



ROMANS

Paul's Exposition of “Salvation by Grace Through Faith”

A Study of the Epistle to the Romans

Chapters 1-16

Twenty Lessons

*With Outline, Introduction, and
Class Questions for Each Lesson*

By: Reg Ginn

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THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

1. **Paul's letter to the Romans is important**, of course, because it is an inspired communication from one of Jesus' own chosen apostles to a group of Christians who needed, as we do, divine guidance in matters which ultimately would determine whether or not they would be able to claim their place in heaven.
2. **Romans has almost always been given special attention** by scholars and serious Bible students as a book deserving of the most careful attention because of its basic theme which grapples with the most fundamental of all possible themes-- "what role does Jesus Christ fill in God's plan for man's salvation, and how does that role impact man's responsibility to God?"
3. **Romans has also commanded attention** by its lofty language, the rationality with which Paul addresses the issues that troubled the minds of certain believers in Rome, the fearless approach he uses as he challenges their thinking about highly controversial questions, and the personal and very human identification he claims with those matters.
4. **The testimony of Bible commentators** about the significance of Romans has been profuse:
 - a. **The Book** has almost invariably been placed first in the canon of epistles as a tribute to its fundamental importance to the gospel of Christ and to those disciples who seek to grasp the essential message of that gospel.
 - b. **Samuel Coleridge**, poet, philosopher, and theologian, said that Romans is "the profoundest book in existence."
 - c. **Martin Luther**, Reformation leader, said, "For it can never be read too often and too well.. And the more it is used the more delicious it becomes and the better it tastes."

- d. **R. C. Bell**, gospel preacher and writer, declared, “If gifted, godly men over the centuries have found matter and inspiration for deep, profound study of Romans, the book must merit, require, and reward such study. It is not a book to be only tasted, or hastily swallowed: it is a book to be chewed and digested! It cannot be read as a mere pastime; it is not designed to be a substitute for a game of canasta, or an after-dinner cigar. Romans is meant for serious, eager students of the deepest and highest things in life...”
5. **The origin of the Roman church** is unknown, but it was evidently established some years before this letter was written to it, according to 1:8 and 16:19 [their faith and their obedience were known “throughout the whole world”] and 1:13 and 15:23 [Paul for “many years” had desired to visit the church]. Probably, “sojourners from Rome” (Acts 2:10) had returned home following the events of Pentecost and had begun meeting and working as a church in their home city.
6. **The author of Romans** is clearly Paul the apostle, so identified in the very first verse of the book. Paul was uniquely equipped to write an epistle about these profound issues to such a divided and divisive reading audience. He was a “man of letters” who was intimately acquainted, both by education and by experience, with the Jewish law and the true relationship of the Jews to that law.
7. **The purpose of Romans** lies in Paul’s deep desire to “see Rome” (Acts 19:21) and personally to “impart some spiritual gift” to the saints there (1:11,13). He planned to visit Spain at some future date, and he hoped that the Romans might assist him in that plan (15:24). Paul’s immediate purpose was to tell the church at Rome about things they needed to understand *immediately*.. Such teaching would not wait until after his ministering to the saints at Jerusalem had been completed (15:25,28).
8. **The place of writing** was likely Corinth (Acts 20:3). Even as Romans was being written, the church at Corinth figured prominently in Paul’s closing remarks: [1] *Phoebe*, whom he commended to the Roman church, originally came from Cenchrea, Corinth’s seaport town; [2] *Erastus*, who joined with Paul in greeting the Romans, was treasurer of “the city” (16:23) and had “stayed in Corinth” as Paul later wrote to Timothy from a Roman prison (2Timothy 4:20); [3] *Gaius* was Paul’s “host” while he wrote the letter to Rome (16:23), and this possibly is the same “Gaius” whom Paul had baptized while at Corinth (1Corinthians 1:14).
9. **The time of writing** was probably in the winter or spring of 58 A.D.
10. **The THEME of Romans** might be stated: “God is righteous and has revealed in the gospel a righteousness available to *all* believers in Christ.” Some considerations within this theme:

- a. **“Righteousness”**-- the state of being right with God. It is “imputed” (reckoned, accounted) to believers (4:11) who are righteous, not because they have *not* sinned, but because God treats them *by grace as if* they had not sinned. This is the “perfection” promised by Jesus to His disciples (Matthew 5:48).
- b. **“Revealed”**-- only in the gospel can righteousness be found. It was in God’s mind from the beginning, but it was only “made known” to all *nations* (Matthew 28:19) by the “commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith” (16:25,26). The Gospel is man’s “map” to God’s greatest treasure-- salvation!
- c. **“Provided”**-- salvation is not earned by man’s deeds under any law or plan (3:20; Ephesians 2:8,9).
- d. **“Believers”**-- obedient people who are true believers in Christ (John 3:16; Acts 16: 30-34; Acts 2:41).
- e. **“All”**-- Jews and Gentiles are treated alike under the gospel (2:11; Acts 10:34,35).
- f. Passages in Romans that reflect this theme: 1:16,17; 2:6-11; 3:21,22; 4:11. Perhaps the clearest statement is in 3:26: “..to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” [NKJV].

11. **Principles** in Romans to observe:

- a. Romans does not deal primarily with the justification of aliens “by faith,” although all salvation is “by faith.”
- b. Righteousness is a *continuing* requirement. God continues to provide it for believers who continue to be obedient. Much of the book deals with the *saved*, not the *lost*.
- c. Problems about church members and the Law of Moses; church members and sin; church members and personal relationships receive much attention in the letter.
- d. Romans was written to those “called to be *saints*” in Rome.

ROMANS

“God’s Righteousness in the Gospel”

General Outline

- I. God’s Righteousness: Revealed in the Gospel (1:1-17)**
- II. God’s Righteousness: Needed by All (1:18-3:20)**
- III. God’s Righteousness: Given through Faith (3:21-4:25)**
- IV. God’s Righteousness: Solving the Problem of Sin (5:1-6:23)**
- V. God’s Righteousness: Overcoming the Curse of the Law (7:1-25)**
- VI. God’s Righteousness: Providing for Man’s Needs (8:1-37)**
- VII. God’s Righteousness: Fulfilling the Hope of Israel (9:1-11:36)**
- VIII. God’s Righteousness: Demanding Righteous Lives (12:1-15:13)**
- IX. God’s Righteousness: Enhancing Relationships (15:14-16:27)**

Quotations and References are taken from the New King James Version [NKJV].

I. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL (1:1-17)

- A. Paul and his credentials. (1-6)
 - 1. A servant. (1)
 - 2. An apostle. (1)
 - 3. An agent of God and of the gospel. (2-4)
 - 4. An instrument for salvation. (5-6)
- B. The Romans. (7-8)
 - 1. Called to be saints. (7)
 - 2. Commendable faith. (8)
- C. Relationships between Paul and Roman Christians. (9-15)
 - 1. Paul's desire to visit Romans. (9-10)
 - a. To impart a spiritual gift. (11)
 - b. To promote mutual comfort through mutual faith. (12)
 - 2. Paul's previous efforts to visit Rome. (13)
 - 3. Paul's commitment to the Gentiles. (14-15)
- D. Announcement of Paul's theme. (16-17)
 - 1. Gospel is God's power to save all believers. (16)
 - 2. Gospel reveals God's righteousness for man. (17)
 - 3. Gospel motivates men to believe. (17)

Text-- 1:1-17**1:1-- "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ..."**

- a. Paul, whose "new" name meant "little," had aspired to high worldly status when he was "Saul" ["lent to God"]. His physical credentials as a Jewish servant of the Law were impeccable (Phil. 3:4-6). His advancement in power and influence among other servants of the Law was significant (Gal. 1:13,14).
- b. His early ambition and zeal for the things of Moses had been replaced with a profound humility and commitment that caused his brethren in the flesh to scorn and hate him intensely (Acts 14:19; 2Cor.11:24) and his brethren in the spirit to glorify God because of who he had become and what he was doing in the cause of the Son of God (Gal.1:24).
- c. In his own mind, Paul was now only a slave ["doulos"] to whom the accolades of worldly people meant nothing (Phil.3:7-11).

1:1-- “called to be an apostle...”

- a. Like all other Christians, Paul had been “called” by the Lord to share in the blessings of salvation (Matt.11:28-30), but he had *also* been “separated” from other men by another call that was shared with few others. Jesus had chosen and equipped Paul to serve Him as an *apostle* [“one sent”] with a special mission to the Gentiles, to “open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:17,18).
- b. This was an awesome challenge, but confidence in his Master had made him confident in his abilities as a servant to do the crucial work of an apostle (1Co.15:10; 2Co.11:5).

“separated to the gospel of God...”

- a. Paul had been seized by Jesus and transformed from *enemy* into *champion* of His cause on earth.
- b. Although circumstances had prevented Paul’s eligibility for the apostleship [he had not been in the company of the disciples during the whole of Christ’s public ministry and was not qualified to be a first-hand witness of Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 1:21,22)], the Lord had made a post-resurrection appearance to Paul [Saul] both to change his own thinking about Christ’s resurrection and to validate his testimony when he should testify to others about the reality of that momentous event (1Cor.15:8).

1:2-- “which He promised before through His prophets...”

- a. The message of the gospel about the Sonship and Lordship of Jesus was not something fabricated by Paul in an effort to justify to other Jews his abrupt departure from the faith of their fathers.
- b. Instead, it was “good news” that had long been proclaimed to Israel and that had been cherished by those who believed the preaching of Israel’s prophets from Isaiah to Malachi [e.g., Isa.9:6,7; Mal.4:2,3].
- c. It was important that Jews understand that the gospel was not a new religion concocted just to appeal to a Gentile audience. It enjoyed a connection with the Law and the Prophets that should have made it especially appealing to Israel.
- d. The gospel should also be attractive to Gentiles who could discern the *continuity* and *stability* of a religion that could trace many of its roots to events and teachings that stretched centuries into the past. Their own pagan religions usually did not enjoy such characteristics as these.

1:3,4-- “concerning His Son Jesus Christ...”

- a. The prophecies of Jesus embedded in the Old Testament had described His dual nature as: (1) A physical being [“according to the flesh”] who would appear in the lineage of David (Hosea 3:5), and (2) A spiritual Being [a “spirit of holiness”] who was eternal and who was totally impervious to any human influence that might seek to defeat His mission on earth (Psalm 72).
- b. Christ’s genealogies, whether traced through the lineage of Joseph (Matthew 1:1-17) or through Mary (Luke 4:23-38), confirms Jesus’ fleshly credentials as the offspring of David. The genealogies, of course, played no part in His spiritual “origins.” That was proof that could be supplied to the world only by the power of heaven.

- c. Heaven furnished its proof of Jesus' divine nature: (1) by the impact of teaching that indicated a teacher who was very different from human teachers (Matt.7:28,29); (2) by the testimony of heaven-inspired witnesses such as John the Baptist (John 1:29-34); (3) by the Scriptures that He fulfilled in His coming and in His work (John 5:39); (4) by the miracles performed by Jesus that attested both to His own spiritual power and to the Father's endorsement of His work among men (John 5:36,37).
- d. Even such strong statements as these failed to convince many people that Jesus is the Christ. Some even among the *apostles* demanded something more (John 20:24-29).
- e. The resurrection furnished adequate proof to every sincere heart. It "declared" the Sonship in a display of power that was strong enough to convince any skeptic who would consider the evidence it provided. This was a resurrection completely independent of any "third party" participation such as had attended other known resurrections. Witnesses of the risen Christ never again had any reason to doubt the reality of His divinity or the authenticity of His claims to the spiritual Lordship of the world.
- f. Some scholars prefer the translation "*of the dead*" as a reference to the raisings in which Jesus personally participated in His ministry. The power needed to raise others was the ultimate proof of His relationship to God. However, most of the leading translations [KJV, ASV, RSV, NKJV, Confraternity (Catholic), etc.] offer "*from the dead*" in reference to Jesus' *own* resurrection. Additionally, several men had acted in the past and others would act in the future as God's agents in physical resurrections (e.g., Elisha, 2Kings 4:34-37;13:21; Peter, Acts 9:36-42; Paul, Acts 20:9-12). But what was *totally different* about the resurrection of Jesus was that He returned to life and *never again* died as other resurrected people did.

1:5,6-- "from whom we have received grace and apostleship..."

- a. Jesus' grace [favor] had been extended to Paul and the other twelve apostles ["we"] first in their personal salvation and then in their special apostleship.
- b. Their personal salvation was for their own benefit; their apostleship was intended for the benefit of others (verse 14).
- c. Their labors would glorify the "name" of Jesus [by proclaiming the totality of what He means to a lost world] when:
 - (1) They preached "the faith" [gospel] to all nations (Matt. 28:19);
 - (2) Sinners obeyed the commands of the faith (2Thes.1:8);
 - (3) The "call" of the gospel (2Thes.2:14) had been answered by the "called of Jesus Christ" throughout *all* nations.
- d. Paul's concept of "salvation by faith in Jesus Christ" did *not* promote faith without works of obedience to gospel commands. "Obedience of faith" meant to Paul exactly what "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" meant to James (James 2:24). Both understood that a faith not expressed in obedience is dead (James 2:26; Romans 6:16-18). No reference by Paul to a *saving faith* in the Roman letter should be misconstrued as *salvation by faith only*!

1:7-- "To all who are in Rome..."

- a. All [Christians] in Rome, as a result of obedient faith in Jesus as the Christ, were:
 - (1) Beloved of God-- what a comfort it is to know that God loves us!

- (2) Saints [“sanctified”... “set apart”... “holy”]-- every Christian is a saint, even when his conduct falls short of his profession [Consider 1Cor.1:2 and 3:3].
- b. Faithful saints could expect God’s continued blessings in the form of:
- (1) Grace. Divine favor would be expressed in ways too numerous to count;
- (2) Peace. Turbulent surroundings are much less threatening to a Christian who has a peaceful relationship with God in his heart (Phil 4:6,7).

1:8-12-- “First, I thank my God...”

- a. Christians in Rome apparently had done well amid contrary circumstances. Their faith was strong. Their *obedience* had become known to all (Rom.16:19) through reports carried from the empire’s first city into “all the world.” Paul was grateful that such widespread publicity of their conduct served to promote rather than to repress the influence of the gospel in the lives of people in other places.
- b. Paul could hardly fail to have special feelings toward such special people as these. They were worthy of his unceasing prayers. They also deserved some personal contact with the apostle that would encourage them toward further faithfulness in serving the Lord. Paul recognized that encouragement is always mutual among the people of God. He would get a blessing from them while they were being blessed with his apostolic visit.
- c. Paul intended to give some “spiritual gift” to the Romans when opportunity permitted. The exact nature of this gift is obscure.
- (1) It might have been a miraculous power that none of them possessed and that would be useful in the functioning of the church in Rome. The church already had the special gift of prophecy and other gifts that may or may not have had supernatural qualities (Rom. 12:5-8). Many of the spiritual gifts listed in 1Corinthians 12:6-11 are not attributed to the Romans, so there was plenty of room for more help in doing their work if this was a miraculous gift.
- (2) Whatever its nature, this “spiritual gift” would help to “establish” the saints more firmly in the faith. Either kind of gift, miraculous or non-miraculous, would serve that purpose.
- (3) Helping to strengthen *their* faith would be an encouragement to Paul’s *own* faith. Fellowship [joint participation] in any phase of the Lord’s work will always have a positive effect on those who join together in that work. It has been so since the beginning of the church (Acts 2:41-47).

1:13-15-- “Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren...”

- a. Evidently, Paul had previously communicated to the Roman church his intention to make a visit to their city. His desire for such a visit had even reached the planning stage on numerous occasions, but his plans had always been hindered and his purpose could not be accomplished.
- b. Personal contact with the Roman church could have two important outcomes:
- (1) Paul would have the opportunity to work among them as an apostle and produce some “fruit” just as he had been able to do among other Gentiles in various locations;
- (2) The Romans would be given an opportunity to assist Paul in making a journey

to Spain (Rom.15:24,28). Although we are not told anything about the nature of the work he wanted to do in Spain, helping him do the work would in turn be of spiritual value to the Roman saints. It is important that Christians maintain a sense of brotherhood with other Christians throughout the world and accept a measure of responsibility to help save the lost everywhere (Mt.28:19,20).

- c. Paul's sincerity about visiting Rome may have been questioned by some people who said that shame was really responsible for his delay. Perhaps, they thought, he was intimidated by the prospect of preaching an unsophisticated message in the sophisticated society of the Roman capital (1Cor.1:18-25) and was too ashamed to say so.
- d. This was not the first of Paul's plans that God "vetoed." Earlier, he had wanted to preach in Asia and Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit would not permit it (Acts 16:6,7). God had something else in mind for Paul to do that better fit *His* plan (Acts 16:9,10). Perhaps plans to visit Rome also had been changed by heavenly intervention.
- e. But, as "God was his witness," Paul would never be deterred from fulfilling his obligation to *all* the lost or to allow any personal consideration to keep him from *any* of the lost. When God was ready for him to preach at Rome, *Paul* was ready, too!

1:16,17-- "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..."

- a. In case his attitude toward the gospel he was preaching was not fully understood by everyone, Paul addressed specifically this accusation that he might be embarrassed to preach the *power* of the cross in the very center of the *power* of the Roman sword.
- b. Paul was convinced that the gospel possessed a power that could do for men what no other power in all the earth could do. Rome was well-acquainted with the power of military force, the power of political office, the power of financial resources, and with the power of social status, but not *one soul* could be rescued from the fires of hell by the intervention of any of them. While it was clear that accepting the truths of the gospel would not guarantee any improvement in the mundane circumstances of believers, the eternal salvation of their souls was far more worthwhile for them than any other advantage they might enjoy in this world!
- c. The gospel was the expression of God's power [*"dunamis"*]. The powers of men could be diminished or destroyed by what might happen in the world, but God's power was *totally* under His control, and no other power could affect its operation in the redemption of lost men.
- d. Of course, in the light of the superiority of the gospel's power to all other powers known to men, there was no reason for any man to be ashamed to boldly proclaim the gospel message to *any* audience in *any* location. R.L. Whiteside observes:

"...even at Rome; where riches, pomp, and glory are alone held in admiration, where the heights of genius and learning are united with the greatest profligacy of manners; and where, consequently, the humbling doctrines of a religion which demands severe self-denial would be likely to attract derision, and might make the preacher and professor of it as it were ashamed.

"But why should anyone be ashamed of the gospel? It has God as its source, Jesus Christ and his plan of salvation as its subject matter, the Holy Spirit as its Revelator, the highest ideals as its philosophy of life, and heaven as its ultimate goal. To be ashamed of the gospel is to be ashamed of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. Should a person be ashamed to be a child of the ruler of the universe, ashamed of being a citizen of the glorious kingdom of Christ, ashamed to be striving for heaven and immortal glory?"

- e. The saving gospel had *first* been preached to the Jews (Acts 2); *later* to the Gentiles (Acts 10). This order reflected no favoritism on God's part (Acts 10:34,35) toward some people over others. Instead, it merely sought to take advantage of the greater preparation for receiving the gospel that the Jews had enjoyed (Luke 1:17). It was God's plan from the beginning that *all* men would be given the *same* opportunities (Genesis 12:3).
- f. The key to the gospel's power was in the fact that it revealed "the righteousness of God" to man. It was not that the gospel revealed how righteous ["right, "just"] God is when He deals with men. That had been widely portrayed in the Old Testament. Rather, the gospel shows men how to be righteous when they deal with God.
- g. Paul told the Corinthians that only through a revelation from God could man understand God's "mind" (1Cor.2:10-13). Man's way [to righteousness--"being right"] has *never* been in himself. "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Only the gospel could direct man's steps in the right direction.
- h. This truth provided man his most urgent motivation to respect the power that lies in the gospel. Man's righteousness results only from man's [obedient] faith in Christ as God's Son and man's Lord. It is "from [the result of] faith." Man must understand that he can be right with God in no other way than that revealed in the gospel. That understanding motivates sincere seekers to have faith in what the gospel reveals about Christ as the Son of God and the Lord of man so they may *be* righteous. Thus, righteousness is "*from faith to faith*."
- i. These verses are usually characterized as the theme of the book of Romans. While there are other statements that also hold thematic qualities, Paul's declaration regarding the power of the gospel which he preached certainly reflects the central message that he will try to convey to the Romans as he develops that message in the remainder of the letter.

1. Paul declared himself to be an "apostle." What were his qualifications? (Cite Scripture)
a. _____
b. _____

What qualificaion could he not meet? _____

2. What two basic facts about Jesus are found in the gospel?
a. _____
b. _____

3. The _____ declared Jesus to be the _____ of _____ with _____.

4. Paul's apostleship was for _____ of _____ among all _____.

5. The Roman brethren were the _____ of _____, who were called to be _____.

6. The _____ of the Romans was spoken of throughout the _____.

7. What did Paul pray for with respect to the church at Rome? _____

8. He wanted to _____ a _____ to them that they might be _____.

9. Paul was a _____ to both _____ and _____, to _____ and _____.

10. He was _____ to _____ the _____ to those at _____ also.

11. He was not _____ of the _____, for it was the _____ of _____ to _____.

12. The gospel would save all who _____, the _____ first and also the _____.

13. The _____ of God is _____ in the _____ from _____ to _____.

14. "The _____ shall live by _____."

15. Extra question: What does "from faith to faith" mean?

II. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: NEEDED BY ALL (1:18- 3:20)

- A. Gentiles were guilty of sin because of disobedience. (1:18-32)
1. Had a manifestation of God in nature. (18-20)
 2. Fell into idolatry despite their knowledge of God. (21-23)
 3. God gave them up to vile passions of the flesh. (24-27)
 4. Reprobate minds led to ungodly conduct of all kinds. (28-32)

Text--- 1:18-32**1:18-- “For the wrath of God is revealed...”**

- a. Later in this book (11:22), Paul warns his readers to be careful to consider the *two* sides of God's character. He is gracious to those who obey Him, but He is severe toward the wilfully disobedient. His judgements are *fair* toward all men.
- b. Paul was unashamed to preach a gospel that offers redemption to people of honest hearts (verse 17). He was also not ashamed to warn wicked and dishonest men that their chosen lifestyle of ungodliness will bring them to eternal ruin. God is *fair* when He sends a message that accurately foretells the ultimate destiny of its hearers, whatever may be their conduct before Him.
- c. God's [legal] *justice* requires that He reward good men and punish wicked men. His inherent *love* prompts Him to save as many as possible from destruction as long as His *love* does not conflict with His *justice*. The gospel satisfies both attributes of the Father. He gave His Son on the cross to pay the price for man's sin to address the issue of *justice*. Now, His great *love* can offer salvation to those who “live by faith.”
- d. All “ungodliness” and “unrighteousness” will become the object of God's wrath, not His grace. Ungodliness [*asebeia*] is “want of reverence toward God, impiety, worldliness” (Thayer, 79). It is “general impiety” (Vine, 1193). Unrighteousness [*adikia*] is “iniquity” (Vine, 1196). It is sometimes associated more with bad conduct toward mankind, while ungodliness is connected more with bad relationships with God. Thus, *every* sin will be punished, whether against divinity or humanity.
- e. Sin “suppresses” [*katecho*] or “holds down” the truth. Not only is the immediate practitioner driven further from the positive influence of truth each time he acts sinfully but also he contributes to the spiritual negativity of his society, and he makes it more difficult for others to focus on things that are healthful for the soul.

1:19, 20-- “...because what may be known of God is manifest in them...”

- a. Paul's primary emphasis in this entire passage is to show how foolish the various nations had been to exchange what they knew about God's power and divinity for systems of idolatry that were at best irrational and at worst totally disrespectful of the goodness of the Godhead in blessing mankind so wonderfully and so consistently.

- b. This emphasis was directed especially toward Gentiles, who had plunged headlong into ridiculous extremes of idolatry. The Romans had largely adopted the idolatrous practices of Greek society to their own. The Greeks offered an interesting dichotomy. While they were intensely proud of their intellectuality and rationality about mundane matters, they had also popularized a system of religion that was contradictory in almost every respect to the powers of reason and observation that they cherished so deeply. Roman religion [as well as that of most of the nations within the empire] was equally in conflict with the practical, common sense qualities so typically displayed by Roman accomplishments in everything else.
- c. The gospel presented no such contradictions between heavenly things and earthly things. Its followers would not be embarrassed by trying to reconcile the fundamental contradictions contained in idolatrous religions. The spiritual message of the gospel was harmonious with the physical message that men observed in the creation.
- d. Many things about God were *not* known by Gentile peoples. Certainly, the things that opened salvation to them were not understood. Paul is speaking instead of what they should have believed through the centuries about God's *power* and *Godhead* [divinity-- *theiotes*-- "The attributes of God, His Divine nature and properties" (Vine, 331)].
- e. The nations were "without excuse" in ignoring what they should have known about the *nature*, *power*, and *expectations* of the Godhead. This knowledge had come to them in two ways: (1) they had been "shown" these attributes; (2) they had observed the things that were "made" by the Godhead. The *nature* of the true God was displayed both in His *power* to create and in the *expectations* He had for what He had created. The historical behavior of the nations denied the reality of *both* basic characteristics of the Godhead.
- f. There is much we cannot know about the what and the when of God's revelation of Himself to Gentile peoples. But *three* channels of information seem possible:
 - (1) The natural creation was ample evidence of the *wisdom* and *power* of God. The beauty, complexity, and the unity of all created things [including man] attest to both qualities. "For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God" (Heb.3:4). Not only does the creation necessitate a Creator but also the *quality* of the creation testifies to the *quality* of that Creator:

"The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech or language
Where their voice is not heard.
Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world." (Psalm 19:1-4)

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"Know that the Lord, He is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." (Psalm 100:3)

- (2) Revelations from God to man from earliest times had transmitted knowledge about the lofty character of the Godhead and about the high expectations that

God had for man to reflect that same character in his own behavior toward his Maker and toward other men. “Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt.5:48).

- (a) Certainly, patriarchs like Adam, Noah, and Abraham received extensive information about the character of God as He dealt with them. Such men provided an opportunity for nations other than the Jews to learn about the holiness and dominion of the God who had made the world.
- (b) Melchizedek, Pharaoh, Rahab and other non-Jews in the Old Testament had knowledge about the true God and serve to indicate that such information was not confined to Israel.
- (c) The captivities of the Jews were channels through which the truths about God’s character and pre-eminence were made available to other nations.
- (3) There was also in man an inner awareness, or *conscience*, by which even the pagans could differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate treatment of other people. Whether this perception was innate or was formed through man’s God-given powers of reason as he dealt with others in life situations, it served as a strong influence among all nations in the determination of what was *right* [righteous] and what was *wrong* [unrighteous] in human behavior.
- g. No nation or individual could claim any justification for immorality or misconduct because God had withheld His expectations and they did not know how they should live. They were all “without excuse.”

1:21-23-- “...because although they knew God...”

- a. God had two expectations of the creatures who had been made in His own image:
 - (1) The creature should acknowledge the superiority of the Creator’s wisdom and power over his own;
 - (2) The recipient of good gifts should be thankful to the Giver for those gifts.
- b. The nations had failed in **both** responsibilities:
 - (1) They abandoned heavenly truth and embraced their own human wisdom [“futile thoughts”-- *mataios*-- “that which is without result or success” (Weust, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, I-32)];
 - (2) They “professed to be wise” in their pursuit of human rationality and became engrossed with a sense of self-importance and self-determination;
 - (3) They changed [exchanged] the glory of God’s *real* nature into perverted concepts of “deities” far inferior in nature and far less worthy of their worship.
- c. This great apostasy from the knowledge of God to the adoration of idols had not happened all at once. Rather, it was a progression. It probably began with men resenting that they were “being told” instead of “telling” what they could and couldn’t do. Taking control of their lives first involved changing a *superior* God with whom they had no voice for *man-like gods* for whom they could speak when they wanted. Next, the desertion of true Deity degenerated into the worship of still lesser beings-- birds, beasts, and even creeping things of the earth. Some likely were chosen because they were *beneficial*, others because they were *feared*. Most were represented by physical images [idols] to which worshipers could easily relate through their

physical senses. Thus, the exchange of a God who could *not* be seen and who demanded absolute obedience for gods that *could* be seen and who made no real demands on them was finally completed.

- d. The consequences of this drastic exchange were devastating:
 - (1) They exchanged light for darkness. The precious light of truth about God was gradually diminished by their erroneous reasonings until it was completely extinguished. Then, man's heart struggled to find its way in total darkness;
 - (2) They exchanged real wisdom ["the *right* use of the mind"] for foolish ["senseless"] thought processes that led *away* from truth rather than toward it;
 - (3) They exchanged a God who was worshiped because He was immensely superior to themselves for gods that were worshiped despite the obvious fact that they were no better than the worshipers, and in many cases were far inferior.
- e. The ultimate foolishness of idolatry was illustrated by Isaiah's ridicule of men who made and worshiped images of their own choosing (Isa.44:15-17). He observed that they cut down trees, from which they both made fires to cook their food and carved out images to worship. Then they prayed to the "divine" part of the tree that became their "god": "Deliver me, for you are my god."

1:24-27-- "Therefore God also gave them up..."

- a. There is a point at which the Lord will cease to be tolerant of man's foolish actions. Evidently, He judges that the likelihood of repentance no longer exists (Heb.6:4-8). Man's fixed purpose to abandon God may result in God's "giving him up" to the consequences of his decisions.
- b. Two possibilities exist about the "giving up" of these idolaters:
 - (1) God removed all influences that might restrain their headlong plunge into the practices of image worship;
 - (2) God actually hastened their involvement in despicable practices so that the resultant consequences would sooner be demonstrated to them.
- c. People who had immersed themselves in idolatry were "given up" to:
 - (1) The lust of their hearts to do evil things;
 - (2) Uncleanness in their personal activities;
 - (3) Behavior controlled by a "lie" rather than by the "truth;"
 - (4) Vile ["dishonorable"--Vine, 1210] passions that drove them to do things that were completely contrary to their God-given nature;
 - (5) The dishonor [abuse] of their own physical bodies "among themselves";
 - (a) Women abused themselves unnaturally with other women;
 - (b) Men engaged in shameful homosexuality with other men;
 - (c) The penalty of this "error" was "due" to be experienced "in themselves": either they suffered severe physical debilities brought on by constant dissipation, or they were engulfed in terrible mental and emotional struggles with feelings of frustration, uselessness, hopelessness, and despair that often result from long-lived self-indulgence.

1:28-- “And even as they did not like to retain God...”

- a. The drastic change in men’s attitude toward the God of heaven was not caused by circumstances beyond their control. It came rather as the result of *deliberate choices* on their part. They did not like [choose] to retain God in their view of the world. Their minds were “debased” [“reprobate”-- *adokimos*-- “not standing the test, not approved” (Thayer, 12)]. They had given God His chance as the driving force in their universe, and they decided they liked better some other explanation for things as they were in the physical world.
- b. When men get caught up in their own self-importance and self-worth, it is unlikely that they will tolerate anything that might be seen as a threat to the exalted role into which they have cast themselves. God stands no chance until those people learn that “...the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jer.10:23). So, He “gave them up” to do what *they* thought best. They could learn by their own sad experiences where the road of self-reliance leads.

1:29-31-- “...being filled with all unrighteousness...”

- a. The alarming exchange made by the nations when they abandoned God’s ways for their own had led them into the most depraved and despicable lifestyles. Paul compiles a list of the sins that had overwhelmed those who had chosen idols rather than the true God. His assessment of the depths of depravity into which idolatry had driven the Gentiles is indeed alarming. They were “filled with *all* unrighteousness.”
- b. If Paul regards “ungodliness” as disrespect for God and “unrighteousness” as the mistreatment of other people, it is clear that the loss of respect for God in the hearts of the Gentiles had led them to lose respect for mankind as well. While it is difficult to categorize the sins, or in some instances to discriminate among them, most of them obviously relate to man’s treatment of man in the physical world.
- c. The original meanings of Greek words sometimes elicit a broader understanding of what a writer seeks to convey to us. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (W.E .Vine) and Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Joseph Henry Thayer) provide some insight into the repulsion felt by Paul as he enumerated the sins of the Gentile nations. Consider the list below [NKJV]:

d.	<u>The Sin</u>	<u>Greek Term</u>	<u>Original Meaning</u>
	(1) Fornication	<i>porneia</i>	“Illicit sexual intercourse” (Vine, 465).
	(2) Wickedness	<i>porneria</i>	“Evil in influence and effect, malignant” (Vine, 1240).
	(3) Covetousness	<i>pleonexia</i>	“A desire to have more, always in a bad sense” (Vine, 255).
	(4) Maliciousness	<i>kakoetheia</i>	“An evil disposition that tends to put the worst construction on everything” (Vine, 714).
	(5) Envy	<i>photonos</i>	“The feeling of displeasure by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others” (Vine, 377).

<u>The Sin</u>	<u>Greek Term</u>	<u>Original Meaning</u>
(6) Murder	<i>phonos</i>	“Slaughter” (Thayer, 657).
(7) Strife	<i>epis</i>	“Contention...wrangling” (Thayer, 249); “The expression of enmity” (Vine, 1105).
(8) Deceit	<i>dolos</i>	“A bait, snare; craft, deceit” (Vine, 281).
(9) Evil mindedness [See maliciousness]	<i>kakoetheia</i>	“Bad manner or character” (Vine, 914); “Evil dispositions” (<u>Berry’s Interlinear</u>).
(10) Whisperers	<i>psithuristes</i>	“Secret slander, detractor” (Thayer, 677).
(11) Backbiters	<i>katalalos</i>	“Speak against, speak evil” (Vine, 96).
(12) Haters of God	<i>theostuges</i>	“Exceptionally impious and wicked” (Thayer, 288).
(13) Violent	<i>hubristes</i>	“One who, uplifted with pride, heaps insulting language upon others or does them some shameful act of wrong” (Thayer, 633).
(14) Proud	<i>huperephanos</i>	“Showing oneself above others, pre-eminent” (Vine, 908).
(15) Boasters	<i>alazon</i>	“An empty pretender” (Thayer, 25); “A wanderer about the country, a vagabond” (Vine, 138).
(16) Inventors of evil things	<i>epheuretes</i>	“Contriver, to find out” (Vine, 609).
(17) Disobedient to parents	<i>apeithes</i>	“Unwilling to be persuaded” (Vine, 321).
(18) Undiscerning	<i>asunetos</i>	“Stupid; has no mind for the things which make for salvation” (Thayer, 82).
(19) Untrustworthy	<i>asunthetos</i>	“Covenant-breaking; faithless” (Thayer, 82). “Perfidious” (<u>Berry’s Interlinear</u>).
(20) Unloving	<i>astorgos</i>	“Love of kindred, esp. of parents...and children” (Vine, 39).
(21) Unforgiving	<i>aspondos</i>	“Cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant, implacable” (Thayer, 81). “Not of a nature to be pacified” (Webster).
(22) Unmerciful	<i>anelamon</i>	“Without mercy, merciless” (Thayer, 44).

1:32-- “...who, knowing the righteous judgment of God...”

- a. There was a universal “knowledge” among the Gentiles that certain behaviors were unacceptable in their societies and other behaviors were allowable. A sense of right and wrong either resulted from practical experiences or had been instilled through ancient revelations from God to their racial ancestors. [See 2:14-16.]

- b. Commentators are divided over whether Paul means “worthy of [*physical*] death” or “worthy of [*spiritual*] death.” Regardless, he declares that sinful men were always aware that there would be serious consequences for their sins. Their prejudices against a God who sought to restrain them from their wicked ways gendered a rebellious attitude in their hearts that drove them to continue in those destructive activities
- c. It is said that “misery loves company.” Sinners feel more comfortable in their sins if those around them are doing the same wicked things. There is usually a sense of security in numbers. [See 1Peter 4:3,4.] It is not surprising that these “undiscerning” [See above, Number 18.] idolators would give support and encouragement to anyone who would participate with them in their evil practices.

1. God's wrath is revealed against all _____ and _____ of men because they _____ the _____.
2. _____ and _____ are "invisible attributes" of God that may be seen by the things that are _____.
3. Man's knowledge of God's nature leaves him with no _____.
4. Idolators did not _____ God and were not _____ to Him.
5. "Professing to be _____, they became _____."
6. Idolators had first worshiped images like _____; then they degenerated into worshiping images like _____, _____ and _____.
7. God gave idolators up to _____ and _____, after which they began to _____ their _____ among themselves.
8. Idolators exchanged the _____ for a _____ when they served the _____ instead of the _____.
9. God "gave them [idolators] up" to what *three* things?
a. _____; b. _____; c. _____.
10. Paul calls lesbianism "what is _____."
11. He describes homosexuality as "committing what is _____."
12. Gentiles were filled with "all unrighteousness," which included how many *specific* sins? _____
13. These sins involve bad *attitudes* and bad *behavior* toward _____ and _____.
14. Gentiles sinners were condemned for *two* things regarding sin. What were they?
a. _____; b. _____.

II. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: NEEDED BY ALL

- B. Jews also guilty of sin for the same reason as Gentiles. (2:1-16)
 - 1. God judges all who commit sin. (1-3)
 - 2. Jews had despised God's blessings. (4,5)
 - 3. God discriminates only between the obedient and the disobedient. (6-11)
- C. The law is not a shield from God's wrath on sinners. (12-29)
 - 1. All doers of law are justified by their doing. (12-16)
 - 2. Jews were self-condemned as teachers of the law. (17-24)
 - 3. God rewards those who are circumcised in their hearts. (25-29)

Text---2:1-29**2:1-- "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man..."**

- a. To what "man" is the apostle speaking? Not to just any man, but to one who judges *unjustly* those other men whose sinful behavior had been blasted by Paul. The Jews were well-known as severe critics of other people's shortcomings-- their own countrymen (Matt.7:1-5) and especially those of other nations (John 4:9; Acts 10:28). This passage indicates Jews as the object of Paul's remarks, although his condemnation would apply to *anyone* guilty of such hypocritical judgment. Not all Jews and not all Gentiles, of course, were under his indictment.
- b. It is unlikely that Paul addressed his remarks to *Christians* in Rome, who were *saints* (1:7) whose *faith* was widely known (1:8) and who were an *encouragement* to Paul (1:12). Some may have been guilty of the wicked conduct described in the first two chapters, but now they were separated from such practices (1Cor.6:9-11) .
- c. Sinners described in these chapters, both Jews and Gentiles, were *non-Christians* who needed the gospel as the only "power" that could save them from their guilt. Paul possibly used the literary device of *apostrophe*, a figure of speech in which the speaker directs his remarks to absent recipients as if they were present.
- d. Roman Christians had already been saved by the gospel from the sins of the Jews and the Greeks, but they needed to be reminded that **all** that had saved *them* was God's grace. The only thing that could save their disobedient countrymen was the *same* gospel they had obeyed previously. They, like Paul, must *never* be ashamed of something that could turn men from idolatry and hypocrisy to holiness and righteousness. They should be as "ready" as Paul to preach it without shame to their lost countrymen in Rome (1:13).
- e. Jesus had warned that with whatever judgment we judge we shall be judged (Matt. 7:1). When Jews condemned Gentiles for "disobedience to God," they were, in fact, condemning themselves. They were guilty of the *same* kind of disobedience as the Gentiles when they violated Moses' Law by which they were supposed to serve God. Apparently, it never occurred to many of them that their condemning attitude was a

good example of “the pot calling the kettle black.” Sins that would destroy Gentiles would also destroy Jews.

2:2-- “But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth...”

- a. God does not always judge right and wrong the way men do. Our determinations about sin and righteousness may spring from any number of flawed sources. The basis on which God judges man’s conduct is **truth** and **truth alone**! If something is contrary to **truth**, it will condemn whoever practices it!
- b. While the Jews would not have *knowingly* and *openly* condemned themselves for their own evil deeds (verse 1), their condemnation of others was *in effect* a self-condemnation, because *no sinner* will escape God’s judgment for committing sin!

2:3-6-- “And do you think this, O man...”

- a. The same [Jewish] man is again addressed about his sin. Not only was he guilty of *doing wrong*, he was sinful because he wilfully *refused to do right*. The Jewish nation had been favored with innumerable blessings from God from its beginning until that present time. Both in the past and in the present the Lord *richly* offered His “goodness” [*chrestotes*-- “kindness of heart or act”], “forbearance” [*anochē*-- “self-restraint in the face of provocation...opposite of anger”], and “longsuffering” [*makrothumēō*-- “forbearance, patience”]. It is thought that forbearance expresses an attitude of mind, while longsuffering describes the resulting action. Many times God’s just reaction to Israel’s sins would have been to *destroy* them, but instead He had shown *patience* such as only He was capable of. [See Exodus 32:1-14 for an example.]
- b. God’s longsuffering toward Israel was intended on His part to prompt repentance and obedience by the Jews. However, only short-term results were usually forthcoming. An unstable nation was spared time and again only to repeat its sins.
- c. Jews must *not* suppose that their national identity would forever warrant God’s patience. He had not *forgotten any* of their rebellious behavior. Hardness of heart and impenitence deserved to be punished. God was willing to wait until His appointed “day of wrath” to prove that His treatment of sin and sinners is “righteous.” Meanwhile, disobedient people are “treasuring up” [“storing up”--RSV] punishment. Their “payday” will see *all* debts settled fairly-- “the wages of sin is death”(Ro.6:23). Until then, God’s desire is that hard hearts will soften and impenitence will change to repentance (2Peter 3:9).
- d. Only one criterion will influence God’s ultimate judgment of the goodness or badness of all men. **Our deeds** will be the sole determinant of our eternity, so far as our responsibility is concerned. Paul quotes from Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12 to press that point to self-satisfied Jews. Of course, we are not saved by **deeds alone** apart from faith and trust in the Christ. But *saving faith is working faith* [See James 2:24,26.], so we cannot be saved *without works* any more than we can be saved *without faith*!

2:7-10-- “eternal life to those who by patient continuance...”

- a. In order to be both clear and strong in this essential lesson about God’s expectations
- (21)

for all His creatures [Gentiles *and* Jews], Paul divides people into just *two* classifications: those who “do good” and those who “obey unrighteousness.” Then, he specifies the definite outcome of the chosen lifestyle of each class. To give the greatest possible emphasis to his lesson, the apostle repeats the points in verses nine and ten that he has just made in verses seven and eight. His repetition in verses nine and ten calls “Jews” and “Greeks” by name so there will be no failure to understand whom he means by “those” in verses seven and eight. Examination of all *four* verses reveals:

<u>Righteous Behaviors</u>	<u>Righteous Outcomes</u>
Continuing to do good	Eternal life
Seeking for glory, honor, and immortality	Eternal life
Working what is good	Glory, honor, and peace

<u>Unrighteous Behaviors</u>	<u>Righteous Outcomes</u>
Self-seeking.....	Indignation and wrath
Obedying unrighteousness, not truth	Indignation and wrath
Doing evil	Tribulation and anguish

- b. Jews were “first” in a just distribution of rewards and punishments because they had distinct and significant advantages over Gentiles in their opportunities to serve God. Jesus’ own assessment had been, “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required...” (Luke 12:48). Therefore, we can understand why those with greater opportunities should suffer greater penalties for failure to use them. But why should Jews be “first” in receiving glory, honor, and peace for doing well from their favorable position? Perhaps it was because, comparatively, it was much more difficult for the Jew to serve God through the intricacies of the Law of Moses than it was for the Gentile to follow his law of moral conduct. The goal of righteousness under the Law was harder to reach.
- c. Paul, of course, contends that attaining righteousness under either law was only *theoretical*. *Practically*, neither kept “his” law, and neither attained righteousness through flawless conduct under his law.

2:11-- “For there is no partiality with God.”

- a. This is a repetition of the truth in verse six, but in different words. Deeds will be the judge of all, regardless of one’s national origin or religious advantage.
- b. Some years earlier, the apostle Peter had declared at Cornelius’ house, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34,35). This was a concept that Jews, even Christian Jews, found hard to embrace. Their background was steeped in the conviction that God loved Jews with an unconditional love that would assure them of eternal advantages much like the temporal advantages they had enjoyed for many centuries. John the Baptist had warned them that this was false hope (Matt.3: 7-9), but they had missed his point. Their Talmud made such statements as, “Everyone circumcised has part in the kingdom to come”; “All Israelites will have part in the world to come”; “Abraham sits beside the gates of hell, and does not permit any

wicked Israelite to go down to hell.”

- c. Many Jews **wanted** God to be partial toward them; they **expected** God to be partial toward them; they **rejected** any idea that God might not be partial toward them. It must have been *very hard* to convert them to Christ’s religion which insisted on an **equal opportunity for every man** to be saved.

2:12,16-- “For as many as have sinned without law...”

- a. Paul applies the concept of equality in verse eleven to the prejudicial attitude of Jews toward Gentiles. Prejudice certainly prevailed in Jewish society generally, and it was also a serious problem in many New Testament churches. It is very likely that there might have been a problem of prejudice in the Roman church, which elicited some of the remarks made by Paul in this letter. [See the comments in chapter three.]
- b. Just as there are only *two* kinds of people in the world, obedient and disobedient, so there are but *two* kinds of religious law, **written** and **unwritten**. Only the Jews had been given a **written** law, the Law of Moses. Whatever guidance other nations may have received from heaven, it was evidently in **unwritten** form.
- c. While there was a distinct difference in having a written rather than an unwritten law from God [as Paul will discuss in chapter three], the difference was **not** that the man following a written law would certainly be saved, and the man with only an oral law would just as certainly be lost. This was the position of the traditional Jew, but it was a flawed position, as Paul proceeds to point out.
- d. Verses thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen in this passage are parenthetical, inserted by Paul to illustrate his lesson contained in verses twelve and sixteen. First consider those two verses:
 - (1) **Verse 12:** Sinners who sin under *any* law will be lost;
 - (2) **Verse 16:** Sinners answerable to *any* law will be judged by the *gospel*. The “secrets” [akin to *krupto*-- “to hide”] of the heart [attitudes, loyalties, etc.] as well as the deeds of the body will be factored into salvation and damnation regardless of the kind of law a man had to serve God.

2:13-16-- “(for not the hearers of the law are just..)”

- a. Paul’s truths are illustrated in verses thirteen through fifteen. Although some versions use “*the* law” in verses twelve and thirteen, it is obvious that these verses present a general truth that applies to both **written** and **unwritten** laws, so “*law*” is preferable. **Doers**, not **hearers** [only], of their respective laws will be justified by the law they try to keep.
- b. When “*the* law” appears in this chapter, apart from verses twelve and thirteen, it refers to the Law of Moses, the **written law** of the Jews. It is contrasted with the **unwritten** moral code by which Gentile nations had functioned in the absence of a revelation such as Israel had.
- c. The Gentiles were never subject to Moses’ Law. It was directed to Israel alone (Deut. 5:3). However, they *did* have a law by which they could judge right and wrong behavior and by which they, in turn, would be judged for their decisions. Paul characterizes their law as a law “by nature.” That same term appears in Ephesians 2:3, where Gentile conduct was *negative* and “by nature” made them “children of wrath.”

Here, “by nature” is a *positive* condition, because “by nature” they did things consistent with the requirements for Jews under the Mosaic Law.

- d. Some think that both references (Rom. 2:14, Eph.2:3) perhaps refer to systems of conduct that had been developed over time by observing what “worked” and what didn’t as people interacted with one another. In this instance, some Gentiles had chosen to live by standards that common sense recommended to them as “right.” These were the same standards that God had labeled as “right” within the Law of Moses. On the other hand, in Ephesians 2:3, it is said that other Gentiles had ignored “good” practices and had chosen to live by “bad” treatment of their fellows. Their choices, of course, were condemned in Moses’ Law.
- e. This moral law developed in the Gentile nations became “a law” by which God opted to hold them accountable. In addition to common-sense experience, moral principles conveyed from heaven to pre-Mosaic worshipers of God [Noah, Abraham, etc.] and spread among Gentiles, along with the influence of Jewish revelation through their contacts with other nations [e.g., the captivities], may well have entered into the formation of the “natural” law referenced in this passage. We can’t be certain of its *origin*, but Paul asserts its *application* in God’s judgment of the behavior of people who were outside Moses’ Law.
- f. When Gentiles lived according to their system of morals, they “showed” [displayed] the same good conduct that Jews did when they obeyed the precepts of the Law. There was then no essential difference in the way the people of each nation treated one another, so God could be fair in judging them alike.
- g. “*Conscience*” [*suneidesis*-- “knowing with (one’s self)”] became a prominent facet of God’s judgment under the Gentiles’ moral law. They adopted a standard of what they thought was right, and the God-given faculty called “conscience” either approved of activities when they met the standard or disapproved when they didn’t. Their consciences *accused* [as wrong] or *excused* [supported] the actions they took.
- h. Translations differ about whether the conscience judged “them[selves]” or “one another.” Either it offered an internal measure of a person’s own activity, or it became the measure by which people could decide the quality of others’ conduct. Perhaps it did *both*.

2:17-20-- “Indeed you who are called a Jew...”

- a. Paul intensifies his attack on Jewish pride and prejudice in these verses. He advances several areas in which the Jew considered himself to be superior to other people. He calls attention to these points of Jewish self-satisfaction so that he might destroy the integrity of each point and help to bring his countrymen to their religious senses about the relationship of their nation to God. Jews were proud of many things.
- b. “You are called a Jew.” The nation basked in the glory they supposed was carried in that name. “Jew” was not used of them prior to 2Kings 16:6. It came into widespread use following the Babylonian captivity. It was a shortened form of “Judah,” which meant “*praise*.” The nation came to assume that, despite its serious deficiencies, it always was worthy of the praise of God and of every other nation.
- c. “You rest on the law.” The fact that they *had* God’s law was enough to gander in

the Jews a pervasive sense of security. The fact that they *regularly abused* God's law seemed not to matter to them.

- d. "You make your boast in God." This could have been a good thing. "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord" (1Cor.1:31; Jer.9:24). The trouble was that Israel gloried in God's supposed relation *to them*, rather than in their relationship *to God*. The burden of the relationship was on God, not on them.
- e. "You know His will." This was another admirable accomplishment. Jews were generally excellent students of the Scriptures. However, *obeying* them was equally as important as *knowing* them (James 1:22-25).
- f. "You approve things that are excellent [out of the law]." Their approval was in word, not in deed. Jesus accused them, "For they say, and do not do" (Matt.23:3).
- g. "You consider yourselves guides to the blind." Jews were "sighted," and Gentiles were "blind" when it came to religion. Actually, some Gentiles could "see" better than many Jews [e.g., Cornelius (Acts 10:2)].
- h. "You are the light to Gentiles who are in darkness." Jewish prejudice was cited and criticized by Paul in Galatians 2:15: "We who are Jews *by nature*, and not *sinners* of the Gentiles..." The mere fact of birth was thought to elevate every Jew far above every Gentile in things that really mattered.
- i. "You can instruct the foolish and teach the babes." They *could have* helped Gentiles learn about God and His righteousness, but they *didn't*. Instead, they chose to isolate themselves in their feelings of religious well-being and ignore others' needs.
- j. "You have a form [*morphosis*-- "an outward semblance"] of knowledge." In reality, Jewish leaders were often "whited sepulchers... full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness"(Mt.23:27). Form without substance and sincerity is woefully inadequate.

2:21-23-- "You, therefore, who teach another..."

- a. Having erected this monument to Jewish religious superiority, Paul now exposes the sham that it really is. He does this by asking several searching questions.
- b. "Isn't your claim as a teacher of righteousness made suspect because of your own unrighteousness?" The Hebrew writer asserted that one cannot teach truth until he has first learned and practiced truth (Heb.5:12).
- c. "Do you condemn stealing [by Gentiles] but steal from your own people?" The Law clearly condemned the use of false weights and balances, moving property landmarks, and other such forms of "stealing." Many Jews violated these prohibitions.
- d. "Do you condemn adultery in others but commit adultery yourselves and encourage its practice by others?" It is said that adultery was rampant among Jewish leaders in the first century. It is also true that loose enforcement of marriage laws had contributed to a significant disregard for marital loyalty within the nation (Matt.19:3-9).
- e. "Do you oppose idolators but rob their temples?" It is difficult to know just what the apostle meant by "robbing temples." Perhaps he had in mind a practice of eating meat slaughtered in pagan temple services and then condemning the services. Maybe in others ways, too, they showed inconsistency between their teaching and their practices regarding idolatry. Also, "rob temples" could be translated "commit sacrilege." In that case, the Jews clearly were guilty over the years of failing to distinguish between "*holy things*" and "*profane things*" (Ezek.22). They professed "to know God, but in works deny Him..." (Titus 1:16).

- f. “Do you boast that you have God because you have His law even though you don’t hesitate to violate that law when it seems advantageous?”

2:24-- “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles...”

- a. Israel had profaned God’s name in the Old Testament when other nations observed the disobedience and insincerity of its people (Ezek. 36:22). That detestable sin had continued into New Testament times. No more serious charge could be made against the spiritual status of self-serving Jews than this. They were accomplishing exactly the opposite of their intended purpose in being “God’s people.”
- b. This scathing indictment of Jewish lifestyle should be further proof that Jews were not exempted from needing the gospel of Christ just because they had been favored by God throughout their past history. It was a matter now of *what* they were instead of *who* they were that counted with God. Causing others to blaspheme His name was *not* something that testified to any worthiness for salvation on their part.

2:25-29-- “For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law...”

- a. Paul will discuss in chapter three the profitability of having Moses’ Law. The Jews should have been grateful that the Lord had blessed them with *written* guidance, and their gratitude should have been expressed in thankful obedience to God’s oversight.
- b. Circumcision was in itself only a *sign* that the Jews were God’s chosen people (Rom. 4:11). The choosing was the essential thing, and that depended upon the willingness of the chosen to obey the Chooser (Rom.4:12).
- c. Fleshly circumcision [a pledge to “cut away” all sin and impurity] was important only when it signified that a man was truly sanctified [set apart from others] to God’s service. If the heart was not really dedicated, fleshly circumcision became a sign of the worst kind of *hypocrisy*, something Jesus openly deplored (Matt.23). One would do well not to be circumcised at all if he refused heartfelt compliance with the Law.
- d. A Gentile who didn’t bear the *sign* of acceptability with God could nevertheless be accepted by Him if he sincerely sought to obey Him within whatever knowledge [law] he had of what was right for him to do. That possibility was available to the Gentile nations until the inauguration of the New Dispensation of grace through Jesus Christ. From Pentecost (Acts 2), both Jews and Gentiles must now be saved through **faithful obedience** to gospel commands. Whiteside says:

“But Paul’s reasoning on this point does not warrant anyone to neglect anything God has commanded him to do. It is singular that, in their anxiety to get rid of the necessity of baptism, some have argued that Paul’s reasoning on circumcision could be applied to baptism. ‘If an unbaptized person lives right, shall he not be considered as if he had been baptized?’ But their effort at running that sort of parallel fails. Gentiles had not been commanded to be circumcised, and therefore violated no law, committed no sin, in not being circumcised; whereas gospel obedience, including baptism, is required of all people. And here is another point their theory fails to consider. Every one to whom the command to be circumcised extended had to be circumcised or be cut off from his people; he had broken the covenant, and was no longer considered one of God’s people. If, therefore, these theologians could establish a parallel between circumcision and baptism, they would thereby prove that every one to whom the command to be baptized extended would have to be baptized or be cut off.”

- e. The Jews were condemned and in need of the gospel just because they had failed so miserably in keeping the Law of Moses. Additionally, the comparatively upright lives displayed by many Gentiles who were without the advantage of a *written* law testified that the Jews had *no excuse* for so flagrantly breaking the Law they had been given. Like the “queen of the South” and the “people of Ninevah,” morally-sensitive Gentiles will rise in judgment against those who have abused their great opportunities to excel in the service of God (Luke 11:31,32).

2:28,29-- “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly...”

- a. Things that are so important to men may be unimportant to God. Conversely, things considered by men as trivial may be regarded by Him as essential (Isa.55:8,9).
- b. God is not concerned that a man may be a Jew or a Gentile. He doesn’t care about circumcision for its own sake. What matters is the effort people make in doing their best to be faithful to their spiritual obligations.
- c. The true child of God is identified by heaven as one whose credentials are spiritual, not physical. Obedient actions are required, but every one must spring from a loving heart whose deepest desire is to please God by doing the things He has commanded. “In every nation whoever *fears Him and works righteousness* is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:35). Peter and Paul were in complete agreement about this issue.

Concluding Observations:

- 1. Romans chapter one convicts the Gentiles of deplorable behavior that makes salvation impossible apart from the grace and mercy of God revealed in the gospel.
- 2. Gentiles had not taken advantage of strictly observing their moral law by which God would have been willing to judge them. They had violated that law, and justification under its terms was out of the question.
- 3. Jews had made the same mistake as the Gentiles about keeping the law by which God would pass judgment on them. They had a *written* code of conduct, but they had spurned the opportunity to allow that code to guide them into righteousness.
- 4. Consequently, both Jews and Gentiles stood condemned before God for breaking their respective laws. *Neither* law offered any forgiveness for offenses committed against it.
- 5. Mankind [Jews and Gentiles] had only **one hope**-- embracing the Sonship and the salvation of Jesus Christ, which Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, was ready to preach at Rome without shame to all who would listen.

1. Those who judge others condemn _____ when they do the _____ things.
2. God's _____ is always according to _____.
3. The Lord had shown _____, _____, and _____ to the Jews, which should have led them to _____.
4. Israel was storing up God's _____ in a day when His _____ would also be revealed.
5. Eternal life is associated with _____, _____, _____, and _____.
6. Eternal death is associated with _____, _____, _____, and _____.
7. Who would be "first" in God's blessings and punishments, Jews or Gentiles? (Circle one)
8. What is the prominent reason given why some will be saved? _____.
9. Sinners do *three* things that result in their condemnation. What? a. _____; b. _____; c. _____.
10. _____ of law are justified, not _____ of law.
11. Gentiles did not have the _____, but they did by _____ the things in the law of _____ and became a _____ to themselves.
12. The _____ bears witness about our doing right or wrong.
13. Jews proposed to do *four* things for Gentiles: a. _____; b. _____; c. _____; d. _____.
14. Jews were guilty of practicing *three* sins they taught against: a. _____; _____; c. _____.
15. Saved people are not Jews _____ but _____; their _____ is not of their _____ but of their _____.

II. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: NEEDED BY ALL (1:18-3:20)

- D. Answering Jewish objections to Paul's charges. (3:1-20)
 - 1. Jews had been given advantages in the past. (1,2)
 - 2. God's faithfulness not dependent on theirs. (3,4)
 - 3. Sinners who "show God's glory" still deserve punishment. (5-8)
 - 4. O.T. Scriptures support Paul's accusations. (9-20)

Preliminary Observations:

1. In this chapter, Paul continues his lesson for Jews about their attitudes of self-righteousness that will keep them from the righteousness of God. He intends to reinforce the truth that the Jews are not privileged to enjoy any significant advantages over Gentiles in obtaining New Testament salvation.
2. Paul's purpose, therefore, is to develop his overall theme, "All men need God's grace revealed in the gospel regardless of their race or religious background" (1:16,17).
3. As in his other letters, the apostle seeks to deal with the problems currently troubling this church and the individuals to whom the letter was written. From chapters later in the book, we can detect some of the issues facing the church at Rome:
 - a. Chapter 12-- personal sacrifices in living the Christian life;
 - b. Chapter 13-- personal submissiveness to the civil government;
 - c. Chapter 14-- personal respect for the religious sensitivities of others;
 - d. Chapter 15-- personal responsibility for like-mindedness among brethren;
 - e. Chapter 16-- personal obligations for unity and for dealing with divisive persons.
4. Perhaps the *most serious* problem that needed attention at Rome, as at many other places, was the eroding influence of false teachers who unsettled brethren by insisting to Gentile Christians that, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Although the issue had been put to rest by those who met in Jerusalem to discuss it, it refused to go to sleep and continued to disturb personal faith and to disrupt unity among Jewish and Gentile saints.
5. It is evident that there were issues about "full fellowship" between Jewish and Gentile Christians at Rome. Paul's task was to convince members from both backgrounds that the gospel afforded no advantage for one person over another, whatever his national origin or religious training might have been. While these Christians might not have shared *personally* in the described depravity of their countrymen, and while they certainly were not guilty of such offensive behavior while church members, all came from nations whose general conduct was so bad as to remove any claim that anyone might make for special favor from God.

6. Jews received more attention from Paul in this letter than Gentiles. They were usually the aggressive parties in these divisive relationships. Nevertheless, Paul demonstrates clearly that *both* Jews *and* Gentiles had come from such evil environments that both would have faced certain destruction without the forgiveness offered in the gospel. There was no place for pride or resentment on the part of either. Now, only the gospel can be “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek,” and it needs no help from any other religious system to accomplish its work among sinners.

Text: 3:1-20

3:1,2-- “What advantage then has the Jew...”

- a. This chapter opens with two questions asked by Paul that, evidently, had previously been raised by others. Chapter two was devoted primarily to indicting the Jewish nation for its reprehensible behavior toward God. Paul’s argument was that only the Jews who “kept” the Law [perfectly] could be justified by the Law, and none of them had been able to do that. Consequently, Jews were as guilty before God as Gentiles, and neither had any hope of justification without the gospel.
- b. The Jews’ response to this argument would have been, of course, that they *were* a people favored by the Lord and that God’s favor could not be affected by any deficiency in the nation that Paul or others might charge. Their historical relationship with God clearly *proved* their religious advantage over other nations. Furthermore, Jewish males bore in their bodies authentication of a unique standing with Jehovah.
- c. Efforts to convert Jews were made much more difficult by their mindset that their physical membership in the nation of Israel was fundamental to acceptance by God under *any* law or in *any* kingdom. For that reason, Jews supposed that they would *retain* their advantage over Gentiles in the “new” kingdom of God unless Gentile converts were physically circumcised and became, in effect, physical Jews in deference to the concept that God’s attachment to physical Israel was so precious that it would endure forever. Gentile Christians, some said, could not be saved unless they were circumcised and “kept the law of Moses” (Acts 15:1,5).
- d. Paul had no desire to antagonize the Jews unnecessarily. Perhaps those who had valued their relationship with Jehovah in the past could be persuaded that their previous religious advantages would help them to offer more excellent service to God in the future. He responds to their concerns by acknowledging that, indeed, Israel *had* enjoyed [“in every way”] special blessings from the Lord.
- e. In chapter 9, Paul lists *several* of the numerous blessings that had come to the Jewish nation that others had not received. Now, he cites only *one*, the most important of

all-- Israel had been chosen as the repository of God's revelation to mankind. Only to the Jews was a *written law* given initially! Only by the *writings* of the Jewish prophets were His additional communications transmitted to the world!

- f. J. W. Shepherd comments on the significance of this gift of God's "oracles":

"The 'oracles' denote the whole of the revelations to mankind, from the beginning of the world to the time of Moses, who by the inspiration of God, committed them to writing, and whatever further revelations God was pleased to make to mankind during the days of the prophets, who recorded them in books; and the whole was entrusted to the Jews, to be kept for their own benefit and the benefit of the whole world. And next to Christ and the gospel we must regard the Old Testament as the greatest boon ever bestowed on the human family. The respects in which it has blessed the world are countless. This confidence was not misplaced, for no people ever guarded a sacred trust with more fidelity than the Jews did the sacred Scriptures."

- e. It is significant that Paul declares that God entrusted the *Jewish nation* with the Old Testament Scriptures. The Catholic Church maintains that *it* has the authority to determine the Old Testament canon and has added several "apocryphal" books to the collection of thirty-nine that others accept as genuine. Obviously, Jews would have a better claim to this decision of authenticity. Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote that the Jews in the first century [and before] held twenty-two books as sacred revelation. His list actually contained *all thirty-nine* books [and no more] of our Old Testament, with several books appearing in combination with others in his list. Catholics must defer to Jewish history and to New Testament Scripture in this matter!

3:3-8-- "For what if some did not believe?..."

- a. Verses 3-8 are a digression by Paul from his theme in this chapter-- "The Jews had been given significant advantages by God, but they had failed to use them in the way God had intended."
- b. This truth needed some follow-up. Paul's critics would likely contend that, while it might be admitted that the Jewish nation had not fully lived up to the requirements of the "oracles" entrusted to it, God must either fulfill His promises to the Jews or be considered a covenant-breaker. Since neither alternative was valid, the apostle must expose their position as false.
- c. "Some" [many] did not really believe the promises of God in the "oracles." But that was *their* fault, not *God's*. His promises always were conditional, and He was always ready to keep them when their conditions were met. Unresponsive Jews were the covenant-breakers, not Jehovah, and they had no one to blame but themselves for failing to receive the promises.
- d. Objective investigations would reveal that God had invariably been true in His dealings with Israel. "Every man" who had violated his trust as a follower of Jehovah was a liar, and his own circumcision *proved it*!

- e. Circumcision was the **sign** of man's promise to obey God. It had been so since Abraham was circumcised (Gen.17:1-14). His covenant with God was a promise to "walk blameless," and God's promise in return was to "multiply" him "exceedingly" (vs. 1,2). These promises extended to Abraham's descendants, who were to be circumcised as a **sign** of their covenant with the Lord (vs.9-11). Every Jewish parent made a solemn promise to God every time a child was circumcised that the child would faithfully obey God's laws. Every time a Jewish man abused God's law, he became a *liar* in God's sight! He had violated the promise made for him.
- f. David's words in support of God's veracity are found in Psalm 51:4. David spoke of God "judging" men with justice, while Paul adapts the verse to vindicate God's veracity when He *is* "judged" by men for *perceived* unfaithfulness. Moses Lard makes this very practical observation:

"God is judged when he is arraigned in human thought, on his dealing with men. When thus arraigned, he must always come off victor. It is not enough that he simply gain his cause; he must gain it triumphantly. This is the force of *nikeses*. He must be shown to be absolutely innocent of every charge. Nor let it be imagined that God is seldom arraigned. He is arraigned in the very charge just considered; and in countless ways we, as it were, arraign him every day. We arraign him for creating us capable of sin; for exposing us to temptation; for subjecting us to death for another's sin; for appointing us to a life of hardship; for requiring us to be holy in the midst of great trials; for not revealing to us more of the future-- on all these counts, and many more, we arraign him. Not that we formally arraign him, and accuse him of wrong. But we arraign him in our perplexities, in our discontents-- in word, in the very modes in which we think of him. Not to be wholly reconciled to God is to arraign him. Now how profound is the necessity that he shall be shown to be, in all the items named, as well as in all others in which he is in any way questioned, not only just, perfectly so, but even perfectly good."

- g. In a desperate effort to justify their sinful behavior under the Law, some Jews claimed that the more they *sinned* against their covenant with God, the more His grace of *forgiveness* could be displayed to the world. Their sin would actually serve to *glorify* God! How, then, could God punish them for the "sin" Paul charged them with, or how could *any* sin be chargeable to them?
- h. Paul exposes the foolishness of their position on "sin" by simply pointing out that if God could not justly condemn *their* sins, then neither could He justly condemn the sins of the [Gentile] world. Of course, Jews would never hold still for anyone exonerating the Gentiles for *their* "deplorable" behavior!
- i. Furthermore, Paul pushes the consequences of their position into another unacceptable corner. Jewish leaders were unceasing in their open condemnation of Paul for "defecting" from the Jewish faith and for his efforts to lead others into

obeying another law. What he had done and what he was doing was nothing less than the *worst* of sins! But, if *anyone's* sins were to God's glory, then Paul's would be, too. Why should they oppose him so bitterly for his "lie" if, by that lie, he was glorifying God? His enemies couldn't hold still for that, either!

- j. Why not just go ahead and adopt as an overriding principle for all man's activities-- "Let's do as many evil things as we can so God will be as highly honored as possible?" That position was so ridiculous that to consider it was to reject it. What kind of world would men have to live in if everyone followed that rule?
- k. We have no way of knowing what Paul is referring to in verse eight when he claims that he was slandered by some as a supporter of the doctrine of "sin equals grace," which he has just refuted. But the slanderers will be condemned for their untrue accusations both by fair-minded *men* and by the *God* of fairness!

3:9-- "What then? Are we better than they?..."

- a. Returning to the original line of reasoning from which he had interrupted himself to deal with the Jews' abuse of God's "oracles," Paul now draws the conclusion that despite their singular opportunities, Israel was in no better position for salvation than the Gentile nations who had not been favored with any *written* law.
- b. This conclusion merely reiterates what the apostle has already proclaimed [e.g., 1:18; 2:1; 2:6,11; 2:26-29]-- *all* [Jews and Gentiles] are guilty of sin.

3:10-18-- "As it is written..."

- a. Jesus had said of the Jews, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life..." (John 5:39). The nation prided itself on its knowledge of God's *written* revelation. Paul is confident that those who could never be convinced by anything *he* might say about Israel's sinfulness could not afford to deny what their own Scriptures said about the same thing. He proceeds to introduce a barrage of Old Testament passages that were condemning of both Jewish and Gentile activities. He quotes pertinent parts of each passage.
- b. Reference 1 [verses 10-12]-- Psalm 14:1-3-- Gentiles were reproofed for their ill treatment of God's people. The same reproof appears in Psalm 53:1-3, and man's general wickedness is pointed out in Ecclesiastes 7:20.
Reference 2 [verse 13a]-- Psalm 5:9-- David's [probably] *Jewish* enemies were censured for their evil actions, particularly the foulness and deceit that came from their mouths when they "rebelled against God." Not *all* Jews were guilty of such conduct, for David said some Jews "put their trust" in God.
Reference 3 [verse 13b]-- Psalm 140:3-- David's *Jewish* enemies were denounced for planning harm to the king.
Reference 4 [verse 14]-- Psalm 10:7-- David lamented the wicked conduct of

his *Jewish* countrymen who “renounced” God. There were other Jews, however, who were said to be “humble” before the Lord.

Reference 5 [verses 15-17]-- Isaiah 59:7,8-- The prophet bemoaned the sins of the *Jews* whose iniquities had “separated” them from God and whose evil deeds had “hidden” His face from their petitions for deliverance.

Reference 6 [verse 18]-- Psalm 36:1-- David decried the “wickedness” of the *Jewish* sinner who suffered from the fundamental cause for all his other wayward conduct-- “There is no fear of God before his eyes.” Bad behavior can be expected from those whose activities are conducted totally apart from any sense of responsibility to the One who judges all our deeds.

- c. J. W. McGarvey and Philip Pendleton say that these Old Testament references were arranged logically by Paul. They quote Meyer:

“The arrangement is such that testimony is adduced: first, for the *state* of sin generally (vs.10-12); second, the *practice* of sin in word (vs.13,14) and deed (vs. 13-17); and third, the sinful *source* of the whole--vs.18.”

- d. Clinton Hamilton adds these remarks about Paul’s use of the Scriptures:

“It appears appropriate to remark about Paul’s use of OT quotations. Although these quotations were uttered in various contexts and to make different points, there is in them the principles that can be applied to men in general. This manner of dealing with the OT was not foreign to the Jews and would not be perceived by them as a problem. What the apostle does by citations of Scripture is to emphasize the sinfulness of men, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. The Jews would have no difficulty in believing the sinfulness of the Gentiles. At the same time they thought of themselves as not being sinners. However, by marshaling Scripture, Paul has proved that Jews are also sinners because in many of these citations it is the Jews who are under consideration. Scripture, therefore, demonstrates that all men are sinners and are in need of justification before God. On the basis of Scripture, no Jew could boast of being sinless and exempt from the judgment and punishment of God.”

3:19,20-- “Now we know that whatever the law says...”

- a. Here Paul applies the point he has made by utilizing the array of Old Testament passages in the previous verses. “The law” obviously refers, at least primarily, to the entire Old Testament law, out of which Paul’s quotations were lifted. This “law” was directed toward the Jews who were its recipients, not to Gentiles. The transgressions cited in the passages were *Jewish*, not Gentile, sins [although the Gentiles practiced the “same things” and were equally guilty].
- b. In these verses, “the law” primarily is understood to mean the Law of Moses and the Prophets. [See Matthew 22:40.] But the term also applies secondarily to *any* law, including the one by which Gentiles had served God (2:14,15). It is the Jews

and their Law under consideration in this chapter.

- c. Both laws, the one from Moses and the Prophets and the one under which the Gentile conscience governed behavior, condemned the conduct of the people who were supposed to follow their dictates. *No* law can be kept perfectly, and perfect compliance is the only way for one to be justified [guiltless] by law. Drive *one mile* above the speed limit, and you have broken “the law” of the land. Fail to perform *one good deed* that you could do, and you are guilty of breaking “the law” of God. Justification [perfect obedience] under *any* law is impossible!
- d. Every mouth [Jewish and Gentile] is “stopped” from claiming justification under a law which provides no forgiveness for violations.
- e. No law *causes* people to break it. The law [any law] informs people of what they can and can’t do under its terms. Law is broken when people take actions that violate the standards of conduct established by that law.
- f. God’s Old Testament law had taught the Jews about acceptable behavior. That law regulated their activities in a way that they were unable or unwilling to keep it flawlessly. In their failure, the Jews sinned against the Law and were hopelessly condemned without some means of pardon for their transgressions. Know-ledge of sin came to the Jews by their Law-- forgiveness of sin did not.
- g. McGarvey summarizes Paul’s lesson to the Jewish nation in this chapter:

“Having, by his quotations from the Old Testament, shown that the Jew was sinful, the apostle sets forth the result of this sin. Does the law provide any remedy? Is the Jew right in hoping that it shall afford him immunity from his guilt? These questions have been for some time before the apostle, and they now come up for final answer. We, says he, universally accept the truth that when the law speaks, it speaks to those who are under it. If, therefore, it has no voice save condemnation-- and it has no other-- and if that voice is addressed particularly to the Jew-- and it is-- his state is no better than that of the Gentile; he is condemned; and the vain, unwarranted confidence of the Jew, that he may see himself in the same condition as the Gentile, and brought, with the rest of the world, under the condemnation of God; and there can be no legal escape from this condemnation, because, by the works of the law, it is impossible for humanity, in its frailty, to justify itself in God’s sight-- nay, the law works a directly contrary result, for through it comes the knowledge and sense of sin, and not the sense of pardon or justification.”
- h. In the next section [vs. 21-31] Paul will introduce the pardon from sin that God has graciously made available to *every* sinner, Jew and Greek, in the gospel.

1. Two advantages of the Jews were: _____ and the _____ of God.
2. “Let God be _____ but every man a _____.”
3. Some claimed God would be _____ if He inflicted _____ on the Jews.
4. If Paul’s _____ magnified the _____ about God’s mercy [glory], the Jews should not treat him as a _____.
5. Some accused Paul of teaching that doing _____ would result in _____.
6. Paul listed _____ [how many] passages from the Old Testament to show the Jews how wicked the nation had always been.
7. What was the underlying problem that caused sin among the Jews? [verse 18]
8. Whatever any law says is directed to whom?
9. Every _____ is _____ from claiming justification under law.
10. “By the _____ is the _____ of _____.”

Extra Question: Can you identify [give references] the Old Testament passages used by Paul in verses 10-18?

III. GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS: GIVEN THROUGH FAITH (3:21-4:25)

- A. Righteousness by faith is available to all. (3:21-31)
 - 1. This righteousness foretold by the law and prophets. (21,22)
 - 2. This righteousness needed by all. (23)
 - 3. This righteousness [redemption] comes through Christ. (24, 25a)
 - 4. This righteousness proves God’s righteousness. (25b, 26)
 - 5. This righteousness excludes glorying by men. (27, 28)
 - 6. This righteousness is compatible with God’s nature. (29, 30)
 - 7. This righteousness fulfills the law. (31)
- B. Abraham, the great example of righteousness by faith. (4:1-25)
 - 1. Justified by faith, not by works. (1-5)
 - 2. David confirms this conclusion. (6-8)
 - 3. Circumcision not connected to righteousness. (9-12)
 - 4. Keeping the law not connected to righteousness. (13-15)
 - 5. Abraham received promises by faith. (16-22)
 - 6. His example assures those who imitate his faith. (23-25)

Text-- 3:21-4:8

3:21-24-- “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed...”

a. Burton Coffman offers his thoughts on this passage:

“In Paul’s small paragraph here, one of the most significant revelations in sacred scripture, the great mystery of redemption, is at last announced: the mystery hidden from the foundation of the world is finally declared, that being the device by which God can forgive the sins of men and procure their absolute justification in Jesus Christ. How could even God devise a vehicle for the conveyance of so great a blessing? How could God be just, that is, accounted by men to be just, while at the same time passing over sins and blessing the perpetrators of sins as if they had never sinned at all, even forgiving them? How could God receive fallen and sinful men unto himself without, so doing, bestowing a tacit approval of their wickedness, thereby compromising his just government of the universe itself? The answer to all such questions is contained in the glowing sentences which make up this small section of Paul’s letter to the Romans.”

- b. “But now” makes a *break* with the argumentation in the previous three chapters to this point. Paul has proved to both Jews and Greeks that there is *no hope* for any of them as long as they depend on the inadequate religious systems by which**

their nations had previously sought to serve God. “By the deeds of law no flesh will be justified in His sight.”

- c. “But now” men *can* hope for salvation because of a [complete] revelation of God’s righteousness [*dikaioisune*-- “The quality or character of being right or just,” Vine, p.535] in the gospel. This salvation is *apart from* [not related to] any law that promotes man’s *works* as the route to justification before God.
- d. This was not the first revelation from heaven that men had received about a “better way” to seek after God. His plan was “according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11). The “Law and the Prophets” had numerous times and in numerous ways called attention to a *law* that *would* work in man’s salvation! But it would be a law of *faith*, not of *works*.
- e. Coffman suggests *four* ways in which New Testament salvation by faith in Christ was forecast in the Old Testament:
 - (1) Some 333 verbal prophecies that dealt with Jesus’ life and character;
 - (2) Great men who typified the Christ [e.g., Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Aaron, Melchizedek, etc.];
 - (3) The tabernacle/temple appointments and ceremonies, such as the veil, candlestick, mercy seat, etc.;
 - (4) The services and ceremonies of the Law: sin offerings, Passover, Day of Atonement, and other such activities required by Moses’ Law.
- f. This salvation was not [fully] revealed in the Old Testament, only witnessed. It *would* be revealed in the “fulness of time” (Gal.4:4). The witness of a more inclusive salvation came during the time when there *was* a “difference” between Jewish and Gentile opportunities to serve the Lord.
- g. Paul repeats his lesson [mainly] to the Jews: “there is [now] no difference.” All are guilty of sin, and sin erects a barrier between *any* sinner [Jew or Gentile] and God. Only by faith in Christ Jesus can sinners [Jews *and* Gentiles] be *justified* [verb- *dikaio*-- “to deem to be right or righteous,” “present continuous tense-- constant process of justification,” Vine, p. 339].
- h. God’s grace [“unmerited favor”] toward all men, as announced in the gospel, is “free.” Men now can have *redemption* [*apolutrosis*-- lit., “a releasing for a ransom,” “forgiveness and justification...deliverance from the guilt of sins,” Vine, p. 516] *apart from* any law of meritorious works. This “free” redemption, however, does require the *obedience of faith* stressed throughout the Roman letter.

3:25,26-- “...whom God set forth to be a propitiation...”

- a. Paul anticipated that Jews might feel discriminated against rather than blessed if the efforts they had made under the Law were now of no advantage to them. If Gentiles could access New Testament salvation as readily as Jews, that showed

favoritism toward Gentiles rather than Jews! After all, Israel had been punished severely in the past for their sins under Moses' Law, even to the point of captivity by foreign powers. But if Gentiles had sinned under *their* moral law, why hadn't God exacted similar chastisements on them before now? And how could God punish some sins and not others under this "New" Testament? Perhaps Jehovah wasn't as *just* ["fair"] in His dealings with men as He should be.

- b.** The apostle hastens to address this concern. He makes or implies several points to explain God's behavior with respect to the past sins of Gentiles *and* Jews:
- (1) Sin cannot be condoned by a just God; every sinner *must* be punished.
The divine law *must* be respected. Legally, *all have sinned-- all must die!*
 - (2) The *entire* human creation cannot be sentenced to everlasting punishment and shame. Man was made to **glorify** his Maker, not to embarrass Him. All men had come short of His glory [glorifying]. Emotionally, God *must not* punish every sinner in a way appropriate to his sins-- *every sinner must not die!*
 - (3) This profound dilemma could be *justly* resolved only if a suitable price were paid that would vindicate God's law and punish sin without destroying the sinner. The blood [life-- Lev.17:11] of Jesus was the only *propitiation* [*hilasterion*-- "...now only used of any act whereby man brings God into a favorable attitude or gracious disposition. It is God who is propitiated by the vindication of His holy and righteous character," effected by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, Vine, p.493.] that could satisfy both the *legal* and *emotional* demands of the problem.
 - (4) Jesus' death for man's sins [Jews and Gentile] was planned even before man sinned (Eph. 3:11), and it governed God's treatment of sin throughout the Old Testament (Heb. 9:15-17). The *just* wages of sin-- eternal death (Rom.6:23)-- had been executed on *neither* Jew *nor* Gentile! God had "passed over" [*pare-sin*-- "pretermision ('suspension'-RG), passing over, letting pass.." Thayer, p. 488] just punishment for everyone's sins until the time should come when He would "provide for Himself the Lamb" of redemption (Gen. 22:8).
 - (5) This *propitiation*, made available by God through **grace** and utilized by man through **faith**:
 - (a) Becomes the means whereby God can satisfy both the demands of His laws [moral and ceremonial] and the beneficence of His Nature;
 - (b) Provides a payment for sins committed that is more than equal to the debt owed by those guilty of committing the sins;
 - (c) Requires obedient faith on the part of sinners as an expression of appreciation and thanksgiving for their *redemption* from the bondage of sin;
 - (d) Refuses to ignore the awfulness of sin and the penalty to be paid for its practice, even though Jesus was the only price adequate to the penalty;

- (e) Withholds redemption from the sinner who declines to be saved on the terms prescribed [obedient faith] by the Redeemer rather than by the redeemed;
- (f) Exonerates God from any accusation of unfairness in His treatment of all sinners, regardless of their national backgrounds;
- (g) Demonstrates [*endeixin*-- “demonstration, proof, i.e., manifestation made in (an) act,” Thayer, p.213] that it is possible for God to maintain His own [inherent] righteousness as He solves the problem of preserving the integrity of His laws while at the same time providing [a reckoned] righteousness to law-breakers. “That He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” is another statement of the *theme* of Romans.

3:27-30-- “Where is boasting then?”

- a. The Jew must discard his inclination to boast of his righteousness under the Law (3:19). If salvation comes out of *faith* instead of *meritorious works*, how can any man be proud of his efforts to be saved? Work *demand*s payment for the work done as a matter of what is right; faith *begs* for an undeserved gift as a matter of grace on the part of the Giver.
- b. God’s plan of salvation is frequently referred to as a “law,” although not as a law that pays wages to workers for work they have done. It is a “law of faith” (Rom. 3:27); the “law of the Spirit” (Rom.8:20); the “perfect law of liberty” (Jas.1:25); the “royal law” (Jas.2:8); the “law of liberty” (Jas.2:12); and “laws written in minds and on hearts” (Heb.8:10). David Lipscomb makes this observation:

“This shows that there is a law of faith in contrast with the law of works. The things ordained by Jesus Christ, of which faith is the leading principle, constitute the law of faith in Christ. The requirements of Jesus allow no glorying, and by these man can be saved. All the requirements of the law of faith humiliate men and turn them from self to trust in God. Faith leads from self to God and his ways, to repentance, to be buried out of self and raised in Christ Jesus. Every act of the law is repudiation of self--a turning away from self in heart, soul, and body into Christ. There is nothing in these acts of turning away from self to encourage or even allow glorying or to cultivate a feeling of self-righteousness; but every act of soul, mind, and body is one that cultivates and declares distrust of self, confidence, and reliance on God through Jesus Christ”
- c. We **conclude**, says the apostle, from the facts we have available to us about the behavior and motivation of God, that law [any law of works] now has *absolutely nothing* to do with salvation in this present dispensation.
- d. Unfortunately, Martin Luther made the monumental mistake of adding “*only*” to Paul’s salvation “by *faith*” (vs.28). Neither here nor elsewhere did Paul ever advocate salvation “by *faith only*.” Luther even questioned the integrity of James,

because he thought that his statement that salvation is by “works and *not* by faith only” was in conflict with Paul’s alleged “faith only” doctrine. He and many others since have ignored the fact that Paul in this Roman letter *began* by speaking of “obedience to the faith among all nations” (1:5) and *ended* by declaring that the mystery of salvation was manifested “for obedience to the faith” (16:26). Also overlooked is his assertion that “obedience is unto righteousness” (6:16)!

- d. If the Law of Moses still provides advantages for the Jews over the Gentiles, then God is really the “altogether” God just of the Jews. If Gentiles must become Jews by circumcision and keeping the Law (Acts 15:1), then He discriminates against other people over whom He claims Godhood. No-- He is truly God over *all men*, and He behaves accordingly toward *all men*.

3:31-- “Do we then make void the law through faith?”

- a. “To make void” is to “make thoroughly useless or idle” (Young). The last thing his audience wanted to hear was that if they accepted Paul’s position on justification through faith in Christ apart from law, it would constitute an admission from them that the law to which they had been devoted was completely without merit.
- b. The apostle was quick to disallow that faith makes law useless. “Certainly not!” Instead, a commitment to faith in Jesus Christ *establishes* the importance and usefulness of the law previously followed. Whiteside says:

“We do not make any law of none effect through faith. Law here evidently is that universal rule of right and wrong that is binding on all nations and peoples of all time. That law is established by faith.

“But how do we establish law by faith? Certainly not in the sense that we set it up or make it binding. But if we come to the Lord Jesus Christ that we may be forgiven of sins committed against the universal moral law, do we not thereby show that we recognize its binding force?”

- c. The Jews had an opportunity through Moses’ Law to be led to the Savior (Gal.3:24) and to understand the seriousness of sin (Rom.7:13). Some Gentiles exhibited sensitivity to God’s moral law in varying degrees, giving them spiritual opportunities that weren’t given to others (Acts 10:2; Luke 7:5,9; etc.).

4:1-4-- “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found...?”

- a. Paul had declared his conclusion from his discussion about faith and works of law (3:28): “A man is justified by faith apart from works of law.” “A man” was any man. No man was excepted. And what man in all of past history could Paul use to best illustrate the truth of his conclusion? His obvious choice was Abraham, Israel’s most-revered patriarch and father of the nation (Jn.8:33).

- b. Paul's strategy was to open his investigation into Abraham's justification with a general conclusion and then to move on to more specific deductions. His opening question is general, but it anticipates something more. "What work [of merit] did Abraham ever do to *deserve* Jehovah's blessing?" That touches Paul's *general* stance about the uselessness of human works. But "according to the flesh" strikes *specifically* at the very center of the Jewish-Gentile controversy. Of what importance was circumcision, or any other bodily service under Moses' Law, to Abraham's quest for justification? Important enough to make any of them binding on *every man* who seeks salvation under the terms of the gospel (Acts 15:1,5)?
- c. No Jew would dare suggest that Abraham didn't enjoy justification before God. But *how* did he become "righteous" [forgiven and treated *as if* he had never sinned]? Was it by some self-determined act(s) or in some other way? Apparently, he didn't succeed in keeping the moral law much better than some other good men [See Gen.12:10-20; 20:1-18.], and he lived long before the Mosaic Law with its ceremonies and devotions were established with Israel. Abraham's righteousness must have come to him in some way other than by those practices that were still so jealously guarded by some Jewish Christians.
- d. If not by works of which he could boast, than by what was Abraham justified? Paul answers, "Let the Scripture settle it once and for all." He quotes from Genesis, "Abraham *believed God*, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gen.15:6).

Note-- It is often claimed that Abraham's belief brought him *initial* acceptance with God, and since he did nothing more than believe what God promised, this is proof that sinners are now justified just by believing as he did. There are *two* basic flaws in this argumentation:

- (1) This was not Abraham's initial justification. Hebrews 11 refers several times to Abraham doing God's will "by faith.". If men are justified "by faith," then each act of faith was evidence of Abraham's justification. The first act occurred when he left Ur and went toward Canaan in Genesis 12, some time prior to his "justification" in Genesis 15. In between were numerous acts of faith and justification. [See Gen.12:6,7; 12:8; 13:3,4; 14:14-24.] Abraham's *belief* in Gen.15:6 is *not* the faith that saves a sinner from sin for the first time. Rather, it is the ongoing, "constant process of justification" [Vine, p.339, on *dikaio*] that is anchored by faith in God over a lifetime.
- (2) Abraham's *belief* in God was not the "faith only" salvation advocated by many churches. "By faith" he "obeyed" (Heb.11:8); "sojourned in the promised land" (Heb.11:9); "offered up Isaac" (Heb.11:17) and

performed numerous other services to Jehovah. [See above.] Neither for sinner nor for saint does Abraham lend support to: “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort” (Methodist Discipline, Article IX).

- e. If Abraham [or any man] could not *earn* justification, then justification must be by God’s *grace* that *gives* salvation to man, rather than by God’s *payment* of salvation to man in exchange for his meritorious work. No man can boast about what is *given* to him, unless he boasts about the giver.

4:5-8-- “But to him who does not work...”

- a. A man is justified before God when he believes in God rather than in himself. All acts of obedience are done because he believes they will please God, whether or not they are pleasing to himself. He is careful that whatever he does is done *by faith* and not by sight (2Cor.5:7).
- b. Such faith is “accounted” or “imputed” for the righteousness of the believer. It is *not* the righteousness of Christ that is put to the believer’s account. It is his own faith that God credits him with, and it is his own “righteousness” that God recognizes [innocence pursuant to God’s forgiveness which allows him to be treated by God *as if he had* never sinned].
- c. David is called out as Paul’s second great witness to God’s abiding practice of justifying only those who “work” by faith and don’t trust in themselves for their justification. He quotes the psalmist’s declaration about the Lord’s forgiveness (Psalm 32:1,2):
 - (1) David spoke of lawless deeds being forgiven, sins being covered, and sin not being “imputed” to the sinner who receives these favors;
 - (2) Paul had spoken (verse 6) of righteousness being “imputed” to the recipient of the Lord’s blessings;
 - (3) Of course, the “man” of both statements is the same man. If *sins* are not imputed [charged] against a person, then he is without sin, and that constitutes a state of *righteousness*. Such “blessedness” is blessedness indeed!
- d. Paul appoints David as a witness to the doctrine of righteousness by faith without meritorious works, although David’s statement in the quotation specifically cites neither “righteousness” nor “faith.” We can safely rely on Paul’s inspiration to transmit an accurate report of what David *meant* as well as what he *said*. Paul harbored no fears of being contradicted in his “commentary” on David’s words.

ROMANS

LESSON SIX

QUESTIONS CHAPTERS 3:21-4:8

1. _____ apart from _____ is witnessed by the _____ and the _____.
2. “For _____ have sinned and _____ of the _____ of God.”
3. How is Jesus Christ a “propitiation” in God’s salvation plan?
4. What part does each element play in this “propitiation”?
 - a. Christ: _____
 - b. Blood: _____
 - c. Faith: _____
 - d. Forbearance: _____
 - e. Righteousness: _____
5. What statement in verse 26 might be understood as the *theme* of Romans?
6. By what law is man’s boasting excluded?
7. What is Paul’s “conclusion” about justification, faith, and works?
8. Faith does not make _____ (the) law but rather _____ it.
9. Two witnesses used by Paul to support his teaching are _____ and _____.
10. Paul quoted _____ (reference) which attributed righteousness to _____.
11. If man’s works could justify him, salvation would result from _____ and not from _____.
12. _____ is accounted (imputed) to the man who _____ on a God who _____ the _____.
13. God always has imputed _____ apart from _____.
14. Sin and lawless deeds are said to be _____ and _____.
15. What is “imputed” to a “blessed” man? _____ What is not? _____.

III. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: GIVEN THROUGH FAITH (3:21-4:25)

- B. Abraham, the great example of righteousness by faith. (4:1-25)
1. Justified by faith, not works. (1-5)
 2. David confirms this conclusion. (6-8)
 3. Circumcision not connected to righteousness. (9-12)
 4. Keeping the law not connected to righteousness. (13-15)
 5. Abraham received promises by faith in God. (16-22)
 6. His example assures those who imitate his example. (23-25)

Text: 4:9-25

4:9,10-- “Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only...?”

- a. “This blessedness” is the “blessedness” in verse 6. It is the blessedness of being declared “righteous” by God without having to keep the requirements of some law perfectly. This is a benefit to be greatly desired. But who can qualify for it? Jews? Gentiles? Both? Much depends on the answer to this question.
- b. We [Jews and Gentiles] all agree that Abraham attained righteousness apart from perfect obedience to law. The Scripture says so: “Abraham *believed God*, and *it* [his faith] was accounted to him for righteousness” (verse 3).
- c. When did this happen? Before or after his circumcision? Sacred history is clear about that. We don’t know how early in his life Abraham was *first* judged to be righteous by the Lord. We *do* know that it was prior to the plain declaration in Genesis 15:6, where his righteousness was again confirmed when Abraham believed God’s promise to give him children from his own body. [See Genesis 12:1-7.]
- d. Abraham was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born (Gen.16:16). God made another covenant with him when he was ninety-nine (Gen.17:2). Abraham would become the father of “many nations” and his seed would inherit the land of Caanan. Also, his heir would be Sarah’s son, not Ishmael. Abraham, Ishmael, and all males in his house were circumcised in conjunction with his covenant with Jehovah. This occurred at least thirteen years after God had pronounced him righteous in Genesis 15:6!
- e. The answer to Paul’s question was a “no-brainer.” *Circumcision was entirely unrelated to Abraham’s righteousness!*

4:11,12-- “And he received the sign of circumcision...”

- a. Circumcision and righteousness were two different things. Abraham’s circumcision was a **sign** [*semeion*-- “a sign, mark, indication, token, is used of that which distinguishes a person or thing from others,” Vine, 1052] that he was in a covenant relationship with God. This same **sign** extended to *every* Jewish male in his posterity, including those

born into Israel when the nation was under Moses' Law. It *signified* a promise that they would be faithful to their obligations under the covenant. Circumcision didn't *assure* righteousness; it only pledged that they would *try* to be obedient.

- b. Abraham's circumcision was God's way of certifying that the patriarch was already righteous. God's seal served as His testimony that righteousness is related to *faithful obedience*, not to an unblemished record of *law-keeping*. To the Jews, this meant that the circumcision legislated by Moses' Law and considered by them to be vital to a good standing with God was *not* the all-in-all they had thought it to be.
- c. God's action, as to *when* Abraham was required to be circumcised, made a strong statement about *who* were to be included in His salvation plans. Other *uncircumcised* people could be considered as righteous individuals if they, like Abraham, demonstrated that they truly believed in God and in His promises. Abraham was to be regarded as "the father of all those who believe," whether they are Jews or Gentiles in the flesh and whether or not they are circumcised.
- d. Abraham was destined to become the *physical* "father" of the Jews who, like himself, were separated from the nations and privileged with unique opportunities to walk with Jehovah in a way that others couldn't. He would serve as a "role-model" for Israel to show the Jews the importance of strict obedience to God's commandments, including the regulation of circumcision. However, Abraham's relationship with Jehovah was never intended to encourage anyone to depend on meritorious works as the way to please God. He *always* worked [obeyed] when God told him to, but his work sprang out of his deep faith and trust that the Lord would do *everything* He had promised, no matter how unlikely it might seem.
- e. The patriarch of physical Israel also would become a *spiritual* "father" to both Jews and Gentiles who would replicate his trust in God, whether or not they had been circumcised or in other ways had been involved in a law that required perfect compliance. This "fatherhood" would consist of a spiritual relationship with other faithful persons, much the same as Paul's own relationship with Timothy, his "true son in the faith" (1Tim.1:2). Abraham continues to serve as a *spiritual* role-model for all those who would be righteous, just as he served as an example of obedience to his physical offspring.
- f. The *spiritual* circumcision that remains connected with Abraham is neither identified as the physically circumcised [Jews] nor as the uncircumcised [Gentiles]. Rather, it consists only of those who "walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still in uncircumcision." Clinton Hamilton makes this observation:

"In effect he [Abraham-RG] was a Gentile at the time. The fatherhood of Abraham in relation to believers antedates his fatherhood of the circumcision. At that time, he was justified although not circumcised. Godet [Frederic-RG] comments, 'What does this mean, if not that Abraham was still ranked as a Gentile when 'he believed and his faith was counted to him for righteousness?' Hence it follows that it is not, properly speaking, for Gentile

believers to enter by the gate of the Jews, but for Jewish believers to enter by the gate of the Gentiles. It will be allowed that it was impossible for one to overwhelm his adversary more completely.”

- g. “In the steps of the faith” focuses again on Paul’s earlier reference to believers “being justified” by grace (3:24). *Dikaioo*, the verb used by the apostle, is in the “continuous tense” and means “a constant process of justification” (Vine, 339). Salvation “by faith” doesn’t happen all at once in a moment of time. It requires “steps” of continual learning, believing, and obeying that occur over time as seekers first *become* God’s children and then as they *remain* His faithful children throughout their lives. This fact explodes the “faith only” doctrine of justification all over again.

4:13-15-- “For the promise that he would be the heir of the world...”

- a. This was not the “land promise” made to Abraham and his physical descendants in Genesis 12 and repeated in Genesis 15 and 17. That was a promise limited to the land of Canaan. This pledge involves Abraham’s inheritance of “the world” and must refer to his future status of becoming a blessing to “all nations [families]” of the earth (Gen.12:3). This unique blessing was realized in the coming of Christ to offer redemption to “all nations” (Matt.28:19) and to “every creature” (Mk.16:15).
- b. Abraham would “inherit” the world as people of faith cast themselves into the pattern he had established in his life of trusting obedience. While the depths of his unwavering and unhesitating faith in God’s promises are extremely difficult to replicate, his example is a worthy goal toward which we must strive. It holds out the same promise to all men of all ages whose goal is heaven: “The just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).
- c. It was not Abraham’s physical “seed” who would inherit the world through their connection with the Law. Instead, this promise of the world [to come?] is fulfilled in his spiritual seed, those “meek” people [humble and receptive to God’s commands like Abraham was] who have the characteristics necessary to obey the gospel. Jesus Himself assured the meek that the world would be their heritage (Matt.5:5).
- d. If God’s spiritual promises were realized in physical Israel [or in Gentiles] because they had a law of works by which to seek righteousness before Jehovah, then everything that God said about the necessity of faith is irrelevant to them. They could earn their justification, if justification came by man’s works. Genuine faith was of secondary importance to the “law-keeper.”
- e. But-- to depend on *works* rather than *faith* was to chase after a rainbow. Justification by *any* law [Mosaic or moral] demanded perfect conformity without any violation at all. Any promise that depended on perfectly keeping a law was “without effect” [useless] because experience showed that no man can keep a law perfectly!

- f. Law never provides forgiveness for those who violate its terms. It only exacts punishment and penalty ["wrath"]. Transgression of law is inherent in the nature of law because of man's inabilities. To give allegiance to law is to agree to suffer whatever penalties law might inflict upon transgressors. Without forgiveness, those who break *some* laws can expect the penalties attached to *those* laws without any consideration being offered for their compliance with *other* laws. Vulnerable man faces a hopeless situation when he chooses to "pull himself up [spiritually] by his bootstraps!" David Lipscomb makes a valuable comment on verse fifteen:

"This passage is often misapplied. It is interpreted to mean that where God has not given a specific command prohibiting a thing, that thing may be done in religious service; that man is authorized to do anything in the service of God that is not specially prohibited in the Scriptures. This principle directly contradicts the whole teaching of the Bible. Moses said: 'Ye shall not do after the things that we do here this day, every man whatever is right in his own eyes; for ye are not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.' (Deut.12:8,9.) At this time the law was not in force. They were left to do whatsoever seemed right in their own eyes. Some general truths had been taught them, and they were left to show their love for God in their own way. But when the law was given, he said, 'What thing soever I command you, that ye shall observe to do; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.' (Deut.12:32.) They were now no longer left to do what was right in their own eyes, but must conform to the will of God. To go outside of it was to sin and call down God's wrath upon them. God now has a law of service given through Jesus Christ, and whosoever oversteps, sets aside, adds to, or takes from that law transgresses the law and incurs the wrath of God."

4:16,17-- "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace..."

- a. Since righteousness was unavailable to anyone through the works of law, it had to be a gift of *grace* from God, if any were to be righteous. But grace and meritorious works are incompatible. Justification would be a matter of *debt* if man worked for it. On the other hand, grace and *faith* are completely harmonious; man does what God directs him to do, but he understands that God *owes* him nothing for his efforts. If he is justified, it is because of God's gracious willingness to forgive him of his mistakes and to treat him as if he had never broken His law.
- b. God's promise that righteousness comes from a man's *faith* and not his works allows *some* to be justified. Otherwise, all would perish despite their efforts to satisfy the requirements of an unforgiving law. *By faith*, all believers, Jews and Gentiles alike, can be *sure* that righteousness is within their reach, just as it was within Abraham's. In God's "presence" [view, judgment] Abraham became the "father" of many [spiritual] nations when he displayed faith and trust that went far beyond what other men possessed.
- c. God had already "made" Abraham "the father of many nations" even before Isaac was born (Gen.17:5). That announcement was made at a time when both husband and wife

were beyond the time for having a child. Paul's tribute to Abraham cites the fact that the patriarch believed God's promise for a contrary-to-nature child because he *also* believed that: (1) God has the power to give life to the dead; (2) God's purposes are so certain of being fulfilled that He can speak of future realities as if they were *already* real.

- d. Perhaps Abraham's faith in God's power to give him a child rested on the unequivocal confidence that he had in Jehovah as the Great Creator of all things on the earth. He knew God could give life to him and to Sarah, although they were "dead" to childbearing, because he had confidence that God had once breathed life into the "dead" clay of Adam's body at earth's dawning. He believed, furthermore, that everything in the world had been made from *nothing* and had been called into existence by the sheer power of the Creator's word. Indeed, any man who accepts Moses' account of the Creation has no problem in believing that the Lord *can fulfill any promise He might make!*

4:18-22-- "...who, contrary to hope, in hope believed..."

- a. It is not out of the ordinary for one to hope for something that has a reasonable possibility of coming to pass. It is not usual for one to hope for something that cannot possibly happen because it is contrary to nature. It would require great faith to trust in a promise that was totally irrational and visibly impossible. The Lord's promise to Abraham of a child in his old age was of that very kind. As Moses Lard observed, Abraham had to decide "whether to believe God against nature, or to believe nature against God." Obviously, he made the *right choice!*
- b. "Contrary to [reasonable] hope," Abraham believed God anyway and hoped for the son of promise. In due time, the promise was realized in Isaac, the child of his own "dead" body and in physical Israel, which became a numerically great people (Gen.15:5,6).
- c. Faith great enough to believe the unbelievable also qualified Abraham to become the role-model for *all* believers to come. This was the faith that would "justify by faith" in the gospel age. Paul applied God's promise of having descendants "as many as the stars" in one nation [Israel] (Gen.15:5) to another promise He had already made to Abraham Gen.12:2; 17:5) that he would become the father of "many nations" [*all believers*].
- d. It didn't matter to Abraham that the laws of nature would have to be violated for God's promise to come true. It didn't matter that he knew of no instance of such a thing taking place. He only considered that Jehovah had pledged a son, so a son it would be! He couldn't *understand how* God could keep His promise, but he could *believe what* God had said. Emil Brunner is quoted:

"The existence of faith in God's promise is completely clear only where God's promise runs counter to human expectation and calculation. Whether one relies on God's word alone becomes manifest only where God's word is not supported by any rational basis, but where, on the contrary, it is opposed to what one must consider probable on the basis of reason."

- e. At no time did he allow doubt to creep in and weaken his strong faith. By using the promise as a way to glorify God, his faith became stronger as he [probably] proclaimed to others his confidence in the Lord's ability to perform what He had vowed. Abraham was "fully convinced."
- f. Paul repeats [from verse three] in verse twenty-two the conclusion Moses had first recorded in Genesis 15:6: Abraham's faith was "accounted to him for righteousness." Since Paul [seemingly] has joined together several covenants between God and Abraham (Gen.12:1-7; 15:1-6; 17:1-22), Moses' statement about faith and righteousness apparently applies to each occasion on which the patriarch believed what God promised to do for him and his "seed," both physical and spiritual.

4:23-25-- "Now it was not written for his sake alone..."

- a. It *was* for the sake of glorifying Abraham's example of faith that Moses first wrote about it as a "perfect" faith (James 2:22). It is only right that those who display admirable qualities in their search for God should be given appropriate recognition. Inspiration has recorded the faithful exploits of numerous righteous people who chose God's will above everything else. [See Romans 15:4 and Hebrews 11.]
- b. More importantly, the Scriptures give attention to Abraham's faith to benefit "us," all who face the choice between the faith of God and the disbelief of Satan. What a comfort it is to know that if we choose to imitate Abraham's faith, God will judge us to be righteous exactly as he imputed righteousness to that great man when he laid aside every doubt that human reason can raise and simply trusted that "if God says it, then it's so!"
- c. Paul concludes his discussion of Abraham and his faith by describing the faith that can justify sinners in these "last days" (Heb. 1:2):
 - (1) It accepts the fact that man's sin made it necessary for Jesus to die on the cross;
 - (2) It embraces the death, the burial, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the tomb by the power of God;
 - (3) It affirms that man's justification before God depends on His ultimate testimony to Jesus' Sonship-- the resurrection from the grave (Rom.1:4).

Addendum--**ABRAHAM-- SAVED BY FAITH OR WORKS?****Paul (Romans 4:1-25)****James (James 2:21-24)**

Verse 2 -- Not justified by works
Verses 3,9,22-- Faith accounted for righteousness
Verse 10-- Justified without circumcision
Verses 12,16-- Father of all the faithful
Verse 13-- God's promise received by faith
Verses 17-21-- Believed despite obstacles
Verse 23-- Example for all who believe

Verse 21-- Justified by works
Verse 23-- Faith accounted for righteousness
Verse 21-- Offered Isaac as a work
Verse 22-- Faith perfected by works
Verse 23-- "Friend of God" after works
Verse 24-- Example for all who work
by faith

Verses 11,12-- Circumcised [worked], and
"walked" [lived] by faith

**Paul's Emphasis: FAITH as the basis
for Man's OBEDIENCE [WORKS]**

**James' Emphasis: OBEDIENCE [WORKS] as
Proof of Man's FAITH**

**WORKS WITHOUT FAITH
CANNOT JUSTIFY**

**FAITH WITHOUT WORKS
CANNOT JUSTIFY**

It is often claimed that Paul and James present conflicting positions on the relationships that exist between faith, works, and salvation. Paul is presented as the champion of salvation by "faith only." James is said to be the defender of salvation by "works." Investigation of their statements about faith and works will reveal that both writers agree that faith in Jesus as God's Son is essential, but so is obedience to the "works [commandments] of God" (John 6:28). Mark offers an inspired confirmation of the truth that both Paul *and* James taught: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

1. “For we say that _____ was accounted to Abraham for _____.”
2. Was Abraham judged righteous before or after he was circumcised? _____.
3. Circumcision served as *two* things for Abraham: (1)_____ and (2)_____.
4. Explain how circumcision served as (1) and (2) above:
(1) _____.
(2) _____.
5. Abraham is the “father” of all believers who are _____ or _____.
6. Believers must _____ in the _____ of Abraham’s _____.
7. Abraham and his _____ are heirs of the _____ through _____ and not through _____.
8. If righteousness comes by law, then faith is made _____ and the _____ is made of _____.
9. The law brings _____ because _____ comes when men violate the _____.
10. How do faith and grace make the promise of righteousness “sure” to “all the seed”?
_____.
11. Abraham had faith that God was able to do what *two* “impossible” things?
(1) _____; (2) _____.
12. What did Abraham’s faith *not* do? _____.
What did Abraham’s faith *do*? _____.
13. Abraham was convinced that what God _____ He could _____.
14. What statement from the Old Testament appears *twice* in this chapter?
_____.
15. Righteousness is imputed to people who believe what things? (1) _____;
(2) _____; (3) _____.

IV. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF SIN (5:1- 6:23)

- A. Christians have confidence that the problem has been solved. (5:1-21)
 - 1. Faith has brought hope of God's salvation. (1-5)
 - 2. God's love through Christ demonstrates His desire to save. (6-11)
 - 3. God's righteousness through Christ's death more than compensates for penalty for Adam's sin. (12-21)
 - a. Death suffered under law before Christ. (13,14)
 - b. Law of grace provides righteousness through Christ. (15-17)
 - c. Eternal life offered by God to the obedient. (18-21)

Text-- 5:1-21

5:1-5-- "Therefore, having been justified by faith..."

- a. Paul announced the theme of his letter in chapter one: The gospel of Christ provides salvation to believers and demonstrates God's righteousness to all (1:16,17). He then followed this announcement with a discussion of related matters.
 - (1) The importance of his theme relates to the *need* of salvation by *all* (1:18-3:20).
 - (2) Christ as a propitiation allows God to be *just* as He *justifies* the lost (3:21-26).
 - (3) Jewish immunity through Abraham and the Law is disallowed (3:27-4:22).
 - (4) Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection were intended for justification. (4:23-25).
 - (5) Faith in Christ is man's only route to a saving righteousness (4:22,23).
- b. Having established these truths [above], the apostle is ready to move on to encourage the Roman Christians about the faith they had embraced at the cost of turning their backs on other things in which they had previously placed their hope of righteousness. "Therefore, having been justified by faith..." believers enjoy numerous blessings that accompany their justification through obedience to the gospel.
- c. The *first*, and in some respects the most basic all, is peace with God (vs.1). Scholars disagree over whether the text says, "*we have peace*," or, "*let us have peace*." Obviously, though, any positive relationship with God must be maintained by the faithful conduct of the believer (1Peter 2:21,22). A meaningful peace between God and man is made possible only by embracing His Son. Coffman offers an interesting list of means by which many people in futility seek God's peace:
 - (1) Through seeking the tranquility offered by peaceful physical surroundings;
 - (2) Through the therapy of psychiatry and other such emotion-calming remedies;
 - (3) Through participation in activities that seek to solve social ills;
 - (4) Through the use of mind-changing substances offering a respite from stress;

- (5) Through pursuing the pleasures of this world;
- (6) Through the satisfactions of significant human achievements;
- (7) Through investing religious leaders with the responsibility of decision-making.
- d. The *second* advantage gained by believers is access to God's grace as an ongoing privilege (vs.2). Grace underpins the sinner's initial redemption, and grace is the underlying factor that enables the continuing righteousness of the faithful disciple (Eph.3:10).
- e. A *third* reward of faith is the hope of glory [glorification] in eternity (vs. 2). This hope can be entertained only by believers (Col.1:27).
- f. The *fourth* benefit of our faith is the ability to handle tribulation in a positive manner (vs. 3). The Christian can endure *any* worldly problem because he knows that if his confidence in God remains strong, it will promote perseverance [patience,endurance] until God is ready to solve the problem. Patience, in turn, will enhance character ["approvedness"-- ASV]. The inner sense of being approved by God will produce the hope of eternal reward, and such hope is fundamental to our faithfulness (Rom. 8:24). Peter also deals with the potential benefits of tribulation in the lives of saints (1Peter 1:6,7).
- e. Paul's *fifth* blessing is our confidence that God's love for His children will sustain us through any negative situation in this world (vs. 5). This assurance comes through the revelation of God's love by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:16; 1Jn. 4:8). That love arms us against losing our hope of reward now and in the judgment.

5:6-11-- For while we were still without strength..."

- a. The disciple's awareness of God's deep love for him is strongly confirmed when he ponders the fact that no man has *any* virtue that could recommend him as being *worthy* of that heavenly love and concern. We were all "ungodly" when Jesus died for us.
- b. God's love in giving His Son for man's justification was governed not only by His deep *emotion* but also by His unlimited *wisdom*. He restrained the expression of His love until it would best benefit man, its object. "In due time ["season"] Christ died for the ungodly." David Lipscomb comments on the heavenly timetable:

"There was a due season for Christ to come. There was a long providential preparation, a remarkable concurrence of many conditions, before the 'fulness of time' for God to send forth his Son had come. A select nation must be prepared by centuries of discipline. Time must be allowed for the human race to grow into the historic age so that the proofs of the facts connected with the advent of the Son of God could be adequately established. A language more copious and precise than any earlier one must be developed; a world government, wider and stronger than the world had before seen, must be consolidated, to favor unwittingly, even while it wickedly opposed, the dissemination of the gospel. And then, when this wonderful preparation was completed, in due season Christ died. Christ is, therefore, the turning point and center of history, the end of the old and the beginning of the new humanity."

- c. **Human love** would be taxed to its limit to prompt one man to die for another. A really “good” [beneficent] man *perhaps might* find someone willing to die in his place. The sacrifice of someone’s life for a “righteous” [just, fair] man is highly unlikely.
- d. **Heavenly love** required no such recommendations of human character to warrant its expression toward mankind. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” (John 3:16). Man was neither *good* nor *righteous*, but he was very much in need of God’s love. God’s character (1John 4:7) was not at all dissuaded from demonstrating profound love toward man just because man’s character was so unlovely.
- e. Having turned aside for the moment to emphasize the greatness of God’s love that was responsible for man’s opportunity to be justified through the Christ, Paul resumes his citation of justification’s blessings for the justified.
- f. The *sixth* fruit of justification is the knowledge that God’s love was expressed in His salvation-procuring action of sending Jesus to die for the sins of “ungodly” men (vs.8). The price paid by heaven for our redemption reflects how important man’s eternal happiness was to the Godhead (1Jn.4:9,10).
- g. The *seventh* gain to the Christian in his justification is escape from God’s wrath in the world to come (vs.9). Paul told the Thessalonians that God’s wrath would involve vengeance, flaming fire, punishment, and everlasting destruction (2Thes.1:8,9). The human mind cannot comprehend the awfulness of God’s eternal wrath on the willingly disobedient (Mark 9:42-48).
- h. The *eighth* blessing is the reverse of the seventh. It would be very worthwhile to avoid God’s eternal wrath. It is a far happier prospect that justified people will also be favored with eternal life made possible by *Jesus’* eternal life (vs.10). We can no more fathom the reward of the faithful than we can the punishment of the unfaithful.
- i. Life instead of death [wrath] is the prospect of the justified person because he had been reconciled to God through the agency of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Moses Lard has this comment on the meaning of reconciliation:

“The whole doctrine of reconciliation, as in operation, is here stated in one brief sentence. *We are reconciled to God, not God to us.* Reconciliation implies a change, a change from enmity to love, and from disobedience to obedience. But this change takes place wholly in us, and in no part in God. God is unchangeable; with him there is not even the semblance of turning. Even his wrath is not a fitful emotion, often subsiding, as with us; but a profound, steady sense of right, which has no alternative but to punish sin. On the contrary, though God was bound not to acquit the guilty; he at the same time, so loved the world as to give his Son to die for it. In that death we have the most astounding proof of God’s love for us. On our part, we accept this proof as satisfactory, and in return love God. “We love him because he first loved us.”

“Every effort to make it appear that in reconciliation there is a mutual change, a change

in God from enmity to love, as well as in us, but dishonors him, as it seems to me, and perverts the truth. The view is not required either by the character of God or any known fact in the life or death of Christ. It is gratuitous, and injurious, and therefore should be abandoned.”

- j. The *ninth* fruit of salvation in Christ is the ever-present opportunity to rejoice in God (vs. 11). To bask in the spiritual comfort of God’s pleasure is a joy indeed! The saint’s confidence in every circumstance is, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom.8: 31). Without our *reconciliation* to God, this close and warm relationship would be impossible for us. Lard has another worthwhile observation about reconciliation:

“To receive the reconciliation is to receive that which effects it. We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Hence to receive the reconciliation is to receive Christ’s death; and to receive his death is to believe in it and accept it as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. It is not enough to believe that Christ died; we must believe that he died as a sin-offering for us, as the Lamb of God that takes away our sin. To accept in soul this great fact is to receive the reconciliation; the practical effect of which is to become reconciled. So soon as we accept the fact in the cordial belief of it, and obey Christ, our sins are remitted-- remitted by God, of favor, through Christ’s blood as the meritorious reason, and on condition of belief and obedience.”

5:12-20-- Some preliminary observations:

- a. This passage is admittedly one of the more difficult in Romans to interpret. There is sharp disagreement among scholars and students. It seems presumptuous to take any dogmatic position that totally disallows contrary positions about Paul’s exact meanings.
- b. The differences among commentators lie in what Paul meant by “death,” “life,” “condemnation,” “justification,” and other such terms. Some assign them strictly physical meanings; others say they are spiritual terms; still others mix the meanings between the physical and spiritual or contend for dual interpretations.
- c. The student of Romans will, of course, adopt whichever approach to the text seems to provide the most consistency within the *text* itself and within the *context* of whatever else he knows about Bible teaching on the subjects in question.
- d. Peter said that some things in Paul’s writings are “hard to understand” (2Peter 3:15,16). [This also is true sometimes of other writers; so, as Paul advised, “Study to show yourself approved unto God” (2Tim.2:15).]
- e. Whether one adopts the “physical” or the “spiritual” interpretation of these verses, he will discover the alternate position taught plainly in other places.

5:12-14-- “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world...”

- a. “Therefore” usually indicates that a conclusion from evidence presented is about to be announced. However, we must wait until verse eighteen for Paul to reach the destination he has in mind. There, another “therefore” takes up the thought begun in verse twelve.

- b. Verses 12-17 comprise a digression from the apostle's discussion of Jesus' role as God's agent for saving the world. Most versions indicate this deviation with parentheses or some other punctuation.
- c. Evidently, Paul thought it important to interrupt his original discussion with a quick study of Adam and Christ as they relate to humanity's ills. This "detour" may suggest that Paul anticipated an objection from his readers about his statements in the verses above that only through Jesus can man become righteous before God. [See verses 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11.]
- d. Some of Paul's critics might find it hard to comprehend how the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike, could be struggling in a quagmire of sinfulness, as he charged, in spite of the fact that God had provided not *one*, but *two* laws [moral and Mosaic] to bring them out [as they supposed] of that very condition? Another "law" [as they might perceive the gospel to be] might be helpful if added to one of the others, but surely there was nothing in it that was so *different* or so *powerful* that the gospel of Christ could, all alone, do for them what no other law could do.
- e. Paul's position was that one act of one man, Jesus Christ, was able to redeem entire humanity-- *past, present, and future*! Even God-given laws [moral and Mosaic] were helpless to accomplish what now can be done because Jesus had died on a cross in the far-away country of Palestine. "How is that possible?"
- f. Resolving doubts that his readers [and others] might have about the gospel's potency to save men from sin apart from any other remedy was Paul's main task in this letter. His theme was , "...to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that he might be [perceived as] just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (3:26). His treatment of that theme certainly indicates that some, even some in the Roman church, questioned God's justice [fairness]. They were being told that the laws He had encouraged them to follow to make them righteous [so they assumed] were, after all, inadequate for that purpose and had now been summarily set aside in order that something better might be substituted. They found it hard to see how that was playing fair with them.
- g. In chapter eleven, the apostle will caution his Jewish readers [especially] to remember that God has *two* fundamental qualities: goodness and severity (verse 22). This balance in His character enables Him to be completely fair in all His dealings with mankind. He *must* punish those who *violate* His law; those who strive to *obey* His law *must* be blessed even though their obedience is seriously flawed.
- h. This innate *fairness* [righteousness] of God will be the basis for Paul's response to any doubters at Rome. God's behavior toward *every* covenant with man, moral, Mosaic, and gospel, is a demonstration of His character. If men ever sin under the terms of a

covenant, they must be punished. If there is no remedy for their sin, they must perish. That satisfies God's *severity*. But His *goodness* is not satisfied in such a situation. That is where *grace* comes into play. If some price can be paid for man's sin that won't result in his eternal ruin, then both *severity* and *goodness* will prevail together. Jesus Christ, God's only Son, could and did offer His life in the place of the lives of weak and sinful men who found themselves condemned by laws they could not keep.

- i. The rest of chapter five is Paul's *grand illustration* of How God operates fairly within the limits of harshness and kindness. It must be conceded by all who accept the account of Scripture about the origin of sin and death in the world that mankind became subject to physical death because of Adam's *one* sin (Genesis 2:17). The curse of death was the expression of God's *wrath* on the wilfully disobedient. Was it fair for all to die because someone else sinned? Perhaps the Lord's arbitrary infliction of that penalty might be construed as unrighteous had He not done something *equally* arbitrary to express His *grace*. Paul declares that this gracious act not only restored all that physical death took away but also provides men the opportunity to enjoy a much better situation than they had before they were claimed by the grave. Maybe verse twelve is best explained by Paul's own statement in 1Corinthians 15: 22: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."
- j. Death spread to all men because *all sinned*. How? When? It's because of Adam's sin and not their own that men die physically. But how did death spread to all through the sin of someone else? The only possibility is that Adam is treated here as the *federal head* [*"federal regenerative head"*-- McGarvey] of the human race. Held by God to be the representative of all humanity, what Adam did personally was charged impersonally to his descendants and the penalty he suffered for his own sin was also suffered by them. A similar situation is described in Hebrews 7:9, when Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek in the person of his "father" Abraham. Such representative action and reaction is not uncommon in the Scriptures.
- k. Man has always been under [moral] law to God, so sin's penalty of physical death was imputed to men from Adam until Moses' law was given to the Jews. Death "reigned" as all men continued to die physically, even as they struggled to keep the spiritual laws God had given them. There was no connection between the penalty of physical death and the failure of those who were trying to keep a spiritual law. All died regardless of whether or not they were righteous before God.
- l. Universal death was inflicted on Adam's descendants even though they did not commit the same [kind of] sin that he did. His sin was making the wrong choice between life and death. Physical death was plainly attached to his disobedience to God's commandment. No such choice has been offered since, because Adam chose for everyone else. We die without choosing to die.

- m.** Adam is portrayed here as a “type” [*tupos*-- “a type, figure, pattern,” Vine, p.435] of Jesus. As such, he possessed characteristics of his person or his act(s) that resemble those seen in Christ and His deed(s). Adam is the “type”-- Christ is the “antitype” [*antitupos*-- “the event or person or circumstance corresponding to the type,” *ibid.*]. Clinton Hamilton suggests several of many such types and antitypes found in Scripture:
- (1) The sacrificial lamb as a type of Christ (John 1:29; 1Peter 1:19);
 - (2) Jonah’s three days in the fish as a type of Christ’s three days’ burial (Matt.12:40);
 - (3) Healing through a serpent on a pole as a type of healing through Jesus on a cross (John 3:14,15);
 - (4) Noah’s salvation by water as a type of water baptism for remission of sins (1Peter 3:20,21).
- n.** Paul draws from the likenesses [and differences] between what Adam did when he sinned in Eden and what Christ did when He died on the cross for our iniquities.

5:15-17-- “But the free gift is not like the offense.”

- a.** The apostle begins his tribute to Christ’s gift of Himself as the sacrifice for man’s transgressions with a contrast as well as a likeness between the deeds of Adam and Jesus. Adam’s sin [one act] brought physical death to many [all], but Christ’s death [one act] introduced the grace of both God and His Son to the situation. Grace “abounded” to many [all] by restoring their physical lives to them in resurrection (John 5:28,29) and by making available to faithful believers a spiritual life that will be immeasurably better than the life taken from them by their *federal head*. J.W. McGarvey comments:

“To illustrate by a figure, there are *two* doors which we must pass in order to inherit eternal life. The first is natural death. This door was closed for all by Adam, and opened for all by Christ. The second is the judgment. This door was closed for all having the capacity to sin by their own individual sins, and opened by Christ for those who shall be justified through belief in him. Therefore, in teaching that Christ leads all through the first door, Paul has not taught universal salvation, for true, complete salvation lies beyond the second door. Justification from the sin of Adam is one thing, and final justification from our own sins is quite another.”

Moses Lard adds his thoughts about the “abounding” of Christ’s free gift:

“But here an important question arises. The favor and gift abound “much more” than the effects of the sin. In what sense? Do they actually invest all with any thing more than restoration to life? I presume not. All that they do beyond this consists in provisions made, not in actual benefits bestowed. They provide for the salvation of the whole human race from personal sin, but they invest none with this salvation except those who obey Christ. As to the wicked, it is not known that a single benefit will be conferred beyond simply restoring them to life; and that too, it may be, in the very bodies, unchanged for the better, in which they died. Thus far only, then, in their case, do the favor and gift abound. But with the saved it is widely different. With them the favor and gift abound even up to immortality and eternal life. Hence it is to the saved exclusively, that the “much more” of the Apostle has reference.”

- b. Another significant difference between Christ's gift [death] and Adam's sin was that, while each consisted of only *one act*, their results were vastly different. The sin brought *condemnation* [to physical death] for all men, but the gift resulted in *justification* [*dikaiosis*], which Thayer defines as "a judicial decision, sentence" (p.151). Since Paul is dealing in this passage with physical rather than spiritual death and life, this term [justification] is taken to refer to God's decision to accept Jesus' death in the place of man's. Man is, therefore, released or separated from God's previous decision to send him to the grave. Of course, the cross also is the means by which man is separated from his *sins* and justified (verse 5:1) to share in the benefits of spiritual redemption, but Paul's focus here is likely on the physical rather than the spiritual.
- c. The imposition of physical death on the human family required *only one offense* to make it happen. However, there were *many offenses* [all the sins of all the world] that made heaven's gift of forgiveness necessary.
- d. Each man, Adam and Christ, did something to change radically the existing state of man. Adam's disobedience allowed physical death to "reign" over mankind, and those sentenced to death had no recourse or appeal. Christ's obedience (Hebrews 5:8) broke death's hold on its victims and gave them back their physical lives.
- e. Paul's promise was that those who receive an "*abundance*" of grace will "reign" in life. Since physical life is short, especially for those raised to life only briefly at the general resurrection of the dead, the restored life could scarcely be called a "reign." The apostle most likely has something more in mind here. He later wrote to Timothy about the elect, "For if we died with Him, we shall live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2Tim.2:11,12). Revelation pictures the saved as "reigning" (Rev. 5:10; 20:6; 22:5) in eternal life with their Savior. Surely, abundant grace will bring an abundant life to some, but not to all. Their *life* will "much more" reign over [dominate] them than death ever could. And they will reign [be dominant (1Cor.3:21-23)] in their new life much more completely than the shadow of death even reigned in their old life! Lipscomb presents these insightful thoughts about "life" and "death":

"Life and death were used originally in a sense different from their present use. Life meant freedom from corruption or suffering, both material and spiritual. Death was the opposite of life--subjection to corruption, to suffering, to decay. 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die' was literally fulfilled in the sense in which the word 'die' was used... Paul says: 'I die daily.' (1Cor.15:31.) Our existence here is but a continued death-- a continued suffering and decay. What we call 'death' is but the end of continued death. The effect of the death upon man's material being is suffering, disease, decay, ending in the return of dust to dust; the effect of that death on the spiritual man is anguish, sorrow, fear, spiritual woe, ending in eternal sorrow unless redeemed from this destiny by Christ, the Savior. It is one death, but one bearing fruit in the material and spiritual world."

- f. A very popular religious doctrine maintains that the guilt of Adam's sin was "imputed" to his descendants and that this "original sin" is transmitted from one generation to the next. This accounts for the practice of infant baptism and other such things in many churches. Physical death does pass from that first sin but not spiritual death. Each person is responsible for himself alone and is guilty before God only of whatever wrong acts he has done. [See Ezek. 18:4,20; James 1:13-15; etc.] R. L. Whiteside says:

"It is a fact that spiritual death, as well as physical death, entered the world through the sin of Adam; and it is a fact that spiritual life entered the world through Jesus Christ. But are we all dead spiritually because Adam brought spiritual death into the world? No more than that we are all alive spiritually because Christ brought spiritual life into the world. As we do not partake of the spiritual life unconditionally, so neither do we partake of the spiritual death unconditionally. If Adam had introduced measles into the world, that would not prove that all his descendants are born with the measles! But people live in a sin-infested country, and sin is more contagious than measles. To say that people are born subject to sin is far from saying that people are born sinners. Adam was created subject to sin, and he sinned; but that does not prove that he was created a sinner, nor even with a depraved nature."

5:18,19-- "Therefore, as through one man's offense..."

- a. Having completed his illustration about the *two* arbitrary decisions of a just God-- one to hold all men physically responsible for the sin of their *physical federal head*, the other to forgive submissive persons of their transgressions through the gracious gift of their *spiritual federal head*-- Paul returns to his initial discussion, interrupted after verse eleven. He starts over again with, "Therefore..."
- b. Paul's proposition is restated: one act of sin was enough to dispense physical death to all men; one act of righteousness was likewise sufficient to make forgiveness of sins available to all men. These facts exonerate God of any charges of unfairness.
- c. The terms used in these verses are defined as follows:
- (1) Judgment (interpolated in most versions)-- "a judicial decision carrying punishment";
 - (2) Condemnation-- "the sentence of physical death to be suffered by all men";
 - (3) Righteous act-- "the propitiatory death of Jesus on the cross for man's sins";
 - (4) Justification of life-- "acquittal or release from the sentence of physical death."
- d. James Macknight makes this comment on verse eighteen:
- "Well then, as it pleased God, through one offence committed by Adam, to pass sentence upon all men, condemning them to death temporal; even so, it pleased God, through one act of righteousness performed by Christ, to pass sentence upon all men, justifying, that is, delivering them from immediate death, and allowing them to live a while on earth, and declaring that, after death, they shall all be raised from the dead."
- e. The meaning of "made" is crucial to understanding verse nineteen. The original is *katestahesan* ["to set down as, constitute...to declare, to show to be," Thayer, p.314].

Paul maintains that men were made sinners by Adam's sin in the same way that others were made righteous by Christ's death. If sin was imputed to mankind [many] because Adam sinned, then it must follow that Christ's righteousness will be imputed to mankind because Christ died on the cross. That, of course, would be universalism, which the Scriptures clearly refute (Matt. 7:13,14; John 5:29; etc.).

- f. Consistency strongly suggests that when men were "declared" or "constituted" to be sinners, and when they were "declared" or "constituted" to be righteous, *both* actions by God involved physical rather than spiritual changes. People became "sinners" subject to physical death through their physical federal head [Adam]. They became "righteous" and worthy to be freed from the sentence of the tomb because of their spiritual federal head [Christ].

5:20,21-- Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound."

- a. Jews might contend that Paul was being disrespectful of the Mosaic Law and was seeking to defame it when he taught that righteousness was not possible through that Law. Gentiles could make the same accusation about the moral law.
- b. That issue will be addressed by Paul more fully in chapter seven (verses 7ff.). There he shows that the Law was not evil nor did it make sinners. It did, however, through its ordinances and ceremonies, provide more opportunities for violations than had been the case under a relatively simple moral law. But again, the Lord was still *more* than fair when He offered *more grace* to cover [and to exceed] His requirements for the forgiveness of every sin, no matter how many sins a law-keeper might have. Jim Mcguiggan says about this:

"Verses 12-21 show that law is powerless to benefit mankind. As things are, when law meets up with man, the invariable result is death and condemnation. This is seen in Adam and everyone since him. What mankind needs is grace. Something which will handle sin and its results. The solution is not more law! Death reigned from Adam to Moses, and then came Moses' Law. It didn't help any; it only resulted in the multiplication of sin."
- c. Sin and grace simultaneously "abounded." Sin's abundance allowed physical death to reign over man. The abundance of grace not only restored man's physical life to him but also provided him with the opportunity to have eternal life in heaven if he, like God, is willing to pay the necessary price.

1. "Therefore" appears _____ times in this chapter in verses _____.
2. There are as many as *nine* blessings in verses 1-11 that come from justification by faith:
(1) _____ (2) _____
(3) _____ (4) _____
(5) _____ (6) _____
(7) _____ (8) _____
(9) _____
3. "Having been justified by His _____, we shall be saved from _____."
4. What have we received through Christ (vs. 11)? What does that mean? [Consult a dictionary.]
5. Paul's illustration compares and contrasts what *two* men?
6. Several pairs of people and things are featured in this chapter:
Two men: _____ and _____;
Two acts: _____ and _____;
Two results: _____ and _____;
Two reigns: _____ and _____;
Two sin remedies: _____ (bad) and _____ (good).
7. Most Bibles have punctuation to indicate a digression of thought before verse _____ and after verse _____.
8. One man's _____ made men _____; another man's _____ made men _____.
9. What effect did law have on man's sinful condition? Which law(s) had that effect?
10. There are *four* forms of "abound" in this chapter. What are they and where found (verses)?
(1) _____ (2) _____
(3) _____ (4) _____

IV. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF SIN (5:1-6:23)

- B. Christians have an obligation to live apart from sin. (6:1-23)
 - 1. Grace and sin are not compatible. (1,2)
 - 2. Christians cannot be dead and alive to sin at once. (2)
 - 3. Illustration about following Christ's example about sin. (3-11)
 - 4. The Christian's body is a tool to serve God. (12-14)
 - 5. Illustration of masters and servants. (15-19)
 - 6. Obvious reasons to live apart from sin. (20-23)

Text: 6:1-23

6:1,2-- "What shall we say then?"

- a. Paul's closing remarks in chapter five had emphasized "abounding" grace on God's part to solve man's problem of sin. He assured the Romans that grace could "reign" through righteousness because of Jesus' death on Calvary for the world.
- b. To people who were jealous for a Law they had lived under for many generations, it seemed much too easy a solution. After all, Moses' law [and the moral law of the Gentiles] had been given by God to address the problem of sin. Millions of people had for many years struggled to follow the ceremonies and commandments of law and had been convinced that they could be righteous only by such efforts. How could they just cast everything else aside and commit themselves to a trust in "grace"? How could grace apart from law bring righteousness, if grace [which they supposed they enjoyed] with law couldn't?
- c. Some of the Judaizing teachers had seized upon Paul's position about the grace of God and had portrayed it as: (1) A doctrine that undermined the importance of the moral standards God had incorporated into the laws He had given. If there was no more law, then there would be no morality. (2) A doctrine that encouraged the practice of sin because it claimed that grace was God's remedy for man's iniquity. If man's sins made God's grace appear, then it was logical that the more man sins, the more grace will follow. His grace is a glory to God, and, after all, isn't it man's *goal* to glorify God? More *sin*, more *grace*, more *glory*!
- d. It was important that Paul answer these false charges, lest his efforts in preaching the real gospel be hindered. "What shall we say to these erroneous ideas?"
- e. Is it sensible that an apostle who had so bluntly and vigorously condemned the multiple sins of Jews and Gentiles would at the same time advocate that people continue to live in those sins? "Certainly not!"
- f. "Dying to sin" and "living in sin" are totally incompatible. It's not reasonable for one

to try to be “dead” and “alive” to sin at the same time. Furthermore, Jesus’ purpose in coming to the earth was to “destroy the works of the devil” (1Jn.3:8). That is accomplished only when men stop committing sin. Living in sin directly opposes the very reason for which Jesus lived and died in the world.

6:3-5-- “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ...”

- a. The terms of grace had been clearly revealed in the gospel message from the beginning. “Repent and let every one of you be baptized... for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). *Every* convert had been taught similarly. [Study all the conversions in Acts.] Of course, they knew that they had been baptized into the death of Christ!
- b. This obedience in baptism was attributable not only to *these* Roman Christians but also to *all* people who had become disciples of Christ. Paul said, “as many of us...” He, too, had been baptized in order to die to sin and its destructive ways.
- c. These verses are primarily designed to call attention to the purpose of baptism. It is one of the *two* things that allow people to die to sin. The other is repentance. When unbelievers become believers, repentance changes their hearts from the power of sin. Then, baptism changes their relationship with God when he forgives their guilt of sin.
- d. Additionally, there are other truths disclosed about baptism in these verses.
 - (1) Baptism is a burial.
 - a. Every scholar translates “baptize” [*baptizo*] as “to dip, to immerse, to plunge,” or some equivalent term.
 - b. Every Greek-English lexicon does the same. For example, Henry Thayer defines *baptizo* as, “...prop. to dip repeatedly, immerse, submerge (of vessels sunk..to cleanse by dipping or submerging to wash, to make clean with water)” [Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T., p. 94].
 - c. Early church history agrees that baptism was uniformly practiced as an immersion in water, not a sprinkling or pouring of water on persons.
 - d. Corroborating Bible evidence is plain, e.g., “...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him...” (Col.2:12).
 - e. Circumstantial Bible evidence points clearly to baptism as immersion.
 - (1) John baptized where there was *much* water (John 3:23).
 - (2) Philip and the eunuch went down *into* the water and came up *out of* the water, acts necessary only for immersion (Acts 8:36-39).
 - (3) People are “washed in pure water” (Heb.10:22) to “draw near” to God.
 - (4) The new birth (John 3:5) consists of faith and baptism [a “coming out of”].
 - (2) Baptism places one into Christ and into the blessings found in Christ (Eph.1:3).
 - (3) People dead in sin are made dead to sin when they are baptized.
 - (4) Believers are baptized into the [benefits of the] death of Christ.
 - (5) Baptized persons are raised to live a new life just as Christ did.

- e. Many people have trouble reconciling Paul's references to baptism in an epistle that they characterize as a "book of salvation by faith." They construe baptism as a "work" that has no place in a system of "salvation by faith." David Lipscomb has this to say about that:

"Baptism is sometimes called a work of the person baptized, and it is sometimes claimed that if a man is pardoned in baptism it would be salvation through works; but baptism has fewer of the qualities of works of the person baptized than either faith or repentance. Faith is an act of the heart, the soul, the inner man-- something the man does. It is a work; man does the work, but it is God's work. It is ordained by God and terminates in and honors God. Jesus said: 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' (John 6:29.) So of repentance. 'Believe' and 'repent' are both active-- both done by the subject. The person baptized gives himself into the hands of the administrator, and is buried out of self, to be raised up in Christ...When a man dies and his friends take his body and bury it, no one could call it a work of the man buried. This is the true type of him who is baptized. And there is no more propriety in calling baptism the work of the man baptized than there is in calling a burial the work of the person buried. Baptism is a work of God performed upon the man baptized through his servant to bring him, dead in trespasses and sins, into the state of life with God. The life is imparted through faith; it turns from sin in repentance and puts off the body of sin in baptism."

- f. Jesus is our Great Example in *every* situation. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps" (1Pe.2:22). He showed us our responsibilities both in becoming Christians and in living the Christian life. Paul establishes a parallel between Christ's obedience to God (Heb.5:9) and ours, which strongly suggested to the Romans his answers to questions about sin in the lives of saints.
- g. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection vividly portray the actions and attitudes that must be realized in every sinner as he leaves sin and embraces salvation in Christ.
- (1) He was crucified because of [others'] sins (Rom. 5:16); we must crucify our "old man" [repent] because of our own sins (verses 3, 6).
 - (2) He was buried to be separated from the world of sin (verse 6) ; we must be buried [baptized] to be separated (James 2:26) from the world of sin. (verse 4).
 - (3) He was raised to possess a new [different] and better life (verse 10); we are raised to experience a new [different] and better life (verses 4, 8).

6:6,7-- "...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him..."

- a. The "old man" lived in a "body of sin" that was employed in the pursuit of the lusts of the flesh (verse 12). That body [figuratively] must be "done away with" [crucified, killed] if we are to imitate Christ's attitude toward sinful living.
- b. The old man was a slave to sin. God intends that we should be in such slavery no longer. Paul will expand this analogy of slavery later in the chapter.
- c. A man's physical death terminates every human obligation and every relationship he

may have had during life. Similarly, the new convert to Christ should feel no sense of allegiance to any part of his former life that contributed to serving Satan. He is “free” from all of that. Paul may have also intended to allude to Christ’s own release in death from such obstacles as attended His sojourn in the flesh.

6:8-10-- “Now if we died with Christ...”

- a. Any defense for sin in the Christian’s life is a clear indication that the defender has *not* “died to sin,” for if he had, he would be convinced that each risen convert is to “live with Him.” This refers not to the future general resurrection of all men but to the first resurrection from the baptism just experienced by the fledgling saint. We “live with Christ” when we conform to His manner of life.
- b. This necessary attitude toward sin is present in new Christians because their hearts have truly died to [the love of] sin. That happens only when people really repent prior to being baptized. The high incidence of new converts rapidly falling away from the faith is no doubt largely due to the absence of genuine repentance before baptism occurs. Perhaps a great deal more teaching needs to be done about that crucial subject than has been the case.
- c. Jesus died only once, and that was to atone for the sins of others, not His own. Having accomplished that purpose, there is no more need for Him to die again, since His sacrifice was sufficient to cover sins forever (Heb. 10:12). He was able to die “once for all” to sin and its consequence so that death posed no threat to His new life. He now “lives to God,” totally separated from all that is ugly and hurtful in this world. Hopefully, this would also be true for His disciples. Our *attitude* must be that we have died once and for all to the power of sin, but in *practical reality* we understand that the death of our “old man” is an ongoing process. We never can kill completely the attraction of sin. Our struggle for sinlessness is constant and continual as long as we live. We gain some victories against Satan, and we meet with some defeats. But we can always find comfort in the fact that Christ’s blood continues to “forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jn.1:9) when we fall short of our elusive goal of perfection. J. W. McGarvey observes:

“Baptism is the consummation of repentance; and were repentance *perfect*, the immersion would result in such an abhorrence of sin, such a complete cessation of it, and such a love of righteousness as would bring about an actual death toward, or abolition of, sin., and the Lord designed and desires such a full transformation; but truth compels us to acknowledge that repentance, like all other human operations, is imperfect, and, therefore, in baptism we only die in so far that righteousness becomes the rule of life, and sin the painful, mortifying, humiliating, heart-breaking exception.”

6:11-14-- “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin...”

- a. Christians must reckon [*logizomai*-- “consider, calculate,” Vine, p.940] the impli-

cations of a new spiritual relationship by using truth rather than the twisted propaganda of uninformed and insincere teachers. They would reach the inevitable conclusion that they, like their Savior, had died to [the control of] sin, which now would not attract them as it had before their conversion. Their task now was to “live to God,” giving top priority to God’s will instead of their own, just as their Lord had done.

- b. Accurate *reckoning* would result in appropriate *behavior*. “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” Certainly not! The struggle against ungodliness must *not* cease. Sin must *not* be allowed to reign [dominate] again in Christians’ lives. Will those who *once* died to sin ever sin *again*? Absolutely! “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1John 1:8). Will we allow sin to become the rule rather than the exception in our lives? *Absolutely not!*
- c. Man’s bodily members are the instruments [*hoplon*-- “a tool, instrument, weapon,” Vine, p. 605] he employs to serve either God or Satan. In construction, they are tools to be used in building either on the rock or on the sand (Matt. 7:24-27). In the military, they are weapons to be employed either *for* or *against* God in the ongoing battle for his soul. In both instances they are under the control of the workman/soldier. He willingly *presents* his members either to the cause of righteousness or to the cause of unrighteousness. No one forces them from him, but whichever foreman/commander he selects to utilize his members will gladly put them into service.
- d. The domination of sin over the souls of law-keepers was unavoidable. Law could *not* be kept perfectly without any violation, and law offered *no* forgiveness for violators. The system of grace includes a law of liberty (Jas.1:25) accompanied with abundant forgiveness for lapses in compliance with its terms (1John 1:9). If we confess our sins, sin [as a pervasive influence] is powerless to gain control of the Christian’s soul.
- e. The discussion about Christ and Christians and the practice of sin can be summarized by this chart, which draws from teaching by Paul and other apostles:

CHRIST

- (1) Rejected the world of sin.
1Pe. 2:22; Rom. 8:3
- (2) Rejected *by* the world of sin.
Jn. 7:7; 8:40
- (3) Died *to* the world of sin (body crucified).
Rom. 6:10
- (4) Raised to live with God.
Rom. 6:10
- (5) Chosen (accepted) by God to serve
His purpose.
1Pe. 2:4

CHRISTIANS

- (1) Reject the world of sin.
1Thes.1:9
- (2) Rejected *by* the world of sin.
1Pe. 4:4
- (3) Died *to* the world of sin (crucify body).
Rom. 6:6,8; Col. 2:20
- (4) Raised to live with God.
Rom. 6:11
- (5) Chosen (accepted) by God to serve
His purpose.
1Pe. 2:5

6:15-- “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?”

- a. The correspondence between Christ’s relation to sin in His death, burial and resurrection and our duty to avoid sin after we have been baptized into Christ’s death gave a ringing response to the question, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” Paul’s analogy showed that his initial response was not overstated: “Certainly not!”
- b. Now, another objection to the apostle’s doctrine of grace and salvation is advanced and quickly answered: “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” “If the laws God gave us previously were so condemning because there was no pardon available, has God now relented by giving us His grace so that when we sin we will have immunity from any guilt?” “Do we now have nothing to fear from sin?” All of these questions, and others like them, met with the *same* response as before: “Certainly not!”
- c. Moses Lard suggests that the objections [above] might be phrased like this:

“The full force of the question therefore is, May we sin because we are not under law which condemns sin and makes no provision for pardoning it; but under favor which, though we sin, provides for remitting it?”

6:16-18-- “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves...”

- a. Paul chooses in these verses to use an illustration to drive home his point about the inappropriateness of sin in the Christian’s life as he tries to serve God. He acknowledged in verse nineteen that his example might be too simple to explain spiritual relationships that seemed too complex for his critics to appreciate.
- b. The basic comparison Paul employed involved the proper responses expected of slaves when their ownership changed. People who were members of a society deeply involved with systems of physical slavery might more easily grasp the lesson if it likened the behavior of converts to Christ to the conduct of slaves when they were “converted” to a new master. This often happened, so everyone should have a “leg up” on getting Paul’s point about righteousness and sin, grace and law.
- c. These readers understood how slavery worked. A slave served the master who owned him and was under no legal obligation to serve anyone else. If he should be sold into the service of *another* master, however, the picture changed. Although he had given loyal obedience to the first owner, his total loyalty must now be transferred to the second master. Otherwise, he would be disloyal to his new owner and considered to be in violation of his new owner/slave relationship.
- d. There are some differences between the institution of physical slavery and the spiritual servitude of people who seek to please God. The former is a forced relationship, in which the slave has no voice. But any change in a man’s spiritual obligations is purely voluntary and completely within the servant’s control. Thus, Paul speaks again of our *presenting ourselves* for service to whichever master we wish to serve.

- e. God has always allowed man to make choices about his service. And, He has always wanted him to understand the consequences of his choices before he makes them. The gospel clearly reveals what our decisions about New Testament salvation will bring. When we choose to continue to serve sin, our reward will be *death*. This is *spiritual* death, because all servants will die physically, regardless of their service. Those who present themselves to God will be considered *righteous*, and their consequent reward will be *eternal life*.
- f. Paul was not thankful for the Romans' previous lives of sin. Rather, he rejoiced in the fact that they had considered the pros and cons of the two kinds of service, and there *are only two*, and had made the right choice to pitch their tents in the heavenly camp. As Peter declared, "For we have spent *enough* of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles..." (1Pe. 4:3)
- g. The change of masters, from Satan to God, had been accomplished by obedience. Many wish to disassociate obedience from salvation by faith, but Paul insists that the two remain *together*. The Roman Christians' obedience had been:
 - (1) From the heart. Faith is formed and resides in man's inner heart. "For with the *heart* man believes unto righteousness..." (Rom.10:10). Obedience that doesn't emerge from faith is completely useless to God *and* man;
 - (2) Compatible with a "form of doctrine." This "form" or "mold" [*tupos*-- "the representation or pattern of anything," Vine, p. 464) of doctrine no doubt refers to the pattern of commands and concepts of the gospel that was preached to them. Every dictate of that pattern was pointed toward righteous living and aversion to sin. Their initial conversion had focused on death to sin, and each precept about life in Christ was centered in righteous behavior. Why should they give serious consideration to any teaching that supported a license to sin?
- h. These converts had "been *delivered to*" the doctrine of righteousness. The KJV has, "doctrine which was *delivered you*." Obviously, the gospel had been preached to them, but the image of their being escorted to the gospel tends to emphasize the controlling power and the incontrovertible essence of its "form of doctrine." Its requirements of righteousness are *not negotiable*!
- i. The transfer of allegiance by these saints was supposed to have been complete. They had been made *free* from all connections to sinful things and should have immediately immersed themselves in lives dedicated to being righteous. There was no place for any division of labor or loyalty. Everything belonged to their new Master!

6:19,20-- "I speak in human terms..."

- a. Like some of the Hebrew Christians, these readers were "dull of hearing" and had trouble grasping certain precepts about the Messiah and His gospel (Heb.5:11).

Paul thought it necessary to clothe his lesson in familiar images to enhance their understanding. So, he spoke to them about slaves and masters, rewards and punishments.

- b. These people had been dedicated and diligent in their pursuit of the lusts of the flesh (verse 12). Their energetic activity had only resulted in a lifestyle that now brought them shame when they thought about it (verse 21).
 - (1) Their lives were full of uncleanness [*akatharsia*-- “uncleanness...in a moral sense, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living,” Thayer, p.21].
 - (2) They were also slaves to lawlessness [*anomia*-- “lawlessness...most often translated ‘iniquity,’” Vine, p. 657]. The disregard for God’s law lies at the bottom of the sins committed by the devil’s slaves. Some think this reference is to the treatment of other people, but the definition seems to call for a broader allusion than that.
- c. Lawless deeds lead to more lawlessness. The second sin is usually easier to commit than the first, and “little” sins turn into “bigger” and “worse” sins. This vicious cycle of lawlessness underscores why those who practice sin are its slaves. Someone has well said, “Sin takes you farther than you wanted to go; it keeps you longer than you wanted to stay; and it demands a price that is more than you planned to pay.”
- d. Conversely, servants of God who practice righteous deeds will find that *good* things also become easier through repetition. “Holiness” [“separation to God”] is the natural outcome of continual righteous activity in the service of the Lord.

6:20-23-- “For when you were slaves of sin...”

- a. People caught up in sinful lifestyles normally pay little attention to spiritual values and morally upright behavior. They are “free” of any sense of a need to do better. Having changed sides, why can’t saints now pay as little attention to the things of the world as they formerly did to the things of God?
- b. Lest there be any doubts among the Romans that they done the right thing when they committed their service to a new Master, Paul reminds them of the *significance* of the change they had made from *sin* to *salvation*. The only thing that had come from their lives as sinners was a certain appointment with spiritual death. On the other hand, the devotion they had given to godly living had made them *holy* and would result in *everlasting life*. With these two options before them, wasn’t it worthwhile to do *whatever* it took to conduct themselves as God desired?
- c. An immutable truth must not be ignored in the choices we make in life: *sin* brings [only] *death*; faithful service to the Lord will be rewarded with *eternal life*. These principles apply to all men in all situations, saints and sinners alike.
- d. Satan pays his debts in full. The problem with that lies in the nature of his paycheck. Payday for sinners will give them every penny of the “wages” they have worked for as employees in the devil’s kingdom of darkness.
- e. God *also* delivers on His promises. The Christian’s reward is not a “wage” he deserves but a “gift” far in excess of what he might expect for work in the kingdom of light.

1. “Shall we continue in _____ that _____ may abound?”
2. We are _____ with _____ in baptism, after which we should walk in _____ of _____.
3. If we “unite” with Christ in the likeness of His _____, we can be certain of being in the _____ of His _____.
4. What does Paul say we should do with:
 - a. The “old man”? _____.
 - b. The “body of sin”? _____.
 - c. The “slavery of sin”? _____.
5. In what way(s) did death have “dominion” over Jesus Christ?
6. Christians are dead to _____ and alive to _____.
7. In what *two* ways can we use our “members” as instruments [tools]?
 - a. _____.
 - b. _____.
8. Are Christians “under law”? Does “grace” exclude law? How or how not?
9. How did the Romans change their “employment”?
10. Why did Paul use the illustration about slaves and masters?
11. The end result of sin is _____; the end result of holiness is _____.
12. Sin’s _____ is _____; God’s _____ is _____.

V. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: OVERCOMING THE CURSE OF THE LAW (7:1-25)

- A. Deliverance from the Law is through death. (7:1-6)
 - 1. Any law binds only the living. (1)
 - 2. The marriage law is an example of this principle. (2,3)
 - 3. Death to the Law of Moses allows marriage to Christ. (4)
 - 4. Service under the Law resulted in spiritual death. (5)
 - 5. Death to the Law permits a new service to God. (6)
- B. Sin used the Law to accomplish Satan's goal. (7-12)
 - 1. The Law identified sinful behavior in man. (7)
 - 2. Sin used the commandments to entangle men in disobedience. (8)
 - 3. Breaking the commandments results in spiritual death. (9-11)
 - 4. Man, not the Law, is responsible for man's plight. (12)
- C. The unsaved man struggles with the pressures of sin. (13-23)
 - 1. Sin's nature is exposed through God's Law. (13)
 - 2. The Law was given to provide spiritual guidance. (14)
 - 3. Man sins despite knowledge of the Law's standards. (15-20)
 - 4. Both spiritual and fleshly impulses war within sinners. (21-23)
- D. Christ alone offers victory over the curse of the Law. (24,25)
 - 1. Total defeat is certain for the man under the Law. (24)
 - 2. Jesus Christ is God's remedy for sin and death. (25)

Text: 7:1-25

“In v. 14 of the preceding chapter, the Apostle tells the disciples in Rome that they were not under law but under favor. Of this statement, so hard for Jews to receive, he there submits no explanation. He merely notices an unwarranted conclusion, which he foresaw would be drawn from it. But this done, he now returns to the statement and proceeds to show *how the disciples became released from the law*. This is the special subject before him at present; and if the reader will only keep it distinctly in view, the opening of the present chapter will cost him but little trouble. How release from the law occurred, therefore, is now the point to be explained. Hence the peculiar form of the address: “brethren, I speak to men knowing law.” A question of law, then, is to be settled, a question, however, falling within their knowledge; and one therefore which they could understand.” [Moses Lard]

7:1-3 -- “Or do you not know, brethren...”

- a. Paul does not choose to specify which “brethren” he has in mind here. Although his remarks in this chapter have a special application to his brethren of Jewish heritage, it seems that Gentile brethren are also included in what he says. The Jews would understand his point because of their experience with the Mosaic Law, and Gentiles would have a background in the principles of Roman and other civil law.
- b. The common truth that none could question was that *no* legal system had any claim on a man after his death. All financial, contractual, and other legally binding obligations are terminated at that point. What is true in *civil* law, Paul asserts, is also true in *religious* law. This will be the basis of his argumentation about spiritual obligations under the old and the new covenants.
- c. To *illustrate* his premise, the apostle uses the marriage law that was a familiar part of Jewish faith and culture. Even his Gentile readers would agree that human relationships end when life ends. Death is the great separator from every earthly connection.
- d. We should be aware that Paul employs the marriage bond only as an *illustration* to make his point about how people loyal to one religious system can honorably break away and embrace another system. This is not a lesson about *marriage* but about *religious change*. Of course, what he says about marriage is true to the principles approved by God when He established the institution between men and women. Certain exceptions to those principles (e.g., Deut. 24:1-4) have no bearing on Paul’s argumentation for the *one* fact that his readers needed to accept-- *death ends our obligations to any law!*
- e. It is not surprising that some of them were confused by the conflicting messages of Paul and the Judaizers. Paul said that the gospel promoted a *new* approach to Jehovah that did *not* depend on works such as they had followed under the Law. His contention was that the gospel stands alone as the way for men to be righteous. On the other hand, the Judaizers were telling them that Paul’s gospel was merely an addition to the Law and that they could be justified by submitting to both laws at once.
- f. *Religious adultery*, the attempt to add new practices from idolatry to the old precepts and commandments of the Mosaic Law, had caused much pain to Israel. Sincere law-keepers would be wary of trying to “serve two masters” again. Still, the attraction to the “Law of their fathers” was very strong. How could they abandon a system that had been a way of life for them for so long for something they apparently did not fully understand?
- g. Paul intends to stand his ground that Christ is the only way to a righteous life. He also needs to convince his readers that men are now *dead to law* because of Jesus’ death to law. If men are *dead* to any law, they are relieved of responsibility to its dictates. The honor attached to the law can be maintained even while men cease to follow its requirements. It isn’t that the law is found to be defective, it is simply that men are no longer subject to its enforcement.

- h. The death of a spouse perfectly illustrates this truth about the law of the gospel and another law. The wife's loyalty to her husband is necessary while both are alive. To be married to another would not only cause her to be *called* an adulteress. She *would be* an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is discharged from her loyalty to him; she may take another husband and not be guilty of adultery. No one would argue with that.

7:4-6-- "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law..."

- a. If Christians who still felt deeply obligated to a religious law other than the gospel could be persuaded that their obligation to that law had been "nailed to the cross" of Jesus (Col. 2:14), their faith would be able to survive the efforts of Judaizers to attach Mosaic rituals to gospel salvation by grace.
- b. Paul has already made the claim that Christians become "dead to sin" when they are united with the death of Christ through baptism (6:2, 4, 11). Now, he adds that they also are "dead to the law" by that same act of obedience. Jesus represented humanity on Calvary in the same way that Adam represented us in the first transgression (6:19). Consequently, whatever change was made by death in *His* relationship to sin is also made in *ours* when we share in that death.
- c. The Law was given to Israel as a spiritual guide that could make them a righteous nation if they would obey its commandments. Predictably, the Jews were unable to satisfy its requirement for *perfect* compliance. When they transgressed the Law, they became guilty of sin, and they died spiritually to God. In this way they were held in bondage to the Law's unrequited demands and faced certain eternal destruction apart from the Lawgiver's forgiveness.
- d. On the other hand, Jesus came to "fulfill" the Law (Matt. 5:17,18). He did this when He lived the totally sinless life intended by the Law but that was possible for no other human being (1Pe.2:21,22). He thus was never bound by the sin which "killed" those who broke its ordinances, nor was He bound by laws He could not keep. He was, nevertheless, constantly faced by the *possibility of temptation and sin* in common with all other men (Heb.4:15; 2:18). But after He had finished a life that was "dead" to the dreadful consequences of sin, His body died on the cross and forever ended any possibility that sin might corrupt His human perfection.
- e. Within Paul's opening premise that man is subject to law only until his death, Jesus' obligations to the Law ended permanently on Calvary. He "nailed" the Law to His cross and simultaneously terminated responsibility to the Law for *every man* (Col. 2: 14-17).
- f. Jesus' death to the Law resulted in *two* significant opportunities for lost men.
 - (1) Since the bond has been removed that formerly tied them to whatever law they served prior to the crucifixion, they are now "free" to be "married" to [the law of] Christ without the guilt of *spiritual adultery*.

- (2) This new “marriage” will provide an opportunity for the redeemed to “bear fruit to God.” Only “rotten” fruit came from prior spiritual relationships. Now, the “fruit of the Spirit” will bring glory to God and eternal life to those who produce it in their new union with Christ (Gal. 5:22,23).
- g. “In the flesh” describes those who are outside of union with the Lord and who practice the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21). They are under the control of sins and passions that prevent them from “inheriting the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). Their fruit leads to spiritual death with the devil, not life with God.
 - h. How were sins “aroused” [NKJV; “by the law”--KJV; “through the law”--ASV] by the law? Some contend that there is a spirit in man that is challenged by the restraints imposed by law and that incites him to violations of that law. While *some* may possess this perverse attitude toward law, it hardly seems likely to be common enough for Paul to attribute sin generally to such a negative reaction to God’s law or any law. Besides, Paul states plainly in verse seven that the law “is *not* sin,” meaning that it has *nothing* to do with man’s lost condition. “The law” cannot be in any way a responsible party to man’s disobedience to the Lord.
 - i. Using either of the alternate translations [above], and relying on the apostle’s development of the relationship between the law of God and the sin of man in the following verses, we understand that the law *declared* the guilt of sin upon man’s activities rather than *promoted* man’s commission of sinful deeds.
 - j. Death to the love of sin in repentance and to the guilt of sin in baptism (6:1-8) has delivered [freed] men from the condemnation of serving an old law of the “letter” [flawless obedience]. The door opened to forgiveness by the Lord’s grace (made possible through serving God within a new law, Rom. 8:14) has been revealed to sinners by the Holy Spirit in the gospel (1:16,17).

7:7-12-- “What shall we say then? Is the law sin?”

- a. Another objection to his teaching about law and grace is anticipated and addressed by Paul. “If it is so important to abandon law [Mosaic or moral] in our efforts to be free from sins committed while under law, then law must be at least partly the *cause* of sin. And if this is so, then law is evil, and God, who gave law to man, can also be charged with contributing to our sinful condition.” Other similar accusations could follow.
- b. Paul’s response to such thinking is quick and strong: “*Certainly not!*” How could anything associated with God be bad for His creatures? Every command from Him has been “for our good always” (Deut. 6:24). Immoral and disrespectful conduct among men is self-destructive. Divine law [moral and Mosaic] was given to regulate behavior and promote the general welfare. Law was designed to *control* sin, not *encourage* it!
- c. Paul, who had served God under the strict regulations of Mosaic Law (Acts 26:5), uses himself as an example of the actual roles played by sin and the Law in every Jew’s life. Detrimental behavior, which might have progressed unrestrained toward serious

personal consequences, was condemned by God in His Law from Sinai. Specifically, covetousness might have become rampant in Paul's life had the Lord not told him in the Law (Exo. 20:17) that it was a sinful act that would condemn him spiritually. Rampant covetousness could easily have led to crime and its aftermath. The Law was intended to *shield* a man from hurtful practices, not *cause* him to do bad things.

- d. Incidentally, when Paul connected the sin of covetousness with "the law" (verse 7), he showed clearly that the position of present-day sabbath-keepers is wrong. The Ten Commandments [God's "moral law"] and the Mosaic rituals [God's "ceremonial law"] were *not two different laws*, with one being abrogated and the other retained in the New Testament. "The law" [in the the tenth Commandment] said that covetousness was wrong! If we are "dead to the law" (7:4), we are dead to the sabbath law [fourth Commandment].
- e. It was *sin*, not the law against sin, that caused Paul to covet [and do other wrong things] and to fall into condemnation. God's law, which related coveting to violating His expectations for man, convinced Paul that his coveting was wrong and should be suppressed. His "desire," under the scrutiny of the law against coveting, became "evil" desire. Without knowing [by the law] that coveting displeased Jehovah, Paul's conscience would have felt no guilt of sin when he coveted. That sin was "dead" to him.
- f. James agrees with Paul about sin when he tells us the way sin develops (Jas.1:13-15):
 - (1) God is not responsible for tempting or causing any man to sin;
 - (2) Man is "enticed" by his own desires to commit a certain act;
 - (3) Desire rules man's will, and he does what will satisfy his desire;
 - (4) Doing what is forbidden in God's law is sin.
 - (5) Isolated acts of sin will grow until they dominate man's lifestyle;
 - (6) A life under the control of sinful behavior leads to spiritual death and damnation.
- g. While Paul, in the innocence of childhood, was unaccountable to the Law, he was uncondemned ["alive"] by the Law's demands. But as soon as the commandment [i.e., coveting] "came" to his conscience, he became aware that men must bear guilt when they covet. His spirit "died" in guilt because he knew he had sinned against God.
- h. Robertson L. Whiteside quotes from the Cambridge Greek Testament:

"He goes back to a pre-moral state-- not necessarily in actual memory of a complete non-moral experience, but comparatively; his life as a child was untouched by numberless demands of law, which accumulated with his moral development; at that period whole regions of his life were purely impulsive; one after another they came under the touch of law, and with each new pressure of law upon his consciousness, the sphere, in which it was possible to sin, was enlarged. It was easy to carry this retrospect one step beyond memory, and to see himself living a life of pure impulse before the very first voice of law reached him, and to regard such a stage as a typical stage in the general development of the moral sense in man."
- i. It is significant that Paul was "alive" as a child and then "died" because of his own sin.

Calvinists contend that every child is **born in inherited sin**. Paul's sin was *committed*, not *inherited*. His testimony about when sin condemns the young is exactly opposite to what we are told by those who subscribe to John Calvin's theology.

- j. Sin, not the law, *killed* Paul's spirit. Satan, of course was the "active agent" behind Paul's spiritual demise. As always, the devil took advantage of his opportunity to lead a young man into activities which God had forbidden in the Law. If Paul could have abolished all covetous desires because he had learned of their sinfulness, the law against coveting would have *prevented* sin in his life and would have helped to bring *life* to his soul. Instead, when he found it impossible sometimes to suppress covetous feelings in spite of the Law's teaching, he was condemned both by his own conscience and by the legal perfection of the Law. He was "dead in sins" (Eph. 2:1).
- k. There is likely a veiled reference here to sin's entrance into the world through the disobedience of the first couple in Eden (Genesis 3). Satan's favorite tactic to entice people to sin is *deception*. He is very effective in making us believe that certain of God's laws are too restrictive for our good and that God's concern for our happiness will overrule our reservations about doing what He *seemingly* has prohibited.
- l. The Law [generally] and any commandment [specifically] were *not* in any way responsible for man's sinful conduct. Instead, they are *holy, just, and good*. Sin [Satan] is greatly to be feared for being able to pervert what should be good for us into what will be bad for us if we allow ourselves to be deceived by wicked devices.

7:13-15-- "Has then what is good become death to me?"

- a. Paul's fourth "Certainly not!" answers that question. If the Jews are to receive his gospel of grace, it is important that they know that he harbors no ill will toward the Law or dares to accuse it as a contributing cause of man's sinful condition. The same awareness is necessary for the Gentiles and their moral law. God's laws are only *righteous* and lead to *righteousness* in the obedient.
- b. The remainder of this chapter finds Paul casting himself as both a personal example and a generic representative of man's plight under law without the grace of forgiveness. What had happened to him as he had struggled against ever-present sin in his conscious life was precisely what happened to everyone else. The hopelessness of his spiritual prospect was the same hopelessness faced by all of humanity. His desperate need for deliverance was exactly what every sinner required to avoid destruction.
- c. Sin was increasingly exposed to Paul [and others] for what it really was-- a sure road to spiritual death-- through the teaching of God's "good" law. The consciousness of sin overwhelmed his spirit "exceedingly" as his exposure to the Law expanded.

- d. Paul's role in these verses is the role of every man without Christ. He is *not* dealing with his condition since he had become a Christian. It is his deplorable state *before* he obeyed the gospel ["I am carnal, sold under sin"] that he pictures to help other Christians see that so long as they depended on law for their release from sin, there would be no release. He had tried hard to keep the commandments perfectly, and he had failed. Their experience, no doubt, was the same as his.
- e. There were *conflicting attractions* battling each other within the apostle prior to his conversion. The same warring factions exist in every human being. The struggle is more violent in the unsaved man while "the flesh" is dominant over "the spirit" and reacts strenuously when "the spirit" seeks to follow what God's revelation says is right and good. This contest continues even after conversion, but, happily, the "new man" is increasingly able to overcome the "old man" as God's law achieves a greater influence in the Christian's choices.
- f. Paul's law-bound man is not a reprobate sinner. Rather, he is a Jew or Gentile who is honestly trying to keep his respective law as well as he can. He *wants* to do right, but God's law is *spiritual* [directed to the spiritual nature of man] and the sinner without Christ is *carnal* [governed by the lusts of the flesh]. A carnal man cannot expect to give perfect obedience to a spiritual law. Only if forgiveness is available when the flesh falters and sins can law and grace converge in justification.
- g. The pull of the flesh is so strong in the law-bound man that he does what he knows is wrong even though his "better self" wishes to act differently. When he gives in to the temptations of the body, he doesn't "know" [*ginosko*] what he is doing. This means that he either: (1) doesn't *approve* in his rational mind of actions that are harmful to himself, or: (2) doesn't *understand* the implications or consequences of his actions. The first possibility is probably preferred, but there are many situations in which the second is very real. It's a miserable circumstance when we really *want* to do something good that we "love," but weakness drives us to do something bad that we "hate" because we are convinced that it is wrong.

7:16-20-- "If, then, I do what I will not to do..."

- a. It is apparent that if our rational minds reject the conduct prescribed by God's law and endorse conduct condemned by God's law, and if sin results from doing things contrary to the law, the fault lies not with the law but with the man who cannot do what the law requires. If sin *dwells* in a man, even the best intentions of his spirit are unable to resist the pull of his flesh toward ungodly deeds. In a sense, it is not "I" but "sin" [Satan] who decides what I do.
- b. There is nothing in a man's *flesh* [lusts] that can keep him focused on always doing

what is both good and good for him. Many wholesome purposes may engage his mind, either *to do* what he *ought to do* or *not to do* what he *should not*, but his ability to implement those purposes [apart from the Savior] is without strength. Much of his conduct seems to be under someone else's control.

7:21-23-- "I find then a law, that evil is present..."

- a. Like other God-fearing Jews [and Gentiles] living under the confines of a law that gave no quarter to offenders, Paul had been [or *should* have been] overwhelmed with the pressures of realizing that sin was an ever-present reality in his daily life. Knowledgeable Jews were aware that forgiveness through the Law was at best temporary. The continually-offered sacrifices of animals could only postpone God's punishment for sins. Eternal retribution was inevitable.
- b. Paul's "inward man" [spiritually-sensitive conscience] highly approved of the lofty precepts of Moses' Law. He gave his best efforts to keep every requirement. He had been "exceedingly more zealous for the traditions" of the Law than many of his contemporaries (Gal. 1:14). Still, "evil" had an ever-constant presence with him. He knew in his heart that he was losing the battle with sin! And he also knew that this condition sprang out of a "law" [either natural and/or religious] that would not change.
- c. Any man in Paul's situation could easily "see" [perceive] the *two* conflicting forces ["laws"] that did battle within him. One part, the "inward man," was committed to the system of Law that was so ingrained in his being. The other, his "flesh," was equally bent on following worldly lusts that were in direct opposition to his more noble purposes.
- d. How distressing it must have been to a man of Paul's caliber to realize each day that the harder he tried to be righteous under the Law, the more impossible it became. The law [driving force] of his fleshly members [lusts] was overcoming the law [driving force] of his spiritual mind. He was doomed forever to be the captive of sin!

7:24,25-- "O wretched man that I am!"

- a. This was not the cry of a blood-washed, forgiven child of God. How could a man whose characteristic advice to others was, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" under *any* circumstances declare that he was "wretched"?
- b. Remember-- the apostle has been describing the lot of a man who has been trying to keep the Law's requirements, but who has instead been piling up sins day after day. **This** is the man who cries out hopelessly, "Wretched man that I am!" This is the man who *sees* himself as lost because he is lost!
- c. His accompanying plea is for rescue. But-- who can possibly do for him what Moses and his sacred Law could not do for him? Or what, with his very best efforts, he could not do for himself? What savior can free him from the awful certainty of eternal spiritual death that the sins of his body were leading him to?

- d. Paul answers his own question with an outpouring of gratitude to God who had sent Jesus to the world to do for lost sinners what no one else could. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)!
- e. The apostle’s final words in this chapter repeat man’s predicament. Without such a Redeemer as Jesus, every man who lives only by law is headed straight for eternal perdition. Even the rational mind of his “inward man” can’t win the fight against the attractions of his fleshly lusts.
- f. The gospel preached by Paul proclaimed to all beleaguered souls that their Savior had come! It is *not* inevitable that men must still walk according to the flesh. Jesus has made it possible for those who are willing to live according to the Spirit to bask in the spiritual sunshine of His great Love and Forgiveness. This will constitute the opening remarks of the apostle in the next chapter.

1. How long can *any* law have control over *any* man? How did this apply to the Law and the gospel?
2. Paul used the illustration of a _____ ended by the _____ of the _____.
3. A widow is _____ from a husband who has _____ and may then be _____ to another _____ without any shame.
4. The Romans had _____ to [the] law by the death of _____. They were now free to be _____ to _____.
5. The task of New Testament Christians is to serve God in the _____ of the _____ and not in the _____ of the _____.
6. Only through the _____ could Paul learn that _____ was a sinful practice, because the _____ said, “You shall not _____.”
7. Paul once was _____ without the _____, but the _____ came and he _____.
8. Paul answered *four* of the Jews’ questions/objections with the same words. What were the words he used, and in what verses [chapters 6 & 7] do they appear?
9. *Two* laws operated simultaneously within Paul and all other human beings. What were these laws, and which one was “winning the battle” in the conflict described by Paul?
10. How did Paul characterize his lost condition under the Law of Moses? How could he and others ever be delivered from that awful condition?

VI. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: PROVIDING FOR MAN'S NEEDS (8:1-39)

- A. Assurance of salvation from sin and death. (1-9)
 - 1. Condemnation under the Law removed by Christ and His law. (1-3)
 - 2. Purpose of the Law fulfilled in obedient Christians. (4,5)
 - 3. Righteous men can avoid the consequences of the flesh. (6-8)
 - 4. The Spirit "dwells" in us to help us overcome sin. (9)
- B. The opportunity to serve God with body and spirit. (10-14)
 - 1. Christians value spiritual activity, not fleshly. (10)
 - 2. The body also serves God if it is under control. (11)
 - 3. The Spirit leads us to use our bodies appropriately. (12-14)
- C. Confidence in our sonship. (15-17)
 - 1. The Christian has exchanged fear for confidence. (15,16)
 - 2. Children of God are confident of blessings even in suffering. (17)

Text-- 8:1-17

8:1-- "There is therefore now no condemnation..."

- a. Paul has given his readers several propositions to emphasize the fact that salvation under any law is *impossible* because law requires *perfect* compliance. Justice under law demands a penalty for *every* violation. Obviously, it is *mercy*, not *justice*, that sinners need or everyone will be *lost*.
- b. The apostle has also tried to show that God's system of salvation by *grace* and *forgiveness*, revealed in the gospel of Christ, will do for the world what law could not-- offer a way for sinners to be *justified* by the sin-price paid by Jesus on the cross. Being justified, they can be *righteous* before God, as if they had never committed sin at all.
- c. Seekers after God should be aware that only by a stand-alone gospel is *righteousness* available. All attempts to secure righteousness with the "mix-and-match" programs advanced by the proponents of other laws [Mosaic and/or moral] are sure to fail.
- d. Paul's argumentation culminated in 7:24, when his own experience as a law-keeper brought forth his anguished cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"
- e. Chapter eight opens with his response to his own question: **"There is therefore now no**

condemnation to those who are in Christ.” “Now” is the new gospel dispensation.

“No condemnation” is a goal previously much sought after but totally unattainable.

“Those in Christ” is exclusive, offering the promise of righteousness only to people in a new spiritual relationship with Jesus, who was preached by Paul as much more than a Jewish martyr. He was the very Son of God. This relationship had been entered into when believers in Jesus Christ had been baptized “into Him” (Rom. 6:3-8), forgiven of their sins (Acts 2:38), and endued with the heretofore elusive *righteousness*.

- f. Paul’s opening statement constitutes a transition from the doom-and-gloom of humanity’s struggles with sin under systems of law-keeping to the hope-and-happiness of freedom from sin and its awful consequences that is now so graciously offered by heaven through the gospel.
- g. Most scholars consider the second part of verse one as an insertion into the text. Perhaps it was lifted from the same language in verse four, which is authentic. If so, this interpolation makes no change in the truth of Paul’s significant proclamation.

8:2-4-- “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus...”

- a. There is disagreement about the meaning of “Spirit” in verses 2-8. Some contend it is *man’s* spirit, attuned to spiritual values, that is under discussion. Others say that it is the *Holy Spirit*. Regardless of which interpretation is adopted for this passage, Paul has already convinced us that man’s spirit can be sensitive to spiritual values only as it responds positively to the instructions of the Holy Spirit. Either view about “to capitalize or not to capitalize” seems to make little difference in pursuing the lesson intended.
- b. Since there has been no clear reference to the *Holy Spirit* prior to this passage, and since Paul has just indulged in an intensive investigation into the conflict between the *two* spirits in man with regard to sin [chapter 7], this study will defer to *man’s spirit* as Paul’s focus, understanding that “*Holy Spirit*” has strong scholarly support.
- c. The “law in our [bodily] members,” which follows the impulses of our fleshly lusts, wars constantly against the “law of our mind,” which delights in the law of God. Each nature strives to dominate the lifestyle of the seeker after God (7:23). In each true Christian, the “good guy” has won the battle over the “bad guy” [at least initially] and has freed him from the prospect of an inevitable death that is the certain result of sin. *What a victory that is!*
- d. Previously, every battle had been lost to Satan and sin, because law [Mosaic or moral] can *never* win against sin because no human can win against the weapons of temptation. Law is “weak” against the devil. God’s laws [Mosaic or moral], of course, were not weak in themselves (7:12), but they were *rendered useless* against sin when they provided no remedy for the transgressions of men who were weakened by their fleshly desires.
- e. There was a remedy available! From eternity a plan had been conceived by which man’s

guilt could be removed and by which man could be snatched from the jaws of hell and taken into the arms of his loving Maker for eternity. The divine plan included:

- (1) God would send His Son to the earth “on account of [‘for’] sin,” i.e., to do something about man’s sinful condition;
- (2) Jesus would take a body in the “likeness” of man’s sinful flesh. This body would be subject to the temptation to commit sin just like *any* human body (Heb 4:15);
- (3) The perfectly sinless life lived by Jesus in human flesh (1Pet.2:21,22) would “condemn” sin. Sin was condemned to defeat in its struggle with the Savior when Jesus demonstrated that the problem with overcoming sin was not in God’s laws but in man inability to *keep* any law *perfectly*. It was not a matter of can’t but of won’t that had placed mankind into so much trouble;
- (4) Forgiveness by *grace* rather than by *conformity* would allow man to become *righteous* as he never had been able before. Strict adherence to law [Mosaic or moral] could have conferred righteousness, but perfect obedience was unquestionably impossible for human flesh. Now, righteousness is available through the gospel *without* the lofty “price tag” attached to other systems of religion;
- (5) Salvation’s only “cost” now is “walking after the spirit instead of the flesh.”

8:5-8-- “For those who live according to the flesh...”

- a. The pernicious influence of sin is observed in those who practice it. They soon “set their minds” to continue and to extend their evil activities. It is very hard to alter patterns of behavior once those patterns have been established by repetition. Sin calls for more sin until the sinner finds himself completely entangled in the web he has spun. However, the converse is also true. People who live under the guidance of the spiritual values found in God’s revelation will become increasingly inclined to “mind the things of the spirit.”
- b. Every man must choose between his two “minds” or “spirits.” Each choice leads him ultimately to a different destination. Carnal [fleshly] mindedness can take him nowhere but to eternal death in hell. The spiritual minded man will be rewarded with peace in his soul in the present world and with everlasting life in the world to come (Mt.11:28-30).
- c. Love for God is essential to salvation with God. Love for Him is displayed by obedience to His law (1John 5:3). The worldly-minded man *cannot* love God so long as he lives in opposition to God’s laws. “No one can serve *two* masters” (Matt. 6:24).
- d. The carnal mind *can* be changed, but unless it subjects itself to heaven’s will, it remains the instrument of Satan. Understandably, the sinner’s “enmity” [hatred] displeases God.

8:9-11-- “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit...”

- a. One serious charge made against Paul’s doctrine of forgiveness through grace was that if men abandoned their laws [Mosaic and moral], sins condemned by those laws would

become even more pervasive. Not so, says Paul. God's expectations are even higher now than before [e.g., Jesus' "...but *I* say unto you..."]. Sinners who were captives of sin under laws that made their captivity *involuntary* must not now become *voluntary* captives simply because they choose to follow a path other than the moral behavior laid out for them in the gospel.

- b. Men who lack proper respect for the Spirit of God do not "have" the Spirit as the dominant influence in their hearts. They obviously are unaware of the profound benefits of grace and forgiveness conveyed in the Spirit's revelation, or they would have no problem with trying to conform to the spiritual standards contained in that revelation. Those who are devoid of the same spirit of submission to God's will that was manifested by Jesus at Calvary (Heb.5:8,9) are not acknowledged as God's sons as Jesus was. The privileges of kinship with the Father demand that the children respect Him as the "authority figure" in every aspect of their lives.
- c. The body will be unresponsive ["dead"] to sin if this "spirit" of Christ, i.e., His obedience, controls our day-to-day choices. That same spirit [or Spirit] will make us "righteous," which in turn generates an assurance that our "dead" [physically alive but dead to sin] bodies will one day be exchanged for "live" [glorified] bodies in the resurrection. Then, the ongoing struggle with temptation, sin, and guilt will finally be over!
- d. The "Spirit," first mentioned in verse eleven, is apparently the *Holy* Spirit. God's spirit is not one of obedience but of control. Paul amplifies the promise he made in the previous verse to include the resurrecting power of both the Father and the Spirit. The death of the physical body has always been troubling to the human family, and many Christians also had unsettling thoughts about the grave. But by grace the disciples could now be confident that the power of the Spirit would do for them what the Father by His power had done for Jesus. Confidence in Christ's resurrection is fundamental to gospel salvation (1Cor.15:17), and one of the precious rewards of being "in Christ" is to be able to rest assured that physical death is not the end of all life but the glorious beginning of a *life* far better (Phil.1:23) than any life on earth.
- e. This promise of resurrection was another good reason for saints to live righteously in their bodies of flesh. Bodies now used as "instruments of righteous" in God's service will be glorified for even more glorious service in the world beyond (Rev.22:3).
- f. Many versions capitalize "Spirit" in both references in verse eleven. Many students believe that references in verses nine and eleven to the Spirit "dwelling" in Christians support their conviction of a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit along with consequent spiritual advantages not enjoyed by those without such an indwelling. Many others are convinced that the Holy Spirit dwells in God's people through the influence of the revelation of truth by which He guides their activities. Admittedly, this is a complex area of study. But, a few facts are evident that may have a bearing on an investigation:

- (1) God dwells in each of His children (2Cor.6:16);
- (2) Christ dwells in each of His disciples (Eph.3:17; Col.1:27);
- (3) The Holy Spirit dwells in each Christian (Rom.8:9,11);
- (4) Our own spirits dwells in us (Acts 17:16; 1Cor.2:11);
- (5) The word of Christ dwells in us richly (Col. 3:16);
- (6) Genuine faith dwells in the faithful (2Tim.1:5);
- (7) Sin dwells in us in our daily lives (Rom.7:17);
- (8) It is by FAITH that Christ is to dwells in Christians (Eph.3:17). If Christ can dwell *by faith*, probably the other entities also dwells [control] by *faith*. There seems to be no good reason to think otherwise;
- (9) The Holy Spirit is a Person, exactly in the same way that the Father and the Son are Persons. The Spirit is not an "It," a "force," "influence," or any such *thing*. He has a Personality and manifests all the characteristics of Personality ["expressly says"-- 1Tim.4:1; can be "grieved"-- Eph.4:30, etc.]. Personality is "distinctive personal character; *individuality*" [Webster]. The *essence of Personality is separateness and uniqueness*. The Persons of the Godhead are as separate and unique from one another as each human is from his fellows. It seems no more likely that a divine spirit would be "divided" and dwells personally in millions of Christians in numerous far-flung locations than for a similar thing to occur with human spirits;
- (10) We can understand the process involved in "dwelling by faith," but the personal in-dwelling is not so easily comprehended nor explained. Moses Lard, who subscribed to the idea, makes this observation about it:

"Now as God dwelt in them [Christians--RG], so Christ dwells in us. The Spirit dwells literally in us, Christ by the Spirit. The mode of dwelling we do not affect to understand. It is inexplicable. The fact of it we accept, but venture on no explanations."

8:12-14-- "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-- not to the flesh..."

- a. Paul was "debtor" ["one held by some obligation, bound to some duty"- Thayer, p.469] to preach the saving gospel to Greeks, barbarians, wise and unwise (Rom.1:7). He "owed" them this favor because of the special commission given to him as an apostle to the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15). Additionally, he bore the debt of sharing a common condition with other men of being lost without Christ. There was also the debt created by the uncommon advantage he had received in his own salvation, which others had not. But neither he nor any other man owed anything to Satan or to sin. These have done nothing for the well-being of humanity, and humanity bears no obligation toward them. Saints and sin have nothing in common. Rather, they have always been mortal enemies, and mortal enemies they must remain.
- b. "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve..." (Joshua 24:15). To choose to live "by the flesh" is to choose spiritual *death*. The choice to live "by the spirit" [Spirit]

is a choice to live eternally in the city of heaven (Rev. 22:14)-- a simple choice, except for the “strings” attached to it: “put to death the deeds of the body.”

- c. McGarvey and Pendleton make these remarks about how the Spirit assists in the process of putting to death the deeds of the body:

“The testimony of Christian experience is that the aid of the Holy Spirit, though real and effectual, is not so obtrusive as to enable the one aided to take sensible notice of it. To all appearance and sensation the victory over flesh is entirely the Christian’s own, and he recognizes the aid of the Spirit, not because his burdens are sensibly lightened, but because of the fact that in his efforts to do right he now succeeds where lately he failed. The success, moreover, though habitual, is not invariable, for invariable victory over temptation breeds self-consciousness and self-righteousness, and other sins perhaps more dangerous than the ordinary lusts of the flesh.”

- d. The apostle has already declared, “Now if anyone does not have the spirit [Spirit] of Christ, he is not His” (8:9). Here he explains further how men can know if and when they qualify to “belong” to God. The sole determinant is that the Spirit of God must “lead” them. This is not a supernatural leading that is “better felt than told.” Instead, it is the simple guidance of the Spirit’s revelation that enables us to see the path we should follow if we wish to reach heaven. We “walk by faith” (2Cor.5:7), and “faith comes by hearing...the word of God” (Rom.10:17).
- e. These issues of sonship (verses nine and fourteen) are an integral part of Paul’s argumentation addressing the fear that morality would be surrendered if laws that had been historically followed should be abandoned in favor of the gospel of Christ. He first associated saved individuals with Christ as the essential example of submission to the Father’s will. Now, he connects their compliance with the Spirit’s teaching about killing the evil deeds of the body with the fact that God will recognize as His children only those who take such action. “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!” (Rom.6:1,2).

8:15-17-- “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear...”

- a. The *two spirits* surface again in this discussion of the holy life of God’s children. Under the unforgiving systems of law previously endured by these Christians, they had great cause to live in the fear that overwhelms people who *want* to please God but who realize they *cannot*. The gospel, however, is a law of **grace** and **freedom** from such fear. Christians *will* sin at times, despite their best efforts not to, but, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:9). We demonstrate our genuine love for God when we keep His commandments (1John 5:3), and “perfect love *casts out fear*...But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1John 4:18).
- b. The spirit with which the Christian serves God today is the spirit of a child who has

implicit trust that his father will allow only what is best for his child. We have been “adopted” to live in God’s family and to enjoy the bounty of His spiritual treasures. He first adopted us because He loved us, and He sustains us in every good way because His love for us has not abated (1John 4:7,8). What does the Christian have to fear?

- c. Unlike people who were under bondage to law [Mosaic and moral], saved individuals can approach God and feel free to address Him as “Abba, Father.” “Abba” is Aramaic, and “*pater*” is its Greek equivalent. Both are translated, “Father.” Together, the terms embrace Aramaic-speaking Jews and Greek-speaking Gentiles, both found among those who read this letter in Rome.
- d. Saints who entertained any doubts about their decision to leave systems of law promising *no* salvation and to go to a system of grace that *guaranteed* salvation to the faithful were offered a self-test by Paul to encourage them about what they had decided. Two witnesses could testify in their behalf. God’s Holy Spirit, who cannot testify falsely, has clearly stated the terms of redemption and sonship with the Father. They also were unimpeachable witnesses of their own salvation. They had *personal* knowledge of whether or not they had done what they were supposed to do to become Christians, and they also knew if they were still striving to live righteously as Christians as the Spirit had directed in the gospel. They understood that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matt.18:16).
- e. This witnessing of the Holy Spirit has been seriously perverted in the religious practices of many persons who are seeking a closer link with the spiritual world. Their mistake is in supposing that the Spirit witnesses **to** and not **with** their spirits. They recount what the Spirit has done **for** them and not what the Spirit wants them **to do** for God, as recorded in the New Testament revelation. Jim McGuigan offers food for thought:

“There are those whose constant topic is the work of the Holy Spirit in them. But in the end it is the work of the Spirit in THEM; they again become the center of attention; their story becomes the central story. This the Holy Spirit didn’t do in the lives of the early Christians. In the preaching and teaching of those empowered to witness for Christ, Christ was at the center. In the bulk of preaching and teaching today it is the work of the Spirit which is at the center of things. But more specifically, it is the work of the Spirit in some man’s life. The sinner is at the center of things rather than the sinless One. Just listen next time and see for yourself! “Today God told me...”; “Yesterday the Spirit led me...”; “Last month the Spirit gave me this song to sing to you...”; “Let the Holy Spirit into your life and he’ll change you...” And on and on and on. The “gospel” of “the changed life” rather than the Gospel of *the* life that changes lives.”
- f. The rewards of trying to keep a law that offered no real prospect of anything better than what people already had were few indeed. It was tiring and frustrating to constantly live within a system that would not be satisfied with one’s imperfect efforts. On the other hand, the gospel promised a better life here *and* in the hereafter. The faithful had

ROMANS

LESSON ELEVEN

CHAPTER 8:1-17

God as their Father, and *everything* is His! His “last will and testament” endows His heirs with every good and perfect gift both now and in eternity (James 1:17). What a prospect-- sharing the bounty of heaven with Jesus Christ!

- g.** The only obstacle standing between God’s children and their sharing in God’s rich inheritance with the Son is a willingness to suffer for the gospel as Jesus had suffered. God’s inheritance is not without conditions. “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mark 8:34).
- h.** The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the value of suffering for Christ and of the role that patience plays in dissuading the faithful from becoming discouraged and giving up their struggle against the world.

1. Those who _____ after the _____ have no _____ in _____.
2. Law was _____ because of the _____ of men.
3. How is the “righteous requirement” of [the] law “fulfilled” in New Testament Christians?
4. What happens to the minds of those who live “after the flesh”? “After the Spirit”?
5. The _____ mind is _____ against God; it cannot be _____ to the _____ of God. Why not?
6. *Two* ways by which a child of God can be identified are:
(1) _____ (2) _____
7. Saved people are not _____ to live after the _____.
8. Christians have a spirit of _____, not of _____.
9. How does the Holy Spirit “bear witness” *with* our spirits?
10. Does the Holy Spirit ever bear witness *to* our spirits? If so, how?
11. Paul mentions in these verses at least *seven* (7) things done by the Spirit. List them and the verses in which they appear.
(1) _____ (2) _____
(3) _____ (4) _____
(5) _____ (6) _____
(7) _____

VI. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: PROVIDING FOR MAN'S NEEDS (8:1-39)

- D. Comfort in suffering. (18-25)
 - 1. Suffering is unimportant within God's plan. (18-21)
 - 2. Suffering is not peculiar to God's people. (22,23)
 - 3. Hope for final relief improves character. (24,25)
- E. Assistance in prayer. (26,27)
 - 1. The Spirit helps when we cannot pray as we should. (26)
 - 2. God understands and accepts prayers thus expressed. (27)
- F. Trust in God's eternal plan. (28-30)
 - 1. "All things" work for our salvation. (28)
 - 2. God's plan in its entirety will be accomplished. (29,30)
- G. Conviction of victory over all obstacles. (31-39)
 - 1. God has shown His concern for our salvation. (31-32)
 - 2. Man cannot negate the roles of God and Christ. (33,34)
 - 3. No influence from without can overcome our faith. (35,36)
 - 4. Christians grow stronger through perseverance in trials. (37-39)

Text-- 8:18-39

8:18-- "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time..."

- a. Paul, in the verses previous to this passage, sought to encourage the Roman Christians in the choice they had made to leave obedience to laws that offered no forgiveness or salvation and to embrace the gospel of Christ. Judaizing teachers were causing them serious problems with their faith by their insistence that there should be a joining of Moses' Law and Christ's gospel. Of course, this was totally unacceptable.
- b. In addition to this form of "suffering," the Romans were still subject to physical problems like everyone else. They were still hurting and dying just as they were before their conversion. Some apparently expected their physical state to be much improved once they were "in Christ." Instead, certain of them probably had witnessed an *increase* in hardship because they had turned from Moses to Jesus.
- c. The apostle had promised them that if they were willing to suffer with [for] Christ, they would be rewarded with "glory" (8:17). To that promise he adds another: "Your sufferings, no matter how severe, will be far outweighed by the glory that you will have

as your reward.” This, of course, they must accept *by faith*, but he has been telling them all along that *everything* in this gospel of grace must be based on *faith*.

- d. One blessing they can look forward to is the release of the physical body from its burdens of sickness and death. The same physical body that was responsible for their never-ending struggle against sin would one day die physically, but it will be raised again in a better form and into a better place. Their resurrection will be unto [spiritual] life, but the unsaved will come from the grave to face condemnation (John 5:29).

Note: Verses 19-23 are among the most difficult of the entire epistle for the student. There are several positions taken on this passage by many eminent scholars. The disagreements are centered in the meaning of terms used by Paul. It is clear that he is speaking of some common condition that is endured both by those who are Christians and those who are not. It is also certain that the curse of physical death is the problem most troublesome to the faith of the saints. [See also, 1Corinthians 15:12ff.] Paul’s emphasis to the Romans was that the righteous cannot not be excused from the consequences of Adam’s sin in Eden, but they can be assured that even the death of the physical body can serve as a *blessing* to men who have been justified from sin.

The varying theories offered to explain Paul’s meaning in these verses are too numerous and often too complex to discuss here. It can be said, however, that the problems of interpretation involve the words, “*creation*” [used several times], and “*whole creation*.”

One of two leading explanations applies “*creation*” and “*whole creation*” to all created things below humans. The earth and the animal world are included in a total decline imposed on them as a result of man’s transgression. The discussion of this “fall” of nature and its rejuvenation at some time in the future is said to be clothed in the personification of lifeless and spiritless entities as if they had the same abilities as humans. Thus, they “groan” and “labor” and “will” just as men do. [See Psalm 98:8, Isa.55:12, etc.]

This interpretation, while advocated by capable scholars, seems fanciful and strained within the context of Paul’s argumentation to the Romans about the value of their conversion. Moreover, this line of reasoning is questioned because of its advocacy of a rejuvenation of nature to its supposed status prior to the fall of man into sin. The whole of Scripture seems to point to the destruction of *this* world and the habitation of a *different* and *better* world, “new heavens and a new earth” (2Pe.3:13). Peter declares that *this* earth will “pass away,” “melt,” “be burned up,” and “be dissolved.” The righteous will be “caught up” to be with Jesus “always” (1Thes.4:17) in a “holy city” and in a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev.22:1,2). There is no *reason* for the renewal of the *old* earth as contended.

8:19-23-- “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits...”

- a. Paul seeks to point out to these saints who were suffering and dying in common with sinners that these experiences were part of God’s plan for them and served an important purpose in that plan. Death was necessary for resurrection, and resurrection was a tool to greatly magnify the power and glory of the Resurrector.
- b. The non-Christian world [the “*creation*”-- the same *creation* to whom the gospel was to be preached (Mark 16:15)] had the same “earnest expectation” [desire] as Christians for a release from suffering and death and a resurrection to a better existence. The “revealing of the sons of God” is the “revealing” of the glory of their resurrection in verse 18. Sinners yearned for this as well as saints. What the sinner did not realize was that *his* rising would not be like *theirs* (John 5:29).
- c. James Macknight says about this “*creation*” referenced by Paul:

“According to some commentators, the words ‘we know that every creature groaneth’ denote the whole creatures of God, animate and inanimate, which, as they were cursed for the sin of the first man, may by a beautiful rhetorical figure be represented as groaning together under the curse, and earnestly wishing to be delivered from it...Nevertheless verse 21, where it is said that ‘the creature itself shall be liberated from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God’; and the antithesis, verse 23, ‘not only they, but ourselves also,’ show that the apostle is speaking, not of the brute and animate creation, but of mankind, and of their earnest desire for immortality. For these reasons, and especially because of Mark 16:15, ‘Preach the gospel to every creature,’ which means to every human creature, I think the words (creature and creation) in this verse and in the preceding three verses [this note was written on verse 22-RG], signify mankind in general, Jews as well as Gentiles. See also Colossians 1:23 where the words signify ‘every human creature.’”
- d. This creation [human family] was subjected to the “futility” of physical death because of the sin of Adam, the “federal head” [representative] of the race [See comments on Romans 5:12-19.], not because of their choice but because of God’s arbitrary decision to impose this punishment. Nevertheless, God’s action was not intended to be permanent. His long-range purpose was to “undo” in a general resurrection from the grave what He had done, and He put that hope in man from early times (Job 19:25-27). God has never desired eternal death for any man (2Pe.3:9). When He subjugated man to physical death [“the bondage of corruption”], it was with the *knowledge* that this condition would be only temporary. Further, it was God’s *hope* that one day men would so position themselves that they could forever enjoy the “glorious liberty of the children of God,” which is freedom from the sin and death that would plague their existence on this earth. God’s hope was the reason why He ordered the gospel to be preached to “every creature” (Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19).
- e. Meanwhile, Paul observes, the “*whole creation*” [the entire human race] is still waiting,

still suffering, and still dying. Men endure their “birth pains,” hoping against hope that an end will come to their troubles and a brighter day will dawn for them.

- f. Worldly people were not the only ones who looked with anticipation for an end to the “gloom and doom” of this planet. Christians, who had already received from Christ the “firstfruits of the Spirit” (Eph.5:9; Gal.5:22,23), knew from experience that God keeps His promises. The Spirit had been given to them (Acts 2:38) as a heavenly minister in their behalf (Rom.8:26,27). The evidences of God’s power had been furnished to them in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that some of them enjoyed (Rom.12:5-8). These were proof enough that even more wonderful blessings were in store for those who chose to remain loyal to the Lord. Among those blessings would be the glorious resurrection *guaranteed* when their Savior was raised as the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1Cor.15:20).

8:24,25-- “For we were saved in this hope...”

- a. These members of the church in Rome had been added to God’s family when they were baptized into Christ (6:3-5). Part of their motivation had been the prospect given to them that just as they were to be raised from a grave of water to “walk in newness of life” on the earth, one day they would be raised from a grave of clay to walk in *eternal* life in heaven.
- b. The promise of the end of death and the resurrection of all dead bodies gave a comforting hope to every saint. However, some might ask, if this promise is so certain to be fulfilled, why must we die anyhow? Why can’t we “see” the promise realized in some other way than through death and resurrection? Paul’s reply: “There is a benefit in waiting for death to come. Time provides opportunities to grow and serve, and this in turn develops the Christian’s character and better prepares him for heaven. Hope of reward fosters perseverance and prevents you from abandoning your ultimate goal.”

8:26,27-- “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our infirmities.”

- a. J. W. McGarvey and Philip Pendleton suggest that God had given these Christians at least *three* reasons to be faithful and to wait patiently for God’s promises to be granted in their completeness. These reasons are discussed by Paul in Romans 8:23-39:
- (1) They had the “firstfruits of the Spirit” as an “earnest” [guarantee] that every good thing promised them would be received;
 - (2) The Spirit was already at work for them, helping in those things they could not do for themselves, especially to pray as they ought;
 - (3) The love and power of Father and Son are invulnerable. Their concern for the welfare of Christians would overcome any obstacle to the saints’ eternal life.
- b. Saved people have many “weaknesses.” Many of them are retained from the life lived

before conversion. The Christian is encouraged to “put off” his old man of *weakness* and to “put on” a new man of *strength* (Eph. 4:22-24). Obviously, this is a process and takes time to perform. Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit has been delegated by the Father to help us in spiritual growth in areas where we are weak. This is done in part through the guidance He provides in the Scriptures (2Tim.3:16,17). He also assists in some ways that are revealed and in other ways that are not.

- c. Prayer is the disciple’s “seawall” against the waves of doubt and confusion that wash against the Christian’s faith in God’s watchcare. We must “pray without ceasing” (1Thes.5:17) while we try our best to remain faithful to our duty. However, *every* praying person realizes that there are often in his heart desires and longings for things he wants to happen in his own life and in the lives of others, but for some reason he finds himself totally incapable of expressing those impulses in any satisfactory way when he prays. What to do? Quit wishing for those things? Quit praying about them?
- d. Absolutely not! We have a Helper, the same Helper given to the apostles to assist them in doing their awesome work. Unlike the apostles, the Spirit doesn’t give us the power to work miracles or to teach without study, but He helps us in getting our prayers to the throne of God. And nothing is more important to our lives and to our work for the Lord.
- e. Although *we* have trouble knowing just how to express our deepest desires to the Father, the Holy Spirit doesn’t have that trouble. He is able with “groanings” to take our requests to heaven. Most commentators understand these “groanings” as belonging to the Spirit, but it may seem more reasonable that the “groanings that cannot be uttered” belong to the one who prays, because Paul says that in some way known only to Them, the Spirit communicates [“utters”?] those groanings to the Father. At any rate, the Spirit “intercedes” for us and delivers our prayers to the only One who can answer them. What a comfort to know that we have a representative to God who will intercede for us “according to the will of God.”
- f. Moses Lard offers these thoughts about the Spirit’s help in the Christian’s prayers:

“We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Holy Spirit. It knows perfectly both what we need and how to pray for it. It therefore becomes, in some measure, a remedy for our weakness. The mode in which the Spirit intercedes in prayer; and the mode in which it prays is in groanings which cannot be framed into human speech, for the reason, it may be, that they embody wants for which human speech has no names. They are the deep real wants of human nature, our wants not for time merely, but for eternity. The groanings which give inarticulate expression to these wants are not the Spirit’s groanings. They are our groanings. But the Spirit, if it does not cause them, which it may, so forms and directs them as to make them express our true wants and in strict harmony with the Father’s will. For otherwise, I can see no advantage they would have over our common prayers. In order to excel these as prayers, our groanings, must clearly possess the two following characteristics: They must pertain directly to the real want, and give exact expression to the same. Even perfection cannot rise above this.”

- g. It should be noted that Jesus Christ also functions in heaven as an intercessor for Christians. “Therefore He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them” (Heb.7:25). Obviously, there is no competition between Jesus and the Holy Spirit as each seeks to help us. Whether or not both operate in the realm of our prayers we do not know. We *do* know that Jesus declared, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). We can only guess about the arrangement employed as both help us, but we cannot really care, because what matters is that we have *all Three* divine Beings concerned about our needs and dedicated to providing for those needs as only They can.

8:28-30-- “And we know that all things work together for good...”

- a. This is one of Scripture’s most precious promises to the child of God. It is a very great comfort to know that heaven oversees the events and troubles of earth and molds them into scenarios that work to the benefit of the saved. “All things work together for good to those who love God.” Many people probably expand Paul’s promise far beyond what he intended. They would include *every detail* of the human experience. We should remember, however, that the apostle has been trying to establish the principle that no obstacle should be allowed to interfere with the disciples’ quest for the inheritance God was reserving in heaven for them (1Pe.1:4). Some “things” like physical suffering and death have already been put on Paul’s list. But there are many more “things” that could discourage the saints as well.
- b. It seems unlikely that “all things” in this promise would include anything not directly bearing on whether or not Christians would be able to persevere (verse 25) in their striving against temptation and sin. And that determination is difficult, if not impossible, for any of us to make.
- c. There are several truths that should be remembered when we contemplate the extent of this assurance about divine intervention in our lives:
- (1) God *is* unquestionably interested in our progress toward eternal life (1Pe.5:7);
 - (2) He is not willing to leave us to our own abilities to overcome obstacles that would interrupt our progress (Heb.13:5,6);
 - (3) Sometimes, problems are solved through *God’s active intervention*-- what He does *for us* that we cannot do for ourselves (1Cor. 10:13);
 - (4) More often [likely], problems are solved through *our own active intervention*-- what we must do *for ourselves* (Jas.4:7);
 - (5) It is spiritually dangerous to depend on heaven to act *for us* in matters where we can act *for ourselves* in ways that enhance our faithfulness!
- d. Coffman calls attention to each man’s responsibility in solving life’s problems:
- “ ‘Work together for good...’ speaks of a situation in which God is surely at work on the Christian’s behalf, but it also speaks of a situation in which the saved person’s reaction to life’s woes is a controlled response. [Quote continued next page.]

“Some ships sail east, and some sail west,
By the selfsame winds that blow.
It’s the set of the sails and not the gales
That determines the way they go!”

- e. Never forget that **God has a plan!** *Nothing* can disrupt or defeat that plan (1Cor.1:20). That plan is specific to *each* Christian’s ultimate salvation. This fact, more than any other, provides encouragement when we might be deterred in our task of “working out our own salvation” (Phil.2:12).
- f. Man cannot comprehend the mind of God, and we can understand only that part of His goals and objectives that He has elected to reveal through His word (1Cor.2:11). How gratifying it is that He chose, through Paul, to outline His eternal purpose for us so clearly and so concisely. We can be strengthened to know that we are part of that purpose and that God will see to it that we will be duly rewarded at the end of a faithful life in His service!
- g. God’s “purpose” [*prothesis*-- “a setting forth,” Vine, p.915] is explained by Paul in terms of God’s “act of placing them [steps in His plan--RG] before his mind so as distinctly to see them. The placing is before his mind and the seeing is mental.” [Lard]
- h. Paul’s outline of the Lord’s purpose is simple, yet profound.
 - (1) He foreknew those He would save. This fact does not require an “inalterable election” on His part. Rather, His choice of the saved was based on a class of individuals, not on the individuals themselves. Calvinistic religious systems are adamant that this eternal choice *was* specific as to persons:

“All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and accordingly, as each has been created for one or the other of these ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or to death. This God has testified, not only in the case of single individuals; he has also given a specimen of it in the whole posterity of Abraham, to make it plain that the future condition of each nation was entirely at his disposal.” -- John Calvin, Institutes, Book 3, Chapter 21, Sec. 5
 - If this doctrine is true, then much of the Bible’s teaching about salvation is false:
 - (a) Acts 10:34,35-- *whoever* fears God and works righteousness can be saved;
 - (b) Matthew 11:28-- *all* who labor and are heavy laden may come to Jesus;
 - (c) 2Pe.3:9-- God is *unwilling* for *any* to be lost;
 - (d) Rev.22:17-- *whoever* desires can take the water of life;
 - (5) Passages too numerous to list teach that no one willing to obey God is barred from salvation under the gospel of grace and forgiveness! These are those included in God’s eternal foreknowledge of who would be saved.
 - (2) He predestined that the saved would be people in the image of Christ. Thus, the fall of man, the need for redemption, and the role of Jesus in redemption were

all foreseen by God. The New Testament discloses God's plan for all of His disciples to be like Jesus (1Pe.2:21; Col. 1:27; 3:10; etc.). It has been said, "Christ was made in the image of man that man could be made in the image of Christ." There might also be some reference here by Paul to the likeness people display when they are baptized into Christ's death (Rom.6:4) and to the likeness of the future resurrection of their bodies from the grave to Jesus when He became the "firstborn from the dead" in His raising (Col.1:18).

- (3) He called to salvation those who were chosen. This call came through the gospel of Christ (2Thes.2:14). It went out for *every* person to hear (Mark 16:15). By that fact we know that redemption is not limited to a few but is available by God's grace to all who are disposed to accept the gospel. Limited salvation was *never* in the mind of God!
- (4) He justified those who accepted the call to be saved. The first conversions are an illustration of God's fidelity to keep His promises. When the gospel about Jesus as God's Son was preached, *three thousand* receptive persons "received the word" and accepted the gracious invitation to be saved. They were baptized for the remission of their sins and were added to God's redeemed family, the church. Not one individual who *wanted* to be saved was denied the opportunity because of some contrary decision made eons earlier. [See Acts 2:1-47 for details.]
- (5) He glorified the justified by a resurrection to eternal life. This statement gives some students a problem, for this "glorification" is spoken of as if it had already occurred when Paul wrote about it. However, it is not uncommon in Scripture for things not yet done to be spoken of as if they were. And, furthermore, *all five of these steps in God's eternal plan were formulated in His mind prior to the execution of any of them.* The Romans could take courage in knowing that if the first four operations had been faithfully performed in keeping with that plan, there should be no question about their hope of resurrection and glory in heaven.
- i. The whole revelation concerning God's foreknowledge and the predestination of the saved has caused much confusion and great concern among many Bible students. We *know* that these are true propositions, for the Scripture plainly speaks of them, but we wonder *how* they can be reconciled with other Bible teaching about man's free will and individual accountability. Moses Lard pondered this problem:

"God as it were set before him the whole human race with their entire destiny. All that man is or shall be stood before him-- sin, redemption, glorification-- all stood naked and open to his eye. It was there that the Logos was foreordained before the foundation of the world, 1Pet.1:20, to be the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world; and from that point forward he was ever 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 a vision as complete-

ly before God as it will ever be in fact when it is past. To us this is utterly incomprehensible; and yet we can not conceive how it could possibly have been otherwise. In that *prothesis*, accordingly, each man was as distinctly before God, as saved or lost, as he will be when judgment is past; not because God decreed that this man should be lost and that one not, but because, leaving each absolutely free to choose his own destiny, he could and did as clearly foresee what that destiny would be, as if he himself had fixed it by unchangeable decree. To assume that God must decree what a man's destiny shall be, in order to foresee it, is a profound absurdity. He can as unerringly forecast the end of a perfectly free agent as he can that of a being to whom his decree has left no more volition than belongs to the merest machine. Can anyone be found so daring as to deny that he can do this?"

8:31-34-- "What then shall we say to these things?"

- a. Paul's conclusion from these powerful arguments he has made to the Romans for their perseverance in the face of human frailty and human troubles is equally strong: "If *God* is for us, who can be against us?" Of course, many already were "against" them and many more would be. But their opposition meant *nothing* as compared to God's support!
- b. Only God or Christ, who had formulated the heavenly plan, was in a position of power to change the plan and the destiny of these saints. Would either possibly do that? Why would God sacrifice the life of His Son to implement a plan that He would afterward reject? Or, why would Jesus go to the cross and suffer death to save people, only to abandon them later? Would He have risen from the grave, ascended into heaven, and become busily engaged in interceding for souls that He would stop caring about? Would He not *complete* the glorification that had begun but was still unfinished? To *ask* these questions was to *answer* them. Of course not!!

8:35-39-- "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

- a. God's eternal purpose for mankind is rooted in His love for every person. "We love because He first loved us" (1Jn.4:19). What greater proof of God's love does man need than that He sent His Son to die *because* of His love for man (Jn.3:16)?
- b. The **love of Christ** (God) is impregnable. No assault of heaven or earth can weaken that love so that the saved should fear for their salvation. Paul said to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2Tim.1:12). He wanted the Romans to have that same confidence about their own future.
- c. Paul's list of possible adversaries that might pose some danger to the faith of Christians was a practical warning to new converts [especially] about what probably lay ahead for many of them. It cited *specific* harm or distress that was *real* and that warranted *real* caution. He had himself experienced all but *one* of these obstacles.[See 2Cor.11:24-28.]

He was likely in a few years to feel the keen edge of a sword that would conclude his second imprisonment in this very city to which this letter was being addressed.

- d. The quotation cited by the apostle is from Psalm 44:22, which is thought to have been written about the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, and which reflected the tribulations and disappointments endured by God's nation. His point in using this reference is that the love of God finally delivered His suffering people and allowed them to "conquer" the terrible adversity they faced in captivity. His love was even extended to a nation that faced trials because of its *own* rebellion and disobedience to the God who saw fit anyhow to forgive and rescue it. Could the Romans not believe that if they tried to be faithful and obedient to Him, that *same* God who yet had the *same* love for people who were special to Him, would do as much or more for *them* in whatever distress they might face?
- e. Indeed, the Roman Christians could be *more* than conquerors through faithful perseverance. Not only could they safely survive trials ahead; they could become *stronger* and *more useful* to their Savior than before their problems arose. *More is better!*
- f. Finally, Paul closes his efforts to solidify the dedication to gospel truth in any who might have been wavering. Having cited a number of *specific* opponents of faith, he now turns to some more *general* areas from which opposition to perseverance might arise.
- g. Paul was "persuaded" that there is nothing to fear from some things that would warrant *great* fear apart from the support given the child of God by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some of the things he *might* have had in mind are listed in pair or groups:
 - (1) Death-- Many Christians would face death as the price of their faith. Their assurance was that God had never abandoned them in life (Heb.13:5) and He surely would not forsake people who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for His sake and for the sake of the gospel.
 - Life-- Sometimes it might be harder to live than to die. Death can come as a relief from other things we might undergo. God will sustain us in His own way(s) regardless of the severity of pain or disappointment (Jas.5:14).
 - (2) Angels--These likely are evil angels who would like nothing better than to "repay" the Lord for banishing them because of their wicked and rebellious behavior. God keeps them in chains safely away from His people (Jude 6).
 - Principalities-- Civil governments would not always look with favor on a religion like Christianity. These saints were living in a city that would become the headquarters for persecuting the church. Paul would himself meet his death at the hands of this dread "principality." Let the fearful remember that no power has power without the power of God behind it (Rom.13:1), and He is in full control over *all* powers.
 - Powers-- These might be people or organizations of great influence who could be a stumbling block to the disciples' faith. Perhaps even personal relation-

ships could be included. Jesus promised that sacrificing these ties would result in gaining multiplied replacements that would *encourage* rather than *discourage* the Christian's efforts to be loyal to Jesus (Matt.19:29).

- (3) Things present-- Short-range crises can cause real tests of one's faith and faithfulness. Things unexpected can disrupt good religious habits and lead to permanent damage to our spiritual health.

Things to come-- Uncertainty and fear of future events can foster doubts and distrust in God's providential care for us. His promise that "all things work for good" for Christians holds true for tomorrow just like it does for today (verse 28).

- (4) Height-- The mountaintops of prosperity and success can encourage us or ruin us, depending on the context in which we view them. Give God the credit for good times; respond with the faithfulness due Him for His grace.

Depth-- It's much easier to blame God for misfortune and disappointment than to search out the real fault and try to remedy the problems that confront us in the valleys of our lives. But be aware that God lives in the valleys just as He lives on the mountains. He will lift us out of the chasms into which we fall and place us on spiritual mountaintops if we will give Him the opportunity.

- (5) Any Other Created Thing-- Paul was disposed toward expressions that covered unidentified details. He adopted the "unknown" god theme in Athens as an entree to preach the gospel (Acts 17:23). He cited unspecified sins as "such like" when he condemned works of the flesh (Gal.5:21). Here he extends his list to include *any other* possible obstacle to perseverance by the disciples in Rome. *Whatever* it is, "it" can't hurt you in any way that really matters. What *does* matter is eternal life! (Luke 12:4,5).

- h. Paul would, no doubt, leave these saints with a word of caution: just because the Father and the Son both love you so much that *nothing external* can cause them to quit loving you and abandon you to make your own way, don't forget that **you** can lose your love for **them** and be lost as unbelievers despite their love for you.
- i. This list of things from which heaven protects our faith in no way supports the position of those who teach that the Christian cannot "so sin as to be lost." This doctrine, called "the impossibility of apostasy," "the perseverance of the saints," "once saved, always saved," and other such names, is a *false* and *condemning* teaching. It totally ignores the grave responsibility placed by God upon His children to behave in a way that will bring no disgrace to the family. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," was Paul's warning to the Philippians (Phil.2:12). R. L. Whiteside's comments on the above list are worthwhile:

"All the things mentioned are things without. Nothing is here said of what corrupting

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LESSON TWELVE **CHAPTER 8:18-39**

influences may do to the heart. No powers of persecutions can compel one to stop loving God; if he quits, he does it of his own accord. Love cannot be destroyed by force or imperial command, but it may wax cold (Rev.2:4). Paul recognized that people depart from the faith, but he was persuaded that no evils coming on us from without could destroy the love of God.”

1. What does Paul [not] compare with our sufferings as Christians?
2. The _____ eagerly waits for the _____ of the _____ of _____.
3. What do you think is the subjected “creation” (verse 20)? Why?
4. The _____ will be _____ from the bondage of _____ into glorious _____.
5. Christians “groan” over problems even though they have the _____ of the _____.
6. The Holy Spirit helps us in our _____ by making _____ for us with _____ that can’t be _____.
7. Who else intercedes for Christians? [See verse 34 and Hebrews 7:25.]
8. Who is promised that “all things work for good”? What is the “purpose” for which they are “called”? How are they “called”?
9. List the *five* (5) “steps” in God’s eternal plan for the saved:
 - (1) _____ (4) _____
 - (2) _____ (5) _____
 - (3) _____
10. What are the *seven* (7) *specific* things that can’t separate us from Christ’s love?
 - (1) _____ (5) _____
 - (2) _____ (6) _____
 - (3) _____ (7) _____
 - (4) _____
11. What are *ten* (10) *non-specific* things that can’t separate us from Christ’s love?
 - (1) _____ (6) _____
 - (2) _____ (7) _____
 - (3) _____ (8) _____
 - (4) _____ (9) _____
 - (5) _____ (10) _____

VII. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: FULFILLING THE HOPE OF ISRAEL (9:1-11:36)

- A. God's purpose for Israel not frustrated by disobedience. (9:1-33)
 - 1. Paul's personal grief because of the Jews' status. (1-3)
 - 2. Israel's blessings from God were significant. (4,5)
 - 3. Not all Jews included in God's plan for righteousness. (6-18)
 - a. Abraham's seed came through Isaac. (6-9)
 - b. God chose Jacob instead of Esau to implement His plan. (10-13)
 - 4. God's choices are always righteous and effective. (14-18)
 - a. His righteousness determines His choices. (14,15)
 - b. Man cannot make God's choices for Him. (16)
 - c. Pharaoh was used to accomplish God's purpose. (17,18)
 - 5. God's choices are above criticism by the Jews. (19-29)
 - a. Example of the potter and his clay. (19-21)
 - b. God's dealings with all men are more than fair. (22-29)
 - (1) He punishes sinners and rewards the obedient. (22-24)
 - (2) He had made His plans known far in advance. (25,26)
 - (3) He will save faithful Jews, despite the nation's unbelief. (27-29)
 - 6. God's purpose is fulfilled in believers in Jesus. (30-33)
 - a. The Gentiles' success in becoming righteous. (30)
 - b. The Jews' failure to become righteous. (31-33)

Text-- 9:1-33

9:1-5-- "I tell the truth in Christ Jesus..."

- a. Chapter nine is a transitional passage in this letter. To this point, Paul has demonstrated that salvation under law is impossible because law is unforgiving of error. He has further shown that *faith*, not law, is the basis upon which God will now justify the saved. Furthermore, salvation by faith is not specific to any nation or individual. It is given by grace to anyone who is willing to accept Jesus as the Redeemer. This truth places Gentiles in the same position with God as the Jews.
- b. This new arrangement would be of great encouragement to most Gentiles, but it would be devastating to the religious confidence of most Jews. They would have numerous questions in their minds that needed answers.
- c. Philip Pendleton introduces his commentary on the chapter with these remarks:

"In Part I. of His Epistle (chaps.1-8) Paul presented the great doctrine that righteousness

and salvation are obtained through faith in Jesus Christ. But the unbelief of the Jews excluded them generally from this salvation, yet “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). The doctrine, and the situation engendered by it, raised before the minds of Paul’s readers several great questions, such as these: How could Scripture, which promised blessings to the Jews, be fulfilled in a gospel which gave blessings to Gentiles to the exclusion of the Jews? The covenants to Abraham guaranteed blessings to his seed, how, then, could the gospel be the fulfillment of these covenants when it brought blessing and salvation to the Gentiles, and rejection and damnation to the Jews, the seed of Abraham? It is for the purpose of answering these and kindred questions which naturally arose out of the doctrine of the first part of his work, that this second part was written. As these questions arose out of the history of Israel, Paul naturally reviews that history, so Tholuck calls this second part of his work “a historical corollary.” The apostle’s effort is to show that the gospel of Christ, while it conflicts with the false doctrinal deductions which the Jews drew from their history, agrees perfectly with all correct deductions from that history.”

- d. Most commentators agree that Paul’s opening statement in this chapter does not constitute an oath but rather only a strong affirmation of his sincerity of purpose in what he has said about the Jewish condition. Both his conscience and the Holy Spirit, by whom he has established his position, testify that his indictment of Israel’s failure to acquire God’s righteousness is accurate, however contrary to what he might wish personally.
- e. Some of the Jews might accuse Paul of a personal vendetta against them. Their leaders had exhibited extreme reactions to his preaching of Jesus since his conversion. They had tried in every way they could to stop his work as an apostle among the Gentiles and among his own countrymen. It would be *expected* that he might fight back with some desperate attack on their religious standing with Jehovah.
- f. That was not the case at all. Paul had nothing but the most sympathetic feelings toward his brethren in the flesh. His heart broke with sorrow and “continual grief” at the thought of their lost condition. He *could wish* [if it were possible] to change places with them-- to be *lost* so they could be *saved*! But it *wasn’t* possible, and the best available option was to try as hard as he could to persuade them to make a basic change that would not take away *his* hope of salvation but would give *them* the *same* hope that he enjoyed as a believer in Christ. He *had been* as they are; his deepest desire is for them to become as *he is* now.
- g. It is important for Paul to convince his Jewish readers that he has no axe to grind with them but that he is totally sympathetic with their plight. He fully appreciated *who* they were and *what* heritage they enjoyed. His acknowledgement of their unique relationship with Jehovah might help him gain a hearing with them. And so, he enumerates some of the religious endowments they enjoyed as a nation.
 - (1) They were Israelites. This name above all others was cherished by the Jews. It connected them with Jacob [Israel], from whom the nation had come, and to whom significant promises for spiritual blessings had been made. This was the

name conferred on Jacob after he had had wrestled and prevailed against heaven's Angel (Gen.32:28).

- (2) They had been regarded as God's sons in a way that was different from all other nations (Exo.4:22; Deut.7:6). Jehovah had always been especially concerned with their welfare because of this Father/son relationship.
- (3) They had received glory [honor] from the Lord in many ways as He manifested His recognition of Israel's special place for all nations to see.
- (4) God's covenants had been offered to them and to nobody else. Solemn promises had been made to Abraham, but the whole world would share in some of them (Gen.12:3; 22:18). Other pledges to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would relate only to the people who were called by Jacob's name and who had been separated from other nations to inherit blessings intended for them alone. These were the "covenants" upon which Israel would become dependent for their spiritual security.
- (5) Moses' Law had been given to them in a transaction that afforded a close contact with the Almighty that was singular in history. Both the *content* of the Law and the awesome events associated with its *giving* at Sinai (Exo.19, 20) highlighted the Lord's special regard for this nation.
- (6) The service of God, first in the tabernacle and later in the temple, was impressive, to say the least. The appointments, the ceremonies, the elaborate wearing apparel, and the extensive rules and regulations governing the Jew's service to Jehovah clearly proclaimed the solemnity and the importance of their standing with Him.
- (7) Numerous "promises" were made by God to His people at different times and under varying circumstances. Perhaps the most precious was, "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Lev.26:12).
- (8) There were many "fathers" in Jewish history of whom the nation was justly proud. Hebrews chapter eleven presents several of them as examples of faith and commitment. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses shine brightly as "stars" of Israel, and there were many others whose demonstration of their submission to God's will was held before the world as being worthy of every man's emulation.
- (9) The greatest of all fleshly tributes that could be given to Israel was that the Messiah whom Paul preached in the gospel was Himself a physical Jew. His advent had been according to divine prophecy (e.g., Isaiah 9:6,7), and He had shown Himself to be a singular individual. Paul's task was to help Jews and Gentiles alike to see that Christ's *true* identity was the "eternally blessed

God, who is over all.”

9:6-8-- “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.”

- a. A Jewish reader, bewildered by the thought that anyone could consider his rich religious heritage to be useless in his search for salvation, might logically raise another issue: “If God’s promises were made to Israel, and if, as you say, Israel does not stand to realize those promises, then God’s word has failed in its fulfillment. The promises that were so precious to so many are completely worthless.”
- b. Paul’s response to that reasoning is blunt and doubtless hard for the average Jew to comprehend. “Not every Israelite is *really* an Israelite.” How was that possible? Who could contest the physical identity of men born to Jewish parents and who lived within the Jewish culture?
- c. One step further-- not all those *claiming* to be Abraham’s “seed” can actually qualify for that distinction. That disclaimer would have surely thrown some of Paul’s readers into a tailspin! Physical connection to Abraham was their most cherished claim (John 8:33,37,39). On this lineage they based their national pride and their expectation of national salvation.
- d. Paul hastens to document his startling challenge to their spiritual security. He quotes Genesis 21:12 from their own Scriptures to begin his argumentation. It is by the Lord’s autonomous choice who will and who will not be saved under the gospel dispensation. Human will and human action play no role in that determination. “In Isaac [not Ishmael] your seed shall be called.” Abraham had a child other than Isaac who could have qualified just as well as the fleshly “seed” of the patriarch through whom God’s promises might be fulfilled. It was God’s *arbitrary choice* that His blessings would come through Isaac and not another. A selection was necessary to implement *physical* events, and a *physical* choice had no bearing on anyone’s *spiritual* standing with Jehovah.
- e. Isaac was the only child of *promise* Abraham had. He was the child of a promise that would delineate the person through whom the Messiah would eventually come into the world. Not by Ishmael, and not by anyone else, but by Isaac would the [physical] seed appear. The Jews, of course, were proud that they could claim to be descended from Isaac and not from Ishmael.
- f. Israelites supposed that their *fleshly* credentials as Abraham’s progeny [“children of the flesh”] would also qualify them to be the heirs [“children of God”] of the *spiritual* promises made long before to the “father of the Jewish nation.” But fleshly heritage no more ensured *their* salvation than Ishmael’s position as Abraham’s firstborn put a

lock on *his* being the son through whom the nation of Israel would descend. It was not left to Abraham as to which son should inherit. God alone would make that choice and for His own good reasons. So, the “children of the flesh” and the “children of the promise” were two *different* peoples according to God’s selection.

9:9-13-- “For this is the word of promise...”

- a. It was important that Isaac’s birth be recognized as the result of God’s promise. Accordingly, the Lord told Abraham, “I will return to thee at this time, when it lives again” [Keil and Delitzsch, vol.1, p.229]. It appears that a specific time was appointed for the fulfillment of the promise.
- b. Philip Pendleton [Commentary, p.386] suggests an interesting parallel between the time-setting of Isaac’s birth and the forecast that accompanied the birth of Christ, which he drew from Daniel 9:24,25. Isaac stands as a figure of the Messiah, and both were distinguished as a “seed of promise.”
- c. Paul is showing his readers that there were *two* promises made to Abraham and to his posterity. The first was a *physical* promise of *physical* blessings, and the second was a *spiritual* promise that would bring *spiritual* blessings, the most important of which was righteousness by faith. The first was made to Abraham’s fleshly descendants and had long since been fulfilled during the earlier history of the Jewish people. The spiritual promise was not made to the *entire nation of Israel*, nor was it made exclusively to them. God’s purpose from the beginning was to include Gentiles as well as Jews among the spiritual “seed” (Gen.12:3; Hos.2:23). Moreover, the promise of the *seed* was made to **individual believers**, not to a favored nation.
- d. This concept of the *spiritual seed* was devastating to the Jewish expectation that the whole nation was the seed and that, consequently, the key to righteousness was to maintain an identity as the fleshly descendants from Father Abraham.
- e. To further reinforce his contention that salvation is based on more than one’s physical pedigree, Paul pursues this matter of God’s right to choose for Himself who will be heirs of salvation. He had chosen Israel to receive His physical benefits, while other people were excluded. The Jews, of course, had no problem with this choice, nor did any charge God with unfairness. What Israel must understand is that God is also *just* in exercising His right to choose the recipients of His spiritual blessings and to exclude any others who fail to meet His requirements.
- f. Jacob and Esau were of identical parentage. Esau, in keeping with custom and practice, should have become the prime recipient of Isaac’s blessings. But that was not what happened. God selected Jacob as the twin through whom the promise of the seed would be realized. That choice was not made on the basis of anything either boy had done, good or bad, because it was determined *before* either was born. Jacob was

to be the brother appointed by God as the father both of the physical nation and of the physical Messiah. A choice was essential, and it in no way discriminated against Esau. Nor was the spiritual status of either affected at all. Actually, God's selection was of a physical nation, not of an individual. [See Gen.25:23.]

- g. Sara was told that Esau would serve Jacob, which suggested a long-range blessing to Jacob's heirs. There is no record of Esau serving Jacob during their lifetimes, but the reverse often happened. Eventually, however, Edom was subjected to Israel many times (e.g., 1Chron.18:12,13; 2Sam.8:14).
- h. In retrospect, Malachi observes that in God's scheme of things Jacob had been "loved" [chosen] and Esau had been "hated" [not chosen]. This declaration had no bearing on the spiritual destiny of either son of Isaac. It **does not** suggest an arbitrary and eternal decision about salvation and damnation that would inalterably consign some individuals to heaven and others to hell. Rather it merely confirms the sovereign right of the Almighty God to do whatever He pleases without advice or consent from His creatures.

9:14-18-- "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?"

- a. The question is confronted again: "Is God unfair to the Jewish nation, in the face of all the promises made to it, because He has decided to grant justification and righteousness *only* to Jews who accept Jesus as Son and Savior and also to receive Gentiles into His spiritual family?" Paul's reply: "Certainly not!"
- b. Moses once asked to see the glory of Jehovah, who was under no obligation to grant such a request. However, God complied, not from *debt* but from *grace*. At that time (Exo.33:19) He proclaimed His unquestioned authority to act in any matter *solely* according to His pleasure.
- c. Paul's application of these citations from Israel's history to the present controversy about the *fairness* of God is clear: God's mercy [choice] is His to give on whatever basis He chooses; it never results from man's "willing" or "running." There is perhaps a reference to Abraham who "willed" that Ishmael should inherit and to Sara who "ran" to expedite God's promise of a child by injecting Hagar into the situation. Their "willing" and "running" did not affect the divine plan for God's "mercy" [choosing].
- d. Another example of God's right to act as He wishes came in the case of dealing with the Pharaoh who ruled over Israel in Egypt. That powerful ruler serves as proof that the Lord is so empowered with the disposition of human events that He can use individuals and nations to execute His purposes in any way He sees fit. Pharaoh was "raised up" [given power as ruler] by Jehovah for *two* reasons:
 - (1) To become God's tool for demonstrating His absolute power over the conduct of human will and human activity;
 - (2) To allow God's "name" [nature] to be declared throughout the earth.

- e. God chose to “harden” Pharaoh’s heart as a way to accomplish both purposes for which he ruled over Egypt. As the result of the plagues visited on the land, God’s *power* and His *name* became evident everywhere. Rahab (Joshua 2:9-11) and the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:24) testified of the dread put into the hearts of their nations by the demonstrations of God’s power in Israel’s exodus from Egypt and in the subsequent events involved in their taking the promised land.
- f. The contest in Egypt between Moses and the Israelites against Pharaoh and the Egyptians was an obvious illustration of Paul’s thesis: “God has mercy on whom He *wills*, and whom He *wills* He hardens.” This truth had special meaning for the Jews, because *their* will was to seek righteousness by the Law; *God’s* will was to confer righteousness by *grace* and *faith*. Although Israel had been given every opportunity to know and to accept the gospel of Christ, like Pharaoh, they had ignored or abused every overture made to them by God. As a result, their hearts, like his, had become hardened to the truth about their salvation.
- g. This passage about the Lord’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart has been a prime resource for religionists who espouse the *unchangeable* election of individuals to be saved or to be lost. They contend that Pharaoh had no control over his heart; he could only act in keeping with God’s decree that he serve Satan and oppose those whom God had decreed should be delivered. Their theory, of course, stands against *every* Bible teaching that man is a free agent to make his own decisions about the welfare of his soul [e.g., Acts 10:34,35; 2Pe.3:9; Rev.22:17; etc.].
- h. Decrees about salvation and damnation are nowhere under consideration in this passage. Pharaoh was charged with sin when he rejected the opportunity to let God’s people leave the land. God’s power over men [Pharaoh] would have been illuminated by the king’s positive reaction to Moses’ demands just as it was after he had spurned them. The choice was Pharaoh’s. He made the wrong choice. God “hardened” his heart (Exo.9:12;10:20,27;11:10) by providing additional opportunities for his cooperation only after Pharaoh had consistently “hardened” his own heart (Exo.8:15,19,32; 9:7,34) by his initial refusals to submit to God’s commands.
- i. Again, the Jews were in hearty support of the choices Jehovah had made in Egypt. All would have defended God’s *fairness* in dealing with Pharaoh and his people. Only in the matter of requiring them to leave Moses’ Law and to embrace Christ’s grace did they find fault with the Lord’s actions and choices.

9:19-24-- “You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault?’”

- a. Another objection to Paul’s position is anticipated and confronted: If God makes the choices involved in New Testament salvation, and if He shows mercy and hardens hearts as Paul claimed, then it was *God’s* responsibility that the Jews had rejected the stand-alone gospel as the route to righteousness. *They* had no control over the situa-

tion; they were merely conforming to the choice that God had made to harden them against accepting the gospel as the only way to justification. The nation, instead of *resisting* the Lord's will, had been caught up in the *execution* of that will. Resisting the *gospel* and resisting *God* were not the same thing, they thought.

- b. Clinton Hamilton has some observations that might prove helpful at this point:

“It should be understood that in this section Paul is not contemplating the final destiny of individuals. What is under view and discussion is God's purpose, his will. His sovereignty enables him to purpose and to have this purpose consummated whatever the intention of any of his creatures might be. He is able to overcome the opposition of sinners whose own wills lead them to oppose God's design. God's goodness leads men to repentance, but there are men after their hardness and impenitent heart who treasure up to themselves wrath in that day when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed (2:3-5). It is obvious that God is not going to hold one responsible for something which God made it impossible for one to do! God is not willing (*boulemenos*) that any one perish, but that all should come to repentance (2Pet.3:9). Were 9:19 interpreted to mean that God purposed that certain individuals do wrong, then this passage would contradict 2Peter 3:9 that says he does not purpose that any should be lost. Whether one is lost or saved is a matter of the will of the individual...It is obvious that Paul is not in 9:19 speaking of individual standing before God because he refutes this doctrine. The point being made is that God's purposes in carrying out his own designs are accomplished in spite of the opposition of men. Whether men are ultimately lost or saved is not under view in this section.”

- c. To question God's *fairness* in any matter is to question God's *nature of holiness*. Paul next employs an illustration used by Jeremiah in the Old Testament (Jer.18:1-6) about the potter's control over his clay in determining the product to be made from the clay. The central lesson to be learned-- the clay [Israel] should not challenge any decision made by the potter [God].
- d. Just as the potter has *two* lumps from which to make pottery, and just as he is the sole determiner of how he uses each lump in executing his plans, so God alone has any voice in deciding the fate of nations and individuals. He decided that Israel should be given physical advantages, and it was done. Jews did not complain, and Gentiles were not mistreated when they were not selected as God's favored nation. Jehovah further determined that through Israel the Messiah would come into the world, and the Jews gloried in that choice so long as they were allowed to retain their own concept about the nature of that Savior. Again, Gentiles were no worse off when God chose that the Christ would spring from Jewish roots. Salvation through Jesus would be as available to them as if He had been of another nation.
- e. There was nothing *inherently* good or bad in the clay, or in the chosen or unchosen people involved in the choices that had to be made to guide the “potter” in his decisions about their use. It was simply that selections were necessary for physical events to occur, both in making pottery and in conferring whatever blessings were

involved in bringing the Christ and His gospel to a lost world. Any *glory* that resulted in the use made by the potter of one lump or the other must be credited to the *wisdom and skill of the potter*, not to the excellence of the clay! “Vessels of honor” [those people chosen to implement God’s purposes] and “vessels to dishonor” [those not included in those purposes] only enjoyed, or failed to enjoy, a *spiritual advantage* to the extent that they served the potter well in the role for which he had fashioned them. Neither Jew nor Gentile had reason to complain or to boast about how the Lord had chosen to use them in His eternal plan.

- f. Who had any right to challenge God’s plan of denying righteousness to the Jew unless he would abandon Moses’ Law as his way to righteousness? Who would indict God’s fairness [justice] in allowing the Gentile to become righteous if he would abandon a religion that *displeased* God and submit to one that *pleased* Him?
- g. Opposition to God’s actions became even less reasonable when one remembered that those actions did not occur in isolation or without preconditioning. Jews had been warned for hundreds of years about the inadequacy of the Law to forgive sins [e.g., Hosea 6:6] and Gentiles had also been shown the flimsy foundation upon which the pagan religions rested. [See 1Kings 18.]
- h. It was not until the “fulness of time” (Gal. 4) had come that God’s plan for both Jews and Gentiles was revealed through Jesus and His gospel. Until then, the Lord had patiently endured the disobedience and negligence of the nations. But since His desire was for man’s *salvation*, not his *condemnation*, He gave Jews ample opportunity to receive their Messiah in faith, and He allowed Gentiles to live in their idolatry in the hope that they would turn to Him from idols (1Thes.1:9) when circumstances were favorable.
- i. God’s choices culminated in the “call” (2Thes.2:14) that went out to every nation by the gospel (Matt. 28:19) to respond to Jesus’ invitation to be saved by faithful obedience (Matt.11:28-30).

9:25-29-- “As He says also in Hosea...”

- a. “God is not the author of confusion...” (1Cor.14:33). He does not deal in surprises. From early on He had informed men of His purpose to include Gentiles in eternal salvation and to exclude any Jews who proved to be careless of His decrees. Paul brings up Hosea’s prophecy (Hosea 1:10; 2:3) as a case in point:
 - (1) Those who were “not His people” would become His people;
 - (2) Some who had been “His people” would be disowned;
 - (3) Among these, some would later be called “sons of the living God.”

- b. Isaiah (10:22,23) is also called to witness that God's ultimate purpose for the Gentiles was not unexpected. Only a "remnant" of the great multitudes would be included among the "saved." Jews and Gentiles alike would be "cut short" in achieving righteousness under the gospel because most of the people would decline the invitation to accept Jesus as their Messiah. The Lord was determined to *finish* His plan to save *only* believers, regardless of any decisions that would resist that plan. There would be no recourse from the consequences of the Great Potter's scheme for His "clay."
- c. *Gratitude* rather than *resentment* was in order for the Jews, and the same could be said for Gentiles. The iniquities of both peoples deserved spiritual *destruction*, not *forgiveness*. God's grace prompted the latter rather than the former. Redemption by grace for a remnant from both peoples was far better than condemnation by justice!
- d. Charles Hodge says about the meaning of "Lord of Sabaoth":

"As the word 'host' is used in reference to any multitude arranged in order, as of men in an army, of angels, of the stars, or of all the heavenly bodies, including the sun and moon, so the expression, 'Lord of hosts' may mean Lord of armies, Lord of angels, Lord of heaven, or of the universe as a marshaled host...It is most probable, therefore, that God is called Lord of hosts being equivalent to the Lord of the universe."

9:30-33-- "What shall we say then?..."

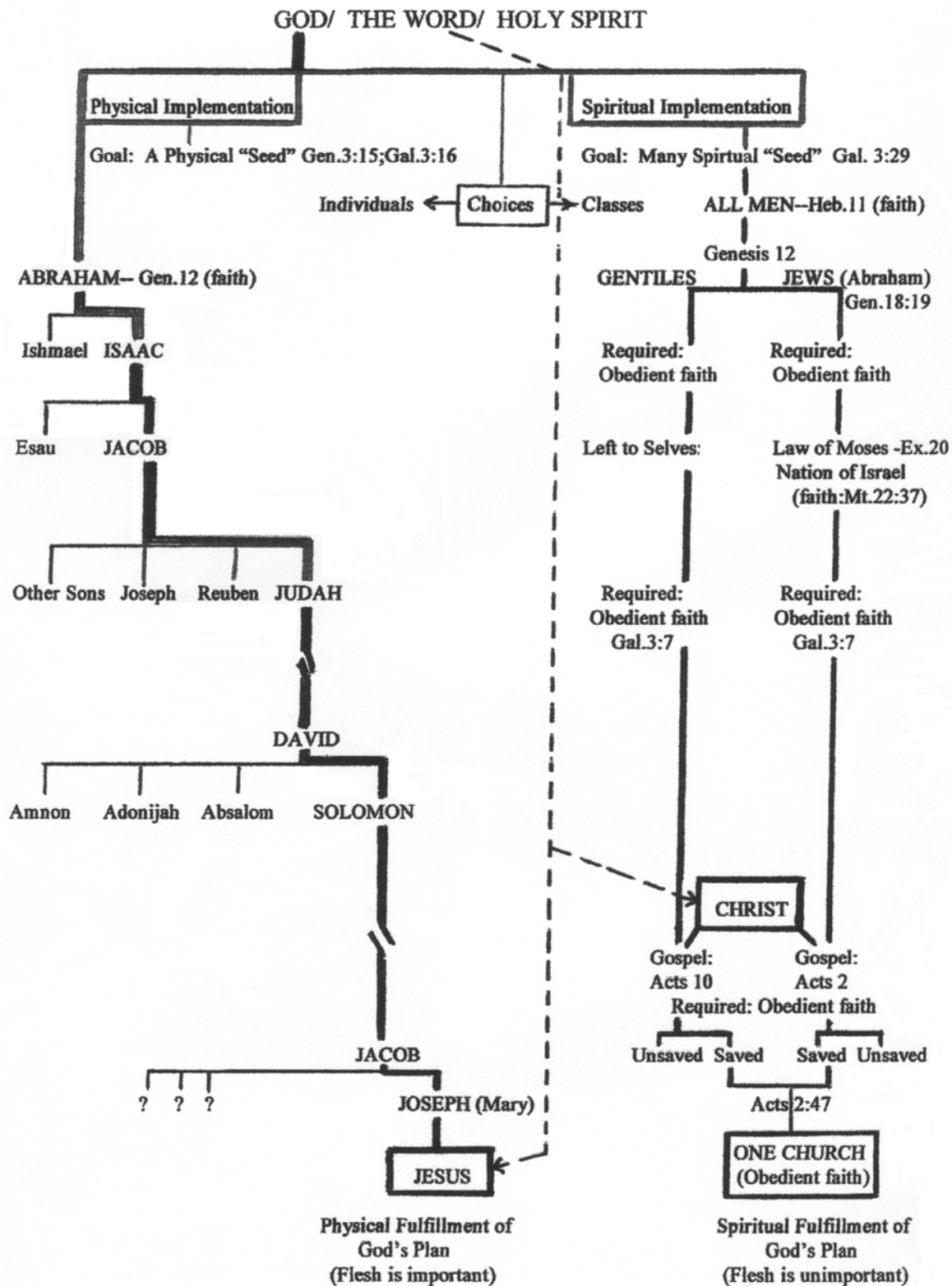
- a. The conclusion of Paul's argumentation is both pointed and disturbing to those readers not yet convinced that the Law and the gospel could not be followed simultaneously.
 - (1) Gentiles had not "pursued" righteousness in the same way as Jews, because they were not given the Mosaic Law to obey. They had a moral law to follow, but they were unable to keep it perfectly and fell short of justification before God.
 - (2) Jews "pursued" [in their own minds] the righteousness that would have been available through their Law *if* they had flawlessly observed its commandments. Justification was impossible because of their human frailty and sin.
 - (3) Neither Jews nor Gentiles could find righteousness within their respective laws. Both laws demanded unblemished conformity, and both people were incapable of offering perfect obedience to God. Neither Law provided any means for the forgiveness of transgressions, so offending participants were left in sin and despair.
- b. Why had the quest for justification ended in disappointment for most seekers? Because both laws by which it was sought were never intended to provide righteousness through perfection. Salvation by grace through faith was unappealing. Jesus Christ as man's Savior fell short of man's expectations for Him. He proved to be a "stumbling block" to unbelievers, who would be "put to shame" [in the judgment] because of their obstinate unbelief and disobedience.

- c. Pendleton cites Moule's comment on Jesus, the "stone of stumbling" for unbelievers:

“Was ever prophecy more profoundly verified in event? If he spake plainly, they were offended; and if he spake in parables, they were equally angered. If he healed, they took offense; and if he forebore healing, and refused to give a sign, they were likewise dissatisfied. If he came to the feast, they sought his life; and if he stayed away, they were busy searching for him. Nothing that he did pleased them, nothing that he forebore to do won him any favor. His whole ministry developed an ever-increasing distaste for his person, and animosity toward his claims.”

1. What was Paul's attitude about the Jews' spiritual condition?
2. Paul lists *nine* (9) spiritual advantages enjoyed by the Jews:
 - (a) _____ (f) _____
 - (b) _____ (g) _____
 - (c) _____ (h) _____
 - (d) _____ (i) _____
 - (e) _____
3. "For they are not all _____ who are of _____." What does that mean?
4. The "seed" of Abraham was both _____ and believers in _____.
5. How many *human* characters are mentioned in this chapter? _____
6. Jacob and Esau prove that God's purpose is by His _____, not _____, but of _____ who _____.
7. God said, "I will have _____ on _____ I will have _____, and..._____ on _____ I will have _____."
8. God used Pharoah to accomplish *two* things:
 - (a) _____.
 - (b) _____.
9. The "potter" made one vessel for _____, the other for _____.
10. Unless God had left a _____, the Jews would have become like _____ and _____.

ROMANS 9: "God's Choices in His Salvation Plan"
 --Ephesians 1:4; 3:11



“ROMANS NINE IN GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION”

1. God’s eternal plan to save men from sin had two necessary aspects: (1) to bring Christ into the world as the spiritual Savior of man, (2) to furnish a human body for Jesus in which to live and in which to die on the cross.
2. This plan was exclusive in both aspects: Many individuals would be excluded from the physical lineage that would ultimately introduce the “human” Jesus. The spiritual plan would be intended for all men, but the willfully disobedient would be excluded from the profound benefits procured on the cross by the eternal “Christ.”
3. Romans 9 is intended to persuade Jews that God has not unfairly discriminated against them. As a nation, they had come to expect to receive the Messiah’s blessings because of their relationship to the *physical* aspect of God’s plan.
4. What had to be understood was that it was necessary for God to make certain physical choices to expedite His *physical* plan. Not everyone could participate in a physical descent. He also had the absolute right [as God] to make choices and requirements about who would be saved as His children [seed] under the *spiritual* plan. In His divine sense of justice, not everyone should share equally in eternal life, since some had chosen to receive His offer of a Savior through an obedient faith while many others had rejected that gift.
5. God’s choices, therefore, were between *individuals* that He thought were suitable for bringing Jesus to the world *and* between *classes* of people: those who loved God [obedient believers] and those who loved something else [disobedient unbelievers]. All must be saved through Jesus.
6. The choices within the physical plan began with Abraham, whom God knew could be depended on to transmit his personal trust in God to his progeny. One man in each generation was selected to continue the physical descent to Jesus. To men, these choices sometimes seem to be logical, sometimes not. In any case, God made the choices, and His choices were not to be challenged by fallible man.
7. Ultimately, Jesus was born of Joseph in the implementation of the physical portion of The Plan. Obviously, fleshly qualifications were essential for those who participated in reaching the goal of that Plan. Few were included, many were excluded.
8. The Jews agreed that God had the right to choose by His own wish those to be included in the Physical Plan and not destroy His innate fairness in dealing with humanity. He also could be just as fair [righteous] in making choices about who would share in the Spiritual Plan.
9. God had always promised His blessings to men who possessed an obedient faith and trust in Him that resulted in obedience to His will. It was reasonable that blessings from the gospel of Christ would also be given to the *same class* of obedient men and not to a *nation* which was physically connected to one phase of God’s Plan but which was also composed mostly of spiritually disobedient and ungrateful individuals.

10. The Jewish nation, though undeserving, had received physical and spiritual blessings too numerous to recite from a God who justly could have destroyed them for their behavior. Their advantage with God over the Gentiles could be seen in their receiving a Law that was intended to keep them focused on obedience to God's will and that could ultimately lead them to the Savior if they would maintain the obedient trust required by God of all people.
11. The Gentiles [those not descended from Abraham--Genesis 12] would be left to serve God without any special revelation of obedience. They had a "law within themselves" by which to know right from wrong [a conscience taught by previous instruction from God--Romans 2:14,15]. Both Jews and Gentiles were obligated to display obedient faith toward God. Unfortunately, most Gentiles became idolators despite their ancient knowledge of God, but some appear to have preserved some semblance of faith.
12. "In the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4) the Christ ["anointed" to save] entered the world, taught men by example the importance of faithful obedience to God and gave lessons that would result in the same faithful obedience to God by people in the world.
13. The gospel of faith, trust, and obedience was first preached to the Jews (Acts 2) and then to the Gentiles (Acts 10). God's choice of who would be saved by the gospel was once again determined on the basis of faithful obedience! Some obeyed, some did not. Some were saved, many were not. God's spiritual dealings with men under the gospel dispensation were in no way different from the history of His dealings in every time previous to the gospel.
14. The ultimate result [purpose] of God's eternal Plan of salvation was for all men [Jews and Gentiles] to live *together* in ONE BODY, ONE CHURCH, and to serve Him *together* in continuing faithful obedience.
15. The oneness of all faithful disciples is the fulfillment of God's spiritual Plan. The Jews should have been able to see [with some thought] that their fleshly credentials meant nothing to God within the Spiritual Plan, even though the flesh meant everything within the Physical Plan. That Plan was designed to allow the Word to become flesh and to die on the cross to save every sinner, whether Jew or Gentile (Romans 1:16,17).

VII. GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS: FULFILLING THE HOPE OF ISRAEL (9:1-11:36)

- B. Israel’s hope fulfilled in individuals, not in the nation. (10:1-21)
 - 1. The nation [“them”] was unsaved. (1-4)
 - a. In spite of their zeal for God. (1,2)
 - b. Because of trust in their own righteousness. (3-9)
 - 2. The individual [“man”] is saved by personal righteousness. (5-13)
 - a. Was not possible under law. (5)
 - b. Dependent on trust in the word of faith. (6-8)
 - c. Requires personal faith and obedience. (9,10)
 - d. Was available to every Jew and Gentile. (11-13)
 - 3. Inspired preaching directed to individuals, not nations. (14-21)
 - a. The essential role of this preaching. (14,15)
 - b. Some reject this preaching. (16)
 - c. Salvation is impossible to those who refuse the word. (17)
 - 4. The Jews were informed about the gospel for all nations. (18-21)
 - a. God’s word was to cover the earth. (18)
 - b. Moses and Isaiah foretold of salvation for Gentiles. (19,20)
 - c. The Jewish nation was always resistant to God’s will. (21)

Text-- 10:1-21

10:1-3-- “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is...”

- a. Chapter nine demonstrated to Paul’s readers that God was righteous in rejecting Israel as a nation because it first had rejected Him as its God. At the same time, individual believers in Gentile nations had been accepted by the Lord to become His people. Paul now faces the task of convincing the Jews that they, too, as individuals, have the same opportunity as Gentiles to be saved on the basis of faithful submission to Christ.
- b. Many Jews considered Paul to be among the nation’s worst enemies. Their leaders had been unrelenting in opposing his teaching and persistent in seeking occasions to harass him with threats of bodily harm. Some had even participated in conspiracies to take his life. Their activities had not been without effect on Paul’s apostleship. It is probable that confidence in his apostleship among some church members had been seriously eroded as the result of their vicious attacks. They would find it hard to embrace the “gift” by which he wanted to “establish” them [Rom.1:11] unless he could convince them that his sincerity was genuine and his motivations were pure when he called into question their standing with God as a nation.

- c. Paul's reaction to the problem of Israel's rejection began with his heart's desire that they might yet change their behavior and be saved by the grace of God. He was a Jew, a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil.3:5), with impeccable personal credentials and a record of religious devotion that had installed him as a leader among his countrymen (Phil.3:4-6; Gal.1:13,14). Becoming an apostle to the Gentiles had not lessened his sense of identity with his Jewish brethren in the flesh. Doubtless, his grief over their spiritual condition was intensified because he was still one of them in many ways.
- d. We cannot know how hopeful Paul might have been that the Jews as a nation might repent of their waywardness and turn to Christ. Remembering his experiences with them over the course of his work as an apostle, we cannot imagine that his expectations could have been extremely high. And yet, his prayer to God was for their salvation. Jesus had stated that with God "all things are possible" (Matt.19:26), and Paul had faith in that promise. A lesson for us might be to never give up on those we want to be saved!
- e. There might have been many reasons why Israel had not chosen to follow their Messiah, but religious fervor was not one of them. They had characteristically displayed a fierce loyalty to whatever they believed at the moment was the right way to serve Jehovah, although their concept of "right" was often terribly twisted. [See John 16:2 for an example of their idea of "service" to God.]
- f. Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37-c.100) is the "author of what has become for Christianity the most significant extra-biblical writings of the first century." From his experiences and observations among the Jews, Josephus attested that they were a nation of impressive religious dedication. He is quoted as saying that the Jews "had a zeal for God...the Jew knew the Law better than his own name...the sacred rules were punctually obeyed...the great feasts were frequented by countless thousands...over and above the requirements of the Law, ascetic religious exercises advocated by the teachers of the Law came into vogue...even the Hellenized and Alexandrian Jews under Caligula died on the cross and by fire, and the Palestinians...died by the claws of the African lion in the amphitheater, rather than sin against the Law...the tenacity of the Jews, and their uncompromising monotheism, were seen in some conspicuous examples."
- g. One such example is reported in Book 18/Chapter 3 of The Antiquities of the Jews:

"1. (55) But now Pilate, the procurator of Judea, removed the army from Cesarea to Jerusalem, to take their winter quarters there, in order to abolish the Jewish laws. So he introduced Caesar's effigies, which were upon the ensigns, and brought them into the city; whereas our law forbids us the very making of images; (56) on which account the former procurators were wont to make their entry into the city with such ensigns as had not those ornaments. Pilate was the first who brought these images to Jerusalem, and set them up there; which was done without the knowledge of the people, because it was done in the nighttime; (57) but as soon as they knew it, they came in multitudes to Cesarea, and interceded with Pilate many days, that he would remove the images; and when he would not grant their requests, because it would tend to the injury of Caesar, while yet they persevered in their request, on the sixth day he ordered

his soldiers to have their weapons privately, while he came and sat upon his judgment seat, which seat was so prepared in the open place of the city, that it concealed the army that lay ready to oppress them: (58) and when the Jews petitioned him again, he gave a signal to the soldiers to encompass them round, and threatened that their punishment should be no less than immediate death, unless they would leave off disturbing him, and go their way home. (59) But they threw themselves upon the ground, and laid their necks bare, and said they would take their deaths very willingly, rather than the wisdom of their laws should be transgressed; upon which Pilate was deeply affected with their firm resolution to keep their laws inviolable, and presently commanded the images to be carried back from Jerusalem to Cesarea.”

- h. It was not a *knowledge* of their own Law in which the Jews were deficient. Rather, they were “ignorant of God’s righteousness,” which they could find only in the gospel preached by Paul (1:16,17). But instead of pursuing the *true* righteousness which they could have enjoyed in a relationship of obedience to Jesus Christ, they insisted on trying to establish righteousness in their lives by continuing to comply with the Mosaic Law, which had demanded consuming activity but in turn had provided no salvation.

10:4-8-- “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness...”

- a. While it is true that Christ by His death was the “end of the law” (Col.2:14), this probably was *not* the point that Paul intended here. His emphasis is on the *purpose* rather than on the *termination* of the Mosaic covenant. Of course, both the purpose and the end of the Law were implemented by Jesus’ sacrifice, which removed the authority of the Old Testament and opened the door of grace and salvation in the New Testament (Heb.8:13).
- b. The *end* [purpose, goal] of Moses’ Law was to lead the Jews to accept Christ (Gal.3:24) and share in His salvation. The prophecies concerning His mission and His Person should have convinced Israel that its Messiah had arrived (John 5:39). His work and His teaching should have persuaded them of His divine nature (Jn.14:11; Matt.7:28,29). But most Jews rejected his Message and His Person in spite of overwhelming evidence that they were wrong in doing so.
- c. “*Everyone who believes*” will be righteous if God’s plan for man’s salvation is followed. Jews and Gentiles had the *same opportunity* to become righteous before God if they all obeyed the *same commandments* through which righteousness could be realized (Acts 10:34,35). It was not by “believing only” but by “fully obeying” that each convert could see in himself the “*end*” of law, whether he had lived by Moses’ Law as a Jew or by the moral law as a Gentile. [See Rom.2:14,15.]
- d. It must have been harder for Jews than for Gentiles to accept this truth. It was *hard* to give up the pride they felt about a righteousness they thought they had through the

Law. It was *hard* to embrace a doctrine that brought them “down” to a level of equality with the despised Gentiles. [See Mark 7:26-28.]

- e. There follows now a pointed contrast in verses 5-13 between the “righteousness” which men *sought* through law and the righteousness which was *attainable* through the faith proclaimed in the gospel of Christ. Paul makes *four* points in his contrast:
 - (1) Righteousness through law is impossible; righteousness through grace is possible (verse 4);
 - (2) Righteousness through law must be partially accessible through others; righteousness through grace is easily accessible by every individual (verses 6-8);
 - (3) Righteousness through law [if it were possible] is achieved through strenuous activity; righteousness through grace is achieved rather simply and easily (verses 9 and 10);
 - (4) Righteousness through law [particularly the Mosaic Law] was parochial; righteousness through grace is universal in its scope (verse 11-13).
- f. Moses had promised in Leviticus 18:5 that those who *kept* the statutes and judgments of the Law would “live” by them. Paul connects such “living” with the “righteousness” sought after in the Law. Moses gave a reassuring promise, but he didn’t mention how very difficult [impossible, really] it would be for anyone to “keep” every commandment and ordinance perfectly and without fault. The Jews learned that the hard way. Moses Lard offers this observation about “righteousness” [justification] under the Law:

"This is the justification of the law, which is justification on the ground of merit. It excludes both favor and mercy, being his due who is entitled to it. It is a debt, not a gratuity; a right which cannot be withheld. How any human being should ever have expected to realize it, is inconceivable. The ignorance of the Jews concerning it must have been profound. They certainly sought it and expected it; yet a moment's thought should have taught them that it was impossible. They seem to have committed the strange blunder of supposing that they could merit, without merit, what can be bestowed only as a debt; or that they could earn by a faulty life what is due only to a faultless one."
- g. The “righteousness of faith” [personified] tells the seeker after righteousness: “If you will do certain things [believing and confessing Christ are specified], you will be saved!”
- h. Moses had also declared that the precepts of the Law were accessible enough to the people that they could obey them. However, many of the ceremonies and ordinances of the first covenant were executed through a priesthood, which also was charged with teaching and making judgments about the Law. No such arrangement is attached to the new covenant. Each individual enjoys a *personal* and *direct* relationship with God and His Son that allows for worship and service unfettered by the functioning of others (Heb.4:16). *Every person* is charged: “Grow in the ...knowledge of ...our Lord...”
- i. Just as Moses described the “nearness” of the Law to the people, so Paul emphasizes

the *accessibility* of the gospel of Christ. It's not necessary to seek saving truth by unusual or difficult means. Christ need not be brought down from heaven for men to see; He has already made His appearance on earth and has been seen by many witnesses. He won't have to be brought up from the "abyss" [Hades] to confirm that He is man's Savior despite the fact that His body was killed and buried in the earth; His resurrection is a matter of record-- He was witnessed to be alive after His death by more than five hundred people at one time (1Cor.15:6)! Men don't need any more *evidence* about the Christ who offers righteousness-- they need faith in the evidence that has already been demonstrated and made available for all to investigate for themselves.

10:9-11--- "...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus..."

- a. The particulars about worshiping and serving Jehovah under the Law were complex and difficult compared to the ease and simplicity by which righteousness is obtained and maintained through the gospel. Paul specifies *two* "steps" by which sinners become saints under the new covenant-- confessing the Lord Jesus [His divine identity] and believing in His resurrection. Of course, there are other requirements stated elsewhere, e.g., repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38), but the *two* cited were those most likely to be contested or compromised by Jewish prospects. Burton Coffman explains:

"First, it should be noted that the verse contains 'doctrine of the gospel' as stated in the foregoing verse. Significantly, it is a pairing of *confession* and *faith* as coordinates among the conditions of salvation, that is primary salvation, or pardon from 'old sins' (2Peter 1:9), such as takes place in conversion to Christ. If this passage stood alone in the NT, it might be fairly inferred that these are *the two conditions* of salvation; but it does not stand alone, for there are other similar pairings of the elementary conditions of primary salvation, as in the case of *repentance* and *baptism* (Acts 2:38), and that of *faith* and *baptism* (Mark 16:16). There are no legitimate grounds for thinking that any one of these pairings excludes the conditions mentioned in the others. Faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are all divinely imposed conditions of salvation, none of them outranking any of the others. Faith is omitted in one of the pairings and mentioned second in another. Repentance is mentioned in only one, confession in only one, and baptism in two; but all alike are commanded, all alike are necessary; and all alike are prerequisite to justification."

- b. No significance should be attached to the *order* in which the apostle mentions confession and belief in verse nine. Clearly, one cannot confess another in whom he has no faith. In verse ten, the two acts of obedience are listed in the reverse [and more natural] order.
- c. This form of compliance with God's will is much less difficult than the many details that had to be followed by law-keepers in trying to obtain righteousness. Furthermore, the results secured by gospel obedience are certain:
- (1) A man with his heart "believes unto [*eis*--in order to obtain] righteousness";
 - (2) A man with his mouth "confesses unto [*eis*--in order to obtain] salvation."

- d. Isaiah's prophecy (Isa.28:16) provides Paul with a reference familiar to most of his Jewish readers at Rome and elsewhere. Isaiah promised that those who accepted the Sonship of Jesus would not "be in haste." Paul's adaptation was, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." Both of God's spokesmen testified about the *surety* of eternal reward for all who believe in Jesus as the Lord and Savior of *all* the lost.

10:12,13--- "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek..."

- a. So far as worldly things were concerned, there were numerous differences between these two peoples in history, culture, lifestyles, etc. However, so far as salvation was concerned, there were no longer any differences in the way *all nations* and *all individuals* were to be treated. Peter some time earlier had proclaimed: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in *every* nation *whoever* fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34,35). Paul had previously said of his gospel, "...it is the power of God to salvation for *everyone* who believes" (Rom.1:16).
- b. Salvation under Christ is a matter of attitude rather than latitude [and longitude]. Man must approach God in humility and receptiveness, "calling on His name." The "caller" will be saved, for the *true* caller will do whatever the Lord has asked of him. There will be no hesitancy or delay. "Speak, Lord, your servant hears," is the spirit of the caller.
- c. The prophet Joel had first made the promise which Paul here repeats (Joel 2:32). Although Joel offers no explanations or examples of what was involved in his "call," the New Testament provides overwhelming evidence that it was far more than a stand-alone faith ["faith only"] that he had in mind. Paul himself, following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, and full of faith about the identity of Jesus as God's Son, was directed by Ananias to "arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, *calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). He understood very well that one calls on [pleads to] the Lord to save him only in accompaniment with his submission to the commandments related to salvation [e.g., Acts 16:31; 17:30; 8:37; 2:38, etc.].

10:14,15-- "How then shall they call on Him...?"

- a. If salvation for both Jew and Gentile involves "calling on the name of the Lord," then some might ask, "Has the Lord adequately instructed us in how that might be done? If we haven't called on the Lord, whose fault is that?"
- b. Paul responds to such questions by pointing out that any deficiency in knowing how to satisfy God's requirements for justification is not:
- (1) God's fault-- He has both *devised the message* and *sent the messenger* with every detail needed for compliance with heaven's will;
 - (2) The messengers' fault-- For years, Paul and other apostles and inspired teachers had spent their waking hours in revealing salvation's requirements to the lost.

Sacrifices necessary to their mission had been many; rewards had been few. In the face of daunting obstacles, the Lord's spokesmen had remained "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Rom.1:16,17).

- c. There seems to have been resentment among many Jewish Christians that Paul offered to Gentiles the same gospel on the same terms as he did to the Jews. What was more, the message given to both peoples included nothing about keeping Moses' Law. It was important that everyone be convinced that this message was God's, not the messenger's.
- d. Many years before, two prophets of God had proclaimed the restoration of His nation to a state of peace and prosperity (Isa.52:1-12; Nahum 1:12-15). There would be messengers like themselves who would bring them "good news" [gospel] about this blessing. They should be given a warm and joyful reception by those to whom they were sent. Their "feet" ought to be thought of as "beautiful" when the message arrived.
- e. Paul's use of these passages from the Old Testament is a strong indication that in addition to containing an *immediate* promise of deliverance to *physical* Israel, they also held out a *future* promise for *spiritual* deliverance to a nation yet to come in the New Testament [spiritual Israel].
- f. The "glad tidings" brought to Rome by whoever had first preached the gospel there were even "gladder tidings" than those of which their prophets had spoken. The "good things" discussed by Paul in this letter were even "better things" than the promise of physical deliverance had been. They offered *everlasting* freedom and prosperity to souls languishing in the bondage of Satan.

10:16-21-- "But they have not all obeyed the gospel."

- a. On heaven's side, **everything** needful for the salvation of men had been done. The plan had been formulated by divine wisdom (Eph. 3:11); the sacrifice had been offered to make its terms effective (Heb.10:10,14); messengers had been dispatched to educate the lost about the *need* and the *opportunity* to be saved (Rom.15:19).
- b. On man's side, **nothing** had been done by those who had rejected the plan announced by the messengers of truth. Heaven's efforts would be lost on rebellious sinners.
- c. Potential salvation cannot become actual salvation until men "obey the gospel." God's blessings have always been conditioned on man's responses. Heaven will do when man does! The gospel contains numerous comforting promises, but it also demands man's obedience to its commands. **Faith** in Jesus is only *one* requirement of New Testament justification. **Repentance**, **Confession**, and **Baptism** are also commanded and are equally important for sinners to obey. "Obeying the gospel" involves all of them.
- d. There had been no headlong rush by the Jews to embrace the "glad tidings" of Isaiah or of Paul. It seems incredible that men would spurn the only remedy available to cure their ailment. Yet, "they have not all obeyed the gospel."
- e. Let it be known, Paul declares, if *faith* is essential to man's proper response to God's

offer of redemption, then *hearing* the *word* which had been taught by His divinely-appointed messengers was just as essential. This was the same word about salvation by grace and not by works that Paul had been dealing with throughout the Roman letter. What he had said must not be lightly brushed aside.

- f. Earlier in this book, Paul pronounced men to be “without excuse” who suppressed the truth by their ignorance and unrighteousness (1:20). He now lifts a statement from the Psalms (19:4) and applies it to Israel’s lack of response to the gospel. It was *not* that they had not heard or did not know what was their present duty to God. Just as the *unspoken* lesson of nature tells the whole world about God’s power and majesty, so the *spoken* message of the gospel tells the whole of mankind about His grace and mercy manifested in the justification of the unjust by faith.
- g. The gospel held no surprises. The Jews had been duly informed by Moses and other prophets that God’s purposes did not begin and end with them. Other nations were included in His plan for *eternal* righteousness. Moses and Isaiah both had put the people on notice that they would be made jealous and angry over God’s intention to include those who were “not a nation” [not of *their* nation] and at best were regarded by the Jews as a “foolish nation” [because they “knew not God” as the Jews supposed *they* did]. It was not God’s wish that His beneficence should work to Israel’s detriment. But His foreknowledge saw this ultimate outcome of Israel’s pride and obstinacy.
- h. Paul’s final word to Jews who had problems with God’s offer of salvation to the Gentiles separate and apart from any deference to Moses’ Law takes the form of a *contrast* pictured in the opening verses of Isaiah 56. One group of people who had made no concerted effort to “seek” the righteousness of God [there are several conspicuous exceptions mentioned in Scripture] nevertheless “found” it. He was “manifested” to these same persons who did not “ask for” [call on] Him. God’s immense *love* and *concern* were wonderfully displayed when He sent messengers like Paul to offer to save those who had generated no *love* and *concern* in themselves. How grateful the Gentiles should have been!
- i. How ashamed the Jews should have been to react with their petty jealousy and anger to God’s exhibition of mercy and grace. They, too, had been abundantly favored by that same grace with an identical invitation to accept the Son and His redemption from sin. Their opportunity had not been diminished in the least by the offer made to the Gentiles to share in the bounty of heaven.
- j. The comparative eagerness of Gentile nations for the gospel stood in stark contrast to the unconcern of the Jews. The gospel that Paul and others brought to a “foolish” nation had fostered a spiritual wisdom far surpassing any shown by people who *professed* to be wise. An “all day” effort to save them had mostly failed.

1. What did Paul wish and what did he do about it?
2. What admirable quality did Israel possess? How was it flawed?
3. Explain the difference between the *two* “kinds” of righteousness cited by Paul.
4. “_____ is the _____ of the _____ for everyone who _____.”
5. *Two* things were unnecessary to do to prove the integrity of the gospel:
 - (a) _____.
 - (b) _____.
6. What is the proper order of confessing and believing in verses 9 and 10? Why?
7. Who had spoken earlier about “calling on the name of the Lord”? What does that mean?
8. What are *seven* (7) steps necessary for salvation in verses 13-16? (Don’t omit the first and last steps!)
 - (a) _____ (e) _____
 - (b) _____ (f) _____
 - (c) _____ (g) _____
 - (d) _____
9. “So then _____ comes by _____, and _____ by the _____ of God.”
10. Who was the “foolish no-nation” that found God? The “disobedient and contrary people”?

VII. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: FULFILLING THE HOPE OF ISRAEL (9:1-11:36)

- C. Israel's hope is fulfilled in spiritual, not physical, Jews. (11:1-36)
 - 1. God has never cast away His true children. (1-4)
 - 2. A remnant of Jews are now saved by grace. (5,6)
 - 3. A majority of Jews were hardened against the truth. (7)
 - a. Old Testament prophets had foretold this. (8-10)
 - 4. Jews' disobedience facilitated Gentile conversions. (11,12)
 - 5. Gentiles' attitude toward Jews should be wholesome. (13-24)
 - a. Paul's bluntness to Jews was intended to save them. (13-16)
 - b. Gentiles were beholden to Jews for implementing God's plan. (17,18)
 - c. Only believers of both nations are saved. (19-27)
 - d. Spiritual opportunities are now equal for Jews and Gentiles. (28-32)
- D. Conclusion to Paul's theme of righteousness. (33-36)
 - 1. God's plans are not limited by man's limitations. (33-35)
 - 2. The gospel is the ultimate tribute to God's glory. (36)

Text-- 11:1-36

11:1-5-- "I say then, has God cast away His people?"

- a. In the previous chapter, Paul declared, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek" (10:12). What a bitter pill to swallow for people who had all their lives been taught that they were special and that their highest goal was to maintain the *significant differences* that existed between themselves and all other nations!
- b. The normal Jewish reaction to this revelation-- "Then God has broken His promises to Israel. He has abandoned us, despite His covenant with our fathers to cherish us forever as His chosen nation." This is the last, and perhaps the greatest, concern entertained by Paul's Jewish readers as they seek to digest the startling statements he has made in this letter to the church at Rome.
- c. Burton Coffman offers these thoughts about some basic facts from which the apostle will launch his discussion in this chapter:

 "...but beginning with chapter 9, Paul began to lay the ground for the revelation of the mystery concerning Israel which was finally stated formally in 11:25.

 "The key facts which Paul had already established regarding Israel are: (1) they are not all

Israel who are of Israel (9:6), making it clear that there are, and always have been, *two* Israels, (a) the external Israel, the state, the nation, the visible Jewry on earth, and (b) true Israel, called “his people,” that is, God’s people, children of the promise, the seed of Abraham, the people whom he foreknew, etc.; (2) the external Israel God had rejected and hardened, as extensively prophesied by their own prophets, and as just punishment for their rejection of God, climaxed by their stumbling on Christ; and (3) the true Israel are now the redeemed in Christ, but such a fact excludes no one: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (10:13).

These three important facts about Israel should be kept in view.”

- d. Paul’s answer to his Jewish critics comes back strong-- “Certainly not!” Then he gives *two* examples as evidence that God had not arbitrarily abandoned His chosen nation. One example is *personal*; the other is *historical*.
- e. The apostle himself is proof number one: “I am a Jew, and God hasn’t excluded me from salvation by grace. If one Jew can be saved under the gospel, then all Jews have the same opportunity.”
 - (1) For his fleshly brethren who might not be familiar with his Jewish credentials, Paul cites his *national* citizenship [descended from Jacob, the “chosen branch”], his *spiritual* heritage [connected with Abraham, to whom spiritual favor had first been given by God], and his *family* attributes [of Benjamin, the tribe that gave Israel its first king and was one of only *two* that remained loyal to the original kingdom].
 - (2) A more extensive list of Paul’s documentation as a Jew can be found in Philippians 3:4-7.
 - (3) His point-- if the gospel arbitrarily excludes Jews from salvation, as some were assuming it did, then I would be among the first ones affected-- but I am not only a member of God’s spiritual family, I am an apostle charged with the duty of bringing others into that elect number.
- g. His second exhibit that God hasn’t renounced His true people is the prophet Elijah (1Kings 19). He, like some of Paul’s contemporaries, jumped to the conclusion that because *most* Israelites had apostatized, Jehovah had turned His back on *all* Israelites. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Although many had killed God’s prophets and had “digged down” [completely destroyed] His altars, there were still at least seven thousand others [plus one--Elijah] who were faithful to their duty.
- h. Elijah needed a “divine response” to clear his thinking. Paul’s own divine response to Jews who were troubled by new concepts that seemed to threaten their favored position with Jehovah was, “Even so then, there is at this present time a remnant according to the election of grace.” Don’t despair! God never has been, and He never will be, unfaithful to His own innate Truthfulness by failing to honor a promise made to His people. Those whom He has pledged to bless *will be blessed!* Salvation by grace will never interfere with the Lord’s *honesty* and *integrity* in doing exactly what He has committed to do.

Moses Lard comments on the “election by grace” that honored God’s pledge to Israel:

“Election or choosing, in the case of the redeemed, does not precede obedience, and therefore is neither the cause of it nor the reason for it. On the contrary, obedience precedes election, and it is both the condition and the reason for it. Obedience is man’s own free act, to which he is never moved by any prior election of God. Choosing, on the other hand, is God’s free act, prompted by favor, and conditioned on obedience. This obedience, it is true, he seeks to elicit by the proper motives; but to this he is led solely by love of man, and never by previous choice. True scriptural election, therefore, is a simple intelligible thing, when suffered to remain unperplexed by the subtleties of schoolmen.”

11:6-- “And if by grace, it is no longer of works...”

- a. Jews did not question the efficacy of the Law to maintain their standing as the people of Jehovah. In truth, the Law was *never* intended to be the *determinant* of their identity as God’s elect. That was accomplished by their faith. The Law was only the vehicle by which they expressed their faith in the Almighty. Nevertheless, the great mistake made by Israel was in transferring their confidence in God to a trust in the Law as their guarantee of favor from the Lord. For them, acceptance *was* “by works” of the Law.
- b. Paul cautioned those laboring under this misapprehension, “You can’t have it both ways!” Salvation cannot be both by works and grace. And since it has been amply demonstrated that *no one* can be saved by [perfect] works, *every one* who is saved, is saved by grace. *Work* earns what it gets; *grace* gives what cannot be earned.

11:7-10-- “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks...”

- a. Israel, as a nation, having made a bad choice between faith and works, had failed to secure God’s recognition as His chosen people. Righteousness had eluded them despite their ongoing participation in the activities of Mosaic religion. Of course, there were significant exceptions to the general unhealthy condition. The Scriptures pay tribute to the faith by which numerous persons lived while under the rule of law, both Mosaic and moral. [See Hebrews 11 for examples.]
- b. Those who were *truly* “elect” had actually achieved a status of righteousness that those *supposedly* “elect” could only assume for themselves. The “remnant” had reached Israel’s spiritual goal by faith, while “the rest” had been disowned by the God they failed to serve from the heart. Those faithless hearts became “hardened” and “dull” toward Jehovah’s counsel and soon became unable to “discern between good and evil” attitudes about Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Heb.5:11,14).
- c. These events, so *unfavorable* for those who considered themselves to be so *avored*, were to be expected. Israel’s prophets [Moses (Deut.29:4) and Isaiah (29:10)] had both spoken of a time when the Jews, as a nation, would no longer see and hear what God had to say to them. They would behave toward Jehovah as if in a “stupor” [deep spiritual sleep], oblivious of the teaching offered by His “prophets” and “seers.” They

had chosen their *own* wisdom in preference to God's, and revelation had come to work *against* them, rather than *for* them.

- d. David is another witness to opportunities abused by the "chosen" people. In Psalm 69:23,23 the "table" of unfaithful men becomes a "snare" and their "well-being" is a trap. Paul's application of this O.T. lesson likely reflects the truth that Moses' Law had become to the Jews the thing upon which they focused their religious loyalty instead of the thing by which they could be led to their Messiah and His salvation (Gal.3:23-25). This *advantage* had, like their prophets and seers, turned instead into a great *disadvantage*. "Eyes that do not see" what is right will lead to "backs that bow down always" under the heavy weight of sin and guilt that otherwise could have been avoided.

11:11-15-- "I say then, have they stumbled that they may fall?"

- a. *Three* facts are evident from Paul's discussion up to this point:

- (1) Somebody had "fallen" but had not been "cast away"(verse 1);
- (2) Somebody had "stumbled" but had *not* "fallen" (verse 11);
- (3) Somebody had "stumbled" and had "fallen" (verse 11).

Were these all the *same* people, or does Paul have more than *one* group in mind? Does he intend different meanings when he speaks of "stumbling," "falling," and "cast away"? To whom do "they," "their," and "them" refer as Paul examines the status of "Israel" in the verses above?

- b. How could some fall and not be cast away [disowned] by the God from whom they fell? How could some stumble at accepting their Messiah and not fall from the favor of the one whom they refused to accept? How could the disappointing failure of one people result in encouraging the success of another people? These were questions that needed answers for church members who were having trouble comprehending this new relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Their lack of understanding likely was becoming the source of friction and disharmony in the Roman church.
- c. The key to unraveling the "mystery" (verse 25) of God's dealings with diversity under the gospel is to remember that there were *two* "*Israels*" under consideration in several of the verses in this chapter. There was the true Israel, the *spiritual* Israel composed of believers in Christ, and the supposed Israel, the *fleshly* Israel that had connections to the flesh of Abraham but not to his faith. God's treatment of the two groups was as different as had been their treatment of the gospel.
- d. How could some "fall" and not be "cast away"? Some religions maintain that the Jews as a nation fell away into unbelief, but, faithful to His promises to them as a nation, God made their fall temporary. At some point, the nation will repent and be restored to God's pleasure. Some relate this restoration to a physical return of the nation to Palestine, while others don't. But whatever is involved in the "falling" and the "lifting up" of

Israel, God deals with the people on a national level. The entire nation fell, they contend, and the entire nation will “return” to its God and His Son.

- e. Keeping in mind the *two Israels*, it is easy to see that in “casting away” *some*, Jehovah did not cast away *others*. He has never disowned His own; He has never owned those who disown Him. Unbelieving Jews were cast away because of their unbelief, but believing Jews, like Gentiles, had *not* suffered that unwelcome fate, because God does *not* cast away “His people” (verse one).
- f. Also, “they” [the unbelievers] did not “stumble” over Christ so as to cause the “remnant” [the believers] to “fall” into disrepute with God. The Lord deals with men individually, not nationally, so what *some* people do has no effect on the rest. Faith sustains the faithful regardless of the depth of unfaithfulness into which others may slide.
 - (1) Some commentators attribute the “fall” (verse 11) to the whole of physical Israel. The nation’s stumbling, however, was not intended to result in the complete spiritual destruction of the nation. The “fall” was not without remedy. God’s purpose was always to “take back” as many of the fallen as would repent of their unbelief and accept the Sonship of Jesus.
 - (2) Lard comments on Israel’s “stumbling”:

“But was it God’s intention that Israel should stumble and fall? By some, the verse is supposed to involve the question. I reply, first, that it was certainly not God’s *intention* that Israel should stumble; for he can not intend any one’s sin. Their stumbling was their own wilful act, to which he was in no sense a party. But I reply, secondly, that conditionally, God certainly intended Israel’s fall. If they rejected Christ, then he intended their fall. In the matter of rejection, they were left perfectly free. God did every thing he consistently could to prevent it, but still left them to their choice. But in case they rejected, he then decreed their fall. Not only so, but he intends them to remain fallen so long as they continue to reject. He will do, to induce them to accept Christ, all he does in the case of the Gentiles, and no more. But if they still continue to reject, he will cause them to remain fallen. Israel can rise on one condition only-- acceptance of Christ.”
- g. It is said that, “Every cloud has a silver lining.” In this case, something good could come from something so bad as a “falling in part” [unbelievers] of national Israel. For one thing, their fall enhanced the success of gospel preaching among the Gentiles.
 - (1) Paul’s custom was to go with the gospel message first to the Jews (Acts 17:2,3). When the Jews rejected the offer of redemption, he then turned to the Gentiles for an audience (Acts 18:4-6). The “hardening” of Jewish hearts often led to the “softening” of Gentile hearts!
 - (2) Widening opportunities to preach to the Gentiles produced many converts who shared in a “fullness” of spiritual blessings unknown and unappreciated by the Jews who had rejected those blessings. In some instances, the joy of salvation (1Pet.1:8)

which they observed in the lives of Gentile Christians, prompted some Jews to “jealousy” [in a good sense-- *emulation* so as to acquire similar joy] and to saving obedience.

- h.** The fall [failure, defeat] of Israel as God’s special people, Paul says, served to “enrich” the world [Gentiles]. In what sense were the Jews defeated? R.L. Whiteside suggests:

Might he not, therefore, have meant their full and complete destruction as a nation? Their complete overthrow as a nation did contribute to the spread of the gospel. The majority of the Jews, both in Palestine and in foreign countries, had been the bitterest enemies Christianity had. In foreign countries where they had a synagogue, they did all they could to stir up the people and the Roman authorities against Christians; but their active persecution of Christians ceased when their nation was destroyed. And they lost all influence with Roman authorities everywhere. And those Judaizing meddlers, who sought to stir up trouble in all churches where there were Gentile members, lost their influence for harm. Perhaps nothing outside the church helped the spread of the gospel among the people so much as the full destruction of the Jewish nation.”

- i.** Lard lists seven ways in which the Jews’ defeat as a viable religious force against the gospel enhanced the knowledge of God among the Gentiles:

- (1) Their dispersion took the concept of one God into many idolatrous countries;
- (2) They encouraged the appearance of a Redeemer, even if it was not Jesus;
- (3) They provided an aggressive force against idolatry and its accompaniments;
- (4) They exposed mythology’s influence to the true origins of mankind;
- (5) The connection between sin and punishment was emphasized among sinful nations;
- (6) They enhanced civil law and government through their contact with Moses’ Law;
- (7) They were *living proof* that their prophecies about Christ were true and that rejecting the Messiah could lead only to downfall and destruction.

- j.** If there were benefits to be reaped by the world [Gentiles] because of the fall [failure] of the Jews, what *greater benefit* might follow the conversion of Israelites to the gospel? Such a prospect should be an encouragement to unbelieving Jews to reconsider their role in the Lord’s overriding plan for mankind. Perhaps their religious background and their prior acquaintance with the ways of Jehovah could help bring about a yet-unexperienced impetus to the success of gospel teaching among the Gentiles. They had the *potential* for becoming an entire *nation* of gospel preachers!

- k.** As an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul chose not to create an impression that he was more concerned for the conversion of Jews than Gentiles. He had spoken at length about the justified “remnant” of Jews and about the possibility of redemption for the “rest.” It was important to acknowledge his responsibility to Gentiles as well as to Jews. His ministry among those nations was “magnified” as he preached salvation more and more to them. But, Paul harbored the hope that every conversion of a Gentile might in some way contribute to the conversion of a brother in the flesh.

- l.** It is significant that one of Paul's goals in preaching was to save "some" of the Jews. He had **NO** expectation that conversions would come in large numbers, and certainly not *as a nation*! How differently many of our time view "the salvation of the Jews."
- m.** In whatever numbers the conversion of unbelieving Jews might occur, those conversions would result in *three* distinct and equally wonderful outcomes:
 - (1) The salvation of Gentiles would be markedly enhanced;
 - (2) The salvation of Jews would constitute nothing less than "life from the dead";
 - (3) Paul and other Christians would have great joy at both outcomes (Rom.9:3; 10:1).
- n.** Philip Pendleton and others explain this "life from the dead" in terms both *fanciful* and unscriptural because they fail to recognize the *individual* basis on which this restoration will rest. With them, it is "all" and not "some" Jews who will be saved:

"The last age, or millenium, will be the triumph of the kingdom of God, the thousand-year reign of the saints on earth, and it will begin with the conversion of the world under the leadership of the Jews, and this is the event which Paul fittingly describes as "life from the dead." The millenium will be as a resurrection to the Jews..., for they will return to their own land... and revive their national life as a united people..."

11:16-18-- "For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy..."

- a.** Antagonism between Jews and Gentiles often found its expression in both parties in the early church. Jews resented equality with Gentiles as insisted on by the apostles, since many of them still felt a spiritual superiority to the Gentiles. Some Gentiles grew proud in the notion that God had displaced Israel to provide room in the kingdom for the Gentiles, and they embellished this action by God to mean that He now held them in higher esteem than Jewish Christians. Both ideas, of course, were patently false! Paul's concerted effort in this letter has been to convince them all that "there is **no** distinction between Jew and Greek" (Rom.10:12).
- b.** The apostle now addresses the mutual dependency of Jews and Gentiles on *grace* rather than *merit*. Gentiles must learn to be as accepting of Jewish Christians as Jews needed to be of Gentiles. They must never forget that, by Jesus' own pronouncement, "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).
- c.** Jewish ceremony required that the "firstfruits" of harvest be sanctified before the greater harvest was utilized. So, the sanctification of the initial Jewish converts [as on Pentecost] was proof that the entire nation ["lump"] could enjoy the same opportunity. Likewise, if it is conceded that the spiritual origins ["root"-- fathers] of Israel were "holy," then the "branches" [descendants] were also "holy" enough to be justified by God's grace.
- d.** The "natural" olive tree was the ongoing relationship between God and believers. From that "root" of faith has always sprung "fatness" [spiritual blessings]. Earlier, God had

“broken off” unbelieving Jews from sharing any longer in such fatness. Gentiles, who were branches from a “wild [spiritually uncultivated] olive tree” had been favored by being “grafted into” this tree of blessing solely because of their belief in the Christ. Now, they could share with faithful Jews the bounty of God’s grace in the same way that Jews previously had shared such bounty only among themselves.

- e. Gentiles should remember that they were not the first to eat at God’s table. A feast of good things had been the regular fare of believing Israelites long before any Gentile could partake of more than the “children’s crumbs” (Mark 7:28).
- f. Newly-converted Gentiles who might become inclined to “boast” of their good fortune to enjoy the fruits of obedience in Christ’s kingdom, and who might begin to feel some sense of meritorious superiority over those Jews who had been “cut off” from the “olive tree,” must remember that it was through fleshly Israel that salvation had been made possible. It was from Israel that the Savior had come into the world. The Jews, as a nation, had contributed *much*-- sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly-- to the present opportunities for reconciliation with God. The Gentiles had done much less in comparison.

11:19-22-- “You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’”

- a. It was hard for Jews who had always been conscious of the numerical limitations attached to membership in the chosen nation to comprehend that God’s favor could be distributed without regard to those limitations. Perhaps some Gentiles had been influenced toward this “numbers game.” Both races needed to understand that while only a “few” could inherit under the Law, no such limitations are imposed on Jehovah’s “new family” (Rev.22:17; Mark 16:15, etc.).
- b. This concept of “kingdom size” may have generated the Gentile remark addressed in verse nineteen. For every Gentile converted, some seemed to think that a Jew had to be removed [“broken off”] from God’s tree of blessings. That idea would have been particularly offensive to Jews, and it would have placed all responsibility for salvation squarely on God. His “election” would indeed be entirely arbitrary on His part, and any change in His prior election that now substituted Gentiles for Jews would destroy every image of His fairness and changelessness (Heb.13:8) that Jews had always been taught to respect.
- c. This remark was “Well said.” Paul has already asserted that the “breaking off” of Jews in some respects facilitated work among the Gentiles (verses 11-15). In that sense, this conclusion was correct. However, in a larger sense, it was entirely wrong. There was no need for Jews to be “broken off” before Gentiles could be “grafted in.” The Lord’s plan from eternity had included both peoples (Eph.3:8-11). The inclusion of Gentiles was not dependent on the removal of Jews!
- d. Paul places responsibility for the lost condition of the Jewish nation where it belongs-- on the shoulders of the Jews themselves. It was not to make room for the Gentiles that Jews

had been disowned by God. Their obstinate **unbelief** was their problem. Faith in Christ would have allowed them to “stand” in the same relationship to heaven that **believing** Gentiles now enjoyed.

- e. Since it was ***faith*** and not partiality or personal worthiness that accounted for “breaking off” and “grafting in,” the process could certainly be *reversed*. If believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, rejected their faith in Jesus as God’s Son, they would immediately be rejected as “branches” in the “olive tree” of heavenly benefits.
- f. God had *demonstrated* His **severity** in taking action against His “dear children” who refused His Only Son. That would grieve *any* parent, but His innate fairness demanded it. On the other hand, God’s **goodness** was *displayed* when He embraced Gentile nations that had made little or no effort to seek Him (Rom.9:30).
- g. Continuing as branches is totally dependent on “continuing in His goodness.” This fact assumes the exercise of *human responsibility*! It is not a matter of God’s willingness to continue to *give* His goodness; men must be willing to continue to *receive* His goodness on His terms! The choice is *ours*, not *His*! The doctrine of “perseverance of the saints” is true only as it includes man’s obedience as the way to “continue in His goodness.”

11:23-27-- “And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief...”

- a. This section extends Paul’s efforts to foster better relationships among church members from differing national backgrounds. None should feel any inferiority or superiority because of their fleshly connections. God now deals only with the *spiritual credentials of individuals*!
- b. Jews who had once been chosen by God to enjoy special treatment under the Law could again receive His special attention under the Gospel, but the choice now was *theirs*. God’s choice had been made-- that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2Pet.3:9). Exchanging their unbelief for faith in Jesus was the only choice upon which their future relationship to the Lord depended. “God is able” to take them back as “branches” if they are able by faith to take Him back as their “Tree.”
- c. The God of *physical* law is also the God of *spiritual* law. More desirable branches are normally grafted into less desirable stock, but God’s power to reverse that order should not be questioned. Similarly, His spiritual power had been demonstrated in grafting the lesser-advantaged Gentiles into the “blessing tree” that previously had nurtured only the “natural” branches of Jewish believers under the Mosaic Law.
- d. Gentile Christians would readily admit that the “operation” had been successful. They rejoiced in the reality of their New Testament salvation, despite a spiritual background that made salvation unlikely. How much more easily could the Lord restore “branches” to His favor who had been cultivated for centuries to serve Him as their God?

- e. There was a “mystery” [something not known until revealed] that Gentiles should understand if they were to maintain a proper attitude toward their Jewish brethren. God was by no means finished with Israel, just because a [large] “part” had been hardened against Jesus and His gospel. Others in the nation would be receptive to the plan for righteousness apart from their Law. They would obey the gospel when it was proclaimed to them. Their “hardening” was only temporary. The effects of spiritual “fullness” being enjoyed by Gentile Christians would soon be seen in their “softening” toward their true Messiah. Faith in Christ would save them, just as it had already saved some of their brethren and many Gentiles.
- f. **God’s eternal plan** remained unchanged. The hardening of the many had not defeated His purpose for the few. “All Israel” would be saved, and nothing that man could do could change that! Moreover, all who comprised the true spiritual Israel [not just those who boasted Jewish flesh] would “so” be saved, i.e., in the same *manner* as the Gentiles-- by faith in Jesus Christ!
- g. Scholars disagree about whether “all Israel” refers to those in physical Israel who became believers [the true Israel of God] or to both Jews and Gentile believers who made up the new spiritual Israel, regardless of national origin. Whichever may have been Paul’s meaning, his lesson was the same: whoever is saved will be saved only through faith in Christ!
- h. Paul combines two prophecies of Isaiah to substantiate the promise that salvation would remain open to all individual Jews who would accept Jesus. The “Deliverer” was to come to “Jacob” [Jews] to turn them from their ungodliness and to take away their sins. The fulfillment of this promise had begun on Pentecost with the conversion of three thousand, and many others had since been converted. **No-- God had not forgotten His promise to the true Israel! He had been faithful to His people who had been faithful to Him! Not one believer had been “cast away”!** [See Rom. 11:1.]
- i. Jim McGuiggan has a good summary of Paul’s argumentation in this passage:

“This, I think, is the explanation of the phrase: if Jews turn to Christ in faith they will be saved (verse 23). In this way (verse 26) every single ‘Israelite’ will be saved in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah 59. So that you Gentiles may be assured, God was faithless to no one. He didn’t reject a single one of his (real) people to let you in. And even the cast off Jews have not been cast off so that they can never have hope. Indeed not, they’re simply now as you once were. They can turn in faith to Christ and this will constitute them Abraham’s real children. This, in turn, would mean, that they have found acceptance with God in fulfillment of the prophet’s words. They then are a part of the ‘election.’”

11:28-32-- “Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake...”

- a. In their unbelief, the Jews had become enemies of the gospel. That had turned out to be for the Gentiles’ “sake” when Jewish opposition to the truth resulted in more teaching

being directed to receptive listeners among other people. God can control the outcome of man's most serious mistakes and, at His choosing, change bad things into good so that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom.8:28). It had surely worked that way for these Gentiles!

- b. The ancient connection between the Jews and their "fathers in the flesh" with whom the covenants of grace had been made was cause enough for the Lord to consider them still as "beloved." Even their unbelief could not destroy the affection He had for them as His first-chosen nation or would it alter His desire to shower them with spiritual blessings if they would only return to Him in faith. But even His love and concern would be of no benefit to Israel in the absence of their repentance and obedience to His will.
- c. God's "gifts" and "callings" are never subject to cancellation or change because they are *always right*. There was no need for Him to regret the choice of a people who would subsequently disappoint Him. His election of Israel to be the nation through whom the Savior would come had been successful-- "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). He had elected the entire nation to receive countless advantages not enjoyed by other people (Deut.7:6-8). But He never elected the *nation* to salvation. That was to be the reward for *obedience to His commandments* (Deut.7:9-11), and obedience is always performed by individuals. The Lord only intended to "reserve for Himself" (verse 4) those *individual* members of the nation who, as individuals, would sincerely submit to His will while they lived under the Law, and who would choose to receive His Son when time came for that. These would be the true [spiritual] Israel.
- d. Gentile Christians should be deeply grateful that the Lord had turned the disobedience of unbelieving Jews to their spiritual advantage (verses 11,12). That was not something that anyone would have normally expected to happen. At the same time, it would be surprising if the hard hearts of the Law's devotees were to be changed into tender hearts of faith and obedience. "But with God all things are possible" (Matt.19:26). Paul would have every church member to pray earnestly for the salvation of the "cast off branches."
- e. Had God arbitrarily renounced Israel as His chosen nation, every member of the nation would have been without recourse. There is no remedy for rejection. But they had *not* been rejected. Instead, *all unbelievers* were committed to a status of "disobedience," and the remedy for *disobedience* is *obedience*! That left the door wide open to any Jew who might choose to obey the gospel and to be reconciled to the Lord. The door was also left open for God to show His mercy in *forgiving* individual Jews who might choose to become believers.

11:33-36-- "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

- a. Paul could scarcely contain his amazement at how wonderfully God had resolved the

complex issue of dealing with such diverse peoples as the Jews and the Gentiles. He had acted in complete fairness to all parties and, at the same time, had never violated His own nature of respect for right and wrong.

- b. “Knowledge” is the possession of all the facts necessary to the resolution of a problem, while “wisdom” is the ability to address the facts in a way as to bring about a suitable solution. The Lord’s knowledge and wisdom had been unquestionably demonstrated in His treatment of the “Jewish problem” in the early church.
- c. Certainly, no *man* would have been capable of solving the problem of relationships within the family of God, nor could any man have given counsel to God to assist Him in taking care of the situation. Only revelation can help us to comprehend how truly wonderful is *everything* about our God!
- d. David Lipscomb and J.W.Shepherd reflect on the “unknowable” ways of the Lord:

“Inexpressibly wise and deep is the wisdom that could so arrange that the punishment of the Jews for their unbelief would open the way for the Gentiles to believe in Christ, and that the reception of the Gentiles would be the means of bringing Israel back to God. [Thus they were to be mutual aids until all their interests should be blended and the human race should be united in the love of the same gospel and the service of the same God and Savior. When, therefore, this profound and wonderful plan is contemplated and its history traced from the commencement to the end, no wonder that the apostle was fixed in admiration at the amazing wisdom of Him who devised it and who has made all events subservient to its establishment and spread among men.] Such wisdom is beyond searching out by human beings, but it is an outburst of wonder and delight in contemplating a glorious revelation of wisdom and goodness surpassing all that the heart of man could have conceived.”
- e. Paul’s reasoning and argumentation to the Roman church about relationships that seem to have been common to nearly all early churches is ended. Everything has been said that needs to be said about brotherly attitudes and behaviors. An outpouring of praise now expresses the apostle’s feelings about what the all-knowing and all-wise Father has been able to accomplish for the good of both Jews and Gentiles:

“For of Him and through Him and to Him
are all things...
To HIM be glory forever. AMEN.”

1. Paul cited *three* characteristics of his “Jewishness.” What were they?
 - a. _____ b. _____
 - c. _____
2. The prophet _____ said Israel was guilty of *three* things:
 - a. _____.
 - b. _____.
 - c. _____.
3. _____ men had not bowed to _____ in the days of _____; in Paul’s time, there was a _____ by the _____ of _____.
4. What *two* prophets had spoken about Israel’s “hardening”?
 - a. _____ b. _____
5. The _____ of the _____ might provoke the Jews to _____. How was that possible?
6. If the _____ is holy, the _____ is also holy; if the _____ is holy, so are the _____.
7. Who were the “natural branches”? The “wild olive tree”? What was the “root and fatness of the olive tree”?
8. “Therefore consider the _____ and _____ of God...”
9. What was the “mystery” mentioned by Paul in verse 25?
10. God committed unbelieving Jews to _____ so that He could show _____ to all of them.

VIII. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: DEMANDING RIGHTEOUS LIVES (12:1-15:13)

- A. Christian behavior reflects indebtedness to God. (12:1-21)
 - 1. God accepts those who behave properly. (1,2)
 - a. He expects the sacrifice of the lives of the saved. (1)
 - b. He expects His sons to be fashioned like His Son. (2)
 - 2. Standards of conduct are set for recipients of His gifts. (3-8)
 - a. Pride is inappropriate in objects of grace. (3)
 - b. Each gift should promote the good of all. (4,5)
 - c. Responsibilities accompany the use of God's gifts. (6-8)
 - 3. Guidelines for ordinary [uninspired] conduct. (9-20)
 - a. Love is the basis of conduct toward brethren. (9-13)
 - b. Christ's image is restored in conduct toward unbelievers. (14-20)
 - 4. The Christian's sacrifice overcomes evil just as Christ's did. (21)

Text-- 1-21

12:1-- "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God..."

- a. Paul has devoted *eleven* chapters of this book to rehearse the "mercies of God":
 - (1) The lifestyle of the *Gentile* nations had totally corrupted the moral law that they had received for guidance;
 - (2) The hypocritical practices of the *Jewish* nation had destroyed any possibility of salvation through their Mosaic law;
 - (3) To a world totally and hopelessly condemned by sin, God has offered His plan for justification-- faithful obedience to Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son;
 - (4) All nations now have equal standing with Jehovah, and salvation is *equally accessible* to all men, regardless of their national or ethnic background;
 - (5) God has more than restored to mankind through Jesus what was lost through the transgression of Adam, man's federal head [representative];
 - (6) Salvation by faith does not require perfection as law does, so salvation now is *possible*, whereas before Christ it was *impossible*;
 - (7) Obedient believers enjoy innumerable encouragements and blessings to assist them in their pursuit of righteousness in Christ;
 - (8) Jehovah has been entirely just in his dealings with all men [including the Jews] in demanding obedient faith in Christ as the *essential* determinant for redemption from sin;
 - (9) The Jews in particular should be grateful that, despite the obstinate disobedience of the majority, justification is freely available to any and all believing Israelites.

- b. Those justified by faith had incurred an *obligation* that could not be ignored. Their Justifier expected a sacrifice from them as an expression of their gratitude for His “in-describable gift.” It was not the offering of an animal or some other devoted thing that He asked. Since He had given them for their cleansing the One most precious to Him-- His only Son-- it was fitting that they should give Him the ones most precious to them-- themselves! “Present [continuously] your bodies a living sacrifice...”
- c. This sacrifice would be “holy” [dedicated] on their part, for it was a commitment not of their own devising; it would be “acceptable” on God’s part because it *was* by His plan.
- d. A life-long sacrifice of self was a significant obligation. But, as much as it might cost the believer, it was “reasonable” [rational] when compared to the “glory which shall be revealed” in them (Rom.8:18).
- e. Philip Pendleton discusses another reason why Paul dealt in this chapter with the high moral expectations the Romans faced as people “saved by faith”:

“The theme of this great Epistle is that ‘the righteous shall live by faith’ (1:17), and its grand conclusion is that those who seek it in other ways fail (9:30-33). But the popular way of seeking it was by obeying the precepts of the great moral or Mosaic law. If, then, Paul’s letter overthrows all trust in morality, of what use is morality? And what bearing has his doctrine on *life*? May one live as he pleases and still be saved by his faith? Such are the questions which have ever risen in men’s minds on first acquaintance with this merciful and gracious doctrine. The carnal mind’s first impulse on hearing the publication of grace is to abuse grace (6:1. Comp. Jas.2:14-26). Anticipating the questionings and tendencies of the weak and sinful natures of his readers, Paul proceeds to first define the life of faith (12:1,2). It is a sanctified, sacrificial life. He then illustrates the workings of this sanctified life in the two grand spheres of its activities, the spiritual kingdom of God or the church (12:3-8) and the civil kingdom of the world (12:9-21). But the faith-life is not defined didactically, but in an impassioned hortatory manner, for Paul is not content that his hearers should know theoretically what it is; he wishes them to have experimental knowledge of it, to actually *live* it. In fact, it has been for the purpose of the exhortation of this section that all the previous chapters have been written, for no Bible doctrine is a barren speculation, but a life-root, developed that it may bear fruit in the lives of those who read it. And here is the hortatory definition of the faith-life.”

12:2-- “And do not be conformed to this world...”

- a. Christians are new creatures (2Cor.5:17) with a clean slate. They can “fashion themselves” (1Pet.1:14) into whatever image they choose according to their free will:
 - (1) The likeness of this “world” [“age”-- “men controlled by the thoughts and pursuits of this present time”--Thayer, p.19]. Such pursuits are not necessarily evil in nature, just distracting from the Christian’s higher calling (Matt.6:33);
 - (2) The likeness of Christ’s image (Col.3:10). A drastic “transformation” is demanded of the convert if he is to become like the One who “did no sin” (1Pet.1:21,22):
 - (a) Transformation begins with a *renewed mind* that assumes a new focus on

heavenly things (Phil.2:5,8; Col.3:1,2);

- (b) Transformation culminates in a *renewed lifestyle* that emerges when the “old man” of sin is cast aside and the “new man” begins to dominate (Col.3:5,8,9, 12-14, etc.);
- (c) Transformation occurs as the mind [spirit] responds to the guidance of the word (2Cor.3:18) as the convert examines and “proves” [by experience] the things specified to be “good” [righteous] and “acceptable” [to God] and “perfect” [complete] for his “image” (1Thes.5:21).

12:3-8-- “For I say, through the grace given to me...”

- a. Paul now launches into a listing of behaviors that would manifest the transformation expected of God’s new creatures. He cites the *apostleship* [“grace”] given him so these stringent requirements would be underpinned with *authority* and would not be received merely as *suggestions* for optional improvement. “Everyone who is among you” was targeted for transformation by these demands. There would be no exceptions.
- b. The new standards of conduct among new creatures were divided by Paul [intentionally or not] through the rest of the chapter into *three* sections: (1) Behaviors relating to the church [verses 3-8]; (2) Behaviors relating to fellow Christians [verses 9-16]; (3) Behaviors relating to non-Christians [verses 17-21].
- c. Another apparent distinction among the practices relating to the church concerns those associated with the utilization of inspired gifts [verses 6,7] and those connected with “ordinary” gifts [verse 8].
- d. Transformation can occur only when one has an accurate evaluation of his own character and of the alterations he needs to attain the “new man” status of discipleship. *Attitude* toward self and others is fundamental. “Sober” thinking [“not affected by passion, excitement or prejudice; well-balanced”--Webster] about one’s responsibilities in the light of his real capabilities is the first requirement. This assessment should be marked by neither self-aggrandizement nor self-disparagement. Coffman comments on Paul’s admonition about this personal evaluation:

“Despite the warning, Paul’s admonition was not directed to the utter negation of self, nor the sinful depreciation of the noble endowments God has granted mortal men; but it strikes a perfect balance, admitting that it is right and proper for one to think highly of himself, but not more highly than becomes a sinner without merit of salvation, and certainly not so highly as to produce any conceit that might arise from a comparison of his own gifts with those of his fellow Christians.”
- e. It is not entirely clear what the apostle meant by “the measure of faith.” Some suppose that it was different levels of faith various members had received from God that enabled them to realize their places of service within the body. However, with the exception

of miraculous expressions of faith (1Cor.12:9), all faith comes from exposure to the word of God (Rom.10:17). It is *not* something man receives, but something he does (John 20:27). Faith is “dealt” to each individual in a “measure” proportionate to the depth of commitment it generates in his heart. This commitment, in turn, drives each one’s determination of which role[s] in the church he is responsible to fill and to what extent that responsibility reaches.

- f. The analogy of members of the church functioning like members of the human body is frequently used in Scripture. Perhaps the most familiar instance is found in 1Corinthians 12:12- 30. Apparently, there was an actual or a potential problem at Rome about the spiritual and ordinary gifts possessed by various members. As in other churches, Christians there needed to learn that the *possession* of a gift was not the most important thing. What really counted with God was the *manner* in which the possessor used his gift. Gifts, whether miraculous or not, were distributed *by God* among saints for corporate rather than for individual benefit. Members were “one of another,” and all gifts were intended to be used for the good of everyone in the body. Paul’s guidance for the proper utilization of these blessings was: “Let us use them” [in harmony with God’s purpose in giving them].
- g. Some of God’s endowments to the Romans were miraculous in nature. Paul addresses their use first. They were usually the gifts about which there was most controversy in the churches. [See 1Corinthians 12,13,14.] Prophecy, the faculty to speak for God in an imparted revelation, was an operation of great value to the church before *written* revelation became available. In view of the fact that the spirits of the prophets were “subject to the prophets” (1Cor.14:32), those occupying the role of conveying Spirit-inspired revelation to other Christians should not allow their own personal contributions to enter into their divine functioning. “Just tell it like it is,” without additions or subtractions of any kind. James Macknight says:

“The apostle’s meaning, therefore, is that such as enjoyed the prophetic inspiration were not to imagine that because some things were revealed to them they might speak of everything, but that, in prophesying, they were to confine themselves to what was revealed to them. The same rule we have laid down in Eph.4:7.”
- h. Ministering might well include several of the other spiritual gifts included in Paul’s list in 1Corinthians 12. “There are diversities of *gifts*, but the same Spirit. There are differences of *ministries*, but the same Lord” (1Cor.12:4,5). These spiritual gifts were used in spiritual ministry [service]. We are not told which special endowments were included here, if the apostle actually had some of them in mind.
- i. Teaching and exhortation may also have been special gifts to members at Rome. Or, these might have just been natural abilities to be used in edifying the saints. *All* gifts, natural and supernatural, were “according to grace” and should be employed with that constant awareness.

- j. Giving with liberality by all members, especially by the more affluent; diligent leading by elders and others in places of influence in the congregation; and the merciful relief of the distresses suffered by the saints were also extremely important to the spiritual health of Christians at Rome and elsewhere.

12:9-16-- “Let love be without hypocrisy”

- a. It was important that members utilize their gifts with humility and consideration for other members. But just as vital to the well-being of the church at Rome was the personal behavior of members toward one another. Paul now delves into things that a faithful desirous of pleasing the Savior would cause them to place high on their “to do” list.
- b. Most early Christians endured tribulation for the sake of the gospel (2Tim.3:12). It was crucial to their perseverance that they have the unquestioned support and encouragement of their brothers and sisters in Christ. And only a deep and genuine love could be depended on to be there when it was needed. Superficial affection was of no value in times of distress.
- c. Evil things must be “abhorred” [*apostugeo*--“to dislike, abhor, have a horror of”--Thayer, p.68]. “The idea is not simply that one refrains from outwardly doing wrong, but that there is in his inward person a complete aversion to, and rejection of, that which is wicked or evil intended” [Clinton Hamilton]. Evil people are also to be avoided because “Evil company corrupts good habits” (1Cor.15:33).
- d. On the other hand, saints must “cling” [“cleave”] to what is good. Clinging is the opposite of abhorring. It is much more than merely preferring some things above others. It signifies an “attachment or devotion” to what is good, according to God’s valuation. Moreover, good things will fill the daily lives of the Christian, and evil things will be conspicuous only by their absence.
- e. “Brotherly love” is love befitting a family of God’s children (1John 3:1). It manifests itself in the family by kindly affection and preference toward one another. “Preference” [*proegoumenoi*--“go before”] is defined by Thayer as, “one going before another as an example of deference,” p.539. This duty of “preferring” a brother is an *active* obligation by which we lead the way to show others the high esteem in which we hold them.
- f. “Not lagging in diligence” [“not slothful in business”] delineates the dedication to excellence with which Christ’s disciple approaches *each* activity in which he engages. There are no unimportant tasks, for in *everything* “we serve the Lord.” Letting our lights shine on earth will bring glory to our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).
- h. Three things will guard the Christian’s faith through whatever hardship and disappointment may come into his life-- “Hope,” “Patience,” and “Prayer.” Hope and patience are both associated with our salvation (Rom.6:24; Luke 21:19- ASV) and prayer is the lifeline by which our faith remains alive and active--“Pray without ceasing”(1Thes.5:17).

- i. From the beginning, Christians were urged to share their prosperity with other saints who were in need. [See Acts 2:44,45; 4:32-35; 6:1,2, etc.] Selfishness and unconcern were subject to shame and punishment (Acts 5:1-11). Moses Lard made these often-quoted remarks about sharing [or lack of it]:

“When the children of God fall into want, take a part of their wants upon yourselves.

Make their wants your wants to the full extent of your ability to relieve them. It is much to be feared that this precept will never again be revived; for I am assuming that where it is not wholly forgotten, it has at least fallen into desuetude. I have never seen it practiced except upon a scale so parsimonious as to render it a virtual nullity. The scanty manner in which the rich disciples of the present day share the wants of the poor is a sham. From their thousands, they dole out dimes, and from storehouses full, mete out handfulls. This is no compliance with the precept; and it were better for a christian that he were without a coat to his name than to have two, and not give to his brother who has none. Such precepts as the present will, in the day of eternity, prove the fatal reef on which many a saintly bark has stranded.”

- j. Hospitality [*philoxenian*-- “love to strangers,” Thayer, p.654] is a virtue to which the disciple of Jesus must be “given” [*dioko*-- “to seek after eagerly,” Thayer, p.153]. Lard’s searching indictment of our sharing in needs might also be appropriate to our lack of real hospitality today. We forget that some have “unwittingly entertained angels” (Heb.13:1) and that we, too, might be tested someday.
- k. Verse fourteen seems out of place as a characteristic of brotherly behavior [Paul here for some reason ignores *our* analysis of the passage!], unless he has in view ill treatment among brethren, which is rather unlikely. This blessing of persecutors better fits with the apostle’s remarks in verses 19-21.
- l. Verse sixteen comes full circle to the introductory remarks in verse one. Again, a high regard [“same mind”] for our brethren and a modest estimate of ourselves [“do not be wise”] are enjoined. Coffman’s comments on this verse bear repeating:

“This verse is a prohibition of partiality and respect of persons within communities of Christians. The development within congregations of small coteries of the allegedly elite, the formation of inner circles of preference, the stratification of churches along social, economic, or other lines of demarcation-- these and all similar separations are evil. Regardless of how naturally and conveniently such divisions (yes, that is what they are) tend to appear, that magnanimous and outreaching love of the true Christian will contermend them. Every member of the body of Christ is a sacred person, every Christian the brother of every other Christian; and God knows no aristocracy in his holy church except that of loving service.”

12:17-21-- “Repay no one evil for evil.”

- a. Here Paul turns to appropriate saintly behavior toward those who are not converted. These remaining verses seem to relate to active ill treatment of Christians by sinners.
- b. These are the negative reactions to abuse that God’s people must avoid:
- (1) Repay no one evil for evil (verse 17);

- (2) Do not avenge yourselves (verse 19);
- (3) Do not be overcome by evil (verse 21).
- c. The positive responses we should manifest toward our adversaries are:
 - (1) Show good behavior before others at all times (verse 17);
 - (2) Live peaceably with all men [if possible] (verse 18);
 - (3) Defer to God for vengeance on others (verse 19);
 - (4) Return good treatment for bad (verse 20);
 - (5) Overcome all evil with good (verse 21).

1. Our bodies are a _____ sacrifice, _____, _____ to God, which is our _____ service.
2. We must be _____ by renewing our _____ to prove the _____ and _____ and _____ will of God.
3. What is the “measure of faith” by which we use our gifts in the church? (verse 3)
4. Where else in the N.T. do we find the same thought of verses 4 and 5?
5. How is the “grace” of Romans 12:6 similar to the “grace” of Romans 5:2? How different?
6. List the “gifts” in the Roman church according to:
 - a. *One* gift that was *definitely* miraculous: _____
 - b. Four gifts that *might have been* “non-ordinary”: _____

 - c. Two gifts that were *most likely* “ordinary”: _____

7. What is the intensity-level of “abhor” and “cling”?
8. List at least *seven* things Christians are not to do:
 - a. _____ e. _____
 - b. _____ f. _____
 - c. _____ g. _____
 - d. _____
9. How does one “heap coals of fire” on an adversary’s head?
10. What is the surest way to “overcome evil”?

VIII. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: DEMANDING RIGHTEOUS LIVES (12:1-15:13)**B. Christian behavior reflects indebtedness to other men. (13:1-14)**

1. Obligations to civil government. (1-7)
 - a. Origin of civil authority over Christians. (1,2)
 - b. Purpose of civil governments. (3,4)
 - c. Duties to civil governments. (5-7)
2. Obligations to fellow creatures. (8-10)
 - a. Pay debt of love to all. (8)
 - b. Kindness was one purpose of the Law. (9,10)
3. Urgency of developing a righteous character. (11-14)
 - a. Time of judgment draws near. (11,12a)
 - b. Behavior is governed by light, not darkness. (12b-14)

In response to questions [actual or anticipated] about the moral consequences of salvation by grace apart from law, Paul has found it important to stress to the Romans that moral living has by no means been compromised. It was true that their *laws* [Mosaic and moral] provided *no hope* of justification because they provided no forgiveness for transgressing those laws. But it was also true that moral standards for Christians were just as high, and in many instances even higher, as they had been before. Paul has already dealt with several aspects of holy living in the previous chapter. Now, he will address an especially sensitive area of Christian responsibility-- submission of God's people to their civil governments. The Jews were particularly in need of this lesson because of the antagonistic stance the nation had taken against their Roman lords in past times. McGarvey and Pendleton survey the background for this lesson about governments:

“(1) The Jew believed that, as a citizen of the Theocracy, it was at least derogatory to his character, if not an act of treason toward God, to acknowledge allegiance to any earthly government (Deut,17:15). This belief had already fomented that unrest in Palestine ...which ten years later broke out in rebellion and necessitated the destruction of Jerusalem. This unrest had already resulted in banishment of Jews and Christians from Rome about seven years before...

“(2) The world generally looked upon the Christians as a mere Jewish sect, and the suspicions of disloyalty which attached to the Jews would readily attach to the Christians...Nero had no difficulty in turning suspicion against them...

“(3) Moreover, many Christians entertained notions similar to the Jews. They belonged to the new Theocracy and held that loyalty to Christ absolved them from all allegiance to earthly government. Rome, as the center of the world-power, at once inspired and hindered the false dreams of well-intentioned but deceived disciples...

“(4) On general principles, the atrocities so soon to be perpetrated by Nero were apt to put revolutionary and even anarchial ideas in the heads of the most staid and sober. Nero's persecutions began about a year after this Epistle was written (Tholuck)...”

Coffman adds his thoughts about Paul's need to deal with the topic of civil submission:

"Furthermore, the Christians themselves were widely regarded as a Jewish sect, were known to acknowledge supreme allegiance to the Messiah, and were easily confused with the extreme nationalistic movement among the Jews. Paul himself was mistaken for the leader of an insurrection by the military tribune himself (Acts 21:38); and thus, it was extremely important that Christian behavior should conform to a strict pattern of respect and submission to the lawful government. Otherwise, the whole Christian movement might have been swallowed up in the overwhelming destruction of Israel, then impending, and so soon to be accomplished.

"Also, there were certain Christian practices which might have led them easily to despise the state. In all legal and civil disputes, Christians were encouraged to bypass the pagan courts of justice and settle, as far as possible, all such questions among themselves (1Cor.6:1ff). They did not participate in the public festivals and ceremonies given over to the deification of the emperor, and might, therefore, have been suspect as enemies of the government. Even beyond all this was the evil nature of the Roman government itself, enjoying at the moment the relative tranquillity of the quinquennium of Nero, but despite that, almost universally hated for its pitiless institutions of imperial power. To the gentle, Spirit-filled Christian, Rome must certainly have appeared to be the seat of Satan himself, an impression that would have been 'proved' in their view by the murders and debaucheries which occurred so soon thereafter, drowning Nero's administration in blood and shame."

Text-- 13:1-14

13:1-5-- "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities."

- a. In the light of the political stresses surrounding Christians in Rome, Paul issues a *command* rather than a plea: "Every Christian *must* be subject to the government!"
- b. There are *two* reasons why this submission is essential:
 - (1) All authority originates with God Himself, and He is within His province to dispose and delegate authority as He sees fit;
 - (2) Civil authorities in general exist only because God has appointed them to rule over their fellows. This, of course, does not mean that every *particular* ruler and governmental official is directly placed into his position of authority by the Lord, although the Bible is clear that God sometimes *does* raise up rulers and nations to serve His special purposes [e.g., Pharaoh, Cyrus, etc.].
- c. The "ordinance of God" is the command in verse one that orders submission to legal authority. Any disciple who dares to challenge this command places himself in opposition to God by whom the command was issued. Certain "judgment" will be exacted upon any such offender. He can expect a civil penalty in response to his civil disobedience, and he will also be subject to spiritual punishment for his spiritual disobedience. The latter, of course, will be much more serious than the former.

- d. Why would God be so defensive of the exercise of civil power over citizens of a heavenly kingdom? For the simple reason that the very concept of worldly governments to control the day-to-day activities of the nations is the product of His own wisdom. It was His intent that an established authority should serve as His agent both in repressing evil behavior injurious to human society and in supporting good conduct beneficial to saint and sinner alike.
- e. No government of record has so disapproved the moral behavior by submissive citizens that those citizens were punished for their good conduct. Authorities are appreciative of subjects who cause no trouble for them as they administer the laws of the land. There is no reason to be afraid of the policeman unless we are in violation of ordinances he is responsible for enforcing.
- f. God has decreed not only that our government must assure civil stability among the populace but also that it must work to promote an environment in which His church may “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1Tim.2:2).
- g. Should saints refuse to acknowledge the rightful role of government as God’s “minister for good” and choose instead to resist its exercise of power, that same government will become to them, as to all lawbreakers, God’s “minister of vengeance.” Disobedience by the Lord’s people is “doing evil,” and those who are guilty should “be afraid.”
- h. Unsubmissive activities will result in *two* consequences that should be “feared”:
 - (1) Spiritual punishment from God for challenging His wisdom and authority;
 - (2) Physical reprisal from the civil authority whose power has been resisted by the Christian. He [the authority] “bears the sword” with God’s approval to administer severe penalties, perhaps even capital punishment in extreme cases.
- i. David Lipscomb, who believed that Christians should not in any way participate in the functions of civil government, has these remarks about the “avenger of wrath”:

“God ordains for people just such institutions as they deserve. If they refuse to obey God’s government, he ordains that they shall be governed by the oppressive rule of man’s own government, of which the devil is the great head. Hence, God ordains these governments of wrath for the children of wrath. The idea is, then, that the powers referred to are civil powers. They are ordained of God as instruments of wrath for the children of wrath, to be conducted and operated by the ministers of wrath; that God’s children must submit to them as such, not strive by violence to destroy them. When, in the providence of God, they are no longer needed, he will destroy them-- cause them to destroy and eat up one another. No Christian, then, can become a partaker or partisan of them, lest he partake of their woes. Quiet, passive submission that involves no violation of the laws of the spiritual kingdom is the measure and limit of their connection with them.”

Lipscomb seems to ignore the fact that civil authority is for the “good” of saints as well as for sinners. It is “ordained” for the welfare of both groups, and its service to God’s people appears to be Paul’s reason for urging compliance with its administration of law.

Each Christian must decide for himself to what extent he can participate in the conduct of government without actively becoming a party to its excesses and sins.

- j. Two pervasive reasons, then, for the Christian to submit to civil authority are clear:
- (1) The *authority* will be offended at his disobedience and undesirable consequences [“wrath”] will be inflicted by the government on the rebellious lawbreaker;
 - (2) The Christian’s *conscience* will be offended by his disobedience after he has learned that God disallows his contrary actions. A good conscience will dictate obedience rather than disobedience. Clinton Hamilton offers these thoughts:

“**Conscience** is 'knowing together with one’s self’...When a Christian learns that God instructs one to be in subjection to civil rulers, his consciousness of this leads him to obey because he knows it is right. If one does not do what he knows is the will of God, then his conscience condemns him as does the civil ruler when one refuses to be subject to him. This is an appeal to the moral and spiritual nature of a person to do what he knows is right. It is a powerful motivator. As a creature of God, man is responsible to him. As a new creature in Christ through the new birth, a Christian is obligated spiritually and morally to be subject to the civil ruler. The political responsibility does not dictate the spiritual, but rather the reverse. If the political will violates the will of God, the Christian obeys God, not man.”

- k. As suggested, there is obviously **one exception** to the apostle’s direction that disciples must obey the civil laws under which they live. This apparently holds true even when governments are oppressive, as Rome’s was, but obedience to civil law is appropriate only when it involves no violation of God’s higher spiritual law. “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) has always been the sentiment of Scripture.

13:6,7-- “For because of this you also pay taxes...”

- a. There is an obvious financial cost attached to the functions of civil government. It is expected that those who benefit from services should bear the expense involved in those services. Taxes and fees constitute the usual means by which necessary funds are procured to underwrite the costs of public business.
- b. Christians must be active and willing participants in the process of taxation because taxes make it possible for *one* of God’s “ministers” to discharge the responsibility that He has given it to do. There is no more reason for the child of God to balk at paying his rightful taxes to support the functions of civil government than for him to refuse to contribute into the church treasury to support the functions of the local congregation of which he is a member. Both entities are “ministers” of the Lord to accomplish different purposes.
- c. “Taxes” [*phoros*-- “tribute”] and “customs” [*telos*-- “indirect tax, custom, duty”] are the “due” of those who serve the citizenry of a nation or region in beneficial ways.
- d. Fear [respect for the power to punish] and honor [for the office or position held] are other “dues” that should be paid willingly by disciples to the “powers that be.”

- e. Coffman has interesting remarks about the early Christians' attitude toward rulers:

"Paul spent many years in prison, being hailed before many judges; but there is no record that he was ever required to be bound and gagged to preserve order in the courtroom. No Christian, much less an apostle, ever organized an underground for runaway slaves, edited a radical newspaper, bombed the baths of the emperor, scrawled obscene slogans on the walls of the palace (even though it was Nero's palace), nor disturbed the public peace. Was it that they did not care for injustices under such evil rulers as Nero? No, indeed. None ever cared as much as they; but, inspired men of God, they *knew* that extremist methods would have done no good, but would have, on the other hand, done much harm in the multiplication of human misery and sorrow."

13:8-10-- "Owe no one anything except to love one another..."

- a. Having satisfied his duty to caution his readers in Rome about the sensitive issue of civil obedience, Paul turns again to the personal responsibilities toward one another that must be shared among saints if heaven's purpose for the church is to be realized. The awareness that Paul has tried to arouse in them-- that *all* members of the church, Jews and Gentiles alike, were just "sinners saved by the grace of God"-- was the foundation on which he hopes to build the mutual respect and love so essential to every local body.
- b. Indebtedness is to be avoided by the Christian. Lipscomb asserts that the prohibition is absolute, but most commentators agree that until any debt is *due for payment* it does not actually constitute a debt. Prompt settlement of debts *due* is important both legally and spiritually if the child of God is to present the "image of Christ" to the world (Col.3:10).
- c. Our ongoing *debt to love* other saints is so great that it can never be paid. Law [of any kind] is intended to foster good treatment among humans. Therefore, the Christian who truly loves others will do them only good and will consequently satisfy not only *God's law* but also whatever *civil law* that may apply to him. We deal righteously with others primarily because fair treatment is required of us by *spiritual* law, but at the same time we are considered "good citizens" because we meet the same requirements of *civil* law.
- d. To illustrate his point, Paul cites several of the Law's Ten Commandments that condemn adultery, murder, stealing, bearing false witness, and coveting in a man's dealings with other men. Additionally, "any other commandment" that touches on just treatment among the followers of the Law is included with those specified as practical demonstrations of "love your neighbor as yourself." *Love* [*agape*] in this context means, "goodwill toward another expressed in deeds that are selfless and designed to bring good to the person" [Hamilton]. The manifestation of such love in good conduct will "fulfill" the purpose of virtually any law under which men may live.

13:11-14-- "And do this, knowing the time..."

- a. It was *urgent* that the Roman Christians "clean up their act" in whatever ways that

might need correction. Persecutions were imminent and suspicions about this “new” religion were already widespread. The best possible image of the *true identity* of Christ’s disciples was crucial to the survival of their cause in the very heart of the pagan Roman Empire.

- b. *Eternal* survival was even more important to them than *temporal* survival. Their ultimate goal of salvation was “nearer” each day. Their anticipation of the great reward should be rising with the passing of time and ought to be sufficient motivation for making whatever sacrifices might be necessary to please their Savior. It was “high time” to wake up and get busy at being the best that they could be! This in itself would serve *two* purposes: [1] it would better prepare them to give a good account of themselves as saints in whatever “judgment” they encountered, and [2] it would tend to calm any fears that outsiders might have about the worthiness of their “peculiar” commitment to Jesus.
- c. The judgment [“day”] of Roman persecution was at hand; time was short for making needed improvements in their lives. “Works of darkness” that had characterized their previous service to the devil, and that might be still “hanging on,” must be renounced and abandoned as inappropriate for people who had found the “light” of the gospel (Eph.5:8). Righteous lives [“the armor of light”] would both shield them from harmful accusations by their detractors and keep them secure “by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pet.1:5).
- d. John Trapp, an eminent 17th-century English minister, said of the *urgency* expressed by Paul in these verses:

“Stir up yourselves, therefore, and strain toward the mark. There is a Greek word (*nuosta*) signifying the end of the race, which is derived of a word that signifieth to spur or prick forward. Surely as they that run their horses for a wager spur hardest at the race’s end, therefore, now that our salvation is nearer than ever it was, we should run faster now than we ever did. When a cart is in a quagmire, if the horses feel it coming they pull the harder; so must we, now that full deliverance is hard at hand. Rivers run more speedily and forcibly when they come near the sea, than they did at the spring; the sun shineth most amiably toward the going down. ‘It is even high time for you and me,’ said old Zanchius to his friend Sturmius, who was elder than he, ‘to hasten to heaven; as knowing that we shall be with Christ, which is far better.’”
- e. Three evil pairs of bad behaviors were likely commonplace among the people in whose midst the church at Rome existed. Revelry and drunkenness, licentiousness and lewdness, strife and envy, popular as they might have been among unbelievers, must *not* for a moment be tolerated among those who believed.
- f. Christians could “make provision” to clothe themselves with the lusts of the flesh, as their neighbors did, or to “put on” Christ, which would show their neighbors a “better way” to live in this world. Adam Clarke, the Methodist scholar, explains the significance of Paul’s command to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”:

“This is in reference to what is said ver. 13. *Let us put on decent garments*-- let us make a different profession, unite with other company, and maintain that profession by a suitable conduct. *Putting on*, or *being clothed* with Jesus Christ, signifies *receiving* and *believing* the *Gospel*; and consequently taking its *maxims* for the government of life, having the mind that was in Christ. The ancient Jews frequently use the phrase putting on of the shechinah, or Divine majesty, to signify the soul's being clothed with immortality, and rendered fit for glory.

“*To be clothed with a person* is a Greek phrase signifying to *assume the interests* of another-- to *enter* into his *views*, to *imitate* him, and be *wholly on his side*...The mode of speech itself is taken from the custom of *stage players*; they assumed the *name* and *garments* of the person whose *character* they were to act, and endeavoured as closely as possible to imitate him in their spirit, words, and actions.”

1. Governing _____ are appointed by _____. How?
2. Resisting the _____ also resists the _____ of God and will bring _____ to the offender.
3. _____ are not a _____ to _____ works but to _____.
4. How is civil authority a “minister for good” to Christians? (See 1Tim.2:2.)
5. What *two* things (verse 4) can government do to punish wrongdoers?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
6. What are the *two* basic reasons why Christians must submit to government?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
7. The civil authority is “due” four things from Christians:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
8. What is meant by “owe no man anything...”?
9. How are the commandments (vs.9) “summed up” in “love your neighbor as yourself”?
10. “_____ does no _____ to a _____; therefore _____ is the _____ of the _____.”
11. *Three* pairs of sins must be avoided by children of God:
 - a. _____ and _____
 - b. _____ and _____
 - c. _____ and _____
12. How do we “put on Christ”? What does that mean to us?

ROMANS-- LESSON EIGHTEEN

LESSON EIGHTEEN CHAPTER 14:1-23

VIII. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: DEMANDING RIGHTEOUS LIVES (12:1-15:13)

- C. Christian behavior reflects concern for other Christians. (14:1-23)
 - 1. Fellowship is not based on matters of opinion. (1-5)
 - 2. Our primary concern must be to please the Lord. (6-12)
 - 3. Our secondary [but essential] concern is for a brother's welfare. (13-23)
 - a. Love rules over liberty when others are weak. (13-15)
 - b. Exercising liberty is sinful if it is counter to love. (16-22)
 - c. Integrity of conscience is critical for all. (23)

Text-- 14:1-23

Burton Coffman introduces this chapter in his commentary with some worthwhile remarks:

"In chapter 12, Paul deals with various moral obligations, in chapter 13, with political obligations, and in this, with reciprocal obligations of church members to each other regarding differences of opinions. The unity of the church of Christ, and, to a degree, its uniformity, are necessary and commendable; but the ability of the Christian fellowship to survive in situations where strong differences of opinions tend to disrupt unity required that specific instructions be given to the problem of containing within the sacred fellowship contradictory views, not on matters essential, but upon matters indifferent. This problem has confronted the church of every generation, and divisions have occurred again and again over things of secondary, or even trivial, moment. Verses 1-12 of this chapter give instructions for the over-scrupulous Christians who made indifferent things a matter of conscience; and verses 13-23 outline the instructions for the proper employment of Christian liberty."

Text-- 14:1-23

14:1-3-- "Receive one who is weak in the faith..."

- a. Paul's discussion in this chapter will center around attitudes that brethren should hold toward one another. It is true that *knowledge* plays a major role in the opinions that Christians entertain about particular issues. Opinions often change as knowledge increases, and it is essential to the growth of the spiritual man that gaining knowledge of the truth continues to be a top priority for every child of God. However, careful study

sometimes increases our appreciation for what the Scripture does *not* actually say about some subject under investigation. Matters of silence must be relegated to the realm of *opinion* and treated differently than matters of *faith* when we attempt to determine issues of fellowship among us.

- b. The emphasis of this passage is *not* on who better understands gospel teaching on eating meats and keeping special days. Nor is it about who is “*weak*” and who is “*strong*” in the various positions represented in ongoing controversies among church members in Rome. Until an agreement satisfactory to the consciences of *all members* can be reached, brethren must “agree to disagree” without fracturing the peace and harmony that always ought to characterize brethren who are motivated by love in their associations with one another.
- c. It is not entirely clear what all of the opinions about meats and days may have been among these local church members. We do know that similar problems arose in other congregations and were dealt with by this same apostle. R.L. Whiteside observes:

“In this chapter and in 1Cor., chapters 8 and 10:14-33, Paul discusses the matter of eating meat; but in the main the points of emphasis in the two letters are different. In Corinthians he warns brethren against eating meat under circumstances that might lead others to eat certain meat in honor of an idol, but the main point in this fourteenth chapter is somewhat different. The Christians Jews, at least many of them, had not entirely broken away from the law of Moses. They observed certain days, and were disposed to condemn the Gentile Christians for not doing so. They would not eat meat that the law declared unclean. Some ate only herbs, lest they might eat meat that had been dedicated to an idol. The Gentile Christians would consider their conduct as foolishness. Perhaps some Gentile converts, having been used to eating certain meats dedicated to idols, feared to eat any meat, lest they honor an idol in so doing. All these matters were grounds for a lot of criticism and strife.”
- d. It *is* clear that the differences addressed were *not* considered by Paul to affect the salvation of the persons involved. Rather, they were merely variant opinions about untaught or misunderstood questions whose determination would neither enhance nor impede the spiritual security of the saints who were parties to disagreements about the questions. Among the Galatian churches similar concerns were made into issues of faith whose resolution would define faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the Lord. About that situation the apostle declared, “I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” (Gal.4:11).
- e. Paul’s simple solution to this serious problem of disunity: “Receive [*proslambanesthe*—‘a special interest on the part of the receiver, suggesting a welcome’--Vine, p.937] one who is weak in the faith.” God has received this “weak” person, and so should his “stronger” brethren.
- f. “Receiving” must not be viewed by the “strong” just as an opportunity to enlighten an “untaught” brother. Instruction about truth is always in order among Christians, but

the immediate need of the “weak” individual was not correction about his opinions [“doubtful things”] but the support and encouragement that the fellowship of his “stronger” brethren could provide him.

- g. The first-mentioned matter of contention among the church members in Rome was whether or not Christians should eat meat [either *certain* meats or *all* meats]. Some claimed the right to “eat all things,” while others for conscience sake ate “only herbs.”
- h. Paul refrains from pronouncing judgment on who is right and who is wrong in this controversy. He recognizes that there *is* a *strong position* and a *weak position* in this matter, but *his position* is that neither “side” enjoys the luxury of summarily dismissing the worthiness of other Christians simply because they hold differing opinions about the practical *applications* of certain basic truths [not the *truths* themselves].
- i. “Despising” and “judging” are both actions of *rejection* that will solve nothing. *Receiving* and nurturing are not only steps to the resolution of differences but also to the attainment of mutual spiritual growth and strength by all parties to the disputes.

14:4-- “Who are you to judge another’s servant?”

- a. Tolerance toward those of differing opinions about unimportant things is even suggested by our everyday physical relationships. One does not properly interfere in the arrangements established between another person and his servant. That is *their* exclusive business. The same rationale governs the relationship between God and *His* servants with regard to the opinions held by those servants. Let that be a situation between *them* that doesn’t need someone else’s interference. God knows what He is doing, even if sometimes we have trouble agreeing with how He handles things!
- b. If the Lord judges that a person “stands” [is acceptable] either *because of* or *in spite of* some opinion he might hold, that person *will stand*, whether we like it or not! God will agree or disagree with that opinion, and *His* disposition of it is *all that matters* so far as the opinion-holder’s salvation is concerned.
- c. We should remember that *God’s* position on any untaught issue [if He has one] is the *right* position. Ours may not be. We should let Him handle the rightness or wrongness of things He has not seen fit to reveal to us in His word.

14:5-9-- “One person esteems one day above another...”

- a. A second bone of contention among the Roman saints was about special observances of days other than the first day of the week. There is no indication that anyone questioned the necessity of complying with God’s appointments for worship on that day (Acts 20:7; 1Cor.16:1,2, etc.). The problem lay in whether it was important for Christians to engage in activities to sanctify *other* days brought over from their Judaism or pagan idolatry.
- b. As with the eating of meats, the issue of special days was of no concern to salvation. As

long as everyone obeyed the commandments regulating Christian conduct on the first day of the week, and as long as those doing special things on other days did not consider that their activities were tied to their salvation, Paul's judgment was, "Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." He would not interfere, and others should follow his example.

- c. Both issues, observing special days and eating meats, were matters of conscience and not of faith. Whatever action one might take about days and meats must be governed by his sincerity in doing what he thought was best for him as a servant of Christ. Whether he ate or didn't eat, it was "to the Lord" according to his personal conscience. The same was true regarding his keeping of days or not. His behavior, as long as he didn't attempt to force it on others, and as long as it didn't interfere with his clear duty as a Christian, should be considered as strictly between Him and God. He could thank God for his liberty to follow whatever choice he decided was best for his spirit.
- d. The underlying principle that governs this attitude among church members is that our only *absolute* spiritual responsibility is to the Lord. Duties to others, and there are *many*, are all executed within our duty to God. Any decision about our relationships with other people must be made within the context of maintaining a pleasing relationship with our Father.
- e. Jesus lived a sinlessly perfect life on earth to qualify Himself as the ruler of life. He has the right to dictate to us the requirements of an acceptable life, because He has "been there and done that" with unqualified success. By His burial and resurrection to life "again" He also rules over death and has made it the Christian's entryway into heaven. In *all things* He is the only Lord who deserves the attention of His disciples as they struggle with the various decisions that make up the daily conduct of their lives.
- f. Philip Pendleton explains "living and dying" in terms of holding of opinions about indifferent religious positions. Some, he says, "live" [are active] in eating and observing special days while others choose to "die" [be inactive] to those activities. This somewhat singular interpretation offers an interesting alternative to most comments that are made about these verses.

14:10-13-- "But why do you judge your brother?"

- a. In the light of the fact that, basically, we all are accountable ultimately to God for our decisions and our actions, why would anyone dare to *assume* responsibility for judging the decisions and actions of others with respect to things not clearly taught in revelation? And, furthermore, why would anyone *presume* to jump to *negative* conclusions about another's acceptability to the Lord because of a position he might hold on some untaught question? Yet, those were the very things that some at Rome were engaged in doing. But that behavior was not just risky-- it was wrong!

- b. Judging, when it concerns matters not related to the *faith* [which comes from the word of God, Rom.10:17] of the gospel, is the exclusive province of heaven. We will *all* be judged one day by Jesus (Acts 17:31) not only on the basis of things taught us in Scripture but also on our attitude about things not taught us in Scripture. And never forget-- we will be judged *as* we judge others in such matters (Matt.7:1,2).
- c. To emphasize the exclusiveness of God's right to judge, Paul cites a passage from Isaiah (45:23). There will be *no* challenging His pronouncements at the last day. *His* judgments about us will be fair and unbiased. We must strive to assure that *our* judgments of others will emulate His.
- d. Each one of us will be accountable only for himself to the Lord when we are judged. Judgment will be between Him and each of us individually. How inappropriate it is for any of us to impose himself, and that prematurely, into the business of judging matters that require far more wisdom and information than we probably possess.
- e. Of course, this observation applies only in situations where the issue to be judged falls into the realm of *unrevealed* questions and answers. Christians are plainly commanded to **judge** [condemn] behavior in others that Scripture discloses to be unrighteous or unauthorized (1Cor.1:10; 5:12; 1John 4:1; 1Thess.5:21; Acts 15:24, etc.). The difference in our stances about judging is that disagreements about untaught things result from quarrels among fallible men whose judgments may be just as fallible as they are; violations of the plainly-taught precepts and commandments of Scripture involve quarrels that men have with an infallible God whose judgments are not in any way subject to be changed by any human opinions to the contrary.
- f. Paul closes this phase of his teaching about hasty judging of unrevealed matters with a firm prohibition: "Let us not judge one another anymore..." Rather than expending their energies in unfruitful and hurtful criticism of brethren holding variant private opinions, Roman Christians guilty of such should instead concentrate their attention on something that would produce far better results among church members-- "do not put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."

14:14,15-- "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean..."

- a. Again, Paul's remarks are confined to things that are *untaught* in Scripture. There are numerous things that Christians must regard as "unclean" [forbidden] for faithful people. Other things are "clean" [approved] for their participation. The regulations under Mosaic and pagan laws that made differences of right and wrong among things that were not right or wrong in themselves no longer apply to the service of God (Col.2:14-18; Gal.3:24,25). The ordinances contained in those laws were the *only* reason for men to fashion their worship and service as they did with regard to keeping days and eating meats.

- b. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he *condemns* prohibitions against eating meat (1Tim.4: 4,5). *Every creature* fit for human consumption may be used for food. The only regulation placed on men under the New Covenant is to be aware of who provides their food and to be grateful for whatever they eat.
- c. The only other restriction on man's diet is self-imposed. Whatever food [for whatever reason] is offensive to a man becomes off-limits for him to eat. The conscience must be the guide to one who chooses to make distinctions. In that sense, the *law of the individual* has replaced *the law of God* as the determinant of "clean" and "unclean." God has been gracious to remove *His* laws about diet, but He has also been gracious to respect the "laws" that *men* choose to make for themselves, as long as none seeks to impose his personal restrictions or allowances on others. Remember-- these principles apply *exclusively* to *unresolved* issues, *not* to things *plainly revealed* by Scripture.
- d. God has elevated man's conscience ["knowing with(in) oneself"] to fill a lofty role in man's quest to please his Lord. God allows men to make their choices, but He insists on holding them to those choices once they are made. If a man's conscience labels a thing as wrong ["unclean"], God will read the label in the same way that man does. What a person *could* have done with impunity, he can no longer do because of the purely personal judgment he has made for himself. By his own "law" he will be judged by the Lord. Lipscomb offers these thoughts about the role of conscience [his illustration of using an "organ" is not entirely appropriate to "matters of indifference"]:

"Those most offensive to God are those who compromise the truth and defile their consciences. The man who worships with an organ, believing it to be wrong, to be sin against God, is a much worse man than he who worships with it, believing it to be right. Then, a man ought to do nothing he believes wrong. Then, if a man believes an organ wrong, he debauches his own conscience in approving it by word or act and renders himself unfit for the service of God. Men that are true to their consciences are what the world needs and God delights in. A man who believes it right to meet on the Lord's day, and fails to do it, does violence to his conscience and is in great danger of destroying his own soul. We ought not to countenance the wrong; we ought to practice the right."
- e. If one's own conscience chooses to indulge in things of indifference that another may disdain, his liberty of conscience may nevertheless be restricted by the self-imposed reservations of the other's conscience. Love will prevent us from "grieving" a brother whose conscience speaks to him differently than ours does to us. This "grief" is much more than hurt feelings-- don't "*destroy*" this brother who has scruples about the practice in question.
- f. No food is as important to us as the health of a human soul. A professed Christian who ignores the scruples of another's conscience has a serious problem with his *own* conscience! Each individual saved from his sins is a "work of God" (verse 20), purchased at the price of Christ's death on the cross. His conscience is precious to God, who gave it to him to help him in his struggle for heaven. Who would dare *steal* from him this

irreplaceable treasure given to him by his Savior?

- g. Clinton Hamilton quotes Isaiah B. Grubbs, who says about the limitations of our liberty to make choices of conscience about matters of dispute:

“The right to hold [an opinion, CDH] is absolute; the right to practice it is relative. A man may use a correct opinion as to be damned; or he may use an incorrect opinion as to be saved... We can not waive a duty; we can waive what we deem a privilege.”

14:16-19-- “Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil.”

- a. The abuse of conscientious *privilege* by knowingly offending the conscience of a “weak” brother is as sinful as violating the *conscience* itself by practicing something the conscience tells us *not* to do. The “good” *privilege* to implement a personal choice becomes a “bad” *and deadly weapon* against the tender *conscience* of a weaker saint. Such misuse of conscientious privilege is to be uniformly condemned as “evil” by all thoughtful Christians.
- b. Any church member who ignores the scruples of other members has also ignored the foundation truth upon which every Christian life must be built. Membership in the Lord’s body is not intended to provide us with a pleasurable life in which we can eat and drink according to our own exclusive desires and choices. We are no better or worse as faithful members because we eat and drink or because we don’t.
- c. What **does** determine our ranking with God is our personal relationship with *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*.
- (1) *Righteousness* [*dikaioisune*] is “integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting,” Thayer, p.149. This quality of spiritual life has been Paul’s whole emphasis in the Roman letter (1:16,17).
 - (2) *Peace* [*eirene*] is “harmonious relationships between men,” Vine, p.851. Respect for others’ consciences is vital to a peaceful environment in any local church.
 - (3) *Joy* [*chara*] is “gladness,” Thayer, p.664. When brethren conduct themselves toward one another in compliance with the Holy Spirit’s guidance [as given about conscience and scruples in this chapter], the *joy* of our relationship with the Lord is unmarred by any *unhappiness* coming from our relationships with other men.
- d. The practice of *these essential* things [above], not the variant practices of things *indifferent*, determines our acceptability with God and with faithful brethren. Other men also appreciate these qualities characteristic of the Christian life.
- e. We must “pursue” [*dioko*] two goals in our dealings with other saints:
- (1) Things which make for peace. Yielding to the scruples of others about nonessentials will certainly work toward that end;
 - (2) Things that will edify [*oikodome*-- “the act of one who promotes another’s growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, happiness,” Thayer, p.440] others in the body

of Christ. Toleration of other's views about debatable subjects will allow for time and opportunity for learning and progress. Intolerance will likely shut the door to such an eventuality.

14:20-23-- "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food."

- a. The "work of God" is the redeemed sinner "for whom Christ died" (verse 15). His spiritual life can quickly be "destroyed" by a single inconsiderate act of another church member who prides himself in being strong in his knowledge about essential and non-essential things but who is very weak in his appreciation of what is necessary to his healthful treatment of fellow Christians.
- b. Aside from individual conscientious judgments to the contrary, "all things" are "pure," i.e., suitable for the Christian to "observe" or to "eat." The Lord can accept whatever decisions may be made about those things. But when a man sets his mind against practicing what others decide they *can* do, God marks it as "evil" for him to participate in it.
- c. When a disciple comes to understand the importance of respecting the "weakness" of other disciples, his judgment of what is "good" or "bad" for his own behavior will become dependent upon what is actually "good" or "bad" for the others. If he must forego the enjoyment of things that are not offensive to his own conscience but will offend the consciences of fellow saints, then so be it. This is just *one* of the sacrifices that he must make in taking up his cross to follow Jesus (Mark 10:21).
- e. Sometimes it is difficult to determine when it is necessary to defer to the views of someone else about nonessential practices. We may be unfortunate enough to encounter a "sorehead" who delights in criticism and opposition to almost everything. His "offense" may spring out of *preferences* rather than *scruples*. Our actions must be carefully measured in such a situation, but our judgments may be different than when we are confronted by truly offended brethren.
- f. A word to the wise who are "strong"-- the "faith" [good conscience about participating in nonessentials] of the "strong" may need to be kept to oneself and not expressed in action because of the conscience of someone else. A spiritually wise person will not allow his freedom of choice to lead him into situations where his behavior damages another person and consequently becomes damaging both to his own Christian reputation among his fellows and to his personal spiritual standing with his God.
- g. Another word to the wise who are "weak"-- regardless of the pressures upon you to act contrary to your conscience about a matter, never give up what *you* feel you ought to do or refrain from doing because of how somebody *else* wants you to behave. "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil..." (Exo.23:2). Violating your conscience *is* evil!

1. In this chapter, who are the “strong” and who are the “weak”?
 - a. The “strong”: _____
 - b. The “weak”: _____
2. What *two* practices about which the Roman Christians disagreed are cited by Paul?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
3. Whatever one did about these *two* issues, what principle must rule his actions (verse 6)?
4. “For none of us _____ to _____, and no one _____ to himself.”
How does that fact relate to the controversial matters discussed in this chapter?
5. “So then _____ of us shall give _____ of _____ to _____.”
6. What could make something “unclean” to Jews or pagans? To Christians?
 - a. To Jews and pagans: _____
 - b. To Christians? _____
7. What *two* things are *not essential* to life in God’s kingdom? What *three* things are?
 - a. Nonessential: _____
 - b. Essential: _____
8. The “_____ of God” can be _____ for sake of _____. How?
9. Inconsiderate behavior toward a brother can have *three* negative effects on him:
 - a. _____; b. _____; c. _____
10. “Whatever is not from _____ is _____.” Explain.

VIII. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: DEMANDING RIGHTEOUS LIVES (12:1-15:13)

- D. Christian behavior reflects the example of Christ. (15:1-13)
 - 1. The strong should help the weak to become stronger. (1,2)
 - 2. Christ is the example of sacrifice for others' good. (3)
 - 3. The Scriptures promote forbearance and harmony. (4-6)
 - 4. Christ's mission sought the oneness of Jews and Gentiles. (7-9a)
 - a. O.T. Scriptures foretold this goal. (9b-12)
 - 5. Salvation depends on mutual acceptance. (13)

IX. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS (15:14-16:27)

- A. Relationships of an apostle to church members. (15:14-33)
 - 1. Acknowledgement of their spirituality. (14)
 - 2. Reminder of the importance of his word and work. (15-21)
 - 3. Expression of his desire to be with them. (22-24)
 - 4. Emphasis of the priorities set by Christ. (25-29)
 - 5. Solicitation of their prayers and interest in his work. (30-33)

Text-- 15:1-33

15:1-7-- "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak..."

- a. We usually expect a change of subject with a change of chapters, but Paul's discussion about relationships between the "strong" and the "weak" continues. It may be that the scope widens now to include *all* scruples about *all* untaught matters, and not just those about meats and keeping days.
- b. The terminology remains the same as before-- "strong" brethren are those who consider untaught questions as relatively unimportant, while the "weak" are highly disturbed by the implications they think must be addressed in decisions that are made about things that arise as "issues" among church members.
- c. The general rule to be followed is the same as laid down in the previous chapter-- those who are stronger should "bear with" the scruples of those who are weaker. Instead of doing just what "pleases" themselves, the strong brethren should try to "please" others to whom choices to be made about indifferent matters pose a real crisis of faith. The knowledgeable member must regulate his behavior so it will be "good" for the slower-to-understand Christian and will *edify* [build up, strengthen] him instead of discour-

aging him and tearing him down spiritually. Sometimes, it can prove to be difficult to know how to do that. Sometimes, it depends on whether the “weak” brother is really weak or just somebody “looking for a fuss.” And, of course, truth must never be sacrificed or compromised regardless of the circumstances.

- d. For the benefit of any “strong” disciples who might hesitate to *sacrifice* their privilege of opinion, Paul calls attention to Jesus, who made the greatest sacrifice of all for the benefit of both strong and weak disciples. Characteristically, he makes his point with Scripture rather than with undocumented argument. Psalm 69:9 recites David’s affirmation that he had suffered much for his efforts to be faithful to God. Paul applies this statement about bearing reproaches to the Messiah. Indeed, Jesus had declared that those who hated God also hated Him because of His claims to Sonship (John 15:24).
- e. Then, the apostle makes a general observation about Old Testament Scripture, especially prophecy, with a specific application in this discussion about weak and strong saints. *Whatever* was written earlier was something from which those who come later can learn lessons needed for successful living for the Master. The O. T. record always stresses the remarkable degree of patience exhibited by the Lord toward weak and often failing people who nevertheless were trying to do right. God has invariably given *comfort* to those who give Him *effort*.
- f. In the instance at hand, patience by the strong was essential for the spiritual survival of the weak. Strong and patient brethren [“we”] could have *hope* of reward from God, because God would doubtless be pleased that they were showing the same attitude toward weak saints that He had manifested throughout all time toward weak sinners.
- g. With “one mind” and “one mouth” both strong and weak could strive to maintain the unity of brotherhood prescribed for all by the Lord for members of His one body. Tolerance and respect for others’ views about untaught questions would *glorify* both Father and Son, for their image of patience and comfort by the strong toward the weak was being replicated for all to see (2Thess.1:12). Furthermore, harmony among disagreeing [but not disagreeable] brethren would demonstrate to the world that God’s plan for men of diversity to live in unity was being successfully implemented in faithful churches.

15:8-13-- “Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant...”

- a. Paul appears now to move on to address some of the friction that existed not so much between weak and strong Christians as between Jewish and Gentile disciples in this congregation in Rome.
- b. Again, Paul turns to Jesus as God’s proof to Jews and Gentiles that His intention was always that they should live harmoniously together in His one body, the New Testament church. Jesus did many things and taught many lessons to confirm God’s purpose for

this unity, but His activity was as *a servant* whose goal was to satisfy the needs of others rather than to pursue His own pleasure. The needs He sought as a servant to fill were:

- (1) The salvation of the Jews. He did this by bringing the truth about their spiritual poverty to a people who gloried in the spiritual riches they supposed they possessed by virtue of having Moses' Law (John 1:17). They had received many promises through prophecies of a Messiah who would *liberate* them from a bondage they would not admit (John 8:32,33). Jesus had fulfilled *every* promise, but the nation had closed its eyes to what should have been easy for them to see;
- (2) The salvation of the Gentiles. The same prophecies that foretold blessings to the Jews, and that generated so much obstinate pride in Israel as a whole, also held out the gift of redemption to the Gentiles. Paul cites *four* passages from the *three* categories of Scripture acknowledged by the Jews: the Law [Deuteronomy], the Psalms [Psalms], and the Prophets [Isaiah]. Jesus validated this division (Luke 24:44). These should have been powerful arguments to convince doubtful Jews that salvation was not designed to be their exclusive property.

c. Whiteside has these comments about Paul's use of these prophecies:

"Paul quotes the passages to show that they were then being fulfilled; and that, as both Jews and Gentiles were enjoying the same blessings and both were under the rule of the Messiah, there should be peace between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. It is strange that some Jewish Christians never would see the plain teaching of the promises and prophecies, and by their stubborn blindness created much confusion in many churches and gave Paul no end of trouble by their contention that all Gentile Christians had to become subservient to all things Jewish, or they could not be saved. But it is even stranger that some professed Christians today hold to that Judaizing notion, and project the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies to some future time. There is less excuse today for such heretical teaching that there was in the early churches."

- d. Paul closes this section of his discussion about the weak and the strong and about Jews and Gentiles living together in God's new family. *All* must exhibit the traits of patience, respect, toleration, and-- most of all-- love, toward others who were different from them and who thought differently than they did about some things.
- e. The "power" of the Holy Spirit had brought the revelation to Rome about this environment of peace among brethren. Those willing to believe in the importance of dwelling together in unity of mind and word (1Cor.1:10), and who would strive to make whatever sacrifices might be necessary to achieve such harmony, could "abound in hope" that accompanies our efforts to carry out the will of God.

15:14-17-- "Now I myself am confident concerning you..."

- a. The American Standard Version describes Paul as "*also*" confident in the "goodness" of
- (169)

these yet-unseen brethren. It is thought that he had received a report about them from some undisclosed source, and this information, in conjunction with his divine perception of their spirituality, led him to conclude that this church had some admirable qualities.

- b. In the light of his personal assessment of the Romans, it would have been foolish not to tell them of his approval. Judging by the negative things he had said in his letter about their problems with relationships, some might well have decided that the apostle was “down” on them. They might be disposed to dismiss the teaching of someone who held a low opinion of them as a group because of the misbehavior of a few.
- c. Paul’s compliments were significant. He believed they possessed personal “goodness” [sincerity and a desire for heaven]. Moreover, they had adequate knowledge and the ability to correct [by “admonishing”] for themselves whatever flaws might exist in their congregational character. Some think that these advantages were made possible by some spiritual gifts they had received in the past, but this is speculative.
- d. Paul’s sense of duty as the apostle to the Gentiles lay heavily on his conscience. He must not be remiss in pointing out to them plainly and boldly those situations among them that called for improvement. Brotherly relationships between Jewish and Gentile church members were crucial to the success of his apostolic mission.
- e. There were *two* offerings involved in the goals toward which Paul labored among the Gentiles. First, he offered [“ministered”] the gospel to the Gentiles that they might have the opportunity to share with the Jews in the blessing of justification by faith in Christ. Second, those who obeyed the commands of the gospel for the remission of their sins were then, in a figure, offered up to God as a sacrifice for His pleasure and glory. This offering [*hierourgounta*] of the gospel was done by Paul “in the manner of a priest” [Thayer, p.300]. Gentile converts were an “offering” [*prosphora*-- “that which is offered, a gift, a present,” Thayer, p.550] that Paul expected to be acceptable to God, since it was “sanctified” [set apart for God’s use] in strict accord with the Holy Spirit’s teaching in the gospel about cleansing from sin.
- f. Paul’s extensive labors to convert Gentiles did not show any greater interest he had in them than in the Jews. The Jews were his national kinsmen, and he was passionate in his desire for their salvation (Rom.10:1; 9:3). However, the Gentiles were his special charge from God as people who had previously enjoyed relatively few opportunities to draw near to the Lord. His “glory” as God’s servant was that through strength he received from Christ Jesus to preach he had been able to witness the salvation of many Gentiles.

15:18-21-- “For I will not dare to speak of any of those things...”

- a. It was not unlikely that some of the Jewish members might have accused Paul of trying to aggrandize himself and his ministry by greatly emphasizing the concept that Gentiles were equally acceptable along with Jews as God’s children under the gospel.

- b. Of course, Paul had no such self-serving motivation for working among the Gentile nations. It was Christ working through Paul, not Paul working by his *own* abilities, that made success possible. Furthermore, he would never take any credit for the accomplishments of others whom he had converted or whom he had influenced to preach the gospel to Gentile peoples. Self-promotion was the last thing that moved him as a preacher.
- c. Paul's labors with the Gentiles obviously had the approval of God, who had equipped him as an apostle with "mighty signs and wonders" which he performed by the power of the Spirit of God. Additionally, the Lord's validation of his labors had spanned a period of years and had included preaching over a wide geographical area. Luke described many of Paul's evangelistic travels in Acts but made no reference to any preaching he did in Illyricum. That would have constituted his northernmost effort, and it is possible that this location was included in the "area" that he "went over" on his way to Greece in Acts 20:1,2. At any rate, his field of work was extensive. J.W. Shepherd offers these remarks:

"There is no mention in Acts of Paul's preaching in that country [Illyricum-RG]; but in describing the circuit of Paul's labors in Macedonia, Luke employs the comprehensive expression, 'when he had gone through those parts.' (Acts 20:1,2.) We may conclude, therefore, that one of the 'parts' was Illyricum, which was adjacent to Macedonia--and so much the more because the chronology of this portion of Paul's life allows us to assign the ample time of three or four months to just these labors in that part before he proceeded to Corinth. Thus the apostle and the history, so incomplete and obscure apart from each other, form a perfect whole when brought together, and that by a combination of circumstances of which Paul and Luke have had no thought when they wrote their different accounts."
- d. Another indication that Paul was not in pursuit of fame or fortune as he proclaimed Jesus Christ was the fact that he consistently chose to labor in places that were "new" to the gospel. Securing a place of prominence in the church could happen more easily where there were many Christians to provide a base of popularity for a preacher. Paul worked instead where he would be unknown to most of the people he would contact in his work.
- e. Paul considered that he was working to execute God's plan as foretold by Isaiah (52:15), who said kings of "many nations" would learn about a Great Ruler they would otherwise know nothing about. Paul challenged himself to make that happen as quickly as possible.

15:22-24-- "For this reason I also have been much hindered..."

- a. The intention to visit Rome was affirmed by Paul soon after he began writing this letter (1:13). We are not told what hindered him from going where he had wanted to go for "many years." But now seemed to be the time for him to carry out his purpose. Opportunities to evangelize in virgin territory had decreased, and he was ready to move away from "these parts" and seek more fertile soil in which to plant the seed of the Lord's kingdom.
- b. Spain was one of those places where Christ had not been named (verse 20) and where Paul wanted to name Him for the first time. His plans to go there had been made, and he

was filled with the anticipation of carrying out his plans. This journey would enable him to accomplish *two* goals at once:

- (1) He would realize his dream of preaching the truth on the new frontier of Spain;
 - (2) He would travel via Rome and thereby satisfy his longtime purpose of visiting the leading city of the world. *Three* other purposes could also be achieved in Rome:
 - (a) He could impart some “spiritual gift” to Christians in Rome and have some “fruit” among them (1:11,13);
 - (b) He could receive some help from the Roman saints to support his journey to preach in Spain;
 - (c) He would enjoy the company of the Roman brethren and would take advantage of an opportunity to “recharge his batteries” before embarking on his mission in Spain.
- c. No record exists to indicate that Paul ever made his intended trip to Spain. God overruled in all his work as an apostle, and he was content to let God make whatever decisions needed to be made to expedite His MASTER PLAN for evangelizing the world.

15:25-29-- “But now I am going to Jerusalem...”

- a. There was more pressing business than going to Spain for Paul to attend to just then. The Jewish church members in Jerusalem were suffering through severe material distress and were in dire need of help. Paul had instigated an effort among Gentile churches to send relief to the poor Jews (1Cor.16:1,2). Having motivated the brethren in Galatia and Asia to send liberal gifts, he and others traveled great distances to gather the bounty and then went to Jerusalem to deliver the relief to Jewish Christians. [See Acts 19-21.]
- b. Paul had convinced Gentile donors in the churches that they were indebted to their Jewish brethren as spiritual benefactors. It was from the Jews that Christ had come to save them, and that blessing was in fulfillment of promises made to the Jewish fathers long before. The apostles were Israelites, as were the first converts to the gospel. These and other relationships between the Jews and their own salvation by grace through faith impressed the Gentiles with just how significant was their spiritual indebtedness to God’s first nation. It was only right that Gentiles should seek to bestow some reciprocal benefit on the Jews, and a golden opportunity was presented to them when their own apostle urged them to send physical relief to Jerusalem.
- c. Paul felt a deep obligation to see the funds safely delivered [“sealed”] to the poor Jews. Other things would have to wait until that task was completed. This “fruit” [harvested from appreciative Gentiles] would also serve as a “seal” [proof] of the high regard in which most Jewish Christians were held by most Gentile converts to the gospel. In 2Corinthians 9:10-15 the apostle reveals that he was completely committed to his pro-

ject of benevolence not only because of the great physical needs of the Jews that needed to be relieved but also it was a means by which the two great factions in the church might be brought closer together and made to diminish the severity of their animosity toward each other. The Gentiles should feel kindly toward brethren they had helped, and the Jews should be grateful to fellow Christians who had come to their aid in time of need, even if they were from nations long disdained by their own proud forefathers.

- d. Though delayed, Paul's purpose to come to Rome remained unchanged. He was confident that when his goal finally was realized, their association together would offer both to him and to them the "fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." And that was something that *all of them* could look forward to!
- e. Burton Coffman has these eloquent words about Paul's plans:

"Paul had in mind a great thing. He planned to finish delivery of the money to the poor in Jerusalem, then proceed to Rome, preach there and enjoy the company of the famous Christian community of the great capital for a brief season, and then he planned to be off for Spain where new victories of faith would be won, more churches established, and more territory won for the Master. Paul's plans, as made, were never realized. He was arrested and imprisoned in Jerusalem; there was a diabolical plot to murder him; there were tedious delays, dangerous journeys, confrontations with kings and governors during the years of his imprisonment; then, there was an appeal to Caesar, a shipwreck, a poisonous viper on his hand; and, at last, up the Appian way he came, wearing a chain, as an animal is chained, and walking between the files of pagan soldiers.

"Was he indeed arriving in the fullness of the blessing of Christ? However it might have seemed to the grand apostle, it was true. During the years ahead of him in Rome, Paul would plant the gospel seed in the very heart of the pagan empire; that seed would germinate and grow, and at last shatter the mighty empire of the Caesars into fragments. There he would write the letters which, more than those of any other mortal, would define Christianity for all subsequent ages. There he would indeed teach, not merely Spain, but twenty centuries of the generations of mankind. There he would baptize members of the royal establishment. There he would seal with his blood the truth and sincerity of his matchless life of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessing of Christ, indeed, not merely Paul's but that of the world for ever afterward!"

15:30-33-- "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ..."

- a. The apostle makes one last grand plea to *all* the Roman Christians. Let everyone lay aside whatever quarrel he might have with his Jewish or Gentile brother and join together with Paul in fervent prayer for *four* great blessings:
 - (1) That God would deliver the apostle from enemies in Jerusalem who would seek to do him harm;
 - (2) That the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would accept and appreciate the gift that he was taking for their relief, making relationships between opposing factions everywhere much more brotherly;

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- (3) That when God should finally grant his wish to come to Rome, he might come with a joy that sprang out of the successful completion of a job well done in Jerusalem;
- (4) That his visit with the church members in Rome would prove to be a season of great spiritual refreshing for all of them.

1. The strong should bear with the _____ and not please _____.
2. Things written _____ are for our _____; the _____ and _____ of the _____ give us _____.
3. We should _____ one another as _____ received us to the glory of _____.
4. Jesus was a _____ to the _____ to confirm the _____ made to the _____.
5. Paul believed the Romans were full of _____ and _____ and could _____ one another.
6. Paul was confident that the _____ of the Gentiles was _____ to _____ and _____ by the Holy Spirit.
7. Paul's _____ and _____ were accompanied by _____, _____, and the _____ of the Holy Spirit.
8. Paul wanted to preach where _____ was not _____, lest he should _____ on another's _____.
9. He planned to go to preach in _____ by way of _____.
10. He took a _____ from _____ and _____ to assist poor _____ in _____.

IX. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS (15:14-16:27)

- B. Relationships of church members among themselves. (16:1-16)
 - 1. Commendation of Phoebe, a servant of the church. (1,2)
 - 2. Greetings and commendation of other church members. (3-16)
 - a. Aquila and Priscilla. (3-5)
 - b. Numerous others. (6-16)
- C. Relationships of the faithful to troublemakers. (17-20)
 - 1. Marking and turning away from them. (17,18)
 - 2. Warning about unfaithfulness and false teaching. (19)
 - 3. Assistance for those who resist Satan. (20)
- D. Relationships among churches. (21-23)
 - 1. Greetings from notable members at Corinth. (21-23)
- E. Benediction. (24-27)
 - 1. Establishment of faith through the gospel. (24-26)
 - a. The mystery was kept secret since the beginning. (25)
 - b. The mystery is now manifested through the gospel. (26)
 - 2. To God is the glory through Jesus Christ. (27)

Text-- 16:1-27

16:1,2-- "I commend to you Phoebe our sister..."

- a. Having completed the instructional parts of his letter, Paul is now ready to bring it to a close. The church to which it would be sent was composed of numerous persons known to the apostle either personally or by reputation. He thinks it fitting to mention each one by name and to say something that will commend them all to their brethren in Rome and encourage them in their future work in the church there. He names *twenty-four* of these saints individually and an indeterminate number of others in groups.
- b. R.C. Bell has this observation about Paul's references to the saints:

"These lively, interesting men and women constitute a cross section of the early church

over the sprawling Roman Empire. Here is a little world of faith, love, work, suffering, and endurance, significantly coming at the close of the Book as a sample of the harvest from the seed sown in the Epistle. These really converted Christians believe all the doctrine of Romans, commit it to life, and move, both physically and spiritually, over a wide field. Albeit they pass before us in such rapid file, they are a living monument of the abiding truth that the oneness, and consequent lovely, satisfying interrelationships of Christians spring from their common relationship to Christ, who shares his life with them all, and expresses himself through their surrendered personalities.”

- c. The first person mentioned by Paul is Phoebe, “a servant of the church in Cenchrea,” Corinth’s eastern seaport, who many commentators say carried this letter from Corinth to Rome. This may or may not be true, but Paul does give her high praise and calls on the Romans to assist her in some “business” she had in their city.
- d. Some suppose that Phoebe was a “servant” in an official sense, i.e., a “female deacon.” However, this is speculation that should be measured in the light of facts that tend to discredit that conclusion:
 - (1) “Deaconesses” are not included when elders and deacons are mentioned in the New Testament [e.g., Phil. 1:1];
 - (2) Qualifications are not specified for such an office, whereas they *are* given for elders and deacons (1Tim.3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9; Acts 6:3);
 - (3) No special work is cited to be done by women in an *official* position in the church such as is prescribed for elders and deacons (1Tim. 5:17; Jas.5:14; Acts 6:1-6);
 - (4) Establishing a leadership role for women in the church would have been inconsistent with the body of teaching that excludes them from such public functions (1Cor.11:3; 14:34,35; 1Tim.2:11-15).

16:3-5a-- “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.”

- a. These two Christians, man and wife, have an interesting history in Scripture:
 - (1) Paul first met them in Corinth after they were banished from Rome by the emperor along with other Jews (Acts 18:1,2);
 - (2) The three, who were tentmakers, lodged and worked together for a time in Corinth (Acts 18:3);
 - (3) They went with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus (Acts 18:18,19);
 - (4) They taught Apollos “the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:24-26);
 - (5) They returned to Rome and were there when Paul’s Roman letter was written;
 - (6) During his second imprisonment, Paul sends greetings to them at Ephesus (2Tim. 4:19);
 - (7) A church met “in their house” while they lived in Ephesus (1Cor.16:19);
 - (8) They also hosted another church in Rome (Rom.16:5);
 - (9) They “risked their own necks” for Paul’s safety in some incident we know nothing

more about. For this, both he and the Gentile churches were grateful that his work was able to continue, thanks to these two faithful and brave Christians.

- b. The practice of local churches meeting for worship in private “houses” seems to have been commonplace. Although some churches had more spacious quarters (1Cor.5:4), many did not. Moses Lard offers these thoughts about “church houses”:

“As yet, in that early day, the disciples were without meeting houses, and hence had to meet for worship wherever they best could. The private houses of brethren were often the only places open to them. In these houses, therefore, they would meet, principally upon the Lord’s day, and hold their simple service. The house of Aquila and Prisca was one of these meeting places; and the congregation assembling in it, is called ‘the church in their house.’ Thirty years ago [circa 1850-RG] the same custom prevailed extensively, with many denominations, in northwestern Missouri. Indeed, in countries where the gospel has been but recently introduced, it is the only remedy. And from no hearts on this earth, I venture to think, has purer or more acceptable worship ever ascended to God than from these unworldly little groups. More of art and splendor can certainly be found in great fanes [churches-RG] erected at much cost to God; but from these great houses, with their gorgeously appareled crowds, he often delights to turn away, I doubt not, as from a sham, and find a delightful seat amidst the ‘poor in spirit.’ who make the ‘church in their house.’ The lowly Master, with his solitary seamless coat, and without a place to lay his head, presents a humiliating contrast to many of the ‘churches’ of the present day, piled up in gratification of folly, and, with no notice from him, ‘dedicated to his name.’”

16:5b-15-- “Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits...”

- a. Here begins a lengthy list of individuals, unknown to us but very well known to Paul personally or by reputation. There has been extensive conjecture about the identity and exploits of these Roman Christians, but for the most part, what Paul tells us about them is all that we can be certain about. The first is **Epaphroditus**, who had been one of the first converts of Paul or some other preacher in “Achaia” [some versions say “Asia”].
- b. **Mary** was a woman who had “labored much” for “us” [either for Paul and his companions or for the church in Corinth as a whole].
- c. **Andronicus** and **Junia** [or Junius] are supposed by some to have been a married couple, but they were more likely two men of whom it was said:
- (1) They were Paul’s “kinsmen” [either by blood or nationality];
 - (2) They had somewhere been his “fellow prisoners” during one of the apostle’s numerous imprisonments for the Lord;
 - (3) They were “of note” among the apostles. Perhaps they were among the converts on Pentecost and had become well acquainted with their inspired teachers;
 - (4) They had become Christians prior to Paul’s conversion; they were “in Christ” before him.

- d. **Amplias** was a disciple with whom Paul seems to have formed a special personal bond.
- e. **Urbanus** was helper to many disciples [“our”] and **Styachys** [a rare Greek name] may have had some connection with the imperial household. He was another close [“beloved”] friend of Paul.
- f. **Apelles** was “approved” [a “tried and true Christian,” Arndt & Gingrich, p.202]. The apostle also greeted members of the household of **Aristobulus**.
- g. Another “kinsman,” natural or national, was **Herodion**, whose name some maintain was usually given to slaves. Some of **Narcissus’** “household” were Christians, but we are told nothing more about this disciple.
- h. **Tryphena** and **Tryphosa** were either twin sisters or just two Christian women whose names happened to be similar. They are said to have “worked” for the Lord, while **Persis** had “worked hard” for Jesus.
- i. Many commentators believe that **Rufus** was the same man whose father carried Christ’s cross (Mark 15:21). But his was a common name and cannot definitely be associated with Simon of Cyrene. Rufus’ mother had at some time been a “mother” to Paul by showing care and kindness toward him. We are not told of the circumstances.
- j. **Asyncritus**, **Phlegon**, **Hermas**, **Patrobus**, **Hermes**, and some other brethren are the objects of Paul’s salute, but he fails to reveal any details about the reason for his greeting.
- k. **Philologus**, **Julia**, **Nereus** and his sister [name not given], **Olympas** and “all the saints with them” possibly were members of another church meeting in someone’s house.

16:16-- “Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

- a. The kiss was a popular mode of greeting in many cultures of Bible times and remains so in many places to this day. Hamilton comments on this verse:

“*Hagio* (holy) signifies that the kiss is free from any eroticism and is consistent with the pure or holy life that is to characterize the saints or Christians. Likewise, it is not to be a kiss of hypocrisy but should be an expression of genuine affection for one in Christ. Accordingly, it is a kiss of love (1Pet.5:14). In this context, *hagios* conveys the idea of purity...In the four passages from Paul’s writings when brethren are to greet one another with a kiss, it is said to be with a holy (*hagios*) kiss.”
- b. Evidently, Paul was not attempting to establish a uniform method of greeting for N.T. Christians. Instead, his interest is in *regulating* a practice that was already entrenched in the society within which the precepts of the Roman letter would be applied to the everyday lives of the people of God.
- c. The “churches of Christ” constituted a plurality of local congregations that wished to express an affinity with the Roman church. We have no way of knowing how many or just which local churches the apostle had in mind by “churches of Christ.” Although each local group of saints was totally independent of all other groups in its functioning, each congregation trying to be faithful to the doctrine taught by the apostles was constrained

to practice components of that doctrine without additions, subtractions, or substitutions. That fact assured that local churches would be alike in their nature and operation. Matters of *judgment* might differ among groups, but *basics* (Eph.4:3-6) were in place everywhere Christians worshiped and worked together in the Lord's kingdom [church].

16:17-20-- “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions...”

- a. Much had been said in this epistle about divisions and offenses. A basic difference existed between some Jews and Gentiles about the relationship of the Law to the Gospel. There was also disagreement over the importance of moral living within the concept of salvation by grace. Additionally, some members at Rome seemed to be having a problem with how the “weak” and “strong” saints ought to treat one another with regard to opinions about untaught questions. All of these issues were possible sources of “divisions and offenses.” Judaizing teachers from other places probably had already invaded the church at Rome, as they had done in so many other places. If not, they would likely arrive there soon.
- b. Church members needed to be on their guard against the pernicious influences of those who sought to force their false doctrines or dangerous opinions on other people. Paul's practice was invariably to warn Christians about the perils of apostasy and to encourage the disciples to take a firm stand against those who would disturb the unity of mind and practice that was so vital to the spiritual security of individuals and to the progress of the gospel among the lost. [See Galatians 1; Colossians 2; 2Thessalonians 2; 1Timothy 4; 2Timothy 3; etc.]
- c. It should be noted that Paul charged the brethren to “avoid” teachers who advanced ideas contrary to “the doctrine which you learned.” This directive demonstrates that there was a definite body of information taught by the apostles, “delivered to the saints”(Jude 3), and intended for the guidance of Christians everywhere in their activities in the Lord's church. The commands directed to first-century disciples were not matters of choice but were directives necessary for them to obey. Anyone refusing to respect the apostles' “doctrine” was to be avoided!
- d. Note these observations by Jim McGuiggan about the apostles' doctrine:

“The divisions being caused are ‘contrary to the doctrine which you learned.’ Doesn't this tell you something? Doesn't this say that there is a corpus of truth that is not only recognizable but which had been committed to all believers and which was indispensable to salvation and fellowship?! The Master spoke of truth which was ‘knowable’ and which gave freedom, recognizable, defensible, guardable, preachable, which could be obeyed, turned away from, denied and departed from. Priests obeyed it (Acts 6), Paul persecuted it and then preached it (Galatians 1), God once-for-all delivered it to the saints (Jude 3) and saints were called to defend it. To leave the doctrine of Christ without definite pattern is to convict Paul of nonsense in his writings to Timothy and Titus. Over and over again he calls these preachers to hold fast the ‘pattern of sound words and doctrine.’ He warned that some would depart from the faith

(1Timothy 4) and that ‘false teachers’ would arise. How could we recognize false teachers as false if there is no criterion for falseness?”

- e. False teachers have false motives for what they do. Paul described their modus operandi:
 - (1) They served “their own belly” rather than Jesus Christ. Their covetousness moved them to “exploit” the innocent (2Pet.2:3) for their own material gain;
 - (2) They used smooth words and flattering speech to deceive the simple.
- f. McGarvey and Pendleton make this thoughtful comment about false teachers:

“Their breed is not extinct. There are many who shine as heretics who would pass their lives in obscurity if they were orthodox, and there are also many who amass fortunes preaching lies who would live at a poor, starving rate if they preached the truth. But nothing better can be expected of the devotees of the belly.”
- g. Paul seemed to be confident that the Romans were making an effort to be cautious about being deceived with false doctrine. Their “obedience” was widely known by their fellow Christians in other places. However, past vigilance offered no protection for the future. They must remain wise [“skilled, expert,” Thayer, p.582] to good teaching and simple [“pure, innocent (lit. ‘unmixed’),” Arndt & Gingrich, p.29] toward the “divisions and offenses” that some were participating in. They must have no part in such things!
- h. Faithfulness to the truth would be rewarded with victory over Satan and his agents. The God of peace and grace [qualities that He wants to permeate His church] would “crush” the devil and the false doctrine that threatens both peace and grace among the saints.

16:21-24-- “Timothy, my fellow worker, ...”

- a. Paul was usually accompanied by several companions who shared in the work with him. He appreciated their contributions toward the success of his mission wherever he went, and he often made reference to them in his letters to the churches.
- b. **Timothy**, of course, was one of his closest friends and co-workers. He was Paul’s “son in the faith,” and was given many important responsibilities by the apostle. He received two of Paul’s letters that encouraged him to be faithful to his duties.
- c. Three others, not so familiar to us as Timothy, join with Paul in saluting their Roman brethren. They, like some at Rome, were “kinsmen” of Paul (verses 7,11).
- d. **Tertius** was Paul’s secretary who actually penned this letter. Some believe that Paul was so afflicted with faulty eyesight that it became necessary for him to employ the help of others to write his letters to churches and individuals. He sometimes signed his epistles to validate their authenticity [e.g., 1Cor.16:21]. Tertius was probably a Christian, since he greeted the Romans “in the Lord.”
- e. **Gaius** was Paul’s host while he resided at Corinth. He also “hosted” the “whole church” [probably providing their meeting place]. He likely was a rather affluent individual.

- f. **Erastus**, another Christian in Corinth, was said to be the “treasurer of the city.” Some question the likelihood that a person in such a high position would be a Christian, in view of the opposition that most governments had toward Christianity. David Lipscomb goes further by asserting that no faithful Christian would dare fill such a role in any civil government. These doubting scholars usually adopt the position that this reference is to the “treasurer of the church” in the city of Corinth. But that may stretch the apparent meaning of the description of this disciple.
- g. **Quartus** is distinguished only as “a brother,” but that in itself, coming from an apostle, was a notable tribute to his worth to the Corinthian church.

16:25-27-- “Now to Him who is able to establish you...”

- a. Many challenging concepts had been presented to these Roman Christians in Paul’s letter. Many changes needed to be made in their thinking about God’s grace and Jesus’ role in their salvation. It was difficult for some of them to comprehend how a Law that had been so established as an integral part of their lives should now be totally disestablished so far as things vital to their salvation were concerned.
- b. As hard as it might be, it was essential that Christians understand that there was some ex-changing they had to do. Old statutes and practices had to be exchanged for new precepts and procedures. The leadership of Moses and the prophets must be replaced by Jesus Christ and His apostles. Dependency on a human and imperfect priesthood for access to Jehovah should give way to each saint taking responsibility for drawing near to a compassionate Father through His loving Son. Worship by ritualistic ceremonies must be exchanged for individual heart-worship performed in spirit and in truth.
- c. **God was able** to “establish” everyone in the “new and better way” who was willing to “come” unto Jesus, take His “yoke” [of tender restraint], and “follow” Him. This God would accomplish for them through the gospel which Paul and others were preaching.
- d. Heaven’s plan for changing the way in which *divinity* and *humanity* can relate to one another had been formulated “from eternity” (Eph.3:10,11) but had been kept a “mystery” [something not revealed or explained] until it was made known by “the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ” (verse 25). One central emphasis of this revelation was to relate the numerous prophetic writings of the Old Testament to their marvelous fulfillment realized in Jesus as the Father’s *only* begotten Son, in His role as Savior, in His methodology of salvation by faith and obedience, and in His church as the one corporate body in which *all* faithful people, whether Jews or Gentiles, can serve God acceptably and be saved eternally.
- e. All nations have now been favored with God’s revelation of grace and redemption (Matt. 28:18-20). Every creature has become the recipient of God’s blessings and the subject of His commandments, issued through His *new* and *only* Spokesman, Jesus Christ (Mark 16: 15,16).

- f. One short phrase at the end of verse twenty-six provides a good summary of Paul's message to the Roman church. It also gives a clear insight into his purpose for writing such a remarkable epistle to an audience that might not entirely be in complete agreement with all that he had to say. It all was done "***for obedience to the faith.***" He had begun the letter with this same statement of purpose (1:5). He wanted the Romans to understand what another apostle stated so clearly: "You see then that a man is justified by his works" [not of law but of grace] "and not by faith only" (James 2:24).
- g. Only the wisdom of God could have devised so wonderful a plan that offers salvation to imperfect men who can be made perfect [complete] through the sacrifice of the only man who ever was truly perfect. It establishes a relationship for man with God because it does not require *perfect obedience* by the believer, only *sincere obedience* to best of his ability. It proclaims victory for sinners through the seeming defeat of one who was altogether sinless. It promises men who are drowning in the sea of misery caused by the sin of their federal head that what mankind lost in Adam has been ***more*** than restored in Jesus Christ. "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). And so... the letter to the Romans closes *appropriately*:

"...to God alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."

1. How many individuals in Rome are greeted [by name] by Paul in this chapter? _____
2. How many individuals in Corinth join [by name] with Paul in these greetings? _____
3. Phoebe was a _____ of the _____ in _____.
Was this an “official” position? Why or why not?
4. _____ and _____ were a married couple who had _____
their own _____ for Paul’s _____.
5. List those whom Paul called his “kinsmen” [countrymen]:
a. _____ d. _____
b. _____ e. _____
c. _____ f. _____
6. The households of _____ and _____ were greeted.
7. Paul speaks of *two* Christians as “beloved”:
a. _____ b. _____
8. Who is spoken of only as “a brother”? _____
9. Whose mother had also been a “mother” to Paul? _____
10. “The _____ of _____ salute you.”
11. We must “avoid” those who cause _____ and _____
contrary to gospel _____.
12. Who “wrote” the epistle to the Romans for Paul? _____

13. Erastus was called the _____ of the city of _____.
14. False teachers don't serve _____ but their own _____.
- With _____ and _____ words they _____
- the _____ of the _____.
15. "...be _____ in what is _____, and _____ concerning _____."
16. The faithful are promised that _____ will crush _____ under their _____.
17. In what way do you think Gaius was "host of the whole church" at Corinth?
18. Who was the "firstfruits of Achaia to Christ"? _____
19. How many people are commended for "service," "labor," or "work" in chapter 16? _____
20. God's _____ was revealed by the _____ Scriptures sent to _____
- _____ by the _____ of God. It is intended for _____
- _____ to [of] the _____.