

*System of
Salvation*

Comments on Romans

James William Boyd

Acknowledgment

This book would never have been produced except for the work, advice, study, and encouragement of my beloved wife, Rosalyn. She tirelessly read, questioned, discussed, and assisted in my effort to put into writing my explanation of the book of Romans. While she should not be held responsible for any errors of any nature, she must be counted deserving of credit. My gratitude toward her and her help not only relates to this book, but to her whole life, and her faith and strength.

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To each of these, let me say aloud, that whatever good this book may contribute, they share in it. I am thankful to God for such associates.

Dedication

To Rosalyn, my wife, and our daughter, Amy Hagewood, and three sons, Bill, Stephen, and Sam, I affectionately dedicate this book. Only the God of heaven knows the extent of affection I have for each of them. They have all been a blessing to me, and I could never express my thanksgiving to God enough for giving them to me. JWB

About the Author

I have been privileged to know the author of this work personally some five years, and much longer than that by his reputation as a writer. I have found him to be a man of knowledge and experience and my respect for him grows each day. The readers of this volume might be interested in a short biography of its writer.

James William Boyd was born April 15, 1930 to Bowling Briggs and Katherine Louise Boyd. On January 14, 1940 he was born into the Lord's Kingdom by baptism. He came from a rich heritage, having a father who served as a deacon and elder at the old Donelson, Tennessee church which was established by the author's grandfather, Dr. William Boyd, and great grandfather, Dr. E.E. Buchanan.

The rich heritage of this family is continued through the family of the author. He married the former Rosalyn Lee Hale in March, 1952, the daughter of Clyde and Christine Hale (Brother Hale preached the gospel for nearly sixty years.). From this union came four precious children: one daughter, Amy Hagedwood, three sons, Bill, Stephen, and Sam. The three oldest are all married, and each of them faithful Christians. This legacy of this family carries on. Brother Boyd is the grandfather to some eight little ones. With such a family it is no wonder that one of his favorite verses is, "*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*" (III John 4).

In addition to his family background, the author is well-trained academically. He attended David Lipscomb University; graduated with a B.A. degree from Vanderbilt University (cum laude); and did graduate work at Indiana University, Harding Graduate School of Religion, completing the M.A. degree from Alabama Christian School of Religion.

The author has been deeply involved for many years in the Lord's work of preaching and teaching the gospel. He started preaching in June, 1952, in Dekalb County, Tennessee with the encouragement of J. Roy Vaughan. Since that time he has served with churches in Nashville, Tennessee; South Bend, Indiana; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Jacksonville, Alabama; Jackson, Tennessee; Tupelo, Mississippi; Rock Island, Tennessee; and is currently serving the East End church of Christ in McMinnville, Tennessee. Also during these years he taught daily Bible classes in the Boyd-Buchanan School in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the Jackson Christian School in Jackson, Tennessee. He preaches some six to ten gospel meetings each year along with speaking on lectureships, radio, television, and writes articles for several brotherhood publications. Perhaps one of his most ambitious projects is the publication of *A BURNING FIRE*, a monthly publication in which his sermons are put in manuscript form. This publication is now in its eleventh year and is scheduled to extend to seventeen volumes.

I consider it an honor to introduce you to the author of this book and invite you to weigh carefully his comments on the Sacred Scriptures. There is no greater study than one can enter than the Word of the Almighty.

September 21, 1990
Tony Lawrence

Preface

It is my hope that this effort will serve as a worthwhile tool to enable all who read to gain a better understanding and knowledge of the truth of God. To embark upon the composition of a written study of any portion of the Bible is a gigantic undertaking. God intends for us to study this book of Romans along with all the rest of His inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, and all-sufficient Word (Second Timothy 3:16,17). It is usually beneficial to pass along to others what we can learn.

This study is not presented in an attitude or attempt to deliberately be a correction of other writings on Romans, although at times I differ, sometimes considerably, from conclusions others have drawn. Making inquiry into various commentaries on Romans through the years, I find a variety of explanations on certain passages. This does not strike me as unusual now that I have tried to explain things myself. While I have consulted many commentaries over the years, I have not consciously leaned upon the conclusions of others. I do share many conclusions with others. But I am not aware that I have accepted anything from others except when I have agreed that the evidence makes the conclusions true. Simply because some notable commentator has said something about a phrase or word has not consciously brought me to my point of view. I do think we can make a mistake to dismiss the experience and learning of others when seeking the truth for ourselves. But we must be

persuaded because of evidence that something is true, not merely because some learned and pious person has so determined. This analysis is a genuine attempt to produce my own understanding.

No one should have a borrowed faith. But it is not a borrowed faith simply because someone may have said, taught, believed, or produced something before him. It becomes borrowed when we make no personal investigation, and when we simply accept what another says without searching for ourselves. I have searched, and profited from that search. I shall continue to study. When truth is passed from hand to hand, or mind to mind, with each hand and mind making it their own, and not merely borrowing the item, in that sense, even originality abides in this volume.

Many of the commentaries that I have studied on Romans seem to lack something I have personally desired. So often such works are so heavy, laboriously done, deep, and complicated that possibly the average student is overwhelmed with the reasonings, translations, backgrounds, and speculations of the commentator that the real message of the writing is lost. I am not suggesting such materials are of no consequence. Some writers are quite capable of delving into Romans with scholarly perception that most do not have, but even such writers will not completely fathom the resources of God's Word. I certainly do not suggest these comments of mine fathom them. But they are my attempt to make clear the message God wants us to gain from this epistle, and put it in terms we all can understand. The measure of success will be left to each reader.

Much more possibly needs to be said in certain areas than I have commented. I have tried to make an expedient comment on every point that I felt needs discussion.

The Scriptures are for us all. Attempts to be profound and intellectual are beyond the realm of usefulness to most of us. But should one person, even one, young or old, happen upon these words, and thereby gain an insight into even one of God's great truths found in His divine revelation, what a joy it will be for me.

While there is justification for discussing the background, historical setting, and other relevant matters before going into the text itself, I make only brief reference to such things, referring the reader to search for such information among the writings of others. Some think this kind of material is indispensable to an understanding of the book. I would suggest, however, that such things can be very beneficial, but if we are not cautious, our conclusions can become predetermined before we ever consider the text. Our thinking can become colored to the point that we may exclude some vital conclusions that might actually be in the text when closely studied. I have preferred to draw from the text what the text teaches, without predetermined introductory material having too much influence.

There are times when I have made reference to other Biblical books and verses that touch upon similar truths as those presented in Romans. Particularly is this true regarding certain Old Testament passages, Galatians, and Hebrews.

Within this framework I have conveyed what I am convinced is the truth regarding the message of Romans, considering it in the logical order a student would likely study the book, beginning with chapter one.

James W. Boyd

Introduction to Romans

Origin of the Church at Rome

We have no specific information in the Scriptures about the time or circumstances of the origin of the church in Rome. Obviously, the church began as a result of people hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel of Christ. Just when and where this happened we are not informed.

There were sojourners from Rome in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when the church of Christ was established (Acts 2:10). Possibly some present then were converted that day, or soon thereafter, and brought the gospel back to Rome upon their return home. Regardless of its beginning, by the time this epistle was written the church in Rome was known through the world for its faith and obedience (1:8; 16:19).

Author and Writer

A distinction is made between the author and writer because the author, in the sense of its source, is Deity. Deity used Paul, the apostle, as the writer. The book is a revelation from God unto man through the inspired apostle.

Purpose

To ask why the book was written may be like asking God why He has done what He has done. We may not fully comprehend all of God's purposes. However, the study of the book reveals some very obvious purposes intended. Paul had heard of his Roman brethren, and he longed to visit them. Possibly he knew some of them personally through previous contacts, or by reputation among the brethren. But the letter was written in preparation for what Paul expected to be an eventual visit by him to that city, and a visit he wanted to be mutually beneficial.

The book shows the need of salvation for both Jew and Gentile, a universal need, because all have sinned. It shows that all can be saved, but that all must be saved the same way, and that way is the way presented in the gospel of Jesus Christ. No longer were Jews and Gentiles serving under different religious systems. Now all were to serve God through Christ. No longer could men be acceptable to God by any other system than the gospel system of salvation.

Therefore, the book of Romans is a great and substantial doctrinal book. **Romans presents this system of salvation as a system of mercy, grace, love, blood, faith, law, and the necessity of obedience.** In both specific and general explanations, the scheme of redemption, the *System of Salvation* is defined, magnified, and explained in this epistle to the church at Rome.

Where Written

Chapter fifteen, verses twenty-five through twenty-seven indicates that Paul was on his way to Jerusalem to deliver certain offerings that had been made by Gentile Christians in Macedonia and Achaia (Greece) for the poor saints in Judea. This corresponds to the last part of Paul's third missionary journey. Paul planned to go directly from Achaia to Syria, but because the Jews were lying in wait for him, he went back through Macedonia (Acts 20:3). No specific city is mentioned where this letter was penned. However, we learn in Acts 20:2 that he had gone into Greece, and remained there for three months before beginning his trip to Jerusalem via Macedonia. Therefore, it is not unlikely that he was in the city of Corinth, and the epistle was penned during his three month stay there.

When Written

As already noted, Paul was likely in the last portion of his third missionary journey, possibly during the three month wait in Greece. As for the year, we must calculate and speculate.

Caesar had banished the Jews from Rome about A. D. 52. It was under this banishment that Aquila and Priscilla left Rome, and came to Corinth where they met Paul for the first time. Considering the time for travel for them, plus the year and a half Paul stayed with them in Corinth (Acts 18:11), probably two and one half years passed.

Paul also engaged in various travel (Acts 18,19), plus a two year stay at Ephesus (Acts 19:10), plus the three months in Greece. This would make the time near the year A. D. 57 or 58. The significance of this is not all important except to

know that the Lord's church was now about twenty-five to thirty-years removed from Pentecost. The gospel was now widespread, persecution was apparent in every quarter, and Jerusalem was not yet destroyed as it would be in A. D. 70. It was a time of progress as well as hardship for the church of Christ.

James W. Boyd

Chapter One

Verses 1-7

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: 5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: 6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is the author of all Scripture (Second Timothy 3:16,17). But Paul is the one through whom God sent this letter or epistle. Paul needs little introduction to the Bible student. He identified himself as a servant, one who belongs not only in the employ of another, but the very property of another like an owned slave. He belonged to Jesus Christ. He was called to be an apostle; one sent, a special messenger, one who could and would speak on behalf of another with authority. Paul mentioned in Galatians 1:15,16 that *“it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen.”* I do not understand that Paul was called to preach at his birth, but Paul says the same God that allowed him to be born was the God who called him to his task. He was separated, set apart, especially appointed for the spreading of the gospel of God.

This gospel was promised by the prophets and their prophecies were written in the Holy Scriptures. Paul asserts the predictive nature of the Old Testament prophets whose predictions find fulfillment in the New Testament, even in Christ. Note also the reverence expressed for the Scriptures, the *“holy scriptures.”* The gospel was about Christ, centered on Christ and depended on Christ.

Christ was of the fleshly lineage of David as had been prophesied, but He was more than a son of David. He was, and is, the Son of God and so declared in a powerful way, no less than the demonstration of power by the resurrection from death. His “*spirit of holiness*” was certain. This meant His Deity was unquestionable because He had been raised from the dead as was foretold concerning the Messiah. The “*spirit of holiness*” here does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to the nature and attributes of Christ as a divine being. In other words, the passage affirms the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ. “*According to the flesh*” is the human nature through David, and stands alongside “*according to the spirit of holiness*” which shows the divine nature since He is the Son of God and was proven to be by the resurrection. In essence Paul states that Christ was human because He came through David, but He was also divine because He came from God and is Deity, the divine nature being affirmed because He was raised from the dead.

Paul states that it was from this resurrected Son of God that he had received grace and apostleship. An apostleship was much more than a discipleship. We who are Christians are all disciples, but not all are or were apostles. Certain specific qualifications had to be possessed to be an apostle (Acts 1:21,22,24). Special calling to the task was necessary to be an apostle. A certain work they were given to do. Inspiration was granted them in the revelation of truth. It is a profitable study to learn the credentials of an apostle, of whom Paul was one, though not of the original twelve, but “*as one born out of due time,*” (First Corinthians 15:8), “*but not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.*” (Second Corinthians 11:5). See chapter twelve and verse three for more on this point. The goal and design of this grace and apostleship was to provoke obedience among people everywhere and for the sake of Christ and to His glory and for His name.

Notice the phrase “*unto the obedience to the faith.*” It is essentially the same phrase that appears at the end of this epistle (chapter sixteen, verse twenty-six). This is significant because in Romans we see the way of salvation to be a system of faith. Calling it a system of faith is one proper way of defining it. There are other definitions equally suitable. But this system of faith is not merely a system of mental assent. While faith (belief) is an essential part of it, it is made clear at the outset of this epistle that an obedient faith is the kind of faith that is under consideration.

The Greek text does not include the definite article “the” before the word “*faith*” as is found in the King James Version. The American Standard Version renders the phrase literally as “*unto obedience of faith,*” both here and in chapter sixteen. Marginal reading says “*to the faith*” in the ASV as it appears in the KJV.

The truth can be seen in either presentation. Whether the phrase is emphasizing how one must obey “the faith” (the system of faith, the gospel plan, the religion of Christ), or whether one must possess the kind of faith (belief) that obeys, in either instance obedience is made essential and stressed at the start and finish of Romans.

Among those who had been obedient to the faith were the Roman brethren. They had been “*called*” of Christ. They had not been called to be an apostle like Paul. Their calling was different from his in the sense he was called, not only to salvation as were they, but also to be an apostle. Their call was not miraculous, direct, mysterious, emotional or visionary. But every person who comes to Christ comes as a result of being called. We are called by the gospel (Second Thessalonians 2:14). As one hears the gospel, he hears the call of God. As he learns and is taught, he is drawn to Him (John 6:44,45). Christians are called “*out of darkness into his marvelous light.*” (First Peter 2:9). How appropriate is the church identified as “the called out.”

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Note the affectionate expression in verse seven directed to the Christians at Rome, "*beloved of God.*" This not only expressed God's attitude toward His people but Paul's attitude toward his Roman brethren.

The term "*saint*" carries the idea already expressed in the term "*called.*" The saint is a holy, cleansed, sanctified, set apart person. The term is synonymous in the New Testament with a Christian.

Those familiar with Paul's writings will note how the Holy Spirit uses the phrase often characteristic of Paul when addressing and making opening and closing remarks to his brethren to whom he penned messages. "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Here is a recognition of the source of such blessings, his personal prayer for their welfare, as well as a recognition of the Fatherhood of God and the Lordship of Christ, named Jesus.

Verses 8-15

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; 10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; 12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. 14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Paul opens by revealing his thanksgiving for them. Their practice of the faith was such that they had gained a wholesome reputation throughout the world. Take note that they were also known for their obedience (chapter sixteen, verse nineteen.) With the Romans it was faith and obedience. Paul calls on God to witness his affirmation that he never ceased to remember them in prayer. They evidently were on his mind at all times, so great was his love and concern.

Paul says he served God “*with my spirit.*” This is his way of saying he served God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. The inward man, of which he speaks more in Second Corinthians 4:16, was converted to Christ. He served God through the gospel. Can one serve God now apart from the gospel? Indeed not! Jesus is the way, truth and life (John 14:6), and we serve God through Him or not at all. Peter affirms the same thought in Acts 4:12. I take the phrase “*in the gospel*” to refer (1) to the state, the sphere, and the relationship to Christ that he enjoyed in which he was able to serve God, and (2) the area of his labors. He labored in the gospel of Christ.

In his prayers he requested it be in God’s providence that he visit the brethren in Rome. He greatly desired to see them because there were certain benefits to be derived for both Paul and the Romans by such a visit. He wished to impart to them some spiritual gift. This means some miraculous ability could be bestowed upon certain ones upon whom Paul would lay hands. The apostles had such power. Whether there were some among them at Rome who possessed such abilities already we do not know. It is possible that some had been present in Jerusalem on Pentecost and were converted, and even then received some miraculous gift from the apostles before returning to Rome. However, this is speculation and not in the record. A degree of sufficiency is hinted in chapter fifteen, verse fourteen. Whatever be that circumstance, Paul wished to visit them so he could grant them such power.

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These facts stand as additional evidence that miraculous powers were not given directly to the early Christians by the Holy Spirit but through the apostles. Without the presence of apostles and laying on of their hands for such a purpose, gifts could not be given and received. We also see additional evidence that at the death of the apostles and the death of those upon whom they had laid their hands, the exercise of miraculous or spiritual gifts ceased. Inasmuch as there are not apostles living now, and since all on whom they laid hands for such purposes have long since died, such gifts are neither imparted nor exercised today.

These gifts were to assist in making them “*established.*” This obviously does not mean to bring them into existence as a church because they already existed. It means to “strengthen and make firm.” By doing this there would come a second purpose for his visit; namely, a comfort to both Paul and the church at Rome by the mutual faith they shared. All in all, Paul saw great opportunity for mutual good to be produced if he could only visit them.

He expressed his desire that the Roman Christians know how much he wanted to come to them. He had been “*let*” (prohibited) so far. He states a third purpose he expected to achieve by his visit; namely, to produce fruit among them as he had produced among other Gentiles.

A fourth purpose was to pay a debt. Paul considered himself obligated to everybody. It mattered not who they were. His obligation was to let them become aware of the gospel, as he mentions in verse fifteen. It is difficult to determine just who may be included specifically in the terms “*Greeks and Barbarians*,” but the main import of the passage is unmistakable. He had a duty toward all. Some have surmised “*Greeks*” referred to the wise or educated people; the “*Barbarians*” to the unwise or at least those who spoke a different language. Nothing in the text demands such a conclusion, but it is of little matter to the main thrust of his concern. To the extent of his ability and as opportunity afforded, Paul was ready to preach the certain message of the good news of Christ even there in the Imperial City, the very capital of emperor worship and paganism. His motive for desiring to do so is contained in the following verses where he speaks of the gospel itself. He wanted to preach the “*gospel*.”

Verses 16, 17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

We do no injustice to say that Paul was not only “*not ashamed*” of the gospel but he was proud to be identified with it and preach it. He knew its worth. This worth was what made him proud of it and grateful for it. What is the worth of the gospel? It is God’s power unto salvation. Salvation is the grand theme of the entire Bible. To bring a doomed, damned and undeserving humanity from the grip of Satan into the fold of spiritual safety with God requires great power. Here is the power God has provided; namely, the gospel. Here is the story of salvation.

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The gospel, although given, is of benefit only to those who accept it. It has to be believed. The term “*believeth*” embraces more than a mere mental acceptance of the story of salvation through Christ, but an obedient response to what the gospel requires in order to receive what the gospel offers. The obedience of faith is a point that the book of Romans makes so clear.

The offer is not exclusive to any nation or people. We see how the gospel differs from the previous systems by which God had governed man. Equal benefit is extended to both Jew and Gentile. The Jews had it extended to them first (Acts 3:26), and this is understandable since the promises came through the father of the Jewish nation, Abraham. Also Jesus was a Jew and came to His own to save His people from their sins. Though the Jews had first opportunity, salvation is also offered and extended to the Gentiles with equal blessings and on the same terms.

This gospel is a revelation. What is revealed therein? Revealed in the gospel is God’s righteousness or “*the righteousness of God.*” This is not a reference to a holy attribute of God’s character or nature, although none can doubt the goodness and purity of God in every respect. It is rather a reference to the way, the plan, the system, the scheme God has designed, devised and delivered to make man righteous. It is God’s plan for justifying man from sin. Psalm 119:172, “*My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.*” It is not merely that God’s commands are righteous, but that his commandments compose righteousness. In them can be found God’s mind concerning God’s way of making man acceptable to God. The salvation spoken of in verse sixteen is accomplished by the system or plan of God called in verse seventeen “*the righteousness of God.*”

The salvation of verse sixteen originates with faith. The gospel that tells of this salvation and reveals God’s plan for making man righteous is designed to produce the faith that is necessary. Here is the meaning of the phrase, “*from faith to faith.*”

Salvation without faith is impossible (Hebrews 11:6). Salvation comes “*from faith.*” The end result of the gospel which reveals God’s plan to make man righteous is “in order to” faith. This latter thought is like the teaching of Romans 10:17, “*Faith cometh of hearing and hearing by the word of God.*” **The Word which reveals THE faith produces faith and faith produces salvation.** Admittedly this is not an easy phrase to unravel and there are many thoughts good men have had regarding it. This view is entirely consistent with what is taught anywhere else in the Bible and in keeping with the context of the passage that has the gospel, God’s power to save, under discussion. The prominence of faith and the production of faith are both emphasized by the quotation taken from Habakkuk 2:4 and repeated exactly or in essence several times in the New Testament, “*The just shall live by faith.*”

Looking more closely at the phrase, we have presented to us a major theme of the book of Romans. We first ask, “Who shall live?” This partially has reference to an abundant life while here on earth, but more importantly to spiritual life resulting in eternal life. The answer is, “The just shall live.” We have seen that the righteousness of God may be understood as God’s plan for making man just, justifying man from sin, making him righteous. These shall have the life the Lord offers. We then ask, “By what means shall they have this life?” The answer is, “By faith, faith produced by the gospel, THE faith.” Here then is the way to spiritual life. It is the way of faith, the faith the gospel teaches by which God justifies man and makes man righteous.

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The tie between faith and salvation, the tie between the gospel and faith, gives explanation to the phrase, "*The just shall live by faith.*" Taking the words as they actually appear in the Greek text, they say, "*The just by faith shall live.*" This shows the method, plan, scheme God has devised. To exalt the idea of salvation by faith but not exalt the entire "faith system" and all that it involves is to do violence to this teaching and all other teaching that says salvation and life are by faith. Paul speaks of the **faith system** revealed in the gospel.

Verses 18, 19

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.

Something else in addition to God's plan for justifying man is revealed from heaven; namely, the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. God's truth is directed against evil and those who do evil. Such men that are described as ungodly and unrighteous are those who "*hold the truth in unrighteousness,*" or possibly more easily understood, those who would restrain and hinder the truth by their evil doing. The word translated "*hold*" is also used in Second Thessalonians 2:6 where the idea of restraint and holding down is evident. There are those who would hinder, suppress and hold down the truth. Of what truth does Paul speak here? Is it the truth of the gospel or truth that was revealed before the gospel?

It cannot be doubted that evil men do hold down the gospel truth. Though this is true, the context indicates the truth which is specifically mentioned here as held down was truth revealed in times past that pre-dated the gospel. It seems that there was truth already revealed to men that they could have known because it had been shown them by the Lord. That truth they hindered and held down by choosing to live an unrighteous life. Placing the explanation of man's behavior (as described in the last verses of this chapter and the opening verses of the next) alongside the fact that certain truth had been held down even though it could have been known, the truth spoken of here as being held down by ungodly men was moral truth that came from God even before the gospel revelation.

Truth revealed before the gospel can be classified in two ways: (1) moral truth revealed in some manner to the Gentiles, although unwritten; (2) the law of Moses given to the Jews through Moses. Men who so lived as to hinder truth in either instance were objects of God's wrath. It is no less true today that when men hinder the gospel truth they make themselves the objects of God's wrath as did men in former ages who lived under different systems.

The gospel does reveal the way of justification. It also reveals God's wrath against ungodliness. Because this is true one might conclude the "*truth*" mentioned in verse eighteen means the gospel. But God's wrath against ungodliness was revealed even before the gospel.

Considering the context of the verses that immediately follow, plus the fact that this "*truth*" had already been shown to the ones under discussion in the next verses, it seems more consistent and reasonable to think the "*truth*" here refers to moral truth before the gospel. Paul is showing the **need** for the gospel because men had held down God's moral truth that they ought to have followed. They held it down by ungodliness and unrighteousness. This brought on them God's wrath. It is this wrath that the gospel is designed to lift from man.

This conclusion does harmonize with the general theme that is dominant in the first three chapters which emphasizes how all have sinned and all need saving from the wrath of God which is justly directed against sin.

Verses 20-23

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Paul speaks of the “*invisible things of him*,” referring to certain unseen realities of God that have always been true and discernible even though invisible. These realities that have always been true are named as His eternal power and Godhead, having reference to His divine nature. “*The things that are made*” means the realm of nature and the creation. Since the creation men could have looked upon what has been created and concluded there is a Supreme Being, there is a God of power and divinity. It has been stated and justly so, “Nature declares **God is**, and the Bible declares **Who He is**.” The Psalmist says in Psalm 19:1, “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork*.” I am aware that some have stated that one can know nothing of God, not even His existence, without the Bible, but this passage refutes that. But the creation declares His glory and by implication His existence. We certainly cannot know much about God through what God has created, but the investigation of the creation itself prods one to believe there must be God.

However, men cannot know God in the sense of salvation by observing nature. This is at least part of the very message Paul gives here and in First Corinthians 2:14. God's mind must be revealed unto man, and has been revealed through the Word which has been given by the Holy Spirit. The man who would lean on nature to know the mind of God leans on a broken reed. Salvation and the plan that God has designed comes by the gospel.

But men can determine from the creation that God is and something of the power of His nature. Men have always had the opportunity and evidence to be aware of the reality of God and are therefore "*without excuse*" for their disbelief and evil conduct. Respect for the existence of God ought be sufficient to know there is a moral as well as physical realm.

Even though one could know the existence of the Godhead (Deity) through nature, he could not know the details of God's will nor man's duty to God except through revelation. The inference is clear that revelation in some manner at some time had been made even to Gentiles although we are not informed how, when or where. It may go back to the age of the patriarchs. Men did have access to revelation that first was given to Adam. But rather than having respect for what was revealed, even though they could have and should have been aware of God, they chose to ignore Him and were not given to glorifying Him. They were not grateful for the blessings from Him, but went another course. They became vain and empty and useless in what they did and thought. They acted as fools without understanding, and their hearts, minds and spirits were darkened by the sinful paths they pursued contrary to the moral truth God had revealed. They thought they were wise, but proved themselves to be fools. They thought it was in man to direct his own steps. They thought they could "do their own thing" and go their own way. But, alas, how deceived and wrong they were.

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Rather than honoring God and giving Him glory, they did the very opposite. They turned to idolatry, making images of things God had created, but turning their back on the Creator. What was the result? Consider their conduct! It is the kind of conduct men have experienced whenever and wherever they have turned from God to idols and refused to allow God's will to prevail among them.

We emphasize a most important point. The Gentiles did have a law under which they lived. They sinned. Sin is a transgression of law (First John 3:4). Therefore, we know a law existed for them.

Verses 24-27

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

God, seeing their rebellious and degenerate ways, allowed them to go their own way. They dishonored themselves, dishonored their bodies, became unclean through their own lusts, took truth and turned it away and followed a lie. Their affections were vile in God's sight. The moral behavior God had designed and even the natural use of the body was perverted in the most base forms. Verses twenty-six and twenty-seven depict in discreet language the low perversions of which many were guilty, including homosexuality. Paul wrote that we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7,8). Such is presented here as well. While they refused to accept God they received the fruits of error which was "*meet*" or suitable.

Verses 28-32

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Since they restrained rather than retained God, God allowed them to do as they wished because God does not force men to do what is right even though He is grieved at man's sin. Man is a creature of personal choice. God had created him in that fashion. God does not violate man's power of choice. As a result, these of whom Paul writes became filled with all manner of corruption as defined in verses twenty-nine through thirty-one as "*recompense of error.*" They knew God disapproved but did not care about that. They knew God's wrath was against them in doing as they did and that spiritual death would result, but they were not turned even by that. They had pleasure in such things and were pleased that others engaged in the same kind of sinful practices.

Some of the things "*not convenient*" (not fitting or proper) they committed are easily understood for what they are. Some need more explanation. "*Wickedness*" refers to a vicious disposition and desire to injure. "*Debate*" means strife, not argumentation of conflicting views. "*Malignity*" places the worse construction on everything. "*Without understanding*" is willful and preferred ignorance. "*Without natural affection*" is to have no love even for one's own children and family. Notice also in the midst of this catalog of abominations stands "*disobedient to parents.*"

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It is discomfoting to take a candid look at the world and see the apparent increases in our own society of these very same marks of degeneracy and the acceptance and toleration of them. This was the case with men whose knowledge of God was not written nor given in forms like the gospel is given, or even as the law of Moses. Revelation had been given nonetheless. Such was the way of the Gentile world. While God was proving by and through the Jews that men need a Savior and are unable to walk correctly even with a law given by the Lord, He was also proving through the Gentiles that man, left to himself, does not evolve into something better and higher, but lower and more base. The Gentiles proved that man, left to himself, sinks into the pits of perversion not to be mentioned in the conduct of God-fearing people. He proved that man, left to himself, cannot and will not rise but fall, unable to live properly and surely unable to devise a scheme of redemption for himself.

With these words and the theme of the next chapter coupled with them, Paul establishes the greatness of the gospel and how necessary the gospel is. The gospel is God's power unto salvation. It is so necessary because of the sins people commit. In the gospel is revealed the way of salvation. It is the divinely given direction.

Chapter Two

Verses 1-4

1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. 2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. 3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Chapter two begins with certain conclusions being drawn from what has been affirmed in chapter one. This is the significance of the term “*therefore*,” sometimes “*wherefore*.” The affirmation of chapter one was the condemnation of those who should have known better but persisted in going their own way and living in ways rebellious to and alienated from the moral truth God has always required of men under various systems. Chapter one affirmed the tremendous need of salvation for these people. This had special reference to the Gentile world. The Jewish world, though guilty of sin in many ways and even the same ways, did have a knowledge of God and were not given over to idolatry as were the Gentiles. The Jews had received a written revelation from God and had more than the “*things that were made*.” The first chapter is speaking of the Gentile world, the degeneracy of the Gentile world, and the need of salvation in the Gentile world.

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In chapter two Paul begins by addressing some who took it upon themselves to condemn the evil described in chapter one. Condemnation of the evil of chapter one was proper and justified. But the ones who were doing the condemning were not the ones to do so since they were also guilty of the same things. One of the overall themes of the book of Romans is the condemnation of sin of all men whether Jew or Gentile, and that salvation is now offered to all whether Jew or Gentile. The Gentiles had received no written law from God and were the ones under consideration in chapter one. The people now being addressed (as seen in verse seventeen) were Jews who had received a written law and who had, in one sense, been God's chosen people for centuries prior to the Christian Age and the authority of the gospel. It seems the Jews considered themselves qualified to condemn the Gentile sins because they had in times past enjoyed a special relationship with God. But Paul shows how they did not have such a right because of their own transgressions. They, by condemning the Gentiles, were also condemning themselves as well because, as Paul said, "*thou... doest the same things.*"

Of the two, Gentiles and Jews, one might feel disposed to reject the Jews here even more than the Gentiles even though both were worthy of rejection. The reason would be that the Jews had greater opportunity, having received this written code from God and had enjoyed a special association with God, whereas the Gentiles had no similar things. However, both knew better than to do as they had done. Neither had excuse for their sins.

Some have wrested and distorted this passage, along with Matthew 7:1-5, by suggesting no one should ever condemn anybody for anything inasmuch as no one is perfect. While it is correct that no man ought to attempt to “play God” and attempt to judge in those realms reserved for God, such as the heart and motive, but that man is to render no judgments regarding others is as false as could be (John 7:24). So often people want to do whatever they want to do, teach whatever they want to teach, even things that are contrary to the will of God, but take a portion of His will and twist it and misuse it to justify their error and forbid anybody from doing or saying anything against their error. It is sinful to so abuse and misuse Scripture. But such has been done and is being done, especially by those who would liberalize the will of the Lord to conform with the will of man. God knows the heart and shall judge the heart and actions. But man must make judgments also, even judgments regarding others (Matthew 7:20). His judgment must be made by comparing God’s will with man’s behavior. It is never wrong to recognize the judgments God has already made and revealed. It is improper to refuse to accept and obey the judgments God has made and revealed. For one to fail to commend what God commends or fail to condemn what God condemns is to stand in judgment of the will of God himself and in essence declare His will null and void (Romans 3:4).

The folly committed by the Jews that Paul condemned was not the mere fact of making judgments, but making judgments of condemnation against the very things of which they were guilty themselves. They were wrong as well as inconsistent. It might be simply stated, it was not judging Paul condemned, but sinning.

Paul asserts that man can be confident, very “*sure,*” that God will judge things properly and He will measure with the standard of truth against those who lived as the Gentiles lived (as noted in chapter one) whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

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In verse three Paul shows God will make proper judgment of those who are inconsistent as well. Paul explodes the idea many Jews held that they were still special in God's sight just because they were Jews. No longer was or is that the case. The way one lives and responds to the truth of the gospel of God is the standard to be considered by both Jews and Gentiles. Paul asks two questions. The question of verse three goes without specific answer as does the question in verse four because the answers are so obvious. They were asked to emphasize the obvious answers.

Actually the question asked in verse four drives home the same point as the question of verse three. The word translated "*or*" sometimes implies a contrast such as right or wrong, up or down. But at other times it suggests the idea of putting the same things another way. It is the last use here. Paul in essence is saying, "Do you think you can commit sin and get away with it? Or to put it another way, do you think you can take advantage of God's goodness, forbearance and longsuffering and go ahead and sin without God judging you?" He will judge you and condemn you just as much as those you think you have a right to condemn. Are you not aware that the great qualities of God that you think will allow you to get away with evil are the qualities God uses to lead you from your wickedness rather than indulge you in it?"

To "*despise*" means to hold in contempt. To hold a thing in contempt means to lack the proper respect. To take advantage, or even to attempt to take advantage, of a quality of God that is designed to produce salvation and turn that quality into an excuse for sinning or a basis for divine favoritism is the height of contempt.

The last phrase of verse four is much like the suggestion by Peter in Second Peter 3:9. *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* Indeed, God is longsuffering, but that longsuffering is not to be considered as toleration of sin or that God pays no attention to sin. The postponement of punishment might lead some to confuse the purpose of the longsuffering of God. God’s longsuffering, His goodness and forbearance is to allow men greater opportunity to repent of their sins and be saved, and return God’s love. It in no way is God’s expression of permissiveness toward sin. So the Jews who would condemn the Gentiles should look to themselves because they stood in a similar condemnation because of their own sins.

Paul has now made two very significant points regarding God’s relationship with men already in this epistle. (1) All men sin and need salvation and God offers salvation to both Jew and Gentile on the same terms. (2) God will judge both Jew and Gentile on the same terms. Both before the gospel and after the gospel, God will judge the Jew and Gentile on the same terms in one sense. This is not to say God will judge by the same law, because as we have noticed and mentioned quite adequately the Jew and Gentile lived under different systems before the gospel. This is to say that God will judge each one according to the law under which he lived. Therein exists the sameness. It further seems apparent that Paul has laid the groundwork to show the universality and equality of the commands, promises and judgments of the gospel, the system under which all men now live.

Verse 5-11

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

Verse five refers again to what the Jews had done and were doing to themselves. They had hardened their hearts. They were not penitent for sins as they should have been. The inevitable result was the wrath of God against them when God executes His judgment. His judgment shall embrace the measuring of that which men have done. Here we find a statement akin to Second Corinthians 5:10, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*" The judgment seat of Christ is the same as God's judgment inasmuch as God shall judge through Christ (Acts 17:31; Second Timothy 4:1).

As far as those to be judged are concerned, there are two groups. The judgment rendered will be in two parts also according to the groups involved. For those who "*by patient continuance in well doing,*" (and there is no better definition of faithfulness than this), who have sought for glory, honor and immortality, their reward will be eternal life. To those (verse ten) who "*worketh good,*" their reward is glory, honor and peace. This is the first group mentioned. It matters not whether one be a Jew or Gentile, if he qualifies he receives the same reward. The same qualifications are applicable to both and the same rewards shall be given both.

But to those who have been contentious against the truth, refused to obey the truth, but obeyed unrighteousness, they shall receive the indignation and wrath of a just God. This is the second group. They shall suffer tribulation and anguish. Such shall be the lot of every soul of man that doeth evil and is not forgiven. Again, it matters not whether one be a Jew or a Gentile, God will deal with each man separately but alike. There will not be a respect of persons with God, especially because of race, but each shall be judged by the standard of righteousness and manner of life.

While all this might seem to be a lowering of the Jew, it really is not. It is rather God's way of placing all men on equal footing before Him regarding responsibility and reward. Whereas Gentiles had served differently from Jews before Christ, now all serve God through the gospel, God's plan of salvation. The great theme of the universality of Christianity, which is quite a contrast to the tribal, national, sectional religions of that day and this, is heavily stressed in the book of Romans.

It may be well to call the attention of the reader to the conversion of the household of Cornelius just here; the first Gentile recorded in the inspired book as a convert to Christ. In Acts ten you will recall that Peter, having learned this very lesson being emphasized in these Roman chapters, made almost precisely the same statement as recorded in verse eleven of chapter two of Romans. Acts 10:34,35, "*Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*" The universality of the gospel is the theme.

Verses 12-16

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; 13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

In verse twelve Paul is guided to elaborate further on the affirmation of verse eleven. He refers to that period of time when the Jews and Gentiles had different relationships with God. The Jews had a written law revealed by the Lord and given into Israel through Moses. The Gentiles had no written law. This difference made it obvious that they would not be judged except by the law under which they lived. It is necessary to note that Paul assumes the reader accepts the fact that both Jew and Gentile were guilty of sin and this he had proved. The Gentile sinned without a written law and the Jew sinned with one. Regardless of what kind of law they had, all had a law and all stood condemned of sin.

But some may say the text says some had no law at all. This is to take the teaching out of context as well as make the grave error of attempting to understand a thing even when such “understanding” makes the Scriptures contradict themselves. Paul infers both Jew and Gentile were under law of some kind; one with and one without a written law. Each shall be judged accordingly. Jew or Gentile will be judged by the law under which they lived and were accountable.

Notice further, John said, First John 3:4, “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law for sin is the transgression of the law.*” This inspired definition of sin tells us it is a violation of law, obviously referring to God’s law whether written or unwritten. It follows that if there was no law of any kind there could be no sin, for one cannot violate what does not exist. Yet, the Gentiles are accused of sin. We are not to suppose the Gentiles lived without any law whatever. The contrast under discussion is not between law versus no law, but different laws under which Jew and Gentile lived. Both sinned because both had violated the law applicable to them. Each would be so judged. This is leading to the point where Paul shows conclusively that both needed a Savior from sin.

To get the main sentence one must go from verse twelve to verse sixteen and return to the parenthetical phrase in verses thirteen through fifteen for a more complete explanation of the subject being discussed. So we go to verse sixteen from verse twelve. This judgment, noted in the earlier passages regarding Jews and Gentiles before Christ, would take place in the day when God shall judge even the secrets of men. Take note of the One by whom the judgment was to be administered. It would be accomplished by Jesus Christ. This is in complete harmony with other statements regarding Christ and the judgment. Acts 17:31, “*Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.*” This unquestionably refers to Christ. Second Timothy 4:1, “*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom...*” Both passages affirm Christ will be the actual administrator at the judgment.

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We are not to understand that the gospel will be the standard of judgment for all men at the judgment day. This verse does not so teach, even though the gospel is the standard for all men since Pentecost. The phrase, “*according to my gospel,*” refers to the fact that the gospel teaches Christ will be the One through whom Deity judges. But it does not teach that the gospel of Christ is the measure for men who lived before the gospel.

Returning now to verses thirteen through fifteen, having shown the Jews and Gentiles to be judged by Christ according to the law under which they lived, whether written or unwritten, Paul dispelled any idea that mere possession of a law like the Jews had made a significant difference. This is not to say the Jewish law was not of great advantage, as noted later. It is to say that what counted with God was whether one obeyed the law under which he lived; whether they were doers or merely hearers. Note the statement from James 1:22, “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*” This principle has been applicable in every age and in every system regardless of which law one considers. Obedience to the law of God has always been the determining factor in God’s pleasure or displeasure with man. The doers are the ones who shall be justified.

When the Gentiles, without a written law, did “*by nature*” (according to the natural sense of propriety, according to the moral truth that had been given them, according to their repeated habit of conduct) what was found in the written law, they demonstrated there was a law which was in them. It also showed the law (the rule of right) for the Gentiles was not written like the law for the Jews, but was “*written*” in their hearts and consciences. Their own heart and conscience bore witness of right and wrong, accusing or excusing their behavior. The reason their heart and conscience could do this is because of training received according to the law revealed unto them.

The word “*mean*” (verse fifteen) refers to the standard by which they will be judged. The law written in their hearts is the law or standard by which they shall be judged.

We make a serious mistake if we conclude that the law by which the Gentiles lived before Christ shall be the standard simply because they themselves decided what was right and wrong. We must keep in mind Paul has already stated that God had showed them the truth (chapter one, verse nineteen). It was not a case of something being right or wrong simply because they had decided it was right or wrong. It was rather a case of something being right or wrong because God had showed it to them to be right or wrong. But inasmuch as the standard of right and wrong for the Gentile had not been committed to writing as with the Jews, the law was written in their hearts and that served as the “*mean*” for judgment.

Although we may agree that these words present some difficulty to fully comprehend and explain, some very obvious and unmistakable conclusions can and must be drawn:

1. All men have always lived subject to some law of God.
2. All men have been guilty of violating the law under which they lived.
3. All men shall be judged according to the law under which they lived.
4. Some lived under a written law like the law of Moses for the Jews while others lived under an unwritten law but a law “*written*” in their hearts. Both laws had been given by the Lord.
5. Whether one was a Jew or Gentile, all were accountable before God and shall be judged by the administrator of judgement, Jesus Christ, because the gospel says Christ shall be the judge.
6. Even though Jews and Gentiles formerly lived under different laws, now all are subject to the gospel, God’s power to save.

Verses 17-24

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, 18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; 19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, 20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. 21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

It is clear that the preceding and following words are addressed to Jews, those who had been God's chosen people under the law given through Moses. It seems also clear that there was much pride on the part of the Jew because he was a Jew. He thought himself above and beyond others because he was a Jew with a written law from God. His ancestors had received promises from God. The Jew trusted in the law. Note the phrase "*resteth in the law,*" meaning he leaned on it simply because Jews had received it. He was boastful of his physical ancestry. He "*approvest,*" meaning he had tested the things of the law, and there was no doubt but the things of the written law excelled in many ways the things of the unwritten law and it was considered far better. All of these things caused the Jew to be confident even to the point of sinful pride. He looked on himself as one capable of guiding others. He was the one who ought to have the say-so in matters religious rather than a lowly Gentile who could not even produce a written law nor had lived very closely to the one "*written*" on their hearts. Whereas others were "*foolish*" in the sense of being untaught and uninformed, he, a Jew, could instruct them. He was the teacher and had the image of knowledge and truth. In all this, he was, in his own mind, far superior to the Gentile who had been so scathingly rebuked in the first chapter because of their transgressions. Considering the historical facts, one might say the Jew may well have been able to guide others and be their teacher if they had not been so filled with pride and actually misunderstood the nature of his being "special" with God.

But Paul turns the spotlight of investigation upon the Jew who considered himself so superior. The questions asked were obviously designed to show the inconsistency and inadequacy of such a person as the Jew for he taught one thing but practiced another.

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Take note that the Jewish teaching was not condemned, but was correct. It is true one should not steal, commit adultery or be guilty of idolatry. The law was something for which the Jew could be grateful and proud. But to teach these things correctly then turn right around and commit the very things condemned was to produce blasphemy against God. Such is always the result of this kind of overt hypocrisy. Many times the behavior of the Israelite people had caused the name of God to be reproached among the Gentiles (Isaiah 52:5; Second Samuel 12:14; and other passages).

It is no less true under the gospel system of Christ. When Christians do that which is inconsistent with the doctrine of Christ it produces in the mind of the non-Christian a blasphemous attitude toward God (Titus 2:5).

In spite of having the law and a special relationship with God, the Jews stood in condemnation just like the Gentiles and in need of a Savior as much as the Gentiles. They stood condemned for their sins just like the Gentiles stood condemned for the sins they had committed. In a way, because the Jews had enjoyed a closer fellowship with God, their sins were a more serious breach by virtue of the influence they would have as God's people. Whereas the Gentiles had rejected God and the moral truth God had given them, and had turned to idols and the worst forms of degenerate human conduct, the Jews had claimed to have God but often did just as bad and brought reproach on the name of the Lord they claimed to serve.

Verses 25-29

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. 26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? 28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Paul continues to show how both Jew and Gentile need a Savior and how the special privilege the Jews formerly had enjoyed really meant nothing anymore as far as being acceptable to God. It never had meant as much as the Jews had attributed to it. In this series of verses (twenty-six through twenty-seven) the terms “*circumcision*” and “*uncircumcision*” have reference to Jews and Gentiles. In verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine they refer to a relationship, or lack of one, with God.

Being a Jew was of profit if the Jew kept the law under which he lived. If he was a Jew and violated that law, the mere fact he was a Jew and had the law would not be sufficient to set aside his sins. He had just as soon not been a Jew if he was going to live like a sinful Gentile. On the other hand, if a Gentile kept the law under which he lived, he was just as well off before God as was a Jew. It was, after all, not the normal thing for the Gentile to be circumcised. But even though he was not circumcised (a sign of the relationship between God and the Jews), but kept the law to which he was amenable, he stood in a position to judge and condemn the Jew rather than the Jew being in a position to judge and condemn the Gentile. (Of course, now that the gospel has been revealed, living according to any previous system would be inadequate).

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In all this Paul is discussing the situation of the Jew and Gentile before the gospel had come. He has already asserted that the gospel is the way of salvation now, but before the gospel the Jew and Gentile served under different systems. It seems that the Gentiles had been given a way to walk that would have pleased God, although what all that way may have included we are not informed. Occasional contacts of Gentiles had been made through the ages, however, such as when Jonah went to Nineveh. Probably they lived under the Patriarchal system that pre-dated the Mosaic law.

While noting how the Gentiles lived under a moral law, we are not to suppose that Paul is teaching that one can be saved now by following moral truth alone. The Jews could not please God by merely following moral truth prior to the gospel because their law required additional things, such as sacrifices, feast observances, etc. Nor can men be pleasing to God today by merely being moral, as important as that is, because men are accountable before God today according to the gospel and the gospel includes more than morality. Paul is not showing that obedience to the law of moral truth was or is sufficient for those who were supposed to be obedient to a law that included more than moral truth. He was showing that the Gentiles lived under a law of moral truth. They would be judged according to the law under which they lived and if found obedient thereto they were in a relationship to God as acceptable as the Jew who had kept the law given to him. If there was more to the law under which Gentiles lived than morality, we are not informed and should not speculate regarding it. Therefore, the Jews really were not superior. They really did not have reason to boast over the Gentiles. They had misunderstood their "specialness."

This same point is stressed in the closing two verses. Here the term “*Jew*” does not refer to a nationality or being a descendant of Abraham, but one who is in the right relationship with God. Paul says in essence, “A person is not right with God merely because he has obeyed some outward form alone, like circumcision, “*the letter.*” Physical circumcision was a sign denoting for the Jews their special calling, but that is not all that was necessary to be right with God then, and since that law of circumcision has nothing whatever to do with Christianity, it certainly is not what makes one right with God now (Galatians 5:5,6; 6:15). There must be the inward relationship with God, a “circumcision” of the heart and spirit.

The circumcision of the heart is further discussed in Colossians 2:11-14. It was a “cutting away” of sins that was accomplished by forgiveness of sins. This circumcision of the heart was “*without hands,*” which meant it was an “*operation of God.*” By this operation sins were cut away, forgiven, put away. The heart was brought into covenant relationship with God. God performed this “circumcision” by the process of forgiveness when they had been buried in baptism. Baptism was not the “circumcision” but the “circumcision” was accomplished when baptism took place.

Take note that Paul is not saying that circumcision was unimportant for the Jew during the time when it was required of the Jew. When it was commanded of the Jew, if he ignored this act of obedience, he would not be pleasing to God. Paul is emphasizing that there was more to being right with God than simply being circumcised, even when circumcision was required. Circumcision was unimportant to the Gentile because the Gentile had never been commanded to be circumcised. To be sure, if a Gentile became a Jew religiously, a proselyte, he had to undergo circumcision according to the Jewish law. However, it was important for the Gentile to live according to the unwritten law of moral truth in the heart that God had required of him. If the heart of the Jew or the Gentile was truly given to God, whatever was required of him he would strive to do.

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This expressed the principle Paul established. Obedience to God is an inseparable matter with a converted heart. A converted heart is essential to the right relationship with God. In the case of the Jews or the Gentiles, whatever was expected of them, they were to do, even before the gospel age. When they obeyed, God was pleased as much with one as the other. When they disobeyed, God was displeased with one as much as the other. Where the giving of the law through Moses to the Jews seemed to place them as very special before God (they were special in the sense they were to serve, and that through them the promised Messiah would come to the benefit of all nations), there actually had existed all along the ages an equality of sorts with Jews and Gentiles in the mind of God. Both had to obey truth given them.

It seems that these first two chapters have produced a level of thinking regarding Jews and Gentiles that the Jews certainly needed to learn because they had misunderstood their special mission and relationship to God and had concluded they were superior. The Gentiles needed to learn this lesson also because they had not received a written law and might have considered themselves inferior. They needed to learn they had to obey whatever law they had, which neither had done historically. They both needed to learn that "*all have sinned*" and all needed salvation. The absence of superiority and inferiority becomes evident in the gospel plan of salvation for all men now. Whereas formerly the Jews and Gentiles had different systems and laws, everyone now is accountable to God through the same system, the gospel, God's power unto salvation.

Chapter Three

Verses 1,2

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

The conclusions made necessary by the first two chapters would naturally draw the questions found in verse one. If obeying the law under which one lived was what really counted, what advantage did the Jew have? What profit was it to him to be a Jew? Paul seems to have taken away all advantage. But he says there is “*much in every way.*” But it was not as much, and not the same, as the Jews had erroneously concluded.

The “*profit*” that Paul suggests is not the “*profit*” the Jews had figured. They concluded because they had the written law, and because of their special calling as descendants of Abraham, and a special and favored relationship with God, that such would cause God to simply overlook their sins and grant them indulgences. They considered this relationship was given to them because they were superior. In this they were mistaken. They did have a special relationship with God, but not for the reasons or purposes they thought.

Their “*profit*” was that they were able to make certain contributions to the good of every man. Their “*profit*” was a profit of serving, not one of superiority. They were a people that had the privilege of being used by God to accomplish something for the whole human family. They had looked upon their “specialness” to be for their own benefit alone.

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The service rendered, as mentioned in verse two, is that God committed unto them His oracles, His Word, the promises and prophecies that are found in the inspired writings of the Old Testament. These writings served a unique purpose in God's plan for redeeming man. The Jews were a fortunate people because through them this plan was to be made known and brought to a reality. In Stephen's sermon (Acts 7:53) he mentioned how the Jews "*received the law by the disposition of angels.*" The trouble with the Jews was, as Stephen continued, they "*have not kept it.*" Nonetheless, God used the Jews to fulfill His intent to save mankind. In this is found their advantage and profit.

Verses 3,4

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

At this point Paul takes note of the same thing Stephen recognized in the last part of Acts seven, verse fifty-three. The Jews had not kept the law nor did they accept the Christ that God sent. Instead of believing, they disbelieved. But are we to think because some Jews, even most Jews, rejected Christ that this rejection nullified God's intent and plan? Because some men that God desired to use for the profit of mankind turned against God and God's Son, does this place in question the fidelity of God to keep His Word? The answer to the question is forcefully given, "*God forbid!*" which means, "May it not be so!" It was unthinkable that God would fail because some men failed. In First Corinthians 13:10 we read the phrase, "*But God is faithful.*" This means you can count on God to keep His Word. He is absolutely dependable. You might also study this similar thought in Second Peter 3:9 and Hebrews 11:11. God had promised the gospel (1:2), and He would not fail in what He had promised. Paul asserts that very point here. He goes on to emphasize the attitude man should have regarding the compared integrity of God and man. "*Let God be true, but every man a liar.*" This is a strong point of emphasis that in spite of the Jewish rejection and disbelief, this did not alter nor declare of none effect what God had promised.

Those of the false doctrine of premillennial thought ought take note here. Those who say Christ came to establish His kingdom but because of Jewish rejection decided to postpone it, and establish the church as a temporary measure with the intent of establishing His kingdom the next time He came, ought to heed what Paul says. Man's rejection, and he specifies the Jewish rejection, did not change one thing God had intended to do and accomplish all along. This thought is another death-blow in a long series of death-blows to this speculative and false theory of premillennialism.

By the phrase “*Let God be true, but every man a liar,*” Paul contends for the authority of God rather than that of man. He is certainly not wishing for men to be liars. But man’s attitude must be to accept what God says to be true. Anything contrary thereto is necessarily false. He cites Psalm 51:4 to emphasize this point, “*That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*”

The “*thou*” of the passage refers to God, not man. If one will go back and read the fifty-first Psalm he will see that the “*thou*” refers to God there, so it must refer to God here in Romans when Paul quoted it. Just how are we to understand this reference?

When man disbelieves God, he is judging God. Man is in essence saying to God, “I cannot accept what you say. I challenge your correctness and authority. I challenge your word.” While men may not think they are committing this serious kind of offense, when a man disbelieves what God has said this is precisely what he is doing. He is placing himself as a judge of God by trying to determine the right or wrong of something God has said. Man has to determine what God says is right, but he must always accept the fact that whatever God says is right. Man could never be more out-of-place than to challenge God’s Word. Yet, disbelief is a challenge and judgment of the veracity of God. The statement of Paul that a man should bow before God’s authority rather than his own demonstrates the correctness and integrity of God’s Word and man must submit. That God has done what He said He would do in the oracles committed to the Jews means that God has overcome those who would dare stand in judgment of Him by disbelieving His Word.

Thus far in this chapter we see Paul proclaiming the way God proposed to use the Jews. We also see Paul’s assertion of God’s authority above any and all, especially above those who choose to disbelieve.

Verses 5,6

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) 6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

By asking the question in verse five that he did, Paul made a point not stressed as forcefully heretofore; namely, the unrighteousness of the Jew “*commend(s)*” the righteousness of God. The “*our*” refers to the Jews. The word “*commend*” means to establish or prove by comparing. The “*righteousness of God*” again refers to the plan of God to make man righteous. The thrust of the question in statement form is, “The sins of the Jews have proven the need for the plan God devised to save man. When one compares God’s plan with the sins of the Jews he sees the plan is well established.”

We know, and do not deny, that the Bible teaches God punishes the sinful. But Paul asks, “If by their sins the Jews have shown and proven the value and necessity and worthiness of God’s plan to save, why does God punish them?” At first glance it may seem that God ought reward them because their behavior has assisted in establishing the validity of His plan. Paul, even though he has asked the question, makes it plain that is not the kind of question to ask nor is it appropriate of anyone to ask it. He says this kind of reasoning is the kind some men might do and speak. He noted, “*I speak as a man.*”

But the answer again comes with emphasis, “*God forbid,*” that such a thing be seriously considered at all. The very idea that God is unrighteous is ridiculous on the very surface. Sin does deserve punishment. Sin is never for good but for evil. Sin made God’s plan of salvation necessary. Rather than being relieved of punishment due to sin man ought be thankful there is a plan of salvation at all. His sin has made the point that such a plan is essential.

Paul responds with another unanswerable point. If God could not condemn sin, how could He judge the world? How could God be God if He could not condemn evil? How could God do what God must do? God is not unrighteous for punishing sinners even though their sins “commend” His plan. The Jews commended it only in the sense of showing it was vital and necessary.

Verse 7

7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

In verse seven the same question of verse five is raised another way. To be sure the truth of God abounded and it had to abound because of the lie of man. However, sin does not show honor to God’s plan. Sin makes God’s plan necessary. Of course, the plan brings glory to God. But simply because sin has made the plan necessary and the plan brings glory to God, it does not follow that sin brings glory to God. God is glorified, not because of sin, but in spite of it.

Verse 8

8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

In verse eight Paul teaches a principle that doing evil does not ever find justification even if ultimately, somewhere along the line, some good results. Good things may at times result from evil, but not because of evil but in spite of evil. Good has to be placed in conflict and contrast with evil. The idea of doing evil that good may come is once and for all repudiated by inspiration. Some, it seems, had slanderously reported and affirmed that Paul had preached such a false idea. Those “*whose damnation is just*” may well refer to one or both of two groups: (1) those who had made a slanderous report against Paul; (2) or those who really believed one is permitted to do evil that good may come.

Verses 9-18

9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

One could just as well have said that the Gentiles ought to be honored because of their sins as well as the Jews to be honored by their sins. The sins of each people made the plan of God, by contrast, a thing of glory. But God was not unjust to condemn either the Jews or the Gentiles because of their sins. Any kind of conclusion of facts and situations that would for a moment indicate any unrighteousness of God to punish sinners immediately is to be dispelled as the worst sort of error.

Paul draws some conclusion by introducing the question, "*What then?*" In view of all that had been said, what do we now know? We know the Jew is no better than the Gentile, and the Gentile is no worse than the Jew. Paul has already proven, and the Gentiles and Jews themselves have already demonstrated, that they are all under sin. This was prophesied and fits exactly into the several Old Testament references to which Paul now refers. One may wish to look up the following references and there he will find almost exactly what Paul quotes here to the Romans. The references are not found at one place, but, as is often done in preaching or in writing even today, several passages are called upon to substantiate what has been declared. Consider: Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1; 140:3; Proverbs 1:16 and Isaiah 59:7,8; possibly others.

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The thrust of the words quoted from the Old Testament is simply that sin is a condition of all, Jew and Gentile, every man, everywhere. The characteristics of a sinful people are found among them all. They do not righteously; they lack understanding; they have left the way they ought to go; they are unprofitable; they do not do good; they are full of decay as a tomb and of poison as a deadly serpent. They are quick to do wrong, even shed blood. They destroy, cause misery, know not peace either with God or their fellowman and have no respect or fear of God. Such is the picture Paul paints that is applicable to both Jew and Gentile. This condition emphasizes the need of a way of salvation that would provide for all sinners.

Verses 19-20

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Paul begins these two verses again making the point he made several times in chapter two that what the law says it says to those who are subject and amenable to it. No law is applicable except to those to whom it applies. But when the law says something, then that is the end of the matter and anything contrary to it is wrong. "*Every mouth may be stopped*" is the expression used to convey the idea that there is no use arguing against what the law says because the law is the law and that is that. It really does not matter what law is under consideration here because when that law speaks to those who are accountable under it, that is the end of it. When one becomes guilty of violating the law to which he is responsible he becomes guilty of sin before God. That is outside the realm of being questioned. There is some question whether Paul has reference specifically to the law of Moses (as most commentaries suggest) or to law generally, the principle of the rule and authority of law. While inclined to agree that the specific law of Moses is under consideration, most certainly the principle applies regarding any divinely given law. The law of Moses seems to be in mind due to the fact that Paul has just quoted several passages from the Old Testament. Also, at this point his words are being addressed primarily to Jews.

However, one good reason for thinking Paul may be considering more than just the law of Moses is because he mentions "*all the world*" and "*no flesh*," a rather all-inclusive term that would seem to embrace both Jew and Gentile. In addition to that, one cannot omit the consideration that the word "*the*" before the word "*law*" which appears in the English translation does not appear in the Greek text in verse twenty. The word "*the*" is the specific and definite article, but without it the meaning becomes rather general. So there is some justification for believing that Paul is not confining his words to merely the law of Moses. But the principle would be true even if Paul was including all law or just some specific law.

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In verse twenty, although he possibly is speaking specifically of the law of Moses, again the point would be true even if he was not limiting it to the law of Moses but also including the laws of nature, the law in the conscience "*written*" on the hearts of the Gentiles, the law of moral truth under which Gentiles lived. In no case could law, by itself justify if the law only specified right from wrong. The law defined sin and made sin known. The law, when violated, made one guilty. The law did not provide for justification and forgiveness. This is true not only of the law of Moses but also the moral law of the Gentiles. The major thrust of the passage may well be to show that a law that only condemns is a law that cannot save. One must look elsewhere for salvation rather than to either of the two laws that have been considered thus far, one for Jews and one for Gentiles. We must remember that Romans, and other New Testament books, speaks of the law of Christ, and this law is a part of God's system of salvation.

Verses 21,22

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

The place to look for salvation is now presented as being open to man. That place is the “*righteousness of God,*” God’s plan for justifying man, His scheme for making man righteous, the gospel itself (1:16,17). This plan is manifested without such law as Paul had been discussing even though this plan is not altogether without any law, as is very apparent when Paul describes this plan as the “*law of faith*” in verse twenty-seven. Paul is showing that this plan is not a part of the law of Moses and not a part of the moral law of the Gentiles. Furthermore, the Mosaic law testified of the plan as did the prophets in times past, which is another assertion of the predictive nature of the Old Testament. This plan, called “*the righteousness of God,*” is by faith of Jesus Christ. The phrase “*by faith of Jesus Christ*” refers to the system of faith which was given through Christ rather than mere belief in Christ because the necessity of belief in Christ is mentioned in the next phrase. Unless Paul is simply repeating himself needlessly, this must be the meaning. In other words, we do no violence to Paul’s words to paraphrase: “Having shown that nobody can be justified by such laws as the Jews had, or the laws the Gentiles had, because such laws only showed the guilt of sin; having shown you must look elsewhere than these laws for salvation, I tell you now where to look for salvation. It is to be obtained in the plan God has devised, the system of faith given through Christ, and this system is open to all and all can receive the benefits of it that believe in the person and system Christ gave. There is no difference whether one be a Jew or Gentile. Salvation is needed by all and available to all who will place their trust in Him and His way.”

Lest someone object to the suggestion of faith in a system rather than in the person of Christ, be it known that there is no such thing as faith in the Person of Christ separate from faith in His system. Faith in His system is tantamount to faith in the Person. God has joined the Man and the plan and no man can separate the two, nor should attempt to try.

Verses 23-26

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

The reason there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in being saved by this system of faith is because there is no difference in their spiritual need of it as has been pointedly shown previously. But here again Paul says, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* None have lived up to the law under which they lived, even laws from God written or verbally given and *“written”* on the heart. None can lived sinlessly perfect. All were guilty of sin, all had fallen short, all needed to be saved, all can now be saved, all will be saved the same way if saved at all.

Again, what is that way, as we consider verse twenty-four? It is the way of grace, the way of unmerited favor, the way of receiving blessing from God that are surely undeserved. It is redemption that is to be found in the right relationship with Christ. Redemption is not “out of Christ,” but *“in Christ.”* The phrase, *“in Christ,”* is often used in the New Testament to denote the spiritual relationship with God one must have and enjoys if he is among the redeemed (Second Timothy 2:10; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:3; Revelation 14:13).

This way of redemption, “*the righteousness of God.*” this place of grace, this system of faith given through Christ, has its merit based upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the gift God gave. God set forth His Son to be the atonement, the propitiation. This word translated “*propitiation*” is from the same word the Holy Spirit selected in Hebrews 9:5 when describing the mercy seat of the Mosaic system. That which is translated “*mercy seat*” is the place of propitiation. It appears likely that Paul is drawing upon the Old Testament for the “type” of which the Lord Jesus is the “anti-type.” “*Propitiation*” refers to the appeasement of God’s wrath against sin or an atonement, a satisfactory payment. Just as the blood of animals was sprinkled over the mercy seat which was on top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, so the blood of Jesus has been shed. Just as the blood over the mercy seat was a sign, pledge or promise of expiation from sin, so the blood of Christ is the expiation of sin. In other words, Paul is answering the question the old hymn asks, “What can wash away my sins?” The answer is, “Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” This is the provision God has made. The blessing of forgiveness and hope of eternal salvation is obtained through faith in His blood. His blood is the life blood, if you please, of the system of faith that God has devised. Without the blood the system would not exist. This shedding of the blood of Jesus the Christ was the declaration of the “*righteousness of God,*” His plan, that would accomplish the remission of sins that are past.

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The phrase, “*sins that are past,*” gives no little difficulty to explain. Turning to Hebrews 10:4, “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*” The animal sacrifices of the Mosaic system did not actually remove the sins of the people, even though the people did all they could do, knew to do, and were commanded to do to accomplish the removal of sins when they offered the sacrifices. Earlier in Hebrews ten the writer said, “*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*” Obviously, the necessity for the constant repetition of the sacrifices showed their sins were not actually forgiven, but at best were lifted for another year. Furthermore, Hebrews 9:15 indicates that Christ is the mediator of a testament or will that provided for the redemption of transgressions that were committed under the first testament as well as transgressions that were committed under His own testament. It is surely within reason and not inconsistent with other Biblical information to think that the phrase, “*sins that are past,*” includes sins committed under the Mosaic system, though not limited to just that. In other words, while animal sacrifices were necessary for the Jews, it was ultimately the blood of Christ that really provided the power of remission even for their sins as well as for the sins of people since the cross.

What took away the sins of the Gentiles who lived during the time of the Mosaic covenant but who did not sacrifice as did the Jews? No reference in Scripture comes to my mind that gives a specific answer to that question unless this one touches upon it. We do know that “*without the shedding of blood is no remission.*” (Hebrews 9:22). We also know “*it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.*” (Hebrews 10:4). Again, we know that “*by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*” (Hebrews 9:12). We know that redemption is “*through his blood.*” (Ephesians 1:7). Suffice it here to say that even though there is no specific reference that informs us of the remission of Gentile sins committed under the moral law “*written*” on their hearts, it must of necessity involve the blood of Christ. There is nothing else that God has ever provided that would accomplish the washing away of sins.

There is another thought in this phrase, “*sins that are past,*” that must be considered, not in contrast to what has been said but in addition to what has been said. When one comes to Christ and is baptized into Him, it is then that the blood of Christ which was shed in His death cleanses one from his sins (Galatians 3:27; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3,4). The sins forgiven upon initial contact with the blood are sins of the past, sins already committed. At the time one is baptized and reaches the blood of Christ he does not receive forgiveness of sins that he may yet commit. To be sure, Christ’s blood makes provision for future sins so long as one remains faithful and loyal in the body (the church) where His blood is and thereby remains in contact with the blood. The Lord’s blood will keep on keeping him clean (First John 1:7,9) as he walks in the light. But we are not to think that coming in contact with the blood of Christ initially provides some kind of indulgence for future transgressions. The sins forgiven are sins of the past. Peter spoke of one being “*purged from his old sins.*” (Second Peter 1:9).

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

The message of the passage is unmistakable. Remission of sins is provided by the blood of Jesus Christ. Such is God's plan, His righteousness. This is the demonstration of the forbearance of God toward the sinner. Forbearance involves an attitude, and here we see that attitude manifested toward the sinner; namely, God's desire that the sinner be forgiven.

Paul had earlier stated in verse twenty-five that God sent Christ “*to declare his righteousness;*” that is, Christ came to proclaim the plan of salvation that God offered through the Son and His blood. Here in verse twenty-six he repeats the thought of declaring this righteousness. The phrase, “*at that time,*” refers to the dispensation of Christ, the time the gospel is applicable to man. Whereas God had dealt with the Jews through the law of Moses and the Gentiles through moral truth given them, now is the gospel age. God declares a plan of salvation now that was heretofore never proclaimed but only prophesied and promised. The purpose of this plan is stated to be twofold. One purpose was that God might be just; that is, that the justice of a just God might be manifested against sin by the penalty against sin being provided and met through the death of Christ. God never intended that sin go unpunished. Justice would not allow that. Justice demands that somebody pay. God provided that Christ should pay on behalf of man, at least for those who would come to Him. The second purpose stated would naturally follow the emphasis of the first. With God showing His justice by having the penalty for sin exacted, this would allow Him to be the justifier of those who believed in Jesus Christ. Whereas justice demanded punishment for sin, mercy demanded release. Psalm 89:14, “*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*” At the cross of Christ, God’s justice and mercy met. Christ paid the penalty for sin enabling the sinner to be mercifully justified, cleansed, redeemed, and his sins remitted. This could be accomplished only because of what God has done on the sinner’s behalf, and would be enjoyed when the sinner places his confidence and obedient trust in Christ. This confidence would include faith in His blood (verse twenty-five) and obedience to the plan God provided. In the sacrifice of Christ, we see the demonstration of divine justice and mercy.

Consider what a marvelous plan God devised! What a sacrifice it took! What mercy and grace is manifested! We marvel at the greatness and goodness of God and His love for sinful humanity!

We need to say more to understand a quality of God that bears on His demand that somebody pay because of sin. This was not demanded because God is *vindictive* and with a desire to strike back and get even. It is because God is *vindictory* and having the determination to uphold right and execute justice. If God was not such a God, the holiness ascribed Him would be seriously flawed and impaired. The execution of His vengeance is not in order to harm or simply even the score with sinners. The execution of vengeance by God is essential to righteousness, holiness, and justice. God would possess none of these virtues if He treated sin and righteousness just alike. In the death of Christ, the demands of justice were met, and yet, the propriety of mercy was made possible.

Verses 27,28

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Having shown salvation to be through the “*righteousness of God,*” the plan given through Christ, Paul asks where is there any room for boasting on the part of man. At least two thoughts come to mind with this question. First, in what does the Jew have to boast, seeing the law under which he lived, the law of Moses, is not the way of salvation? Second, in what does a redeemed soul have to boast as far as his own merit and goodness is concerned? Salvation is not granted him on the basis of his merit, but on the merit of the blood of Christ. Indeed, all boasting “*is excluded.*” If there was to be any boasting at all it would rather be turned into glorying in the cross of Christ, the very point Paul makes in Galatians 6:14. “*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*”

Salvation is neither by the law of Moses nor by moral law. Both systems rely on man doing good. While men do much good and must do good, they also do evil. They cannot do enough good to offset the guilt of the evil they do. All their good will not erase one transgression. Salvation is not by a law dependent on the meritorious works of man. It is by the law of faith.

Return in our thoughts to verse twenty-one of this chapter where Paul had said, "*the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.*" The article "*the*" is not found before the word "*law*" in the Greek text. We are not to think that no law is involved in the "*righteousness of God.*" His plan for justifying man involves law. As stated then, and must be restated in view of the phrase, "*the law of faith,*" in verse twenty-seven, there is law involved and this is apparent as Paul described the plan as "*the law of faith.*" Paul shows that this plan is separate from the law of Moses and separate from the moral law the Gentiles had. But he is not saying the way of salvation is totally void of law. This point must be stressed in view of some false ideas people have that salvation is by grace or faith alone, and that obedience, even to the law of faith, is of no real consequence. The "*law of faith*" is a law, and in that law are found many commands that will either be obeyed or disobeyed. When we discuss chapter four regarding Abraham we shall see more clearly how the "*law of faith*" includes obeying what the Lord commands.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Having made this plain, then Paul drew the conclusion that a man is justified by faith. With this none dare raise objection. Let “*every mouth... be stopped*” with this affirmation from inspiration. There is no question but justification is by faith. But we must ask what this includes. What does this involve? Does this simply mean giving mental assent to certain truths or does it also include an obedient response to commands involved in that “*law of faith*”? It is the latter. Salvation, shown to be possible through the gospel, is by the kind of faith that has always been necessary to make men acceptable to God; namely, an obedient faith. Faith without the works of obedience is a dead faith (James 2:26). A dead faith will not and cannot save.

But this system of faith is separate from the deeds of the Mosaic and moral laws and from works of merit that man might do. It matters not which law is under discussion, the system of salvation is founded on the blood of Christ. We certainly do not understand Paul to be saying this “*law of faith*” would nullify and make unimportant moral truth, or that one could be immoral and live acceptably under the “*law of faith*.” God forbid! It simply asserts that the way God justifies man “*at this time*” is not by laws previously discussed, but by “*the righteousness of God*.”

Verses 29-31

29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Getting back to another major theme of the epistle to the Romans, that of the universality of this gospel plan, Paul asks if God is the God only of the Jews. Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, God is the God of both. God has never been the God for the Jews only. He did sustain a relationship with the Jews that was special and for certain purposes, but He has always been the God of the entire human family. This being true and manifested so obviously now by the universal offer of salvation and universal conditions of the gospel, there being one God (one Godhead and divine nature), both the Jew (circumcision) and the Gentile (uncircumcision) shall be saved the same way, and by the system of faith, grace, blood, law and obedience.

Paul anticipates a question that may then arise in the minds of either Jew or Gentile regarding the previous laws. Does this system of faith make void the law? The answer is, "No." God forbid!

Notice the real question. It is not being asked if we make the law of Moses or the moral law of the Gentiles void by the system of faith. Rather the question is, "Do we make void all law through faith?" The definite article "*the*" before "*law*" is once again missing in the Greek text. In neither of the two instances where it appears in the English translation in verse thirty-one does it appear in the Greek text. This affects the understanding of this passage to some degree and we might be misled if not cautious and aware of it.

It is plainly stated in other places that the law of Moses has been made void and abolished (Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:15), in the sense that it is no longer binding upon anybody, even the Jews, the only ones to whom it was ever applicable. It has been fulfilled as Jesus said He came to do (Matthew 5:17,18). Paul has just shown in this chapter how we are justified by faith separate from, and without, the deeds of former laws. Justification is not founded on deeds, even though deeds are involved. But now he argues strongly that the system of faith does not rule out all law and the necessity of obedience to law. Law means the rule of right. There is law even in the system of faith. The system of faith is itself a law, the rule of right. Therefore, Paul's contention for the system of faith does not abolish the principle of law and the necessity to obey, but rather is a strong contention for law. The principle of law is firmly established even by the system of faith. Verse thirty-one read, "*Do we then make void law through the faith? God forbid: yea, we establish law.*"

Let us investigate this matter even further by supposing the specific law of Moses is what is meant as the law that is established. The system of faith established the Mosaic law in that it is the fulfillment of what "*the law and the prophets*" (verse twenty-one) had declared would come to pass. This system of faith is that to which "*the law and the prophets*" had borne witness. The coming of the system of faith proved the Mosaic system was of God.

Then again, let us suppose the moral law of the Gentiles is the law which the system of faith established. This is also within good reason and Scriptural affirmation because when one realizes he needs salvation because he has violated God's moral laws, and that salvation is in Christ, does he not establish the validity of moral law?

It slices whatever way you cut it -- Mosaic law, moral law, or the principle of law itself-- the system of faith given by and through Christ and based on His blood establishes law.

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

(The marginal readings in the American Standard Version take note of the use and non-use of the definite article “*the*” as marked in these comments.)

Chapter Four

Verses 1,2

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

This chapter, like chapter three, begins by questions being asked regarding the value of what had transpired before the introduction of the system of faith. In chapter three, even though the law of Moses did not make the Jew superior, there was benefit in being a Jew because he could be used to serve all humanity. The third chapter emphasized the “*righteousness of God*” as the way of justification rather meritorious works.

Paul begins now to show that justification by a system of faith was not an unheard of idea in God-man relationships. He asks something about the most revered of all the ancestors of the Jews, Abraham. The very mention of Abraham and anything that had to do with Abraham would immediately receive attention from the Jews. Abraham had been taught of God to be circumcised (Genesis 17:10-14). Ever since that time the descendants of Abraham had relied heavily on the fleshly act of circumcision denoting them to be special. Indeed, they were special, but not always in the sense they supposed. But the fleshly act of circumcision was not that which made Abraham justified before God. This was not that by which Abraham “*found*” or obtained favor with God. In fact, God had called Abraham, when still named Abram, as far back as Genesis, chapter twelve. He had repeated the promises to Abraham several times (see Genesis 15) before ever mentioning circumcision. Circumcision was a “*token of the covenant*” (Genesis 17:11), not the reason for making the covenant. The pressure of this point was inescapable upon the Jews. Whereas the Jews relied so heavily upon their circumcision, even their venerable ancestor was not so justified. Indeed, Paul reasons if the works of Abraham or if a system based on works had been the basis of his justification he would have had reason to boast of his own righteousness. But such was not the case, “*not before God.*”

It would be a mistake to consider the term, “*works,*” in the sense of obedience here. The context makes the term “*works*” refer to a system of meritorious works, like the Mosaic law or moral law, in contrast to the system of faith. That this is true is further in evidence in another discussion of the justification of Abraham in James, chapter two, which we will discuss with the next verses.

Verses 3-5

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Paul again quotes from the Old Testament. Here again we see the predictive element of the Old with reference to the New. He quotes from Genesis 15:6, “*And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*” What the reference means in Genesis is what it means in Romans. At that time in the life of Abraham God had called him and he obediently responded to that call. See Hebrews 11:8. Had Abraham been called and refused to obey God, could he have been counted righteous? Indeed not! **The faith by which Abraham served God was a faith that demanded obedience to that which was commanded him.** His faith required obedience to law. The blessing of justification for Abraham was based on a system of this kind of faith. It is the height of the ridiculous to think for a moment Abraham could have been pleasing to God without obeying whatever God required of him. When we turn to James, we see James quotes the very same Genesis passage that Paul quoted regarding the justification of Abraham. Whereas Paul stressed how his justification was by a system of faith in contrast to a system of meritorious works, James stressed how this system or law of faith required obedience to the commands in that system. In fact, James becomes so specific as to say, “... *by works was faith made perfect.*” (James 2:22). He goes on to show how the absence of the works of obedience would have made the faith of Abraham a dead faith (James 2:26).

To summarize, Abraham believed and trusted in the Word and promises of God. He was obedient to what the Lord required of him. Because of his belief plus obedience, he was justified. This is what the system or law of faith includes. Abraham’s justification was not based on a system where he could be so good as to merit God’s favor. He could not earn what he received. All he received was given him, but upon condition that his trust responded in obedience. So teaches Paul and James, and there is absolutely no contradiction, but complete harmony between them on this matter.

The same idea is conveyed regarding our own justification in Ephesians 2:8,9. Obviously, there are different kinds of works being considered by these two inspired passages. This is evident since one says, in essence, "Abraham was not justified by works," and the other says, "Abraham was justified by works." The first spoke of a system of merit; the other spoke of obedience to the commands required in the system of faith or law.

What Paul has just said regarding Abraham only verifies the principle of which he now speaks in verse four. If a man could merit what he gets from God, God would owe it to him and it would not be the result of God's unmerited favor or grace. But as verse five makes clear again, the one who is justified is not the one who relies on his meritorious works, but the one who relies on the system or law of faith given by God's grace. Then what he lacks is supplied. Even though lacking in personal righteousness, his faith, being properly placed in Christ and acted upon in obedience, is the means of obtaining what otherwise he could not obtain. One can see most clearly that Paul is giving honor and credit for man's justification to the One to whom it belongs -- God.

It would seem, therefore, especially to the Jews but also to the Gentiles, that they may as well terminate any arguments they had regarding superiority or inferiority. They both were dependent upon a system similar in principle to the one that had made Abraham acceptable before God.

Verses 6-8

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Another highly respected ancestor of the Jews is called to testify as to the way one is justified before God. This time it is David, and Paul quotes David's words in Psalm 32:1,2. Being justified is called "*blessed*." The man who is justified is surely blessed. God counts a man righteous, but not by a system of works such as that under which Jews and Gentiles had formerly lived. Justification is by and through a system of faith, the gospel. In that way man's sins are forgiven and thereby covered. Rather than counting sin against man, God counts him righteous. This righteousness is the righteousness described several times in this book; already reality when man aligns himself with the "*law of faith*" first mentioned in chapter three, verse twenty-seven.

It is worth adding here that our sins must be covered if we ever expect to see God in all His glory in heaven. The only way our sins can truly be covered is that they be forgiven. Inasmuch as forgiveness takes place in the mind of God, we are dependent on God forgiveness. God will forgive our sins and not count them, not reckon them, not impute them against us if they are forgiven. **Forgiveness is available to us by and through the system of faith, grace, blood, law and obedience that God has devised and delivered through His Son, Jesus Christ.**

Verses 9-12

9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Is Paul following some pattern in chapters three and four, or is it merely coincidental that he has presented his two main points in the same order in each chapter? It really does not matter. In chapter three he had first extolled the “*righteousness of God*” separate from law, and then emphasized the universality of the system of faith. In chapter four he has already stressed how justification is by the system of faith, and now he proceeds to emphasize the universality of it by asking if this blessedness previously discussed belongs only to Jews, the circumcision. He notes it belongs to the Gentiles, the uncircumcision, as well.

The faith of Abraham was the means of obtaining his righteousness, his justification. It was so counted before he was circumcised. He was yet uncircumcised when he was counted righteous by the system of faith which applied to him. Circumcision was the sign or seal, the assurance, of his righteousness that he obtained while yet uncircumcised. It seems God deliberately made Abraham righteous before circumcision so the very arguments then raging between Jew and Gentile would never have to be raised. He made Abraham righteous before commanding Abraham to be circumcised because the whole procedure involving Abraham was a foretaste, a symbol, a type of that which was to come. Abraham is the father of the believer, whether Jew or Gentile (Galatians 3:28,29). He is the father of all those who walk in the same principles of the system of faith as did he. It matters not whether one be a Jew or Gentile. One is a spiritual descendant of Abraham if he has placed his obedient trust in the system of faith given by the grace of God that is based on the merit of the blood of Christ. Abraham placed his trust in a system of obedient faith. **This system required belief plus obedience.** We cannot state this too often. The system of faith is not “belief only.” It is true for us today that the system of faith which applies to us requires **belief and obedience.**

One inescapable emphasis is the act of circumcision has no spiritual effect in the plan of salvation now revealed in the gospel. Again we call attention to Galatians 5:6; 6:15 and Acts 15 to document this truth.

Verses 13-17

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. 16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, 17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

This passage must be considered with great caution and remembrance of the context of the book to this point. Otherwise, the message shall be missed.

The promise refers to a promise that involves the whole world. The promise mentioned here refers to the greatest of the promises given by God to Abraham. God promised Abraham many things, (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18) as one can determine from the study of Genesis, such as being the father of a great nation, his descendants being beyond number, God's watchcare over him by blessing those who blessed him and cursing those who cursed him, and by giving his descendants a land for their own. But the one promise that involved the whole world was the one concerning the seed through whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed. This was a reference to Christ, according to Galatians 3:16. This promise was given to Abraham, not on the basis of any moral law, nor the Mosaic law which had not yet come into existence, but on the basis of one being made righteous by a law or system of faith. The Biblical record shows, of course, that was precisely what happened regarding Abraham. The promise owed no allegiance whatever to the law, Mosaic, moral or otherwise. The promise was made on the basis of the system of faith described in verses one through five. If it were otherwise, then faith is void and not even involved. If faith was not involved, if it was not on that basis of faith, the whole promise is made void. The promise provided a blessing. Therefore, it could not be based on a law of works because a law of works would only produce wrath and punishment, not blessings. If the promise was not based on the law of faith the promise actually is nullified. The law of works produces wrath because man transgresses the law. Transgression is the violation of law; no law -- no transgression! But with law there is transgression. The law of works, a system of works, rather than producing the much needed justification and righteousness, makes the need all the more apparent. Only the grace of God can provide the justification that is needed. The promise of Christ was in essence the promise of salvation for man and justification before God. The law of works could not and did not produce what the promise offered. The promise came by the system of faith. It was a matter of the manifestation of the grace of God. The promise extends to all who place their trust in a system of faith similar to the system of faith by which Abraham was justified and by

which he became the father of all who are saved by the gospel.

Taking a quotation from Genesis 17:5, Paul says Abraham is the father of many nations in the sense that his spiritual children are to be found, not just in one nation like the Jews, but many nations. People of many nations shall be made righteous in Christ. Such had been foretold, as in Isaiah 2:2, *“And all nations shall flow unto it.”* Also, Peter had declared the same thing to be true when he was at the home of Cornelius. Acts 10:34,35, *“Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.”*

The last part of verse seventeen is very difficult and comment is made only to a limited extent. Paul had just referred to Abraham as the *“father of us all,”* *“all”* meaning the saved. He had noted that God had promised him to be the father of many nations and explained *“many nations”* to mean the saved from whatever nation. God made promises, and in Abraham stands before the Lord as the father of us all. Abraham believed God, and God, who has power to make alive even that which is dead, did just that in making it possible for Abraham to have a descendant, Isaac. *“Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead...”* (Hebrews 11:12). Isaac was born of Abraham after his normal time of becoming a father and after Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. God was very able to call into being what did not then exist just as by His power He was able to call into being and existence this entire universe. Whatever be the precise meaning in all this, it seems quite sure that it is an exaltation of the power of God with special reference to the manifestation of His power through Abraham and the promises made and kept. This understanding is certainly in keeping with what follows in verses eighteen and nineteen.

Verses 18-22

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Even though there seemed to be no reason for hope in such a promise as God gave Abraham at the time it was given, Abraham had faith in the Word of God. Even though his body was “*dead*” as far as producing children was concerned, he did not consider that a barrier to what God had promised. Even the inability of Sarah to bear children did not cause him to disbelieve the promise of God.

It must be stated here, in view of the “assistance” Sarah and Abraham tried to offer God through the use of Hagar, that they did not understand how God would fulfill His promises. But Abraham did not doubt that it would take place as God said in spite of every reasonable argument that could be raised against it ever happening. He gave God glory and believed Him and obeyed Him. He was fully persuaded that God would keep His Word and was able to carry it out. He acted on his faith throughout. On this kind of obedient faith his justification was secured. Taking Hagar, Sarah’s handmaid, and having a child by her in the name of Sarah, was according to the custom in that land at that time, according to the Nuzi Tablets. But that was not God’s way of keeping His promise.

Verses 23-25

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

This passage reminds us of Romans 15:1 and First Corinthians 10:11, not that they teach exactly the same things, but informs why some of the writings of the Old Testament have been given to us. The information about Abraham to which Paul referred was not for the benefit of Abraham and for his glory only. It was not just for his sake that God acted the way He did with respect to Abraham. It is an amazing and humbling thought for which we ought be grateful to know that the records about Abraham and how he obtained approval before God are for our benefit. Righteousness was obtained by Abraham by a system of faith. Righteousness is open *“for us also.”* The only difference is that in the system of faith applicable to us (and our faith is in the same God as Abraham served), we acknowledge Christ and how God raised Him from the dead. We depend on Christ for our justification through the system of faith based on Christ. Christ was delivered for the removal of our sins against God. Without Christ and what He did on our behalf there would be no gospel, no system of faith, no offer of grace, no law of faith, no cleansing blood, no justification, no blessedness, no salvation and no eternal life with God. Thus far in this book of Romans all these terms have been used at one time or another to depict and describe what Paul is emphasizing as the results to be gained by and through the system of obedient faith based on the merit of the blood of Christ that is given by the grace of God. This is what God offers to man through His Son and how it is offered. Paul stressed that it is offered to all men alike and on the same terms.

To summarize, we can already draw the conclusion that salvation from sin for man is obtained by and through a system of God’s grace, the blessings being appropriated by an obedient faith, not on works of man’s merit, but the entire system based on the merit of the blood of the Son of God. **It is a system, then, of grace, faith, law, blood and works of obedience.**

Chapter Five

Verses 1,2

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The main phrase is, “*We have peace with God.*” Inasmuch as man has declared war against God by committing sin, being alienated from God because of sin, becoming estranged from God due to sin, man has a desperate need to be brought into a harmonious and favorable relationship with God. This is spiritual peace. This peace is possible only if a man is justified, cleansed, or forgiven of his sins which have caused the separation and alienation. Isaiah 59:1,2, “*Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*” It is a glorious thought to ponder that a sinful man may come to a spiritual peace with God. How does it come? The justification necessary was accomplished, and this is a marvel. But how was it accomplished? It was by the system of faith that God devised through Christ. By faith in Christ, the kind of faith that causes one to obey, we are justified, and therefore, enjoy this needed peace with God. It is all possible by the virtue and due to the merit of Jesus Christ.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

In addition, it is through this same Christ that man has access into a spiritual state or condition defined here as *“this grace.”* *“This grace”* means that which the grace of God has produced, offers, and provides. It is the spiritual peace with God. How does one gain access into this grace? Again, the answer is *“by faith,”* belief in Christ and His system of faith. Notice this belief does not by itself accomplish the entrance into this grace. This belief or faith gives *“access”* into this grace. It makes entrance possible. The same thought is presented in John 1:12 where the record says, *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”* Who were the ones who received him? They were the ones who believed on His name. What did they receive? Were they made sons by mere belief? No, but the *“power to become”* sons of God was given to them. Having the power to become something is not the same thing as actually becoming that something. Having access to something is not the same as having that something. Faith, in the sense of belief, gives *“power to become.”* Faith gives *“access.”* When this faith is coupled with obedience, then the desired result becomes a reality. Obviously, the Roman Christians had taken advantage of the *“access”* their faith had brought them for they were at that time sons of God. They had followed through in the plan God devised. That plan, *“the faith,”* brought them into the blessings of God’s grace.

They now stood in that spiritual relationship called *“grace.”* They would rejoice in the hope of the glory God would give the saved. The *“glory of God”* does not refer to God’s personal glory, an attribute of God, but something God provides and gives to those who follow His scheme and system of redemption.

Verses 3-5

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Further benefits of being in *“this grace”* are mentioned. Tribulations were and are an inescapable part of serving the Lord. Second Timothy 3:12, *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* But as James teaches, the result of tribulation is not all bad (James 1:12). Peter teaches the same thing in First Peter 1:6,7. *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”*

Paul’s admonition that they glory in tribulation certainly does not mean they were to be glad for the persecution itself. Who could ever be? But they were to be like the apostles in Acts 5:41, who rejoiced *“that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”* Here is the glory under consideration when he discusses *“glory in tribulation.”* This tribulation produces something vital to serving God; namely, patience, steadfastness, and faithfulness. This in turn contributes to the development of another quality; experience, or more literally, a tried character. One who has been put to the test and passed the test is in far better condition to withstand what may come than the one who has yet to be put to the test. Having this tried character one could take hope and have reason for hope. This hope will not make one ashamed of the Lord and what is believed, even though the original tribulation was designed to make one ashamed. Nor would the Lord be ashamed of such a person. Compare the word *“ashamed”* as used here with the same sense of it in Second Timothy 2:15, *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Remember in the first chapter Paul declared he was *“not ashamed”* of the gospel, and had suffered much tribulation. He had learned to be steadfast; was a tried character; had reason for hope.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

The love of God refers to the love God has for man, or more specifically, for the Christian. This love is revealed in the gospel, “*the righteousness of God.*” It has been “*shed abroad*” in the Christian heart. It is the love God has for man that is “*shed abroad.*” It is His love of which we are aware. We became aware of His love by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, through the revelation of God’s scheme by which He will save mankind, makes us fully aware of the love God has for mankind.

The Holy Spirit is given unto the Christian in the sense that the blessings we can and do have through the love of God revealed in His scheme are ours. Without the revelation given by the Holy Spirit, we would remain ignorant of God’s love, and ignorant of the spiritual blessings we now enjoy as Christians. The Holy Spirit is given to us in that the “*good things*” declared by the Spirit are given to us. A similar teaching is found in two parallel verses, Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit is given to the same extent that the “*good things*” are given. It is not that the Holy Spirit personally is given, but the blessings derived from the operation of the Holy Spirit. Such is the idea of Romans 5:5.

It is worthy of suggestion (though not limited to just this) that the blessings specifically mentioned in verses three and four are what Paul had in mind. Certainly none could argue against the fact that the blessings mentioned here result from the operation of the Holy Spirit as He operates through the Word that reveals God’s love.

Verses 6-8

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The word “*for*” points back to that which has just been discussed, and now we can expect an elaboration of it. That which has been discussed is the love God has for man. Paul denotes more precisely the manifestation of that love. We were without strength, that is, weak in faith, the same word used in Romans 4:19 when Paul described what Abraham was not. When we were hopeless, indifferent, and wayward from doing what was correct in God’s sight, and when God saw the time was right or fulfilled, Christ died for the ungodly. As for God determining the proper time for all things regarding Christ, consider Galatians 4:4. “*But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.*”

The “*ungodly*” refers to sinful man, including the ones just described as “*without strength.*” We have to take note that it was God who acted on behalf of man. He was the One **who** instigated **what** was to be done and **when** it was to be done. The **who** is God. The **what** was the death of Christ. The **when** was when God saw fit for all these things to be accomplished.

Such a magnanimous deed as that done by Christ is emphasized in verse seven and eight by contrasting what Christ did against what normally might be expected. For “*scarcely,*” with difficulty, one might die for a just man. Such would surely be a tremendous sacrifice, but one might see some reasonableness for taking the place in death for an innocent man. The innocent did not deserve to die. One might, with the greatest kind of nobility, die in the stead of such a just person. For such a good man someone might “*dare to die,*” or bring himself to do so. Even this would be with the greatest difficulty.

But what Jesus did was far more than that. As extraordinary as one man dying for another even when the cause seemed worthy, it is more extraordinary what Christ did. He died for those who deserved to suffer death for themselves. The ones for whom He died earned their condemnation. Their sins condemned them. They should have paid for it. But He took their place. This is the place of all of us “*for all have sinned.*” While man was in condemnation and justly so, He came forward and died. Here is the demonstration of the love God has for man of which Paul has been writing, and which is revealed in the revelation of the gospel as given by and through the Holy Spirit. This is an essential part, indeed, the very heart, of the plan God had by which He would make man righteous.

Verse 9

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood,
we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Verse nine is the only logical conclusion to be drawn from what has been written. We are justified by the blood of Christ. We are saved from the wrath of the just God of heaven against sin because of the mercy of the same God. Christ and the plan built and based upon Him is that by and through which we can be counted for what we otherwise could never be counted; namely, righteous.

Notice in verse one of this chapter where Paul said we are justified “*by faith.*” Verse nine says we are justified “*by his blood.*” There are not two justifications. Our faith is in His blood. Our faith is in God and the plan He devised that called for the blood of His Son in our stead. In mentioning faith and blood, Paul was referring to two of the many essential ingredients that have gone into the gospel scheme of salvation, “*the righteousness of God,*” the gospel.

Notice also that from which one is saved is wrath. Paul had spoken of wrath against both the Gentile (1:32), and the Jew (2:5), and had been very plain that both stood in condemnation (3:9,23). Now he mentions again that both can be saved from wrath and reveals how.

Verses 10-11

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

The term “*if*” is not used in order to convey some doubt that we were enemies or that there is any doubt that the Christian is reconciled. The term is more properly understood in the sense of “*since*.” “*Since*” we were enemies and “*since*” we were reconciled by the death of Christ, now having been reconciled, there is another ingredient in God’s scheme for man’s salvation; namely, the life of Christ. This infers His resurrection and reaches back to include the perfect life He lived on earth as an example for us to follow. Most probably, however, having mentioned His death, and following the sequence of events, the main thrust has to do with His resurrection. Without the resurrection there would be no gospel, no demonstration of power over death, no climatic proclamation and declaration that He is the Son of God (1:4). The resurrection is an indispensable fact in providing for man’s salvation (First Corinthians 15).

Not only that, “*and not only so*,” we have blessings here and now. Our blessings for abiding in this grace are not limited nor confined to eternity. God has provided for us a way of joy in this life. We can live happier knowing we are going to our home with God. This joy that we have “*in God*” has been made possible through Christ. He was the One through whom we have received God’s gift of being forgiven. This repeats the teaching of Chapter three, verse twenty-five. Christ is our atonement.

The passage speaks of being “*reconciled*,” carrying the same thought forward from verse one of this chapter when Paul said, “*We have peace*.” This peace is accomplished by a reconciliation being made. Ephesians two speaks more on this theme of reconciliation and we suggest a study there.

Verses 12-19

12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: 13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. 15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Beginning here and continuing through several verses is a comparison, or better yet, a contrast between Adam and Christ, and the results of the actions of Adam and Christ. By one man, Adam, sin entered the world. The result of sin was death, spiritual as well as physical, but more importantly, spiritual (6:23; James 1:14,15). This result of Adam's sin “*passed upon all men*.” The meaning of this phrase is of great importance and consequence.

The idea of the word “*passed*” shows that which took place was of such significance that none could escape its power. There has not lived a person since sin entered the world that has escaped certain results of Adam’s sin.

We must keep before us that **guilt** of sin is one of the consequences of sinning, but not the only one. There are other consequences as well. Did the **guilt** of sin pass upon all men because of Adam’s sin? Or does this refer to other consequences of Adam’s sin that “*passed*” upon all men? In other words, are you and I **guilty** of Adam’s sin?

The answer is found in the definition of sin the Holy Spirit gives in First John three, verse four. Sin is transgression. Not until one does transgress the law of God does he become guilty of anything. The preposition “*for*” of verse twelve is to be understood as “because” or “inasmuch as”.

Certain results of sin have passed upon everybody. But why have they passed upon everybody? Some things have passed upon everybody unconditionally. For instance, due to the sin of Adam we all die physically. Because the first couple was driven from the Garden of Eden and from the tree of life, we all must die physically. But this has nothing whatever to do with our personal sins. Nonetheless, we physically die. Even the infant, who does no sin, dies. This is a result of Adam's sin and what sin introduced into the world. But remember, Paul is discussing spiritual death primarily. Spiritual death has "*passed upon all men,*" but why? It is not because we are guilty of Adam's sin, "*for that all have sinned.*" Spiritual death came into the world through the sin of Adam. Spiritual death was suffered by Adam the day he sinned (Genesis 2:17). Spiritual death is suffered by everybody who sins, but because of his own sins and not because of Adam's sin. Adam's sin introduced sin unto men, but each one must partake of sin for himself before he is counted guilty of sin. This is either true or First John three and verse four contradicts this passage, which is untenable. Many other people, other than the one who commits sin, may suffer certain consequences of a person's sins, but not the consequence of guilt. But one suffers the guilt when he himself sins.

Verses thirteen through seventeen seem to be an inspired explanation of the main theme being presented in the contrast of Adam and Christ and the results of their actions. The main theme continues at verse eighteen and nineteen which informs us how by the offense (sin) of Adam, judgment (condemnation) came upon all men (because all men partake of sin.) But righteousness (making man a righteous being or at least counting him so) came by Christ. The system or plan to make man righteous came through the One (Christ) as a gift from God, and justifies man, granting him life instead of death. One man's disobedience introduced sin into the world, and all have partaken of it and became sinners. But the obedience of One (Christ) makes the many sinners righteous by introducing life through justification. This is a gift, but the gift must be received. It is received by our obedience. It was provided by the obedience of Christ. Christ was obedient even to the death He suffered on the cross (Hebrews 5:8; Philippians 2:8). What a contrast! By one (Adam) came death, but by the other (Christ) came life. By one (Adam) came condemnation, but by the other (Christ) came justification.

If you and I are guilty of Adam's sin, unconditionally, then we are justified by Christ, unconditionally. This would mean universal salvation with nobody being lost. But this would not be in harmony with Scriptural revelation. Nothing is made clearer in the Bible than the fact that some will be saved but some will be lost.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Consider the detailed contrast given in verses thirteen through seventeen. First, Paul notes that until law, sin was in the world. In other words if there had been no law there would not and could not have been any sin because sin is a transgression of law. Since there was sin, there was law in the world. This is reaffirmed in verse fourteen when Paul states that death reigned from Adam to Moses. Death is the result of sin. Even though the law of Moses did not come until Moses, there was law, sin, and death. Sin reflects the existence of law (First Corinthians 15:56). Those who lived during the period from Adam to Moses had a law as we have already noted in previous chapters. Therefore, those that lived during that time sinned, but not just like Adam did, although they sinned nonetheless. They violated law given by God. They sinned, not to the equality and identity as did Adam, but they sinned and death reigned.

Observe this comment about Adam, “*who is the figure of him that was to come.*” Adam was a type of Christ. Indeed, the entire portion of verses thirteen through seventeen presents this typical nature of Adam to Christ. Adam, in somewhat a reverse order, did **against** mankind what Christ did **for** mankind. What Adam took away, Christ brought back. We are not to think the offense of Adam is either exactly like or simply the counterpart of the work of Christ. The “*free gift*” may refer to Christ since He was given. But I think the “*free gift*” refers to the justification received (verse eighteen). But let it be stressed that the offense and the blessing are not merely off-setting forces. Paul explains that the offense brought death, but **much more** came by the grace of God. The gift which comes through Christ and the justification He brought hath abounded unto many. The gift is **more** than the offense. Such is the meaning of the phrase, “*But not as the offense, so also is the free gift.*” The offense and the free gift are not exact opposites because the gift abounds “*much more.*”

Furthermore, the sin of Adam, the offense, condemned him. But the gift of Christ justifies all who sin and come to Him for forgiveness. The gift was not limited to the sin of Adam. Many offenses, not just Adam's sin, are covered by justification.

The difference between "*grace*" and the "*offense*" is that grace is more abundant than the offense, well able to cover any and all offenses. Notice the phrase in verses fifteen, seventeen, and twenty, "*much more,*" "*much more,*" "*much more.*"

Death reigned because sin entered the world and man sinned, but the "*abundance of grace*" and the "*gift of righteousness*" enables life to reign "*much more.*" In other words, the lack of similarity of the offense and the gift is seen in the power of each one. The offense had deadly power, but the power of the gift was and is greater, even to the removing of the deadly result of the offense.

An additional and repetitive comment is needful. Some believe we are born into the world **guilty** of sin unconditionally because of Adam's sin, and without any action of sin on our part personally. If that be true (which I do not accept for a moment), we still have no fear of spiritual death due to any alleged guilt we would have because of Adam's sin. What one lost unconditionally in Adam, he gains unconditionally in Christ. So even if we are guilty of Adam's sin (which we are not), we are relieved of that guilt in Christ just as unconditionally as we are supposed to have become guilty.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

We are not guilty of Adam's sin. The reason is simply because the guilt of sin was not passed to all by Adam, even though through him sin entered the world. Nor are we the receiver of life simply because Christ through His sacrifice brought life into the world. We are what we are on the basis of what we do regarding the will of the Lord for ourselves, including meeting the conditions of salvation in the gospel. Plainly, we are guilty of our own transgressions. Even so, we may well suffer consequences of other's sins, but not guilt. We are condemned spiritually on the condition that we sin, and are justified on the condition we come to Christ and follow His plan of justification. To be guilty of Adam's sin would mean we must have sinned just like Adam did, which Paul said those from Adam to Moses did not do. If they did not, we do not, either.

Verses 20,21

20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul defines the relationship of law and sin. Law defines sin; law exposes sin; law tells just how sinful sin is; law makes sin sinful. This is true regardless of which divine law you have under consideration. But where sin abounds, grace abounds more. When sin condemns; grace justifies. Where sin brings death and havoc; grace brings peace and joy. We are privileged to enjoy life, eternal life, through the grace of God manifested through Christ because grace is greater, more powerful and more abundant than is sin. There is no sin that grace cannot cover. This very emphasis of the greatness of God's grace over sin provokes Paul to enter the discussion, guided by the Holy Spirit, in chapter six. It is a discussion similar to what he had just completed in 3:5-8.

Chapter Six

At this point in the book of Romans, Paul has shown the Jews and Gentiles responsible before God and guilty of sin. Both had lived under law even though different laws. The advantage of the Jew was one of service because through the Jews the Savior was to come. Neither could stand before God justified under the law to which each was amenable because they stood condemned by virtue of violations. The sins of both Jews and Gentiles established the need of a universal system of salvation. The system by which sinful man can be made righteous before God, or counted so, is one of grace, blood, law, faith, and obedience. This God-given way is sufficient. Abraham had been justified by a similar plan, at least in principle. Adam had brought sin into the world, but Christ had brought life and justification. What does all this tell us?

Verses 1-7

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Some may have concluded if sinning causes the grace of God to abound, then the more one sinned the more grace abounds. Sinning was, therefore, commendable, not contemptible. They may have even decided sinning was doing God a favor because it enhanced the value of His system. It seems rather unlikely that such an idea could be taken seriously, seeing the destructiveness of sin. But when men want to sin and wish to find some excuse for doing so they can come up with most anything. Paul had already dealt with this matter partially in chapter three when he dismissed any Jewish contention that might have been raised that they were being condemned unjustly in view of the fact that their sins only “*commended*” the righteousness of God. Paul’s reaction shows such to be an absurd idea even on the surface. He said, “*God forbid!*” His reaction, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is equally forthright at any suggestion that one may or ought to sin in order to think grace would abound all the more. Again, we read, “*God forbid!*” It was ridiculous to think that those who had been separated from sin (“*dead to sin*”) should live in sin any longer. They had seen that sin was that from which they needed to be separated. They certainly would not wish to continue in sin.

Paul does not imply it was **impossible** for one who was separated from sin to return to a life of sin. The fact that he discussed it shows it was possible. If it had been impossible to return to a life of sin he would have simply dismissed the idea of sinning with the assertion that it was impossible to do anyway. However, he shows not the **impossibility** of sinning, but the **incompatibility** of sinning by the one who had been separated from sin.

He goes further in verse three to emphasize this incompatibility by recalling what they had understood at the time they were baptized. They knew that when they were baptized they had been baptized “*into Christ.*” Paul mentions this point in Galatians 3:27. Being “*in Christ*” is a definition of a spiritual condition and relationship to God. One is not condemned in that spiritual state (8:1). All spiritual blessings are enjoyed in that state (Ephesians 1:3). Salvation is in that state (Second Timothy 2:10). “*In Christ*” is where our spiritual needs are met and supplied. Out of Christ we are excluded from what Christ brought and offered. The question under discussion is the transference or the change of spiritual conditions from moving out to “*in.*” This was accomplished when they were baptized. The Romans realized this. Notice, it is not that baptism is of any virtue in the mere act of being immersed by itself, or that there is power in the water itself that accomplishes the desired result. But the desired goal of entering “*into Christ*” where the benefits become reality is when one obeys the commanded action of baptism. The power, merit, and source by which the change of spiritual condition was made possible and real is God through the blood of Christ as chapter five, verse nine already noted.

Only two passages in the Bible speak of how one gets “*into Christ*”(this one and Galatians 3:27), and both teach the same thing. We are **baptized** “*into Christ.*” There is not another passage that speaks of this accomplishment any other way. This is significant to those who accept what the Bible teaches on the plan of salvation.

But when one was baptized “*into Christ*,” other implications were involved. Not that the other implications were in disagreement or contradiction with entering “*into Christ*,” but that the blessings are expressed in other ways. One expression mentioned here is “*baptized into his death*.” To be baptized into the death of Christ cannot mean His literal death. Such would make no sense. It means one is baptized into the blessings that can belong to man by virtue of the death of Christ; namely, salvation. It means the same spiritual benefit as being “*in Christ*.” After all, Paul has already emphasized several times that the blood of Christ, which was shed in His death, is the atoning power God devised and provided. So the purpose of baptism is stressed here as entrance into the spiritual state of salvation, the benefits of His death, into a life separated from sin where it is incompatible to live in sin, and into the provisions of the grace of God. All who had been baptized enjoyed these blessings. Paul reminds them of this in answering any suggestion that they should live in sin anymore for any purpose.

Verse four begins with an unmistakable reference to the act of baptism itself which is a burial. The same point is made in Colossians 2:12, “*Buried with him in baptism*.” When one is baptized he is buried. The substitution by man of sprinkling and/or pouring is totally unwarranted by Biblical teaching. Men ought have more respect for the Word of God than to practice such things. God’s book teaches baptism is a burial.

Christians are “*dead to sin*” (separated from sin). How does this separation come about? It takes place when one is baptized into the death of Christ, or as stated in verse three, when one is baptized “*into Christ*.”

One “*in Christ*” is a “*new creature*” (Second Corinthians 5:17). Just as Christ died, was buried, and was raised, in like figure we die to sin being buried in baptism, and raised to “*walk in newness of life*.” We are then to live, conduct ourselves, behave ourselves in a new manner of life apart from sin because we are in a new relationship with God.

There is no entrance “*into Christ*” prior to baptism. There is no entrance into His death, or the benefits of His death, prior to baptism. One cannot be separated from sin apart from the blood of Christ, and it is in baptism that one enters that realm where His blood was shed, His death (John 19:34). The actual accomplishment of the separation from sin cannot be considered real until the power to cleanse has been applied. The power is the blood of Christ. It is applied when we obey baptism. In the action of baptism man is freed of the sinfulness of his condition and brought into the saved state. The Bible teaches no other way.

Look again at the “*newness of life.*” This is equivalent to the new birth taught in John 3:1-5. When one is “*born again*” he enters a new life. This is the same as the “*washing of regeneration*” of Titus 3:5. When one is baptized “*into Christ*” he becomes the new creature of Second Corinthians 5:17. Paul elaborates further in the following verses.

Verse five teaches we have become conjoined, “*planted together,*” united with each other, and united “*in Christ.*” A two-fold oneness is accomplished in baptism. We are united with Christ since those baptized “*were baptized into Jesus Christ.*” Baptism is in the likeness of His death and burial, and also in the likeness of His resurrection.

In all this the “*old man*” of sin is put off. The “*old man*” is the former sinful man who lived in sin as presented in Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:9,10. The old man is “*crucified*” or put to death, separated from and destroyed. There is now “*newness of life.*” Inasmuch as the question had been raised whether “*we shall continue in sin,*” Paul affirms since the old man has been removed we should not return to him and should not serve sin. Having died to sin, separated now from sin by the blood of Christ in the obedient actions taken, man is freed from sin. He is spiritually free “*in Christ.*” This freedom is not a freedom to do whatever one wants to do, but a freedom from sin that would otherwise destroy one spiritually. What a glorious deliverance is presented in these first seven verses of the sixth chapter.

This paragraph presents a positive and a negative accomplishment in baptism. The negative is the separation from sin. Sin is washed away by the blood of Christ when one is baptized. The positive is the oneness created with Christ and the redeemed in a spiritual state of a new relationship with God, free from sin, and characterized by a life that stays away from sin because a sinful life would be incompatible with the new spiritual relationship with God.

Verses 8-11

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word “*if*” does not convey any doubt that what is said is true, but is best understood as “*since,*” or “*inasmuch as what has been said is certainly true,*” certain things naturally follow. Since we are dead to sin (separated from sin), and are with Christ, we believe we shall also live with Him. In fact, our earthly lives must be lived with Him.

The life to be lived may have a twofold application. First, we are to live with Christ here on earth in the sense that we are not to live in sin, but are to pattern our lives according to the way of life He exemplified. We are to live in His fellowship which demands living as He directs. This cannot be done if we pursue a life of sin. Secondly, the idea must be embraced of the eternal and future life that the redeemed shall enjoy in heaven. Those who live with Christ here will live with Christ eternally. This eternal life is most important, indeed the prime portion of the spiritual benefits offered to man through Christ. He died never to die again. By His resurrection He demonstrated power over death, and death no longer must be dominant over man. Death cannot be dominant over the one who lives “*in Christ.*” Life is assured the faithful because Christ conquered death. Our assurance is even more certain in that He shall die no more. Death cannot destroy the One on whom we rely. We could not have relied on such a one as Lazarus, or others who once were raised from the dead, because they were raised only to die again. But not so with the Son of God. He died for payment of the penalty for sin, but was raised to die no more. He is the “*firstfruits*” of them that slept (First Corinthians 15:20). Herein lies the foundation of our hope.

Note Paul asserts here as in Hebrews 7:27 and 9:26 that He died “*once.*” Once was all that was necessary, and once was all that He would die. He died, but now lives. The life He lives is totally “*unto,*” looking toward, given to God. For that same reason we are to count ourselves as separated from sin, and are to live this “*newness of life*” unto God through Christ.

In answer to the question of verse one, “*Shall we continue in sin?*” Paul has answered with a resounding, “**No,**” for two very powerful reasons. One reason is because of what Christ has done for us in bringing deliverance from sin, and the other, because of what we have done in obedience to appropriate the deliverance Christ brought.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Being spiritually alive “*in Christ*,” one ought not allow sin to be a part of his life. Just as Paul has stated earlier in the chapter, God forbid that we should live any longer in sin. Our bodies should not be used for sin. Sin should have no place in our activities. We ought not obey lust. We have died, become separated from sin, and are now alive in the “*new man*” state, a “*new creature*” in Christ. Therefore, all of this is reason enough to terminate the practice of sin.

We are not to yield our members, our bodies, to be used as tools for doing things unrighteous. We are, rather, to be tools in the hands of God like spiritually alive people should be, and are expected to be. Either the devil or the Lord will use each of us. The Christian has made a commitment that he will be used by the Lord for righteousness rather than by the devil for evil. Sin is not to have dominion over us, but we are to make sure that it does not. Sin cannot have dominion over us as long as we choose to walk uprightly with the Lord. We do not live under the bondage of condemnation that is pronounced upon us by law, but we live under the system of grace by which God has offered release from sin.

It is both a comforting thought as well as a heavy obligation imposed upon us by the phrase, “*for sin shall not have dominion over you.*” It is a statement of determination. When we were out of Christ we were under the dominion of sin, but not so once we are “*in Christ.*” What a blessing! At the same time, we are under obligation not to follow a life of sin. **We need to remember where the blessing goes, so goes the obligation!**

Verses 15-18

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. 16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

What is the conclusion that is to be drawn from all this? Shall we sin because the condemnation of the law is no longer upon us, and we are under the blessings of grace? The answer is, "Absolutely not!" Just the opposite ought abide. Because we are under grace and not law, grace having released us from sin, we ought not sin. Again, for the third time (3:6; 6:2), Paul uses the strong sentiment expressed by the word, "*God forbid!*"

He now asks a question in view of what he has said, and answers it. "Do you know you are servant of the one you obey, whichever one it is, whether God or the devil, sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness?" What a powerful way to assert we serve what we obey. It is noteworthy how Paul makes it plain we are always servants, either of one or the other. We never are completely "free" in this life. We always have a master. We can choose our master, but we shall always be under one or the other. The one we obey is the one we serve.

Christians once had been servants of sin. But now, because of the grace of God to whom thanksgiving ought be given, they had obeyed that which had been delivered to them. The King James Version renders verse seventeen in a way that some think is misleading, but not necessarily so. It sounds to them as if Paul said they had obeyed what had been delivered to them. While this is true (because they could never have obeyed something never delivered to them), the American Standard Version makes it sound like the Christian is the one who has been delivered rather than the message delivered. What difference it makes escapes me! The message certainly had been delivered to them and they had obeyed the message. When they did the Christian was delivered from the bondage of sin which they had obeyed in times past. Their obedience to the "*form of doctrine*" which was delivered them brought about their deliverance from sin. Actually, a teaching had been delivered them (First Corinthians 15:3).

What had they obeyed? They had obeyed a "*form,*" a representation of something. Of what was it a "*form*"? It was a "*form*" of a doctrine or teaching. The only doctrine by which men can be delivered from being servants of sin is the gospel of Christ (1:16). So the gospel had been preached to them and they had obeyed it. Upon their obedience, they were made free from sin. They became servants of righteousness.

More specifically to the "*form,*" we refer again to First Corinthians 15, and learn Paul had delivered the gospel which includes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It was by this gospel they were saved. What "*form*" of that doctrine is more appropriate and precise in the representation of it than what Paul had just reminded the Romans that they had obeyed; namely baptism?

In baptism one dies to sin. He is buried and raised to walk in newness of life. The phrase, "*newness of life*," corresponds to the phrase, "*servants of righteousness*." One who has obeyed the command to be baptized walks as a new creature in a new life, no longer a servant of sin, but a servant of righteousness. The "*form*" they had obeyed was baptism which is a representation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Obedience to this "*form*" changed their spiritual servitude because of the blood of Christ reached in that transaction.

As in chapter one and verse one (when Paul called himself a servant of Christ, as one not only in the employ of another, but one who was the actual property of another, or a slave), so the term "*servant*" is used here. Christians are the actual property of Christ as well as in His employment. First Corinthians 6:19, 20 can be studied in this connection because it emphasizes the same truth.

Verses 19-23

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. 20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. 21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. 22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul addresses them in a manner to which they would be accustomed, "*the manner of men,*" according to the thinking of men. He speaks to them in a way they would understand. He uses the physical concept of slavery to describe the spiritual conditions of being in sin or salvation. He does this because their grasp of spiritual things was somewhat limited. They had lived in sin, and had demonstrated the weaknesses of the flesh. In this manner he impresses upon them the point that they once yielded to serving uncleanness. They went from iniquity to iniquity. Now, in contrast to that, as Christians they were to yield themselves unto a holy, sanctified, and set apart life. They once were slaves to sin. But they obeyed God's righteousness and were made holy. Whereas they once were servants of sin, no longer was this the case with them. When they served sin they were "*free*" from being righteous. The term "*free*" may seem a bit peculiar because usually one thinks of freedom as something to be desired. We usually seek freedom from what harms us. But here Paul uses the term in the sense of being removed from righteousness.

We are always servants either of God or the devil. When in bondage to one we are free from the other. So he is consistent in presenting these contradictory spiritual conditions this way. When you serve sin you are "*free*" from righteousness. When you serve God you are free from sin.

What did that former manner of life produce for them? Now, being "*in Christ,*" they were ashamed of what their former life had produced. Well they might be, because it produced sin. The end result of the life they formerly lived produced spiritual death, separation from God, and condemnation.

Now, free from the dominion of sin that brings spiritual death, and being servants of God, their fruit was different. In fact, it was opposite to the former state. The fruit of this new life is eternal life. While they lived here their life would produce that which is holy and good.

In a summary statement in words of contrast, Paul notes that the wages, payment, of sin is spiritual death. How foolish man is, while pursuing sin and enjoying its pleasures for a season, that he does not take time to consider the end result and inescapable wages of his life of sin. Ultimately it produces eternal, spiritual separation from God. On the other hand, servitude unto God produces eternal life, a gift from God, not something earned or accomplished by good works alone or by ourselves without Christ, but a gift received on the merit of Christ and His blood when certain conditions are met through obedience to the gospel commands.

There is a significance in naming Christ as “*our Lord.*” The word “*Lord*” whether capitalized or not, means “master.” We may have many masters even here on earth, but there is one spiritual Master, who is Christ. He is Lord of all. It is by and through Him that we enter, and can remain, in the blessed spiritual servitude to God of which Paul has written. We are presented the choice of two spiritual masters, Christ or Satan. Salvation is “*in Christ.*” Christians accept Jesus, the Son of God, as both “*Lord and Christ,*” (Acts 2:36).

Chapter Seven

Paul continues with one of the primary themes of Romans with the presentation of the gospel of Christ as that to which men are accountable now, rather than previous systems or laws, even the law of Moses. This was, and is, of utmost importance to the Jewish people and absolutely indispensable for all men in coming to understand the authority to which we are now all accountable.

Verses 1-4

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Paul makes an appeal to those who know the law of marriage, which has been God's rule since Eden. He states what all recognize to be true, how the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives amenable to it. We emphasize that one is amenable to the law which is over him.

He illustrates this accountability by the marital relationship. A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. This passage is not primarily discussing the various aspects of marriage. It is stating a basic principle regarding marriage, and uses this principle to make the point about the law of Moses and its relationship to the law of Christ. But marriage is not the prime topic of discussion. Nonetheless, it clearly shows how God intends for marriage to be a lifelong relationship. The exception involved in this lifelong oneness is discussed in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, but the exception is not relevant to the discussion under present consideration. However, one must be impressed with God's intent and preference regarding marriage even in this passage. The wife and husband belong to each other as long as they both shall live; until the death of one or the other). When the husband dies, he is separated from his wife, and at his death she is no longer married to him. She is then free to marry another if she chooses. For her to marry another while her husband was still living would make her an adulteress, but to marry after she is released from her husband due to his death does not make her an adulteress. Becoming free from the one, she is liberated to become obligated to another.

Paul uses this truth to illustrate the relationship of those previously under the law of Moses, but now living under Christ. The old Mosaic law was dead. It died at the crucifixion of Christ (Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14). Now the Jew who was a Christian was not under the old law anymore, but he is spiritually married to another, who is the Christ who was raised from the dead. The figure of Christ and His church as a marriage relationship is also found in Ephesians, chapter five.

Now, under Christ, they were to bring forth fruit unto God in this new relationship. The fruit to be borne was mentioned in the last verses of chapter six.

Verses 5,6

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Paul had just illustrated the changed relationship of the Jew regarding the law of Moses. As Christians they were married to Christ. In these two verses he draws the contrast between the two dispensations in terms of flesh and spirit. This may be drawing upon the fact that the flesh perishes and the spirit continues, although the reason for using these two particular terms is not definitely revealed to us.

Being "*in the flesh*" does not refer to being physically alive. Literally, they were alive in the flesh. Being "*in the flesh*" refers to some condition that previously existed, but no longer existed. The phrase "*which were by the law*" permits us to understand the phrase "*in the flesh*" to refer to the time when they served God under the law of Moses. Law, as noted earlier, defines sin and makes sin odious. Without law there is no sin, for sin is a violation of law. So when they live "*in the flesh*," under the old law, they worked the works of sin as the law defined it, and the wages of sin is spiritual death.

But now, being delivered from the old law in which they once were held captive, it being dead, they served in "*newness of spirit*," not in the oldness of the letter or subject to the old law. They continued to serve, but under a different system. The phrase, "*newness of spirit*," is in contrast to "*in the flesh*," and also in contrast to "*oldness of the letter*." The phrases "*in the flesh*" and "*oldness of the letter*" both refer to the time of service under the old law. "*Newness of spirit*" is the new way under Christ, while the other terms refer to the former way under the law of Moses.

Some have wrested this passage trying to make it say that we are not subject to any written law at all. They contend “*the letter*” refers to written law. They contend we are simply to “follow the spirit” in a subjective kind of service rather than an objective one defined by revealed law. The fallacy of such a position is at least twofold: (1) You cannot determine the “spirit” apart from the “letter.” When people talk about the spirit of a thing we must realize the only way we can understand the spirit is by what the letter says about it. (2) Such a position ignores the use of the terms “*spirit*” and “*letter*” as they are used by Paul. These two terms are used to represent two distinct systems. “*Letter*” refers to the Mosaic law to which none are now accountable. “*Spirit*” refers to the Christian system to which all are accountable. Neither refer to “conscience versus the Bible,” as some have falsely taught.

Verses 7-12

7 What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. 12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

What shall we conclude? Since under the old law people were in sin, did this make the law itself sinful? For the fourth time in this letter we have the strong and emphatic negative, “*God forbid.*” This literally means, “May it not be so.” Keep in mind the law of Moses also came from God, and the law itself was not sinful, nor the producer of sin. People sinned. The law defined that sin and made sin evident, classified what was and was not sinful, and condemned sin. But the law itself was not sinful.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Paul shows how he could not have known lust was sinful except the law had revealed such was sinful. He cites the tenth of the Ten Commandments as the law which had identified this sin to him. It is highly significant that Paul used this law to illustrate his point for he had just stated in verse six that we are delivered from the law. Obviously, he included the Ten Commandments in that from which we are delivered. The Ten Commandments were a part of the law given by and through Moses. It is that law, all of it, including the Ten Commandments, from which we are delivered. The Ten Commandments were a part of the law given by Moses.

This certainly does not mean that we are at liberty to murder, commit adultery, lie, or do the evils condemned in the Ten Commandments. We are still prohibited from such things under the law and will of Jesus Christ. But we are prohibited, not by the authority of the law given through Moses, but by the authority of Christ, the One to whom all men are now subject.

The commandment did not force Paul to sin. No commandment forces a person to violate that law. The commandment is simply an identification of sin which asserted itself when there was violation of the commandment. Sin would not have been alive, but dead, in fact, not even sin, if there had never been any commandment forbidding it. Without law there is no violation. But the law does not force or make the violation.

In verse nine Paul seems to imply there was a time when he was not accountable to the law. (Remember, Paul was a Jew by birth, and had been a Jew religiously until his conversion to Christ. He once lived subject to the law of Moses.) He infers there was a time, not clearly identified to us, earlier in his life when he was not accountable to the law, even the law of Moses. The only time I could understand this might mean would be when he was too young to know the requirements of the law, and therefore, could not have been responsible to obey it. We do know there were times when those who were young were not punished because of sins committed by those who were older, who could and should have known better (Numbers 14:29,30). Whether this is a reference to the time of his infancy and youth I cannot say with assurance. But when the commandment did become applicable to him as a mature person, his sin against the law was held against him and he died spiritually.

Here we have an important reference regarding whether one is born guilty of sin. If Paul had been born guilty of sin, there never would have been a time he was spiritually alive without the law. He would have always been spiritually "dead." But he states that was not the case. He never was "dead" until the commandment became applicable to him, and he partook of sin for himself, thereby, becoming spiritually dead or separated from God.

The commandment was given in order to define sin, and lead man in the paths to keep him away from sin. By keeping him away from sin it would keep him away from the necessity to die spiritually. But it actually became a contributing factor in his spiritual death because it branded his conduct sinful. It may be considered in this sense that the Mosaic law was a law of sin and death; that is, it defined the violation of the law as sin, and sin brought death. But the old law might be considered as being ordained to life in the sense that living perfectly under the law (which was not possible for human beings), one would have never sinned, never spiritually died, but continued to enjoy spiritual life. It is noteworthy, while one might never die spiritually by living perfectly, man could not live perfectly, and the old law did not make adequate provision to remove sins once committed.

An additional word about the old law being a “*law of sin and death*” is in order. In the sense suggested above, the old law may be thought of as a law of sin and death. But the “*law of sin and death,*” which is mentioned in chapter eight, verse two, is not the Mosaic law, as shall be explained when we come to that passage in chapter eight.

Note here that Paul suggests a quality of sin that makes sin so deadly. It has the power to deceive men. Sin looks to be what it is not. It is deceptive. When men fall for the deception of sin they die spiritually. You will want to read First Timothy 2:14 in this connection.

Rather than the old law being sinful, the law itself was holy. The commandments therein were holy, just, and good. Having come from God, we would not expect it to be otherwise. If men could have lived perfectly under the old law they would have been sinless.

Verse 13

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the 13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Having stated that the law and any commandment specifically therein was itself good, it might seem (since the law had a contributing part in identifying Paul as a sinner), that the law would appear to be the source of death. But again, Paul emphatically denies that kind of conclusion. Sin and death was not the fault of the law, but the fault of man in failing to keep the law. The law had simply made sin to appear to be what it actually was; that is, sinful. It identified sin so that sin was branded as sin. Everything the law called sinful was hurtful and harmful to man because it prevented man from fulfilling his purpose for existence; namely, to bring glory to God. We must not become confused as to the purpose and use of the old law. It was not a system by which man might be given eternal life once he had sinned. In this sense it was not “*faultless*” (Hebrews 7:19; 8:7). It was a system that required perfection to be counted sinless, and this was impossible. Therefore, the result was spiritual death. The death, however, was the result of sin, and not the fault of the law itself which identified sin.

Verses 14-20

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Paul continues a defense of the old law, not that it is still binding, because he had made it clear that it is not binding on anyone anymore. He was defending it in that it was not evil itself. The law was an appeal to the spirit of man. It is described as being spiritual. It was from God, and that made it a spiritual law. Paul, as are all men, was carnal, however, and not willing or able to abide by its spiritual appeal, but rather chose at times the carnal path of sin.

To illustrate his carnality, he shows an inconsistency within himself, yea, all people. To paraphrase his comment, "I do what I ought not. I do not do what I ought. I even do what I hate. When I realize I do not live properly under the law, I acknowledge I ought to live according to the law, and thereby recognize that the law itself is good."

Verse seventeen has been misappropriated by some who contend that men are not guilty of sin when they sin in the body if they really did not intend to sin. But Paul teaches no such thing. Paul is simply asserting that it was contrary at times to his will to sin, but he sinned anyway. Either his will was too weak or his flesh too strong to abide by the law. The desire to sin was stronger than his determination to resist sinning. For more on this point, observe the comments made on verse twenty.

The body is full of desires and appetites, many of which are not evil themselves, but can be fulfilled and satisfied in an evil manner. This is what he means by saying no good thing dwells in his flesh. He is not saying his flesh is itself sinful by its very existence. Rather his flesh poses a problem to him. Even when his will is not to sin, his flesh overrides his will. Again, inconsistency between flesh and will, between his flesh and God's law, is very apparent.

All in all, Paul makes a graphic presentation of the destructive power of sin. Sin is not to be taken lightly. It is that with which one cannot mockingly trifle. It deceives. It overrides your will at times. It causes you to do what you know you ought not do. It strikes at the appetites of the body to lead you to violate God's law. It prevents doing what ought to be done. The carnality of the person does not measure up to the spirituality required even by the law. Man sells his soul to Satan by sinning, and the law defines that transgression.

To suggest verse twenty relieves the soul of man from sin that he did not intend to commit or from sin committed against his will would reduce the entire passage of verses fourteen through twenty to nonsense and uselessness. If sin committed unintentionally or under the weakness of the flesh was not to be counted against the Christian, why would Paul consider such a situation as that to be the kind that could make him "*wretched*" (verse 24)? Why would he even be concerned about deliverance from something for which he would not be held accountable anyway? Why would he be concerned about being brought "*into captivity to the law of sin*" (verse 23)?

When Paul says in verses seventeen through twenty, "*It is no more I that do it,*" he is not removing his guilt of sin nor his responsibility for sinning. He is simply saying it was not his will to sin, but he sinned anyway. It is a very impressive way of presenting the power of sin.

Verses 21-23

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

What Paul knows and reveals is that man does not always live up to what he intends. He may have good intentions, but can sin to his own destruction nonetheless. One may even delight in God's law, but unless he keeps that law he is guilty of sin. The inward man, the spirit of man, may well see the goodness of God's way. But there is a conflict being fought, and an on-going spiritual war. This war is between the mind and the body; between the spiritual requirements of the law that appeals to the mind of man, and the temptations of sin that appeal to the fleshly appetites of the body. The "*law in my members*" (the law of sin), is the appeal of sin. The "*law of the mind*" is God's law as it appeals to the mind of man.

The man of God, so long as he lives on this earth, shall be engaged in such a conflict. He must learn to overcome evil with good rather than be overcome with evil.

Verses 24, 25

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Because of this constant war that must be fought, Paul describes himself as a wretched man. Such is true of every man who is in the very same conflict. He ponders how he may be victorious, and be delivered from this situation. What is provided that would release man from the destruction that threatens? He cannot live in perfection. He is battered with temptation, and will sin. The only way to be preserved from destruction is liberation from sin. What is the answer? The question really is, "Who is the answer?" The answer is Christ. God through Christ provides the much needed and desired deliverance.

The last statement of very twenty-five needs more elaboration. Paul is showing two paths men can travel. They can follow the law of God, or the law of sin. Man is faced with the choice to allow the mind, which is given over to the law of God, to govern and rule the body, or to allow the body, which is given over to and prone to follow sin, to govern and rule the mind. One or the other will control our lives. It is not possible that you can serve God with the mind, and sin with the body, at the same time. Paul had already shown this to be absurd and ridiculous in chapter six, verses two, and twelve through fourteen. Sinfulness is to be foreign to the life of the Christian in mind and body. But which shall it be? Will it be a surrender of the body to the will which responds to the spiritual, or a surrender of the will to the body which responds to the way of sin? The way the Christian ought to go cannot be misunderstood.

Chapter Eight

Men have divided the Scriptures into chapters and verses. For this we are grateful because it makes location of passages easier. But sometimes a chain of thought is broken by these artificial divisions. Such seems to be the case at this point in Romans. At least, the general theme appears to continue into chapter eight that was under discussion in chapter seven.

Verses 1, 2

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Having explained in the seventh chapter how men must not be governed by the will of the flesh that is prone to sin, but by the will of the mind that is given over to God, realizing that sin brings death and condemnation, having stated that deliverance was in Christ, Paul states the same blessing another way in verse one as one of “*no condemnation.*” What a glorious release and deliverance this really is! “*No condemnation!*” Men who realize that sin condemns will rejoice in this knowledge. But where is this state of “*no condemnation*” to be found? It is found “*in Christ.*” Paul has discussed this phrase earlier in the letter. Once again there is this implied contrast between what is “*in Christ*” and what remains out of Christ. We considered this in chapter six when Paul discussed being “*baptized into Christ.*”

Those who are “*in Christ*” escape condemnation, but they have the obligation to walk or live a certain way that is not according to the satisfaction of the appetites of the flesh which is a sinful way, but to live a life directed according to the Spirit. This refers to the Christian way as revealed unto man by and through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the author of a law that brings life. This is the way of Christ, the plan devised by God the Father through Christ, and revealed to man through the gospel. When one submits himself to the gospel he will enjoy the blessing of freedom from what condemns him. He enjoys freedom from sin. One law (the law of life) overcomes another (the law of sin and death). The law of sin and death declares, “You sin; you die.” One might consider Romans 6:23 and James 1:15 as he defines the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death is not the law of Moses as some have presumed. If that were the case, then Paul would be saying the law of Moses could not deliver us from the law of Moses, which makes no sense. The teaching is that the law of the Spirit of life releases one from the spiritual death of the law of sin and death.

Verses 3, 4

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The law given by God through Moses was not able to do what it was not designed to do. It was never intended to be the way of deliverance from sin (Hebrews 7:19; 8:7). The law did attempt to regulate and govern the Jew in his conduct of the body in which there are appetites and desires that, when fulfilled and satisfied unlawfully, brings sin. It is actually the flesh of man that is weak rather than the law itself. Thereby, the weakness of man’s flesh makes the law of Moses seem weak in that it is unable to accomplish salvation for man from the sins of the flesh. There is a difference between defining sin and delivering from sin. The Mosaic law did the first, but not the second.

Therefore, God did something else to accomplish the deliverance. What He did was to send His Son in the form of man, in the likeness of flesh, as a man, being human and divine, and because of sin, allowed him to die on the cross in order that sin might be condemned, and man granted a way of freedom from it. The righteousness of the law, the high and strict code of conduct required by the Mosaic law, and the impossibility of man to achieve perfectness, made the necessity of forgiveness all the more important. This righteousness could only be achieved by forgiveness. It could not be accomplished by the deeds of man, but by the grace of God through forgiveness of the transgression of man. It is fulfilled in those who walk not in the way of the flesh, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, but in those who walk in the way of the directives of the Holy Spirit. By walking in the Christian way of life, and enjoying forgiveness of sins, the righteousness the law required can be accomplished. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude the necessity of being "*in Christ*" in order to meet the requirements of righteousness that God desires in man.

No man has the capacity to live a perfectly sinless life. All accountable people have either said, done, or thought something contrary to the will of God. Even so, man can be counted righteous if he is forgiven of his sin. The way of forgiveness is the way of the Spirit.

Three laws are mentioned in these first four verses. (1) There is the law of the Spirit of life, which is the gospel plan of salvation. (2) There is the law of sin and death, as earlier defined. (3) There is the Mosaic law which could not deliver from law number two that law number one could do.

Verse 5-9a

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

Emphasizing that the Christian is the one who fulfills the righteousness of the old law, Paul notes that those who mind the things of the flesh are in contrast to those who mind the things of the Spirit. There are those who are interested in living the life directed by the Spirit, and they are the same ones who are not given over to the things of a fleshly or sinful life. Though they be in the flesh in the sense of being physically alive and in the physical body, and though they have the same physical make-up and bodily appetites, they control themselves in keeping with the Word of the Spirit. The fleshly minded person cares little or nothing for the welfare of his own spirit before God. He is more interested in the satisfaction of his passions and lusts in whatever way he sees fit.

The results of these two states of mind are poles apart. The carnal mind brings spiritual death while the spiritual mind brings life and peace, eternal life and spiritual peace with God. To possess the carnal mind and walk according to the dictates of the carnal mind means one places himself in opposition to God, even enmity with God. There can be no harmony between the carnal, fleshly, sinful way of life and the true and living God. One is at enmity against the other. There is pictured here again the conflict between the two that Paul had described in chapter seven. One cannot be in submission to the other. One or the other dominates. There is no way for the fleshly minded person to be subject (obedient) to God while in his fleshly mind. Those in the flesh, in sin, simply cannot please God in that condition.

It is so obvious that it may not even need to be mentioned, but being “*in the flesh*” does not refer to being physically alive in the physical body, but being in the condition of sin. This is the second contrast between flesh and Spirit. The first was found in chapter seven in a contrast between the old law (flesh), and the newness of the Spirit (the gospel). Here the contrast is between living in sin (flesh), and living according to the way of the Spirit. One cannot please God while living the way of sin (flesh).

Christians are not those who live in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The phrase, “*in the Spirit,*” is synonymous with the phrase, “*in Christ.*” It denotes a spiritual relationship with God as well as a way and direction of life.

Finally, there is the outright affirmation that the Spirit of God dwells in those who are in the Spirit. The Christian has fellowship with Deity. The way and manner of this dwelling in the Christian is not stated here. But it is implied in the overall context. As one walks after the Spirit, as one lives in obedience to the directions of the Spirit (and these directions are revealed in the Word), to that extent one enjoys the company of Deity. One in Christ, or in the Spirit, is one who has this relationship or fellowship with Deity. Again, we can see that there is no consistency in one claiming to have fellowship with the Spirit unless he is not of the flesh.

Verses 9b, 10

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

A break in the midst of this verse is proper. Paul had just been discussing the carnal versus the spiritual mind, and the accompanying results. At the last he introduced the concept of fellowship that exists between man and Deity. It is this last thought that goes forward in this paragraph.

To belong to Christ means to have the Spirit of Christ (which I understand to be another identification of the Holy Spirit, although it may simply refer to the Son Himself) in our possession. We have fellowship with Him. In other words, one cannot claim to be in Christ or belong to Christ when he does not have the Spirit of Christ. Where one goes, so goes the other.

Having learned of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit with us in verse nine, it is not surprising that we find Christ is in us also. One “indwells” us just as does the other, in the same relationship or fellowship, and under the same circumstances of our walking according to the way of Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. We have fellowship with Him in a saved state, and He has fellowship with us at the same time. In this state the body is not the controlling factor of our life. The passions, lusts, and sins of the body are brought under our control. Indeed, they are dead in the sense that we do not give ourselves over to such things. In contrast, we have life because of righteousness given by the Spirit. This verse is relevant to the discussion of what is often called the “indwelling of the Spirit.” The concept is best understood as being synonymous with having fellowship with Deity rather than a personal, literal habitation within the body.

Verses 11-13

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

These verses reaffirm that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian. It was by and through the Holy Spirit that Christ was raised from the dead. This same Holy Spirit is the One to whom we also look for our resurrection. It cannot be said that the Holy Spirit performs His actions independent of the Father or the Son, however. What the Spirit is said to do must also include the cooperation of the Father and Son.

But since we have the Spirit of Christ, the body of sin being dead, life being assured us, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, our obligation is to refrain from a fleshly life of sin. We are debtors to abstain from evil. But having put to death the sinful deeds of the body, we shall have eternal and spiritual life.

But note that it is "*through the Spirit,*" by means of the Spirit, that the deeds of the body are mortified. Man, by himself, cannot put away sin nor obtain deliverance therefrom. Man can do his part only by following the guidance given by the Spirit. We learn elsewhere how the Spirit guides, which is by means of the Word.

Verses 14-17

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Christians are the sons of God. Christians are God's children. Christians are led through life by the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit. The way the Holy Spirit leads and directs men is by and through the Word given through the Holy Spirit. When one does what the Spirit teaches, when one is of the disposition to allow himself to be led by the Spirit, he will become and remain a faithful child of God.

Christians were once in bondage to sin, and in a fearful state of doom. But not so now! Some Christians were in bondage to the old Mosaic law before becoming Christians. But not so now! Having left whatever was the former state, in a sense having been adopted by the Father and now His children, Christians have every right to refer to Him as our Father, even in the dearest and most intimate ways, ever keeping in mind the necessity of genuine and obvious respect. The term “*Abba*” is a term of endearment and closeness which the Christian has with the Father of heaven. God forbid, however, that we refer to God with trite and earthy terms that fail to show proper reverence due Deity.

The Holy Spirit, through the Word given by and through Him as He inspired the writers of the Bible, informs me what I must do to become and remain a faithful child of God. I either go the way prescribed by Him or I cannot possibly claim spiritual sonship. On the other hand, I know whether I have conformed to what is commanded of me. I know whether I have done what is taught because, being a creature of intellect as God has made all men, I can determine what is required by the Holy Spirit in the Word, and I can determine whether I have done what is required. My testimony as to my obedience, alongside the testimony of the Holy Spirit in which the commands are given, will determine whether or not I am a child of God.

If my testimony says I have done as the Holy Spirit has actually taught, the promises and directions of God being true, I can know I am God’s child. If my testimony is that I have not yet done what the Holy Spirit’s testimony requires, I can know I am not yet a spiritual child of God. The testimonies together, not separately, determine my sonship, and my knowledge of my relationship to God.

Too many have wrested this passage and tried to insert the idea that in some unexplained way the Holy Spirit sends us a special message to tell us that we are children of God. Many conclude that this message comes in the form of some dream, vision, or some strange and unexplained experience of some sort. Such is simply not taught. It is not even suggested. Rather, such an idea reflects a genuine distrust and lack of respect for the inspired, infallible, all-sufficient Word of God given by and through the Holy Spirit. The instructions found in the Word are reliable and true.

If I am God's child, I am His heir, and one who shall receive the full inheritance offered. As Christ was God's Son, I am also God's son in a lesser sense, but still a joint-heir in the same family as Christ, having the same Father as Christ.

One characteristic of this sonship will be that of suffering for His cause. But if I am faithful to the way of the Lord, and must suffer for it, I can be assured that the suffering is not for naught, but I shall, in God's good time, be glorified with Christ, and all the redeemed.

Verse 18

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Having mentioned the suffering of a Christian, Paul compares that suffering with the benefits of being a child of God. Actually, there is no comparison because one so far overshadows the other. The glory that the Christian shall enjoy shall overshadow the suffering the Christian must endure. They really cannot even be compared.

Verses 19-23

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

We heartily concur with Peter in Second Peter 3:16 when he said some of the writings of Paul are hard to understand. This passage is one of them.

First, there is an earnest expectation, something earnestly and sincerely anticipated. It is expected and anticipated by *“the creature,”* whoever this may mean. The term *“creature”* is also the same term sometimes translated *“creation.”* In view of the mention of the *“whole creation”* in verse twenty-one, I understand the term *“creature”* in verse nineteen to refer to some of the creation. What part of the creation is meant? It is that part that has an earnest expectation, anticipation, or hope. It is reasonable to suggest this refers to the Christian.

Furthermore, in verse nineteen the expectation is defined as the manifestation of the sons of God. This is an identification of the sons of God before all as to who is, and who is not, a son of God. Who else but the Christian earnestly anticipates the manifestation of God’s family? While we can know we are the sons of God because of the joint testimony of the Holy Spirit and our spirit, as discussed earlier, there is much disagreement among men as to who are sons of God. There will someday be a manifestation who is, and who is not, a son of God. Also, there is a day coming when the glories that shall be bestowed upon the sons of God will be manifested. The *“creature,”* or Christian, earnestly expects, anticipates, looks with hope, to that manifestation.

In verse twenty the “*creature,*” or Christian, is said to have been subjected to vanity, meaning exposed to sin, tempted to sin, and by partaking of sin, brought under the dominion of sin. It was not the creature’s will that he be exposed or tempted even though the creature partook of sin by his own will. But this exposure and temptation to sin was the will of another, allowed by another, who is called “*him.*” That “*him*” did not force the creature to sin, but allowed the creature to sin. The creature actually came under the dominion of sin and vain things by his own willingness to partake of that to which he was exposed.

That “*him*” is the same one who later subjected the creature (exposed the creature and allowed the creature to come under another dominion) to hope. The One who has allowed man to sin, and who offers man hope of deliverance from sin, is God. God did not force man to become vain. Neither does He force man to be freed from vanity. Man is a free agent to exercise his own power of choice. But God has allowed man to sin if he chooses to sin, and God also allows man the hope of deliverance from sin if he chooses the way of deliverance. In both instances, God offers, or has willed, that opportunity be given. What man eventually does with each opportunity is his own choice.

This verse is speaking of the former condition of the “*creature,*” or Christian, when he was in sin due to the fact he had partaken of sin. Then it turns attention to his present and saved condition as a child of God, “*the creature*” who anticipates the manifestation of the sons of God.

Again, in verse twenty-one, the “*creature,*” or this portion of the creation “*shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*” How could this refer to anyone except a Christian? Who else but the Christian is delivered into the glorious liberty? So I conclude that the “*creature*” of verses nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one refers to the Christian. This passage shows the glory and benefit of being a Christian.

In contrast to that of the Christian, there is the “*whole creation*” in verse twenty-two. The Christian is a new creature in Christ, and the “*whole creation*” includes everybody else as well. I see no reason here to think as some do that Paul includes the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms in this phrase, even though such is a part of the creation in one sense. None could question that such things are a part of God’s creation. But keep in mind the context of the passage lest we become bogged down with irrelevant discussion. Paul is concerned with people. He is concerned with salvation of that which is lost in sin and needs to be saved from the guilt of sin. He is not concerned with things created in which there is no guilt of sin. The scheme of redemption is applicable to man, not brute beasts and material things. Therefore, the “*whole creation*” refers to people, all people of the world, including Christians. It is in contrast with that smaller portion of “*creatures*” that earlier verses mentioned when referring to Christians.

The Christian has many things in common with the rest of mankind. One thing mentioned here is that he suffers. Indeed, as we have already learned, the Christian sometimes suffers a suffering that never befalls the non-Christian because he suffers for his faith, as seen in verses seventeen and eighteen. But he also suffers those things such as are common to man simply because he is a member of the human family. Everyone suffers many things due to the introduction of sin into the world by Adam and Eve. We all suffer pain, disease, physical death, and other sufferings. While here on earth we all groan and travail together in the common disasters of human existence.

But there is a difference between the Christian and the rest of the creation of men. While the Christian suffers, he suffers in hope. He has the firstfruits of the Spirit; he is the recipient of the pledge and promise of God, the Lord's guarantee of something better. The Christian is a part of God's assurance. The very existence of the Christian, a saved being, stands as an assurance of the promise and pledge of God to the human family. All the human family can look at the Christian, note his life and his hope, and take heart. The Christian awaits for the time when, though he dies physically, he shall be raised with the redeemed. The adoption here is the final adoption, and not used in the same sense as in verse fifteen. Verse fifteen infers that we have become children of God as if adopted from the family of the devil, while in verse twenty-three we have under discussion the final reward and redemption of the resurrection and heaven. The first adoption we already enjoy in this life as sons of God, while we wait for the eternal adoption in heaven.

Let me remind the reader that this explanation may not be approved by many. But I contend it fits and harmonizes with the context of the passages before and after it. It speaks of the blessings of being a Christian, and what it means to be a Christian. There is so much in this chapter that emphasizes the meaning and significance of being a Christian. At the end of the chapter I shall enumerate some of the blessings and significances of being a Christian found in chapter eight.

Verses 25, 25

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

These verses seem to confirm the conclusions drawn from the preceding verses. Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, keeps talking about the hope the Christian has that others do not have. This hope keeps us striving forward and pressing toward the prize in faithfulness. Hope is a motivating factor toward faithfulness. Take away that hope and you take away the reason for remaining faithful. That for which the Christian hopes has not yet come upon him, but he patiently, steadfastly, persistently “keeps on keeping on” with his earnest expectation before him. Someday this hope will become reality, and will no longer be hope.

Verses 26, 27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

We are informed that the Christian has difficulties or infirmities. We have noted this previously. Our own experiences in life teach this. We are also informed that the Holy Spirit helps the Christian respecting these infirmities. We do not know everything that Deity may do on our behalf. We only know what is revealed. But we do know that Deity does work on our behalf, and this is enough to give us great comfort. We do not know of any influence Deity exerts upon us to show the way of the Spirit other than the persuasions found in the revealed Word. **There is no revelation that would let us believe Deity operates on the spirit of man except through the Word of the Spirit.** However, we are assured that Deity works in other ways **for us**, even though we have no knowledge whatever that He works **upon us** or does anything **to us** other than through the Word. The fact that the Holy Spirit does not operate directly **upon us** does not mean the Spirit does nothing **for us** in ways not revealed in detail. In this very passage we have the revelation that the Spirit does operate **for us**. Through the providence of God rather than some miraculous or direct manner, we are confident Deity is caring for us. I do not propose to comprehend all the ways of God in the operation of His providence. But in this verse we have information telling us something that Deity (specifically the Holy Spirit) does on behalf of the Christian.

Prayer is a privilege that belongs to the child of God. However, it is evident that there be times that the Christian does not know how to pray as he ought. In the context that the Spirit helps in our infirmities, I safely presume that the times the Christian may not be able to pray as he ought may be when he is overburdened amidst some infirmity or hardship he finds very difficult to carry. At such times, we are informed in this passage that intercession is made on our behalf. The One who makes this intercession is the Holy Spirit.

It is suggested by some that the “*spirit*” here is not the Holy Spirit, but man’s spirit. It makes no sense whatever that my own spirit would make intercession for me separate and apart from the operation of my own intellect, intelligently and rationally. When I pray my own spirit is involved in making that prayer, and I must pray with an awareness of mind or spirit. But in the condition under consideration here, my own spirit is prohibited from functioning as it otherwise might. It is at such a time that I need help beyond the power of my own spirit. I do not see how my spirit can intercede for me when my own spirit is unable to pray as prayer ought to be made.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the intercessor here. While the Scriptures teach there is only one mediator, Jesus Christ (First Timothy 2:5), to intercede on the behalf of another is not limited to Him. Intercession is making a plea for another. We can and do make intercession for each other in prayer. That the Holy Spirit can and does make intercession for the Christian when the Christian does not know how to pray for himself is the thrust of the passage. Comments on verse thirty-four should be considered.

The last of verse twenty-seven states intercession is made by some “*he,*” which I understand to mean the Holy Spirit. It is not other saints who make the intercession under discussion, nor my own inexplicable intercession for myself, but an intercession by someone “*for the saints.*” Again, that someone is the Holy Spirit.

Neither does this intercession by-pass Christ through whom we approach the Father. Notice the intercession is “*according to the will of God.*” Therefore, even though the Holy Spirit makes the intercession, it is made through the Son, and to the Father.

Having sufficiently established that the intercessor is the Holy Spirit, let us take note of the phrase, “*with groanings which cannot be uttered.*” It would make no sense for one Person of the Godhead to be making groanings to another Person of the Godhead because of an inability to express Himself. The Holy Spirit is not the source of the groanings, but the groanings come from the saints who are in the midst of infirmity, and cannot pray with words that cannot be spoken at that time. They are so beset by that which has pressed upon them that they can only groan beneath the weight of it. It is these groanings of the infirmed saint that the Holy Spirit takes and presents, through Christ, to the Father on behalf of the saint. Herein is the great blessing we have as children of God. There is no problem so great that can befall us, even problems that may be of such severity that would deprive us of the proper faculties to be able to pray as we ought, but God will still hear petitions on our behalf. Our very groanings are taken by the Holy Spirit and presented as prayer for us. “*He that searcheth the hearts*” is the Father, and the Father knows the mind of the Spirit, even as the Spirit presents an intercession for us.

Verses 28-30

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

In this passage certain things are mentioned that work for the good of certain people. The things that work for good are that which God works, primarily the predestination and foreknowledge of God concerning certain ones. This refers to His system for man's salvation, and all God did to provide it. God predetermined some would be saved. Christ is the first rank among many who would be acceptable sons of God. Being "*firstborn*" means He has rank, position, and authority over all others. The ones who would be like Christ, and acceptable to God, are those who are called. They have answered that call. The called ones make a proper response to that call. God calls men by the gospel (Second Thessalonians 2:14), and the gospel is God's power unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Those who hear the call of the gospel, conform themselves to the Christ that has been sent, are the ones predestined to be the sons of God. This plan that God worked out is for the good of them that have shown their love for God.

We are not to think this passage means that everything that happens is good. Sin is often a part of our lives, and there is no way to construe sin to be good. Tragedy may befall the saint, and that is not itself good. Sometimes hardship is much better for us than we at first might think, but not all difficulties that come to the Christian are good. Nor does this teach that everything that happens is because God makes it happen. That is not true. Men make things happen also.

God has predetermined, according to this passage, that those who love Him and conform to Him and His Son will belong to Him. Each one must decide for himself whether he will be one who loves and conforms.

Verse thirty continues the last thought regarding predestination. Here is a sequence of events in proper order that describes more of this predestination. The predestined are first called. We know this call comes by the gospel. A proper response to the call is obviously implied because the New Testament constantly calls upon man to properly respond to the gospel. The proper response to the gospel is faith and obedience. God has predetermined that those whom He calls by the gospel, and who makes the proper response, shall be justified. Justification carries our thoughts back to the previous passages in this epistle regarding the system of grace, faith, including the blood of Christ, by which our justification, or salvation, from sin is accomplished. It naturally follows that those who have become partakers of such spiritual benefits that are found "*in Christ*" are the ones who shall be glorified at last.

There is a set plan, predetermined, unchangeable. While the specific individuals are not predestined as to whom shall hear and respond properly to the call, it is specifically determined that those who hear and obey as they should shall be those who are justified, and eventually glorified.

Verses 31-34

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

In view of the information about the aforementioned promises and assurances given, what conclusion can we reach? Having mentioned how the Christian is often beset with infirmities, what of such things anyway? Can they overcome the Christian? Since God overrules, and we are in His care, will those things that seem to oppose us be defeated, and shall we truly enjoy victory? The answer is, "Yes." If God is for us, if we are with Him and He with us, nothing that comes shall be able to win the ultimate victory over us. None can stand against the Mighty God whom we worship, and whose sons and daughters we are.

So complete and overwhelming has been God's concern that He even gave His own Son to die on man's behalf. By that plan He has provided deliverance for us from that which would otherwise destroy us. If God would go that far for our good, will He not also provide for us all things that are needful to see the successful conclusion of the matters of life and spirit? The question answers itself, and in the affirmative. (See Ephesians 1:3 and Second Peter 1:3). The fact that God provides everything needful does not mean man will always use and partake of what God has provided. But that is not the fault of God in whom there is no fault. The refusal of man to take advantage of what God offers him is no reflection whatever on the generous and sufficient provision God has made.

Since God has justified, who can stand to condemn what God has justified? Is there any who can override the edicts and judgments of God? Indeed, not! What a joy and security is that of the Christian who has come to God by God's system of faith that God has provided through Christ! They are God's own, and none shall condemn them. The only power to condemn is the very One who makes intercession on our behalf.

Verse thirty-four asserts that Christ is also One who intercedes for us. Having previously learned how the Holy Spirit intercedes on certain occasions, now we learn that the Son is also concerned with us. We pray through Christ. “*No man cometh unto the Father but by me.*” (John 14:6). While this is primarily applicable to coming to God for salvation, it must also include all other approaches and relationships between us and the Father.

Some object to my previous conclusion and discussion about the intercession of the Holy Spirit on the grounds that it bypasses Christ. They emphasize that man must approach the Father through the Son. I believe man must approach the Father through the Son. In fact, he cannot approach the Father any other way. As already noted, the intercession of the Holy Spirit is “*according to the will of God.*” Nothing in my conclusions necessitates by-passing the Son in approaching the Father. But we are speaking of the operation of Deity with Deity, and would be presumptuous to say what one Person could do in His relationship with another Person. I suggest we accept the asserted intercession of the Holy Spirit as stated in the text and leave unanswered questions to the wisdom and operation of Deity. Furthermore, the blessing is extended only to those who are “*in Christ.*” How could it by-pass Him?

Notice concerning the intercession of Christ the position, rank, and place of authority, highly favored with respect to the Father. The term “*right hand of God*” is one that denotes the highest of all rank and authority, as Peter taught regarding Him in Acts, chapter two, and as claimed by Christ in Matthew, chapter twenty-eight. With Christ in this most favored position, how fortunate are we to have Him as the One through whom we come before the Father of spirits.

Verses 35, 36

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Continuing a presentation of the blessings in Christ, Paul asks another rhetorical question. Who can keep God from loving us? Who shall succeed in making Christ abandon us? While this point does not make it impossible for a man to turn from the Lord himself, and cease to enjoy the blessings of God, it surely states that nothing else can force us to be deprived of His love except our own choice to forsake Him. The infirmities mentioned (tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword) have already been covered by the statements regarding the work of the Holy Spirit for us when beset with infirmity. But even these things, as great as they may become, will not cause God to cease seeking our highest good, which is the definition of love.

In verse thirty-six, Paul expresses an attitude as well as a reality in service to Christ. The attitude is one that was first expressed in Psalm 44:22, "*Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.*" This is a statement of complete self-sacrifice. We are to be, as it were, living dead men for the cause of the Lord. Also, it is a realism, because Paul mentioned in First Corinthians 15:30-32 that he and others were in constant jeopardy because of laboring for the Lord. He had to suffer more than anyone of whom we read among the followers of Christ (Second Corinthians 11:26ff). He probably suffered martyrdom himself, although such is not specifically stated, only implied, in Scripture. Tradition does say this was his fate. But shall even such things as that mean one must stand alone? Is not God still with him, and does not the love in the heart of Deity still flow over him? Indeed, God will not cease to love.

Verses 37-39

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The concept of God's love is enlarged in the final three verses of chapter eight. In all things, good and bad, life or death, we are not defeated, but we are victors. This victory is not accomplished by our own works of merit, or by ourselves, but through Him that loved us. This would included the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Paul was convinced, "*I am persuaded,*" that death never separates one from God's love; nor does life separate us from God's love. God's love for us is His seeking our highest good. He never ceases to do that. No angel, no messenger of any kind from anybody shall come between man and God's love for man. The terms "*principalities nor powers*" are not precise in my mind as to what they refer, but I take it to mean spiritual personages, powers, and authorities that would work against us rather than for us. (See Ephesians 6:12). Whatever may be included in the terms, even that shall not have success in making God cease to seek our highest good. There is nothing now, nor yet to come, nothing so high or low, nobody, nor anything that shall ever separate man from being the object of the love of God. Especially is this true regarding the Christian who belongs to God.

Notice again, it is "*in Christ*" where all such blessings abound. What a certainty and security! What a guarantee and seal! What a pledge and promise has God given to the Christian!

We cannot and must not allow ourselves to be deceived by this teaching. We cannot conclude because nothing will ever cause God to cease loving man that nothing can cause man to cease from loving God. Man can once love God, and later refuse to love God. This does not teach that nothing causes God to disapprove of man. Love and approval are not the same. While love will abound regardless of what man does or does not do, regardless of what may or may not happen, it does not mean God approves of man regardless of what man does. God never ceases to love man, and seeks man's highest good. But approval of man by God depends upon man's response to the love of God in obedience. Love always abides, but approval is conditional.

Summary

It can be confidently stated that chapter eight is one of the most momentous chapters, not only of Romans, but the entire Bible. There are heavy problems and difficulties regarding the conclusions reached in certain portions of it, but these difficulties are not what makes the chapter outstanding. The greatness is seen in the dominant theme of chapter eight which defines what it means to be a Christian. Reviewing the material discussed, we note certain points and the pertinent verses in the chapter on what it means to be a Christian.

1. In Christ there is no condemnation, verse 1.
2. There is freedom from the law of sin and death, verse 2.
3. There is the obligation not to be carnal minded, but spiritual minded, verses 5-9.
4. We have fellowship with Deity, the Holy Spirit being specifically mentioned, verses 9,10.
5. We have the obligation to live after the Spirit, and not the flesh, verses 5-9, 12,13.
6. We have the right to look forward to the resurrection, 11.
7. We are the sons of God, verse 14.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

8. We are led by the Spirit, 14.
9. We have been delivered from bondage of sin, verse 15.
10. We have been adopted into the family of God, verse 15.
11. We know of our relationship with God, verse 16.
12. We are heirs of God with Christ, verse 17.
13. We have a glory awaiting that surpasses all the suffering that may be endured, verse 18.
14. We have a hope and expectation that the rest of the world does not enjoy, verses 19-23.
15. We have the intercession of the Holy Spirit when needed on certain occasions and situations, verses 26, 27.
16. We can be sure God works all things for our good, and has done so in providing salvation, verse 28.
17. We are in that company that God has predestined to be glorified, verse 30.
18. We are with God who can and shall protect us so that we shall not be defeated, verse 31.
19. We are justified, and none can condemn, verses 33, 34.
20. We have the assurance that nothing shall deprive us of God's love, verses 35-39.

All of the above is included in being a Christian, one who has been justified in a like manner as was Abraham, by a system of faith, a system that is of Christ, a system of grace that relies upon the merits of the blood of Christ, a system that requires our obedience to the commands of Christ's law, a system different from the Mosaic and/or moral laws that could only condemn, but a system that gives freedom from sinful bondage, a system that is universally open to all who would partake of it, a way that subverts the flesh and its sinful ways beneath the spirit, and the ways of the Holy Spirit.

I must again emphasize a theme that must never be allowed to escape us as we ponder the revelation of Romans. The book is an emphatic doctrinal treatise regarding the religion of Christ in contrast to all other systems, indeed, showing its superiority over all other systems. It is the only system that can accomplish for man what man needs. The emphasis is not on man, but Christ. Man's need is presented, but God's remedy, God's solution, the panacea to man's greatest threats and problems, is provided. This book is one that glorifies Christ, His will, and all things pertaining to Him.

Chapter Nine

The theme of the book of Romans thus far has been the system of faith by which man can be saved. The need of salvation has been adequately presented by showing how neither the Jew nor the Gentile could obtain salvation through previous systems under which they had lived. They had lived under different kinds of laws of works; the Jew under a written law of works given by God at Sinai through Moses, and the Gentile under a law of works, a moral law, written on their consciences, and, to some degree, of their own making. The result was that the Jews had failed to live perfectly under the law of Moses (and nobody could), while the Gentiles had simply degenerated into conduct and situations of the most abominable nature. Only by the gospel could man be saved. Spiritual life was to belong to man only in the system of obedient faith which had its merit in the blood of Christ, graciously given by God. This system, therefore, because all men need salvation, was universally offered to Gentile and Jew alike; that is, on the same terms. Such had always been God's intention and design since before the foundation of the world.

The Jews had been God's chosen people for a special purpose. It was through them the promises made to Abraham were fulfilled. The greatest of these promises was the blessing for all men through Christ. The chosen people now are those who come to God by the gospel system or scheme. Men are saved by "*the righteousness of God,*" or the plan devised and designed by the Lord Himself rather than some other way. The way of salvation now operative is similar in principle to the way Abraham was justified. Paul at this point in the epistle has adequately discussed peace with God, spiritual life, and release from the wages of sin that belong to children of God who have become His children through the system of obedient faith that the book of Romans presents.

By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul concerns us with the condition of the Jews since most (though not all) had rejected the system of Christ. In discussing the Jews, and God's use of them, he also discusses others whom God has used to bring about the system of faith by which man is saved.

Verses 1-5

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Paul opens his remarks with strong terms insisting that the message he bears is truth, not only stemming from the Holy Spirit's use of Paul's experiences, but because of additional revelation from the Holy Spirit Himself. Paul carried in his heart grace concern, even sorrow, over the spiritual condition of the Jews. So great was this sorrow that he was personally willing to be lost if that would have accomplished the salvation of his fellow-countrymen in the flesh. He does not for a moment suggest that such would be possible, but it is an expression of a willingness at self-sacrifice, and the extent of his concern as Israelites. In other words, he realizes that the Israelites had formerly enjoyed a special relationship with God, and were God's chosen people, even though they were chosen for a specific and limited purpose, and not chosen because of their own merit. Fleshly Israel had obtained adoption, and had been glorified as children of God, and enjoyed His care. They were the ones with whom God had made covenants. To them God had given a law. They had been in God's service, and they and their fathers were the ones to whom and through whom God's promises were offered. Israel in the flesh was the very nation to which Jesus Himself belonged. (The mention of Christ being "*over all*" proclaims His preeminence.) Of all people who had advantages, and should have recognized Christ, and enjoyed salvation by the system of God devised through Christ, the Israelites were that people. About eight special advantages they had are listed here: adoption, glory, covenants, law, service, promises, the heritage of their fathers, and Christ.

Verses 6-9

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:
7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

Even with special advantages, the Israelites had not accepted God's plan. Indeed, they had rejected the very One, Jesus Christ, who was the executor of the plan. Earlier in this epistle, chapter three and verse three, Paul took note of that rejection. But even with that rejection, the plan God devised through the Jews was not made void. (It is well to refer to comments made on chapter three about the rejection by the Jews of Christ, and how it made no material effect whatever upon the overall plan of salvation that God developed and delivered.) While the Jewish rejection of God's system did not nullify, nor invalidate the system, it did mean that those who were of fleshly Israel, formerly God's chosen people, were not God's chosen people any longer. The phrase, "*For they are not all Israel which are of Israel,*" means that those who are of fleshly Israel no longer possess a special relationship to God by virtue of their physical birth. Just being a descendant of Abraham did not mean they were approved of God, nor were they of the spiritually chosen Israel. Those who were of spiritual Israel were those who were children of promise; that is, those who had become spiritual children of God because God had kept His promises made unto Abraham about blessing all nations through his seed, who is Christ. Therefore, salvation is based upon a person's response to God's system of salvation through Christ, and not upon one's physical relationship with Abraham. On that relationship with Abraham is what the Jews, heretofore, had relied in order to be considered favorable before God. (Study Galatians 3:28, 29 with verses seven and eight.)

To show from the record that such was the case, Paul cites the statements concerning the birth of Isaac, the child of promise. As Isaac was a child of promise, people can be spiritual children of God by the promise which is fulfilled by, in, and through Christ.

We also learn that God decided to use Issac, the child of promise, as the descendant of Abraham through whom the Messiah would come rather than some other descendant of Abraham, such as Ishmael, or one born unto Abraham through Keturah, whom he married after Sarah's death.

Verses 10-13

10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

To further show that one is a child of God through the system involved in the promise made, Paul notes how God decided that it would be through Jacob, rather than Esau, that the system would come into reality. Even before the time the twins, Esau and Jacob, were born, God had predetermined which one He would use for this purpose. This was done in spite of the fact that Esau was the eldest of the two. Of course, considering the nature of the two men, even with all the flaws of character that are often obvious in the life of Jacob, it is evident that God chose the better one for the lineage through whom the Savior would come. Because one proved better than the other, the statement of verse thirteen is made that Jacob was loved and Esau hated. The significance is that Jacob allowed himself, in spite of early failings in youthful life, to be used, and God loved him for it, while Esau was of such a nature that he brought the wrath of God against himself.

We would make a mistake to conclude that God had determined to love one and hate the other even before they were born. He did predetermine to use one rather than the other before they were born. Also, it would be a mistake to conclude that God made each of these men the way they proved themselves to be. God did not force one to be better than the other, or force one to be worse than the other. The choice was still their own as to how they would order their lives. The truth being presented here is that God used one rather than the other. He predetermined to do so. The foreknowledge of God regarding the nature of the two could well have been what motivated God's attitude toward each, and determined His choice of Jacob. This paragraph shows how God used people of many natures and situations to bring His plan into reality. But the main point for us is that the system, as well as its gradual revelation, was God's.

Verses 14-16

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

This seems to be an answer to an anticipated objection to the way God operated in producing the system of faith by using various and sundry people in a variety of ways. Paul states that the way God used people was in no sense unrighteous. Once again in this book we find Paul using the very emphatic term, "*God forbid,*" to deny any unrighteousness on the part of God. Rather than God being unrighteous, the methods and means God used were merely the demonstration of His divine right as God. It was as had been stated to Moses in Exodus 33:19, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*"

This does not say God deliberately or arbitrarily withheld mercy and compassion from anyone, nor does He now. Rather it asserts that God has the power, and the right, to determine and decide what must be done, how it is to be done, and through whom He will accomplish His purposes. This does not say God forces anyone against his will to do anything. Rather it asserts that God uses the will and actions of men to accomplish what He wants done. Man is not the one who determined these things one way or the other. Man is not the one who holds the power of decision regarding the actions of God. Man should not attempt to criticize God for the way God uses divine wisdom. The One who “calls the plays,” so to speak, is God, and He alone has that right. This passage is a powerful assertion of the right of God to act as God without objection from any man.

Verses 17-18

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Another example of the use of God’s power and His use of men was God’s use of Pharaoh. You are encouraged to go back to the Old Testament into the events recorded in Exodus and see how God used Pharaoh in bringing deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Often the Scriptures speak of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. It is said that God hardened his heart. It is also stated that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 7:3; 8:15).

The way God hardened the heart of Pharaoh was by giving Pharaoh a command that Pharaoh chose not to obey; namely, allow Israel to go free. This was the role of God in hardening Pharaoh's heart. God did not directly, nor against Pharaoh's will, harden Pharaoh's heart. The only thing one reads of God's actions is that He sent to Pharaoh through Moses His word of instruction. Pharaoh chose to remain stubborn and resistant to submission to the Word of the Lord. God used Pharaoh's disposition of disobedience to display and manifest God's own power. The events that transpired became widely known among all nations then and now, yet to the glory of the power of God. But God did not force Pharaoh to respond or react the way Pharaoh did. This was Pharaoh's own choice. God took advantage of that situation, overcame the obstacle that Pharaoh placed before the plan of God, and showed that man cannot thwart the will of the Lord.

So once again, Paul shows by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Pharaoh that God is the One "calling the plays." Paul repeats the teaching of verse fifteen in verse eighteen.

Verses 19-24

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Again Paul seems to anticipate some objection some might raise against the way God has done things, and Paul answers the question, "If these people who were wicked were used to accomplish the overall purpose of God, why are they faulted for what they did? Who could resist the will of God?"

Before answering directly as he does later, Paul reminds man that man does not assume a proper stance to question what God has done. *“Who art thou that repliest against God?”* Man is never so out of line than when he brings into question, or raises objection, against God’s actions. So many times when men do not understand why God has done thus and so, before they will accept what God has done they feel they have a right to subject God to an inquisition, and force from God a kind of explanation for His actions that will satisfy them. To use the words of Paul, *“God forbid!”* Paul shows the indiscretion of such a thing by saying, *“Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?”* He is quoting from Isaiah 45:9. The thing formed is of such a lesser position than that which did the forming that it is totally out of line for such a thing as that to occur. As the potter has power over the clay that he uses, so God has the right and power to use men as He sees fit. **It is as much out of place for the thing formed to question the one who forms (for the clay to question the potter), as for man to question God.**

We must be cautious lest we be tempted to draw the analogy of the potter and clay beyond legitimate realms. The potter does, indeed, have power over the clay to use it to make whatever he may choose without consultation with the clay. Like so, God has the power to use man without having to consult man’s will or wishes in the matter. But again, the potter is somewhat limited by the clay depending upon the quality of the clay. Some clay is more suitable for one use than for another. God is somewhat limited in His use of man depending upon the quality of man. We must ever keep before us the fact that God did not, and still does not, force man to be bad or good. God made man a creature of choice with the power to exercise that choice. But God often used good men and evil men according to their choices to accomplish His purposes. Having shown, now, that man has not the right to question God, Paul proceeds to give answer to the question raised. He is leading to the explanation of the use of the Jews as well as others.

While the matter being taught is presented in question form in verses twenty-two through twenty-four, we can state it in a declarative way. God, willing to show His power and wrath against that which is evil, endured many things from many people that really deserved destruction because they had fitted themselves for destruction. He did this so that His riches of glory might be manifested on those who would partake of His mercy. These who became vessels of mercy had been predetermined. God had determined who would and would not be a vessel of mercy; that is, who would or would not be the recipient of God's mercy. This is not to say that God had determined which specific individuals would be recipients of His mercy, but He had determined what class of people would be the vessels through which His mercy would be carried to the world, and what class of people upon which His mercy would be realized.

It was the function of the Jew to be the one through whom the mercy of God through the Messiah would be made known. Furthermore, those who became the recipients of the mercy of God included all those whom God called, whether Jew or Gentile.

God calls men now through the gospel being preached to them (Second Thessalonians 2:14). This implies that men must respond favorably to the call of the gospel by rendering obedience to that which the gospel commands. Both Jews and Gentiles, men of every nation, were the vessels of mercy on whom God had shown the riches of His glory. Indeed, God had used many people in many circumstances in the gradual unfolding and presentation of the system of faith, the scheme of redemption, the system of salvation, but it was intended for the benefit of men of every tribe and tongue. The few that were used to bring the system of salvation to reality were used for the benefit of people everywhere. Paul now turns to show from prophetic statements that such had always been God's intent to use the Jews and others for the benefit of all men.

Verses 25-29

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. 26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. 27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: 28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

Paul refers to two prophecies by Hosea, and two by Isaiah, concerning the Gentiles and the Jews. Keep in mind that Paul had under consideration the spiritual condition of the Jews, primarily, from the first of the chapter, and the use of them and others in bringing the fulfillment and completion of the system of salvation. He had shown that salvation was not for Jews only, but also for Gentiles, in verse twenty-four. As for the Gentiles, Hosea had spoken of the will of the Lord, and His intent that the Gentiles, "*those which were not my people,*" would be among those to be called. If salvation had not been extended to Gentiles as well as Jews, this prophecy would have been proven false. As for the Jews, Isaiah had remarked that many of the Jews would be lost, but a remnant would be spared. This indicates that some Jews would favorably respond to the call of God through the gospel. Such was actually the case. If all Jews had rejected the Christ and His will, the Jews would have been as completely destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah; utterly destroyed. Because a remnant did follow the Lord they were not destroyed. The phrase, "*The Lord of Sabaoth,*" means the Lord of hosts, the Lord of many and all, with an emphasis on the greatness of the Lord.

Verse twenty-eight needs special attention. It first must be noted that in verse twenty-seven, Paul had quoted almost verbatim the prophecy found in Isaiah 10:22. Verse twenty-eight follows on the heels of this quotation, and seems to have just about the same frame of understanding as Isaiah 10:23. But what follows it not a verbatim quotation. While he does not quote the Isaiah passage precisely, he conveys the sense of the Isaiah passage, guided by inspiration. The idea is, even though there were many Israelites, fleshly descendants of Abraham, only a few would be among those that were saved because most would reject the way of God. The resulting condemnation would be a work that God would perform, even to the termination of Israel as a special people as they had previously been. The “*short work*” is the consumption of the disobedient. Righteousness demanded this destruction of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians, and that served as a type of the ultimate destruction of Israel. Paul applied this in Romans to refer to the destruction of the Jewish nation that would come at the hands of the Roman army in the year 70 A. D. Whatever be the specific events that are suggested here (we do well not to be dogmatic in what is not specified), the thrust of the passage is that the Jews rejected God’s way, and those who did would themselves be rejected by God. More than this we run a risk to conclude.

Verses 30,31

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

Drawing a conclusion from what has been written, Paul asks, “*What shall we say then?*” Indeed, what can we conclude from all this revelation? First, Gentiles, which did not follow a righteous path, and who did not have the law like the Jews, have now been included among the saved. This was not accomplished by means of the law, or by their own merit, but by the righteousness which is accomplished through the system of salvation in Christ. On the other hand, the fleshly Israelites, who had the law and other advantages, but did not live perfectly under it, even with certain privileges, have been rejected as a nation because they rejected the system of salvation given through Christ. Recalling again that a remnant did accept the Christ, Paul refers here to the nation of the Jews generally. The Jews as a nation did not receive the very system of salvation that God had devised, and the very system to which they as a nation had contributed so much in its development and revelation.

Verses 32-33

32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Why did the Jews now find themselves in the deplorable spiritual condition that Paul describes? It was because they did not seek salvation by the system of faith, but persisted in their attempts to be made righteous by holding to the old law that Christ fulfilled and took out of the way at the cross (Colossians 2:14). The purposes and functions of that law were accomplished. They held to a system that no longer was operative. They stumbled over what should have been their stepping-stone into glory.

But even their stumbling had been predicted. The “*stumblingstone and rock of offense*” refers to Christ. Those who put their confidence in Christ, and the system of salvation delivered through Him, would not be ashamed. But those who did stumble over Him by refusing to accept Him produced their own shame and downfall. First Peter 2:8 also refers to Christ as “*a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.*”

It is obvious from these verses in the last of this chapter, as well as many other passages throughout the New Testament, that Christ came to save. He is the Savior. He desires the salvation of all men. Such was the mission He came to accomplish (Luke 19:10; First Timothy 3:15). Nonetheless, Christ does condemn and will condemn those who reject the salvation He offers. While it is certainly true that the Lord did not come primarily to condemn, the very nature of saving those who favorably respond to the gospel also condemns those who do not favorably respond. In this sense, the Lord is offensive to some, a stumbling block, while being the Savior and salvation of others.

Paul had adequately described for us the spiritual state of the Jew who rejected Christ as well as the spiritual state of the Gentile who accepted Him. How ironic that the very ones God used to produce a blessing to all nations turned from that very blessing, and from the One through whom it was offered.

Chapter Ten

Verses 1-4

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The personal attitude of Paul regarding his fleshly brethren, the Jews, is almost sad. It is sad, not because his attitude is unworthy, but because it is so heart-rending how he loved his fellowman so much, yet they refused to come to the source of blessing. He had already stated in chapter nine, verse three, how he wished he might be accursed if that would be of any value in bringing them to Christ. Now he expresses with a tone of great sincerity that it was his heart's desire that Israel be saved. He prayed to that end. Certainly he did not pray for their salvation in their rejection of God's plan, but he prayed that they might receive God's plan, and thereby, be saved.

The Jews had the good quality of being zealous. They were fervently religious. They thought many times they were doing good even though they were actually doing wrong. Paul could understand that because he had been guilty in the past of that same action and misunderstanding himself. They had a zeal to serve God, but they were trying to serve God the wrong way. They were ignorant and ill-informed as to what they had to do to serve God. By turning from Christ and rejecting Him, they had turned from the only way that one can acceptably serve the Lord of heaven. They were ignorant of "*God's righteousness.*" It refers to the commandment of God, as explained in Psalm 119:172, that man must obey in order to be counted righteous, and be forgiven of sins that separate him from God. The people of Israel, as noted earlier, persisted in establishing their own way, or continuing to conform in a fashion to the former ways under which they had lived, but which were no longer operative, inasmuch as the all-sufficient and eternally intended system of redemption was now effective. Determined to follow the old law as given by Moses, and coupling with that their many traditions and customs, they refused to submit to the "*righteousness of God,*" that system of salvation God planned before the foundation of the world, and delivered through Christ.

Paul states emphatically, and it seems most difficult that anyone could misunderstand such a forthright declaration, that Christ is the end of the law. The word "*end*" means goal, target, that which was in view. The coming of Christ was that toward which the old law pointed. "*End*" here is like the term "*end*" in First Peter 1:9, where Peter wrote, "*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*" The goal, target, that which is in view of faith, is salvation. In like manner, Christ was the "*end*" of the old law of Moses. It is the same thought here as in Galatians 3:23-25 which teaches the purpose of the law was to bring to Christ.

Verses 5-11

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. 6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) 7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Paul calls upon Moses to describe the significance of the old law under which not even the Jew continued to live as subject. Moses said the old law was a law of works, a law whereby one could be declared righteous only if he was perfect, a law by which one would be acceptable unto God only because he merited acceptance by the Lord. The old law was a system where eternal life was obtainable only upon perfection, which simply meant, eternal life was not actually attainable under the old law. To violate one point meant being guilty of the law, a law that did not provide for forgiveness (James 2:10; Hebrews 10:4).

In contrast to that, the system by which man can truly have life is the system of faith that demands complete trust and confidence in Christ. Those who subscribe to the system of salvation by faith do not ask questions, or make demands, that in essence challenges God, or continually ask for signs and miraculous evidences and proofs before they accept what the Lord has declared. Those who walk and live by faith do not seek for Christ to come again and manifest Himself personally as He once did, nor that He be resurrected over and over again before they will believe. This kind of attitude would be one of disbelief in what God has already done, or caused to be done. It would be the very opposite of the trust and confidence that is an essential part of the system of faith.

What does the system of salvation by faith declare? It declares the Word that the Roman Christian had, and spoke, and in which they believed, indeed, the Word of truth that Paul preached. The system of salvation by faith declares the gospel Paul and the other apostles were teaching. There is a parallel stated here between the message of faith and the message being preached. What was being preached was the very system of faith that God brought through Christ.

What was that message of faith that Paul was preaching? Verses nine and ten state the necessity of faith, and confession of that faith. This passage, if there was no other teaching related to being saved, (there are many others), would prove forever that salvation by faith alone in the sense of giving mental assent to certain facts of truth cannot and does not save. Confession of that faith is also mentioned. It is mentioned twice in the two verses as being necessary to salvation. One may argue that if a person truly believes, he will obey the teaching to confess. This is exactly correct. Also, if one truly believes, he will obey other commands for salvation, such as repentance and baptism into Christ, which are also parts of the system of faith.

There is not presented here a checklist of steps to be taken to be saved as if this is all there is to be done by man. But these two things are essential, and the passage presents in understandable terms that salvation is by a system of faith, and that system includes more than mere mental assent. One must place his complete confidence and dependence on Christ to be saved. One must hold deeply and dearly the conviction in his own heart of the true identity of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the true and living God of heaven. One must hold that conviction so steadfastly that he will acknowledge his faith and trust in Christ by making confession of that faith with his mouth. We read of several instances in the New Testament of people who verbally confessed that they believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This is the kind of confession under discussion here. It is more than the conviction that Christ is God's Son, which, of course, is not to be minimized whatever. But it specifically makes reference to a confession made with the mouth. Salvation is no more solely based upon one's verbal confession than upon one's mental assent to certain facts regarding Christ. The terms **confession** and **belief** are used to represent the entirety of the system of salvation. They are but two parts of that system, which is based upon the merit of the blood of Christ, offered by the grace of God, and blesses those who are obedient.

This system, rather than the one upon which the Jews had for so long looked with favor, was and is the one that brings release from the sin and shame that deprives a person of spiritual life, but brought spiritual death. Paul repeats himself in verse eleven by saying almost the same thing he did in verse thirty-three of chapter nine. He is repeating the same message the prophets of old had forecast concerning the way of salvation. The way of faith is the way of salvation, and the way of escape from being ashamed before God. The emphasis of the passage is that salvation is one based upon complete and unquestioning trust in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Such trust and confidence naturally necessitates acceptance of and conformity to whatever commands He has given in His law.

Verses 12-17

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The following passage presents one of the examples of indisputable logic and order in the presentation of divine truth. Step by step, Paul traces the connection between the Word of the Lord and salvation. The passage gives emphasis to the necessity of the message of truth, without which there can be no salvation for man.

In verse twelve, the point is made that had been previously established in the book on several occasions, that God approaches all men alike, there is no respecter of persons, Jew and Gentile are both in need of salvation, and both have the same avenue open to them to become children of God. The Lord treats all men alike with respect to their service before Him without regard to their nationality, ancestry, or other such barriers that once existed during former ages. He is over all, and rich unto all that call. Under the system of faith "*there is no difference.*" Everyone has access to the riches of God the same way; namely, through calling on the name of the Lord.

Those who call on God shall be saved. This is a theme repeated from the prophets and accentuated in New Testament teaching. The question does not present itself as to whether one is saved who calls on God, because this is unmistakably affirmed to be the true case. The question is, "What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord?"

It means more than mere belief that God is, even though man must acknowledge that truth. Mental assent that Jesus is the Christ is not all it means. Mental assent is not calling on the name of the Lord. Christ warned during His personal ministry on earth that just calling, "*Lord, Lord,*" would not suffice (Matthew 7:21). The way some act and teach, you would think speedily repeating the name, "Jesus, Jesus," is what it means. But that is not it. Therefore, one could actually believe in God, even believe that Jesus is the Christ, and still not call on the name of the Lord and receive salvation. Jesus made it clear that calling on the name of the Lord involves **doing** what is instructed by the Lord. It means **doing** His will. There is something to be **done**. Obedience is absolutely essential in calling on the name of the Lord in order to be saved. Matthew twenty-five reveals how some at judgment will have thought they served God, but learn that they had failed in their purpose because they did not **do** as they were instructed to do. Keep in mind, even as one does what he is commanded, he cannot and does not earn his salvation.

Calling on God is making an appeal unto God for salvation according to His will. First Peter 3:21, "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*" God calls -- man must answer. In answering, he makes his appeal to God. It is plain that answering God's call involves baptism. Acts 22:16 makes the point even clearer. Ananias told Saul (the writer's name before he became an apostle), "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" In the passage now under consideration in Romans, Paul makes it plain that those who shall call, shall be saved. This calling, therefore, involves belief and trust, but also the doing of other commandments directed by the Lord in order to enter into a saved relationship with God. This includes repentance (Luke 13:3), confession of faith, as noted even in this passage, plus being baptized, an action of obedience by which we enter into Christ (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27). The system of faith, therefore, does not exclude obedience, but necessitates obedience.

But inasmuch as obedience to God must be from the heart (see Romans 6:16-18), it logically follows that one who obeys must first have an understanding of what he is doing. Having such information, assuming he does believe what he has been taught, and does possess a real conviction of the truth he has learned, he can call on God for salvation as noted above. But until one believes, he cannot call. (It should be quite evident to us that believing and calling on the Lord are not identical, but are two distinct operations, although certainly related and connected. But they are not the same. Calling on the Lord for salvation is not merely believing. Believing comes before the calling. Paul put something between believing and salvation, and he identified it as calling on the name of the Lord.)

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Continuing the logical and orderly presentation, Paul now insists that until one hears about the Lord and His plan of salvation, he cannot possibly, intellectually, emotionally, or in any other way believe and have confidence in Christ. You cannot be convicted of something about which you have no knowledge. The heart (mind) must be informed before there can be faith. We see the necessity of hearing the will of God.

Before one can hear, (meaning more than having audible sounds fall on the ear drum, but includes comprehension and understanding of what is taught), there must be someone who will preach the gospel. Before one can preach, he must be sent. The apostles were sent to do this preaching of the glorious system of faith. Since their day, others have continued to "*preach the word,*" using many methods of doing so. That which is to be preached is the Word of the Lord, the message of salvation by grace, extended to man through Jesus Christ, made possible by His blood, and appropriated by obedience faith.

The process is simple. One is sent with the Word. Some hear and understand. The evidence in the message convinces them of the truthfulness of it, and they believe it is true. Now, in a believing state, they call on the name of the Lord by rendering obedience to the commands given in the message of salvation. All this is traced back to the Word of God. Where there is no knowledge, there is no faith, no ability to obey. It begins with the preaching and comprehension of the Word of God. Faith comes as the evidence of the Word is presented. The hearers must be persuaded and convinced by the message of truth. Without it, there can be no salvation.

Verse fifteen turns back to an Old Testament statement that declares the beauty found in those who present the message of glad tidings, the gospel, the good news of salvation. The beauty is not in the messenger, but the message. I think this statement has primary reference to the apostles through whom the truth was given to the world, and who were, at the time of Paul's writing, engaged in revealing and proclaiming to the world the plan of salvation that was heretofore a mystery. On the other hand, it surely must have application to any person who would preach God's truth to his own generation.

Unfortunately, not all who hear will believe. This spells their spiritual death. It was true when the gospel was first preached, and it is true even yet, that not all who have the opportunity to hear, believe, and obey do so. Many, like the Jewish nation generally, persist in rejecting the message of God. This is an eternal tragedy, and our hearts are pained to personally know some who will treat God's holy will in such fashion. But regardless of how men respond (favorably or unfavorably) to the Word of the Lord, the presentation of the Word, belief in that message, obedience to that message, is still the way God has devised to bring men unto Him.

Let me encourage the reader to study in this connection John 6:44,45; Acts 15:7; James 1:21; First Peter 1:22,23. These and other passages emphasize the Word in order to be saved.

Verses 18-21

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. 19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. 20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Paul returns specifically to the theme he introduced significantly in the first part of chapter nine, and again at the beginning of chapter ten; namely, the spiritual condition of the Jews. Having noted that Christ was rejected by the Jews generally, one wonders why. They had heard the Word. The sound or message of truth had gone to the ends of the earth, as prophesied in Psalm 19:3,4, to which Paul refers. No excuse could be given for not having been taught. Paul asks, “*Did not Israel know?*” The answer is clear. Yes, they knew. In fact, if they had paid proper attention to such revered people as Moses and the prophets, they could have quickly and easily known they were supposed to respond to the plan God devised. Moses had spoken the Word of the Lord to Israel, telling Israel that God would allow the Gentiles, “*them that are no people,*” to provoke them to jealousy. In other words, seeing how Gentiles would desire to enter into the saved relationship with God, God anticipated that through the use of the Gentiles, the Jews might be provoked to salvation. Not only do we see how God used the Jews to bring salvation to the entire world, including Gentiles, but God also used the Gentiles to motivate the Jews to be saved as well.

Paul reminds his reader how Isaiah had prophesied that the Gentiles, “*those who sought me not,*” found the Lord, and God manifested Himself to the Gentile. But the case with the Israelites, unfortunately, was so different. As God had pleaded with Israel, as revealed in Isaiah 65:2, God stretched forth His hand, extended His invitation to Israel, (a people who badly needed salvation as much as the Gentiles), but the people of Israel turned their backs against the invitation. This is the sad and deplorable state, not only of the Jews as a nation even yet, but the state and spiritual condition of any and all who reject the gospel, God’s plan for saving man.

Chapter Eleven

Verses 1-5

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, 3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. 5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Continuing a general discussion of the spiritual condition of the Jews, having noted sufficiently in the previous two chapters the need of salvation for the Jews, having noted the use of certain ones through the ages to bring about the way of salvation, and having noted how the Jews had rejected the way God provided, Paul now asks, "*Hath God cast away his people?*" In other words, Paul is asking if God had gone back on His promise, now refusing to save the Jews. Is the alienation between God and the Jews the fault of God? Does God really want the Jews to be saved? Is there no way for reconciliation to be made between God and the people that were once His chosen?

Once again, we read this strong apostolic and habitually used negative, “*God forbid.*” Never could one properly think God is the fault for the Jews being estranged from the God they formerly served. Never are we to conclude that God went back on His promise. Never are we to believe that God did not want the Jews to be saved, or that He does not want them saved now. Yes, there is a way of reconciliation between God and the Jews. But the fact of the matter is that the Jews failed to receive Christ. Already Paul has noted that, even though the Jews as a nation had rejected the Christ, some of that nation had accepted Him. Those who had accepted Christ were acceptable to God. Paul cites himself as one example. Paul was a Jew, the seed of Abraham, specifically of the tribe of Benjamin. He was not a castaway. To be sure, some of the Jews were not God’s children, but this was because they had chosen to reject the plan of salvation God had devised. But it was not God’s fault, nor was there any reluctance on God’s part to receive them. He did receive all who would respond to the system of faith.

Paul reminds the reader of the time in Israelite history when Elijah addressed certain words to God about the Israel of his day. It was a time when it seemed to Elijah that just about everybody of the nation of Israel had turned against God except Elijah. This has specific reference to the time following the great contest on Mount Carmel that is recorded in the Old Testament, First Kings, chapter nineteen. Elijah accused the Israelite nation of making all sorts of offenses against God, and he alone had remained faithful. But contrary to what Elijah thought, God told him that many had not “*bowed unto Baal.*” So Paul is stating, that while he does not minimize the overall and general truth that most Jews had rejected God by rejecting Christ, not all had done so. Nor was it God’s fault that any had done so. There was a remnant that was among the elect; that is, among those who had partaken of the benefits of the grace of God, because they had accepted the scheme God devised for their salvation.

In this is a powerful lesson for us today when we get discouraged as we are forced to realize the abundance of sin, and the influence of wickedness in the world. We may get disheartened concerning the inroads of error and digression that are often made even among the ranks of the Lord's church. We may be inclined to despair by thinking everyone has gone the way of departure. But most likely the truth is, even though many do go astray, possibly even most as did Israel in Elijah's day, and as the Jews were doing in Paul's day, there is surely a remnant that remains loyal and faithful, and pursues the course in life according to the directions of the Lord given in His Word. We just need to be sure we are among that remnant, and do all we can to enlarge the number of that remnant.

Verses 6, 7

6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. 7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

In the preceding verse Paul mentioned the election of grace, having reference to the system of grace, and those elected to salvation through that system. Having mentioned grace, he says something more about grace and works. Whenever we study works as given in the Bible we must understand that there are different kinds of works discussed. There are works of our own merit by which one might think he could obligate God to bless him in some fashion. The Scriptures make it plain that man cannot be saved by such works as these. Ephesians 2:8,9 teaches us we are saved by grace through faith, and not of works of which we can boast. Titus 3:5 teaches the same lesson. At the same time, there are works of obedience, such as is described in James, chapter two, and other places. Whenever man does something God directs him to do, he is working. But such are not works of merit, nor works like were performed under the old Mosaic law. There are works of obedience to God. Obedience is necessary to salvation (Hebrews 5:9; Matthew 7:21; Second Thessalonians 1:7-9). The works under discussion in our passage here have reference to works of merit, the kind by which we cannot accomplish nor earn salvation. We can never do enough good to erase even one sin whereupon God would owe us anything. Remember that the law of Moses was also a law of works because one would have to live perfectly under that law in order to be saved, and this none could do.

Election, or belonging to the company of the saved, was declared to be by grace. The system whereby man can be saved is in existence because of the unmerited favor God has bestowed on undeserving mankind. It is a system that relies upon the mercy of God rather than upon the goodness or perfection of man, which is non-existent. Since salvation is by grace, it is not of meritorious works. If it were of works then God could be placed in a situation of owing man salvation, and salvation then would not be the result of God's grace and mercy. If it were possible that salvation could be attained by works of merit, then it could not be a system of grace. Even works of obedience have significance only because God has graciously declared that they have significance.

The works of obedience which are included in the system of grace have no righteousness of themselves, but only as God's grace has announced their worth. So, if salvation were by meritorious works, the works of obedience would cease to be important because they are not works of merit. "*Otherwise,*" or if it was any other way, works of obedience do not count for anything. But they do count, and God expects man to obey whatever He commands.

There are certain conditions man must meet in order to benefit from the grace of God, but even meeting these conditions does not constitute meriting salvation. Meeting certain conditions is simply the procedure God has devised whereby man comes to partake of the mercy of God. There is a clear distinction between meeting God's conditions by being obedient and earning what you receive. We can never earn salvation, but we must meet the conditions God has specified. Salvation is by grace which includes works of obedience even as it excludes works of merit.

What does all this mean in relation to the spiritual condition of the Israelites? Israel did not obtain that which they sought, which was salvation. Obviously, it was because they followed another system other than the system of grace through faith. However, those who are of the elect did obtain the desired salvation through forgiveness, and have established fellowship with God because they came the way of salvation that God provided through Christ. In a sense, Israel was, and continues to be, blinded. They are blinded by their own refusal to comply with the provisions God has made. For the most part, they have remained blinded even as they were at the time Paul wrote Romans. They remain blinded because of an allegiance to a system of works by which none can be justified, and under which they no longer live even though they once lived subject to it. (See other passages on this point in Romans 3:20,26; Galatians 2:16; 3:11). Paul follows this with two Old Testament references showing how this blindness was prophesied.

8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. 9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them: 10 Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

Paul refers to a writing by Isaiah (Isaiah 29:10), and how God had allowed the Jew to possess (“*given them*”) a spirit of slumber, sometimes rendered more emphatically as stupor. By their own choosing they had closed their eyes, shut their ears to anything contrary to what they were determined to follow.

Paul also refers to words of David (Psalm 69:22) to show how “*their table,*” (that upon which they fed), was a snare and trap, a stumbling-block, because they allowed that system under which God had formerly ruled them to block them from accepting the system God had brought into being through the Israelites themselves.

Verse 11

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

The question is asked, “*Have they (Israel, JWB) stumbled that they should fall?*” Was it the design and intent that Israel should behave in this disobedient fashion? Again, Paul uses the strong negative, “*God forbid.*” Never did God hope Israel would reject the very scheme He was providing. Such would have made the work of John the Baptist, Christ, and the apostles, even the work of the old prophets be nothing but mockery. The scheme was being provided through God’s use of the Jews, and they were to have first opportunity to receive it. They had more advantages than anyone to seize it with gladness, but they refused to do so. But since the Jews did reject Christ, God used that rejection to appeal to the Gentiles, and also used the acceptance of the Gentiles to once again appeal to the Jews. Possibly, when the Jews realized that even Gentiles were becoming children of God, and that God’s way of making children through Christ was true, they would be provoked to desire this family relationship with God also. Keep in mind, Christ, John the Baptist, and the apostles had made it plain by this time that physical ancestry would not make anyone a child of God anymore. Being a descendant of Abraham did not make the difference it once did. Now God’s children are spiritual children, and “*children of Abraham*” (Galatians 3:7) are those who belong to God because they have come to God through the system God has provided through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a system of grace, mercy, blood, faith, law, and obedience to the law of Christ.

Verse 12

12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world,
and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles;
how much more their fulness?

Paul once again is very logical in his presentation. He notes how the fall of the Jews had, in a measure, brought opportunity for salvation to all mankind. As far as the Jew was concerned, the idea of the termination of the law of Moses would be a fall. Remember, however, that God had always intended and planned that salvation be universally offered. But the Jewish rejection of Christ hastened that opportunity being extended to the Gentiles. Seeing how the call of the Jews brought opportunity to others, how much more good could be accomplished if the Jews favorably responded to the gospel! Jewish influence for truth would have been a powerful benefit to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike.

Verses 13-15

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. 15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

Paul makes an appeal to Gentiles to assist in bringing the Jews into the fold. He reminds them that he was an apostle especially sent to Gentiles, and his work was not a minor one, but a great one. Yet, he was searching for some means to provoke the people of his own flesh, the Jews, to be saved. He notes that if the rejection of the Jews by the Lord because of their rejection of Christ had brought a hastened opportunity to the rest of the world to be reconciled to God, then if the Jews would obey, and they would also be received of God, it would be like a resurrection from the dead. Paul was hoping to find a way to provoke the Jews to obey as the Gentiles had done. He was seeking help from the Gentiles to this end.

Verses 16-17

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

In this passage we have a very precise use of the word “*holy*.” Certainly, all the Jewish people were not “*holy*” in the sense of being free from sin, or cleansed by the blood of Christ. Nor were they “*holy*” because they were so righteous in themselves. But the term “*holy*” has reference to them like the term was used with regard to certain offerings that were made of the firstfruits of crops that were harvested. By the acceptance of the firstfruits, God showed that the entire harvest could be usable and acceptable.

Inasmuch as many Jews were converted to Christ at the beginning of the Christian age at Pentecost, there is the demonstration of the desire for all Jews to be saved. In fact, those on Pentecost who were converted were all Jews. So it was obvious that the firstfruits were acceptable. That being true, all would be acceptable who would come to God through Christ. Because **some** Jews were saved, it was evident that God wanted **all** Jews to be saved. The acceptance of the “*root*” shows God’s willingness to accept the “*branches*.” Here is the answer to the question of verse one, “*Hath God cast away his people?*” The answer is, “No.” Unfortunately, many of the “*branches*” were cast away, but it was because of their own rejection of Christ.

Paul now refers to the Gentile Christians as a “*wild olive tree*,” in distinction from the Jew who was a natural branch. Some wild branches, having reference to Gentiles, had been grafted in because they had accepted Christ. These grafted branches were enjoying unity with God as much as the natural branches (Jewish converts). Therefore, the Jews and Gentiles in Christ were enjoying a common salvation. Paul is showing that the Jews who rejected Christ were as those branches that were broken off, and the Gentiles who had accepted Christ were branches grafted in. Again, we have presented the theme aforementioned in this epistle, that the salvation God offers was for every man without regard to race or nationality. All may be saved because all need to be saved. All that are saved will be saved the same way. God wants all men, Jew and Gentile, to be saved.

The precise terms used in these verses pose somewhat of a problem to get a “word by word” understanding of Paul’s message. But the general thrust of his words can be grasped, and has been so explained.

Verses 18-21

18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: 21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Continuing some comments to the Gentiles, Paul issues a warning that they do not become boastful that they belong to God rather than the Jews. True, they were in spiritual fellowship with God, and with converted Jews that may once have excluded Gentiles. But to now brag that one is saved while the other is rejected would be totally out of character for a Christian. The Christian, like Christ, wants all men to come to repentance. But the burden of the warning is that Paul shows the possibility that the Gentile Christian could also fall away, and be rejected. Indeed, they would be rejected if they did not remain firmly united to their Jewish brethren in Christ, and faithful to the will of God given through Christ. Paul is admonishing the Gentiles not to commit the same error some Jews had committed, that of thinking themselves more righteous or possessing such a superior feeling toward others. They were to remember they were borne out of the root. They came to Christ after the early Jewish converts, and after the system had been delivered through the Jews. They were not the natural branches, but grafted branches. Because of unbelief, natural branches were broken off (referring to Jews who rejected Christ). If the natural branches were broken off because of unbelief, surely grafted branches would and could be broken off if the same unbelief overcame them. It is a strong warning not to be highminded and superior in their attitudes toward the Jews, but humbly grateful for salvation.

There is also the undeniable significance that apostasy is a possibility among Christians. But there is a significance beyond even that. Thus far we have learned all men need salvation, and God offers salvation to all men, and all men must and will be saved the same way, through the system of faith given through Christ. What will cause one man to be broken off will cause the next man to be broken off also. In this we again see demonstrated how God is no respecter of persons.

Verse 22

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Two very contrasting characteristics of God are mentioned. They are in contrast, but not contradictory. Paul mentions the goodness of God, and also His severity. This first trait we like to consider because we like to believe we are the beneficiaries and recipients of blessings because of this quality of God. It is certainly true we are blessed because God is good, and good toward us. The other trait causes us to have fear and trembling because it means if we rebel and disobey we shall be the recipients of the wrath of a just God. His wrath has already been made very evident toward sin in this book, and it was because of this just wrath of God that the penalty for sin has to be paid by the death of Christ on the cross. By unbelief, we deprive ourselves of God's mercy, and become the targets of the wrath of God that justice demands.

God's severity is meted out on those who fall from Him. His goodness is manifested to those who come to Him. In verse twenty-two, Paul explained not only the possibility of falling away, but shows that we must continue in the goodness of God lest we be cut off. How can any read such passages and ever believe the false doctrine of "once saved, always saved," as is generally taught by some denominationalists? If God just ignored the sins committed by unfaithful children, He would thereby nullify any claim to justice, one of the qualities that made the sacrifice of Christ necessary.

It was the goodness of God that allowed the Jews and Gentiles opportunity to salvation. It was the severity of God that caused the disobedient "*natural branches*" of verses nineteen and twenty to be broken off. Also, his severity would cause the unfaithful Gentiles (the grafted branches) to be broken off again, if they became unfaithful.

Verses 23-24

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

If those who rejected Christ because of unbelief, particularly the Jews, would abandon that position of unbelief, God would restore them into His favor. If God can take the Gentiles, who were not His chosen people, and make them His people, surely God could take the Jews, who had been His chosen people, but who for a time rejected Him, and make them His people again should they return to Him through Christ. If God could save the Gentiles, He could also save the Jews. But the terms for both were the same.

Verses 25-27

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Paul more or less repeats much of what has already been taught. This seems to be a statement of emphasis to the Gentiles that they not fall guilty of conceit and a feeling of superiority. While it is true the Israelites were blinded as already discussed, they still could come to God. Notice Paul said that blindness “*in part*” is happened to Israel, which means that some of the Israelites had not been blinded, but had accepted the truth of Christ.

From what I have been able to learn, the phrase, “*until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,*” has been a subject provoking much comment and speculation about the salvation of the Jews in some kind of sudden, miraculous, and national form or manner sometime in the future. There is one point in studying the Bible we need to remember, and that is that there may well be passages, the meaning of which, we cannot know for certain, but we can know what it does not mean. When we come to some passages, and conclude that it teaches something that we know cannot be true because it would contradict other teaching that is clear and easily grasped, then we can be sure we have placed the wrong conclusion on the difficult passage in question. Such is the case here. If it be true that there is to be a sudden, miraculous, and national salvation of the Jewish people sometime in the future as some teach, then all we have been learning this far in the book of Romans is contradicted. How many words have we read that teach us that the Jews and Gentiles shall be saved the same way, by the same system, on the same terms? But all this would be nullified, and we would have a genuine contradiction in God’s Word should we look for a sudden, miraculous, and national salvation of the Jewish people. I reject the idea that this passage has any reference to some kind of sudden and total national salvation of Jewish people, or some Jewish colony or nation. This would be against everything Paul has been declaring to be true up to this point. Men ought not array God against God because of some theory they hold, like premillennialism in this instance.

Verse twenty-six mentions, “*And so all Israel shall be saved.*” It does not say all Israel will be saved. It says, “*And so...*,” the word “*so*” referring to the manner by which Israel shall be saved. What is the manner by which Israel shall be saved? The previous verses, twenty-three and twenty-four, teach us that the abandonment of unbelief, which means coming to belief, would cause the broken off branches (the Jews who had thus far rejected Christ) to be grafted in again. The manner of salvation for the Jew was the system of obedient faith provided by God’s grace. This is the same manner of salvation for the Gentiles.

That the Jews might be saved has been God's intent and desire as noted from the word of prophecy from Psalms and Isaiah. This was God's covenant with them, and God intended and wants, even yet, to take away their sins. However, there is a role the Jew himself must play, and that is to obey the law of faith which are the conditions that must be met to enable him to enjoy the promises of God.

Let us go back for a moment to the phrase, "*until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*" This does not necessarily state a specific time reference when certain events will take place. It could well mean that the Jews would remain hardened against the system of faith that embraces all men until almost nobody except Gentiles would be among the saved. In other words, what appears to be a time element refers more to a condition rather than some point in time. Even if that condition or circumstance did occur, (and historically and actually it is just about that way even now with almost only Gentiles accepting Christ), the Jews still could be saved, but only if they abandoned their unbelief, and complied to the method of salvation God devised through Jesus Christ.

Again, the passage may well mean that Jews would refuse to accept God's grace through Christ until all realized that the Gentiles as well as Jews could be saved the same way. This explanation has real merit.

Verse 28

28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

Paul is again referring to the spiritual condition of the Jews at the time he was writing. Having rejected the gospel, they were enemies, enemies of God and enemies of those who had accepted the gospel. This runs true to the principle that one is either for the Lord or against Him, there being no middle ground. The Jews were against the Lord when they, through unbelief, refused to follow the Christ. Nonetheless, as far as the possibility of them being saved, and as far as God's attitude toward them, and His desire to save them was concerned, that had not and would not change. God still wanted them, the Jews, as well as Gentiles, to be saved.

In this we see a principle that must always be considered when discussing the love God has for man. God loves man whether man accepts or rejects God. But God does not always approve of man. He approves only those who obey Him. We should not confuse love with approval for the two are not the same. God loved the obedient Gentiles and approved the obedient Gentiles. But God also loved the Jews even as He disapproved of the Jews in unbelief.

Verse 29

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

The offer of salvation, the blessing of a spiritual nature that can belong to a man through Christ, is "*without repentance*." This does not mean a man can obtain God's blessings without repenting of his sins, but that God does not repent, change His mind, with respect to His offer to save. Nor will He change His plan to save.

Verse 30-31

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

The Gentiles in times past did not believe God, as amply noted in Romans, chapter one. Yet, now having come to Christ, they have obtained mercy. The Jews disbelieved and hastened the opportunity for the Gentiles to believe. The Gentiles did believe, and thereby obtained mercy. On the other hand, as things stood at the time of Paul's writing of Romans, and as they still stand for the most part regarding Jews, the Jews disbelieved. Yet, it was the hope that through the belief of the Gentiles the Jews might be provoked to believe for themselves.

Verse 32

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

Paul emphasizes the universal need of forgiveness, and the universal offer of forgiveness. Once again Paul is showing that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles as to how to be saved. Neither is there any difference between them once they are saved. The difference exists between the saved and the lost, not between the saved Jews and saved Gentiles, lost Jews and lost Gentiles. All were once in unbelief. But God has offered mercy to all because all needed it, and now, all have been exposed to it.

Verses 33 - 36

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

These verses are words of praise toward God for the great and matchless qualities He possesses. It seems rather obvious that the provocation to enter into words of praise at this point was the summary of God's plan for saving Jew and Gentile alike. What a glorious system! What a glorious plan! What justice and mercy combined! What a great God that devised such a system! What a Savior that carried out the system that paid for man's sins! So marvelous is the wisdom and knowledge of God! So beyond full comprehension by the finite human mind, is God!

The plan of salvation is the great expression of the wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10). None can give advice to God. None can be His counsellor. None can fathom the depth of His mind. None can make any real contribution that would improve on God, or the ways of God that He has devised. None can ever place God in their debt, or be such that God would owe them anything. It is the other way. Man owes everything to God. God is the source of all, the glory of all, now and forever!

These are words praising the author of the scheme of redemption, the system of salvation. Whereas the human mind could not devise a system so perfect in every respect, nor can the human mind fathom the reaches of the wisdom of God, the human mind can comprehend sufficiently in order to recognize the greatness of the plan, and the greatness of the source of that plan. Such praise as given here is the prime theme of the words of Paul in these closing passages of chapter eleven.

Chapter Twelve

Verses 1,2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Paul beseeches or makes a special plea and request of his brethren in the Lord. He asks them to do something very important. He urges them to make a presentation to God. That which ought to be presented was themselves, their very own bodies as sacrifices unto God. Notice he urges that they be living sacrifices. Someone has said that the only thing more noble than dying for the Lord would be living for the Lord. God wants people to live lives according to His will. He wants everyone to deny themselves, and follow the Savior. This is what Paul calls for these brethren to do. They are to set themselves apart, consecrate, and devote themselves unto the acceptable service of God.

The King James Version says “*reasonable*” service, and the American Standard Version says “*spiritual*” service. I find no conflict in these varied renditions, but rather a complement to each other. Such rendering gives tremendous aid in understanding what is spiritual. For something to be reasonable means it must appeal to the mind or intellect of man. Serving God is rational and intelligent. The human heart, the mind, must be reached and converted. Man has the power to reason and weigh evidence. Service to God is service that results from an intelligent consideration of the evidence and the formation of the conviction that serving God is what ought to be done. When a man serves God with his mind, and from conviction, in an intelligent fashion, and according to the directions of the Holy Spirit, that is spiritual service. Sometimes people have confused that which is almost entirely emotional with that which is spiritual. Many artificial environmental aids and gimmicks have been used to arouse the carnal emotions of people during various religious exercises, and those who have been so led are sometimes heard to say that their experience was so “spiritual.” Such is not spiritual, Biblically speaking. That which is spiritual is not based upon emotion, but upon revelation, and intelligent understanding. Reasonable service, that which appeals to the intellect of man, as guided by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is spiritual service. When the Word of God conveys a message to the mind of man, and convinces man of a certain course of action, and man follows that course of action because his mind has been so convinced with the evidence of the Word, that is reasonable or spiritual service. One can well be aroused emotionally, even to the point of hysterics, and never be spiritual or spiritually minded as the Bible used the term. Our sacrifice of ourselves must result in spiritual service, rational, intelligent, with understanding and conviction.

Having now given a positive instruction, Paul also gives a negative instruction. Christians are not to follow the sinful ways of the world, nor follow the multitude to do evil. Christians are not to let the world set his pace, or determine his standards. While in many things a Christian can conform to what is around him, there are certain limits beyond which he cannot, and will not, go regardless of what the rest of the world about him does. There is no value in being different or a non-conformist simply to be one, or to attract unwarranted attention to oneself. But the Christian is expected to be a different person because of his relationship to God through Christ. His attitudes and actions will differ from those embroiled in sin, and caught up with what “everybody’s doing.” Of course, not everybody is doing anything, but often it seems that most are going a certain way, and the Christian is tempted to go along. But the Christian is a person who thinks before he acts, and his thoughts are always centered on what Christ would have him do in all circumstances. Sometimes it seems one of the hardest lessons for Christians to learn is to be wary of imitating the world, following the world, and allowing the world to determine his conduct, dress, manner of speech, goals, ideals, values and habits. Rather than allowing himself to be guided by the Lord’s way, he allows himself to be molded by the world. But the Christian is one who is transformed, changed, and different. This transformation and conversion comes by the mind being changed, and actions based on the conviction of the mind. The mind is renewed. The heart is converted. As stated above, the intellect of man is convinced and persuaded. The doctrine of Christ makes its prime appeal to that part of man that thinks. The transformation or conversion that makes one a Christian means he no longer seeks the way of the sinful world, but by changing his mind, and accepting the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he is made distinctive and different.

Once transformed, the Christian proves (puts to the test and demonstrates) God’s will. He is expected to show what the will of the Lord is by the life that he lives. The gospel is to be preached by word, to be sure. But the way of truth is to be lived, demonstrated, and proved.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Take note that the will of God is described as being good, acceptable, and perfect. These are the terms, therefore, that ought to describe our lives as we demonstrate the will of God. To the extent our lives are not so described, to that extent there is room for growth. We must not fail to demonstrate to the world how God would have all men everywhere to live.

It would seem that it goes without belaboring further that one would find it impossible to live and demonstrate in life the will of God if he should refuse to give himself completely as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Having given oneself to the Lord, one is able, with God's help and spiritual growth, to live the kind of life that brings glory to God (Matthew 5:16).

Verse 3

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Paul writes not as one who is giving his own ideas or perceptions, but as he is directed and guided by the Lord. He so expresses this in the phrase, "*through the grace given unto me.*" The grace of which he speaks is his apostleship to which he referred in chapter one, verse five. What he is saying is, therefore, the Word of God.

The instruction of this verse is for every Christian. It strikes at the temptation to consider oneself more than he ought to consider himself. It strikes down the attitude of pride and conceit. It urges a sense of humility, and calls for a recognition of one's own limitations and inabilities. It is the concept presented by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount that one should be "*poor in spirit.*" Much of this world's ills are caused by people who are too self-centered, too conscious of themselves, and who rate themselves more highly than they ought. Possibly, we all are inclined to do this, or are tempted to do so. Paul is not denouncing legitimate self-respect, but condemning conceit and pride.

Furthermore, he calls for sober thinking, and discreet consideration of life. The person who is enamored with himself will not likely be able to think clearly and properly on any matter, especially if it pertains to him, because he will always have the cloud of pride between him and true wisdom. To be sure, we are not all endowed with the same capacities, physically or mentally. But each shall be responsible for whatever capacity he has, and whatever that is must be governed by a humble and sober mind.

We are justified in thinking that the phrase, "*according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith,*" to mean the presentation of the standard by which we govern our thinking. In other words, we are to think like the faith would have us think. Paul shows us two standards. One is incorrect, and the other is correct. The incorrect one is according to our personal pride. The correct one is according to what has come from God.

Verses 4-8

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Building upon the admonition given in verse three, Paul reminds those in Christ of the oneness and unity that abides among us. We are all of the same family, the same body, servants of the same God, and we all have been saved by the same Christ. Regardless of ancestral or national background, those in Christ are simply different members of the same body. This very thought ought make us considerate of every other member of the body. There is something very wrong with a body where one member of it seeks the harm of another member, or fails to cooperate with the other members in their particular functions for the overall good of the entire body. Paul alludes here to the body to picture the relationship of one Christian to other Christians, and drives toward the goal of showing practical reasons why we ought follow the teaching of verse three. Just as the physical body has many members, and every member does not have the same function or office to perform, the same is true of the body of Christ. First Corinthians twelve brings out these very truths explicitly. Together, we make up the body of Christ. The term "*body*" is the very term used in other passages to define the Lord's church (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18). We are, therefore, related, and are one of another.

We have differing talents, and whatever talent we have ought be used properly, and to the best advantage for all concerned. Let me insert here that it is very possible that Paul includes the use of spiritual gifts, miraculous gifts, that some in the early church did possess. It is not sure that anyone in Rome had such gifts at the time Paul wrote this letter, although it is possible that some did. Whatever be that situation, Paul hoped to visit them and grant them such gifts, as noted in chapter one, verse eleven. Here is a regulation of these gifts, if ever and whenever, such gifts were given them. Certainly, the use of those abilities would be included in this teaching, but we would not conclude it referred only to the use of miraculous gifts. The principle taught would embrace the use of whatever contribution or talent each one could offer to the advantage of the whole body.

If one could prophesy (used here in the sense of teaching rather than foretelling the future), let him do it according to the faith he had, and the understanding of the faith he possessed. If one was given to performing certain services (termed here ministry), let him tend to that the best he could. Let the one who teaches tend to his teaching. The one who can best exhort, let him emphasize that ability. The one who gives, may he do so with simplicity, meaning sincerity and honesty. The one who rules, which would certainly have reference to the leaders of the church, let them rule with diligence by giving the work of leadership their genuine and complete concern. The one who shows mercy, let him do so with cheerfulness, not as if he merely had to be merciful, but because he truly wanted to be merciful, and was glad for the opportunity to show mercy.

What Paul is expressing is understandable enough. With everyone working together, each doing his part to the fullest, great and lasting good would result. Such oneness makes for a wonderful fellowship in Christ.

Verses 9-13

9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

In this paragraph we are introduced to several short, simple, and very direct commandments and practical admonitions in living the Christian life, especially our relationship with brethren. It should go without much comment that love (seeking the highest good of the other) ought to abide and abound among brethren. It is most unfortunate when there is evidence that each is not seeking the good of the other, and love is not present. Surely, God is highly displeased when brethren are of such evil dispositions and attitudes toward one another.

But this love is to be genuine, not pretended or feigned, “*without dissimulation.*” People can smother you with words of sweetness and kindness, and not really mean a word of it. It is not altogether unknown for people to “sweet talk” you to your face and tear you apart behind your back. This is the kind of thing Paul says should never be among brethren. Let there be love among the brethren, and let it be true and real like God wants it to be.

The Christian must learn to hate some things. “*Abhor*” is one of the strongest terms that can be used to denote disapproval. God “*hates*” some things (Proverbs 6:16-19). Surely, the child of God ought to learn to hate what his heavenly Father hates. God hates that which is evil. Something is wrong if the Christian does not learn to hate, abhor, and despise whatever is contrary to the will of God.

We must ever keep in mind that there is a difference between hating sin, and hating the sinner. The first we are to do, but the second we are never to do. Christ hated sin, but loved the sinner. He did not approve of the sinner in his sins, but He still loved the sinner, even while hating the sin that condemned the sinner He loved. So must be the attitude of His followers.

But just taking a negative attitude toward sin is not all that God expects of a Christian. In addition to hating sin, Christians should learn to hold fast, “*cleave,*” to that which is good. Life cannot be lived in a vacuum. Our lives will be filled with either good or evil. While driving out the evil, we must fill our lives with good. If we do not do this, evil will come and reoccupy our lives (Matthew 12:43-45). In verse nine, Paul gives us a **do** and a **don’t** like he did in verse one. There is a positive and negative side to serving God. Emphasis on one to the neglect of the other will make our service lopsided, distorted, and unacceptable before God.

Paul returns to the idea of brotherly affection one for another in verse ten. Here the word translated “*kindly affectioned*” comes from the Greek word *storge*, one of the three words in the Greek New Testament that conveys the idea of love in the English language. It gives emphasis to the family relationship we have in Christ. While each member of the family truly seeks to please the Father of the family, we must also learn to love one another, because we realize the Father loves every member of the family. Christians are God’s spiritual family (First Timothy 3:15). It is only natural and proper that we love our Father. Therefore, it follows automatically that we ought to have brotherly love for each other because of the Father’s love for all.

This love is to be put into practice. It demands selflessness. It requires putting the consideration of the other before consideration of self. It means seeking the other’s best interest before your own. It means having preference for the other’s welfare before your own. Often men find this difficult to practice, but never is it wrong, but always right, to behave toward each other in this manner. The more such a disposition among brethren exists, the greater the chance of tranquility and peace abiding among them. Brethren will cooperate more, work together better, and be far more likely to fulfill their mission on earth in God’s family.

The teaching of verse eleven exhorts the Christian in two ways toward the same goal. (1) The Christian is to be energetic and active as far as he is capable. He is to be diligent as he goes about his tasks that are honorable and beneficial. (2) He is not to be a person who is lazy and irresponsible, but one who serves the Lord and his fellowman with a zest and zeal that marks him as a child of God. Whatever task he undertakes, he is to do it with all his might, believing in what he is doing, and doing it like he knows the worth of it. Solomon wrote similarly in Ecclesiastes 9:10, “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*”

Verse twelve continues with expressions of the attitudes of practical use that are to be found in the heart of the Christian. The child of God has more reason to rejoice than any other person on earth. After all, he belongs to God. He is in the right spiritual relationship with his Creator and Judge. His sins are forgiven him and he is saved. He is on his way to heaven. Why should he not rejoice? He has a hope, and this hope burns within his heart. It enables him to face hardships and tribulations with patience and steadfastness. He does not buckle under when hard times come because he has hope, and he has the quality of perseverance. All the while he realizes his dependence on God. He knows he is not self-sufficient. Therefore, he reflects this recognition of dependence by constant prayer.

The Christian life, so amply defined in the verses of chapter twelve, does not confine itself to attitude. Already, in verses four through eight, we have seen the need for cooperative action. Verse nine through verse eleven includes action and attitude. The Christian is mindful of those who are less fortunate than he. He distributes, gives to the necessary provision, of those who lack. While this passage asserts his attentiveness to the needs of the saints, which must always take priority, his concern for those outside the body of Christ is amply taught in such passages as Galatians 6:10, "*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*" The same lesson is taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan, by the examples of Jesus, and others. Always, however, the Christian is more concerned for the welfare of his brothers and sisters in the Lord than anyone else.

This trait of character will call upon him to share what he has. He will show concern for others. He will manifest the unselfishness that he has learned as a part of following his Lord. He is one given to hospitality. This idea is more than just "having company," but is a kindred statement to the preceding one. Those who are strangers and sojourners that have need will also find a place in the Christian's concern. His provisions are open to the use of those in need.

Verses 14-16

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Continuing certain teaching designed to make the Christian a Christ-like person, Paul takes cognizance of something the early Christians knew first hand, and which all those who live godly in Christ Jesus can expect. There is persecution to suffer (Second Timothy 3:12). There will ever be those who will deride the Christian because of his faith and convictions regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. Persecution is not a stranger, nor a strange thing, to those who serve the Lord (First Peter 4:12). Yet, the attitude the Christian has toward those who seek his harm is so different from the action men generally manifest toward those who seek harm. Whereas others curse the Christian, the Christian is not obliged to curse them in return. Rather, he will seek to bless such people. While this takes more courage and character than to respond with curses when cursed, it is the way the Lord reacted, and He wants His followers to react as He did. This does not preclude certain personal safeguards and protection of self that God allows, which shall be considered when we discuss chapter thirteen. But the attitude of blessing rather than cursing is that which is to be found in the heart of the child of God.

From verse fifteen it is obvious that the Christian heart is sympathetic and understanding. We may often be called upon to weep with those who are in sorrow. We do not usually find this to be very difficult if there is any compassion whatever in the heart. Pitiably indeed is that person who cannot be grieved when another is brought low due to sorrow and tragedy that causes him to weep. Surely, we ought to be able to feel sorry for people in any kind of trouble. While it may well be true that they are receiving their "just desserts," and reaping as they have sown, it is no cause for rejoicing, but only cause for sorrow, to realize that others suffer heartache and heartbreak. So many things can, and do, happen in the course of the lives of human beings that bring sadness and pain that seemingly are unavoidable. Can we not weep with those who weep?

But the first part of the verse also teaches the Christian to rejoice with those who rejoice. The only thing that would keep one from rejoicing over the good fortunes of another is jealousy. Possibly sometimes people cannot truly be glad that another has received good fortune and prosperity because they wish it had happened to them. Certainly, it is not wrong that we could want good things to come our way, but it is truly wrong to fail to be glad when good things come the way of others. Rather than being jealous and envious we ought to rejoice when others succeed in what is right and honorable. Whether one succeeds in some worthy goal or accomplishment, or whether in the greater realms of becoming and being a child of God, we ought to be made glad when things go well with others. Such is the Christian way of doing things. This is the Christian way of thinking.

Unity is another trait that is urged upon the Christian in verse sixteen. Be of the same mind and think alike. To think alike, people must have the same measure by which to measure their thinking. Possessing the same values is necessary in order to be of the same mind. Christians may not always have the same values in all matters of a secular nature because of differing interests, talents, and tastes. But these matters are relatively unimportant. But when it comes to matters of the spirit, when it is a matter of serving God, when it comes to submission of the human will to the will of Jehovah, Christians are to think alike. If they do not, one, or possibly both, are in error. When they think correctly they will think alike, and be of the same mind. This is an essential quality tending toward essential unity. Unity of mind is essential to Christian unity in matters of God's revealed Word.

We are also admonished, "*mind not high things.*" This has reference to seeking the glory and praise of the men of this world. Men often will seek the grand and glorious according to worldly standards, and in doing so, lose their souls. The "great things" of this life pale into relative insignificance in comparison with the things of the life to come. So often men are willing to be "great," or be given some "great" assignment and recognition. But they despise the lowly and more humble aspects of service. They seek the "*high things*" for their own conceited ambitions. Often those who quietly and unpretentiously go about doing their tasks faithfully without fanfare are neither recognized nor appreciated as they ought to be, except by the Lord. But that is what counts after all. Being "the big hen in the pen" is not always the best thing. "Top man on the totem pole" should not be our goal. To sit at the head of the table should not be our prime interest. Certainly, such ambitions are not to be allowed to provoke neglect of those of lowly estate, or cause one to turn away from serving them. Again, there is this teaching through Paul toward genuine humility and sacrifice of self and selfish ambitions.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

The teaching to “*be not wise in your own conceits*” is so much like the teaching in verse three, “*not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.*” You have heard it said that some people have the “big head,” meaning they really think they have the world by the tail and they are the last word in perfection. Such an attitude surely does not commend itself, and does not exemplify the character God wants among His people.

What glorious traits Paul has urged upon the Christian! Let us not minimize the importance, nor think for a moment, that these qualities are to become ours in a single day or with a single bound. They are qualities of character that will likely occupy a lifetime to acquire and develop. We can never think that we have attained, but must keep working more and more toward their development.

Verses 17, 18

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

One of the outstanding characteristics of being a Christian is the imitation of Christ in not seeking the harm, but seeking the good for all those around you, even those who have done you evil. The Christian is not the kind of person who feels he must “even the score” and get revenge when someone has mistreated him. Instead of evil in return for evil, the child of God seeks to do what is honorable in the sight of all men.

The Christian is not a person who seeks conflict. Instead, he would much prefer to avoid conflict, and live in peace with those around him. While it is true that those who will live godly lives shall suffer persecution (Second Timothy 3:12), and while it is true and cannot be denied that those who want to live godly lives will always be in antagonism with those who wish to live contrary to God's will (Second Corinthians 10:4-6), this conflict is neither the making, desire, nor preference of the Christian. This conflict is imposed upon him. He cannot compromise his convictions for a moment even to live in peace with others, but his attitude and disposition toward others is that of peace, as far as is possible. Short of denying his duties to God or compromising the truth, he will try to get along "*peaceably*" with everyone, doing what men consider honorable.

At the same time, he knows that peace with God is the peace that matters. He will not sacrifice that peace in order to have peace with anybody. He will never be the kind of person who is willing to "go along with error" to "get along with others."

Verses 19-21

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Paul urges his brethren not to take matters of revenge into their own hands. One thing the Christian knows that others do not accept is that ultimately the right shall be victorious over the wrong. Satan cannot win the great conflict, but God shall be victorious, and those who are with God shall be victors as well. Therefore, we should not seek to settle all matters against evil in this life. Indeed, we cannot, and it is not within our power to do so. But in the long run of things and in the final analysis we shall be avenged and shall enjoy the spiritual victory in Christ. Instead of taking vengeance against those who do us harm, instead of trying to “get them back” for what they have done, instead of seeking as much or more evil for them than they have sought for us, we are to “*give place unto wrath.*”

Many have confused this last phrase, “*give place unto wrath,*” by concluding that we are to simply, passively, timidly, idly sit by and allow the evildoer a free and unrestricted hand in doing whatever he wishes. This passage is not teaching the Christian to submit to the wrath of the evildoer, but to acquiesce to the wrath of God against the evildoer rather than attempting to handle the evildoer alone. In other words, the Christian is to give place to the wrath of God against the evildoer rather than take it upon himself to mete out revenge against the evildoer on his own. The reason that such a course is the proper one is because the Lord has said, “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*” This matter of vengeance does not belong to the Christian, but is a matter that lies in the hands of God to mediate as He sees fit and when He sees fit. (We shall learn that one instrument of God in rendering vengeance on the evildoer is the long and powerful arm of civil authority, as is taught in chapter thirteen.)

Instead of vengeance, the Christian’s attitude and action is to be one of rendering good for evil, as already suggested in verse seventeen. Rather than doing harm, even to an enemy, Christians are to be ready to assist and help should opportunity afford.

This kind of reaction toward the evildoer and toward the one who has offended the Christian would “*heap coals of fire on his head.*” I take this great and oft-repeated phrase to mean that this Christ-like kind of benevolent attitude on the part of the Christian would burn out the animosity the persecutor might have against the Christian. It would make the enemy ashamed. It would cause him, by appealing in a very distinct manner, to his sense of compassion, if there was any such sense within him, to relent and discontinue imposing the hardships he was placing upon the Christian. This kind of benevolent response would be more practical, beneficial, and would likely obtain the desired result of release from persecution than fighting back and getting even, which thing the Christian could not do because such vengeance is reserved by the Lord for Himself.

It is wise to mention here that God is not unjust in heaping vengeance against the evildoer, but rather justice demands that such be done, or God would no longer be a just God. It is, therefore, not a matter whether the enemy or persecutor ought be dealt with and handled and the matter settled. The enemy deserves being punished. It is a matter of **who** is going to administer the wrath against the enemy. Paul says God would attend to that rather than the Christian, personally, and on his own.

There was, and is, the very strong likelihood that being the recipient of hardships from the hands of enemies might crush the Christian, or so provoke him that he would react in such a fashion that would cause his own condemnation. Recognizing the most tempting reaction to be retaliation (to be distinguished from self-defense), Paul urges the Christian to rise above that level of conduct and not be overcome by the evil, but so conduct himself that the good he would perform would overcome the evil.

Admittedly, this may prove to be one of the most difficult obligations that the Christian has to perform in his service to Christ. When one is wronged, the most natural thing that comes to mind is to “not let him get away with it.” But as stated before, the Christian knows (because God has told him through His Word) that the wrongdoer will “not get away with it” at all, but the Christian is to leave the settling of the matter, and the retaliation, in the hands of God. This requires great faith and patience on the part of the Christian who is being mistreated. Especially difficult it may be to obey when everything necessary to utterly destroy the enemy is at your disposal, which is often the case. He has probably left himself vulnerable. The temptation to strike back may be strong. But the obligation to refrain from doing so is imposed. The Christian is not the kind of person who seeks harm, but who seeks to help. This requires of him forbearance from doing what men otherwise might do with regard to their enemies and opponents.

This chapter is without question one of the great chapters of the new covenant of Jesus Christ with respect to daily conduct and Christian demeanor. If those who profess to follow the Lord could and would study and apply this chapter to their lives, even when difficulties are presented against them, maybe I should say especially when difficulties are presented against them, the cause of Christ would be observed to have an influence on the church, and on the world, that would make for a better world in which to live. It would promote the influence of Christ. The obligations of this chapter cannot be taken lightly, but must be considered with the weightiest degree of seriousness.

Chapter Thirteen

It seems evident to me that the thoughts presented in this chapter follow in logical sequence to the ones presented in chapter twelve. Chapter twelve, the great chapter on daily living as a Christian, deals with some general and specific principles in living the life a Christian should live. Chapter thirteen, and fourteen as well, turns to additional specifics where these principles are to be applied.

Verses 1, 2

1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

The overall theme of these two verses, in fact much of the chapter, is the relationship of the Christian to the earthly government under which he lives. The teaching is the will of the Lord, not only for the Christian, but for the unconverted person as well. If this were not true, the conduct and purpose of civil government would be nullified altogether. We see in these words the mind of God in ordaining there be civil governing powers, even though we cannot conclude there was any specific type of civil government that God has directed that we must adopt. It can be said without any real opposition, and can be successfully argued, that any government that bases its precepts and laws upon the great principles of human relations as taught in Scripture is a government more acceptable to God than a government built and based upon values and ideologies that contradict what the Lord has taught concerning human conduct toward other humans.

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The higher powers are to be understood in the context of the entire first seven verses as civil powers that have authority over the people of a given area. Verse three identifies this power as the “*rulers*,” and verse seven identifies them as those to whom tribute and custom are to be paid. This obviously refers to civil authorities.

We are to be subject, obedient, and submissive in giving allegiance to the civil government over us. We have a responsibility to civil government. We are Christians, citizens in the kingdom of God, but also we are citizens of the earthly kingdom where we live. This is plain and needs no elaboration.

The reason given why we are to be subject to such power is because that is God’s plan and design by which society is to be kept orderly and proper. Such powers are ordained of God, made of God, and are according to God’s intent that they exist. The civil power derives its power from the fact that God has granted such power to it. In this connection, read John 19:10,11 and Daniel 5:18. For this reason it is a travesty against all that is right for any government to ignore the will of the Lord in the handling of its affairs. The operation of the civil government is different from the operation of the home, or the church, but the civil government certainly ought to consider the thinking of God regarding the realm in which it is to operate. More often than not, it seems that those who lead in civil matters pay little to no attention to what God would prefer, but more to what is politically expedient for their own selfish gains and aims. We are grateful when the rare exception rises among us. It need not be this way, but it seems it is that way so very, very often.

It is because God has appointed that there be civil government that the Christian is to respect its power. To violate civil law is more than violating civil law. It is violating an authority that God has appointed to exist in governing man on earth.

Some have falsely thought if everyone were good and all were Christians that civil government would not be necessary. This is folly. They have concluded that the only function of civil government is to punish evildoers. That certainly is a major function of civil government, but not the total function. Civil government would be necessary if everyone was a faithful Christian because there are matters of a secular nature that impose themselves upon all men in the conduct of living that are not specifically determined by laws written in Scripture. There are matters that are secular and material that have to be decided. The need for traffic laws, property laws, inheritance laws, the manner of collection of taxes, and innumerable other duties such a dealings between nations that demand some form of civil government by which all are to be governed. Such laws of government are not specified in the Bible. Even though there be principles that would bear upon such things, the actual laws must be made by men. Man ought not make laws that are contradictory to Scriptural principles, however. Whether the laws of the land are consistent with Scriptural principles or not, if they do not demand of the Christian that which necessitates him to violate divine law, he is subject to the higher power and is expected by man and God to obey these laws.

In the event some civil law demands something of us that would force us to violate a teaching of God, we are obliged to respect the teaching of God rather than the “*higher power*” or civil government. Fortunate is the person who is privileged to live under a system of civil government that does not demand of him violations against the law of God.

Our first allegiance to God’s law above civil law does not warrant taking the law into our own hands or disobeying laws we simply may not like. This principle only applies when we are directed or forced to do that which would cause us to sin. Peter was once confronted with such a matter, and he stated the principle with clarity in Acts 5:29, “*We must obey God rather than men.*”

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To resist the power is to resist a law of God. As stated, it is the ordinance of God that we obey. To resist will mean trouble for us, not only from duly ordained civil authorities, but from God as well. Violating civil law is more than just violating civil law, as we have aforementioned. It is also violating a divine law that says we are to obey civil law, with the exception already noted. This is the source from which the Christian gains his determination to be a law abiding citizen. God has said he is to be just such a citizen.

Verses 3, 4

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Civil powers are not designed to inflict harm on the good, but to control and punish the evil. When we obey the law we have no need to fear the civil power. Indeed, if those in power are of the nature they should be they will praise the citizen who abides by the law. Of course, there are men that abuse civil power and do inflict harm on the good. But when men do this they are not using the power God has ordained, but are abusing the power granted to civil government. The system that calls for civil government is not to be abolished simply because some will and do misuse that system and power at times.

The philosophy that says one is justified in revolting against civil government just because they may not like it, or the philosophy that says we shall overturn all civil authority because some abuse it, is not according to God's will. There is nothing, to my knowledge, in the will of God that prevents the citizenry of a nation from correcting the abuses of the civil power. When there are lawful ways and means of doing so then a lawful course of action should be followed. If abuses exist and there is simply no way for one to address himself to the correction of such offenses, this raises another set of questions altogether. We must keep in mind that God never designed that civil government should be abusive of the citizens under its power, and never intended that government so conduct itself as to mistreat those in its dominion. When it does, it deserves being terminated because it violates God's intent.

We need to be impressed with the strong statement that the civil power is a "*minister of God.*" The purpose for this ministry is the accomplishment of the will of God in the realm over which this minister has authority granted by the Lord. This ministry is for the accomplishment of that which is good. Once and for all this ought to silence any advocacy that the civil government of itself is evil, or has come into existence because of evil. It came into existence because God designed it as His tool for the accomplishment of good that must attend in the conduct of society. Otherwise, there would exist nothing but anarchy and total chaos.

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Take notice that Paul says the power is the minister of God “*to thee*” for good. Consider the phrase, “*to thee*,” more closely. What did Paul mean? Is the civil government God’s tool on behalf of the Christian **only** as some seem to have concluded? Some admit the necessity of civil rule while denying the right of a Christian to have any part whatever in civil government. They contend that government is to be left in the hands of those who are not Christians. They indicate the government is simply a provision of God as a servant for the benefit of Christians. They contend the “*thee*” refers just to the Christian brethren. To my mind, such is an unnatural, forced, unrealistic, and inconsistent conclusion that also defies the facts of the case.

None doubt that all are to obey the rule of civil authority whether Christian or not. Is it reasonable to conclude the benefit of government is not for everyone as well as the Christian? God has ordained government for the sake of all society. While Paul was writing to Christians, and was insisting the civil power is a minister of God for good to them, it was not by virtue of their faith, but by virtue of their citizenship in the nation being governed that the government did them good. Remember, they were citizens of the earthly government as well as citizens in the kingdom of God. The government is a minister of good for all men because of their citizenship in the earthly kingdom, not because of citizenship in God’s kingdom. “*To thee*” means “to thee as citizens,” not just “to thee as Christians.”

The false idea some have suggested that Christians can have nothing whatever to do with government has driven men to conclude that only sinners can have anything whatever to do with work that even they contend is primarily on behalf of the Christians. Does it not strike you as grossly inconsistent to grant the sinner fellowship with God in doing God's work, but deny that fellowship to the child of God? Here is a work of God that produces good, not evil, but good for everyone. A position that would deny the Christian the right to serve God as His minister in this capacity, and participate in this good work ordained of God is untenable. That the Christian may face dangers and temptations in working in civil government does not invalidate the argument because he faces such things in almost every human secular activity, even in earning a livelihood for himself and his family.

Christians are to obey the laws of the land as any other citizen, and will receive benefit from the same government as any other citizen. Christians do have a two-fold motive for obeying, however. (1) He must obey because the government has the power and authority to enforce its own laws. (2) More significantly to the Christian, God said obey the *"higher powers."*

Civil power has been ordained of God to have the power of enforcement of its laws. It has the power of the sword, an instrument of force, and even of death. There is no doubt but the civil government has been given this power by the Lord, and if it chooses to exercise that power, it has the right before God to do so. Capital punishment is no more a violation of God's law than the existence of civil government itself is a violation of God's law. Even the home and the church could not survive without the power to enforce the laws governing them. No government could possibly survive, and could not do that for which it was ordained, without the power to enforce its laws. The power of the home and church is not the same power as that of civil government, but there is no doubt that the government has the power of capital punishment if it chooses to use it.

The question is often raised if a Christian can have part in civil government. We have touched on this already, but more can be said. Many good brethren have taken extreme and widely separated views on this subject. I contend if we will look at some facts that the Bible does reveal we shall not see the need for the complications many have raised, nor the inconsistencies into which they have drawn themselves. God ordained civil government. The government is the minister of God. There is a complete absence of any divine directive to the Christian forbidding him to participate in government. While this argues from silence, if God had forbidden it, that would have been the end of the matter. On the other hand, there are instances in the New Testament where Christians were involved in government without rebuke from any divinely guided messenger. These instances present material which is too lengthy a subject to expound here. As far as I am concerned, this fact settles the matter that Christians can operate in civil government. The function of government is a proper function. It fills a need the Lord saw, and it has a role assigned it by the Lord. It would be a strange concept to be sure that would allow only the servants of the devil to do the work of the Lord, and deprive servants of God from doing it under any circumstances. Government is a work of the Lord. When one serves the government and conducts the affairs of government he is doing what God has ordained to be done. He may not do it well. He may well abuse his power rather than properly use it. He may become corrupt while doing it, and surely experience has shown this is a grave problem for those who serve. But the fact remains that a Christian involved in governmental affairs is involved in a function that God approves, provided the operation itself is honorable, of course.

I find it most unreasonable to take a position that says God and the children of the devil can work together to accomplish good for the Christian, but God and His own children cannot work together for the good of all mankind. I know God has used evil people to accomplish His purposes many times as recorded in Old Testament revelation. He used them to punish His own wayward children. He even sometimes used them to help His children. But that did not mean it would be sinful for His children to also be involved in accomplishing His noble purposes.

Civil government is for the good of all mankind. The Christian is God's child. One who is not a Christian is yet the devil's child. Government is God's order and plan. It is not of the devil, but of God for accomplishing certain benefits for everybody. Surely, a child of God would do a better job in God's work than a child of Satan. When there is nothing required in civil rule that God forbids, the Christian can serve in governmental service.

Furthermore, God does not force men to sin. To say the civil government does things that the Christian cannot do, and that such things must be left to the sinner, but that such things must be done, is to contend that God, who ordained civil government, has ordained certain things that must be sinful, and made it necessary that somebody sin to carry them out. God does not force sin, but He has ordained government, given it its duties to perform, and all those duties are by His authority.

We recognize that sometimes governments do violate the functions God has given government to do. But this is an abuse of government, not the use of it.

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Before one jumps too far into condemning a Christian's participation in government at all, you might recall how school teachers, mail deliverers, water meter readers, road engineers, etc. are government workers. You might say that is acceptable, but being a policeman, mayor, or soldier is not. So you now obligate yourself to produce Scripture that teaches you can do some government work, but some is excluded. If that be so, it obviously is not so on the basis that it is government work.

Verses 5-7

5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. 6 For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

The Christian is presented with a double motive for being subject to the higher powers. We touched upon these two motives earlier. One, it is for wrath's sake. That means it is to escape punishment from the civil power. Two, it is for conscience sake. This means the Christian's conscience is trained according to the will of the Lord, and that will says obey the laws of the land. This dual motive also directs him to pay tribute, custom, taxes, have respect for the authority of the government, look upon the function of government as honorable, and give honor to those who hold governmental positions, if not for the sake of the person, then for the sake of the position itself. Christians are to render to all what is deserving, and the civil government is deserving of obedience and respect. The support of the citizenry of the civil government is proper because the civil government is attending continually to the work the Lord has given it. Civil affairs are vital and necessary to the conduct of orderly and lawful human existence.

We must take note that one function of government mentioned in verses four and five is that of executing wrath on the evil doer. Some have erroneously concluded that this legislates against all forms of self defense by individuals, even if he is set upon by intruders or otherwise threatened with harm. The idea has been set forward that the Christian will turn all such defense into the hands of the civil power and absolutely refrain from any notions of self defense. This passage does not teach such as that. To take such a position is to add without warrant to the scope and realm of the teaching embraced in this passage. Let us first note that the matter of self defense is not under discussion here. What is under discussion is the role of civil government. It is taught that civil government can and does punish the evildoer. This does not preclude the individual under some circumstances protecting himself.

You may recall that I said when discussing verses nineteen through twenty-one of chapter twelve, that retaliation is not to be equated with self defense. Retaliation, vengeance, getting even, executing punishment against one who offends you is not allowed to the Christian as an individual. But God has provided for vengeance, retaliation and punishment. In many instances the way God has provided is through the long and powerful arm of civil power. Defending oneself is not the same as retaliation. Retaliation is taking the offensive on your own and reaping vengeance. Self defense is warding off offenses. At times the actions may seem very similar, but the motive for the actions comes into play.

There may well be times when one can rely upon the civil power not only for retaliation against the wrongdoer, but also for personal protection. But there may be times when he cannot rely upon the civil power for personal protection. Agencies of the civil power may not be on the scene. In such circumstances the Christian is not forbidden to protect himself. It is not expedient in this discussion of chapter thirteen to go into all the many parts relating to self defense because chapter thirteen is not discussing self defense. You have to study elsewhere for God's will regarding this and the extent to which such is allowed.

This chapter is not the entire presentation in Scripture regarding a person's relationship to the government under which he lives. There are many questions that can be raised that this chapter does not address. I have tried to discuss what this chapter teaches. There are other passages that should be studied to gain the full scope of the teaching regarding the Christian and the civil powers. I would refer the reader to one of the most consistent presentations of the subject it has been my good fortune to study, and I have studied many of them. I recommend The Christian and the Civil Government, by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. I know everyone does not accept all that is stated in that book. But one will find himself hard pressed to refute the conclusions drawn, and even harder pressed to come up with a more accurate and consistent presentation of the subject of the Christian and the government. The study of the first seven verses of this chapter often produces the kind of thinking we should avoid; namely, straining to produce certain ideas from the text that is foreign to what the text teaches. Too often men concoct some theory, and then proceed to make a serious effort to read that theory into the Scriptures. It is far better to take the text and read out of the text what is in the text, and be content therewith. This is all I have attempted to do with these comments.

Verses 8-10

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The next matter to be considered is that we, as Christians, are not to neglect our obligations. Duty is a precious word, and the Christian of all persons on earth should be one who does his utmost to discharge his duty in whatever realm that duty lies. The admonition to "*owe no man anything*" is not restricted to financial and monetary matters, though these are included. It does not forbid borrowing or entering into financial negotiations. If one wants to be very specific regarding borrowing money and making debts, then consider how a man who borrows a certain sum of money with the obligation to repay that sum in smaller installments over a specified period of time is not indebted to anybody so long as he meets the terms he accepted. When he makes the required payment at the required time he is not in debt or obligated to anybody until the next payment is due. He is not owing any man anything if he meets the terms. A man is supposed to pay his monetary debts and fulfill that duty. But a Christian has many duties to many people, and he will strive to meet all his duties to the fullest that he is capable of doing.

One duty mentioned is the duty to love others. Yes, I would consider the desire to seek what is the best for others a Christian duty as well as a privilege. Love is something everyone owes everyone else. So many do not love others, and therefore, they are neglecting one of the duties of life. When one does love another he is accomplishing the thrust of the law of God regarding person-to-person relationships.

There are many laws that have reference to human relationships. Some of the commandments God originally gave at Mount Sinai are mentioned to illustrate human relationships. These are not all inclusive in the law of human relationships, but they show what the apostle was emphasizing in this passage. Man is obligated to treat his fellowman properly.

In verse ten we have a definition of love. There are other definitions in the Scriptures as well. But this one emphasizes love, not seeking the harm of another. No man can claim to love if he desires and seeks the detriment of another. Love is the very opposite of that. Love seeks the other's highest good. This allows no room for doing ill toward another to harm him. Only when one seeks the other's highest good can he know he is fulfilling God's will regarding his attitude and action toward other people. Love does not forbid discipline or self defense, or even properly executed punishment by civil power. Love does seek the best for the other person as God's will has determined what is best.

One definition that must be included regarding love, even though it is not in this text, but is implied in the entire system of salvation that Paul is revealing in the book of Romans, and that is what we read in First John 5:3. *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."* Other passages teach the same thing. One cannot separate love and obedience any more than he can separate faith and obedience.

Sometimes a person may develop the idea that what he does is altogether his business, and he can live his life somewhat isolated from others. This is not true. What one does affects others, and each must be mindful of the effect he has on others. To the extent his conduct affects others, to that same extent what he does is somebody else's business as well as his own. Since what he does is of consequence to others, the Christian will be a person that will strive to perform his duty. These great characteristics, performance of duty and love, are to be a part of the make-up of the Christian.

Verses 11, 12

11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Verses eleven and twelve are directed toward the prime thought that opportunity is now, and we must make the best of it. We must consider the time and circumstance under which we live, and the conditions of the world around us, and be busy about our task of living the Christian manner of life. There will be those times probably when all become spiritually drowsy, even indifferent, in spite of Paul's admonition in Galatians 6:9 not to be weary in well doing. But we cannot afford the luxury of sleep at a time when we need to be wide awake and on the job. Each day we live we should live in a saved relationship with God, but each day brings us closer and closer to the ultimate reward of eternal salvation in heaven. It would be the tragedy of tragedies should we neglect so great salvation by spiritual drowsiness and unconcern.

Paul is giving some of the most practical advice and encouragement that a bedraggled and hardship-laden people might hear. The Christian is often just such a person, and the Christian needs to be warned against indifference and urged to work.

Because the time grows shorter and shorter in which to make some real contribution for righteousness' sake, we cannot afford to do the work of darkness, perform the deeds of sin, or commit evil. The time is drawing nigh when our opportunity to do right will be terminated. This being true, we ought to arm ourselves with the brilliance of light, truth, righteousness, godliness, purity, and all the other qualities that God wants His people to possess. Study in this connection Ephesians 6:10-20.

Verses 13, 14

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. 14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

In addition to those qualities just mentioned in the last phrase, there is the quality of honesty. There are some things to avoid, such as rioting, drunkenness, chambering (having reference to sexual intercourse and the context in which it is given obviously refers to illicit and unlawful intercourse), wantonness, wastefulness, dissipation, strife, and envy.

Rather than partaking of such evils, we are to put on Christ, which means, we are to imitate the life of Christ in our own lives, not surrendering to the passions of the flesh and the fulfillment of lust. The teaching not to make provision for the flesh is not teaching us to neglect the care of the body, or fail to provide the necessities for this body and our material needs. It has reference rather to the flesh as the term "*flesh*" was used previously in this book with reference to sinfulness on contrast to the ways of the Spirit. See chapter seven, verse five, and chapter eight, verse five.

By way of summary, this briefest chapter of the book of Romans has presented several of the most profound teachings regarding the Christian and his life. It tells him of his duty to civil government. It shows his obligation to love and to do his duty in all realms of life. He is urged to take advantage of the short time he has, and keep alert, wide awake to the opportunities that are his. There are things he must do and not do in serving the Lord. His emphasis is doing what is right, not satisfying the lusts of his flesh.

As we read such chapters as this thirteenth one in Romans, we are once again impressed that the epistles, written to Christians, by inspired men, are so vital to us because they enable us to know what is expected of us as Christians. It is one thing to **become** a Christian, but something more to **be** what you have become. The book of Romans, studied, understood, believed, and obeyed, will contribute immensely to our spiritual growth and equip us to live lives acceptable before God that will bring glory and honor to Him.

Chapter Fourteen

In what appears to be a very logical sequence of presentations, this chapter, like the two before it, deals primarily with Christian living and the discharge of the responsibilities that belong to the Christian. While chapter twelve mentioned many matters in general, and chapter thirteen was more specific in dealing with the Christian and his relationship to civil authority, and also attitudes and actions toward opponents, this chapter has to do with the Christian and his conduct and attitude toward his own brethren who might not be as strong and well-grounded in Christ as he is fortunate to be.

We also must approach this chapter cautiously because many have taken certain statements of this chapter and wrested them so as to make these statements seem to mean what is diametrically opposite to the spirit and requirements of Christianity. So often when men are determined to “do their own thing and go their own way,” having little to no real respect for the Scriptures, but at the same time realizing the value of having Biblical support for what they think and do, they will take sentences out of context and assign meanings to them that actually lead in the opposite direction of the truth. Chapter fourteen has often been so abused by those who are very liberal and permissive in their thinking, and who relegate the doctrinal demands of the gospel to an insignificant and unimportant position.

Verse 1

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

The words are obviously addressed to someone other than those who are weak in the faith, but to those who are strong in **the** faith, with the knowledge and ability to apply to their lives **the** faith, the religion of Christ. They are addressed to those who are stronger. Weak ones are not to be disdained or viewed with contempt. They are to be received because they are brothers. Surely, they lack maturity, and there is much room and need for growth. The mere fact that one is weak in the faith is no cause to refuse him.

We must not gather from this passage that God is pleased when one **remains** weak in the faith even while he has opportunities to grow strong in the faith. The receiving of a weak brother necessarily indicates the weakness is neither deliberate nor because of neglect, not feigned nor pretended, but because of the lack of time and opportunity to grow. Those who are in the Lord's church for years on end and are satisfied to remain weak, confused, unlearned, and who are really doing relatively little to improve their situation can hardly be considered as the "*weak*" under discussion here.

Verses 2, 3

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. 3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Paul gives this illustration that defines more clearly the principle of receiving a weak brother. It is on the subject of food. Certain foods were forbidden among the Jews by the Mosaic law. Certain meats were called “*unclean*.” Some brethren stoutly believed that they ought never eat any meat whatever. They were strictly vegetarians. Upon becoming Christians they were not likely to discard that strong conviction readily. Like so many other things, when one becomes a Christian he must grow out of some ideas he formerly held and grow into an acceptance of the truth in all matters. Whether to eat meat or not eat meat was not a matter that was morally or religiously right or wrong in itself. To eat was not wrong. To refuse to eat was not wrong. This is a very important element in the context of this discussion, and it shall be mentioned repeatedly lest we be inclined to overlook it. Overlooking it is at the heart of much of the abuse of this chapter. The principles being presented and illustrated in this chapter regarding the conduct of brethren who are stronger toward brethren who are weaker are not to be applied to matters where there is a right and wrong, a truth or error situation. It deals with a matter of indifference. Some falsely conclude that regardless of what one does or believes they should be received. This is **not** what is being taught. The problems and issues under consideration are those of indifference. It is only a matter of the conscience of those involved that is being discussed. God has not demanded meat to be eaten, nor has He demanded only herbs be eaten. He has neither forbidden nor commanded concerning such things under the dispensation of Jesus Christ as was true for the Jews under the law given through Moses. Paul makes it plain that there is nothing wrong with eating meat if one chooses to eat meat in First Timothy 4:3-4. He even warns against those who would forbid others to eat meat in First Timothy 4:3.

The question here is similar, though not identical, with the problem discussed in First Corinthians, chapter eight. There the problem was not only the eating of meat, but the eating of the meat of animals that has been sacrificed to idols. The thrust of the teaching in First Corinthians was that there was nothing wrong of the meat itself that would prohibit the Christian from eating it for food, even though it may have been once offered to idols. One was not necessarily showing any honor or respect to the idol to which the animal had been offered if he simply purchased the meat for food after it was placed on the market. If that practice proved to be an occasion of stumbling for a weaker brother who did not understand this, however, that was another matter. Then that practice ought to be discarded. Paul said he would rather never eat meat again than to cause a weak brother to fall and be offended. The overriding message is the same here in Romans fourteen. It has to do with the conduct and attitude a brother has toward those of the brotherhood who have yet not matured sufficiently to be able to discern between matters of right and wrong on the one hand, and matters of indifference on the other. For the sake of the weak one, however, the safest course is directed.

The situation was one where the weak one, in his limited knowledge, ought not condemn his brother for eating meat because there was actually nothing wrong in doing so. On the other hand, the stronger brother ought not condemn the weaker one either for the simple fact he is weak, and needs to grow in his understanding. To unnecessarily offend him in his weakness might well cost him his soul.

Let me express it even another way. The strong brother had the “right” to eat the meat because he understood there was nothing wrong in doing so. But he must be willing to sacrifice his “right” if it would offend a weaker brother, and if he did not, he would be wrong.

Some have objected to this teaching on the grounds that it infringes upon one's liberty in Christ. One might object that this deprives stronger brethren of those things they ought be permitted to do. Sometimes we hear people talking about their "liberty in Christ." It causes one to wonder if they really know whereof they speak. The liberty in Christ that we enjoy as Christians is liberty or freedom from sin, liberty to do what is right in the sight of God, liberty to voluntarily be concerned about the feelings and spiritual welfare of others. In Christ we are never at liberty to do just as we please regardless of others.

It is not uncommon that the very ones who cry loudest about their "liberty in Christ" are doing many things in which they have no liberty whatever to be involved. For instance, we are not at liberty to reduce the worship of Christ to an entertainment, or a disorderly hand clapping, foot stomping session of emotionalism. We are not at liberty to dress whatever way we please, go anywhere we wish, say whatever comes to mind, even pray and preach in whatever fashion and message that strikes us as being acceptable to the "in" generation. Such things are sometimes done by those who cry "liberty in Christ," but their liberty does not extend that far. Even if it did, since they claim many times to be so much more "spiritual," mature, and loving than others, they have a duty to restrain themselves for the sake of the "weak."

Some advocates of "liberty in Christ" are not beyond insisting they can do whatever they wish, have their women to preach, take the Lord's Supper on days other than the first day of the week, and demand that you sit by quietly as they denounce, ridicule, degrade, and belittle with trite words, uncouth manners, and misrepresentations those things that others have done and learned from Scripture that they consider holy and sacred. This is certainly not the instruction of Romans, chapter fourteen, and the so-called "new" approach some take to this chapter, and their misappropriation of its verses, is a crime against brethren as well as a sin against God and disrespect for His Word.

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What is being taught here is that out of consideration for a weaker brother the stronger brother may well forego some of his “rights.” This means he will not demand his “rights” if they are going to cause some weaker brother to fall from the faith. As stated earlier, that is when “rights” can become wrongs.

Actually, we have no right to condemn one another in matters of indifference or human judgment. These are matters where it makes no difference either way to God, such as eating or refusing to eat, meat. God has not legislated this matter. When there are disputes in such matters they are not to be simply dismissed. They ought to be settled with an understanding by all involved. But the instruction warns against giving the weaker brother spiritual indigestion over matters which they have not yet matured sufficiently to grasp and comprehend. There must be patience and tolerance toward the weak on the part of the strong. Love for the weak brother will demand this be done.

Once again, we would remind the reader that this weakness must be removed by teaching. One who has been sufficiently taught, but just stubbornly refuses to allow even what God allows, cannot forever be considered a mere “weak” brother, but might even be a factious brother.

Verses 4-6

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. 5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

We are the servants of God. Each of our brothers and sisters in Christ are servants of God. Therefore, it is not our prerogative to condemn the servant of whom we are not the master. Each Christian is accountable unto God, and God will condemn if condemnation is deserved. But once again we warn how this passage has been abused to contradict other teaching in the New Testament regarding discipline that is to be administered toward a disorderly brother. Remember, the words written are in the context of matters of indifference, not in matters of doctrine, or matters of faith, morals, conduct, where there is a right and wrong before God, but matters of mere human judgment and opinion, each possibly having varying personal preferences. Some have misused these verses to make this teaching say that Christians have no right to confront brethren even when error is obvious. This would place God against God, the apostle against the apostle, and divine teaching against divine teaching. There are numerous commands dealing with meeting the disorderly in the church. Some are found even in this very epistle in chapter sixteen. These words are not talking about a disorderly one, but one who is weak in the faith.

Other illustrations of the principle are given. One man may well count one day of some special concern to him, while another man may not so count that day. It would not be unusual that a Jewish convert might still consider the Sabbath of some distinction to him if he had observed it all his life. After all, his forefathers had looked upon it in a special light for over fifteen hundred years. He is not likely to leap out of some feeling for that day just because he has become a Christian. He may even know he is not bound to observe that day as before. But let us not be guilty of wresting the passage and making it mean something it certainly does not mean. Paul is not saying it is proper to make or observe religious holy days, and observe them as was done under the Mosaic system, or even as some observe special days even yet. He is not saying that one can ignore the first day of the week assembly, or the worship, including the Lord's Supper whenever he feels like it, or to substitute or "*esteem*" some other day rather than the first day. The New Testament church observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week and no other day. Paul is not authorizing men to make religious holy days and observe them for which there is no new covenant authority. He is obviously referring to an individual and private concern, an individual matter where one man might wish to make some private and personal observance of his own. Such a man has no right to bind this on others, but neither does anyone have the right to forbid him his own private activity. He presumes, of course, that his activity does not violate any teaching of the revealed will of God through Christ. It would not allow him the right to worship God privately in some manner untaught and unauthorized in the New Testament. It would not give him the freedom to engage in some activity that would be wrong, even though he kept it to himself. Even though others may not learn of his wrong, and therefore would never condemn him for it, God knows if he does wrong, and he cannot excuse his wrong on the basis that it is a private matter.

Let me illustrate with a very modern and up-to-date fashion. If a man wishes to make a trip into the woods each Wednesday morning for prayer, and comes to consider in his own mind this period of time as very special to him, and would not fail to go to the woods each Wednesday morning for anything, so long as he does not neglect the first day of the week assembly, or attempts to do anything God does not approve, nor tries to bind his Wednesday morning prayer time on others, none can forbid him the exercise of his right in the matter. Let him, if he sees fit, choose a certain hour of the day for prayer. Well and good, and may it be so! So long as he makes no attempt to force others to observe this hour, he does no wrong. But neither should anyone attempt to forbid him that hour. So long as he is "*fully persuaded,*" that is, he knows what he is doing is right, and it is done with good conscience, again assuming no violation is involved, it is acceptable to God, and is offered unto God. The same principle applies to other matters of indifference, even the food he eats.

Verses 7-9

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

We do not live alone. We do not live in a vacuum without influencing others and others influencing us. We do not live apart from God. Our lives touch the lives of others. We must at all times be mindful of responsibilities toward others, and our influence on others. We must ever remember we belong to God and are His. We are His property. We ought always do what pleases Him. It was for the purpose that we can live for God, and please Him, that Christ died and was raised from the dead. Actually, these three verses present the platform upon which the following verses build some basic principles.

Verses 10-12

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Drawing upon the arguments made just prior to these verses, Paul writes again logically, and in the most reasonable and understandable sequence. Why should we engage in the practice of condemning one another in such matters of individual opinion? Of course, we should not. We have a judge and that judge is Deity. This is a prerogative we ought not take to ourselves, this action of condemning others in matters of indifference. The primary thing is that we recognize the greatness of God, bow ourselves before God, confess our faults unto God, as well as confess the majesty of God. We are accountable to God, and since that is true, we ought to be busy doing all in our power to be able to give a good account unto God, as we must do individually. Please notice that Paul affirms how all shall bow before the Lord, not only all should do this, as taught in Philippians 2:11. The word to note is "*shall.*"

Verse 13

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

Having shown the impropriety of judging in those areas where we have neither the ability nor the right, in contrast, let us busy ourselves in another effort. Let us make sure we do not become a stumbling block for a brother. Let us make sure we do not put an obstacle in the path of our brother. Should we be guilty of doing that, we shall give account of that to be sure.

Often one may hear of some brother or sister who has fallen by the wayside, quit the church, ceased to be the Christian they vowed they would be when they were baptized into Christ. They sometimes blame some other Christians for this. They violently accuse others and lay the fault at the feet of the church. This verse shows the possibility that brethren can be at fault in causing others to fall. Those who have the attitude that everything must go their way may well be so offensive. Someone whose convictions are not yet strong enough to overcome such behavior might abandon the faith to their spiritual destruction. This bad conduct by the offensive brother does not **justify** a person turning his wrath against the truth of God and the church, nor does it make it right for him to take his retaliation toward an inconsiderate Christian out on God and other brethren. This is precisely what some people do whenever they quit the church for whatever excuse. That does **explain** why some quit. But this passage emphasizes the tremendous responsibility we have toward one another not to make living a Christian life harder, but we should try to smooth things out for each other as much as we can.

Too often, however, assigning the blame for someone's apostasy to another brother is more than can be accepted and justified. Sometimes there be those who wish to run counter to the truth. Should one resist them for their sins, sometimes the sinning brother will turn and rend his brother, quit the church, and lay the blame for his quitting on the one who was doing his brotherly duty to call his sins to his attention. Again, we must consider the context of all these instructions, even at the risk of repeating them too often. Because these verses are so often abused, especially in a time of drift from the truth and digression, we have to repeat it. We are discussing matters of opinion in this chapter, matters of human judgment, matters of personal preference, matters of indifference, not matters of faith, right and wrong, truth and error. While we must do all we can to teach what is correct in all matters, there can be toleration in these realms of indifference, but never in the realm where God has spoken or where truth is at stake. Paul admonishes that we are not to take advantage of our liberties, even in doing what of itself may otherwise be all right, if that thing is going to cause some brother to lose his soul. A soul is worth more than our liberty. Paul teaches Christians to be careful and not become a hindrance, but always seek to be a help.

Verses 14-17

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. 16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of: 17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

To emphasize the type of things Paul was discussing wherein we are to be tolerant and charitable toward the weak, he expressed immovable confidence, having been persuaded by no less authority than Christ Himself, that the matters under discussion are matters that are not unclean or sinful. Surely, there can be no doubt whatever as to the Lord's attitude toward matters of sin. Paul is not saying here that if a man thinks a sinful thing is not sinful, then it is clean. Neither is he saying that sinful deeds are actually all right if only men would consider them all right. He is not teaching that only thinking something is sinful is what really makes it sinful. Paul is talking about matters where there is room for difference of opinion, room for variance in practice, matters of indifference, matters where one does no evil should he do them, and does no evil should he refrain from them. Those are the kind of things of which he writes when he says, "*There is nothing unclean of itself.*" This is another phrase in this chapter that is often abused and wrested to make it appear that Paul is teaching everything is beautiful in its own way if we would only consider it so.

The point is, if a thing that in and of itself is not unclean is thought by someone to be unclean, should that person partake of it thinking as he does about it, he would be violating his conscience, and the violation of one's own understanding and conscience regarding right and wrong constitutes sin. One cannot be honest if he deliberately does something that he is convinced is wrong. If he thinks it is wrong and does it anyway, then he has done wrong, even if it is not wrong in itself. It is not the action done that makes him guilty of sin, but it is the violation of his conscience and violation of honesty to himself.

We note again that this is another one of those phrases in this chapter that has been grossly abused in trying to make wrong seem to be right. Some have erroneously concluded that only when one thinks something is wrong is it actually wrong for him. **This is not true.** There are matters that are right and wrong whether anyone ever believes them to be right or wrong or not. There is absolute truth and absolute error regardless of what anyone or everyone thinks about it. Just thinking something is right or wrong is not all that determines what is right and wrong. There are some things right or wrong because God said so regardless of what men think. But what one does think about a deed when that deed is actually all right will determine whether it is permissible for that person or not. He should never violate what he believes to be right. Even though what he believes does not make a wrong thing right, he can make a right thing wrong by doing it against his own conscience.

Let us illustrate with Paul's discussion of eating meat. Paul taught if Mr. A, who is a Christian, thinks it is right to eat meat, he does not sin in eating meat because before God there is nothing wrong in eating meat. Should Mr. B, also a Christian, think eating meat is wrong, even though before God it is not wrong, he would commit wrong to eat meat because he would violate his own conscience.

Let us consider another illustration to make the matter perfectly clear. Should Mr. A think stealing is all right, and then steals, he has done wrong, not because he violated his conscience (which he did not do), but because God has made stealing wrong in itself. God commands, "*Thou shalt not steal.*" It does not matter what Mr. A thinks about it one way or another. Stealing is wrong and one cannot steal without committing sin.

However, should Mr. B. think stealing is wrong, and steals anyway, he has committed two sins. He sinned by stealing, and he sinned by violating his conscience.

Sometimes people say, “Let your conscience be your guide.” While there is some truth in that, it needs some clarification for a full understanding of the guidance of the conscience. We must not transgress what we believe to be true. On the other hand, even though the conscience may not be offended, that does not prove what we are doing is right. Conscience “speaks” to us according to the way the conscience has been trained. For this reason we ought make every effort to assure that our consciences are trained according to the Word of God. Only in this way can our consciences be reliable guides. In reality, our guide even then would not merely be the conscience, but the Word of God working through a properly trained conscience.

Paul continues on the general theme of attitudes and actions brethren must have toward one another. If eating meat is offensive and thought to be sinful by a brother, this brother ought be willing to forego eating meat before he would destroy his brother by confusing his brother, placing a stumbling block before him. Even though meat is acceptable in itself, he should not let his good be evil spoken of because he commits the permissible in an unwarranted manner. We cannot even do all that “liberty in Christ” might otherwise permit if it is going to lead to the loss of a weak soul. We have belabored these points because they are vital in understanding our duty in Christian living. Too often these marvelous principles are misused to allow sin. To do that is to be guilty of false teaching.

What is the remedy to this situation? Some have drawn the conclusion that surely cannot be true; namely, that the whole church can never exercise its liberties in Christ except to the extent of the knowledge of the weakest brother. This does not follow at all. The very first item of concern must be to teach the weak brother two things. One, he must be taught the truth about the matter under consideration so he will not be offended when right things are done by others. Two, the weak brother also must be taught that he has a duty to his brethren, as is taught in verse three. He is not to think he is to judge concerning a matter about which he is uninformed or misinformed. Anyone, even the youngest and weakest brother, can be taught to understand that obligation. The weak brother has a duty to withhold his criticism, learn, and grow out of his weakness. This last lesson he can be taught in a moment. The first may take longer. It is the duty of the stronger to afford him opportunity to do just that, and it is the duty of the weaker to take advantage of the opportunity afforded him to be taught, learn, and grow.

The real reason behind the instruction for the stronger to make room for the weakness of the weaker on such matters is because of the relative insignificance of these matters anyway. Also, there must be maintained brotherliness, peace, and love among them. This is the emphasis of verse seventeen. Remember, and this is repetitive but needful, that Paul is discussing things of indifference, matters that really are not the sum and substance of the kingdom. He is dealing with matters of themselves that have no real bearing on the salvation of the soul, but matters that would not violate God's law either way.

What does matter is righteousness (the law of God by which men are made righteous), peace (peace between man and God as well as man and man, especially among brethren), and other such things. Brotherhood peace ought not be disturbed and/or broken over such things. Things that do count include joy in the Holy Spirit, the blessedness and joy that Christians enjoy when they are in the saved relationship with Deity. These things are paramount. What to eat and drink, except drinking blood, eating things strangled, and meat offered to idols by which honor is paid to the idol, (Acts 15:26), are of little importance. I do not think it is too much to contend that they are of no importance except as they might have an adverse influence on brotherhood peace, and to the extent they have a bearing on the attitude and conduct brethren have one toward the other regarding them.

Verses 18-21

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. 19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. 20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. 21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Here is a noble goal set before the Christian in his conduct of his life. Be acceptable to God regarding such things. The words in this chapter are important to our approval before God. We are expected to be governed by them and live by them. Not only will God be pleased, but brethren also, and possibly others as well who can then recognize the attitude of concern and love Christians have toward each other.

Instead of arguing and tying ourselves in knots regarding lesser matters, we ought set our minds and hearts in another direction, that of working for what makes for peace, and what edifies the brethren. Edification, teaching, strengthening one another is essential in Christian growth. Let our emphasis be there, not on matters that really do not matter. This we could do if there were fewer who were determined to have their own way on everything and demand that others conform to them. Those of that disposition, however, have to be handled lest they disrupt the entire brotherhood.

Do not destroy the work of God, disrupt the church, offend brethren, impede the growth of the kingdom over such matters. Brethren who make mountains out of these kind of indifferent molehills will have a lot for which they must answer in judgment. Again, and we do not tire of making this reminder because some misuse the passage, lest one be tempted to read into these words what is not taught, we remind you of the nature of the subjects under discussion. We are not talking about truth versus error. A totally and completely different attitude toward error is required of the Christian. The actions Paul discusses are themselves pure, not impure. He speaks of offending the conscience, and that of another, over matters about which there may be misunderstanding due to weakness. He concludes it is good to do nothing, not even eat flesh, drink wine, or anything else that leads to the loss of the precious soul of a brother who is yet weak.

A word is in order regarding the term "*wine*." There is no way one can establish and prove from this or any other New Testament text that it is legitimate for one to drink strong drink as a beverage. It certainly cannot be done from the word "*wine*." The term "*wine*" in the New testament does not necessarily carry the idea of an intoxicating beverage every time it is used. Without going into a lengthy discourse that the subject really deserves regarding the Christian teaching that forbids drinking alcoholic beverages and strong drinks, suffice it here to say with unwavering insistence that the entire direction of sentiment and teaching from the Bible regarding such a practice calls for total abstinence. Of this there can be no serious Biblical challenge. Although some try desperately to make room for their worldly and sinful practice with beer in the refrigerator, social drinks at the club, cocktails before dinner, etc., they struggle against truth in vain and shall never succeed until the Bible is rewritten. Of course, somebody might do that with some "modern version." It has been done on other subjects in these perverted books called "Bibles."

But let the point be carried a step further. Granting that under some circumstances it was permissible for a Christian to drink strong drink (a contention that is almost too offensive to even grant for the sake of argument, and a contention I stoutly resist), why would not the drinking brother be under obligation to refrain from drinking in view of the fact that drinking is so absolutely offensive to nearly every other brother in Christ? It cannot be denied that such drinking would place a stumbling block before somebody who has an alcohol problem, and who is trying to recover from it. Such a stumbling block contributes to encouraging others to drink, who may well become an alcoholic. Furthermore, there can be no doubt because experience proves too well that drinking on the part of a brother is misleading to others. How many have been guilty of placing the drink before young and old, male and female, rich and poor, brother and alien, because they were determined that they had the liberty to drink alcoholic beverages in some fashion or another? There is no way, absolutely no way, to justify the strong drink consumption even if the term "*wine*" meant an intoxicating beverage every time. And of course, it does not mean that.

We never cease to be amazed at the manipulations made by worldly members of the church to excuse themselves and justify their transgression against God, mankind, and brethren in particular.

Verses 22, 23

22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. 23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Here is the summary passage that lays down the essentials of this chapter. Do you have faith, a personal conviction, about something that is important to you? Then have that personal conviction, and live by it before God. Test it to see if it is actually God's will, or if it is just simply your personal preference. If right and wrong is not at stake, where either way you go you do no sin, you may take whatever course you choose and it is permissible. Only let it be a personal and private conviction, and do not disturb others with it or about it. Happy is that man who can live consistently with his convictions. To fail to live according to one's own conscience is the worst sort of inconsistency and hypocrisy, even if you and God are the only ones who know it.

If you have doubts about it, leave it alone because you cannot do it within the realm of your own convictions. Whatever you do must be done within your convictions or else you would not be true to yourself. A man that will not be true to what he believes will not be true to God. If a man thinks a right action is wrong, but does it anyway, he will do a wrong action just as quickly and willingly. I suggest this may be the reason some lay awake nights. They are not true to themselves or to God and they know it. How can one rest easy when he is in such a spiritual state as that?

The twenty-third verse has sometimes been misappropriated. Recognizing the absolute necessity for authority for what we do in service before God, and realizing that “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,*” (Romans 10:17), some have taken this verse and used it to teach this truth. But this passage does not teach this truth, even though this truth is taught elsewhere. But it is not taught here. It has been used to teach that we must have Scripture for every activity before we can engage in that activity. Some contend unless you can read specifically something from the text, then it is not of faith, and therefore error. This is not true.

There are many things not specifically mentioned in Scripture for which there is authority. There are many ways of determining authority which we shall not belabor here. But that is a most profitable study. While there must be authority, general or specific, implicit or explicit, for all we do, there is not the necessity for a specific statement with reference to every activity that is permissible to the Christian. Where does one find specific authority or reference to attending a football game, saving money at the bank, securing a college education, mowing the lawn, and on and on? We know these things are not sinful. These are matters of human judgment and opinion, often nothing more than an expedient in conducting the affairs of life, and no right or wrong is involved. I have heard practices condemned on the basis of this passage because we find no specific reference to them in Scripture. When God has spoken, that settles it. Someone has said, “God said it, I believe it, that settles it.” The truth of the matter is, “God said it, that settles it, whether I believe it or not.” There are those activities we cannot do because God has spoken on the subject but he left out other additional practices. This is properly identified as “the silence of the Scriptures.” Instrumental music is a point at hand. Seeing how God has specified the kind of music He wants in worship, we must not add to what He has said by playing mechanical instruments and producing another and additional kind of music.

But there are many activities that are permissible in which the Christian can engage for which there is no specific statement. I have cited several such things that we encounter regularly in the secular realm of life. We need to understand, therefore, what is meant by something being “*not of faith.*”

There are matters of faith, meaning there are instructions and authority given in Scripture for our work and worship before God. But every detailed item is not specifically named. To read into this verse as if it was teaching the necessity of Biblical wording which mentions every activity is to miss the point of the entire chapter. When Paul says what is “*not of faith,*” he speaks of matters of conscience, matters of personal conviction or personal faith. He is not talking about **the faith** that is revealed in the Word. To paraphrase his conclusion, “If what you do is not according to your personal faith, conscience, convictions, doing it can and does become sinful if you do it.”

Possibly there are few chapters in the entire Bible that have been so abused, and whose passages have been so wrested by the enemies of truth, and turned into a defense of error, than Romans, chapter fourteen. But let us not become guilty of making God contradict God.

Also, few chapters place as much emphasis on the heart of the Christian as does this one. Solomon wrote, “*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*” (Proverbs 23:7). It is not true that a man is what he thinks he is, but rather, he is what he thinks. This emphasizes that God is concerned about our attitude, motive, intent, and condition of the heart or mind. Each must live true to his heart, making sure that his heart is correctly trained according to the Word of God. To ignore the heart is to ignore that which God emphasizes. The heart will, for the most part, determine our actions in this life, and our eternity. It determines where our treasure really is in life, either on this life on earth, or on the life hereafter.

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

The basic thoughts of chapter fourteen are extended into chapter fifteen. For the complete discussion of the relationship of the weak and strong one must not observe the chapter break.

Chapter Fifteen

One unfortunate, even though infrequent, occurrences in the division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses is the break of a thought that obviously carries forward into the next verse or chapter. This is what has happened between chapters fourteen and fifteen. The reason this is unfortunate is because the student who is not careful is very likely to conclude his pursuit of the truth with the end of a chapter rather than continue his search through the entire discourse the writer has actually given on the subject.

Verses 1- 4

1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. 3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. 4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Chapter fourteen dealt with the relationship of the strong toward the weak, and the weak toward the strong. Paul has just shown how the weak are to be received and nurtured, receiving care with tenderness and concern lest in their weakness they stumble. The strong are to avoid being stumbling blocks for the weak, even to the point of surrendering liberties if need be in order to protect and preserve the sprouting faith of a weaker brother. Verse one of this chapter is an overall conclusion that is inescapable in view of the directives of chapter fourteen. The strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak. One could hardly expect it to be the other way around. The better qualified are to assist the less qualified in order to obtain, retain, maintain and sustain the brotherhood God desires. Neither is to be a self-pleaser, but a pleaser of the other. This attitude has a great deal to do with successfully concluding the problems that arise between the weak and the strong. Those who are determined to have their own way, even at the expense of others, will not contribute to the solution of differences, but will only aggravate them. Again, we would repeat what has been often repeated in the comments of chapter fourteen, that this has to do with matters of indifference and human opinion, not to “*thus saith the Lord,*” and the matters of truth versus error, right against wrong.

Paul is encouraging brethren to take advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate Christian love (seeking the other’s highest good). We would better edify and strengthen one another than fight one another over insignificant problems. “*Doubtful disputations*” have been the cause of many church problems among Christians, and it is wrong to allow them to become divisive factors.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Seeking the spiritual welfare of our neighbor, especially our neighbor in the Lord, and bearing his infirmity rather than creating strife, is precisely the attitude and action that was characteristic of the Lord whom we profess to imitate. Christ did not come to please Himself. He came to please the Father and be of benefit to mankind. This required of Him tremendous self-sacrifice, even to the point of bearing the reproaches that rightfully belonged upon the spiritual shoulders of those who had committed deeds of reproach. Men reproached God. Christ came to intercede and mediate on man's behalf. Paul makes a direct quotation of the latter part of Psalm 69:9, and makes application of the passage to what Christ did. It is the same sense as the prophecy of Isaiah in the fifty-third chapter regarding Christ and His suffering for man's benefit. The sins of man against God fell on Christ. (Take note once again of the predictive nature of the Old Testament and the fulfillment in the New).

Having made reference to an old writing, a writing of the Old Testament, a writing made “*aforetime*,” Paul inserts the thought how the things of the Old Testament, the “*aforetime*” writings, are of benefit still to those who are no longer subject to them but who live under the new and better covenant. Men sometimes make the grave mistake of concluding the Old Testament is really not worthy of much study because we shall be judged by the new covenant. There can be no doubt that the new covenant of Jesus Christ is that to which we are amenable, and we will be judged according to what the Lord expects under that system of faith rather than the system God used in governing men before Christ and His religion. Nonetheless, the value of the old to those living subject to the new cannot be measured because of its greatness. We can and will profit from these writings. They help us to learn certain principles of God’s dealing with man. There are principles that transgress the lines of the covenants or dispensations even while the specifics of those covenants apply only to those certain ones who lived subject to them. We shall not just here attempt to identify all the benefits to be derived from the older writings, such as history, principles of faith, obedience, reverence, prophecy, example, love, and the unfolding of God’s system of salvation. Suffice it to say that Paul, having quoted from the old, asserts there is great value and spiritual profit even to those who serve God under the gospel system.

The things “*written aforetime*” are part of the God-breathed Scripture. Scripture provides us with hope. The hope man has is revealed in Scripture. Man learns to have patience, to be steadfast, and finds comfort from what is written in Scripture. These blessings help mankind through this pilgrimage on earth. Without Scriptural revelation where would man find his hope? It is certainly not to be found in the ways devised by men or derived by man’s own calculations and genius. This Paul makes so plain in Romans one and also First Corinthians one. By quoting Scripture and making reference to its value, those who will give heed to what Paul declares cannot escape possessing a great respect for Scripture, old and new. Actually, only when a man has reverence and respect for Scripture, the Word of God, will the message of Scripture have very much significance to him or have much of an impact on his life.

Verses 5- 7

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: 6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Paul had just stated that patience (steadfastness) contributes to our hope, and the comfort derived from Scripture also gives us hope. He now acknowledges that in reality God is the source of patience, comfort, and hope. In this way Paul certainly shows that Scripture is from God. What is attributed to Scripture is followed by attributing the same thing to God. It is not difficult to see how God operates on mankind to the accomplishment of man’s hope through the use of Scripture.

God desires that his people be "*likeminded*," a rather inclusive way of saying that God wants unity and oneness among His people. In this way division is noted as being contrary to what God wants. The matters discussed in chapter fourteen were matters that often create division and disunity among brethren. God does not want that. Through these very chapters God is giving us the remedy for that division. He wants us to be one of "*one mind*," that is, think alike, consider things in unity, look at the evidence and come to the same conclusions. God wants His people to be, not only of like mind (oneness in thought), but one in action, as is evidenced in the phrase, "*one mouth*." God's people should talk alike. It is absolutely true that by one's speech one can be identified as being a child of God. God's children will "*speak as the oracles of God*" (First Peter 4:11), and not after the language of Ashdod, a mixed up, confused speech that mingles truth and error. Brethren ought not imitate the unsaved in the way they attempt to express God's truth. They ought to use words and phrases of God's book to convey their messages from the mind of God.

Let there be no mistake that only in this united condition can God be truly glorified by His people. Division and strife only brings reproach upon God as well as those who say they love and serve God.

When there exists the oneness the Lord wants, it is only logical that brethren will receive one another. Christ received the sinners as they became His disciples by casting away that which was foreign to the will of the Lord. Unity, then, must be based upon each one adopting the will of God. Notice, we have been received of Christ for a purpose, and that purpose is to bring glory to God. Surely, this ought be motivation enough for us to seek unity, bear the infirmities of the weak, not become stumbling blocks, seek the other's highest good, despise not one another, nor allow matters of indifference and insignificance disrupt and destroy the cause of Christ in our lives. It is motive enough to bend ourselves to the task of building upon the foundation of truth.

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: 9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. 10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. 11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. 12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

At this point Paul shifts somewhat from the theme of attitudes and actions that has occupied his epistle from the beginning of chapter fourteen, and turns his attention to the theme of the role of Christ with respect to the Jew, and then to the Gentile. Paul is simply returning to an overriding theme of the book of Romans because chapters one through eleven hammered away at how God through Christ sought the salvation of Gentiles as well as Jews, how both needed salvation, and how provision for both has been made through the system of obedient faith that God by His grace and mercy has given through His Son.

Christ served as “*minister*” (here the term “*minister*” means one of authority as well as one who serves) to the Jew who is also called “*circumcision*” (as the Jews were called in chapters two and four). In rendering His service He was expediting the truth of God. The promises made as far back as Abraham were confirmed or verified by being fulfilled. This statement certainly emphasizes that Christ is the fulfillment and accomplishment of all that God had been saying and promising down through the ages concerning a redeeming Savior for man.

Not only was the ministry of Christ on behalf of the Jew, but also the Gentile. The Gentiles could know the mercy of God as well as the Jews. Paul shows again that it was always God’s intent to save the Gentiles as well as the Jews. This has been forcefully presented in previous chapters. Paul quotes from several inspired Jewish writings, and they ought to be considered carefully by the student.

The quotation in verse nine is from Psalm 18:49. The quotation in verse ten is from Deuteronomy 32:43. Verse eleven comes from Psalm 117:1. Isaiah 11:1 and 10 is the source of verse twelve. With this vast array of writings from the old covenant prophets of God, from even among the Jews themselves, it is well established that Christ is and was always intended to be the Savior of all mankind. (Jesse was David's father, an ancestor of Jesus who was born of Mary.)

Verses 13, 14

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. 14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

The two verses now under consideration express a pious wish, possibly it is correct to describe them as a prayer, or at least the substance of a prayer. Also, it is an expression of the personal confidence Paul had in the Roman brethren.

It was Paul's desire that God, the very God that is the source of their hope, would fill them with joy and peace that comes in believing. How does God fill one with joy and peace? This is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. Just what does this involve? Does God in some miraculous, direct, overpowering way give the believer joy and peace, or does God through the Holy Spirit work through the means of the message that provokes faith and provides hope? The entire tone of Biblical revelation on this point is that the power of the Holy Spirit by which man can enjoy the joy and peace that accomplishes his hope is brought to man through God's Word. As a man hears and believes, continues in that Word, the power of the Holy Spirit brings to pass the fullness of joy and peace. It is Paul's prayer, therefore, that the Word as it is delivered to man by and through the Holy Spirit will have free course in their lives, and be allowed to produce the joy and peace which belongs to the believers.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Paul also states that he was persuaded, indeed convinced, that their spiritual quality of goodness and knowledge was at a very mature and adequate level. They were quite capable with the goodness and knowledge characteristic of them to admonish one another effectively and sufficiently. The terms, "*fill, abound, full, filled,*" carry the idea of maturity and completeness, sufficiency and thoroughness in these qualities that were manifest in the lives of those Romans brethren. Such is the goal of all Christians in every generation.

Verses 15 - 19

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, 16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. 17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19 Through the mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

However mature and adequately supplied they might be or that Paul considered them to be, it is obvious from these words that there was yet, (1) room for growth on the part of the Roman brethren, and (2) the possibility that they could retreat from their position of strength that had warranted the commendation Paul gave them. Because of this two-fold threat or condition, Paul was bold, forthright, and uncompromising in reminding them of various matters. This was his task. This was the job given him by the Lord, to which reference had been made in earlier passages (1:5; 11:13; 12:3) as the “*grace given to me of God.*” His work as an apostle demanded that he write to them as he was doing. He was a minister with authority of Jesus Christ. He was appointed to the task of preaching the gospel to Gentiles in order that the Gentiles might be acceptable before God, that they might be “*sanctified,*” meaning cleansed, set apart, made holy. This sanctification was the work of the Holy Spirit. Again, we raise the question how the Holy Spirit sanctifies? In view of this statement of Paul that the Gentiles are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, plus the statement of Jesus how sanctification is accomplished by the Word (John 17:17), it becomes undeniable that the sanctification of the Holy Spirit is accomplished by and through the Word. As one hears that Word, believes it, obeys it, he is operated upon by the Holy Spirit.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

As for things that pertain to God, which would certainly include fellowship with Deity, forgiveness of sins, service to God, etc., Paul's glory was through Jesus Christ. What a contrast to that upon which the Jews had depended through the years! What a contrast to that upon which Paul himself had once depended! Once a Jew of no little zeal and power himself, he cast all that aside so he might glorify God another way. Although he once approached or attempted to approach God through that system that had been removed, no longer did he rely upon that system (the law of Moses). He no longer spoke of the law of Moses as **the** way. Now he relied solely on his relationship in Christ in all matters that pertain to God. The mighty signs and wonders, the power of the Spirit, all that had been used to make the Gentiles obedient, every word and deed, it was now only what was wrought through Christ that was in his mind and under consideration. Other matters, regardless of how important they once had been to him, were not even worthy of mention.

By the power that came through Christ, Paul had been able to preach the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum, the latter a place located northwest of Macedonia, far removed from Jerusalem. This geographical designation covers the wide span of operation of Paul's preaching activities through his extensive journeys. His influence was even wider through the ones he had converted because they in turn went forward preaching the Word. Paul covered more territory with the gospel than any other of whom we have record in the New Testament.

Verses 20 - 24

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: 21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. 22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

However unique and widespread was his labor, a dominant characteristic of Paul's preaching was that it often took place in those localities where the gospel had never been heard prior to his preaching. He did not build on what another had started. He cultivated virgin soil and sowed the seed. He once characterized his labors in the letter to the Corinthians (First Corinthians 3:6) as planting, the work of Apollos as watering, and God giving the increase. He did not refuse to build on another man's work or the foundation another man had laid because he considered himself superior and the other man inferior. Nor did he work in this fashion because he considered himself above watering. He did not feel building on another's foundation was insignificant and unnecessary. He was glad that others had built on the foundation he laid. But it was because of his deeply imbedded desire that the gospel cover the world that he went to territories where the truth had never been heard before. One translation says this was his "aim."

In Isaiah, chapter fifty-two, the chapter where the beauty of the feet of them that bring good tidings is mentioned, a reference to which Paul had referred back in chapter ten of Romans, there is also a verse that Paul quotes in verse twenty-one. This quotation notes how those who had never before heard would hear. It refers to those who had no opportunity previously to know and understand, but would be given that opportunity. This opportunity was given through such work as was done by Paul taking the gospel to places where it had never before been preached.

This labor had prevented him from doing some things he otherwise might have done and even wanted to do, such as visiting the brethren in Rome. But now the situation was such that it appeared that Paul would at long last be able to fulfill his ambition of seeing the brethren in Rome.

The possibility of seeing the Roman brethren would become a reality as he attempted to take the gospel to yet another place where he had not yet gone with it. He was going to Spain. Geographically, Spain was far to the west of Rome and it would be logical and expedient on his way to Spain to make the visit at Rome. He not only counted on seeing them, but he was depending on them to help him make his journey to Spain after he had a full and complete visit with them.

You may recall in chapter one, verses ten and eleven, Paul had already expressed his intent and desire to go to Rome. As the book draws toward its end, this desire is expressed once again. Does not this also show his love for brethren?

Verses 25-28

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

Before Paul could start on his way to Spain and stop at Rome there was yet another mission he wished to fill. He was to take that which had been given by Gentile brethren for the physical relief of Jewish brethren in Judah. He would take it to Jerusalem and from there distribution would be made. The brethren in Macedonia and Achaia had made certain contributions on behalf of the poor saints in Jerusalem and Paul was to deliver it. Several times in other passages of the New Testament is mention made of such aid and relief being collected and sent (Acts 11:27-30; 24:17; First Corinthians 16:1-3; Second Corinthians 8,9). The gifts had been made because it pleased the Gentile brethren to be able to assist their Jewish brethren. The Gentile brethren felt indebted to the Jewish brethren because it was by and through the Jewish brethren that the gospel had come to them. The Gentile brethren realized how blessed they were because the Jewish brethren had wanted the gospel spread. So they were glad, not for the misfortune and poverty of Jewish brethren, but for the opportunity to return something of the love and goodwill which had brought the truth to them at the first. The Gentiles had been privileged to become partakers of spiritual things of the true God. The least they could do was to provide carnal, temporal, and earthly provisions and necessities to their brethren.

When Paul finished this task of delivering the contributions, then his attention would be turned again toward his journey to Rome and Spain. At this point, little did he realize that he would see Rome under the conditions he did. It is possible that he eventually went to Spain, but the sacred and inspired record does not reveal as much. There is only a faint indication that he ever had opportunity to do so. Tradition says he made the journey. But he would see Rome, but in a much different set of conditions than he visualized when he wrote this letter. He would go there as a prisoner of the Roman government, having made an appeal to be judged before Caesar, a right that he had as a Roman citizen. This appeal was made necessary to preserve his life from the Jews in Judea who tried to seize control over him. Read Acts twenty-five through twenty-nine in this connection.

Verse 29

29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

He states with confidence that he was sure when he did come he would “*come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*” I understand this to be an expression that means he was among those who were recipients of the marvelous blessings God gives to man through Christ. Also these words indicate that when he would come he would have the blessings of the Roman brethren as well because he was their brother in Christ.

Verses 30 - 32

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;
31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; 32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

In this passage Paul makes a solemn request of his Roman brethren. The word, “*beseech,*” conveys the concept of intently asking for something. He was asking, for the sake of Christ, and because of the love they had learned through the Spirit, that they would offer prayers on his behalf. Their prayers, naturally, would be directed to the Father.

What was it Paul wished for them to pray regarding him? There are four specific matters that he mentions. (1) He asked that they pray that he might be delivered from the unbelievers he would encounter when he went to Jerusalem in Judea. The fact that he expressed this request reveals that there was already some concern and uneasiness on his part that everything might not go just exactly as he would want it. He knew he had encountered heavy opposition from the Jews of that area on other occasions. In fact, wherever he had taken the gospel he met Jewish hostility. Now he was going to the very heart of the Jewish faith (Jerusalem), and no matter that it was from that very city that the Word of the kingdom went out, it was still the religious and political center of all Jewish thought. Although he knew the possibility that he would suffer many things there, he still hoped he would not be hindered from carrying out his future plans. (2) He wanted them to pray that his mission would be successful in the giving of aid to the poor. He wanted to render this service on behalf of the Gentile brethren from whom he had received these funds. He sincerely hoped the brethren in Jerusalem would receive them in the spirit of love and fellowship in which they were given and were being delivered. It is always possible that those you wish to help may misunderstand your motives and even resent your help. Paul did not want to be misunderstood or have anything to upset the good ties of brotherly love and fellowship that would be made and strengthened by this action. (3) He asked that they pray that he might see them as he planned. So many potential hazards would have to be overcome before the fulfillment of that ambition. (4) He wanted them to pray for the spiritual success of his planned visit to Rome. He knew that their association with each other would be of benefit to both of them. He had certain goals in mind as he had expressed in chapter one. Both Paul and the Roman Christians stood to be refreshed, encouraged, benefited, and edified by the forthcoming and anticipated visit.

Verse 33

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Here is a characteristic closing remark from this notable apostle. Although the book is not yet completed, and a few things remain to be said by way of completion and greeting, it seems to me that the inclusion of this most wholesome expression, indeed a prayer in itself, on the part of Paul on behalf of the Roman Christian, only underscores the sincerity and desire he had for their prayers which he had just requested.

By these last few verses, thirty through thirty-three, among the many worthy points that must be observed, it would be negligent to omit the observation that in the mind and action of this apostle, prayer by Christians for Christians was not only proper, but the order of the day. It should be no less the order in any other generation.

Chapter Sixteen

In the verses of this last chapter you might at first think you see only a list of greetings to be passed along to certain people. But I insist there is much more to be found in this list of salutations than at first meets the eye of the mind. While we scan the greetings themselves, let us be mindful that nothing short of genuine and sincere Christian love has motivated these expressions. Let us be mindful at all times that Paul wrote as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write. So these expressions have great significance because they have the stamp of divine approval. Brotherly love is a theme Paul often mentioned in all of the epistles he wrote. These greetings and commendations are means of expressing that love in words. These people were special to him. Some he had known in previous times and different circumstances. Obviously, he knew many of them personally. Others he may have known only through reputation or through mutual friends and brethren. Nonetheless, because they were his brethren, he was desirous to send them special and warm greetings.

We might also learn something by the fact that one person is not mentioned here. In view of the contention made by Romanists that the apostle Peter was the first pope (an office of which the Scriptures never even hint, let alone authorize), does it not strike you as strange that the apostle Paul would omit a special greeting to “His Holiness” should Peter even have been there in the capacity claimed for him? Paul does not even mention him, let alone greet him.

It is impossible for Peter or anyone else to ever have been a pope by the authority of Christ. There is not any Biblical evidence that Peter was ever in Rome at all, let alone as the “bishop of the church” at that place. Paul would have been guilty of the worst form of arrogance and insubordination to have written an inspired message, giving special instructions regarding many matters, giving special greetings to many brethren, but ignoring altogether the “vicar of Christ.” Of course, this omission of Peter’s name does not prove that Peter was never in Rome. But it does prove Paul recognized no such pope when he wrote the letter. Other evidences sustain this fact, also. But this omission does harmonize with all the evidence available that disproves the Romanist contention regarding Peter as being the first pope.

Verses 1 -2

1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

Special commendation is given to a woman named Phebe. She was a sister in the Lord, and identified as a servant of the church at Cenchrea, a city in Achaia near Corinth. There is nothing here to establish that she was a “deaconess” in the sense of being a female counterpart of a deacon. Women serve the church in a variety of ways then and now without being given some special office, lest they violate First Timothy 2:12. Paul did urge, however, that she be received because she was worthy of being received, seeing how she had provided for him and others in time past. Whatever she would ask of them, the brethren ought to assist her.

It is most unfortunate that this good Christian lady has been abused by some modern women’s liberation heretics as an example of women taking office and authority in the church. Phebe did no such thing. Paul would not have commended her if she was in violation of the teaching Paul himself wrote in First Timothy 2:12.

Verses 3 - 5a

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

This man and his wife were old friends of Paul, and also well known to the Bible student. Paul had first met them when he preached in Corinth the first time, being of the same trade of tentmakers. Paul had converted them to Christ. They had been influential in correcting mistakes of doctrine that the eloquent preacher, Apollos, had been making regarding John's baptism. They had exposed themselves to death in order to do the work of the Lord. Paul was so grateful for them, as well as were Gentile churches everywhere. Obviously their influence had been beneficially felt in a number of places. Even then the church was meeting at their house. Who can doubt but Priscilla and Aquila were strong, stalwart and powerful pillars in the church of Christ.

Verse 5b

Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

Mention is made of one who was among the first converts in Achaia, the well beloved Epaenetes. Surely, it must have been encouraging to Paul to know that those who were among his early converts were still remaining loyal and true in the faith. It is always a pain of sadness to hear of anyone turning from their salvation. But it is particularly distressing to learn of some whom you had converted doing this. Paul could rejoice in this person.

Verses 6 - 10

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. 7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. 9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

Paul notes a certain Mary who was known for her good work. Men named as kinsmen, whether in the flesh or spiritual kin I cannot discern, were Andronicus and Junia. Whoever they were, they obviously had suffered imprisonment with him and were known among the apostles. It is not that they were apostles, but the apostles knew of them. Paul also recounts that they were Christians even before he was.

One named Amplias, others called Urbane, Stachys, Apelles, and Aristobulus are specially mentioned. Each of them receives some word of notation identifying them as beloved of Paul and being commendable Christians.

Verses 11 - 15

11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. 12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. 13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. 14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. 15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

Another mentioned as a kinsman is Herodion. Special greeting is given to the entire family of Narcissus. To Tryphena and Tryphosa are kind words for their work's sake. Also alongside them was one named Persis.

One denoted as chosen in the Lord was Rufus. The mother of Rufus is mentioned, and it seems in some sense this good woman was very close to Paul. Possibly she had been as a mother to him in time past. I even suppose one could speculate that Rufus and Paul were fleshly brothers, and the mother being mentioned was their very own physical mother. Such amounts to just so much speculation, however.

Names of Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and other unnamed brothers with them are saluted. Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, Olympas and the saints with whom they were particularly associated were considered deserving by the Holy Spirit for special mention.

These names have no special significance except for the fact that it shows the personal concern Paul had for brethren, and the extent of his dear love for them. What an honor it is to the lives of these people, the details of which are not revealed to us, to be among those whom the great and matchless apostle was guided to include in this list of worthy people.

Verse 16

16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

The sixteenth verse seems to be a cover-all type of greeting. The customary manner of considerate greeting, the holy kiss, is designated. It was the means of cordial salutation one toward another. While customs of greeting vary from people to people and age to age, the consideration one should have for another that provokes courteous and sincere greeting ought not vary. Brethren ought to love one another and greet one another with attitudes and in actions that display the same quality of concern and affection as was displayed by New Testament brethren. That type of greeting is not our custom. In fact, that type of greeting is often used by those who are anything but holy, or who intend to convey holiness by it. Nothing teaches this particular manner of greeting is binding upon us, although it is not wrong to so greet others.

Paul sent word to the church at Rome on behalf of many churches with which he was acquainted, and cited that they all saluted the Roman brethren. He used the phrase, "*churches of Christ.*" That is not a name or title of the church, but it denotes possession or ownership of the church. The church has no divinely given title, and it is a mistake to assign one to it. That some means of identification for the church for the purpose of locating brethren, for business transactions, and other reasons, is necessary cannot be denied. In our world where the confusion of denominationalism is the dominant characteristic of religion, those who strive to be simply Christians, (and this is the name of God's people in the New Testament, Acts 11:26), are forced to have some expedient means of identifying themselves in distinction from the many claimants as followers of Christ who are in human churches. The church belongs to Christ. It is God's church, the church of God. These phrases show possession rather than some title.

Some object to using this phrase to specify God's people. Those who object are usually those who have chosen to wear names and identifications that one cannot find in the New Testament. It is, therefore, most expedient to "*speak as the oracles of God*" and identify the church as belonging to Christ with the phrase "*churches of Christ.*"

The plural use of the word **church** shows that Paul included more than one congregation who was sending this salutation. It in no way has reference to various denominations. There were no denominations to which reference could be made. Denominations did not come into existence by the teaching of the apostles, and are in existence because men have chosen to stand at variance from the authority of Christ. Denominations grew out of a departure from the truth that came years after the church had been established. They came after the epistle to the Romans was written. Truth had penetrated and grown throughout the world before that which has been called **Christendom** became plagued with the denominational concept of the church. Here the term, "*churches*," refers to churches in various localities where Paul had labored, and which he knew as good brethren. Paul is simply touching the hearts of the Roman Christians by expressing to them the salutations of their Christian brethren elsewhere. Since his association with God's people was so extensive, he was well qualified to send this greeting on their behalf.

Verses 17 - 18

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Having taught sound doctrine to these brethren for fifteen and one half chapters, it is not unreasonable to expect to find this kind of warning toward the end of the book. The truth of God must be believed and obeyed if one is to remain acceptable to God. It is nothing but reasonable to think that those who love the Lord will also expect brethren to remain loyal and faithful to what the Lord teaches. In the sad event where one or more decide to go against the doctrine, they must be disciplined. False teaching cannot be allowed to go unchecked without refutation lest error become the rule of the day. Churches are often divided because false ways that are injected into their spiritual existence are tolerated. Such false teachers ought be met with the truth and every effort made to persuade them to turn from their error and follow truth. The instructions Paul gives here are to be followed in the event such false teachers and their followers do not mend their ways. In such cases as that, they cannot be accepted further as faithful brethren because they are unfaithful to the doctrine taught and learned from authoritative sources. They are to be marked, identified, pointed out, and they are to be avoided. This means the church is to have no more to do with them, and they are to be sent on their way, rejected by the brethren, because the brethren refuse to accept those who reject the doctrine of Christ.

This is a strong medicine to take, as one learns from other teaching in the Scriptures regarding discipline. But this action is for the purpose, and administered in the hope, of recovery and restoration of the erroneous brethren. There is never to be any manifestation of hatred toward those involved, but there must be hatred for the false ways being taught and practiced.

It would not be the practice of Christian love to allow the one in error to continue in his error and allow him to think that it made no difference with God or brethren. The one who was wrong would then think he could do wrong and still be right. True love demands that false brethren and those in error be properly disciplined.

Paul identified false brethren in most inglorious terms as being those who do not serve the Lord, but serve their own ambitions, "*their own belly.*" Their self-interest goes above and beyond the interests of the things of the Lord. Surely, none in their right mind would consider it proper for God's people to appear to condone and fellowship people whose doctrines run contrary to the Lord's, and whose interests are primary to them before the cause of Jesus Christ according to the revealed truth of God in the Bible.

Notice how Paul said they are men of good words and fair speeches, men who possibly have mastered the art of oratory, men who are personable, likeable, and therefore are able to win converts to their false line of thinking by such talents. They are men who are persuasive, and who can use language in a way that makes error appear to be the truth. In this fashion they have the capacity to deceive the hearts of others described as "*simple.*" This does not mean simpleminded, illiterate, or ignorant. It refers to a condition of the heart. It means people who are honest and sincere in wanting to do what is right, but who obviously lack the knowledge of right and wrong, and therefore can be misled by those who have persuasive, subtle, and deceptive manners. Such people who mislead others are destructive to the Lord's church because they bring havoc and division. They cause many brethren who would otherwise grow and be faithful to lose their souls because they turn from the truth and follow after a lie.

If there is one commandment that the church in my lifetime needs to study and practice with vigor, this is the commandment. With the ever growing tide of atheism, digressions, worldliness, liberalism, immorality, hobbies, and the exaltation of human intellectualism and reason above the wisdom of God, the Lord's people must bolster themselves and mark those who cause such doctrines that are contrary to the truth to be taught. If they do not cease their false ways, then brethren who love the Lord and his truth must do exactly what Paul commands to be done. They are to be marked and avoided. There cannot be maintained fellowship with them.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Verses 19 - 20

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. 20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The obedience of the Roman brethren was widely known among the churches. For this Paul was glad. It was Paul's desire for these brethren that they be wise in the things that are good, and remain simple, inexperienced, and uninformed by practice and participation in things that are evil.

This is a solid rebuke to that line of thinking we sometimes hear that one must experience a thing before he can know it. There are things that Paul does not want the Christian brethren to know through experience because it would only harm them. What benefit is it to a Christian to know how horrible sin is because he has experienced it? Is it not much better that he know the horrors of sin because God has warned him of it in His Word? Can he not demonstrate some true wisdom and learn from the tragic experiences of others pertaining to sin? Must he act so stupidly as to think he must dirty his soul before he can really know what dirt is? God's Word is the source of wisdom about evil things that we should avoid as well as what good things to do.

Sometimes we hear parents remark, possibly in defense of their own sinful permissiveness toward their children, how they are not too concerned about their children being associated with some of the most wicked situations and conditions life can offer because, as they explain, they want their children to see the real world. They act as if they want their children to know first hand all about sin through experiencing it. They claim their children are too protected unless they are violently exposed to the worse behavior of humans. But God knows what is best for His people more than some permissive parents and intellectuals who have concluded that it is best to rub shoulders with evil in order to really find out about it. Paul wanted Christian brethren to be so far removed from what is wrong that they would remain “*simple*” regarding it, innocent of it, having no sympathy for it, having no part in it, not becoming insensitive to its horrors through frequent association with it. People can know about sin without committing it because God has told us what we need to know. Many of today’s people who think they are modern and up-to-date have a lot to learn from these words of truth given by Paul in these verses.

It logically follows that if one will pursue such a course toward evil as the Lord has directed, the Lord will provide for him. God, the God of peace between man and God as well as peace between man and man, will bruise, inflict injury, against our adversary, Satan. It seems to me the word “*shortly*” indicates that the Roman brethren might well have been suffering from some source various persecutions even as Paul wrote them, and the devil was using some means or some people to bring hardship against them. Paul comforts the brethren of Rome by admonishing them to faithfulness and wisdom in the things that are good. He pleads that God will indeed protect them, and the pressures mounting against them at that time would soon be relieved.

This paragraph closes with the familiar remarks of Paul, “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*” Paul knew from whom all grace and blessings flow. With this remark he would underscore in the minds of those who read this same fundamental truth regarding our Lord.

Verses 21 - 24

21 Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. 22 I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. 23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. 24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Paul returns to mention a few more names. This time he names some who sent greetings to the Romans. There was one named Timotheus. I wonder if this was the same Timothy to whom Paul wrote two epistles. There was Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, and Tertius, who seemed to have been used in some capacity in writing these words in the letter form for Paul. Gaius was named as Paul's host. Possibly it was in this man's house where Paul wrote this epistle. First Corinthians 1:14 mentions a man named Gaius that Paul had baptized in Corinth. As much as any other evidence, the mention of Gaius indicates the letter was most likely written in Corinth. John also mentioned a man named Gaius in Third John, verse one. Could it have been the same man? I know of no way to know. Surely, then, as now, many men had the same name.

Erastus, a chamberlain, the treasurer of the city, a holder of public office in civil government, and another named Quartus, sent salutations. The fact that Erastus is named is additional evidence that civil government is not of the devil, and that it is no sin to be a civil servant. One named Erastus also lived in Corinth (Second Timothy 4:20).

Verse twenty-four repeats the familiar prayer of grace for which Paul is known. There are similar sentiments expressed in other epistles the Holy Spirit moved him to write.

Verses 25 - 27

COMMENTS ON ROMANS

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: 27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Here are closing words giving praise and honor to Christ. Christ is the source of power. He is the One who can establish, stabilize, and ground the Christian. This is done by the gospel being heard, believed, and obeyed. The gospel must be preached.

The gospel which must be preached, and was preached by Paul, was once a mystery in the sense it was not revealed. From the time the world began until God saw fit to make the mystery known, man did not know how God intended to redeem him. Now man can know because God has revealed His plan. **His system of salvation is a system of grace, mercy, love, blood, law, and obedient faith by and through His Son Jesus Christ.**

The writings of the prophets or teachers, both Old and New Testament writers, gradually unfolded the scheme God designed, devised, and delivered. Now, with the full revelation of His will and covenant, all nations can know to obey **the** faith. Notice the phrase, "*obedience of faith.*" Faith, in order to be saving faith, must be obedient faith. The system of faith demands obedience to the commands of the faith, which was taught from the early verses on this epistle. Observe the teaching in chapter one and verse five.

Paul's final statement is an expression of glory to the true and living God, the only wise God. Glory is to God and is offered through the avenue that God designated. That one way is the only way, and is the way of Jesus Christ.

SYSTEM OF SALVATION

Such is the **system of salvation** as revealed by Deity through Paul's letter to the church at Rome. Thanks be to God for it, and His revelation of it.