

In what sense is the term *all Israel* to be understood? Various views have been expressed:

- referring to spiritual Israel (Calvin)
- referring to the remnant of Jews who by grace are elected
- referring to all who at the end of the world will return to the Lord.

The flow of the discussion and the context indicates that the actual history of Israel is being referenced. This is quite clear from

- the contrast with *all the fullness of the Gentiles* in verse 25,
- the use of the term, *Israel*, in the same verse,
- and the drift of the argument vv. 17-24.

*All* (Greek: *pas - πᾶς*) must be taken in the proper meaning of the word - Israel as a nation, or Israel as a whole, rather than referring to every individual Israelite. For similar language, see I Kings 12:1; II Chronicles 12:1; Daniel 9:11, in which the Septuagint uses these terms in the same sense that Paul uses them here.

So, Paul is stating: In the fullness of time, the general hardening of the Jewish people will end, and the Jews will begin to be united to the Church, just as the Gentiles have been uniting with the Church throughout the Gospel age.

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<sup>72</sup> The term is used in this manner in I Corinthians 2:6-12 and Ephesians 3:1-9.

This does not mean that every Israelite will be saved. Paul is not thinking here about individuals, nor is he commenting on those who die before the salvation takes place. He simply is considering God's dealings with the nation as a whole. Paul is dealing with classes of men. He looks forward in prophetic vision to a time when the whole earth, Gentiles and Jews, shall be united into the Kingdom of God.

Again, Paul referenced Isaiah, and, as usual loosely quoted two Messianic references:

*"And a Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the LORD. (Isaiah 59:20)*

*Therefore through this Jacob's iniquity will be forgiven; And this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones; When Asherim and incense altars will not stand. (Isaiah 27:9)*

The Isaiah 59 passage comes from the later portion of Isaiah in which Isaiah dwells most fully on the high spiritual destinies of Israel.

Paul's application of this passage is in keeping with the spirit of the original as well as with Rabbinic interpretation, i.e., that this quote from Isaiah is Messianic.

The Rabbinic view of Paul's day was expressed by R. Jochanan (*Tract. Sanhedrin*, f.98.1).

"When thou shalt see the time in which many troubles shall come like a river upon Israel, then expect the Messiah himself as says Isaiah 59:19." The Jews looked forward to a Messianic Kingdom in Palestine. This would be preceded by a general resurrection, as well as a gathering of all living Jews from all nations, so that Israel as a whole might share in this Messianic kingdom. Even though later Judaism denied entirely any hope for Gentiles, in Paul's day many of prophecies were understood as predicting an inflow of Gentiles into the Kingdom (Isaiah 14:1-2; 66:12, 19-21; Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27)

*And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins, is another way of saying, "When I forgive their sins, then my side of the covenant will be fulfilled."*

### **Verses 28-29**

***From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.***

This rather severe language, *they are enemies for your sake*, impresses on Paul's audience that God's chosen people, the Israelites, have been treated as enemies for the sake of the Gentiles, i.e., Paul's Roman audience.

Two parallel expressions when translated literally, help in understanding this verse:

*Standpoint of (literally - According to) the Gospel κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (kata men to euangellion)*

*Standpoint of God's choice (literally- According to the election) κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογήν: (kata de ten ekogen)*

Thus, the Jews were elected (chosen) because they were the descendants of the beloved patriarchs, God's chosen.

The expression *the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable*, speaks of the very nature of God. He does not repent Himself of the choice that he has made. God's feelings of mercy toward the Jews are assured.

**Verses 30-31**

*For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,  
so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.*

This is a somewhat awkward parallelism describing the situation of Gentile and Jew.

The Gentile converts were disobedient at one time. God use the disobedience of the Jews as an occasion to show mercy on the Gentiles. If the Jews had kept the covenant, God would have shown fidelity to the covenant and that would have been the end of it.

However, by the disobedience of the Jews, an occasion was presented for showing mercy to Gentiles. Since God showed mercy to Gentiles, He also can show mercy to Jews.

**Verse 32**

*For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.*

This unusual statement refers to the conclusion that God reached,

- all are disobedient,
- and this gives God an opportunity to show His mercy.

If there had been a perfect covenant keeping people, there would not have been an opportunity to display this characteristic of God.

**Verses 33 - 36**

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*

*For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?*

*Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?*

*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.  
Amen.*

Paul has concluded his argument.

- He has vindicated divine justice and mercy.
- He has shown how even the reign of sin leads to a gracious result.
- Now, carried away by the contrast between apparent injustice and the real justice of God, he bursts forth in a grand hymn of praise.

Whenever we criticize God, Paul declares that it is our faulty knowledge and not His goodness that is at fault.

## **V. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS GROWING OUT OF THE FOREGOING DOCTRINAL EXPOSITIONS 12:1-15:13**

### **A. Exhortations concerning Christian duties 12:1-8**

**Verses 1-2**

*I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

This is one of the most memorized passages in the Bible. Paul displays a beautiful tenderness by beseeching them by the mercy of God.

*Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.* In every ancient religion, the sacrifice had to be clean and without blemish.

As our minds are transformed, so our bodies, which are controlled by our minds, will not be stained with sinful pursuits.

The Christian's body is:

- a member of Christ (I Corinthians 6:15),
- a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19),
- instruments of righteous to God (Romans 6:13),
- and we are to be pure in body and spirit (I Corinthians 7:34).

Hebrews 13:15-16 presents additional material on the sacrifice that is pleasing to God:

*Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

Praise to God and good deeds flowing out of holy life are the sacrifice that Christians offer in worship of God. This is contrast to the animal sacrifices that were commanded under law.

The expression *spiritual service of worship* (NAS NIV), also is rendered,

- *reasonable service* (KJV),
- *intelligent service* (YLT).

The Greek, *ten logiken latreian humon* (τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν) refers to something that displays reason. *λογικὴν* is the accusative singular of *λογικὰς logikas*, which refers to something that is thoughtful or reasonable. Hence it refers to a reasonable sacrifice, something that cannot be given by an irrational sacrificial animal. Understanding is involved.

The two terms *conformed* and *transformed* present an interesting play on words.

*Conformed* is the word, *suxxematizesthe* (συσχηματίζεσθε). It is a compound built upon the word, *skema* (σῆμα), which has as its basic meaning a *form* or a *mold*. The term refers to outward appearance. It can be rendered, *fashion*. Thus, in the passive sense, as here, it means, *to be conformed* or *be fashioned*.

*Transformed* is the word, *metamorphousthe* (μεταμορφοῦσθε), which also is a compound word, built upon *morphe* (μορφή), indicating the inner basic nature – one's essence.<sup>73</sup>

Paul is exhorting the believers to be totally changed.

This is not reformation, but a remaking.

This change can take place only by the renewing of the mind. The believer's mind is no longer to be enslaved by fleshly passions, but to be remade and purified by the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,*

2 Corinthians 4:16 *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

Colossians 3:10 *and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him*

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<sup>73</sup> This is the word used in English to describe the "metamorphosis" of the caterpillar into a butterfly.

This emphasis on the mind harks back to the chapter on Immersion, which urges us to *consider yourselves* dead to sin, referring to our self-perception:

Romans 6:11 *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

*That you may prove* (*dokimazein* - δοκιμάζειν), refers to the seat of moral judgment, which will be true and exact in judging on spiritual and moral questions. The result of this judging is ascertaining what is in harmony with God's will. This is further defined by three adjectives:

- That which is good
- That which is acceptable
- That which is perfect

### **Verses 3-8**

***For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;***

***but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.***

***For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.***

***And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly:***

***if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;***

***if service, in his serving;***

***or he who teaches, in his teaching;***

***or he who exhorts, in his exhortation;***

***he who gives, with liberality;***

***he who leads, with diligence;***

***he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.***

These are what have been labelled, *functional gifts*. With the exception of prophecy, none of them would be considered obviously supernatural. Also, note that in this list, there is no hierarchy – they just differ in their manifestation and function.

It is important that we remember that the source of our abilities is God, for *God has allotted to each a measure of faith*. This echoes what Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

*For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?* (1 Corinthians 4:7)

Carnally minded individuals who seek to distinguish themselves, in a vainglorious manner, usually disturb the peace of the community.

*according to the grace given us...according to the proportion of his faith*, is an important emphasis. One's gifts depend upon the measure of faith allotted to him by God. Each believer must exercise these gifts in proportion to the faith given to him/her.

Note that in this section, *faith* and *gifts*, are almost synonymous. When God bestows a gift, He also imparts the degree of trust and confidence needed to function in that gift.

Since the recipient of the gift is to exercise the gift, *according to the proportion of his faith*, it seems that there is a limit to how much and to what depth that gift is to be exercised. Some will function in a greater manner than others, because of the proportion of faith that accompanies the gift. God determines who has what gifts, and the proportion of faith given to implement the function of the gift. It's all of God, not of the recipient.

Paul indicates that each member has some spiritual gift. The list that he gives certainly is not a complete list, but it is illustrative of the point that he is making.

Because of the character of the Christian community, it is the duty of each person to function in his gift for the good of the whole. The picture is of an organism, with each member supplying a necessary element to the life of the organism.

Of special note is the *one who gives*. The Greek term here, *ho metadidous* (ὁ μεταδιδούς), refers to one who gives from his own resources. If this referred to one who distributed other people's gifts, the word would be *ho diadidous* (ὁ διαδιδούς). One so gifted is a person of with a generous and unselfish nature.

## **B. Exhortations to love and the various manners in which love is exemplified 12:9-21**

*Let love be without hypocrisy.*

*Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love;*

*give preference to one another in honor;*

*not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;*

*rejoicing in hope,*

*persevering in tribulation,*

*devoted to prayer,*

*contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.*

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

*Be of the same mind toward one another;*

*do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly.*

*Do not be wise in your own estimation.*

*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.*

*Respect what is right in the sight of all men.*

*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*

*Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head."*

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

These verses are so straightforward that they need little comment.

Even so, they are of extreme importance to those who seek to live a life that is pleasing to God.

## **C. The duty to obey civil authorities 13:1-7**

### **Verses 1-2**

*Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.*

*Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.*

Peter penned the same injunction as Paul presents in this paragraph. *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 slaves of God.*

(1 Peter 2:13-15)

Paul wrote a similar injunction to Titus, *Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed*, (Titus 3:1)

In this section, Paul moves from the duties of the individual Christian to mankind in general. The specific topic, duty toward civil rulers, is applicable to every citizen, regardless of his faith, or lack, thereof.

The closing portion of Chapter Twelve and this section have a common thread running through them - the promotion of peace in all situations of life. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul commented on the relationship between good government and peace.

*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.* (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

God has ordained that there be order in society and that order is to be implemented, and sustained, by civil government.

The truth presented in this section has been one of the most important elements in the development of the West. A society of law and order, manifested in most western nations, has come about, largely because Christians have been committed to civil obedience. This is in contrast to those areas of the globe where Christianity was not foundational in the formation of society.

Law, in which every individual is considered important and equal before the law, has been the greatest contributor to a peaceful society. The US Constitution is built upon this principle – that all men are created equal, and thus law should be applied equally to every individual.

### EXCURSUS

#### **Sub-Apostolic literature illustrates the attitude toward government, of the first-generation of Christians in the Roman Empire.**

#### CLEMENT

The Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Church at Corinth, was written at in the final decade of the First Century. The Corinthians had just undergone a series of persecutions. In this letter, Clement includes a prayer that is worthy of our attention.

”You made to appear the enduring fabric of the world by the works of Your hand; You, Lord, created the earth on which we dwell — You, who is faithful in all generations, just in judgments, wonderful in strength and majesty, with wisdom creating and with understanding fixing the things which were made, who art good among them that are being saved and faithful among them whose trust is in You; O merciful and Compassionate One.”<sup>74</sup>

To our rulers and governors on the earth — to them You, Lord, gave the power of the kingdom by Your glorious and ineffable might, to the end that we may know the glory and honour given to them by You and be subject to them, in nought resisting Your will; to them, Lord, give health, peace, concord, stability, that they may exercise the authority given to them without offense. For You, O heavenly Lord and King eternal, givest to the sons of men glory and honour and power over the things that are on the earth; do Thou, Lord, direct their counsel according to that which is good and well-pleasing in Your sight...”<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Chapter 60 <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1010.htm>

<sup>75</sup> Chapter 61 <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1010.htm>

## POLYCARP

Polycarp wrote to the Philippians just after he had met Ignatius, on Ignatius' journey to martyrdom (c117 AD). Polycarp urged the Philippians to pray for rulers, even as they should pray for all of their enemies.

“Pray also for kings, 1 Timothy 2:2 and potentates, and princes, and for those that persecute and hate you, Matthew 5:44 and for the enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest to all, and that you may be perfect in Him.”<sup>76</sup>

*Let every person* is a Hebraism (*pasa psuche* - *πᾶσα ψυχή* - literally: *every soul*) that suggests the idea of individuality. These rules apply to everyone, regardless of how privileged they might be. This is a matter of individual duty.

The fact that God ordains civil government as a societal structure does not mean that God ordains a particular kind of government – i.e., a monarchy vs. a democracy.

Paul wrote these injunctions to the Romans, who were ruled by a hedonistic, autocrat, Nero – who instigated horrible persecution of the Church in his final years. A few years after Paul wrote this epistle, Nero, in order to provide light for one of his hedonistic parties, had Christians crucified on crosses surrounding his garden – covering them with tar, and then igniting them.

Some societies have taken these verses to advocate the Divine right of kings. According to this view, God has decreed that the royal family of any nation is the royal family, because God has ordained it to be so. Therefore, the Divinely ordained family produces the kings of that society.

Not only this passage in Romans, but Daniel often is cited as authority for the view of the Divine right of kings:

*Daniel answered and said,*

*"Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,*

*For wisdom and power belong to Him.*

*And it is He who changes the times and the epochs;*

*He removes kings and establishes kings;*

*He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to men of understanding.*

*It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.*

*To Thee, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,*

*For Thou hast given me wisdom and power;*

*Even now Thou hast made known to me what we requested of Thee, For Thou hast made known to us the king's matter." (Daniel 2:20-23)*

In determining the relevance of Daniel's words to the question of the Divine right of kings, context once again comes into play.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which disturbed him. He ordered the sorcerers and magicians of his kingdom to interpret the dream, declaring that if they failed to do so, he would tear them from limb to limb and destroy their homes. When they could not give the interpretation, he ordered them killed, but through circumstances, Daniel learned of their plight and intervened by asking the king if he could seek God for the interpretation.

<sup>76</sup> Chapter 12 <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0136.htm>

The king granted Daniel's request and Daniel and his Hebrew companions prayed for God to give Daniel the interpretation. God granted the request and Daniel was given the interpretation. Daniel 2:20-23 is Daniel exuberant response to God's response.

The six basic questions of exegesis, concerning biblical quotes are,

1. Who said it?
2. To whom was it said?
3. What was said?
4. Why was it said?
5. When was it said?
6. Where was it said?

Applying these questions, numbers 1 and 4 are important in evaluating Daniel's words. Daniel is the speaker, and he said these words because he was excited about what God had done. These are not a proclamation by God, nor are they presented as a general truth. They are the exuberant words of an excited man who is giving praise to God. Whether or not they are universally true is open to question – not something on which we can base a doctrine.

Because of the seemingly very clear statement, *For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God*, many have wrestled with the question as to whether or not God has placed in authority a king, a potentate, a democracy, or some other rule over a society.

Rather than argue for or against the Divine right of kings, or any other form of rule, it is more important for us to grasp the truth that Paul is presenting and the goal of that truth.

The motivation behind is the principle is the importance of civil peace, to which an ordered society is most conducive. Governments can be atheistic and displeasing to God. However, in all instances, the Christian is to be a law-abiding citizen.

Jesus submitted to Pilate as a pattern for His followers. He did this while acknowledging the source of Pilate's authority: *Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin."* (John 19:11)

Of course, when one has to choose between loyalty to the civil government and loyalty to God, there is but one choice, to obey God. However, it must be done in the right spirit.

The apostles modeled for us how such a situation should be handled.

*And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard. "*

*And when they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which they might punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed. (Acts 4:18-22)*

The apostles went back to the Temple and continued to preach the Gospel. As a result, the court once again, had them arrested.

*Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, lest they should be stoned)*

*And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and*

*behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."*

*But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

*But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and were intending to slay them. But a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time...*

*And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them.*

*So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (Acts 5:26-34, 40-42)*

The arresting officers were afraid of the crowd, because the crowd was on the side of the apostles. The apostles could have started a riot or a protest movement, but they did not do so. The apostles did not promote civil disobedience.

Neither were the apostles disrespectful. In a sense, they said, "We respect you, but we must respectfully disobey. We will quietly accept the consequences of our behavior." The consequences included a lashing.

### **Verses 3-5**

***For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil.***

***Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good.***

***But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.***

***Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.***

It should be noted that the condemnation of personal vengeance in Romans 12, does not apply to the action of the state in enforcing law. The state is God's minister, and it is the wrath of God which is acting through it.

The statement, *for it does not bear the sword for nothing*, implies capital punishment. Capital punishment is enforced in every dispensation.

The first decree given to Noah and his family, after the flood, was a decree of capital punishment.

*Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God, He made man. (Genesis 9:6)*

Capital punishment is one of the several penalties imposed in the Law. Not only is the death penalty commanded for murder, but for adultery (Deuteronomy 22:22), sexual intercourse with an animal (Exodus 22:19), rebellion of one's parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), etc. There are twenty-five crimes in the Law for which capital punishment is commanded.

Of some interest is the fact that in the Mosaic Law, imprisonment was not used as punishment for a crime.

The Christian obeys law for conscience sake, not just because he is afraid of punishment.

**Verses 6-7**

***For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.***

A Christian pays his taxes. The term rendered, *tax*, is φόρος (*foros*), which usually refers to, *tribute*, which is how the term is rendered in the KJV.

*Tribute* refers to tax or fee that a subject people pays to a foreign ruling power. Usually, it was in the form of a poll tax, which made the implementation of a census very important (such as that which caused Joseph and Mary to go from their home in Nazareth, to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born).

The Jews were forced to pay a tribute to the Roman Emperor and they greatly resented it. Not only that - they argued that it violated their religion to support a foreign potentate. That was the background for the scheme the Pharisee used in their attempt to trap Jesus in His words. Note that the Pharisees took some Herodians with them. The Herodians were in league with their Roman overlords.

*And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.*

*"Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"*

*But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?*

*Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax."*

*And they brought Him a denarius.*

*And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"*

*They said to Him, "Caesar's."*

*Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:16-21)*

As noted earlier, the *tribute*, was a poll tax, imposed on every Jew as tribute to Caesar.

*Custom* usually is a tax that is based on the value of the thing being taxed – for example the worth of the products being transported in a caravan.

*Honor* means that the Christian respects the office. This must be true even if the person in the office does not deserve respect.

**D. Morality and the law fulfilled through love 13:8-10**

***Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.***

***For this, "you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,"***

***and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."***

***Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.***

Paul is not prohibiting the obtaining of a loan to purchase a farm or a house, which is to be repaid in scheduled payments. Paul is saying, "make the payments, don't defraud the lender."

Even though Paul cited the Mosaic Law, the truth is broader than this. The debt of love never is completely paid. This is what James described as, *The Royal Law of Love*.

*If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. (James 2:8)*

The Royal Law is not fulfilled by just keeping the negative rules. Learning to do good also is necessary for the Royal Law.

In the statement, *love therefore is the fulfillment of the law*, Paul used the term *pleroma* (πλήρωμα), which carries the idea of complete fulfillment. Love embraces both the positive and negative aspects of the law.

#### **E. Exhortation to holiness in view of the nearness of eternity 13:11-14**

##### **Verses 11-14**

*And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.*

*The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand.*

*Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

*Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.*

*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

*Night* is used figuratively for our time on earth, our time of probation. *Day* is used figuratively for eternity.

This could refer either to the time of one's death or to the return of Christ. The idea is that the end is closer than it was when the believer first came to Christ... some time has passed.

Since the day is close, whenever it might be, behavior should reflect the character of that day. Figuratively, the believer should be attired for the day.

The exhortation is to put on Christ, as an actor puts on the garments and character of the personality which he portrays.

Paul gave similar exhortations in Galatians and I Corinthians.

Gal. 3:27 *For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

I Cor. 11:1 *Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*

#### **F. Christian freedom and tolerance in matters of opinion 14:1-12**

The issue in chapter fourteen is one's conscience. The contrast is between the strong brother, who has a properly instructed conscience, and the weak brother, who has an incorrectly informed conscience. The point of the chapter is that we should not tempt each other to violate our consciences. This chapter does not deal with tempting someone in an activity that truly is sin.

##### **Verse 1**

*Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.*

In this chapter, *weak in faith*. refers to one whose conscience has labeled certain things right and wrong, which in reality, are neither right nor wrong. These are those who continue to labor under a legalistic mentality, even though those narrow standards of the Mosaic Law were abolished at the cross.

The Church should accept those who still are not free from the need to make their salvation certain by keeping of formal rules. They should be fully accepted as brothers.

##### **Verses 2-3**

*One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.*

*Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.*

Some believers, especially those of Jewish background, thought that certain foods were sinful. For example, on the basis of the Mosaic Covenant, some converts from Judaism continued to have conscience that would be troubled if they ate pork. These should not be judged because of their incorrectly instructed conscience.

Neither should those whose consciences allowed them to eat pork be judged for their behavior. It is not our place to judge one another in these matters. It is God's business.

Those who are weak in faith may impose restrictions on themselves for conscience sake should be accepted as brothers and sisters. However, it is important for them to not become divisive, by attempting to impose their standards on others.

This is an important point in today's church. Because of the various backgrounds of contemporary Christians, many have a conscience concerning dress, diet, music, dance, recreational activities, what sort of music is appropriate for the Sunday meeting, whether or not it is pagan to observe Christmas, etc.

Given the spiritual and moral condition of our present-day culture, some of these concerns are very important. – especially in the area of modesty.<sup>77</sup>

On the other hand, some are just tradition. Christians must not judge one another in these areas of individual conscience. Such matters are between the believer and God.

#### **Verses 4-12**

***Who are you to judge the servant of another?***

***To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.***

***He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.***

***For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.***

***For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.***

***But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.***

***For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God."***

***So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.***

These verses elaborate on this principle. They are so plain that little comment is needed.

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<sup>77</sup> The subject of modesty is not always easy to define. Some years ago, John Miller, who was the secretary of Mennonite missions, and I were discussing some of the cultures that Mennonite missionaries encountered. He told me of one missionary couple, working in a country where both men and women wore only garments from the waist down. The men were bare-chested and the women bare-breasted. The missionary's wife always wore a white blouse. The women of the church asked the elders if they could wear a white blouse, like the American woman. The elders said, "Yes, you may wear a white blouse, except at the communion table. It would be immodest and distracting for you to wear a white blouse during communion." So, to some degree, what is modest and what is immodest has a cultural component - JWG

Paul wrote a similar exhortation to the Colossians.

*Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day--(Colossians 2:16)*

Let it be noted that a congregation does not have to adhere to every judgmental crank that comes along. Cranks usually are not weak and are not going to be tempted to violate their standards.

### **G. The law of brotherly love takes precedence over personal feeling 14:13-23**

#### **Verse 13-15**

*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*

*I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

*For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love.*

*Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.*

We never should do anything to tempt someone to violate his/her conscience. If one believes that something is evil and he does it, he has chosen evil - even if what he chose is not defined in Scripture as evil. In his heart he was choosing evil. Should we entice someone to eat pork whose conscience is troubled by eating pork, we have enticed that brother to choose to commit what to him is evil. Thus, having chosen to do what he thinks is evil, he has chosen to sin. Such behavior on our part would be destroying a brother for whom Christ died.

*For whom Christ died* emphasizes the importance of each believer. It also emphasizes Christ's example. Christ was willing to die for the brother. Can we not sacrifice a moment of pleasure in order to avoid destroying the brother?

It is important to realize that this is a discussion of behavior in matters where there is no true evil in the act.

- This is not talking about drinking a glass of wine in the presence of a brother who is an alcoholic, thus tempting him to fall off the wagon and return to a life of drunkenness (although it certainly would not be an act of love to drink wine in the presence of someone who is struggling with alcoholism).
- This is talking about enticing someone to drink a glass of wine whose conscience would bother him if he imbibed.

#### **Verses 16-17**

*Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Here we encounter the Kingdom principles in the heart of a Christian. Paul lists three characteristics of a citizen of the Kingdom of God:

- *Righteousness* - Moral righteousness, not judicial righteousness;
- *Peace* - Not only reconciliation with God, but a corresponding disposition, involving love and accord with brothers who disagree in matters of opinion;
- *Joy* - This is the logical result of righteousness and peace. This does not refer to having the giggles, but the inner joy, which may be a very quiet joy.

#### **Verse 18**

*For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.*

A Christian with this disposition is one who will be approved by his neighbors as well as his brothers in Christ. This is one of the requirements for eldership: *And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church...* (1 Timothy 3:7)

### **Verses 19-23**

***So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food.***

***All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.***

***It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.***

***The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God.***

***Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.***

***But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.***

This is an elaboration and a continuation of that which already has been presented.

Again, note that *faith* in this passage refers to belief about certain behavior. If one believes that something is good, for that person it is good. If one believes that something is evil, for that person it is evil (of course, this does not refer to those behaviors that Scripture clearly labels, *sin*)

The following criteria should guide us in making decisions about appropriate behavior:

- Mandatory Law
  1. Prohibition – thou shalt not
  2. Precept – a generally accepted rule of behavior
- Permissive Law
  1. Expedient – will it contribute to reaching the goal
  2. Inexpedient- it will hinder reaching the goal
- The Law of Love – how will this impact my neighbor/brother/sister
- Apostolic Precedent – what did the apostles model in this situation.

In whatever we do, we must not add to the Word of God. Even so, because of other people's conscience, we may go along with something for expedience sake.

Paul gave us an apostolic example and precedent in this matter, by how he handled the decision involving circumcision of two of his team members. This illustrates expediency.

*Paul wanted this man (Timothy) to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.* (Acts 16:3)

The apostolic team was going to be working in an area where there were many Jews. In order to remove the stumbling block of having an uncircumcised person on their team, Paul circumcised Timothy.

Paul had a different response concerning Titus.

*Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.*

*And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.*

*But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.*

*But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.* (Galatians 2:1-5)

When Paul took uncircumcised Titus with him to Jerusalem, James and the other mature leaders did not compel Titus to be circumcised. However, there were Judaizing teachers in the Jerusalem Church who insisted that Paul circumcise Titus. Paul refused. Why the difference between Paul's circumcision of Timothy and his refusal to circumcise Titus?

- In Timothy's case, Paul chose to remove a barrier to evangelism. It was a choice freely made for expediency.
- In Titus' case, there were those who were trying to add something to the Gospel and Paul refused to give them one inch of ground.

Thus, there are times when we will refuse to give in to a weaker brother's improperly instructed conscience. That especially would be true when the weaker brother is trying to impose a rule on us in order to make us Christians.

An illustration of how some Christians have forced certain behaviors upon others in order to make them Christian is the way some missionaries have insisted that converts become westernized. In Hawaii, the missionary wives developed the Mumu<sup>78</sup> as dress for female converts to Christianity. They thought that the native attire was not appropriate for believers. The Mumu has become so much a part of Hawaii that its origin is largely forgotten. In country after country, converts began wearing suits and other western attire, because the missionaries westernized them and western customs equaled, "saved."

Such actions violate the principles laid down by Paul in this section.

#### **H. Christ's example of demonstrating love through self-denial for the good of others 15:1-13**

##### **Verse 1**

*Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.*

At first glance, it might appear that Paul contradicted himself in similar comments he made to the Galatians.

*Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)*

*For each one shall bear his own load. (Galatians 6:5)*

These statements are not contradictory. That is seen when the entire passage is considered.

*Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.*

*Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.*

*For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

*But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.*

*For each one shall bear his own load. (Galatians 6:1-5)*

Each one of us has vulnerabilities. Therefore, we should do all that we can to help one another, especially when we can help someone overcome a weakness. Such is possible when Christians live in an *agape* love for one another. In such a relationship of trust, Christians can risk obeying James injunction, *confess your faults, one to another* (James 5:16).

However, there is a sense in which each one must bear his own burden. Each person will stand before the judgment seat of God and be judged concerning his/her response to opportunities, responsibilities, and sins committed willfully of which there has been no repentance.

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<sup>78</sup> A loose flowy dress, that is a cross between a shirt and a robe – sometimes spelled Muumuu.

### Verses 2-3

*Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.  
For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written,  
" The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell upon Me."*

Christ set the supreme example of living to bless others, and dying in behalf of others.

These verses remind us of Hebrews 10:24-26, which state that the reason for attending worship services is not just for our personal benefit, but to stimulate one another to faithful living so that willful sin can be avoided.

*...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.*

### Verse 4

*For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

The Old Testament was the only Bible available to the early Church. The lessons taught therein are for our instruction (Romans 4:23ff; 2 Timothy 3:16; I Corinthians 10:6, 11).

The Greek word translated *encouragement* is the word *paraklesis* (παράκλησις), which means, *to call alongside*. Picture a man fighting through a severe snowstorm, trying to reach shelter as night is falling. He is weak and weary, just ready to stumble from exhaustion. Suddenly, a strong man comes along and puts his arm around his shoulder and together, they trudge to safety. The helper didn't take away the storm or darkness, but his encouragement gave the traveler the extra strength needed to go on.

The noun form of this Greek word (παράκλητος -*paracletos*) is used to describe the Holy Spirit and, in one instance, Our Glorified Lord. Usually, the term is rendered, *helper*.

John 14:16 *And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another **Helper**, that He may be with you forever;*

John 14:26 *But the **Helper**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*

John 15:26 *When the **Helper** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,*

John 16:7 *But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the **Helper** shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*

Once in our English Bibles, the term, in reference to Jesus, is rendered, *Advocate*.

1 John 2:1 *My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;*

Thus, in this Romans passage and the writings of John, we see three *paracletes*:

- *Scripture* which speaks to us objectively (Romans 15:4)
- *The Holy Spirit* who speaks to us subjectively – the Gospel of John (4 times)
- *Our Lord Jesus Christ* who intercedes for our forgiveness before the Father, when we sin. John's First Epistle (I John 2:1)

**Verse 5-7**

*Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.*

In any congregation, various members will have differing opinions on a variety of topics. However, we are to have the same affection for one another. Unity is of prime important in the Kingdom.

When praise to God comes out of a united congregation, it brings joy to God's heart and joy to the congregation giving the praise. A divided congregation can praise, but it is an individual matter of praise. A united congregation praises God as a unit.

The Church is a society of the redeemed. It should be a foretaste of heaven. Unfortunately, in some congregations, it is a foretaste of hell. When we have a problem with our attitude toward someone, we should stop and ask how Christ could have accepted us, with all of our obvious faults.

**Verses 8-12**

*For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles, and I will sing to Thy Name."*

*And again He says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people."*

*And again, "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him."*

*And again Isaiah says, "There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope."*

Paul quotes the Septuagint at Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1; Isaiah 11: 1, 10.

These verses cite two reasons for Christ's coming to the earth:

- To confirm the promises given to the fathers (to the Jews)
- To glorify God for His mercy (to the Gentiles)

**Verse 13**

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

What a beautiful description of God - *the God of hope*.

Recall that the Greek term rendered as *hope*, is ἐλπίς (*elpis*), which certifies an expectancy, in which there is no doubt in its fulfillment.

In this prayer for the Roman Church, Paul described two sources for the prayed-for hope:

- The joy and peace that is experienced as a result of belief;
- The power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul indicates that belief in the promises that are a part of the Gospel, produces inner joy and peace. Paul then indicates that this inner joy and peace produces hope, which is enhanced by the Holy Spirit. The specific hope is not specified in this passage, but the term usually refers to the resurrection and the glory in heaven awaiting the arrival of believers. Acts 2:21-27; 23:6; 24:15; II Corinthians 1:10; Colossians. 1:5; Titus 1:2; 2:13; 13:7; etc.)

## VI. CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE, INCLUDING PERSONAL COMMENTS AND GREETINGS 15:14-16:27

### A. Personal comments, including reference to Paul's labors and plans 15:14-33

#### Verse 14-16

*And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.*

*But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Paul had not written to them because of their ignorance. On the contrary, he knew the state of their knowledge and it was high. Neither had he admonished them because they were not capable of admonishing one another. He was influenced by other reasons, which he immediately presents, stating that he has boldly written on some points.

Paul had written to them boldly because of his apostleship. He was fulfilling his duty.

The Greek expression, *apo merous* (ἀπὸ μέρους) carries the idea of *in part*. So, Paul is saying that he was bold here and there, or in certain parts of the letter. He did not, in these sections, impart anything new to them. He was reminding them of what they already knew.

The term rendered, *priest*, in the expression, *ministering as a priest*, is the Greek term, *hierourgeo* (ἱερουργέω).

- The term is borrowed from the Temple service and denotes to officiate as a priest or to perform priestly duties. It is an interesting turn of phrase for Paul to use the term here.
- Paul pictures himself as being a priest offering up to God the Gentile converts as a pure offering.

*My offering of the Gentiles*, also is Temple language. *He prosphora* (ἡ προσφορά), i.e., *the offering*, continues the same sacrificial image as was used in 12:1-2. The sacrifices offered in the New Covenant are not dumb animals, but human beings - in this instance, the great body of Gentile Churches.

The old sacrifices are no longer pleasing to the Lord, but Paul's offerings are acceptable, made so by the Holy Spirit which indwells the offering.

1 Peter 2:5 *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 6:11 *And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.*

NOTE: The concept of a select group of clerics, who function as priests who have a special role in ministering to the other believers and through whom they approach God, is not found anywhere in the New Testament. The concept of such a priesthood that grew into Roman Catholicism & Greek Orthodoxy is post-biblical.

In one sense, all Christians are labelled, *priests*. (1 Peter 2:5; 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6)

### Verses 17-21

*Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit;*

*so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

*And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation;*

*but as it is written, "They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand. "*

Paul had a feeling of self-confidence in his position, which arose from the fact that he was a servant of Christ and of the Gospel. He defended his authority on two grounds:

- His apostolic mission, as proved by his successful mission (vs. 18-20)
- The sphere of his labors, the Gentile world, especially that portion of it in which the Gospel had not been officially preached.

The emphasis is on *in Christ* and *things pertaining to God*.

Paul stated that even though he only cared to mention the works done through him, the true value of his work was seen in the fact that it was not his own, but Christ's working through him.

*In the power of signs and wonders* is language used often in the New Testament to express miracles.

*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.* (II Corinthians 12:12)

*God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.* (Hebrews 2:4)

*And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.* (1 Corinthians 12:28)

In the combination, *signs and wonders*, (*semeia kai terata*- σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα), both words have the same idea, but express different connotations.

- τέρας - *Teras* (wonders), implies anything marvelous or extraordinary in itself.
- σημεῖον *Semeion* (signs) represents the same event, but not just a purposeless event; it is a sign or token of the agency by which it is accomplished.

The addition of the third word, *power* (*dunameis* - δυνάμεις), implies that these *works* are the exhibition of more than natural power – they are a demonstration of supernatural power.

The fact that Paul's work was accompanied by and certified by the power of signs and wonders, verifies that the Holy Spirit was active in Paul's ministry. To a degree, they were his credentials. As he had written to the Corinthians, they were *the signs of a true apostle*.

*From Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum* has caused considerable discussion. Many of the commentators of the late 1800's took the term, *round about*, to be tied to Jerusalem, thus they would render the phrase, *from Jerusalem and round about*. This is not the best rendering of the Greek, καὶ κύκλῳ μέρι τοῦ Ἰλλυκρικου (*kai kuklw meri tou illukrikou*), literally is rendered, *and in a circle as far as Illyricum*.

There is a legitimate question about this phrase is what is meant by *as far as Illyricum*. Does this include exclude Illyricum or does it mean that Paul got as far as Illyricum, but did not enter that domain? The Greek terms are ambiguous.

The reason that this is of interest is because there is some question as to the extent of Paul's labors. Did they include Illyricum? Acts 20:2 and Titus 3:12, in combination, suggest that Paul may have preached in Illyria, but leave it uncertain. It has been suggested that Jerusalem and Illyria represent the limits of Paul's ministry. No firm conclusion can be reached by honest exegetes.

Paul stove eagerly (the meaning of the Greek term) to preach where no one had preached before. He was averse to preaching where someone else had already laid a foundation. Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15 to explain his passion.

*Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand.*

#### **Verses 22-24**

***For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you; but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain— for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while--***

It is important to note that the reason why Paul had been prevented from coming to Rome was not the fear that he would be building upon another man's foundation. Such a fear would indicate that another apostle would have preceded him. He had been prevented from visiting Rome because he had been occupied in preaching in the districts through which he had been traveling. Now there was no region in these districts untouched by his preaching and so he hoped to be free to visit Rome.

We do not know if Paul ever got to Spain. His hope was that he could visit Rome for the first time and that the Roman Church would help him to travel on to Spain.

#### **Verses 25-28**

***but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.***

For the time being, Paul had to head in the opposite direction in order to take the offering to Jerusalem. The references to this offering in so many passages of Scripture is one evidence for the credibility of Paul's having written the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>79</sup>

The Gentiles received the Gospel from the Jews and Paul felt that the Gentiles owed the Jews a debt. Therefore, during the difficult financial times in Jerusalem, it was appropriate for the Gentiles to send an offering. This was one application of the principle which Paul presented to the Galatians, *And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.* (Galatians 6:6)

<sup>79</sup> I Corinthians 16:1-3; II Corinthians 8-9; Acts 24:17

**Verses 29-33**

*And I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

Paul passionately asks the Roman Christians to pray for him, concerning four things:

- For personal safety
- For the effectiveness of his ministry. He feared that the Jewish Christians might refuse to accept the offering from the Gentile Churches.
- A prayer that he might reach Rome
- A prayer that he might be refreshed

**B. Introduction of Phoebe 16:1-2**

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.*

Although it cannot be determined for certain, Phoebe, usually is considered to be the person who carried Paul's letter to Rome.<sup>80</sup>

We know nothing about Phoebe, except for what is stated here. The name, *Phoebe*, means "bright," "pure," or "radiant. She was as a member of the Cenchrean Church. Cenchrea was the port city for Corinth. The only mention of Paul's being in Cenchrea was when he left Corinth and, from Cenchrea, he set sail for Syria. Prior to departing, he had his hair shorn in Cenchrea as a part of a vow that he had made (Acts 18:18)

The Greek term translated, *servant*, is δῆκονος (*diakonos*), from which we derive the term, *deacon*. The term commonly means,

- servant (Matthew 20:26; 22:13; Mark 9:35),
- waiter (John 2:5,9),
- helper/minister (II Corinthians 6:4; 11:23; Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 1:23, 25; I Timothy 4:6).

It also is used for an official role in the church for which one is ordained (Acts 6:7; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8, 12).

Whether or not there were deaconesses in the First Century Church is open to debate. The first mention of any such designation is in a document, *The Apostolic Constitutions*, which was compiled 375-380 AD.

Although we cannot know whether or not Phoebe held an official position in the Cenchrean Church, Paul knew her as one who served the saints in that city. It would not be unreasonable to assume that Phoebe had been a helper of Paul while he was at Corinth, and later in Cenchrea.

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<sup>80</sup> The English language phonetic pronunciation of her name, φοίβη, is *Foibay*.

### C. Salutations addressed to believers in Rome 16:3-16

- *Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house.*
- *Greet Epauetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.*
- *Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.*
- *Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*
- *Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.*
- *Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.*
- *Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ.*
- *Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.*
- *Greet Herodion, my kinsman.*
- *Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.*
- *Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord.*
- *Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.*
- *Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.*
- *Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them.*
- *Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.*
- *Greet one another with a holy kiss.*
- *All the churches of Christ greet you.*

These fourteen verses (3-16) are punctuated with the constant refrain, *greet...greet...greet*. Paul urges the Roman Church to extend his greetings to twenty-six individuals and to five groups. Paul obviously knew a significant number of members of the Church at Rome. Furthermore, the picture clearly is one of a church that had a sense of community. These people knew each other and were involved with one another.

Three house-churches are mentioned:

Vs 3-5 the house-church that met in the home of Prisca and Aquila

V 14 the house-church that included Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren that are with them

V 15 the house-church that included Philologus, Julia, Nereus, his sister, Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

At the heart of the Christian faith is its meeting, the assembly of the faith community. The early Christians, like the Jews, met in open places (Pliny, *Letters*, 17; Acts 16:13,16) and in hired halls (Acts 19:9). However, it seems that the most common meeting place was in the homes of believers (Acts 2:46; 12:12; etc.)

The earliest example of a church building to be discovered by archaeologists is a house in the city of Dura-Europos (located in modern Syria). The original house was remodeled to accommodate a house-church between 232 and 256, the year that Dura-Europos fell to the Sassanians.<sup>81</sup> Churches located in homes are specifically mentioned six times in Scripture. In addition to the instances before us, reference also is made to house-churches in I Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; and Philemon 2. In such house-churches, intimacy, identity, and bonding would be the expected norm.

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<sup>81</sup>For an excellent and detailed article on the Dura-Europos house church, see: Graydon and Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, (Mercer University Press, Macon, GA) 1985, pg. 67-71.

Two other groups of interest to our study are mentioned in Romans 16:10-11. These verses probably do not refer to house-churches.

- Notice that neither Aristobulus nor Narcissus are greeted.
- The Greek says, "Greet those of the Aristobulus," and "Greet those of the Narcissus."

The KJV translators added the word, "household," in an effort to make the sentences more understandable to English readers. Most modern translations followed suit. However, the Greek text does not contain the word for *household*.<sup>82</sup>

The custom in Rome was for the slaves of a deceased prominent figure to be referred to thereafter, as "the (name of deceased master)," regardless of who owned them in the future.

For example, the famous Roman historian Livy (BC 59 - AD 17), had among his slaves

- the Maecenatiani (slaves from the household of the deceased Maecenas),
- Amyntiani (slaves from the household of the deceased Amyntas),
- Agrippiani (slaves from the household of the deceased Agrippina),
- and Germaniciniani (slaves from the household of the deceased Germanicus).

The consensus of classical New Testament scholars, especially from Lightfoot onward, is that the language of verses 10 & 11 *ton aristoboulou* (τῶν Ἀριστοβούλου), i.e., *the of Aristobulus*, probably refers to the slaves of Aristobulus, the deceased grandson of Herod the Great.<sup>83 84</sup>

Aristobulus was a friend and political supporter of Emperor Claudius. Because of his nationality, Aristobulus' household slaves presumably would have included Jews and other Palestinians. Upon his death, the normal thing would have been for his slaves to have been added to the slaves of the Imperial household. In that setting, these would have been called, *those of Aristobulus*.

The same would be true of the *ton narkissou* (τῶν ναρκίσσου), *the of Narcissus*. This Narcissus probably was the wealthy and influential freedman who was the secretary to Emperor Claudius. It was at his orders that Claudius' wife, Messalina, was put to death. Two years after Nero succeeded Claudius, Agrippina, Nero's mother, fearing the threat of Narcissus political power, ordered the execution of Narcissus. Nero would have confiscated Narcissus' slaves and added them to his household.

Interestingly, in between these two groups is mentioned Paul's kinsman, *Herodion*. Both by his name and the fact that he is Paul's kinsman, we know that Herodion was a Jew. Since he is mentioned in conjunction with *the of Aristobulus*, he probably was one of the Jewish/Christian slaves of Aristobulus that were transferred to the ownership of the Caesar.

The important thing to observe in all of this is that even though brothers and sisters were slaves in the palace of Caesar, they were known and were considered to be a part of the local church.

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<sup>82</sup> οἰκεῖος, οἰκέτης, οἰκία οἰκιακός, are the Greek terms that express various concepts of a household, all derivatives of οἶκος, meaning, *house*.

<sup>83</sup>For a brief discussion, see, Sanday, William and Headlam, Arthur, *The International Critical Commentary*, THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, Charles Scribner and Sons, New York, 1896, pgs 425-426.

<sup>84</sup>Lard is a notable exception (Lard, Moses E., *Commentary on Romans*, Standard Publishing, Cincinnati, 1875, pg. 457)

#### D. Warning against those who cause divisions 16:17-20

*Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.*

*For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*

*For the report of your obedience has reached to all;*

*therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil.*

*And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

There are honorable divisions. Families will be divided over Christ. Anticipating what some of his disciples would face, Jesus declared,

*Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;*

*and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.*

*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (Matthew 10:34-37)*

Yet, tragically, in the Church there often is ungodly division.

*Keep your eye on* is a translation of *skopein* (σκοπεῖν), which means, *to mark*.

*Hindrances* is the translation of *skandala* (σκάνδαλα), which has the basic meaning of *trap* or *snare*. These are the hindrances to Christian progress caused by the divisions.

To Titus, Paul wrote *Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.* (Titus 3:10-11)

In his address to the Ephesian elders, Paul exhorted and warned,

*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

*Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.* (Acts 20:28-31)

Paul, calling the local church a *temple of God*, warned the Corinthians about the seriousness of the divisions that were threatening the life of their congregation.

*Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are* (I Corinthians 3:16-17).

The eternal consequences of causing division in a church, are very serious. Of course, should the majority of the church begin espousing ungodly doctrines and tolerating sinful conduct, then a true believer must take some sort of action.

- The description of the Romans as *innocent in what is evil*, reminds us of the Garden of Eden.
- The divisive members are like Satan in the Garden.

With that figure in mind, *And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you*, becomes more meaningful.

### **E. Salutations from Paul's companions 16:21-23**

*Timothy my fellow worker greets you,  
and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.  
I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.  
Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you.  
Erastus, the city treasurer greets you,  
and Quartus, the brother.*

- Timothy, of course is Paul's constant companion.
- Lucius probably is the Lucius of Cyrene mentioned in Acts 13:1
- Jason probably is the one mentioned in Acts 17:5-9.
- Sosipater may be the one mentioned in Acts 20:4, who was a native of Berea.

These all were Jews.

Tertius, who was Paul's amanuensis for this letter, sent his personal greetings. It was Paul's custom to employ one of his disciples as the scribe who wrote the letters, as Paul dictated. (I Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; II Thessalonians 3:17; cf. Gal. 6:11).

Gaius was Paul's host in Corinth, from which the letter was sent.

In the introduction we mentioned that a paving stone was found in Corinth in which an Erastus is mentioned as supervisor of public works (cf. II Timothy 4:20).

We have no information concerning the identity of Quartus, other than his mention here. He must have been a member of the Church at Corinth, from which Paul wrote the epistle.

### **F. Concluding doxology 16:24-27**

*{The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.}  
Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.*

All of the great thoughts of the epistle are summed up in this doxology. Professor George Mark Elliott stated, "This is the most condensed, yet the most comprehensive doxology ever penned."<sup>85</sup>

NOTE: Many manuscripts do not contain the first line, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* The Editorial Committee of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren) have indicated the level of probability/improbability Paul's having penned this line as a "B", indicating "some degree of doubt."<sup>86</sup>

Because of the general uncertainty of the integrity of this line, most modern versions of the New Testament indicate that uncertainty:

- The NAS by enclosing the verse in ( ) and a side note indicating the uncertainty.
- The NIV by omitting the verse and commenting on it in a footnote.

The tremendous theology in the epistle's opening salutation, and the theology in the doxology are fitting bookends for Paul's Epistle to the Romans - the most theologically comprehensive document penned by Paul.

<sup>85</sup> George Mark Elliott, Seminary Lecture on Romans, Cincinnati Bible Seminary, 1954

<sup>86</sup> *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (United Bible Societies) 1971, page 540

The term, *mystery*, in the line, *revelation of the mystery*, is the Greek term, μυστήριον (*mustayrion*). As noted earlier in commenting on Romans 11:25,

- in English, the term, *mystery*, refers to a puzzle we are challenged to figure out, or something that we are unable to fully grasp.
- The Greek term, on the other hand, means something that is known for certain, but it could only be known because God has revealed it.

Eighteen times in his epistles, Paul used this term to describe important matters of faith.<sup>87</sup>

Note that this μυστήριον *mystery* was contained in the *Scriptures* (literally – *writings*) of the *prophets*. The prophets penned these matters, but they were not able to grasp the meaning of what they were writing. In a similar statement, Peter wrote,

*As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.*

*It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven— things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12)*

Somewhat amazingly, because these things have been revealed to us who are living in the Gospel age, we understand what they angels were trying to figure out.

This epistle is a comprehensive statement of these μυστήριον mysteries.

### CONCLUSION

Thus, we come to the conclusion of the most theologically comprehensive document of the New Testament. Let us give thanks to God for speaking to us in this Epistle, and revealing to us truths that we never could have known without His gracious act of a μυστήριον revelation.

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<sup>87</sup> Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Co. 2:7; 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3f, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:26f; 2:2; 4:3; II Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16

**ADDENDUM A**  
**PREFACE TO**  
**THE LETTER OF ST. PAUL**  
**TO THE ROMANS**

by  
 Martin Luther<sup>88</sup>  
 1483-1546

**TRANSLATOR'S NOTE**

The material between square brackets is explanatory in nature and is not part of Luther's preface. The terms "just, justice, justify" in this piece are synonymous with the terms "righteous, righteousness, make righteous." Both sets of English words are common translations of German "gerecht" and related words. A similar situation exists with the word "faith"; it is synonymous with "belief." Both words can be used to translate German "Glaube." Thus, "We are justified by faith" translates the same original German sentence as does, "We are made righteous by belief."

This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes. Therefore I want to carry out my service and, with this preface, provide an introduction to the letter, insofar as God gives me the ability, so that everyone can gain the fullest possible understanding of it. Up to now it has been darkened by glosses [explanatory notes and comments which accompany a text] and by many a useless comment, but it is in itself a bright light, almost bright enough to illumine the entire Scripture.

To begin with, we have to become familiar with the vocabulary of the letter and know what St. Paul means by the words law, sin, grace, faith, justice, flesh, spirit, etc. Otherwise there is no use in reading it. You must not understand the word law here in human fashion, i.e., a regulation about what sort of works must be done or must not be done. That's the way it is with human laws: you satisfy the demands of the law with works, whether your heart is in it or not. God judges what is in the depths of the heart. Therefore his law also makes demands on the depths of the heart and doesn't let the heart rest content in works; rather it punishes as hypocrisy and lies all works done apart from the depths of the heart. All human beings are called liars (Psalm 116), since none of them keeps or can keep God's law from the depths of the heart. Everyone finds inside himself an aversion to good and a craving for evil. Where there is no free desire for good, there the heart has not set itself on God's law. There also sin is surely to be found and the deserved wrath of God, whether a lot of good works and an honorable life appear outwardly or not.

Therefore in chapter 2, St. Paul adds that the Jews are all sinners and says that only the doers of the law are justified in the sight of God. What he is saying is that no one is a doer of the law by

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<sup>88</sup> Translated by Bro. Andrew Thornton, OSB, "Vorrede auff die Epistel S. Paul: an die Romer" in "D. Martin Luther: Die gantze Heilige Schrifft Deudsch 1545aufs new zurericht, ed. Hans Volz and Heinz Blanke. Munich: Roger & Bernhard. 1972, vol. 2, pp. 2254-2268. Books For The Ages - AGES Software • Albany, OR USA Version 1.0 © 1997

works. On the contrary, he says to them, “You teach that one should not commit adultery, and you commit adultery. You judge another in a certain matter and condemn yourselves in that same matter, because you do the very same thing that you judged in another.” It is as if he were saying, “Outwardly you live quite properly in the works of the law and judge those who do not live the same way; you know how to teach everybody. You see the speck in another's eye but do not notice the beam in your own.”

Outwardly you keep the law with works out of fear of punishment or love of gain. Likewise you do everything without free desire and love of the law; you act out of aversion and force. You'd rather act otherwise if the law didn't exist. It follows, then, that you, in the depths of your heart, are an enemy of the law. What do you mean, therefore, by teaching another not to steal, when you, in the depths of your heart, are a thief and would be one outwardly too, if you dared. (Of course, outward work doesn't last long with such hypocrites.) So then, you teach others but not yourself; you don't even know what you are teaching. You've never understood the law rightly. Furthermore, the law increases sin, as St. Paul says in chapter 5. That is because a person becomes more and more an enemy of the law the more it demands of him what he can't possibly do.

In chapter 7, St. Paul says, “The law is spiritual.” What does that mean? If the law were physical, then it could be satisfied by works, but since it is spiritual, no one can satisfy it unless everything he does springs from the depths of the heart. But no one can give such a heart except the Spirit of God, who makes the person be like the law, so that he actually conceives a heartfelt longing for the law and henceforward does everything, not through fear or coercion, but from a free heart. Such a law is spiritual since it can only be loved and fulfilled by such a heart and such a spirit. If the Spirit is not in the heart, then there remain sin, aversion and enmity against the law, which in itself is good, just and holy.

You must get used to the idea that it is one thing to do the works of the law and quite another to fulfill it. The works of the law are every thing that a person does or can do of his own free will and by his own powers to obey the law. But because in doing such works the heart abhors the law and yet is forced to obey it, the works are a total loss and are completely useless. That is what St. Paul means in chapter 3 when he says, “No human being is justified before God through the works of the law.” From this you can see that the schoolmasters [i.e., the scholastic theologians] and sophists are seducers when they teach that you can prepare yourself for grace by means of works. How can anybody prepare himself for good by means of works if he does no good work except with aversion and constraint in his heart? How can such a work please God, if it proceeds from an averse and unwilling heart?

But to fulfill the law means to do its work eagerly, lovingly and freely, without the constraint of the law; it means to live well and in a manner pleasing to God, as though there were no law or punishment. It is the Holy Spirit, however, who puts such eagerness of unconstrained love into the heart, as Paul says in chapter 5. But the Spirit is given only in, with, and through faith in Jesus Christ, as Paul says in his introduction. So, too, faith comes only through the word of God, the Gospel, that preaches Christ:

how he is both Son of God and man, how he died and rose for our sake. Paul says all this in chapters 3, 4 and 10.

That is why faith alone makes someone just and fulfills the law; faith it is that brings the Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ. The Spirit, in turn, renders the heart glad and free, as the law demands. Then good works proceed from faith itself. That is what Paul means in chapter 3 when,

after he has thrown out the works of the law, he sounds as though he wants to abolish the law by faith. No, he says, we uphold the law through faith, i.e. we fulfill it through faith.

“Sin” in the Scriptures means not only external works of the body but also all those movements within us which bestir themselves and move us to do the external works, namely, the depth of the heart with all its powers. Therefore the word “do” should refer to a person's completely falling into sin. No external work of sin happens, after all, unless a person commit himself to it completely, body and soul. In particular, the Scriptures see into the heart, to the root and main source of all sin: unbelief in the depth of the heart. Thus, even as faith alone makes just and brings the Spirit and the desire to do good external works, so it is only unbelief which sins and exalts the flesh and brings desire to do evil external works. That's what happened to Adam and Eve in Paradise (cf. Genesis 3).

That is why only unbelief is called sin by Christ, as he says in John, chapter 16, “The Spirit will punish the world because of sin, because it does not believe in me.” Furthermore, before good or bad works happen, which are the good or bad fruits of the heart, there has to be present in the heart either faith or unbelief, the root, sap and chief power of all sin. That is why, in the Scriptures, unbelief is called the head of the serpent and of the ancient dragon which the offspring of the woman, i.e., Christ, must crush, as was promised to Adam (cf. Genesis 3).

“Grace” and “gift” differ in that grace actually denotes God's kindness or favor which he has toward us and by which he is disposed to pour Christ and the Spirit with his gifts into us, as becomes clear from chapter 5, where Paul says, “Grace and gift are in Christ, etc.” The gifts and the Spirit increase daily in us, yet they are not complete, since evil desires and sins remain in us which war against the Spirit, as Paul says in chapter 7, and in Galatians, chapter 5. And Genesis, chapter 3, proclaims the enmity between the offspring of the woman and that of the serpent. But grace does do this much: that we are accounted completely just before God. God's grace is not divided into bits and pieces, as are the gifts, but grace takes us up completely into God's favor for the sake of Christ, our intercessor and mediator, so that the gifts may begin their work in us.

In this way, then, you should understand chapter 7, where St. Paul portrays himself as still a sinner, while in chapter 8 he says that, because of the incomplete gifts and because of the Spirit, there is nothing damnable in those who are in Christ. Because our flesh has not been killed, we are still sinners, but because we believe in Christ and have the beginnings of the Spirit, God so shows us his favor and mercy, that he neither notices nor judges such sins. Rather he deals with us according to our belief in Christ until sin is killed.

Faith is not that human illusion and dream that some people think it is. When they hear and talk a lot about faith and yet see that no moral improvement and no good works result from it, they fall into error and say, “Faith is not enough. You must do works if you want to be virtuous and get to heaven.” The result is that, when they hear the Gospel, they stumble and make for themselves with their own powers a concept in their hearts which says, “I believe.” This concept they hold to be true faith. But since it is a human fabrication and thought and not an experience of the heart, it accomplishes nothing, and there follows no improvement.

Faith is a work of God in us, which changes us and brings us to birth anew from God (cf. John 1). It kills the old Adam, makes us completely different people in heart, mind, senses, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. What a living, creative, active powerful thing is faith! It is impossible that faith ever stop doing good. Faith doesn't ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active. Whoever doesn't do such works is without faith; he gropes and searches about him for faith and good works but doesn't know what faith or good works are. Even so, he chatters on with a great many words about faith and good works.

Faith is a living, unshakeable confidence in God's grace; it is so certain, that someone would die a thousand times for it. This kind of trust in and knowledge of God's grace makes a person joyful, confident, and happy with regard to God and all creatures. This is what the Holy Spirit does by faith. Through faith, a person will do good to everyone without coercion, willingly and happily; he will serve everyone, suffer everything for the love and praise of God, who has shown him such grace. It is as impossible to separate works from faith as burning and shining from fire. Therefore be on guard against your own false ideas and against the chatterers who think they are clever enough to make judgments about faith and good works but who are in reality the biggest fools. Ask God to work faith in you; otherwise you will remain eternally without faith, no matter what you try to do or fabricate.

Now "justice" is just such a faith. It is called God's justice or that justice which is valid in God's sight, because it is God who gives it and reckons it as justice for the sake of Christ our Mediator. It influences a person to give to everyone what he owes him. Through faith a person becomes sinless and eager for God's commands. Thus he gives God the honor due him and pays him what he owes him. He serves people willingly with the means available to him. In this way he pays everyone his due. Neither nature nor free will nor our own powers can bring about such a justice, for even as no one can give himself faith, so too he cannot remove unbelief. How can he then take away even the smallest sin? Therefore everything which takes place outside faith or in unbelief is lie, hypocrisy and sin (Romans 14), no matter how smoothly it may seem to go.

You must not understand flesh here as denoting only unchastity or spirit as denoting only the inner heart. Here St. Paul calls flesh (as does Christ in John 3) everything born of flesh, i.e. the whole human being with body and soul, reason and senses, since everything in him tends toward the flesh. That is why you should know enough to call that person "fleshly" who, without grace, fabricates, teaches and chatters about high spiritual matters. You can learn the same thing from Galatians, chapter 5, where St. Paul calls heresy and hatred works of the flesh. And in Romans, chapter 8, he says that, through the flesh, the law is weakened. He says this, not of unchastity, but of all sins, most of all of unbelief, which is the most spiritual of vices.

On the other hand, you should know enough to call that person "spiritual" who is occupied with the most outward of works as was Christ, when he washed the feet of the disciples, and Peter, when he steered his boat and fished. So then, a person is "flesh" who, inwardly and outwardly, lives only to do those things which are of use to the flesh and to temporal existence. A person is "spirit" who, inwardly and outwardly, lives only to do those things which are of use to the spirit and to the life to come.

Unless you understand these words in this way, you will never understand either this letter of St. Paul or any book of the Scriptures. Be on guard, therefore against any teacher who uses these words differently, no matter who he be, whether Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Origen or anyone else as great as or greater than they. Now let us turn to the letter itself.

The first duty of a preacher of the Gospel is, through his revealing of the law and of sin, to rebuke and to turn into sin everything in life that does not have the Spirit and faith in Christ as its base. [Here and elsewhere in Luther's preface, as indeed in Romans itself, it is not clear whether "spirit" has the meaning "Holy Spirit" or "spiritual person," as Luther has previously defined it.] Thereby he will lead people to a recognition of their miserable condition, and thus they will become humble and yearn for help. This is what St Paul does. He begins in chapter 1 by rebuking the gross sins and unbelief which are in plain view, as were (and still are) the sins of the pagans, who live without God's grace. He says that, through the Gospel, God is revealing his wrath from heaven upon all mankind because of the godless and unjust lives they live. For, although they know and recognize day by day that there is a God, yet human nature in itself, without grace, is so evil that it neither thanks nor honors God. This nature blinds itself and

continually falls into wickedness, even going so far as to commit idolatry and other horrible sins and vices. It is unashamed of itself and leaves such things unpunished in others.

In chapter 2, St. Paul extends his rebuke to those who appear outwardly pious or who sin secretly. Such were the Jews, and such are all hypocrites still, who live virtuous lives but without eagerness and love; in their heart they are enemies of God's law and like to judge other people. That's the way with hypocrites: they think that they are pure but are actually full of greed, hate, pride and all sorts of filth (cf. Matthew 23). These are they who despise God's goodness and, by their hardness of heart, heap wrath upon themselves. Thus Paul explains the law rightly when he lets no one remain without sin but proclaims the wrath of God to all who want to live virtuously by nature or by free will. He makes them out to be no better than public sinners; he says they are hard of heart and unrepentant.

In chapter 3, Paul lumps both secret and public sinners together: the one, he says, is like the other; all are sinners in the sight of God. Besides, the Jews had God's word, even though many did not believe in it. But still God's truth and faith in him are not thereby rendered useless. St. Paul introduces, as an aside, the saying from Psalm 51, that God remains true to his words. Then he returns to his topic and proves from Scripture that they are all sinners and that no one becomes just through the works of the law, but that God gave the law only so that sin might be perceived.

Next St. Paul teaches the right way to be virtuous and to be saved; he says that they are all sinners, unable to glory in God. They must, however, be justified through faith in Christ, who has merited this for us by his blood and has become for us a mercy seat [cf. Exodus 25:17, Leviticus 16:14 ff, and John 2:2] in the presence of God, who forgives us all our previous sins. In so doing, God proves that it is his justice alone, which he gives through faith, that helps us, the justice which was at the appointed time revealed through the Gospel and, previous to that, was witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets. Therefore the law is set up by faith, but the works of the law, along with the glory taken in them, are knocked down by faith. [As with the term "spirit," the word "law" seems to have for Luther, and for St. Paul, two meanings. Sometimes it means "regulation about what must be done or not done," as in the third paragraph of this preface; sometimes it means "the Torah," as in the previous sentence. And sometimes it seems to have both meanings, as in what follows.]

In chapters 1 to 3, St. Paul has revealed sin for what it is and has taught the way of faith which leads to justice. Now in chapter 4 he deals with some objections and criticisms. He takes up first the one that people raise who, on hearing that faith make just without works, say, "What? Shouldn't we do any good works?" Here St. Paul holds up Abraham as an example. He says, "What did Abraham accomplish with his good works? Were they all good for nothing and useless?" He concludes that Abraham was made righteous apart from all his works by faith alone. Even before the "work" of his circumcision, Scripture praises him as being just on account of faith alone (cf. Genesis 15). Now if the work of his circumcision did nothing to make him just, a work that God had commanded him to do and hence a work of obedience, then surely no other good work can do anything to make a person just. Even as Abraham's circumcision was an outward sign with which he proved his justice based on faith, so too all good works are only outward signs which flow from faith and are the fruits of faith; they prove that the person is already inwardly just in the sight of God.

St. Paul verifies his teaching on faith in chapter 3 with a powerful example from Scripture. He calls as witness David, who says in Psalm 32 that a person becomes just without works but doesn't remain without works once he has become just. Then Paul extends this example and applies it against all other works of the law. He concludes that the Jews cannot be Abraham's heirs just because of their blood relationship to him and still less because of the works of the law.

Rather, they have to inherit Abraham's faith if they want to be his real heirs, since it was prior to the Law of Moses and the law of circumcision that Abraham became just through faith and was called a father of all believers. St. Paul adds that the law brings about more wrath than grace, because no one obeys it with love and eagerness. More disgrace than grace come from the works of the law. Therefore faith alone can obtain the grace promised to Abraham. Examples like these are written for our sake, that we also should have faith.

In chapter 5, St. Paul comes to the fruits and works of faith, namely: joy, peace, love for God and for all people; in addition: assurance, steadfastness, confidence, courage, and hope in sorrow and suffering. All of these follow where faith is genuine, because of the overflowing good will that God has shown in Christ: he had him die for us before we could ask him for it, yes, even while we were still his enemies. Thus we have established that faith, without any good works, makes just. It does not follow from that, however, that we should not do good works; rather it means that morally upright works do not remain lacking. About such works the "works-holy" people know nothing; they invent for themselves their own works in which are neither peace nor joy nor assurance nor love nor hope nor steadfastness nor any kind of genuine Christian works or faith.

Next St. Paul makes a digression, a pleasant little side-trip, and relates where both sin and justice, death and life come from. He opposes these two: Adam and Christ. What he wants to say is that Christ, a second Adam, had to come in order to make us heirs of his justice through a new spiritual birth in faith, just as the old Adam made us heirs of sin through the old fleshy birth.

St. Paul proves, by this reasoning, that a person cannot help himself by his works to get from sin to justice any more than he can prevent his own physical birth. St. Paul also proves that the divine law, which should have been well-suited, if anything was, for helping people to obtain justice, not only was no help at all when it did come, but it even increased sin. Evil human nature, consequently, becomes more hostile to it; the more the law forbids it to indulge its own desires, the more it wants to. Thus the law makes Christ all the more necessary and demands more grace to help human nature.

In chapter 6, St. Paul takes up the special work of faith, the struggle which the spirit wages against the flesh to kill off those sins and desires that remain after a person has been made just. He teaches us that faith doesn't so free us from sin that we can be idle, lazy and self-assured, as though there were no more sin in us. Sin "is" there, but, because of faith that struggles against it, God does not reckon sin as deserving damnation. Therefore we have in our own selves a lifetime of work cut out for us; we have to tame our body, kill its lusts, force its members to obey the spirit and not the lusts. We must do this so that we may conform to the death and resurrection of Christ and complete our Baptism, which signifies a death to sin and a new life of grace. Our aim is to be completely clean from sin and then to rise bodily with Christ and live forever

St. Paul says that we can accomplish all this because we are in grace and not in the law. He explains that to be "outside the law" is not the same as having no law and being able to do what you please. No, being "under the law" means living without grace, surrounded by the works of the law. Then surely sin reigns by means of the law, since no one is naturally well-disposed toward the law. That very condition, however, is the greatest sin. But grace makes the law lovable to us, so there is then no sin any more, and the law is no longer against us but one with us.

This is true freedom from sin and from the law; St. Paul writes about this for the rest of the chapter. He says it is a freedom only to do good with eagerness and to live a good life without the coercion of the law. This freedom is, therefore, a spiritual freedom which does not suspend the law, but which supplies what the law demands, namely eagerness and love. These silence the law so that it has no further cause to drive people on and make demands of them. It's as though you owed something to a moneylender and couldn't pay him. You could be rid of him in one of

two ways: either he would take nothing from you and would tear up his account book, or a pious man would pay for you and give you what you needed to satisfy your debt. That's exactly how Christ freed us from the law. Therefore our freedom is not a wild, fleshy freedom that has no obligation to do anything. On the contrary, it is a freedom that does a great deal, indeed everything, yet is free of the law's demands and debts.

In chapter 7, St. Paul confirms the foregoing by an analogy drawn from married life. When a man dies, the wife is free; the one is free and clear of the other. It is not the case that the woman may not or should not marry another man; rather she is now for the first time free to marry someone else. She could not do this before she was free of her first husband. In the same way, our conscience is bound to the law so long as our condition is that of the sinful old man. But when the old man is killed by the spirit, then the conscience is free, and conscience and law are quit of each other. Not that conscience should now do nothing; rather, it should now for the first time truly cling to its second husband, Christ, and bring forth the fruit of life.

Next St. Paul sketches further the nature of sin and the law. It is the law that makes sin really active and powerful, because the old man gets more and more hostile to the law since he can't pay the debt demanded by the law. Sin is his very nature; of himself he can't do otherwise. And so the law is his death and torture. Now the law is not itself evil; it is our evil nature that cannot tolerate that the good law should demand good from it. It's like the case of a sick person, who cannot tolerate that you demand that he run and jump around and do other things that a healthy person does.

St. Paul concludes here that, if we understand the law properly and comprehend it in the best possible way, then we will see that its sole function is to remind us of our sins, to kill us by our sins, and to make us deserving of eternal wrath. Conscience learns and experiences all this in detail when it comes face to face with the law. It follows, then, that we must have something else, over and above the law, which can make a person virtuous and cause him to be saved. Those, however, who do not understand the law rightly are blind; they go their way boldly and think they are satisfying the law with works. They don't know how much the law demands, namely, a free, willing, eager heart. That is the reason that they don't see Moses rightly before their eyes. [In both Jewish and Christian teaching, Moses was commonly held to be the author of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the bible. Cf. the involved imagery of Moses' face and the veil over it in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18.] For them he is covered and concealed by the veil.

Then St. Paul shows how spirit and flesh struggle with each other in one person. He gives himself as an example, so that we may learn how to kill sin in ourselves. He gives both spirit and flesh the name "law," so that, just as it is in the nature of divine law to drive a person on and make demands of him, so too the flesh drives and demands and rages against the spirit and wants to have its own way. Likewise the spirit drives and demands against the flesh and wants to have its own way. This feud lasts in us for as long as we live, in one person more, in another less, depending on whether spirit or flesh is stronger. Yet the whole human being is both: spirit and flesh. The human being fights with himself until he becomes completely spiritual.

In chapter 8, St. Paul comforts fighters such as these and tells them that this flesh will not bring them condemnation. He goes on to show what the nature of flesh and spirit are. Spirit, he says, comes from Christ, who has given us his Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit makes us spiritual and restrains the flesh. The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children no matter how furiously sin may rage within us, so long as we follow the Spirit and struggle against sin in order to kill it. Because nothing is so effective in deadening the flesh as the cross and suffering, Paul comforts us in our suffering. He says that the Spirit, [cf. previous note about the meaning of "spirit."] love and all creatures will stand by us; the Spirit in us groans and all creatures long with us that we be

freed from the flesh and from sin. Thus we see that these three chapters, 6, 7 and 8, all deal with the one work of faith, which is to kill the old Adam and to constrain the flesh.

In chapters 9, 10 and 11, St. Paul teaches us about the eternal providence of God. It is the original source which determines who would believe and who wouldn't, who can be set free from sin and who cannot. Such matters have been taken out of our hands and are put into God's hands so that we might become virtuous. It is absolutely necessary that it be so, for we are so weak and unsure of ourselves that, if it depended on us, no human being would be saved. The devil would overpower all of us. But God is steadfast; his providence will not fail, and no one can prevent its realization. Therefore we have hope against sin.

But here we must shut the mouths of those sacrilegious and arrogant spirits who, mere beginners that they are, bring their reason to bear on this matter and commence, from their exalted position, to probe the abyss of divine providence and uselessly trouble themselves about whether they are predestined or not. These people must surely plunge to their ruin, since they will either despair or abandon themselves to a life of chance.

You, however, follow the reasoning of this letter in the order in which it is presented. Fix your attention first of all on Christ and the Gospel, so that you may recognize your sin and his grace. Then struggle against sin, as chapters 1-8 have taught you to. Finally, when you have come, in chapter 8, under the shadow of the cross and suffering, they will teach you, in chapters 9-11, about providence and what a comfort it is. [The context here and in St. Paul's letter makes it clear that this is the cross and passion, not only of Christ, but of each Christian.] Apart from suffering, the cross and the pangs of death, you cannot come to grips with providence without harm to yourself and secret anger against God. The old Adam must be quite dead before you can endure this matter and drink this strong wine. Therefore make sure you don't drink wine while you are still a babe at the breast. There is a proper measure, time and age for understanding every doctrine.

In chapter 12, St. Paul teaches the true liturgy and makes all Christians priests, so that they may offer, not money or cattle, as priests do in the Law, but their own bodies, by putting their desires to death. Next he describes the outward conduct of Christians whose lives are governed by the Spirit; he tells how they teach, preach, rule, serve, give, suffer, love, live and act toward friend, foe and everyone. These are the works that a Christian does, for, as I have said, faith is not idle.

In chapter 13, St. Paul teaches that one should honor and obey the secular authorities. He includes this, not because it makes people virtuous in the sight of God, but because it does ensure that the virtuous have outward peace and protection and that the wicked cannot do evil without fear and in undisturbed peace. Therefore it is the duty of virtuous people to honor secular authority, even though they do not, strictly speaking, need it. Finally, St. Paul sums up everything in love and gathers it all into the example of Christ: what he has done for us, we must also do and follow after him.

In chapter 14, St. Paul teaches that one should carefully guide those with weak conscience and spare them. One shouldn't use Christian freedom to harm but rather to help the weak. Where that isn't done, there follow dissention and despising of the Gospel, on which everything else depends. It is better to give way a little to the weak in faith until they become stronger than to have the teaching of the Gospel perish completely. This work is a particularly necessary work of love especially now when people, by eating meat and by other freedoms, are brashly, boldly and unnecessarily shaking weak consciences which have not yet come to know the truth.

In chapter 15, St. Paul cites Christ as an example to show that we must also have patience with the weak, even those who fail by sinning publicly or by their disgusting morals. We must not cast them aside but must bear with them until they become better. That is the way Christ treated

us and still treats us every day; he puts up with our vices, our wicked morals and all our imperfection, and he helps us ceaselessly. Finally Paul prays for the Christians at Rome; he praises them and commends them to God. He points out his own office and the message that he preaches. He makes an unobtrusive plea for a contribution for the poor in Jerusalem. Unalloyed love is the basis of all he says and does.

The last chapter consists of greetings. But Paul also includes a salutary warning against human doctrines which are preached alongside the Gospel and which do a great deal of harm. It's as though he had clearly seen that out of Rome and through the Romans would come the deceitful, harmful Canons and Decretals along with the entire brood and swarm of human laws and commands that is now drowning the whole world and has blotted out this letter and the whole of the Scriptures, along with the Spirit and faith. Nothing remains but the idol Belly, and St. Paul depicts those people here as its servants. God deliver us from them. Amen.

We find in this letter, then, the richest possible teaching about what a Christian should know: the meaning of law, Gospel, sin, punishment, grace, faith, justice, Christ, God, good works, love, hope and the cross. We learn how we are to act toward everyone, toward the virtuous and sinful, toward the strong and the weak, friend and foe, and toward our selves. Paul bases everything firmly on Scripture and proves his points with examples from his own experience and from the Prophets, so that nothing more could be desired. Therefore it seems that St. Paul, in writing this letter, wanted to compose a summary of the whole of Christian and evangelical teaching which would also be an introduction to the whole Old Testament. Without doubt, whoever takes this letter to heart possesses the light and power of the Old Testament. Therefore each and every Christian should make this letter the habitual and constant object of his study. God grant us his grace to do so. Amen

## **ADDENDUM B**

### **New Testament Passages that Resemble Paul's Epistle to the Romans**

Several passages in James also resemble Romans:

Romans 2:1	James 4:11
Romans 2:13	James 1:22
Romans 4:1	James 2:21
Romans 4:20	James 1:6
Romans 5:3-5	James 1:2-4
Romans 7:23	James 4:1
Romans 13:12	James 1:21

Hebrews and Jude also appear to allude to Romans.

Romans 4:17-21	Hebrews 11:11,12
Romans 12:19	Hebrews 10:30
Romans 16:25-27	Jude 24-25

## ADDENDUM C

### Rome in AD 58

The population of Rome in AD 58 was about 800,000. Much of the population consisted of people from the provinces who had moved to the capital city. The slave population was significant, and the slave population consisted of people from all races. Many of Rome's inhabitants lived in multistoried apartment complexes, similar to present-day "high rises."

Nero had been Caesar for four years. The city was in a five-year period of immense prosperity and peace.

Almost every religion had adherents in Rome. All religions were given freedom, as long as they did not interfere with the administration of the city.

\*The earliest monuments to the worship of Mithras date from the time of Tiberius (AD 14-37).

\*The poet, Lucan (AD 39-65), celebrated the worship of Isis in Rome.

\*Nero revered the Syrian goddess Astarte.

\*Judaism came near to the throne in the person of Poppaea Sabina, whose influence over Nero began in 58 AD.<sup>89</sup>

The first sizeable settlement of Jews in Rome dates from B.C. 63. This is the year that Pompey took Jerusalem and sold Jews as slaves to Roman citizens. Because the Jews refused to compromise their national customs and religion, they usually proved to be problems to their owners. As a result most of the Jewish slaves were soon given their freedom. In time, the Jews in Rome became so numerous and prosperous that they financed the formation of a Roman/Jewish synagogue in Jerusalem, so that they would have a place to worship when they made the various religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

The early emperors favored the Jews. When Julius Caesar died, the Jews passionately bewailed his death, going by night and by day to his funeral pyre. Under Augustus, they were allowed to form a colony on the further side of the Tiber. In time, the Jews became so numerous, that their settlement overflowed into other parts of the city. They became a powerful political block.

When a deputation came from Judea to complain to the Emperor that Archelaus was abusing his power as governor of Palestine, 8000 Roman Jews joined the delegation (in response, in 6 AD, the Emperor removed Archelaus). They were able to build synagogues in Rome, including the synagogues of *Augustus* and *Agrippa* (either of the household or under the patronage of Augustus and his minister, Agrippa).

In AD 19, during the reign of Tiberius, two scandals happened at the same time, one connected with the priests of Isis and the other with some Jewish scam artists. A wealthy Roman lady who had become a proselyte to Judaism, was swindled by some Jews who claimed to be raising funds to be sent to Jerusalem to help the faithful in that city. When scam was exposed, at the same time that the scandal associated with the priests of Isis was exposed, Tiberius instituted repressive measures against Judaism. Four thousand Jews were banished to Sardinia.

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<sup>89</sup> Tacitus and Suetonius portray Poppaea as an ambitious and ruthless schemer. The Jewish historian Josephus paints a different picture. He calls Poppaea a worshipper of the Jewish God and urged Nero to show compassion to the Jewish people. In one account, Josephus shows how Poppaea advocated for Jewish priests when an issue was brought before Nero by Herod Agrippa II, who was the ruler of Jerusalem, concerning a wall that was built blocking Agrippa's view of the Jerusalem Temple. She convinced Nero to not order the Jewish priests to tear down the wall and to leave the Temple as is. However, in 64 she secured the position of procurator of Judaea for Gessius Florus, her friend's husband, who was harmful to the Jews.

Caligula, the half-crazy and sex obsessed Emperor gave the Jews a hard time. He insisted on the setting up of his own bust in the Jerusalem Temple. His opportune death in 41AD saved the Jews from worse things.

During the reign of Claudius, persistent tumults in the Jewish quarter, "at the instigation of Chrestus," resulted in the expulsion of the Jews from Rome (about 52 AD). This is mentioned in Acts 18:2 with reference to Aquila and Prisca, as well as being mentioned by the Roman historian, Suetonius. The statement, "At the instigation of Chrestus," possibly refers to the effect of the Christians' proclamation of the Gospel. Three years after this edict, Claudius died as a result of being poisoned. Nero, his adopted son, succeeded him and Jews were allowed to return to Rome. They quickly grew in numbers and influence in the city.

Claudius' first three marriages ended in divorce. His fourth wife, Julia Agrippina, already had a son, Nero, when they married, and Claudius adopted Nero. Many ancient writers indicate that Claudius was poisoned, and that through the intrigue of Agrippina, Nero became emperor in 54 AD.

Nero had a taste for literature, music, and drama; he fancied himself to be a poet and musician. Sadly, he also was drawn to the basest behaviour. He and his noisy companions wandered the streets at night looking for adventure. He did not hide his illicit union with various freedwomen. The more respectable members of Roman society considered Nero's behaviour to be signs of degradation. There were standards of respectability in the city, although the more common classes ignored them.

The early years of Nero's rein were years of prosperity and peace. Later, they were called, the *Quinquennium* of Nero (Nero's five years) and were remembered as the happiest period of the Empire since the death of Augustus. Paul penned the Epistle to Rome during this period (AD 58). Nero had been tutored by the distinguished stoic philosopher and statesman, Seneca. During the first five years of his reign, Nero was guided by Seneca and the praetorium prefect, Burrus. The stabilizing influence of these experienced and distinguished leaders seemed to be what produced the *Quinquennium*.

During this period, Seneca was the most influential man in Rome. He was a man of noble thought and his stoic teachings were of extreme significance in developing Roman culture. His universal and humanitarian views permeated Roman society. He taught the equality of all men – in some sense, even slaves. Even though Seneca and the other jurists did not always live up to their teaching, they did mold and change the law and legal system of the Empire. It was becoming increasingly possible for Roman citizens of every stripe to obtain justice in the courts (note how the courts dealt with Paul). Except where the personal wishes of the Emperor intervened, the law was administered justly, and the police were efficient.<sup>90</sup>

Considering these elements, we conclude that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans during a time of prosperity and peace in the city.

Free trade recently had been proclaimed for all of the Empire and where trade abounded, wealth resulted. As a result of this prosperity in the Empire, the city of Rome also prospered, including the Jewish population.

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<sup>90</sup> In time, Nero became jealous of the great wealth that Seneca had amassed and began to view him as an enemy. In 62, in obedience to a sentence imposed upon him by Nero, Seneca committed suicide.

## ADDENDUM D

### Important passages that refer to the Messiah's identity and His lineage

**2 Timothy 2:8** *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,*

**Acts 2:30** *And so, because he[David] was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne,*

**Hebrews 7:14** *For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.*

**2 Samuel 7:4b-5a, 12-14a** *...the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, Go and say to My servant David ... "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me..."*

**Hebrews 1:5** (quoting 2 Samuel 7:14) *For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten Thee"? And again, "I will be a Father to him and He shall be a Son to Me"?*

**Isaiah 7:14** *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

**Isaiah 9:7** *There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.*

**Isaiah 11:1** *Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

**Isaiah 11:10** *Then it will come about in that day That the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.*

**Hosea 3:5** *Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.*

**Jeremiah 30:9** *But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.*

**Ezekiel 37:24** *And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them.*

**Ezekiel 34:23 -24** *Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.*

**Psalms 110:1** {A Psalm of David.} *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.*

**Two genealogies of Jesus appear in the Gospel accounts.**

**Matthew 1:1-16** The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

To Abraham was born Isaac;  
 and to Isaac, Jacob;  
 and to Jacob, Judah and his brothers;  
 and to Judah were born Perez and Zerah by Tamar;  
 and to Perez was born Hezron; and to Hezron, Ram;  
 and to Ram was born Amminadab;  
 and to Amminadab, Nahshon;  
 and to Nahshon, Salmon;  
 and to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab;  
 and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth;  
 and to Obed, Jesse;  
 and to Jesse was born David the king.  
 And to David was born Solomon by her *who had been the wife* of Uriah;  
 and to Solomon was born Rehoboam;  
 and to Rehoboam, Abijah;  
 and to Abijah, Asa;  
 and to Asa was born Jehoshaphat;  
 and to Jehoshaphat, Joram;  
 and to Joram, Uzziah;  
 and to Uzziah was born Jotham;  
 and to Jotham, Ahaz;  
 and to Ahaz, Hezekiah;  
 and to Hezekiah was born Manasseh;  
 and to Manasseh, Amon;  
 and to Amon, Josiah;  
 and to Josiah were born Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.  
 And after the deportation to Babylon, to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel;  
 and to Shealtiel, Zerubbabel;  
 and to Zerubbabel was born Abihud;  
 and to Abihud, Eliakim;  
 and to Eliakim, Azor;  
 and to Azor was born Zadok;  
 and to Zadok, Achim;  
 and to Achim, Eliud;  
 and to Eliud was born Eleazar;  
 and to Eleazar, Matthan;  
 and to Matthan, Jacob;  
 and to Jacob was born Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

**Luke 3:23-28** And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age,

being supposedly *the* son of Joseph, the *son* of Eli,  
 the *son* of Matthat,  
 the *son* of Levi,  
 the *son* of Melchi,  
 the son of Jannai,  
 the *son* of Joseph,  
 the *son* of Mattathias,  
 the *son* of Amos,  
 the *son* of Nahum,  
 the *son* of Hesli,  
 the *son* of Naggai,  
 the *son* of Maath,  
 the *son* of Mattathias,  
 the *son* of Semein,  
 the *son* of Josech,  
 the *son* of Joda,  
 the *son* of Joanan,  
 the *son* of Rhesa,  
 the *son* of Zerubbabel,  
 the *son* of Shealtiel,  
 the *son* of Neri,  
 the *son* of Melchi,  
 the *son* of Addi,  
 the *son* of Cosam,  
 the *son* of Elmadam,  
 the *son* of Er,  
 the *son* of Joshua,  
 the *son* of Eliezer,  
 the *son* of Jorim,  
 the son of Matthat,  
 the *son* of Levi,  
 the *son* of Simeon,  
 the *son* of Judah,  
 the *son* of Joseph,  
 the son of Jonam,  
 the *son* of Eliakim,  
 the *son* of Melea,  
 the *son* of Menna,  
 the *son* of Mattatha,  
 the son of Nathan,  
 the *son* of David,  
 the *son* of Jesse,  
 the *son* of Obed,  
 the *son* of Boaz,

the *son* of Salmon,  
 the *son* of Nahshon,  
 the *son* of  
 Amminadab,  
 the *son* of Admin,  
 the *son* of Ram,  
 the son of Hezron,  
 the *son* of Perez,  
 the *son* of Judah,  
 the *son* of Jacob,  
 the *son* of Isaac,  
 the *son* of Abraham,  
 the *son* of Terah,  
 the *son* of Nahor,  
 the *son* of Serug,  
 the *son* of Reu,  
 the *son* of Peleg,  
 the *son* of Heber,  
 the *son* of Shelah,  
 the *son* of Cainan,  
 the *son* of Arphaxad,  
 the *son* of Shem,  
 the son of Noah,  
 the *son* of Lamech,  
 the *son* of  
 Methuselah,  
 the *son* of Enoch,  
 the *son* of Jared,  
 the *son* of  
 Mahalaleel,  
 the *son* of Cainan,  
 the *son* of Enosh,  
 the *son* of Seth,  
 the *son* of Adam, the  
*son* of God

Matthew's genealogy is that of Joseph; Luke's is of the virgin Mary.

Matthew begins with Abraham and moves forward to the birth of Christ. Luke begins with the birth of Christ and moves back to Adam. The two lines run parallel from Abraham to David. From that point onward, they diverge.

- Matthew follows the line that comes down to Jesus by way of David's son, Solomon.
- Luke follows the line that comes down to Jesus by way of David's son, Nathan.
- The two genealogies are the lines of two brothers, whose children were cousins, first, second, and once removed.

Solomon's line, in Matthew, is the royal line. Nathan's line, in Luke, is the legal line. Nathan was Solomon's older brother and, legally, had a claim to the throne. Solomon took the throne, by David's intervention, and his line became the royal line.

Through his mother, Mary, Jesus was in the legal line (descended from Nathan). Through his step-father Joseph, Jesus was in the royal line (descended from Solomon). Note that Matthew does not say that Joseph begat Jesus, but that he was the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus. Also note that Luke says that Jesus, *being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph*. Thus, both Matthew and Luke presume the virgin birth. Matthew also says that Joseph and Mary did not have sexual relations until after the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:25).

NOTE: Luke's genealogy, does not say that Joseph is *the son of Heli*. The word, *son*, is missing throughout Luke's genealogy. The Greek says, *Joseph, of Heli*. This expression could mean either "son" or "son-in-law."

A telling reason why Jesus could not have been the son of Joseph is seen in the fact that one of Joseph's ancestors was Jechonias. God cursed Jechonias with a curse that took the royal throne away from his descendants. In Jeremiah 22:30 we find, *Thus says the LORD, "Write this man (Jechonias) down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David Or ruling again in Judah."* Not one of the seven sons of this man ever possessed the throne (I Chronicles 3:17-18). If Jesus had been the son of Joseph, because of this curse upon his ancestor, he never could have been the Messiah. On the other hand, the line of Nathan was not the royal line. A son of Heli would have faced the fact that there was a royal line that would have contested any claim that came from a descendent of Nathan. God solved the problem.

- The line that had no curse upon it produced Heli and his daughter, the virgin Mary and her son, Jesus. He therefore was eligible and exhausts that line.
- The line that had a curse upon it produced Joseph and Jesus exhausted that line also, because Joseph's other children had an older brother who legally, by adoption, was the royal heir.
- The title therefore is free through the lack of reigning royalty on one line and a curse upon the other.

When the Holy Spirit begat the Lord Jesus in the womb of the virgin, Mary, without any human father, Jesus was born the seed of David, according to the flesh. When Joseph married Mary and took the unborn child as his own, he legally gave him the title that had come to him through his ancestor Solomon. Jesus is the only possible Messiah.

## ADDENDUM E

### Forty-three verses that contain the expression, "Son of God."

Matthew 4:3 *And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the **Son of God**, command **that** these stones become bread."*

Matthew 4:6 *and \*said to Him, "If You are the **Son of God** throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE CONCERNING YOU'; and ' ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE. '"*

Matthew 8:29 *And behold, they cried out, saying, "What do we have to do with You, **Son of God**? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"*

Matthew 26:63 *But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the **Son of God**."*

Matthew 27:40 *and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the **Son of God**, come down from the cross."*

Matthew 27:43 *"HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET HIM DELIVER Him now, IF HE TAKES PLEASURE IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the **Son of God**.'"*

Matthew 27:54 *Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the **Son of God**!"*

Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the **Son of God**.*

Mark 3:11 *And whenever the unclean spirits beheld Him, they would fall down before Him and cry out, saying, "You are the **Son of God**!"*

Mark 15:39 *And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the **Son of God**!"*

Luke 1:35 *And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the **Son of God**."*

Luke 3:38 *the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the **son of God**.*

Luke 4:3 *And the devil said to Him, "If You are the **Son of God**, tell this stone to become bread."*

Luke 4:9 *And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the **Son of God**, throw Yourself down from here;*

*Luke 4:41 And demons also were coming out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the **Son of God**!" And rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.*

Luke 22:70 *And they all said, "Are You the **Son of God**, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am."*

John 1:34 *"And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the **Son of God**."*

John 1:49 *Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the **Son of God**; You are the King of Israel."*

John 3:18 *"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten **Son of God**."*

John 5:25 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the **Son of God**; and those who hear shall live."*

John 10:36 *do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?*

John 11:4 *But when Jesus heard it, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the **Son of God** may be glorified by it."*

John 11:27 *She \*said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the **Son of God**, even He who comes into the world."*

John 19:7 *The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the **Son of God**."*

John 20:31 *but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the **Son of God**; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

Acts 9:20 *and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the **Son of God**."*

Romans 1:4 *who was declared the **Son of God** with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,*

2 Corinthians 1:19 *For the **Son of God**, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us-- by me and Silvanus and Timothy-- was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.*

Galatians 2:20 *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the **Son of God**, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.*

Ephesians 4:13 *until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the **Son of God**, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.*

Hebrews 4:14 *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the **Son of God**, let us hold fast our confession.*

Hebrews 6:6 *and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the **Son of God**, and put Him to open shame.*

Hebrews 7:3 *Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the **Son of God**, he abides a priest perpetually.*

Hebrews 10:29 *How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the **Son of God**, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

1 John 3:8 *the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The **Son of God** appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*

1 John 4:15 *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the **Son of God**, God abides in him, and he in God.*

1 John 5:5 *And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the **Son of God**?*

1 John 5:10 *The one who believes in the **Son of God** has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son.*

1 John 5:12 *He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the **Son of God** does not have the life.*

1 John 5:13 *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the **Son of God**, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.*

1 John 5:20 *And we know that the **Son of God** has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*

Revelation 2:18 *"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The **Son of God**, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:*

## ADDENDUM F

(This is an excerpt from *The Pattern of New Testament Prayer*, a paper authored by James Garrett for the Conclave of New Testament Elders, 1998)

### SECTION ONE

#### NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER IS ADDRESSED TO THE FATHER

Both John the Baptist and Jesus were known for their prayer life. Both taught their disciples how to pray. Jesus repeated His teachings, as He spoke to various audiences in different places. He usually tailored the emphasis of a particular teaching to fit the need of the audience. Because of this, the four Gospels record similar, but slightly different, lessons taught by Jesus in various settings and at different times in His ministry.

#### JESUS TEACHING TO HIS DISCIPLES

There are two records of the model prayer that Jesus taught His disciples. The first is in Matthew, during the early Galilean ministry, as a part of the Sermon on the Mount. Here, Jesus presented the model prayer in contrast to the prayer patterns of the Pharisees.

*And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name... (Matthew 6:5-9)*

Two years later, during his later Judean ministry, Jesus taught the model prayer to another group. Luke began his report of this incident by stating that after Jesus had finished a season of prayer, one of His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. This request may have been inspired by Jesus' lengthy communion with the Father, something that they were unable to achieve. If so, the terse model that Jesus presented to them becomes all the more impressive. Quality rather than quantity is the measure. Here is Luke's record of this event:

*And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come... (Luke 11:1-2 NAS)*

We must not conclude that Jesus taught the disciples to pray this way because He was then on the earth, and the Father was in heaven. Jesus clearly stated that even after his ascension, the Father, not Jesus, was to be the object of prayer. In response to their queries about Jesus' statements concerning His pending departure, and their sorrow as they contemplated it, Jesus painted a picture of how things would be after His departure. He told them that their privileges and endowments would be better than having Him with them in the flesh. One thing that they would have was an open avenue of prayer to the Father.

*"And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full. "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will*

*tell you plainly of the Father. "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father. (John 16:23-27)*

*"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. (John 15:16)*

This pattern is consistent in all of the teaching that Our Lord gave concerning prayer. Prayer is to be addressed to the Father.

## **THE POST-ASCENSION CHURCH**

The New Testament record of the post-ascension Church describes prayer as being offered to the Father. Interestingly, the Holy Spirit never is addressed or worshipped in the New Testament. Contemporary prayers, such as, "Come Holy Spirit," or "Holy Spirit, You are welcome in this place," have no precedent in the New Testament and to a degree violate the New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit. Worship songs that include worship of the Holy Spirit certainly are outside of the role of the Spirit as displayed in the New Testament.

In the New Testament record, Jesus is spoken to, after His ascension, only when He appears in a vision (technically termed, an "epiphany"). There are five such episodes.

### 1. Stephen

*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:54-60)*

### 2. Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus

Acts 9 contains the historical record Saul's Damascus road encounter with Jesus. Acts 22 records Paul's speech from the staircase of the Tower of Antonio, in which he recounted his Damascus Road conversation with the Glorified Lord. Acts 26 records Paul's speech before Agrippa, in which he also describes the conversation, with some extra details. Here is the Acts 9 account:

*And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do." (Acts 9:3-6)*

*But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. (Acts 9:27)*

### 3. Paul's vision in the Temple

As Paul continued his speech before the Jerusalem mob, recorded in Acts 22, he also stated that Jesus appeared to him in a vision in the temple and a conversation ensued:

*"And it came about when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in Thee. 'And when the blood of Thy witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.' "And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" (Acts 22:17-21)*

#### 4. Ananias

In conjunction with Saul's Damascus road vision, a disciple living in Damascus also had a vision in which he talked with Jesus.

*Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, here am I, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight. " But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake. " (Acts 9:10-16)*

#### 5. Peter and the vision of clean and unclean animals.

Although we do not have the heavenly speaker identified, in Peter's vision of the clean and unclean animals, the speaker could have been Jesus Christ. We do not know whether the, "Lord," who spoke was Jesus or God the Father, although the visionary pattern of the New Testament would lean toward the speakers' being Jesus Christ.

*And he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; 11 and he \*beheld the sky opened up, and a certain object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, 12 and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. 13 And a voice came to him, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat!" 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." 15 And again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." 16 And this happened three times; and immediately the object was taken up into the sky. (Acts 10:10-16)*

In the many visions contained in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, John describes visionary scenes that contain praise and petitions to Jesus. For example, the paean of praise in Revelation 5:8-9. This, however, is outside of the historical life of the Church.

#### **WHAT ABOUT ACTS 4:24-29?**

Because the powerful prayer of Acts 4:24-29 is addressed to the "Lord" (vs 24 & 29), many assume that it is a prayer to Jesus. A careful reading of the prayer makes it clear that the term, "Lord," in this prayer, refers to God the Father.

*And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is Thou who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father*

*David Thy servant, didst say, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? 'The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ.' 'For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus. " (Acts 4:24-30)*

Note the language of verse 26, "against the Lord and His Christ;" verse 27, "Thy holy Servant, Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint;" verse 30, "and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy Servant Jesus." This language makes it clear that the term, "Lord," is applied to God the Father, in this prayer.

It is important to note that the title, "Lord," (Greek, κύριος) is a generic term of respect. It is equivalent to the English, "mister," which is a contemporary variant of "master." The Spanish term, *senor*, enjoys the same usage in that language. So, "lord," may be used as a courteous expression of respect for any individual, human or divine. When the term, "Lord," is used for a member of the Godhead, the context must be examined to determine whether the one to which the term refers is God the Father or God the Son. The term is used generously for both of them throughout the New Testament. However, after Pentecost, the term always is used in the third person, when applied to Jesus (the exceptions being noted above, i.e., when Jesus appears in a vision). With reference to God the Father, "Lord," is used in both the second and third person. (NOTE: another Greek term, *despotes* (δεσπότης), meaning, "one who owns slaves," often is loosely translated, "lord." Δεσπότης, is the "lord" of verse 24. Κύριος, is the term translated, "lord," in the rest of the passage).

### **THE ONLY POSSIBLE EXCEPTION**

The only possible exception to the pattern of addressing prayer to the Father, is Paul's statement in I Timothy 1:12.

*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service;*

In this passage Paul expresses his gratitude to "Christ Jesus Our Lord" for putting him into the ministry. We would expect Paul to direct his gratitude to Christ Jesus, because it was Christ Jesus who appeared to him in a vision on the Damascus road. Through that vision, through the vision to Ananias, through the vision that Saul had in the Temple, and probably through other unrecorded visions that Saul experienced in Arabia, Saul of Tarsus became Paul, "An apostle of Jesus Christ."

**The Question:** The question arises,

- does this verse describe a prayer,
- or does it describe the gratitude that Paul had in his heart?

If it is the second of these – Paul's deep sense of gratitude - then this is not an exception to all of the other examples in the New Testament.

Since there is this possible one exception to the pattern, we must say that it is not wrong to thank Jesus, when He clearly is the expression of the Godhead that it is appropriate to thank. However, praying to Jesus is the rarest of exceptions (only this one instance, if it does describe a prayer). It is not the pattern of New Testament prayer.

Throughout Church History, there have been those who prayed to Jesus. Some of the Mystics of Roman Catholicism, for example, prayed to Jesus. Many of the revival songs written in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century are addressed to Jesus. Prayers in the "Jesus Only" wing of the Pentecostal Movement

would be addressed to Jesus. The "Jesus Movement" (late 1960's and early 1970's) and the "conversational prayer" movement, led by Rosalind Rinker (early 1970's), modeled prayer to Jesus. These last two movements had great impact on the Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. Thus, prayers addressed to Jesus have become a general custom. "Dear Lord Jesus, we just ask you...and we just ask you...and we just ask you..." is heard often in our present-day prayer meetings. This is not the biblical model, as recorded for us by the Holy Spirit.

### **THE NEW TESTAMENT FORMULA FOR PRAYER**

A careful reading of the New Testament, reveals a pattern that is formulated in Romans 1:8.

*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all,...*

Jesus, Our Great High Priest, is the one through whom we pray, but the destiny and object of the prayer is God the Father.

## **SECTION TWO:**

### **THE NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN OF PRAYER IS PRAYING TO GOD THE FATHER IN JESUS' NAME.**

The main activity of Jesus today, seems to be intercession.

*Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (Romans 8:34)  
Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)*

In addition to the blessing of Jesus' intercession, our own personal prayers go directly to the Father because of the completed work of Jesus. We again look at John's record of Jesus discourse on the benefits that the disciples would have after the ascension.

*You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. (John 15:16)*

*And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father. (John 16:23-24, 26-27)*

This does not mean that we should tack on the end of our prayers the customary incantation, "In Jesus Name, Amen." Certainly, there is nothing wrong with closing our prayers in this manner and it is very meaningful when spoken in the right spirit. However, adding these words at the close of a prayer does not mean that the prayer has been offered in Jesus Name.

We recall the seven sons of Sceva who used the expression, "in the name of Jesus."

*And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:11-16)*

This episode teaches us that it could be dangerous to use the Name of Jesus as an incantation. One has the authority to do something, "in Jesus Name," only when he is in Christ and Christ is in him.

*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:7)*

*If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. (John 15:10)*

Thus, when we are in Christ, and His word is in us, producing a Christ-like life, we can approach the Father in prayer. We have no right to come to the Father apart from our standing in Christ.

When we are in Christ and He is in us, we have taken His Name upon us. His Name upon us gives us the same access to the Father that Jesus has, because we wear His Name. Over the years, this truth has been illustrated by a check written on a bank account. If I write you a check, and sign it, you can take it to the bank and cash it, because I have money in that bank and because my signature is on the check. My signature gives you the same authority that I have over a portion of my assets. The bank is responsible to make certain that I have assets in the bank, that the signature is genuine, and that you are who you say you are. Although all analogies break down when pressed on every detail, this is a good illustration of the proper use of Jesus Name by those who are His.

## ADDENDUM G

### UNIVERSALISM AND ULTIMATE RECONCILIATION

**James W. Garrett**

**Note:** *this document is merely a draft, waiting for the time when I can give the subject further attention.*

In its simplest form, Universalism declares that no being will spend eternity in hell. There are a variety of views that fall under the general term, “Universalism.”

- At one end of the spectrum are those who believe that there is no life beyond the grave – all are universally “out of existence.”
- Adjacent to that view is the contention that there is no after-life judgment of any sort.<sup>91</sup>
- At the other end of the spectrum are those who believe that there is a hell where some will spend a period of time before being reconciled to God. Hell, or the lake of fire, is where the damned are “enlightened,” a time of “attitude adjustment.” Those who hold this view are known as *Ultimate Reconciliationists*. Most who hold this view state that even Satan and his angels will be reconciled to God.
- There are a variety of expressions of Universalism found between these various views.

### ORIGEN, THE ORIGIN OF UNIVERSALISM

Universalism is not a new idea. The first church leader of any note to advocate Universalism was Origen (185-254 AD). Origen has been denied the title, “Church Father,” because he departed so drastically from Orthodox theological positions. He advocated<sup>92</sup> *apokatastasis*, the teaching that ultimately God will reconcile all creation and created beings to himself, including Satan. As shown in the following quote, he understood Psalm 110:1 (Psalm 109:1 in the Septuagint, the version read by Origen) to result logically in *apokatastasis*.

The end of the world, then, and the final consummation, will take place when everyone shall be subjected to punishment for his sins; a time which God alone knows, when He will bestow on each one what he deserves. We think, indeed, that the goodness of God, through His Christ, may recall all His creatures to one end, even His enemies being conquered and subdued. For thus says holy Scripture, “The LORD said to My Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” And if the meaning of the prophet’s language here be less clear, we may ascertain it from the Apostle Paul, who speaks more openly, thus: “For Christ must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.” But if even that unreserved declaration of the apostle does not sufficiently inform us

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<sup>91</sup> Sarah McLachlan’s touching song, *Angel*, was her response to the heroin overdose death of Jonathan Melvoin, the touring keyboard player of the group, *Smashing Pumpkins*. Ignoring the fact that the “angel” in the song is heroin, some have made this beautiful song, the anthem of the view that at death everyone – a good person or a bad person – goes to “a better place.”

<sup>92</sup> Although the statement often is made that Origen firmly believed these things, it is my opinion that a fair reading of Origen presents a different picture. He clearly states that this is a speculation which he presents for debate. Note his comments in *De principiis*, “These subjects, indeed, are treated by us with great solicitude and caution, in the manner rather of an investigation and discussion, than in that of fixed and certain decision. For we have pointed out in the preceding pages those questions which must be set forth in clear dogmatic propositions, as I think has been done to the best of my ability when speaking of the Trinity. But on the present occasion our exercise is to be conducted, as we best may, in the style of a disputation rather than of strict definition.” Origen, *De principiis*, Book 1, Chapter 6, Section 1 *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Volume 4, page 499

what is meant by “enemies being placed under His feet,” listen to what he says in the following words, “For all things must be put under Him.”<sup>93</sup>

Origen then discussed the meaning of “subjection,” concluding that it is the same relationship that all disciples of Christ, even while in this present world, experience in their relationship with Christ.

According to Origen, this reconciliation/subjection will result in the total removal of all evil. Otherwise, according to Origen, God is not “All in all.”

...and thus God will be “All,” for there will no longer be any distinction of good and evil, seeing evil nowhere exists; for God is all things, and to Him no evil is near: nor will there be any longer a desire to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the part of him who is always in the possession of good, and to whom God is all. So then, when the end has been restored to the beginning, and the termination of things compared with their commencement, that condition of things will be re-established in which rational nature was placed, when it had no need to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; so that when all feeling of wickedness has been removed, and the individual has been purified and cleansed, He who alone is the one good God becomes to him “all,” and that not in the case of a few individuals, or of a considerable number, but He Himself is “all in all.” And when death shall no longer anywhere exist, nor the sting of death, nor any evil at all, then verily God will be “All in all.”<sup>94</sup>

In Origen’s later writings, there are only faint traces of the *apokatastasis* and he seems to have modified his teaching to exclude Satan from final restoration.<sup>95</sup>

Full universal salvation (including Satan) was taught by a well-known later teacher at the school of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa (died 395), as well as by Diodorus of Tarsus (died 394), Theodore of Mopsuestia (died 429) and many Nestorian bishops. Fifteen anathemas against Origen were passed by the local Synod of Constantinople in 543 AD.

Augustine noted that in his day there were some who held to the view of Universalism, but that they were a minor group.

## UNIVERSALISTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Universalism experienced a revival in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Various sects called, “Origenists,” and “Merciful Doctors,” developed in England. Dr. George de Benneville preached Universalist views in Pennsylvania in 1740, but there seemed to be no lasting results from his ministry. John Murray was the founder of the Universalist Church in the United States.

John Murray (1741-1815) was an Englishman of “high Calvinist” background who, through the preaching of Wesley and Whitfield, had become a part of the Methodist movement. He was converted to Universalist teaching by another British Methodist, James Relly (1720- ca.1780). Relly extended Wesley’s “grace to all” to mean that Christ’s sacrifice had purchased salvation, not only for the elect but for the entire human race and as a result all would be saved. This was a drastic departure from the “limited atonement” position of Calvinism.

After being excommunicated by the British Methodists, John Murray arrived in America in 1770. He preached throughout the colonies and finally settled in Gloucester, Mass,

<sup>93</sup>Origen, *De principiis* Book 1, Chapter 6, Section 1, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Volume 4, page 500

<sup>94</sup>*De Principiis* Book 3, Chapter 6, Section 3

<sup>95</sup>*Epistle ad Romans* Book 1, Chapter 8, Section 9; Origen states that Satan will not be converted, not even at the end of the world.

where he found that a small group of Rely's converts had preceded him. In 1779, he organized these into a congregation, which was the first Universalist Church in America. Six years later a convention was held to win legal rights in Massachusetts (legal rights were won in the courts in 1789). In 1793 a New England Universalist convention began to meet.

The man who led the movement to prominence was Hosea Ballou (1771-1852). Ballou was of Baptist background. He was influenced by the liberal sentiments of Boston Congregationalists, many of whom were arriving at Universalist views (chiefly Charles Chauncy). The Boston Congregationalists were emphasizing the goodness of man and the benevolence of Deity. In 1804, Ballou published his *Treatise on the Atonement*, which displayed a shift toward Unitarianism and a substitutionary view of Christ's sacrifice. Ballou defended a "moral theory" of the Atonement, holding that Christ suffered for men, but not instead of them. In 1803 the Universalists adopted the *Winchester Profession*, which became the standard expression of Universalists views, which coined the expression, "salvation by character." Other similar statements were formulated in later decades.

Universalists began publishing a weekly paper in 1819. By the time of the War Between the States, there were state conventions in most northern states. Tufts College (founded 1852) and Divinity School (1869), in Medford, Mass., became its major educational institution, although there were several colleges and seminaries elsewhere.

One thing that contributed to rise of Universalism was the Second Great Awakening. Most of the ministers associated with the awakening were Calvinists. When they saw great numbers coming to repentance, they began to question their hyper-Calvinism and to ask if perhaps all could be saved. In time, some took the leap from "could" to "would" and began to espouse Universalist views.

The movement divided in 1831, when a group that came to be known as the "Restorationists" broke away from the denomination. The Restorationists maintained that the wicked would pass through a temporary state of punishment after death, then be "restored" to God. The original Universalists maintained that there is no punishment for sin, except for the consequences of sinful behavior that one experiences in this life. The Restorationist sect dissolved after about a decade.

Universalism lost ground, as an organization, following the War Between the States, but it did not die, especially in New England. In 1947, a joint commission of Universalists and Unitarians began to meet to lay the groundwork for merger. Total consolidation was completed in 1961, forming the Unitarian/Universalist Society.

## VARIETIES OF UNIVERSALISM

### *Institutionalized Universalism*

As already stated, the original Universalists were biblical, although they quickly began to accept liberal doctrines. The present-day Unitarian/Universalist Association of Congregations is not biblical in its orientation. The following quote from a pamphlet written for inquirers gives insight on this point.

"The most fundamental of all our principles, then, is *individual freedom of religious belief* – the principle of the free mind (emphasis in the original).

Churches, Bibles, and creeds are the creations of those who once exercised their freedom to create. Is there any reason why we should expect to do less?

Unitarian Universalism, then, is an ethical rather than a doctrinal religion, with individual freedom as its method and reason as its guide.”<sup>96</sup>

### ***Ultimate Reconciliation***

A belief system that often has been called, “ultimate reconciliation,” has experienced an ebb and flow over the last century. Generally reflecting the views of the Restorationists, mentioned above (and Origen), those who contend for ultimate reconciliation currently maintain a plethora of internet websites.

In its simplest form, ultimate reconciliation maintains that there is a hell and that those who have not accepted Christ in this life will go to hell for an eon. Some Ultimate Reconciliationists state that people do not go to hell to be punished or purified, as taught in the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, but the unregenerate go to hell where they have an “attitude adjustment.” In the resurrection, everyone, including Satan, will bow the knee to Christ and then will enter into unending heavenly life.

The Concordant Publishing Concern, founded in 1909 by A. E. Knoch, presents one of the most highly developed and systemized ultimate reconciliation concepts. The Concordant Publishing Concern published the Concordant Literal New Testament and at this time is in the process of completing the Concordant Version of the Old Testament. These versions of Scripture reflect the Ultimate Reconciliation eschatology.

The view presented by the many websites compatible with the CPC holds that there are five eons mentioned in Scripture. Each eon (αἰών) has its own world (*cosmos*, system) and they synchronize (Ephesians 2:2). God is the King of the eons (I Timothy 1:17) and made them through Christ (Hebrews 1:2). The first two eons are not mentioned in Scripture, but their corresponding worlds are. Two eons are in the future (Ephesians 2:7). We are living in the present wicked eon (Galatians 1:4). The eons have consummations (I Corinthians 10:11) and a conclusion (Hebrews 9:26). During the eons, some (many/most) will go into eonian (αἰώνιος) punishment (hell). Furthermore, during the eons, God especially is the Saviour of believers (I Timothy 2:4; 4:10). At the consummation (after the eons and the end of the eonian worlds) all will be saved, justified, vivified, and all estranged will be reconciled (Romans 5:18; I Corinthians 15:22; I Timothy 6:13; Colossians 1:20; II Timothy 1:9; I Corinthians 15:26). Death will be abolished, since all will have repudiated sin (Hebrews 9:26) and God will be All in all (I Corinthians 15:28).

During the formative days of the Charismatic Movement,<sup>97</sup> Ultimate reconciliation was taught by Charles Schmidt, a very gifted teacher who was a man of huge influence during this period. He presently leads a large congregation in Silver Springs, Maryland.

The Gospel of Inclusion, as some have labeled the doctrine being espoused by prominent Charismatic leader, Carlton Pearson, falls squarely in the Ultimate Reconciliation camp.

On the website that has been set up to explain this teaching, Carlton states,

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<sup>96</sup> Jack Mendolsohn, *Meet the Unitarian Universalists*, Unitarian Universalist Pamphlet Commission Publication, 25 Beacon Street, Boston.

<sup>97</sup> 1968 – the early 1980’s. During this period, two annual gatherings of leaders set the direction of the Charismatic Movement. One was the annual Apostles and Prophets gathering, held on the east coast. The second was a meeting of 50 leaders, held annually at Glencoe, Missouri. The Glencoe meeting was somewhat covert and was by invitation only. The Shepherding Movement, led by five hugely respected teachers, almost captured the Charismatic Movement during these years. Today most of those who were the dominate leaders of the Shepherding Movement have disavowed the doctrines that they presented in the 1970’s. Many of them have died. The Shepherding doctrines no longer are accepted in most of the Church.

*It is my objective to simply re-present Jesus in a softer and more loving way, being less excluding and more inclusive in His love, tolerance, acceptance, and glorious promise to all.*<sup>98</sup>

We can understand Carlton's motivation. Too often God has been presented as a big all-knowing very stern judge whose sole activity is to keep a ledger and sternly write down everything that we do wrong, so that He can justify the punishment that He has waiting for us. That is an erroneous picture of God.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

However, in order to present Jesus as kind and loving, Carlton has gone too far. He presents a different Jesus and a different Gospel.

Carlton states on his website, *A careful study of early church history will show that the doctrine of universal restoration was the prevailing doctrine of the Primitive Christian Church.*<sup>99</sup>

As we have already demonstrated in recounting the early history of this eschatology, Carleton's statement simply is not true. It was a point of controversy, because Origen was such a popular and influential teacher, but it was strongly opposed by many others. It was not *the prevailing doctrine*. For that matter, as stated in footnote #1, Origen initially presented the doctrine as a *speculation*.

## GOD IS LOVE

Advocates of this doctrine declare that God is love and since love is the overriding definition of god, *eternal hell* is impossible because love never would send anyone to eternal hell.

Two verses frequently quoted by those who present this argument are:

**I John 4:8** *The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love*

**I John 4:16** *We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*

All other scriptural statements are forced to fit under this rubric

Two things are wrong with this argument:

- Love is not the all-encompassing definition of God.
- This statement assumes that how we define love is how God will display love.

### The all-encompassing definition of God is *holy*.

The term, *Holy*, is a virtual synonym for God. Quoting Leviticus, Peter wrote, *but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."* (I Peter 1:15-16)

In the New Testament, the terms, *holy*, *holiness*, *sanctify*, and so on, are renderings of some form of the Greek term, ἅγιος (*hagios*), and its derivatives.

In the Old Testament, these terms are the rendering of קֹדֶשׁ (*qodesh*) and its derivatives.

The basic idea in both the Greek and Hebrew terms is *separation*. When used for God, these terms are describing a being who is totally separate from His creation. He is unique. He is *suigeneris*. There is nothing in all of our human experience that enables us to define him.

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.greater-emmanuel.org/inclusion.html> paragraph 13

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.greater-emmanuel.org/inclusion.html> paragraph 10

The technical theological term that communicates the essence of *holy* is the term, *transcendent*, which means

- *something beyond the limits of possible experience,*
- *something that exists totally apart from the material universe.*

Every race of people has tried to understand God. Consider the Greek and Roman effort.

The Greeks and Romans pictured the gods as a hierarchy of super humans, except that they did not die. The gods traced their origin to mother earth, named, *Gaea*, and father heaven, named, *Ouranos*. After several eons and all sorts of strange creatures and events, Zeus was born. The Romans called him, Jupiter. Zeus became the king and father of the gods. His wife was Hera. The story of the gods was one of giant human propensities – jealousy, greed, lust for power – all of the things that a human emperor might experience. The gods were giant-sized beings with giant-sized egos and emotions. Greek poets wrote about them, Greeks and Romans worshipped them, and tried to appease them, because they seemed more bent on giving man trouble than helping him. The Greek gods delighted in playing games with mankind. From time to time, in their stories, the Greeks pictured the gods as viewing a man as if he were in a maze, and putting obstacles in his way just to see how he would handle it. It was a cruel game.

The Greeks and Romans tried to understand God by envisioning gods who were super-humans. The gods of the Greeks and Romans were not transcendent. They were a part of the material universe and were within the paradigms of human experience.

The true God, however, is transcendent.

- He is beyond the limits of human experience
- We have nothing whereby adequately to comprehend Him, no language adequate to describe Him, or define him.

The term, *holy*, therefore, means “unique, separate, totally beyond the human experience.”

*Holy* and *transcendent* are terms that are synonymous, when used in reference to God. We would not be in error if when we sang the Hymn, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, instead of singing, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, we would sing,

*Transcendent, transcendent, transcendent,  
Lord, God, Almighty;  
Early in the morning, our song shall rise to Thee.*

Because of this, God has, from time to time, given *theophanies* to various men. A *theophany* is something that can be seen, either in a vision or physically, which represents God. Although one is not actually seeing God, when a theophany is given it is as if one were seeing God.

When Abraham was visited by the Angel of Jehovah, prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Angel of Jehovah was a theophany. It were as if Abraham were seeing God Himself (That very same angel, the Angel of Jehovah, led Israel through the wilderness).

- When Ezekiel saw the wheels, fire, and so on, that was a theophany.
- When Moses beheld the burning bush, that was a theophany.
- When Isaiah had a vision and saw the Lord, high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple, that was a theophany.

Scripture states that no one has seen God and lived.

John 1:18 *No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

John 6:46 *Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.*

1 Timothy 6:16 *who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.*

1 John 4:12 *No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.*

However, men have seen theophanies.

Jesus Christ came into the world for two reasons:

- To redeem us from our sins
- To reveal the character of God

For a season, one person of the Godhead left the realm of the unapproachable light, as described in I Timothy 6:16, gave up His glory, and dwelt among us in human flesh.

- John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
- John 1:18 *No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*
- John 12:45 *And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me.*
- John 14:9 *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*
- Colossians 1:15 *And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.*
- Hebrews 1:3 *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

To illustrate: The all-encompassing definition of Jim Garrett is human. Everything else that you say about me reflects my traits, but my full identity is, human.

*Holy* is the same thing in reference to God.

### **Love is not the all-encompassing definition of God; It is one of God's attributes**

As a human I have attributes – you might say that the human, Jim Garrett, is *mean spirited*, or *jealous*, or *kind*. These are my attributes; they are not the all-encompassing definition of who I am. So it is with God. Love is one of God's outstanding attributes.

God has other attributes as well:

- **Jealous**  
Exodus 20:5 *"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,*
- **Hate**  
Malachi 2:16 *"For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."*
- **Anger & Wrath** – These two terms, *anger* and *wrath* are found together in 26 passages that describe God. Here is an example:

Psalm 21:9-10 *You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger; The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath, And fire will devour them. Their offspring You will destroy from the earth, And their descendants from among the sons of men.*

Many other traits of God are described in Scripture, but the point that must be recognized is that love is one of the traits of God, but not the all-encompassing definition of God.

### **Ultimate Reconciliationists are in error when they assume that how they define love is how God will display love.**

This is a faulty assumption even when applied to humans.

- Someone might argue that if you spank your child that you do not love him.
- Someone else might argue that if you love your child you cannot fail to spank him.

The major error in this supposition is equating God's love with the sympathetic, perhaps romantic, kind of love. God's love is *agape* and God defines this love by how He models it, not by how we define it.

**The declaration that love is the all-encompassing definition of God, and that a loving God would not allow anyone to spend eternity in hell, is a faulty declaration.**

### **TWO KEY PASSAGES CITED BY ULTIMATE RECONCILIATIONISTS**

No passage is more important to Reconciliationists than Philippians 2:10-11

*Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus "every knee should bow," of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

This passage teaches that the *authority* of Christ will be acknowledged by all beings, but it in no way indicates that all who acknowledge that authority will be saved. The biblical picture seems to be that at death, each person knows his eternal destiny. The Judgment is an event in which justification for one's eternal state becomes apparent. For those who had opportunity to accept His Lordship in this life, but refused to do so, they will be released from Hades to publicly acknowledge the His Lordship; because they refused it when they had a choice, they justify their damnation and are consigned to hell.

The other passage to which Reconciliationists constantly point is Colossians 1:20.

*and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*

The entire passage must be read in order to grasp understanding of this verse. Suffice it to say Paul elaborates on the reconciliation in the verses that follow, stating,

*Colossians 1:21-23 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.*

The reconciliation will be realized, *if indeed you continue in the faith....* Thus, verse 20 must mean something other than the everlasting ultimate reconciliation of every being.

## SOME ULTIMATE RECONCILIATIONISTS MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN REDEMPTION AND SALVATION.

Carlton Pearson has written,

*The so –called “Doctrine of Inclusionism” or as some call it, the “Theory of Universal Reconciliation,” maintains that Christ’s crucifixion and death on Calvary accomplished its purpose of reconciling all mankind to God. The death of Christ made it possible for God to accept sinful man, and that he has, in fact done so. Consequently, whatever separation there is between man and the benefits of God’s grace is subjective in nature and exists only in man’s mind and unregenerate spirit. The message man needs to hear then, is not that he simply has a suggested opportunity for salvation, but that through Christ he has, in fact, already been redeemed to God and that he may enjoy the blessings that are already his in Christ.*

In another place Pearson comments,

*If the sinner’s debt is cancelled, do you think it reasonable to assume that they are still going to hell? Would that be Christ-like or fair?*

In another section he quotes Kenneth Hagin’s book, *The Authority of the Believer*,

*There is no sin problem, there is a sinner problem. Get the sinner to Jesus, and that cures the problem...The sinner doesn’t know what belongs to him, so it won’t do him any good.*

Pearson responds to Hagin’s statement,

*I agree it won’t do him any good as it pertains to his **overall quality of life here on earth**; but the sinner’s ignorance does not necessarily cancel the potency and ultimate effectiveness of Christ’s finished work at Calvary.<sup>100</sup>*

In other words, all are redeemed and nothing will keep anyone from spending eternity with Jesus. The only advantage to accepting Christ in this life is that one’s life on earth will be better. While on earth one can have the fellowship with God that he will have in heaven and that is the only difference between the saved and the unsaved.

This doctrine not only changes the motivation for evangelism, it also makes it difficult to justify sending dear brothers and sisters to distant nations where life will be difficult, so that they can tell people about the redemptive work of Christ. Would Christ commission his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples, knowing that those who became disciples would be beaten, tortured, and martyred, if the only goal of their preaching was related to this present life?

When someone in a closed society is being beaten, tortured with cattle prods, whipped with a metal cable – as happens all of the time – how does this apply to them? If they are going to spend eternity with Jesus anyway, why experience suffering because you wear the name of Jesus, if that has nothing to do with your eternal fate?

Ponder these two passages

*Hebrews 6:4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. 7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.*

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<sup>100</sup> All of these quotations are from the website, [www.higherd.org/html/gnac.htm](http://www.higherd.org/html/gnac.htm)

Hebrews 10:26 *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and “the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.” 28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, “vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” And again, “the Lord will judge His people.” 31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Peter wrote that the choice is repent or perish.

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for **any to perish but for all to come to repentance.** (2 Peter 3:9)*

Hebrews 12:14 declares that sanctification is required for one to “see the Lord.” The implication of the citation of Esau (12:16) is that one who lives as an immoral or godless person has no hope in some future repentance, no ultimate reconciliation.

*Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.*

*See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;*

*that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.*

(Hebrews 12:14-17)

## **THE ULTIMATE RECONCILIATIONIST UNDERSTANDING OF HEBREW AND GREEK TERMS**

In my opinion, the most challenging argument put forth by advocates of Universal Reconciliation (henceforth we will use the initials “UR”) involves the translation of the Greek and Hebrew terms that most English Bibles translate as *eternity* and *eternal*. The Greek terms are *aion* (αἰών), which most English versions render as *eternity* and *aionios* (αἰώνιος) which most English versions render, *eternal*. The Hebrew term is *olam* (עוֹלָם). The translators who produced the Septuagint consistently chose the Greek term αἰώνιος, to translate this Hebrew term.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, we conclude that in the mind of the Septuagint translators both the Hebrew and Greek terms convey the same sense of time.

We must examine the assertions made concerning these terms before we can evaluate the scriptural arguments for UR. Many pivotal passages related to the topic before us will be impacted by how one renders αἰών and αἰώνιος.

For example, most Christians consider Jesus’ description of the general judgment, as recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, to be “case closed” evidence for the eternal damnation of the lost. The two key verses are 41 and 46.

*Then He will also say to those on His left, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal (αἰώνος) fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41)*

*And these will go away into eternal (αἰώνιος) punishment, but the righteous into eternal (αἰώνιος) life. (Matthew 25:46)*

<sup>101</sup> The Septuagint is a Greek version of the Old Testament, produced by Jewish scribes in Alexandria Egypt in the Third Century BC. The Pentateuch translation as completed c. 250 BC, with the balance of the Old Testament’s being translated over the following seventy-five years.

Because Jesus used the term, αἰώνιος, to describe the duration of the blessed state of the righteous and also the duration of the punishment of the damned, then these two conditions must be of the same duration. Believing that the blessed state of the righteous is eternal, we must conclude that the state of the damned likewise is eternal.

“Not so,” say the UR advocates. They argue that orthodoxy has misunderstood the Greek adjective, αἰώνιος. URs contend that their understanding of the meaning of these terms is based upon their use in Greek literature. They argue that the terms refer to a limited duration. A survey of both biblical and non-biblical literature clearly demonstrates that indeed the noun, αἰών, from which the adjective αἰώνιος is derived, commonly is used in a durative sense (referring to something of limited duration). That being true, we must seek to discover the implications of this fact (for example, how does this influence the understanding of the adjective), and then ask if the terms are used in any sense other than durative. If it can be shown that these terms always have a durative sense (i.e., that there is an end to the duration referenced), then the doctrine of eternal punishment can be questioned.

### THE ULTIMATE RECONCILIATION EONIAN PARADIGM

Ultimate Reconcilianists contend that the Greek noun, αἰών, refers to a particular era or “age,” partitioned and delineated from the rest of time. God’s creative and redemptive events are the markers that set the partitions. The events that began and ended each of the past ages are known, because they are history. The duration of the present age and of the ages to come cannot be known, but they will be clearly partitioned segments of time. According to this view, the terms, *age* and *ages*, refer to specific periods.

There are passages of Scripture in which this clearly is the sense in which the terms are used. As noted earlier, Matthew 28:20 contains Jesus’ promise that as the disciples go forth to make disciples, He will be with them to the consummation of the age. Clearly, this speaks of the age that began with His ascension and will be consummated by His second coming.

Most of us, in contemporary speech, do not use these terms with such preciseness. When someone says, “Oh, that’s been true through all the ages,” he means to convey that something has existed for a long time. Or, when someone says, “He is an eternal pest,” the meaning is that his pestering is constant. When so used, the expression does not mean that one is referring to a series of specific, defined eras.

URs do not consider these terms, in any scriptural passage, to have the ambiguous meaning just illustrated. In keeping with their view, URs believe that the terms rendered *eternity* and *eternal* always must be understood as referring, in some way, to epochal eons. Modern URs have developed an eonian paradigm to conform to their understanding. The following summary will assist in understanding their doctrine.

Here is the Concordant Publishing Concern’s summary of the UR’s eonian scenario.

**“Concerning God’s Eonian Purpose:** The Scriptures speak of God’s wisdom, in a secret, designated *before* the eons (1 Cor.2:7), His own purpose and grace *before* eonian times (2 Tim.1:9), and life promised *before* eonian times (Titus 1:2). Each eon (*aiōn*) has its own world (*cosmos*, system), and they synchronize (Eph.2:2). God is King of the eons (1 Tim.1:17), and made them through Christ (Heb.1:2). Five epochal eons can be found. The first two eons are not mentioned, but their corresponding worlds are. Two eons are impending (Eph.2:7), and we are living in the present wicked eon (Gal.1:4). They have consummations (1 Cor.10:11) and a conclusion (Heb.9:26). God is the Saviour of all mankind at the consummation, but especially of believers during the eons (1 Tim.2:4; 4:10). At the consummation, we find all saved, justified (Rom.5:18), vivified (1 Cor.15:22; 1 Tim, 6:13), and all the estranged, reconciled (Col, 1:20). Death

will be abolished (2 Tim.1:9; 1 Cor.15:26), sin having been repudiated (*cf* Heb. 9:26), and God will be All in all (1 Cor.15:28).”<sup>102</sup>

William W. Bentley Jr. presents a simple outline of the eons and the events related to them.<sup>103</sup> In keeping with the CPC summary given above, Bentley describes Seven Grand Segments of Time:

- the time before the eons,
- the five eons
- the time after the consummation of the eons.

The eons are identifiable as follows (I have added explanatory parenthesis that convey the understanding presented in earlier sections of Bentley’s book).

- 1. Before the Eons**
  - God was all - Romans 11:36
  - Then Christ – John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17 (earlier in his book, Bentley states that God “brought forth” Christ – JWG)
- 2. The First Eon**
  - Christ sets up eons – Hebrews 1:2-3
  - Universe is created – Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 45:18
  - Earth is disrupted (as a result of Satan’s rebellion-JWG) – Matthew 25:34-35; 2 Peter 3:5-6; Genesis 1:2
  - Earth is restored - Genesis 1:3-25
- 3. The Second Eon**
  - Adam and Eve (are created – JWG) – Genesis 1:26-27
  - The Great Flood – Genesis 7:17-24
- 4. The Third Eon (our present Eon)**
  - Noah’s family – Genesis 9:1
  - Abraham called – Genesis 12:1-3
  - Old covenant – Exodus 19:3-6
  - The New Covenant – Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26; Luke 7:12-15; John 11:11-44
  - Jesus born – Luke 1:31-33; 2:6-7
  - Jesus crucified – Matthew 27:35
  - Jesus roused – Matthew 28:6
  - Christ’s revelation to Paul – Paul’s epistles
  - Body Church called away – Ephesians 2:5-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18
  - Great Tribulation & Christ’s second coming – Matthew 24:4-36
- 5. The Fourth Eon (coming next)**
  - The Millennium – Revelation 20:1-10
- 6. The Fifth Eon: Eon of the Eons**
  - New heaven and the new earth – 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1
- 7. After the Eons**
  - Consummation – 1 Corinthians 15:24
  - Death abolished – 1 Corinthians 15:26; 2 Timothy 1:10
  - God is All in all – 1 Corinthians 15:28

<sup>102</sup> *Some of the Special Truths for Which We Stand*, Concordant Publishing Concern website, [www.concordant.org](http://www.concordant.org)

<sup>103</sup> William W. Bentley Jr., *The Simple Story of the Universe, Revealing the Reasons for Everything*, [www.concordant.org/exphotml/SimpleStoryOfTheUniverse/SimpleStoryofTheUniverse.html](http://www.concordant.org/exphotml/SimpleStoryOfTheUniverse/SimpleStoryofTheUniverse.html) pgs. 31-32

This outline displays a form of Dispensationalism, incorporating such elements as a Pre-Tribulation, Pre-Millennial Rapture of the Church, and a literal Millennium. This UR scenario also includes the view that the earth was “recreated” after the chaos created by Satan’s fall, which is a position held by some Dispensationalists.

As with many esoteric doctrinal positions, especially those that are somewhat oblique to the mainstream understanding, there is a mixture of obvious truth and questionable exegesis in this outline and in the Concordant Publishing Concern’s summary, quoted above.

Of obvious note is the rejection of the Trinity.<sup>104</sup> URs (at least those associated with the CPC) contend that before the eons God was All; He then brought forth Christ (described by some URs as, “God’s Creative Original”<sup>105</sup>). The Holy Spirit is not a person, but rather, the Spirit of God, that is bestowed upon all believers. This view of Christ is a virtual template of the heresy of Arius, who early in the Fourth Century AD contended that the Son is a semi-divine being, not begotten, but created by the Father, before the creation of the world.<sup>106</sup> We will not embark on a defense of the Trinity, but needless to say, this definitely departs from the well-established view of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Some of the verses cited as authority for the elements in the outline given above do not appear to be related to the topic, unless one has read UR literature. There is the feel of “proof-texting” in some of the citations. To examine each verse and its application would require more space than we are prepared to allot to the effort. We will note only one of Bentley’s points to illustrate this tendency.

A glaring example of defining a term to fit one’s theology is Bentley’s citing of Matthew 25:34-35 as evidence that the world was “disrupted” during the first eon and then restored at the close of that eon. Here is how the passage reads in the New American Standard Version:

*Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in...*

Bentley cites this passage because verse 34 contains the Greek word, *καταβολή*, which he translates as *disruption [of the world]*. Traditional English versions translate the term, *foundation [of the world]*.<sup>107</sup> Bentley’s definition of this term is common in UR literature, not only in this passage but in others as well.<sup>108</sup>

*Καταβολη* is a composite term that carries the idea, *throw down*, or *lay down*. The term is used for casting seed into the bosom of the earth, and for the male ejaculation of sperm. For example, the term occurs in Hebrews 11:11, in which the aged Abraham is described as receiving power to *lay down seed*, in the founding of his posterity.<sup>109</sup> I have not found any lexicographer who in his survey of Greek literature lists *disruption* as a valid rendering of *καταβολή*. This unusual

<sup>104</sup> For a rather complete treatment of a view of Christ held by many URs, see A.E. Knock, *Christ and Deity*, (<http://www.concordant.org/expohtml/GodAndChrist/ChristAndDeity1.html>)

<sup>105</sup> A.E. Knock, pamphlet, *The Pre-existence of Christ* (Santa Clara, California, Concordant Publishing Concern)

<sup>106</sup> See Bentley, *Simple Story*, html page 4, “The Grand Scheme,” line 2; Part B, “Scriptural Explanations,” Trinity, html page 32; CPC *Simple Truths*, html page 1, “Concerning the Deity,” and “Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.”

<sup>107</sup> ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

<sup>108</sup> Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Lk. 11:50; Jn. 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8

<sup>109</sup> Numerous textual authorities argue convincingly that there was an early corruption of this text and that Abraham should be the subject of the verb, not Sarah. For an excellent but brief discussion, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (United Bible Societies, 1971) pg. 672; also see Kittel, *op city*, Volume III, page 620.

translation seems to be motivated by the UR's need to shore up their contention that the world was "disrupted." The disruption and recreation of the world is a necessary condition for the UR eonian paradigm. Manipulation of the translation is the very thing of which URs accuse traditionalists of doing, when αἰώνιος is rendered as, *eternal*, in selected passages.

One of the passages that URs employ as an argument that ages do end is Hebrews 9:26. It is interesting that they would use this as a proof text for their argument, since this verse defies their eonian paradigm.

*NAS Hebrews 9:26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages (ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων) He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

This verse is an element in the Hebrews argument that the New Covenant sacrifice of Christ is superior to the sacrifices enjoined in the Old Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, the priest, taking not his own blood, but the blood of an animal, each year entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the people. Under the New Covenant, Christ offered His own blood, not that of an animal, and He did it only once. The sacrifice does not need to be repeated.

Hebrews 9:26 states that Christ came into the world in order to make this one-time sacrifice. When did He come into the world to do this? *At the consummation of the ages.* It is an historical event that occurred in the First Century *Anno Domini* (in the year of Our Lord). If, as URs argue, there are five "ages," two are past, we are living the present evil age, and there are two ages in the future, and after the fifth eon the eons will be consummated, then Hebrews 9:26 can't be true. If one chooses to use the term with UR understanding (a definite, partitioned period of time), the present age must be the consummating age and there are no more to come. Furthermore, if one gives the specificity to the terms, αἰών and αἰώνιος, as URs insist, then Scripture contradicts itself, i.e., Scripture speaks of this present age and the age to come,<sup>110</sup> but Hebrews 9:26 states that the consummation of the ages occurred in the First Century. Such uses of the terms αἰών and αἰώνιος illustrate that one cannot give the specificity to the terms that URs insist upon. In each passage, one has to ask, "What is the point being made by this statement and how do the terms relate to the point?"

### AN EXAMPLE OF CONTEXT DETERMINING THE DEFINITION

Ecclesiastes 3:11 has become an important verse in the modern missionary movement. The phrase, *eternity in their hearts*, is an encouragement to missionaries who believe that God has planted in each human heart a yearning for that which is eternal. Because of that yearning, missionaries assume that one of their roles is to unlock that yearning and to meet it with the Gospel of Christ. Here is how the more popular versions render these terms:

*KJV He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*

*NKJV Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.*

*NIV Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*

*NAS Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.*

The King James Version of 1611 rendered the term, *world*. However, other popular versions, including the New King James Version, render the term, *eternity*. Why? The explanation is the fact that the 1611 KJV translators almost always rendered these Hebrew and Greek terms as

<sup>110</sup> Matthew 12:32

*world* (i.e., “end of the world,” rather than “end of the age”). Modern translations, seeking to be more consistent with the Greek and Hebrew terms, render them as *age* or some other time related term. Most recent versions recognize that serious exegesis of the text of this passage requires that the term be rendered, *eternity* in Ecclesiastes 3:11.

In the Keil & Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament*, the highly respected orientalist, Franz Julius Delitzsch devotes several pages to a detailed discussion of this passage. Prior to the exegetical section, in the introduction to Ecclesiastes, Delitzsch summarizes the flow of the thought in the book. Concerning Chapter Three, he writes,

“...Everything has its time appointed by God, but man is unable to survey either backwards or forwards, the work of God, which fills eternity, notwithstanding the impulse to search into it which is implanted within him; his dependence in all things, even in pure enjoyment, most become to him a school in which to learn the fear of God, who maintains all things unchangeably, who forms the course of that which is done.”<sup>111</sup>

In the exegetical section of the commentary, following detailed scholarly discussion of the history of the use of the Hebrew אֶת־הָעֵלָם (rendered in the Septuagint by the Greek τὸν αἰῶνα), Delitzsch summarizes the thought of the passage in the following manner:

“...the impulse of man shows that his innermost wants cannot be satisfied by that which is temporal. He is a being limited by time, but as to his innermost nature he is related to eternity. That which is transient yields him no support, it carries him on like a rushing stream, and constrains him to save himself by laying hold on eternity. But it is not so much the practical as the intellectual side of this endowment and this peculiar dignity of human nature which Koheleth<sup>112</sup> brings here to view.

It is not enough for man to know that everything that happens has its divinely-ordained time. There is an instinct peculiar to his nature impelling him to pass beyond this fragmentary knowledge and to comprehend eternity; but his effort is in vain, for ‘man is unable to reach unto the work which God accomplisheth from the beginning to the end.’ The work of God is that which is completing itself in the history of the world, of which the life of individual men is but a fragment.”<sup>113</sup>

Thus, here is an illustration of a situation in which contextual use requires that a certain understanding be given to terms. In this instance, only *eternity* meets the exegetical/expositional requirement.

A second illustration is Daniel 7:14

*NAS Daniel 7:14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.*

<sup>111</sup> F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* Volume 6, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers, 1989) Page 185

<sup>112</sup> *Koheleth* is the Hebrew pseudonym that the writer of the book uses for himself (Eccl. 1:1). This could have been meant to be a name, or a title, since the term means, “collector (of sentences)”. In most versions, the term is rendered, “preacher” or “teacher.”

<sup>113</sup> Keil & Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 Volume Set, Volume 6, “Ecclesiastes” (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers 1989) page 261

Here the term, *everlasting*, is the only rendering of the Hebrew *olam*, or the Greek *aionios* (Septuagint) that is consistent with the declarations that follow, *Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed*. Thus, context clearly defines the terms for us.

## **A SURVEY OF AION (αἰών) and AIONIOS (αἰώνιος) IN BIBLICAL AND NON-BIBLICAL LITERATURE**

URs contend that their understanding of these terms is the result of their study of Greek literature. In order to evaluate that claim, we will examine classical Greek literature, as well as biblical Greek literature.

### **Classical Greek Literature**

From the time of Heraclitus (c.540-c.480 BC) and Empedocles (c.490-430 BC), philosophers made use of the term αἰών in discussing the problem of time. Generally, αἰών was considered to refer to the period of time allotted to each specific thing (for example, a man's lifetime is his αἰών).<sup>114</sup>

The difficulty in determining the meaning of αἰών and αἰώνιος, in both biblical and non-biblical literature, is illustrated by the manner in which Plato and his student Aristotle used these terms. Plato gave one meaning to these terms, whereas Aristotle gave a contradictory meaning. Plato (c.428- c.347 BC) departed from the general use of the term, αἰών. In his dialogue, *Timaeus* (written c.360 BC), he used the term, αἰών, to refer to timeless, ideal eternity, in which there are no days or months or years. Plato chose the word, χρόνος, to refer to the relative time allotted to a being (one's life-span). Plato considered χρόνος to be a characteristic of the world, which was created at the same time as the world and is a "moving image of eternity."<sup>115</sup>

Aristotle (384-322 BC) was a student in Plato's Academy. He adhered to the more traditional understanding of these terms. He used the term, αἰών, to refer to the period of time allotted to each specific thing (a man's lifetime is his αἰών). He gave to αἰών a definition similar to but not identical to the meaning that Plato had given to χρόνος. Aristotle considered the world to be eternal, and consequently the world's αἰών [lifetime] is eternal.

Commenting on the world's αἰών, Aristotle wrote in *De Caelo*, Book II, Part One,

"...boundless time: Accordingly, the entire universe neither has come into existence nor is it possible [for it] to be destroyed. But is one and eternal, having

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<sup>114</sup> A rather complete survey of the use of these terms and their evolution is found in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) Volume I, pgs. 197-209.

<sup>115</sup> When He saw it to be moving and living, to the eternal gods (τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν), it had become a thing of joy, the Creating Father rejoiced. And being delighted *nn*He conceived the thought of finishing it more exactly like the Model; and as this [Model] was eternal (ζῶον αἰδίων, i.e. *eternal living thing*) he sought to make the universe of a like kind, so far as might be possible. Now the nature of the Living Thing [the Model] was eternal (αἰώνιος); to bestow this attribute in its fullness upon a creature was impossible. Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity (Εἰκὼ κινητὸν τινα αἰῶνος), and when He set in order the heaven, He made an eternal (αἰώνιος) image of that Eternity (αἰώνιον) which rests in unity, but moving according to number, and this image we have named, "time." *Timeaeus* 37d (JWG translation)

Of special note in this passage is the manner in which Plato uses the two terms, αἰδῖος and αἰώνιος. He uses the first of these terms for the gods and the Father Creator, and the "Model." Then, he uses the second term for the Model, both expressing the eternal nature of the Model, a nature that cannot be bestowed upon the created universe. Clearly in this passage the two terms are used as synonyms.

no end or beginning of its entire duration [*aion* αἰών], but having and embracing in itself of endless time.”<sup>116</sup> (JWG rendering)

Thus, for Aristotle, the term αἰών did not necessarily mean *eternal*. The term referred to the lifespan of someone or something, whether eternal or durative. If the entity to which αἰών referred were eternal, then that being’s αἰών is eternal.

The fact that Aristotle was Plato’s student, and that the student gave a different meaning to αἰών than did his teacher, illustrates the difficulty in assigning a single definition to the terms under question.

## Biblical Literature

Scripture reflects the same pattern of ambiguity in the use of these terms. First, we cite examples of the durative use of these terms in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. We then cite examples which traditionally have been understood as being other than durative.

### The durative use of αἰών, αἰώνιος, and עולם in Scripture.

#### *Old Testament examples in which the terms are used with a durative understanding*<sup>117</sup>.

- The Septuagint declares in Habakkuk 3:6, *the everlasting*<sup>118</sup> *hills melted at his everlasting going forth*<sup>119</sup>.

Since Scripture clearly declares that all of this present material universe will be destroyed,<sup>120</sup> the existence of the hills cannot be unending. Even this verse declares that the *everlasting* hills “melted” at His *everlasting* going forth. This is an example of using these terms to describe an entity (hills) that has existed or will exist for a long time, but will not last forever. Whether or not the going forth of Yahweh, as described in this verse, is *unending* (referring to His eternal existence) or for a particular period, is ambiguous.

- Another example from the Septuagint is Exodus 21:6, *his master shall bring him to the judgment-seat of God, and then shall he bring him to the door, to the door-post, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him for ever*.<sup>121</sup>

In this passage, *serving forever* clearly means to serve until the end of one’s life. It does not mean that throughout eternity a man will be bound in slavery to the one who was his master on earth.

- Genesis 9:16 provides another interesting example, *When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant*<sup>122</sup> *between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.*

<sup>116</sup> ...χρόνος ἄπειρος: ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὔτε γέγονεν ὁ πᾶς οὐρανὸς οὔτ’ ἐνδέχεται φθαρῆναι... ἀλλ’ ἔστιν εἰς καὶ αἰδίου ἀρχὴν μὲν καὶ τελευτὴν οὐκ ἔχων τοῦ παντὸς αἰῶνος, ἔχων δὲ καὶ περιέχων ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν ἄπειρον χρόνον

<sup>117</sup> In each of the Old Testament verses the Hebrew term is עולם; it is represented in the Septuagint by the Greek terms, αἰών or αἰώιος.

<sup>118</sup> αἰώνιος in the Septuagint; עולם in the Hebrew text

<sup>119</sup> αἰώνιος in the Septuagint; עולם in the Hebrew text

<sup>120</sup> 2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

<sup>121</sup> Septuagint: δουλεύσει αὐτῷ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα; Hebrew: וְעָבְדוּ לְעַלְמָא

<sup>122</sup> Septuagint: διθήσεται αἰώνιον; Hebrew text: ברית עולם

The covenant is everlasting in that God never will destroy the earth by a flood. Therefore, as long as the earth exists the covenant will stand.<sup>123</sup> *Everlasting*, in this verse refers to the period of the earth's existence (the meaning that Aristotle assigned to αἰών).

***New Testament examples of the durative use of Greek term.***

- Matthew 28:20 *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*<sup>124</sup> (KJV – end of the world).

In this final verse of Matthew's account of the Great Commission, Jesus promised that He would be with the Church as it made disciples of the nations. He said that He would be true to this promise even to the end of the αἰών (*aion*), which in this passage is best rendered, *age*. This clearly refers to an αἰών that will terminate.

- Matthew 12:32 *And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in **this age**, or in the **age** to come.*<sup>125</sup>
- Ephesians 1:21 *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in **this age**, but also in the one to come.*<sup>126</sup>

In both the Matthew and Ephesians passages, αἰών describes an “age” that will be followed by another age. Thus, the term is used in a durative sense, referring to an age that will pass away.

Most lexicons have lengthy entries concerning αἰών and αἰώνιος. The subtlety of meanings associated with these terms requires more than just a passing definition. An inductive investigation of the use of these terms, in all literature, results in the conclusion that αἰών and αἰώνιος convey the sense of *indefinite time*, i.e., no one knows the end, or the end is not in sight. For example, as already noted, αἰών can be used to describe the life of a man, because no one knows how long that man will live.

The term also is used in the sense that as long as the thing referred to is in existence, then that which is said about it will be true. For example, as already noted, the phrase, *everlasting hills*, refers to the hills' indefinite existence, to which there is no known or assignable limit.

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<sup>123</sup> Of course, when the earth no longer exists, because God will have brought forth a new heaven and a new earth, the earth still will have not destroyed it by a flood.

<sup>124</sup> ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος

<sup>125</sup> Literally, *neither in this age nor in the coming*

<sup>126</sup> Literally, *not only in this age but also in the coming*

Charles Hodge comments on the biblical use of these terms,

“It is objected... that the word “everlasting” is sometimes used in Scripture of periods of limited duration. In reference to this objection it may be remarked

(1) that the Hebrew and Greek words rendered in our version, eternal, or everlasting, mean duration whose termination is unknown. When used in reference to perishable things, as when the Bible speaks of “the everlasting hills,” they simply indicate indefinite existence, that is, existence to which there is no known or assignable limit. But when used in reference to that which is either in its own nature imperishable, or of which the unending existence is revealed, as the human soul, or in reference to that which we have no authority from other sources to assign a limit to, as to the future blessedness of the saints, then the words are to be taken in their literal sense.

If because we sometimes say we give a man a thing forever, without intending that he is to possess it to all eternity, it were argued that the word “forever” expresses limited duration, everyone would see that the inference was unfounded....

(2) ...the Bible says that the worm never dies and the fire never is quenched.<sup>127</sup> We have therefore the direct assertion of the Word of God that the sufferings of the lost are unending.... If that doctrine, therefore, be not taught in the Scriptures, it is difficult to see how it could be taught in human language.<sup>128</sup>”

Hodge presents a reasonable conclusion, but there is a problem with his statement, “...then the words are to be taken in their literal sense.” The core question of the debate is, “What is the literal sense of these Greek and Hebrew terms?”

#### **New Testament examples of passages in which αἰώνιος refers to past time without an assigned or known limit.**

- Romans 16:25 *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, (literally: in times of undetermined length<sup>129</sup>)*
- Titus 1:2 *in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago (literally: in times of undetermined length)*
- 2 Timothy 1:9 *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, (literally: before times of undetermined length).*

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<sup>127</sup> *And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, {where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.} And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than having your two feet, to be cast into hell, {where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.} And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. (NAS Mark 9:43-48)*

<sup>128</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Volume Three, Part IV, “Eschatology” (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1975) pgs. 876-877

<sup>129</sup> In each of the three verses cited, the KJV contains the phrase, *before the world began*, reflecting the influence of Ephesians 1:4.

### New Testament examples of passages in which αἰώνιος is used to refer to Divinity.

- Hebrews 9:14 *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal Spirit** offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*
- Romans 16:26 *but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the **eternal God**, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;*

### New Testament examples of passages in which the term is used to refer to the life, the graces, and provisions, that the redeemed will receive from God.

- John 3:36 *"He who believes in the Son has **eternal life**; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*
- Titus 1:2 *in the hope of **eternal life**, which God, who cannot lie, promised **long ages ago***
- 2 Peter 1:11 *for in this way the entrance into the **eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.*
- Revelation 14:6 *And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an **eternal gospel** to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;*
- 2 Corinthians 4:17 *For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an **eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison,*
- 2 Timothy 2:10 *For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it **eternal glory**.*
- 1 Peter 5:10 *After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His **eternal glory** in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*

URs disagree with the rendering, *eternity*, or *eternal*, in all of the above passages.

## THE CONCORDANT VERSION

Of special interest is the UR produced, *Concordant Literal New Testament*, and the *Concordant Version Old Testament* (see Addenda A for fuller discussion of this version).

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Adolph Ernst Knoch began work on what became the Concordant Version. Knoch died in 1965, but his successors continued the work. Knoch and his associates formed the Concordant Publishing Concern, which publishes the Concordant Version.

Knoch correctly discerned that αἰών and αἰώνιος refer to indefinite time. He chose not to attempt the translation of the terms, but to transliterate them, as the KJV translators had done with the Greek term, βαπτίζω (coining the now familiar English term, *baptism*).<sup>130</sup> Thus, each time the term, αἰών, occurs, the CV reads, *eon*. The adjective, αἰώνιος, is rendered, *eonian*. This practice not only removed the difficulty of translating a difficult term, but it also produced a version that does not conflict with the UR eonian paradigm.

<sup>130</sup> There is a great difference between the problem associated with translating βαπτίζω and the terms, αἰών and αἰώνιος. βαπτίζω clearly means to “immerse” or other English terms synonymous with immerse. The reason for transliterating the term was the theological storm that raged over whether to immerse or to sprinkle. The KJV translators avoided the conflict by choosing to not translate, but to transliterate – producing a new word for the English language.

Many URs argue that the noun, αἰών, should be translated as, *age*. James Corm of the Concordant Publishing Concern argues that even though this correctly communicates the sense of the term in most instances, such a rendering causes problems because there are usages in which αἰών requires an understanding other than "*the epochal eons of Scripture*," (emphasis in the original).<sup>131</sup>

Furthermore, Corm argues, translating αἰών as *age*, presents a problem when rendering the adjective, αἰώνιος. If the sense of *age* is to be retained, this would result in awkward terms such as, *age-pertaining*, or *age-lasting*.

In the passages quoted above (from the NAS), the Concordant Version<sup>132</sup> reads, *the aeonian God, eonian life, eonian Kingdom, eonian Gospel*, etc.<sup>133</sup>

Transliterating rather than translating removes the problem for the translator, and forces the reader to decide what the terms mean in context. Whether or not this is a good practice is open to question, but if that is the process, how should the reader understand these terms?

James Coram gives us the CPC's answer when the terms are applied to God.

“Finally, let us consider the phrase ‘the eonian [*aiōnion*] God,’ found in Romans 16:26. ‘The eonian God,’ speaks of the God of the eons, even as ‘the French language’ speaks of the language of France. He Who is the King of the eons (Rev.15:3), is the eonian King. Similarly, as the supreme God of the eons, He is the eonian God. Even as God is the God of Israel, He is also the God of all the earth. And, even as He is the *eonian* God, He is also the God of all duration, whether past or future. The titles “the God of *Israel*” and “the *eonian* God,” do not confine the Deity to these relations; instead, such titles simply *speak of* such relations, drawing our attention to them accordingly.

The notion of ‘lastingness’ is neither expressed nor entailed in the Greek adjectival ending. *Aiōnion* (or *aiōnios*) no more means eon or ever-*lasting*, than *ouranion* (‘heavenly’) means heaven-*lasting*. Hence the rendering, as in the Authorized Version, “[ever]*lasting*,” is quite wrong.”<sup>134</sup>

The purpose of Coram's argument is to deflect the assertion that the terms under question are used in Scripture with the meaning, “eternity,” or “eternal.” If it can be demonstrated that they are so used in reference to God, then that opens the possibility that they might be used in that sense in those passages in which they refer to the fate of the damned. So, let's look at the argument that the use of these terms in reference to God should not be viewed as describing God as *eternal* or *everlasting*.

First, we must ask if there is Greek terminology that we could use to describe God as eternal. Indeed, there is. For example, one could employ the language used to describe Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:3

<sup>131</sup> J. Coram, *Eon as Indefinite Duration*, Part One, page 1 (<http://www.concordant.org/exphtml/TheEons>)

<sup>132</sup> *Concordant Literal New Testament and the Concordant Version of the Old Testament*

<sup>133</sup> The same practice is followed in the Old Testament in the rendering of ml"A[

<sup>134</sup> James Coram, [www.concordant.org/exphtml/TheEons/eon2.html](http://www.concordant.org/exphtml/TheEons/eon2.html), *Eon as Indefinite Duration* Part 2, The Eonian God,

*Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life*<sup>135</sup>, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest *perpetually*.<sup>136</sup>

The *having neither beginning of days nor end of life God*, is one way in which God's eternity could be expressed. In Greek, six words are used to make this statement (seven, if one includes the term, *God*). Who would want to use an expression like this every time he wanted to express God's eternity, if there were another option.

What about the last term in Hebrews 7:3, rendered as *perpetually* in the NAS? The Greek uses three terms to make this statement, which literally says, *into the continuing* (or *perpetuity*). Not only is this an awkward expression, but it also presents only one aspect of eternity. It speaks of endlessness, but it says nothing about not having a beginning.

Is there a better solution? I believe that there is and it is by using the Greek term, αἰώνιος.

Is there anything that forbids our using this term to refer to eternity? In discussing αἰών and אָוֶן and their use, James Coram writes,

“There does not seem to be anything in the word itself that would *definitely* preclude at least the possibility that it *could* be used in reference to an unending duration (since, after all, all the word says is, ‘duration’).<sup>137</sup>

Of course, Coram rejects the idea that the words ever are used to refer to unending duration, based on the research of another writer published by the Universalist establishment. Coram quotes John Wesley Hanson, a Universalist writer of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,

I do not know of an instance in which any lexicographer has produced the usage of *ancient* classical Greek in evidence that *aion* means eternity. *Ancient classical Greek rejects it altogether* (by ‘ancient’ he means the Greek existing anterior to the days of the Seventy).<sup>138</sup>

The “Seventy” referring to the scribes that produced the Septuagint, did their work after 250 B.C. We have shown that Plato and Aristotle, in one way or the other, a century before the Seventy, in one case assigned and in the other case by inference allowed the concept of eternity to be associated with the term. Thus, we have to conclude that Universalist Hanson's research is faulty.

Since an inductive study of the terms leads us to conclude that these terms imply indefinite time or indefinite duration, meaning that the end is not in view or cannot be known (whether the view is directed to the past or to the future) is this not a description of eternity? Of course, the URs would argue that *indefinite duration* inherently implies a point of termination, even though the specifics of that termination cannot be known. We must remember that the term, *duration*, is the URs chosen term to give understanding to the Greek words; It is not necessarily the correct term. However, if we allow *duration* to be the underlying idea of these terms, I would argue that this does not necessarily imply a season that has an end. God's αἰών, His duration (the period of His existence), is eternal (the duration is defined by the entity to which it refers). On this basis, αἰών and αἰώνιος appropriately could be used to describe God's eternal existence – indefinite, the end is not in view, it cannot be known, because there is no end.

Two arguments from classical Greek might be made to justify the use of the term to communicate the idea of *eternal*. The first argument is patterned after Plato. Remember that

<sup>135</sup> μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μέτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων

<sup>136</sup> εἰς τὸ διηνεκές

<sup>137</sup> James Coram, *op cit*

<sup>138</sup> John Wesley Hanson, *Aion-Aionios*, p 12; Chicago: Northwestern Universalist Publishing House, 1875, as quoted by James Coram, *op cit*.

Plato departed from the general use of the term, αἰών, and gave it a technical meaning in his writings. From the context in which he used the term, it is clear that he “accommodated” the term, αἰών, and used it to refer to timeless, ideal eternity, in which there are no days or months or years (see discussion above). Furthermore, according to some who have surveyed ancient literature, Plato seems to have coined the adjective, αἰώνιος, and used it to describe the “eternal image” of the αἰών (see the Plato *Timaeus* quote contained in footnote #22).<sup>139</sup> The writers of the New Testament did the same thing with various Greek terms. For example, *logos*, first was accommodated by the Gnostics; they used the term to refer to their secret knowledge. In his Gospel, which is a polemic against Gnostics, John accommodated the term from the Gnostics and gave it a Christological meaning. Did the writers of the New Testament follow Plato in giving the meaning, *eternity*, to the noun? If they did, then the adjective derived from the noun would be understood as *eternal*.

On the other hand, what if the writers of the New Testament chose to use the noun as classical writers generally used it (as exemplified by Aristotle i.e., the period of time allotted to each specific thing - for example, a man’s lifetime is his αἰών). In that case, the adjective, αἰώνιος, would refer to something related to God’s lifetime. I would argue that that since God has no beginning and no end, and that His αἰών therefore is eternal (without beginning and without ending), it is appropriate to translate the adjective, αἰώνιος, as, *eternal* when modifying *God, Father, Christ, Spirit*, or any other term specifying a member of the Godhead.<sup>140</sup> On this basis, I would contend that *Eternal Spirit* and *Eternal God* are appropriate. I also would argue that this traditional rendering conveys the idea that the passages in question seek to convey.

If we take at face value the Concordant Publishing Concern’s claim that transliteration moves the burden of definition from the translator to the reader, and that this is a good thing, then I contend that the best understanding that the reader can have of these terms in reference to Divinity is *eternal*. The only reason to do otherwise is to make the language fit into the UR *eonian* paradigm.

## POLYPTOTONIC USE OF αἰών and αἰώνιος IN SCRIPTURE

Exaggeration to make a point is a common practice in most languages and understood as such when it is used. For example, when asked who was at a party, one might reply, “Oh, everyone was there.” The meaning, of course, is that the party was well attended; the speaker did not mean that every person on the face of the earth attended the party. This is called *hyperbole*. It is not deceptive exaggeration. It is a well understood figure of speech.

Scripture often uses hyperbole to make a point. For example, in Genesis 22:17, we find God’s promise to Abraham,

*indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.*

Using the figure of the stars of the heavens, which are beyond estimation (it often is stated that there are 100,000,000,000 stars in our own galaxy and that there are 1,000,000,000 other galaxies) plus the figure of the uncountable grains of sand on a beach, make the point that

<sup>139</sup> Coram quotes Hanson again, on this topic. Hanson, according to the Coram quote, stated that Ezra S. Goodwin “patiently and candidly traced this word through the Classics, finding the noun frequently in nearly all the writers, but not meeting the adjective until Plato, its [apparent] inventor, used.”

<sup>140</sup> URs that reject the concept of the Trinity, would object to the term, *eternity*, in reference to Christ and the Holy Spirit, regardless of the terms used.

Abraham's descendants would be beyond number. Yahweh expressed this truth through an hyperbole, an exaggeration that everyone understands is not to be taken literally.

Related to the hyperbole is the *polyptoton*. A polyptoton is the repeating of a word for emphasis. In English, for example, one might say, "It was a big, big, mountain." Scripture is replete with polyptotons. In the verse just quoted, Genesis 22:17, the Hebrew reads, *multiplying I will multiply*, and the NAS appropriately renders it, *I will greatly multiply*.

Another well-known Old Testament polyptoton is *Holy of Holies*, which means, *Most Holy Place* (Exodus 26:33, *et al.*) One could say that polyptotons are as numerous in Scripture as the "sand which is upon the seashore."

Αἰών frequently is used as a polyptoton to emphasize an incomprehensible length of time, most often (but not exclusively) in reference to God. Nine times in the New Testament this polyptoton is used in a doxology, ascribing glory, and other attributes to God, concluding with *amen*. Here are the instances in which this is true (because the English translation does not always reflect the polyptoton, we have highlighted the terms by which it is rendered).

- Galatians 1:5 *to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.*
- Ephesians 3:21 *to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*
- Philippians 4:20 *Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*
- 1 Timothy 1:17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*
- 2 Timothy 4:18 *The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*
- Hebrews 13:21 *equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*
- 1 Peter 4:11 *Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
- 1 Peter 5:11 *To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.* (only in the Scrivener/Beza Text)
- Revelation 1:6 *and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
- Revelation 7:12 *saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."*

In all of these passages, the Greek states, *into the ages of the ages* (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων), with the exception of Ephesians 3:21, which reads, *into all the generations of the age of the ages* (εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων).

Note that the above quotes are from the pens of Paul, Peter, and John (and another writer, if one rejects the Pauline authorship of Hebrews), demonstrating how common was the practice of expressing incomprehensible time through the use of a polyptoton.

Here are other passages in which this polyptoton is used to describe God.

- Hebrews 1:8 *But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom."*
- Revelation 1:18 *and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.*

- Revelation 4:9 *And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives **forever and ever**,*
- Revelation 4:10-11 *the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives **forever and ever**, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created."*
- Revelation 5:13 *And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion **forever and ever**."*
- Revelation 10:6 *and swore by Him who lives **forever and ever**, Who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer,*
- Revelation 11:15 *And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign **forever and ever**."*
- Revelation 15:7 *And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives **forever and ever**.*
- Revelation 22:5 *And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign **forever and ever**.*

As in the nine doxologies quoted earlier, the Greek in all of these passages is, *into the ages of the ages* (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων), with the exception of Hebrews 1:8, which reads, *into the age of the age* (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος).

The only basis by which one might argue that the polyptoton in the verses quoted does not refer to eternity, are those verses that speak of the Son's having dominion for eternity. This argument is based on I Corinthians 15:24-28.

*then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.*

URs argue that since the Son will surrender the Kingdom to God the Father, the polyptoton in the verses referring to the length of the Son's rule cannot mean eternity. This argument is an uncertain argument, however, when one exegetes the verses in question. In every controverted verse, with one exception, the passage can be understood to refer to God the Father, rather than to the Son, or to both of them together. The exception is Hebrews 1:8.

*But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of his kingdom."*

Does the fact that the throne of the Son is forever and ever mean that he is not subject to the Father? Certainly not. For that matter, several of the verses quoted in Revelation speak of the Father and Son in shared glory.

Therefore, in these verses in which the αἰών polyptoton is used to describe Divinity – the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit – the concept of eternity is an appropriate understanding. *Forever and ever* is a good way to express this concept.

In addition to referring to Divinity, the αἰών polyptoton is used to describe the fate of the key players in Satan’s realm, as well as the fate of those who accepted their rule. Here are the three uses of the polyptoton in reference to these entities:

- Those who worship the beast (Revelation 14:11)  
*"And the smoke of their torment goes up **forever and ever**; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."*
- The great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication (Revelation 19:2-3)  
*"Because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her." And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up **forever and ever.**"*
- The devil, the beast, and the false prophet (Revelation 20:10)  
*And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night **forever and ever.***

The terminology in these verses follows the common pattern noted above, *into the ages of the ages* (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων), except for Revelation 14:11, which reads, *into ages of ages* (εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων).

Since the polyptoton is used to describe the everlasting existence of Divinity, it is logical to assume that the use of the polyptoton in the verses describing the fate of Satan and his minions also refers to eternity. As an aside, note that there is no hint of ultimate reconciliation in any of these scenes.

## CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE GREEK TERMS

The preceding summary of the UR argument based upon Greek and Hebrew, demonstrates that the linguistic argument is not a simple matter. However, as the above pages have shown, the UR argument is not proven by their linguistic evidence. Since the Church throughout history, with the exception of isolated pockets, has held to the eternal existence of the redeemed in heaven and the eternal existence of the damned in hell, the burden of proof lies on the URs to prove their opposing view. Linguistically, they fail, unless one makes the assumptions upon which their doctrines rest. A doctrine based upon assumptions is not sound doctrine.

### A Final Assessment of Matthew 25:41-46

*Then He will also say to those on His left, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the **eternal** fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me." Then they themselves also will answer, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?" Then He will answer them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." These will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life**.*

Since αἰώνιος is the term used to describe both the life of those on the right and the fire which is the fate of those on the left, we must choose from one of the following four options:

1. **Annihilation** – since what is said about the damned will be true as long as they exist, then as long as the damned live they will be in *ainonos fire*. At the close of the eons they will be annihilated. No Ultimate Reconciliationist would accept this view because they believe in restoration to God where all will live forever.
2. **Both the damned and the righteous will have a limited life, then it's all over.** No Ultimate Reconciliation advocate teaches anything like this. They teach that every being in the universe will live forever with God who becomes All in all.
3. **There will be a chain of eons and the eonian life that the believer enjoys is coexistent with the aeonian hell of the lost.** At the end of this aeon, all will be reconciled to Christ. Since this teaching is based on the eschatology of the Concordant Publishing Concern, and all Scripture is made to fit into that scheme, rather than a firm exegetical basis, this view is highly suspect.
4. **The damned will be forever in hell and the righteous will be forever in heaven.**

The last option is the one that the Church at large (in the historical section, we noted those who presented an aberrant view) has held from the beginning of Christianity. In my opinion the Orthodox view (option 4) is the one that fits most comfortably with the entire corpus of Scripture.

## CONCLUSION

Ultimate Reconciliationists and Universalists seek to present a kinder Gospel. One certainly can empathize with their motives. However, the Gospel that they present is a drastic departure from the historic Gospel that has been proclaimed by the church at large from the apostolic era until the present.

***But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.***

(Galatians 1:8)

## ADDENDUM H

### RELEVANT ECCLESIASTICAL COMMENTS ON BAPTISM

#### LUTHER'S SERMON ON BAPTISM

Vol. II, Page 75, of his works edited in 1551

“The term 'baptism' is a Greek word; it may be rendered into Latin by *mersio*: when we immerse anything in water, that it may be entirely covered with water. And though that custom be quite abolished among the generality (for neither do they entirely dip the children, but only sprinkle them with a little water) nevertheless they ought to be wholly immersed, and immediately to be drawn out again, for the etymology of the word seems to require it. The Germans call baptism '*tauf*' from depth, which they call '*tief*' in their language; as if it were proper those should be deeply immersed, who are baptized. And truly, if you consider what baptism signifies, you shall see the same thing required, for it signifies that the old man and our native character that is full of sin, entirely of flesh and blood as it is, may be overwhelmed by divine grace.

The manner of baptism, therefore, ought to answer to the signification of baptism, so that it may show forth a sign that is certain and full.”

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#### JOHN WESLEY

Explanatory Notes on the New Testament

Published by G. Lane & C.B. Lippett

For the Methodist Episcopal Church at the Conference Office

200 Mulberry St.

Joseph Longkinge, Printer

1846

New York

**Page 220 (comments on Romans 6:4)** "Alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion."

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#### NEW CATHOLIC BIBLE

##### Confraternity - Douay Version

Imprimatur: Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York

The Catholic Book Publishing Co.

1957

**Footnote on Romans 6:3:** “St. Paul alludes to the manner in which Baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive Church, by immersion. The descent into water is suggestive of the descent of the body into the grave, and the ascent is suggestive of the resurrection to a new life. St. Paul obviously sees more than a mere symbol in the rite of Baptism. As a result of it we are incorporated into Christ's mystical body and live a new life.”

## ADDENDUM I

### JOSEPHUS' DESCRIPTION OF HEROD'S JEALOUSY OF ARISTOBULUS, RESULTING IN THE DROWNING OF ARISTOBULUS

#### An Example of the Definition of the Greek Term, βαπτίζω, (*baptidzo*)

And now, upon the approach of the feast of tabernacles, which is a festival very much observed among us, he (Herod) let those days pass over, and both he and the rest of the people were therein very merry; yet did the envy which at this time arose in him cause him to make haste to do what lie was about, and provoke him to it.

For when this youth Aristobulus, who was now in the seventeenth year of his age, went up to the altar, according to the law, to offer the sacrifices, and this with the ornaments of his high priesthood, and when he performed the sacred offices,<sup>9</sup> he seemed to be exceedingly comely, and taller than men usually were at that age, and to exhibit in his countenance a great deal of that high family he was sprung from, - a warm zeal and affection towards him appeared among the people, and the memory of the actions of his grandfather, Aristobulus, was fresh in their minds; and their affections got so far the mastery of them, that they could not forbear to show their inclinations to him.

They at once rejoiced and were confounded, and mingled with good wishes their joyful acclamations which they made to him, till the good-will of the multitude was made too evident; and they more rashly proclaimed the happiness they had received from his family than was fit under a monarchy to have done.

Upon all this, Herod resolved to complete what he had intended against the young man. When therefore the festival was over, and he was feasting at Jericho<sup>10</sup> with Alexandra, who entertained them there, he was then very pleasant with the young man, and drew him into a lonely place, and at the same time played with him in a juvenile and ludicrous manner.

Now the nature of that place was hotter than ordinary; so they went out in a body, and of a sudden, and in a vein of madness; and as they stood by the fish-ponds, of which there were large ones about the house, they went to cool themselves [by bathing], because it was in the midst of a hot day.

At first they were only spectators of Herod's servants and acquaintance as they were swimming; but after a while, the young man, at the instigation of Herod, went into the water among them, while such of Herod's acquaintance, as he had appointed to do it, dipped (βαπτίζοντες)<sup>141</sup> him as he was swimming, and plunged him under water, in the dark of the evening, as if it had been done in sport only; nor did they desist till he was entirely suffocated. And thus was Aristobulus murdered, having lived no more in all than eighteen years, and kept the high priesthood one year only; which high priesthood Ananelus now recovered again.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>The nominative, plural, masculine, present, active participle of βαπτίζω)

<sup>142</sup> Josephus Jewish Antiquities, Book 15 Chapter 3 Section 50-56  
<http://www.biblical.ie/page.php?fl=josephus/Antiquities/AJGk15#03>