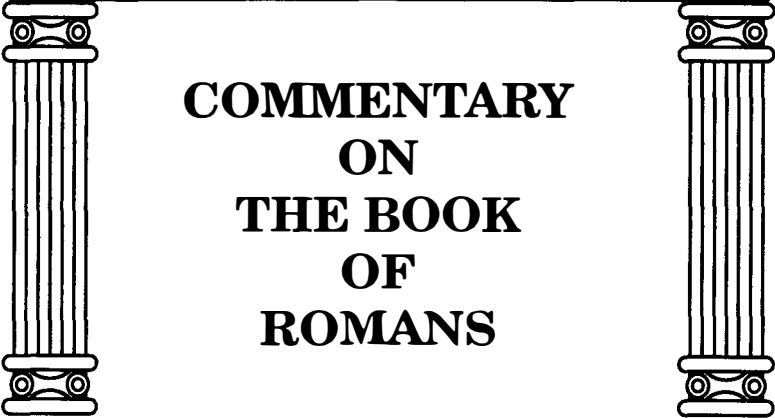


GOD'S MESSAGES BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES

VOLUME 4

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8).



COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ROMANS

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Introduction

- I. The writer is Paul the apostle.
 - A. He was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5).
 - B. He had been a Pharisee (Acts 23:6).
 - C. He was born in Tarsus, north of Palestine (Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:5).
 - D. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3).
 - E. He was a young man at the time of Stephen's death (Acts 7:58).
 - F. He first devoted himself to the destruction of the church (Acts 8, 9).
 - G. After his conversion, he promoted that which he had sought to destroy (Acts 9:22 & 26).
- II. The Date and Place of Writing.
 - A. The letter was written from Corinth on the third missionary journey.
 - B. He mentions Gaius as his host. Gaius was from Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14).
 - C. The book can be dated about ten years before his death in A.D. 58.
- III. The Purpose of the Book.
 - A. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.
 - B. This book establishes the Gospel as the power of God to salvation for all men, whether Jew or Gentile.
- IV. The Nature of the Book.
 - A. Romans has the format of the letters of its own time.
 1. Greeting

2. Prayer
 3. Thanksgiving
 4. Special contents
 5. Salutations and personal greetings
- B. Romans stands among the classics in all of literature.
- C. Romans varies from Paul's other epistles.
1. Others deal largely with problem situations.
 2. Romans is a unified explanation of Christianity.
- V. Historical Setting of the Book.
- A. The Jews had been scattered to Rome from Jerusalem.
- B. The city of Rome was the center of the Roman Empire.
- C. The corruption was indescribable.
- VI. The Church at Rome.
- A. There is no evidence Paul had ever been to Rome when this letter was written.
- B. It is believed the church at Rome was begun by some who had been at Jerusalem on Pentecost.
1. They had spiritual gifts which could only be imparted by the laying on of the hands of the apostles.
 2. Some of these brethren must have been in contact with an apostle.
- C. There were both Jews and Gentiles in the church.



**The Book Of
ROMANS**

Chapter 1

ROM 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Paul identifies himself as the writer of the book. This is common to Paul. He calls himself the *doulos*, or slave of Christ. He was called by the Lord to be an apostle (Acts 9:15 and 26:16-18). He was separated from Judaism to serve Christ.

The gospel is the good news brought about through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It was Paul's great privilege to preach it.

ROM 1:2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

The gospel of Christ had been promised by Old Testament prophets (Rev. 19:10). Consider such passages as Isaiah 53 and the sign of Jonah.

ROM 1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

The Messiah was to be of the lineage of David. (Psalm 16:1 and 2 Sam. 7:12-16 are quoted in Acts 2:27-31.) Christ was both Son of God and son of David.

ROM 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

The resurrection proved Christ to be the Son of God. He is, therefore, both human and divine. The Spirit of Holiness is the Holy Spirit—the power which raised him from the dead.

ROM 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Paul was always amazed that the grace of God could forgive the chief of sinners. This had been true that he might teach all nations to obey all commands given in the name of the Lord. Paul considered himself no less than the other apostles (2 Cor. 11:5).

ROM 1:6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

Paul was not the only one who had been called to serve Christ. Every Christian is “called” by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14).

ROM 1:7 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.

The letter is addressed to all of the Christians (Saints) in Rome. Grace is presented through the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who reach out for that **grace** are offered peace with God, with men and with self. That peace is only possible in Christ. It is a peace which passes understanding.

ROM 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Paul was thankful for every saint in Rome. Even more, he was thankful their reputation had spread to the whole world.

ROM 1:9 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;

Paul's spirit was moved to serve them. His service to God caused him to continually pray for them.

ROM 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

He desired to come to them. Later, he would go to Rome in chains. Such prayers must be placed in the hands of the Lord (James 4:15).

ROM 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

Spiritual gifts were imparted by the laying on of the apostles hands (Acts 8:18).

The Roman saints did have some spiritual gifts since Paul instructed them on how to use such gifts properly in chapter 12:6-8.

ROM 1:12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Any time Christians are together they may benefit by the faith of one another. This is one of the marks of the wisdom of God in commanding assembly of the saints (Heb. 10:26).

ROM 1:13 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.

Paul was torn between his duty to preach the gospel where it had not yet been preached and his desire to be with those to whom he had already labored.

There is evidence in this verse that part of the church at Rome was made up of Gentiles. After all, it is the church at Rome. We will see later that a portion of the church was also composed of Jews.

ROM 1:14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

The command of the Lord is to preach the gospel to every creature. Men of every nation must hear. Because so much had been done for him, Paul felt obligated to preach it to as many others as possible.

The Greeks were known for their wisdom. The

word barbarian is reported to have arisen because, to those who did not understand their language, they seemed to be saying “bar-bar”. To the Greeks, the barbarians were a rough and uncultured people. Paul felt just as much need to preach to the uncultured as to those of culture.

ROM 1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

It mattered little to Paul whether those at Rome were Jew or Gentile. They must hear God’s plan of salvation. Paul was ready to see that they did hear it.

ROM 1:16 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.

To kings and paupers, to Jew and Gentile, to both the wise and unwise, Paul proudly preached the gospel of Christ. It would lift the lowly and humble the exalted.

The gospel contains the dynamite of God to change sinners to saints.

The gospel is designed for **all** who believe. It is not limited to a select few who were individually chosen for heaven before the world began. God chooses those who choose him. Every man may believe and be saved, or rebel and be lost.

ROM 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

“Therein” means within the gospel.

There are several explanations for the term “from faith to faith.” I believe it is saying, faith is built upon faith. Faith is a body of truth which is presented in the Holy writings. It is also a condition of mind which comes to life in obedience. **From faith** may mean from the presented body of truth. **To faith** may mean the condition of mind which produces obedience. If that is the case, the verse is saying the hearing of the gospel produces faith in the one hearing it. Then, that faith becomes the backbone of a Christian life.

Some see the first term faith to be the faith produced in men in the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, and the second term as the faith produced in the New Testament age. In that case, the verse would be saying—men of every age live lives pleasing to God by placing their lives under his will. The faith of the Old Testament then led to the faith of the New Testament which was superior to that of the Old. This verse contains a quote from Habakkuk 2:4.

ROM 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

If the gospel is received with readiness of the

heart, the blessings of God will be poured out upon the recipient. If the gospel is rejected and men live in ungodliness, the wrath of God will fall upon that man.

It is a most dangerous thing to have had access to the will of God and then to have ignored it and deliberately lived a life of sin.

ROM 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

Paul is speaking to Gentiles here. He is going to show they had certain truths revealed to them. They knew something of the nature of God even if they had not had the advantage of the oracles of God as the Jews had.

What was it they should have known? The next verse will explain.

ROM 1:20 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:

The Gentiles should have known something of the nature of God. They had access to the world of nature. By looking at God's workmanship, it is possible to ascertain certain of his qualities.

There are three basic attributes of God which may be seen in nature. They are:

- (1) His **power**

(2) His **wisdom**

(3) His **benevolence** —

One can see the necessity of an infinite mind,
One can see the necessity of power superior to
that of nature, and

One can see the existence of law with its cause
and effect.

Some other passages of scripture should be noted
here:

Acts 14:17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Psa. 19:1-3 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

Job 12:7-8 But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.

Scientists and farmers, above all others, should be believers in Jehovah. They come into constant contact with his universe in such a manner as to have the clearest of evidence of his nature.

There is no excuse for any man being ignorant of the existence of an invisible God who is wise, powerful and benevolent.

ROM 1:21 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.

Although the Gentiles had such evidence of God before them constantly, they still refused to acknowledge Him in either mind or action. They considered him as a figment of a fool's imagination. By turning away from the light, they plunged themselves into darkness.

Notice the sequence here:

1. They observed the evidence of God.
2. They refused to glorify him.
3. They were not grateful.
4. Their imagination became vain.
5. Their hearts (minds) became dark.

ROM 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

They were forever holding their education and reputation high for all to see. In the meantime, their distorted value system shows just how foolish they really were.

ROM 1:23 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.

Because they have need to fasten their affections

upon something, they turn from the Creator to the creation.

They begin to worship images made like men, birds, beasts and creeping things.

ROM 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

Because they turned from God, he turned from them.

He allowed them to follow their lust and pride into utter confusion. They worshipped their own bodies. While doing so, they dishonored and corrupted themselves in sexual misbehavior.

ROM 1:25 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.

They refused to believe in God as the true object of worship.

As a result their faith descended from God to man, to beasts, and finally to the lies and deception of Satan.

ROM 1:26 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:

God does not force men to believe in him and obey his will. If they choose to fasten their affections upon their own lust and pride, they will be allowed to do so.

When this happens, women will become lesbians. They will become prostitutes. They will use their bodies and minds as trinkets to attract immature men.

ROM 1:27 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 recompence of their error which was meet.

When men reject God, they also lose respect for the male-female relationship and turn to homosexuality.

The results of such behavior scar both the mind and the body. The world is set up by Jehovah who knows its operation. To ignore him is to reap the consequences of our ignorance.

ROM 1:28 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;

When the mind is emptied of the truth of God, it becomes flooded with a host of ungodly filth and pours forth a flood of social horror.

The reprobate mind produces all kinds of

inconvenient actions. By inconvenient actions, we are talking about those which make life difficult rather than comfortable. Disease and guilt defile both the body and the soul.

ROM 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Man becomes his own god. In his own estimation, anything which satisfies his selfish greed is a proper action. God is ignored. Man is abused. Self is degraded. Everything is turned into chaos.

ROM 1:30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Those who hold such philosophies cannot be trusted. They are forever seeking methods by which they can deceive others and feed themselves.

ROM 1:31 Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

They do not understand the fact that their selfish rebellion leads to misery of the most excruciating kind.

ROM 1:32 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.

The Gentile could have known through observation of nature that the breaking of the law ends in death. Yet, in spite of this, he proceeded to break the law which is available to him.

He not only took pleasure in his own disobedience, he was entertained by the sin in the lives of others.

The picture of the Gentile given by Paul in this chapter shows the plight of man in general and points up the enormous need for the preaching of the gospel.

Chapter 1 — Summary

1. The Gentiles are sinners because they have ignored the truth God has made available to them.
2. God has given them up and allowed them to follow their own ways.
3. This has resulted in terrible consequences.
4. **THE GENTILES NEED A SAVIOUR.**



Chapter 2

ROM 2:1 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.

Up to this point, the apostle has been demonstrating the fact that the Gentiles are lost in sin. Now, he will turn to the Jews and prove they are likewise guilty and destined for eternal separation from God without the forgiveness which comes through Jesus Christ.

As pointed out before, the congregation at Rome was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. As Paul was pointing out the faults of the Gentiles, it would have been entirely too easy for the Jews to look upon them with haughty eyes. The Jews took great pride in having been the chosen people of God from as far back as the time of Abraham. They had been divinely instructed to keep themselves separate from the Gentiles and to refrain from intermarriage with them. The Gentiles had been an idolatrous people and God warned the Jews that to intermarry with them brought the danger of turning to other gods.

This situation had now changed abruptly. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. It was his special charge to reveal the mystery of God to all men. That mystery involved the integration of the Gentiles and the Jews into one new man in Christ. There was to be neither bond nor free, rich or poor, male nor female, Jew nor Gentile in Christ Jesus. Each was

equally privileged to be a member of the family of God, and a citizen in Christ's everlasting kingdom.

Because of these new relationships, no man was to be judged on the basis of his fleshly relationship to Abraham, or to David. The Jews were in danger if they thought they could judge the Gentiles as sinners when they were guilty of the same sins.

A man is to be judged on the basis of the fruit produced in his life. That had been the message of John the Baptist when he cried out for men to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. If one was to be an acceptable citizen of the kingdom of heaven, he would have to bring his life into harmony with the will of God. *By their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7:20)*. Galations 6:8 agrees in saying, *For he that soweth to his flesh shall reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

It is important that we note the difference between recognizing a Christian by the fruit he produces and judging men on the basis of criteria other than the Word of God. It is quite right to compare the fruit of a man's life with that which would be produced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is wrong to judge one's self as being acceptable to God and another as unacceptable when both are equally guilty of transgressing God's laws. The judging which is condemned in Romans 2:1 is the latter type. It is the type found in Matt. 7:1-4: *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that*

is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother; Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

ROM 2:2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

When God makes his own judgment, it will be according to the truth. It will not be based upon impure motives because God himself is no respecter of persons. He will not excuse one man and excuse another when both have committed the same sins.

In addition, God has all of the evidence at his disposal. Unlike frail men, he will not be deceived by any lack of information. His judgment will be accurate and unprejudiced.

ROM 2:3 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?

It is foolish to think one may evade the judgment of God. If the Jew thought he could commit sin and be cleared simply because he was a descendant of Abraham, he was mistaken. All men will face the judgment bar of God and will be judged according to the manner in which they have reacted to the will of the Living God. Hebrews 9:27 spells it out—*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*

ROM 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

The reason God has not destroyed every man on earth is that he is a loving and merciful God. He is not willing that any should perish. *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* (2 Peter 3:9). We deceive ourselves if we think we are too good to be destroyed. Men live because of the patience of the Creator who wishes that each might have time and opportunity to repent of his sin.

ROM 2:5 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;

There are at least two serious problems with having a hard and impenitent heart:

First, God cannot get in.

Second, love for our fellowman cannot get out.

Such a hardhearted condition results in storing up for ourselves the wrath of God. Matthew 6:20 encourages us to store up for ourselves treasures in heaven. What a tragic thing when those treasures are replaced by God's wrath.

ROM 2:6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Each man may be certain he will receive a reward or punishment in line with the life he has lived. The judgment will be fair. There will be no appeals.

ROM 2:7 To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

There are some who, like Abraham, search for a city whose Founder and Maker is God. Having been patient and persevering, they will find that which they have sought. They will be rewarded with:

- (1) Glory
- (2) Honor
- (3) Immortality
- (4) Eternal life

Those who seek shall find (Matt. 7:7).

ROM 2:8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

There are others who reject the truth. They actually contend with God. They follow after unrighteousness and do those things which bring upon them the wrath and indignation of God.

ROM 2:9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

Those persons who seek to separate themselves from God will finally succeed. For them, the judgment

will bring tribulation and anguish.

It will not matter whether they are Jew or Gentile. The punishment will be waiting.

ROM 2:10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

Just as sure as the anguish and tribulation await everyone who walks in darkness, glory, honor and peace are waiting for those whose works are good and whose fruit is that of the Spirit of God.

The Gentile will have equal access to these blessings with the Jew.

Many times in the book of Romans we find the mention of the Jew first, and also the Gentile. This is because God first began to develop his plan of salvation through the Jew. He had worked through the family of Abraham, and the kingdom of David. Christ himself was a descendant of both Abraham and David. When the gospel was first preached, it was preached to the Jew, and after that the Gentile.

This verse should also remind us of the truth of 1 Peter 4:17: *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

ROM 2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

Yet, there is no respect of persons with God. If the Jew obeys, he will be blessed. If he disobeys, he

will be punished. If the Gentile obeys, he will be blessed. If he disobeys, he also will be punished. *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).*

ROM 2:12 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;

Every man will be judged by the law to which he was made subject. Since the Gentiles were not ever made subject to the law of Moses, they will not be judged by that law.

However, the Gentiles were not completely without law. Sin is the transgression of the law. Where there is no law, there is no transgression. The Gentiles were still subject to the law given during the Patriarchal age. They would be judged by it. They also were able to observe certain cause and effect relationships in nature and would be held responsible for ignoring those truths.

Conscience cannot be ignored. It is not always dependable, as in the case of Paul, who lived in all good conscience while persecuting Christians. But one who does that which he believes to be wrong, commits sin. *“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”*

The Jews had been given the law of Moses. They would be judged by that law.

Both the Jew and the Gentile have sinned. One

sinned by breaking the Law given through Moses. The other sinned by breaking the law which had been transmitted from Patriarchal days and the law which could be read from observing nature.

ROM 2:13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.)

It is always good to listen to the truth; yet, listening to the truth is not sufficient. It is necessary to place one's life in harmony with that truth. Faith and practice must operate as a team. James spoke of the man who observes himself in a mirror and then walks away without doing anything to tidy himself (James 1:22-25). Jesus condemned those who heard his words and then failed to observe them (Matthew 7:21).

Robert Ingersoll had a remarkable knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. He had heard the law. In spite of this, he went about the country lecturing on "The Mistakes of Moses". Though he was a hearer of the law, he was hardly a doer of the law.

ROM 2:14 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:

Without the aid of special revelation from God, the Gentiles had arrived at some of the truths which were revealed in the law of Moses. When they had thus discovered these truths, they were obligated to

respect them. God would hold them responsible for obedience to them. These truths were embedded in their hearts and to ignore them was to sin. They had transgressed the law of God which had been written in their heart.

ROM 2:15 Which shew 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;)

Lying, stealing and killing are wrong. Love of God and man is right. These truths are recognized by many who have never read the Bible through. When a man kills, knowing it is wrong, he has sinned. When he refrains from killing because he knows it is wrong, his conscience tells him and God in heaven he is not guilty of the sin of murder.

ROM 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

In the day of judgment, God will hold every man responsible for obedience to the law under which he lived. Christ will be involved in the judging process and his gospel will be the measuring stick.

Every supposedly secret thought or action will be made evident and the man who has sinned will be found guilty.

ROM 2:17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

The Jew was then, and still is, proud of the name "Jew." Some believe the name was given after the division of the ten tribes in the north from the two tribes in the south, when the northern tribes were called "Israel" and the southern tribes became known as "Judah", with those who lived in the lower territory called Jews. Later, the name is thought to have been applied to those of the other ten tribes.

The Jew had a fierce pride in his ancestry. He felt he could rest confident in his relationship with Jehovah. He was one of God's chosen. He had been given the law. The Gentile could not lay claim to either of these benefits.

ROM 2:18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

The Jew took great pride in the study of the law of Moses. The scribes and doctors of the law spent countless hours finding precisely what the law taught. Therefore, the Jew knew the will of God and had been thoroughly instructed in the excellent way of life it laid out.

ROM 2:19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

With such a command of the teachings of the law, the Jew considered himself as thoroughly illuminated. In his mind, he could look down upon the unenlightened Gentile as wandering in ignorance and darkness. The Gentile must look to him for guidance and light.

ROM 2:20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

The Jew looked at the Gentile as a foolish babe with respect to the knowledge of the will of God. If the Gentile was to come to Christ, he would have to be instructed by the Jew.

Notice the following descriptions of the Jew, as given above:

1. He carried the name “Jew” which was a privilege.
2. He lived among a people who have been given the law.
3. His god was the only true God.
4. He knew the will of God.
5. He was supposed to be an example for others.
6. He was supposed to be a harbinger of light.
7. He had watched the form of knowledge unroll through the fulfillment of prophecy as the Messiah came.

Each of the above should have been cherished and utilized.

ROM 2:21 **Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?**

Now Paul proceeded to show that every privilege had been severely abused.

They were able to teach others—yet, had not truly learned the principles they taught.

They knew and taught that it was wrong to steal—But stole themselves.

ROM 2:22 **Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?**

They knew full well that adultery was a forbidden way of life—yet, they committed adultery.

They knew God hated idolatry, and they taught it was evil—yet, they committed idolatry themselves by taking spoil from the temples of the idols.

ROM 2:23 **Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?**

If one boasts of the greatness of the law, it is hardly logical that one would break that law.

By breaking the law, the Jews were bringing dishonor to Jehovah, not honor. Jesus directed man to let others see their good works and glorify the Father which is in heaven. By letting men see them breaking the law and doing evil works, they were

demeaning the Giver of the law.

They had brought themselves down to the place where God's people were considered a hissing and a byword (Isa. 52:5).

ROM 2:24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

The Gentiles should have been able to learn purity of life from both the doctrine and the example of the Jews. It was not so. The Jews were actually teaching the Gentiles to disrespect Jehovah.

We must not pass this verse without noting the comparison between the effect the Jews disobedience had upon Gentile behavior and the effect of hypocritical action of Christians today upon those outside of Christ. The man or woman who has been baptized into Christ and has taken the name Christian must honor that name by his life. If not, he caused the unbeliever to blaspheme and ridicule the Bible, the church, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Truly, he crucifies Christ afresh.

ROM 2:25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

The Jew was proud of the covenant he had made with God through circumcision. But if he broke that covenant, he might as well not have been circumcised.

Christians may also learn from this. Proper baptism places one in Christ. Yet, getting into Christ is not sufficient. One must walk in the light as he is in the light if he expects the blood of Christ to cleanse him from sin; otherwise, he might as well never have been baptized. Some unfaithful Christians act as if immersion provided a ticket straight to heaven. It is not true!

ROM 2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

If the Gentiles had obeyed the law of God which was available to them, it was not necessary that they be circumcised. They had not been commanded to undergo circumcision and they could be right in the sight of God without it.

ROM 2:27 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?

In addition, if the life of the Gentile met the requirements of the truth, as he had received it, his life would put that of the disobedient Jew to shame in that he had transgressed the law of Moses.

ROM 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

The Jew was one of God's chosen; however, this goes both ways. God must choose the man. Then, the man must choose God. Circumcision may be accomplished without the inner man having been really committed to Jehovah. Such a man is not a true spiritual Jew. God would not approve of him, nor treat him as his own. The kind of circumcision which truly matters is that which cuts off worldly desires from the heart of a man. The Gentiles could, by this circumcision of the heart, be just as truly chosen of God as could the fleshly descendants of Abraham who had undergone outward circumcision.

Rom 2:29 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.

There was a time when God commanded the male descendants of Abraham to be circumcised on the eighth day after their birth. If this was not done, they were cut off from God's people. They had no covenant relationship with Jehovah.

With the coming of the new covenant, the cutting off is to be spiritual in nature. The accomplishments which are achieved by the new spiritual descendants of Abraham are not to be boasted of as human efforts. They are to be honored as the achievements of God and due to the mercy and grace of the Living God.

Chapter 2 — Summary

1. The Jew has no right to rejoice that he is better than the Gentile.

2. God is no respecter of persons.
3. The Jew is a sinner because he broke the law which God gave to him.
4. **THEREFORE, THE JEW IS ALSO IN NEED OF A SAVIOUR.**

Chapter 3

ROM 3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

Paul anticipates the question the Jews will have now that he has explained they are guilty of the same sins as the Gentiles. They will ask what difference it makes to be a Jew. Why did God even give the command for circumcision?

ROM 3:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

The answer is there are many ways in which the Jews profited by their special relationship with Jehovah. The first one which came to his mind was that they had clear access to the specific will of God as it was revealed in the law. Any information the Gentiles had obtained came from general revelation and was limited to that which could be had through observation of the wisdom, power and benevolence of God as declared by his handiwork.

To be a descendant of Abraham was to be heir to a very special promise. The Jew had a right to be proud. The promise that the world would be blessed through Abraham's seed would be kept.

ROM 3:3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

Many of the Jews had rejected Christ. That, however, would not destroy the dependability of God. God certainly would have had the right to revoke his promise in view of the fact the Jews had acted as they had. But, God was still faithful in the keeping of his word.

ROM 3:4 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.

God is always true to his promises. Even though men sin, God will be sinless. The latter part of this verse is a quote from Psalm 51. In that Psalm, David was conscience stricken over his sin with Bathsheba. He indicates that God is just in his condemnation of evil. God can never be judged by men. He will always be correct in his commands and in his treatment of men.

It would be easy to apply the “thou” in this verse to men. That is not the correct application. It is God who is being judged by men. When God appears before the judgment bar of men, he will be found righteous.

And so it is not true that God is unfaithful in the keeping of his promise to Abraham if he condemns the Jew and finds him sinful and in need of a Saviour.

ROM 3:5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

A man would be prone to say all of this played into the glorification of God. If the Jew has sinned, that simply allows God to show his great patience and longsuffering. Failing to forgive the sins of the Jews would be an indication of unrighteousness on the part of God.

As we can easily see, the Jew felt he could do nearly anything and be justified just because he was a Jew and, thus, a recipient of the promise of blessings to Abraham.

ROM 3:6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

“Be it not so!” If such were true, there is no way God could ever judge the world. Every sinner would be able to accuse God of impatience and malice in punishing him for his sin. Every sinner could magnify the glory of God by presenting God the opportunity to forgive his sin, no matter how horrible the sin, or even whether it had been repented of.

ROM 3:7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

Under this line of reasoning, the man who lied would cause the glory of God to shine forth when God’s truth was compared with his own lie. Therefore, his sin was not truly sin and God should not condemn him because of it.

ROM 3:8 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.**

Paul had taught forcefully that the grace of God was a most wonderful blessing. God had forgiven Paul of his persecution of Christ and the church. Paul was grateful to God for his grace and mercy. He urged others to take advantage of it.

But some were using this to accuse Paul of saying the more a man sinned, the more the grace of God had room to operate; and, therefore, God was glorified by men's sins. This was pure slander and a vicious lie. Paul was in no way proud of his past sins. He had repented of those sins. He buffeted his body and brought it under subjection that he might not sin as much in the future. By praising God for his grace, Paul was not attempting to make a way for further sin for either himself or those he taught.

If a man used the grace of God as justification for further sin, it was appropriate that such a man face the fires of damnation.

ROM 3:9 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;

Paul is ready to draw an important conclusion. The "we" is the Jews, of whom Paul is one. Are the Jews better than the Gentiles? Do they have a right to look down upon the Gentiles because of their innocent status? Not at all. The Gentiles have sinned. The Jews have sinned also. Both find themselves under the sentence of death.

ROM 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

For the Jew to have been righteous under the Law of Moses, he must have kept it to perfection. The law provided a year by year day of atonement which looked forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. However, without that perfect sacrifice, the blood of bulls and goats did not cleanse from the guilt of sin.

The quote probably comes from Psalm 14.

ROM 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

No man, either Jew or Gentile, has truly understood the mind of God, nor has any man ever sought after him perfectly. Every man who ever lived has stained and marked his life with sin.

ROM 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

God has provided instructions in righteousness, but every man has defected and traveled in his own ways. This requires effort on God's part to bring him back to the right. No man provides God more than God provides him. Not a single man has lived a pure life.

ROM 3:13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Sepulchres are full of dead men's bones. These are not pretty. Pretty things do not come from the throats of sinful men. They speak lies and make deceitful promises. Their words often sting like the poison of a rattlesnake or a cobra.

ROM 3:14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Blasphemy and foul language are uttered. Hateful and malicious words are spoken against both God and fellow-man.

ROM 3:15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

All too often men even descend to the point where their malicious words bear fruit as did that of Cain.

ROM 3:16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

All of this evil speaking and action leads to anguish for both themselves and for others. Following such paths can lead to nothing but difficulty, both now and forever.

ROM 3:17 And the way of peace have they not known:

Sin leads to conflict and violence. God's way is the way of peace; but when men forsake it, they invite a host of evils into their lives. Remember chapter one. Also refer to the sixth chapter of Revelation.

ROM 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

There are two kinds of fear. One is profitable. The other is unprofitable. The wrong kind of fear paralyzes one into inaction. The right kind motivates one toward righteous life and away from sin, violence and death. All men have neglected to fear God completely in the profitable sense of the word. Some have done so far more than others.

Paul is not trying to say that every man is guilty of each of the sins he has been enumerating. He is trying to make the point that every man is guilty of at least one of them.

The verses above, from 10 through 18, include a number of references to Old Testament scriptures. See Psa. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccl. 7:20; Psa. 5:9; 140:3; Psa. 10:7; Prov. 1:19; Isa. 59:7-8; Psa. 36:1.

ROM 3:19 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.

The Jew should understand that the Law of Moses was applicable to him. When he broke that law, he had no right to point to the Gentile and cry out that he was a sinner, when the man doing the pointing was guilty as well.

ROM 3:20 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.

Since no man kept the law perfectly, no man was just before God. The law was presented that men might know of their sin. Then, aware of their guilt, they would be prepared for the introduction of God's plan for justification.

ROM 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

The righteousness which God makes available does not come from within the law. It was introduced by the law and the prophets. That righteousness hinges on belief in the witness of the law and the prophets.

ROM 3:22 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 righteousness which God makes available comes through the grace of God and by faith in Jesus Christ. It is not restricted to those in possession of the law of Moses, but is available to **all** who believe in the Christ.

ROM 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Here, in the plainest words possible, is Paul's conclusion to everything he has been saying in the first two chapters and down to verse twenty of this chapter. Every man, both Jew and Gentile, has sinned and is in need of cleansing.

ROM 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

The word “freely” in this verse is not a matter of restrictions. It is a matter of price. There is no way man could pay the ransom after he has sold his soul to the Devil through sin. Yet, the free gift of God through Jesus Christ provides two valuable benefits:

1. Forgiveness of sins.
2. A new relationship as a friend of God, rather than as an enemy.

We must not miss the fact that the redemption is **in Christ**. One gets into Christ through baptism after belief, repentance and confession (Gal. 3:27).

ROM 3:25 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;

The Godhead has presented the Son of man as a “propitiation” or **purchase price** to buy back man from his bondage. It was through the forbearance of God this propitiation was set forth. God had no

obligation to pay that price. It was due to his mercy, his grace and his forbearance that it was done.

ROM 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

For Jesus to declare God's righteousness was to show the way for man to find God's forgiveness. Jesus himself was just and, because he was, it was possible for him to be the justifier of those who believe in him.

ROM 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

What boasting does he refer to? It is the boasting of the Jew who feels secure in his possession of the law of Moses. The law of works as presented under Moses could only condemn and point forward to the need for Christ. The law of faith in Christ Jesus could render a man righteous before God.

I would add an insert here:

1. God's law is given to make sin plain.
2. Sin results in death because of lack of harmony with spiritual realities.
3. When men break the law, they destroy themselves and endanger others.
4. Therefore, God must punish men for breaking the law, or they would continue their destruction.

5. If God forgave sin without penalty, he would build disrespect for the law.
6. Thus, Christ is offered to pay the penalty.
7. God, by this means, shows the seriousness of sin.
8. At the same time, he can forgive penitent men.

ROM 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

This verse does not teach “faith only”. It teaches that the keeping of the law of Moses, without the sacrifice of Christ, saved nobody. Nobody kept it.

ROM 3:29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

Even in the days of old, the Jews accepted proselytes from the Gentiles. In the gospel age, the gospel is to be preached to every creature. Jehovah is the God of all men who will accept his offer of redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ.

ROM 3:30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

It is not likely there is any difference between “by faith” and “through faith”. The sinning Gentile must obtain righteousness by or through faith. The sinning Jews must also obtain righteousness by or

through faith. Both have an identical means of access.

ROM 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Righteousness through faith in Christ does not make the law of Moses meaningless. Instead, it gives it fulfillment. Jesus said he had not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. Christ came to fulfill the purposes and to establish the usefulness of the Mosaic law.

Chapter 3 — Summary

1. God is righteous in taking vengeance against men for their disobedience.
2. Jew and Gentile are both sinners.
3. **ALL MEN HAVE SINNED AND HAVE BEEN PRONOUNCED GUILTY.**
4. The law spells out sin; but since no man keeps the law, no man will be justified by the law.
5. **BUT GOD HAS PROVIDED CHRIST AS A MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION.**
6. A man may be justified by faith in Christ.

Chapter 4

ROM 4:1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

This question may be better understood by putting it as follows: “What did Abraham obtain through the power of his own flesh?” When one attempts to find justification through the law, he must depend upon his own power. The line of argument will be that the deeds of Abraham were not sufficient to justify him.

ROM 4:2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

If Abraham’s deeds were sufficient to earn his salvation, he would have a perfect right to boast. The truth of the matter is that his works were not sufficient and, therefore, he had no right to boast before God. If he wished to boast of his works, he had better do it before man and not God.

ROM 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

The quote referred to is from Genesis 15:6. Abraham was beyond the age for begetting a child. In addition, the womb of Sarah was barren. But since God had promised them a multitude of

descendants, Abraham believed that what appeared to be impossible could be accomplished.

Such faith not only believed in the existence of God, it placed absolute confidence in God's outstretched arm. This faith is the living faith which is manifested in action. See James 2:23 and Heb. 11:8-10, 17-19.

JAM 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

HEB 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

HEB 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham's works could never have been sufficient to render him righteous in the sight of God. But his

willingness to place his life in the hands of God, caused God to consider him a righteous man.

ROM 4:4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

If a man were to keep his life in perfect order, his just wages would be salvation. God would owe him passage into heaven. Both the Romans and ourselves are capable of seeing the futility of sinlessness for an entire lifetime. If the man does not live a perfect life, he must depend upon the grace of God for his hope.

ROM 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Be careful! This verse does not teach that works are unnecessary. It teaches that when one's faith leads him to obedience, that faith will be pleasing to God and will result in God considering him a righteous person. It was Abraham's faith which was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Nevertheless, it would not have been reckoned unless it was a faith brought to life in obedience.

The words "reckoned", "imputed" or "counted" occurs eleven times within this one chapter.

ROM 4:6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

David is now introduced as a witness that justification is not earned through working. The quotation is from Psalms 32:1-2.

ROM 4:7 **Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.**

Psalm 32:1-2 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

David, thus, defines justification as the covering or forgiveness of sin.

ROM 4:8 **Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.**

This verse indicates that imputation does not involve giving credit for something belonging to another. If this were true, it would imply that God might associate sin with one who had not sinned. This was done only in the case of the Son of God.

The verse is teaching that after God has forgiven a man's sin, he will not lay sin to the account of that man.

ROM 4:9 **Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.**

The blessing here is the forgiveness of sins and being counted as righteous. This blessing was available to both the Jew and the Gentile.

Abraham's condition was approved of God because of his faith, not because of his circumcision.

ROM 4:10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. Since that was true, the Gentile might also be justified without circumcision.

ROM 4:11 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:

Circumcision was only an outward act which manifested the faith inside the man. It was a sign of the covenant made with Abraham.

Circumcision was like placing a brand on a product to certify its quality. Circumcision and baptism are not exact parallels.

To become one of God's chosen:

The Jew was born of the flesh.

The Christian is born again.

The seal of God:

To the Jew was circumcision.

To the Christian is the Holy Spirit
(Eph. 1:13).

Like father, like son. Just as Abraham became righteous through an obedient faith, so the Gentiles could be made righteous through obedient faith, apart from the works of the law of Moses.

ROM 4:12 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.

Abraham is the spiritual ancestor of all those who follow in his faithful steps. As he was counted righteous before circumcision, they also may be counted righteous who imitate his walk of faith.

ROM 4:13 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.

The article “the” does not appear before the word law in the Greek. That promise that Abraham would inherit the world was not provided to him through the keeping of law. It was provided because he was considered a righteous man due to his faith.

ROM 4:14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

If one could gain righteousness by the keeping of the law, faith and trust in God would be completely unnecessary. The law is but a step in the bringing about of the promise of salvation in Christ. There would be no need of the promise if one could gain righteousness through the keeping of the law. The law itself contains no reward.

ROM 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

The law convicts every man of sin and, therefore, leaves him staring straight in the face of the coming wrath of God.

Only where there is no law could a man say there is no sin or transgression of the law. But, since there is some type of law everywhere—All have sinned.

ROM 4:16 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,

All men are then dependent upon faith in God. All men are dependent upon his grace. The promise of inheritance was made to all of Abraham's spiritual descendants, not just to those who lived under the law of Moses. It includes those Christians today who are his seed through union with the body of Jesus Christ (See Galatians 3:28-29).

GAL 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

ROM 4:17 (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.

The quotation here is from Genesis 17:5. Sarah was barren. Abraham was old. Yet, Abraham believed when God promised he would become a father of many nations. Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead with respect to child bearing. Yet, Abraham knew God is capable of quickening the dead. God can make real that which seems to be impossible.

ROM 4:18 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*.

Though all of the facts seemed to indicate otherwise, Abraham still hoped through the promise of God. God had said he would be the father of many nations. Abraham believed him.

ROM 4:19 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:

Abraham's faith in the power and dependability of God cause him to ignore the impotence of his own body and the barrenness of Sarah. At almost one hundred years of age, it was incredible that he should beget a child.

ROM 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

When it is clear that God has made a promise, men should not doubt either his ability or his willingness to keep that promise. All things are possible with God. Abraham knew this and glorified God for his power and his wisdom.

ROM 4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

It would be well for men today to have the faith Abraham demonstrated. God has made a number of promises which unbelievers label as "pie in the sky by and by". In view of the natural events occurring in this present world, it would seem that eternal life in the City of God is impossible. But God kept his promise to Abraham and he will keep his promise of heaven for those who are the children of Abraham by faith.

ROM 4:22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Because of such faith, God imputed (or set down on his account) that Abraham was a righteous man.

ROM 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

If Christians today act in a similar manner to that of Abraham, we may look forward to similar treatment by Jehovah. We shall be counted as righteous.

ROM 4:24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

The imputation of righteousness will not be accomplished separate from conditions. It is necessary to believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead through the power of the Father in heaven.

ROM 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Jesus Christ died in our place and for our offenses. He was raised up from the dead that we might be delivered from the sentence of death to spiritual life.

Chapter 4 — Summary

1. Abraham is an example of one who was justified by faith.
2. Abraham was counted as a righteous man long before the law was given.
3. As Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness, so ours may be.
4. But, we must trust in God who delivered Christ for our offenses and raised him for our justification.

Chapter 5

ROM 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

If one goes to the Greek, the sense is “having been justified”. Since we are justified, or returned to the innocence we had before we sinned, we are no longer enemies of God. We are with him rather than against him. The faith which justifies will be accompanied by the works of obedience.

This justification is possible only through the sacrifice of the Son of God. Without him, all men are dead in sin and continue as the enemies of Jehovah.

ROM 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

It is through Christ that we are blessed with escape from the guilt of our sins. Once having taken advantage of the opportunity of justification, we stand in innocence through the power of his blood.

We do not yet enjoy the full glory of his presence; however, we know that when he returns we will hear the words, *Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joys of thy Lord.* That hope causes us to rejoice.

ROM 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

When we grasp the hope which is found in Christ, we will be able to look upon tribulation in a new light. We do not serve for God's approval in this world only. We look to the wonders of heaven. The light tribulation we bear here may be born more easily because of that heavenly hope. Tribulation will not result in hopelessness. It will simply result in the growth of patience in service.

ROM 5:4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

Patience and experience work together to fortify one another. Every spiritual experience builds greater patience. That patience leads us to expose ourselves to further experience in the service of God. We sometimes talk of vicious circles. This circle is quite the opposite. It is a blessed circle. It moves the Christian toward ever greater godliness.

ROM 5:5 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.

The faithful Christian will never have need to regret his or her commitment to Christ. Some men have reason to be ashamed of the path they have chosen because it becomes obvious it leads to destruction.

The Holy Spirit is given to the Christian as a pledge of the good things which are to come. As a man sometimes receives a down payment which is

followed later by full payment, God gives to us a small part of the glory which is to come in eternity. The wonder of the coming blessedness is sampled by experiencing the love of God and of our brethren which the Spirit promotes within the heart.

Notice the verse does not say it is the Word of God which is given to the Christian. It clearly states the Holy Spirit is given.

ROM 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Obviously, the Holy Spirit is associated here with the spiritual strength which is found in the justified man. Remember that one of the fruits of the Spirit is love.

See the following passages: Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 5:22; and 2 Corinthians 1:22.

It was not after we were justified that Christ died for us. It was while we were still sinners. It was while we were ungodly. The Father had planned for thousands of years in order that Christ might sacrifice himself for our sins. In the fullness of time, he came and presented the grace of God to sinful men.

ROM 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

Very few men would give up their lives for the best of men. There are some few who would venture

to make such a sacrifice. However, the man would have to be a good man and, even then, only a few would give their own life for another.

ROM 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

In contrast, God proved the depth of his love by offering his only Begotten Son. Also Christ went to the cross because it was the avenue to salvation for wicked men.

These are not just words, my friends. These are statements backed by history. God the Father and Christ the Son both reached out to us after we had earned the wages of death.

We must take note here of Jesus' own statement — *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).*

ROM 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

What is meant by the words “much more then”? I believe it refers to the greater love God and Christ have for men than men have for one another. Because they have greater love than we do, Christ justified us by the shedding of his blood and saved us from the fires of eternal hell.

ROM 5:10 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.

The life and death of Christ is laid down beside the life and death of the sinner. Christ died for us while we were still in sin. That death allowed us to be brought back into his good grace. Once reconciled, we are strengthened and guided by the power of his resurrected life.

ROM 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

The life which is lived after the sinner is justified is more than just existence. It is life filled with abundant joy. Before, we could not rejoice. Now, after atonement is made, we rejoice in the hope we now hold.

ROM 5:12 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:

Though Eve was the first to sin, she is considered one with her husband in this passage.

Adam provided the “gateway” through which sin entered the world. When sin entered, death followed closely behind. The wages of sin is death.

But how did death pass upon all men? Is every babe born into the world a rank sinner because Adam sinned? Hardly. The verse itself explains how death

has passed upon all men. It is because they have sinned as Adam sinned. Death does not pass upon a man until he has committed sin. But since all men have sinned, death has passed upon all men. The third chapter of this book states that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Thus, all men have invited death into their parlor.

ROM 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Sin is the transgression of the law. Even though the law may not have been stated, it does exist. When one transgresses that law, he has sinned. Until the law, as given by Moses, defined sin, man had nevertheless sinned. He simply did not know what sin was until it was defined. If no law existed, there would be no sin and, thus, no death.

ROM 5:14 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.

Since death did exist from the time of Adam until the law was delivered through Moses, it is evident that law had been transgressed. Sin had been imputed during that time.

Other men did not sin in the same sense that Adam sinned. Adam was the first to sin. Others were all followers. Adam provided a figure of Jesus

Christ when he sinned. It is an unusual figure, but still a figure.

ROM 5:15 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.

The gift of forgiveness through Christ is in great contrast to the death which comes through following Adam's lead. By uniting ourselves with the unrighteous nature of Adam, man has brought death upon himself. By uniting one's self with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the grace of God brings a multitude of spiritual blessings to many.

ROM 5:16 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.

One sin by Adam introduced a multitude to physical and spiritual death. The sacrifice of Christ frees all who will avail themselves of it from a multitude of sins.

ROM 5:17 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.)

Which shall reign? Shall it be death, or shall it be the man? When Adam sinned, he set the pattern for the reign of death. When Christ died upon the cross, he made it possible through the gift of righteousness, for the Christian to reign over death.

ROM 5:18 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.

By the unrighteousness of one man, Adam, many were shown the way to participation in his sinful actions and, thus, earned the wages of sin. By the sacrifice of Christ, as he offered himself, many men were offered the free gift of justification from sin.

I do not share in Adam's sin until I choose to join him in the commission of sin by unbelief. Nor, do I share in the righteousness of Christ until I accept that free gift through faith.

ROM 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Many were not made sinners through Adam without entering into sin. Many were not made righteous by Christ without repenting and being baptized into him.

ROM 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

When the law was revealed, it became possible for man to recognize his sin. It defined sin and allowed man to avoid it if he wished to do so. Then, when the sin became evident, God offered forgiveness of that sin through the gift of his Only Begotten Son.

ROM 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Since all men had sinned, and death had prevailed among men all the way from Adam to Christ, the grace of God overcame this condition and made eternal life possible through the forgiveness of sin.

The grace of God is powerful enough to release the captives of Satan from their wages.

Chapter 5.— Summary

1. When we are justified, we have peace with God and stand in his grace.
2. Even in the midst of tribulation, we have hope of heaven's glory.
3. Through one man, Adam, sin was introduced into the world.
4. By sharing in sin with Adam, men share in death which is the wages of sin.
5. Through one man, Christ, righteousness has been made available.

6. The righteousness of Christ brings eternal life, the gift of God.
7. Even though sin has abounded, there is more than sufficient grace to overcome the sin.

Chapter 6

ROM 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Chapter five of Romans was given largely to the wondrous blessings which are available to the one who is justified through the grace of God. It made clear that justification comes only in Jesus Christ.

Terms which were used to describe the persons who stand in the grace of God, were “justified”, “reconciled” and “atoned for”. Peace, hope and joy and the love of God were said to be found in the heart of such persons.

Toward the end of chapter five, a comparison was made between the destructive power of sin and the saving power of the grace of God. No matter how serious the sin, there was always enough of God’s grace to reconcile the sinner.

That is why Paul asked the question in verse one of this chapter. He knew some would reason that if God’s grace is so powerful in overcoming the effects of sin, one need not worry about continuing to sin. The more one sinned, the more God’s grace would be manifested. Man could give way to worldly appetites and desires and live any way he chose. Then, he could call upon the grace of God which would be more than sufficient to cancel it out.

Paul says, “May it not be!” As Christians, we must never use such an excuse for serving Satan.

ROM 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

The Christian is supposed to have crucified the old man of sin. It is unthinkable that he would bring that old man back to life and place himself under the wrath of God.

ROM 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Justification is associated with being in Christ. Christians enter into Christ at the time of their baptism. Both this verse and Galatians 3:26-27 make this evident. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

In I Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul defined the gospel as being the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Every time a person is baptized, he shows his willingness to die to the old life of sin. That person has been justified and reconciled to God. Can he logically wish to live that old life again?

ROM 6:4 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.

If we unite ourselves with Christ in dying to the old life, we make possible a new life with him after being raised up from that burial. The power and glory of God raised Christ from the grave. It can also raise the man who has died to sin from the

watery grave of baptism to walk with Christ in the light of new life.

ROM 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Some who deny the essentiality of baptism make an attempt to explain baptism here as Holy Spirit baptism rather than water baptism. This is unwise. Ephesians 4:5 tells us there is but one baptism today. There was a baptism of the Holy Spirit described in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit was poured out and the body of Christ was made alive through the Spirit of Christ. Today, baptism in water places one in the body of Christ where the Spirit of Christ is available to those who obey. (See Acts 2:38 and 5:32.)

There can be no doubt that water was the medium of baptism in the several conversions described in the book of Acts as the early church obeyed the great commission of Christ.

As Jesus was resurrected from his grave in the earth, we also are resurrected from baptism to live anew. We are planted and buried with him. We are then lifted up to live with him.

I might add, that neither pouring water on one's head or sprinkling a few drops on a baby is baptism. Baptism is a burial. It is a planting. The original word is translated by the lexicons as "to dip", "to immerse" or "to plunge".

ROM 6:6 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.

When the old man of sin was crucified, he lost his life, just as Jesus Christ lost his life when his spirit left his body on the cross. Since that old man was destroyed, he ought not to take control again.

ROM 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Sin captivates. Jesus said he had come to release the captives. He also said that the truth would make those free who became his disciples. It is a terrible thing for a person to delude himself into thinking he is free when he is really serving sin and Satan. The person who has become a Christian has thrown off the shackles and arrived at a truly free condition. *He that loseth his life shall find it.*

ROM 6:8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

Paul hammers on this point with all his might. It might seem he is repeating himself beyond what is necessary; however, he knows the importance of persuading his readers to keep themselves separated from the life of the ungodly.

You must not die with Christ and then live with the Devil.

ROM 6:9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dómínion over him.

The Christian must not think that he can die from sin and be raised with Christ over and over again. When Christ died and rose again, he did not repeat the process many times. He won the victory over death, never to die again. We should do the same.

ROM 6:10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

When Jesus Christ died, he carried the sins of all mankind upon his soul. The Bible student will remember his words upon the cross, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" When Jesus rose from the grave, he no longer carried those sins. He had died to them. He will never have to repeat that death and resurrection. He now lives and reigns in pure holiness at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He has conquered sin.

ROM 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The justified man is free from the guilt of sin. It is as if he had never sinned. Death is a separation and the Christian has separated himself from the unholy. Being separated from the unholy, he surrenders himself to the will of God and is led by the Spirit of God.

ROM 6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Our bodies are merely a tabernacle in which the real man lives for a few years. The spirit and mind of the man control that body and bring it into action. Note, that the verse calls it a mortal body. It will either die, or be changed in the twinkling of an eye into a spiritual body with a completely different nature. This spiritual body will either be bathed in everlasting glory, or it will be plunged into the everlasting lake of fire.

There are two spiritual forces which would like to take control of the body. The will of Satan is that we might fasten our attention on worldly lust and pride which last but for a season. The will of God is that we give ourselves in service to God and our fellowman. Love never faileth. When hope has become reality and when faith has become sight, love will continue. It is eternal.

Will we align ourselves with the will of Satan and die, or will we align ourselves with God and live?

ROM 6:13 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.

The members of the human body are simply instruments for the accomplishment of the will. To allow the members of our body to do that which is sinful is to yield to the will of the Devil. Jesus said, *"I must work the works of him that sent me."* God has work which must be done. Christians are the

body of Christ on earth today. The members of their individual bodies must be instruments for getting that work done.

The fact that God has created man with a will means that a man can yield to that will as he chooses. However, he cannot serve two masters. He must love the one and hate the other.

ROM 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

The first three chapters of the book of Romans proved all men to be guilty of sin and, therefore, at enmity with God and destined to come under his wrath. It was shown that the law makes clear what sin is; but, provides no way to escape the wages of that sin. If men had nothing but law, sin would be in control and death would follow.

But, God be thanked, we are not captives of the law of sin and death. Through the grace of God, we have been offered justification, atonement and reconciliation. The Christian need not die eternally.

ROM 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Paul has come back to the question which he asked in verse one. Does the fact that grace has allowed us to escape from the guilt of sin mean that we should abuse that grace by knowingly sinning and expecting grace to cleanse us? That would be mocking God and God is not mocked.

ROM 6:16 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?

The choice a Christian makes as to his course of action in life will determine his eternal destiny. He may let sin be his master and reap death; or, he may let righteousness be his master and receive the gift of life. One cannot alternate between life and death.

ROM 6:17 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.

Paul rejoiced in the fact that faithful Christians had made the wise choice. Where they had once served sin, they were now serving Christ. They had obeyed the teaching which God gave unto them.

There is strong reason to believe the “form of doctrine” which Paul speaks of here is baptism. In First Corinthians 15:1-4, he spoke of the gospel which he presented being the “death, burial and resurrection.” In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, he taught the coming of Christ and his mighty angels to take vengeance upon those who know not God and obey not the gospel. The baptism which Paul discussed in the first part of this chapter six is a “form” or figure of the change from the old life to the new life in Christ.

ROM 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

When one is baptized for the remission of sins, he has been made free from that sin. He has repented of the former life and no longer serves his former master. He now gives his body to the righteous service of the Son of God.

ROM 6:19 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.

Paul's illustration of slaves and masters was the best he could do to teach these Christians at Rome the importance of not becoming re-enslaved to sin. They understood what was meant by the freeing of a slave. They knew the slave would be foolish to go back and place himself under bondage. Even though the readers spiritual perception was not all that great, perhaps they would understand his example.

Before becoming Christians, they had committed iniquity after iniquity, getting deeper and deeper into the clutches of Satan. Now, they must leave the iniquitous life behind and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, being changed from glory unto glory and ever reaching toward the stature of the fullness of Christ.

ROM 6:20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

While they served Satan, they were strictly his servants. They had not accepted Christ as their Lord

and did not honor his will. They were aliens with respect to the kingdom of God.

ROM 6:21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

The life they had lived before being baptized into Christ was a fruitless life. Supposedly, they were now ashamed of a life which produced nothing of value. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but, the end thereof, is the way of death. There is only shame and confusion at the end of that way.

ROM 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

But these Christians had been released from that fruitless way of life. They had now become servants of God and were bearing the fruit of the Spirit of God. A holy life which produces spiritual fruit for God here is a preparation for the everlasting life which is the inheritance of the faithful children of God.

ROM 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The unrighteous man will be paid exactly what he deserves for his service. The wages of sin is death,

and his wages are certain.

In contrast, the righteous man does not get what he deserves. He has indicated his desire to stand in the grace of God. He has **given** his life to the service of Christ. In return, God will give him his greatest **gift**. That gift is eternal life which only comes to them who are baptized into Christ, who live in Christ and who die in Christ.

Chapter 6 — Summary

1. A Christian must not take advantage of God's grace as a license to sin.
2. When we are baptized into Christ, we are supposed to die to sin and live a new life of righteousness.
3. Christ died and arose just one time, and so should we.
4. Having died to sin, we escape from its bondage and should not wish to serve it again.
5. Those who live in bondage to sin will be paid the **wages** of death.
6. Those who have become servants of God will receive the **gift** of everlasting life.

Chapter 7

ROM 7:1 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?

Chapter seven continues the discussion of the expected separation of a Christian from the life of sin.

Law has an effect only upon those who live under that law. If a person dies, that person is no longer under the control of that law.

Paul speaks in particular about the law of Moses. This can be seen by dropping down to verse seven where he talks about the law saying thou shalt not covet. The ones to whom Paul was writing were very familiar with the law of Moses. Paul is ready to make the point that Christians have died to the law of Moses and are, therefore, no longer bound by that law.

However, he is using this to talk about dying to the law of the flesh which causes the sinner to be controlled by his sinful pride and lust. The Christian should be dead to both the law of Moses, and the law of the flesh.

ROM 7:2 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.

He will use the marriage vows as an example. When a woman marries, she is bound by the law to

keep those vows. She is bound as long as her husband lives; but when her husband dies, she is no longer subject to those promises. At that time, she is free to marry another man.

ROM 7:3 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.

If the woman arranges to live with another man while still married, she is an adulteress. She is breaking her marriage vows. She is still bound by the law to her husband. When her husband dies, she is free from the marriage covenant and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

Paul does not mention Matthew 19:8-9 and the exception it presents because he is interested in the general rule rather than the exception.

Remember, that when Israel turned from the worship of God to the worship of idols, God said they were committing spiritual adultery (Jer. 3:9 and Ezek. 32:37).

Jer. 3:9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

ROM 7:4 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.

When these Christians were living under the law of Moses, they were bound by that law. That law defined sin. It also pointed out the wages of sin, which is death.

When Christ died upon the cross, the Law of Moses was replaced by the perfect law of liberty in Christ Jesus. The Christian was no longer bound by that law and could escape the wages of sin through the grace of God. (See Ephesians 2:14-16 and Colossians 2:14.)

They were now married to Christ and the fruit of that marriage is to be eternal life for one's self, as well as for others who may be born spiritually as a result of our labor with Christ. Christ was raised from the dead and our marriage to him brings life (Ephesians 5:22-23).

ROM 7:5 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.

Is Paul talking about the law of Moses, or is he talking about the law of the flesh? He is talking about a combination of the two. The law of the flesh was that controlling influence exerted upon the body by the pride of the mind and the lust of the body. The law of Moses was the set of directions which told men that pride and lust were deadly sins.

Men who walk after the flesh are controlled by the law of the flesh. The law of Moses then informs them they are condemned to die because they have transgressed against the will of God. The end of the matter was death.

ROM 7:6 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.

As Christians, these persons were no longer bound by the law of Moses. That law was dead. Just as a woman would be freed from obligations to her husband if he died, they were free from the old covenant of sin and death. Having been baptized into Christ, they were married to him and were now living a new life under the blessings provided through his grace. They might live. They need not die!

ROM 7:7 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.

The law of Moses itself was not sinful. If one had kept the law of Moses perfectly, he would have been saved. The problem is that no one did, or does, keep the law of God perfectly. The law of Moses told a man what sin was. Then, when he saw what sin was, the man began to break it. In this manner, sin became alive and active. The law said for a man not to lust or covet. When the man coveted, he could expect death.

ROM 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

There are two possibilities as to the meaning of this verse. The first is that as the man is informed concerning what sin is and what the consequences of sin are he then builds up within himself a desire to do that which is forbidden. Sin has then become a living and controlling influence. In that case, sin would be dead until the law was presented and the desire to do that which was forbidden arose.

The other possibility is that Paul is speaking of a time in men's lives when they have not yet reached the age of accountability. As soon as they recognized sin for what it was, they became guilty in the sight of God. Once under the law, sin became alive and active within them.

It is probably the case that the law did not create the evil desires or concupiscence; but that in pointing them out, it left the person conscious of just how sinful he was. Sin became alive in the sense that it became obvious.

ROM 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

When was Paul alive without the law? It seems likely that he is speaking of the time before he was old enough to recognize sin as disobedience to God. Tiny children know they will receive a spanking for doing certain things. They know their parents will be displeased at certain actions. But, they do not recognize the law of God.

When the child comes to a realization of the law of God, he becomes guilty of sin and stands

condemned to death. He has died spiritually. As soon as Paul recognized sin and knew its consequences, sin became alive within him and he died.

ROM 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

If he had kept the commandments of God, he would have lived eternally. Now, those same commandments, since he had broken them, had resulted in alienation from God, which is real death. The same commandments which could have brought life, actually brought death.

ROM 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

It is not the law which kills a man. It is the breaking of the law which brings death. The problem is not in the law, it is in the man who breaks the law.

Sin does not present itself in its ugly reality. It appears in a form both tempting and desirable. Yet, in the end, it kills.

ROM 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

There are both bad laws and good laws. Men often make bad laws. God does not. God's laws are based upon spiritual realities. We are not to murder, lie, covet, or steal because these actions are harmful

to both ourselves and others.

God did not spell out his laws just because he wished to dictate. His laws are in harmony with his nature. He is holy. He is just. He is good. The laws he enacts are the same. We are not to blame the law of God for our death. We are to blame ourselves.

ROM 7:13 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.

The law of God did not bring death. That is simply not the way it works. What did happen was that the law made a man see sin for what it really is. It is the result of man transgressing the way of life which God has given.

Through the commandments of God, a man could see how exceedingly sinful he was. That was a good thing, not a bad thing.

ROM 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

The law of God is spiritual in its source. It is also spiritual in its nature. The difficulty is in the man who sells himself to the Devil by allowing his selfishness to lead him to destruction.

ROM 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

Paul now describes the continuous battle which he fought and which each of us fight. There are things which we do that we know are wrong and we do not really want to do them; yet, we are overtaken by them and fall. Paul is talking here about the person who hates sin; yet, who falls to its temptation.

He fails to do that which he knows he ought to do. He also does that which he knows he ought not to do. He is guilty of sins of both omission and commission. At the same time, he really wants to live a holy life.

ROM 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Since he does not really wish to live a life of sin, even when he falls into sin, he has recognized the law is good.

ROM 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

In a sense, Paul is saying, "The Devil made me do it!" He knows it is sin. He knows the seriousness of sin. He is ashamed after the sin is committed; but, for the moment, he has allowed self to become the center of creation.

It would be altogether too easy here to fall into the line of reasoning used by the Nicolaitanes who felt that the body was evil and the spirit was good; therefore, the body could sin while the spirit remained pure. Paul is not excusing the person who has sinned. He is saying the person has been guilty

of allowing the mind and body to thrust God aside. Such thoughts and actions must be controlled through the power of the Spirit of God.

ROM 7:18 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.

When Paul speaks of the flesh, he is not talking about blood and protein. He is talking about the mortal man who fails to reach spiritual planes and who is wrapped up in the bondage of corruption. The man who centers his purposes on that which is destined for the grave and the lake of fire is a foolish man.

How much Paul desires to go to heaven. He wishes to do that which is pleasing to his Heavenly Father. His spirit is willing; but, his flesh is weak.

ROM 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

I would do good, but fail to do it. I would avoid evil and, yet, I do it.

ROM 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

This repeats verse seventeen. He re-emphasizes his main points.

ROM 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

There are controlling forces working within him. He wishes to keep the commandments of God. But these drives repeatedly bring him under subjection and he does evil.

ROM 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

The inward man is the new man who was born of water and the Spirit at the time of conversion. The inward man knows the law of God, loves it, and wishes to obey it.

ROM 7:23 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.

That inward man faces a constant battle with the forces of Satan. Satan would persuade a man to distort every blessing God has provided into a tool of wickedness. If a man will allow it, Satan will take control of his tongue, his stomach, his reproductive organs and his imagination. If Satan succeeds, the man will become a bondservant of unrighteousness. Christ came to release just such captives (Luke 4:18-21).

ROM 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Has not every Christian felt the horror of this situation? I wish to do well. I find myself sinning. I know sin leads to separation from God. What shall I do? Where shall I look for help?

ROM 7:25 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.

Through the grace of God, an answer to this question is available. The help comes in Christ. Without him I can do nothing. But, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

I may allow myself to be manipulated by the temporary, fleeting and self-centered actions which lead to death; but, I will not cease to fight these forces. I will serve God and do his will. I will not sin that grace may abound!

Even as we close chapter seven, Paul is still answering the question as to whether a Christian can continue to walk in the ways of the world. His answer is “God forbid”.

Chapter 7— Summary

1. Under the law, all men have been doomed to death.
2. But, men can die to the law and be married to Christ.
3. The law of God tells a man the nature and consequences of sin.

4. The law of the flesh rises from within and every man commits sin.
5. The Christian desires to obey the law of the Spirit of God, but often yields to the law of the flesh.
6. How can one escape from such a wretched condition?
7. Deliverance is found in Christ who provides both grace and guidance.

Chapter 8

ROM 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The “therefore” of verse one refers back to the deliverance of verse 24 of the previous chapter. He had asked who should deliver him from the body of this death. The answer was that Jesus Christ, our Lord, would provide that escape, because Christ has made possible the forgiveness of sin, and also the example and teaching necessary to remain unspotted.

The Devil goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. There is nothing which is more pleasing to him than to be able to make a true accusation against the soul of any man. If we are guilty of sin, the wages of that sin is death. Satan may appropriately appear before the throne of God and call for the eternal destruction of the sinner. No such accusation may be made against the soul who has been baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, and who has continued to walk in the light as did Christ.

There are two aspects of being found without condemnation. First, one must get “in Christ.” Second, one must walk properly after having been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son.

There are two ways to walk. One may walk in a fleshly manner, or one may walk in a spiritual manner. In one case the selfishness of man and his

own desires takes precedence. In the other case the desire and will of the Spirit of God takes top priority.

ROM 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

We must attempt to understand what Paul means when he uses the term “law” in this chapter. It appears that sometimes he is speaking of the law as delivered by Moses; while at other times, he seems to speak of the inner appetites and desires which control a man.

May I suggest that a law, as Paul uses it, is a motivating force which brings about action on the part of a person. When he speaks of the law of the Spirit, he is speaking of the directions provided by the Holy Spirit for holy and righteous living. For the most part, this would be provided by the Holy Scriptures, though it might well include the providential chastisement which God applies to his beloved children.

When Paul speaks of the law of sin and death, he is speaking of two matters simultaneously. The appetites of the flesh urge man to place them above all else. They are a motivating force which would separate us from the approval of God. They call for us to set our own will in opposition to the will of our Maker. At the same time that the law of Moses pointed out what sin is it demonstrated plainly that all men sinned, and that all men were therefore condemned to eternal separation from God. The law of Moses depended upon man keeping the law

perfectly. No man did that through the power of the flesh.

Thus, when Paul says the law of the Spirit of Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death, he is saying a man is pulled in one way by the will of God, as presented by the Holy Spirit, and that man is pulled in the opposite way by his own will as he seeks to satisfy his own selfish pride and lust.

When the person succeeds in bringing his own pride and appetite into subjection to the directions of the Holy Spirit, he may conquer both sin and death which is its wages.

ROM 8:3 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:

The law of Moses could not make men free of the condemnation of sin and resulting death. The law of Moses simply pointed out to men where the transgressions of the will of God were found. In other words, it defined sin. The problem was that even though a person knew what sin was, he invariably committed it anyway. All men sinned and came short of the glory of God. All men were then under condemnation to eternal death. The condition of man was absolutely hopeless. Not because God had not given the law, but because no man kept it.

There was a way. God sent his own Son to live in the flesh and prove the law could be fulfilled to perfection. This was Jesus' statement when he

discussed the law of Moses. He said he had not come to destroy it, but to fulfill it. Christ became both a perfect example and a perfect sacrifice because of his complete subjection to the will of the Father.

Because of the life and death of Christ, sin itself was condemned to death. Now, it is not the penitent sinner who stands condemned, it is sin which must die. Jesus met every temptation Satan provided, and conquered each. He was tempted in all points, like as we. And yet, he had no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth. He is destined to conquer every enemy.

ROM 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The only way any man can become perfectly righteous through the law is to unite himself with Christ who kept the law perfectly. By faith, repentance, confession and baptism into Christ, any man may be buried with him to rise and walk with him in a new and perfect life. This will never happen through the will of man. Neither will it happen through the keeping of the law of Moses. For no one other than Christ ever kept it. Note: this present verse speaks of **walking** after the Spirit, **not just entering** Christ. Walking after the Spirit brings the righteousness of God. Walking after the flesh brings condemnation.

ROM 8:5 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.

There is clear reason why those who walk in the two contrasting ways come to such different ends. The dedicated Christian is always attempting to discover the will of God. Both his forehead and his right hand are marked with the seal of God. He belongs to God both in thought and in deed. On the contrary, the man who demonstrates the antichristian spirit is constantly striving to find ways to satisfy his own selfish ends. In thought and in deed, he is ever ready to challenge the will of God and go his own way. The things of the Spirit are the commands of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. The things of the flesh are the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

We cannot serve two masters. To say that we are Christians and children of God, it is necessary to follow the statement by a demonstration that we continually and consistently attending to the **will** of God. He who mouths, Lord, Lord, but does not do the things which he commands, is not a child of God. He is a child of Satan.

ROM 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. The flesh is destined to corruption. These bodies which we now inhabit will return to the dust from which they were formed, unless Christ comes back first. If we spend ourselves in the glorification and service of bodily matters, we have no eternal hope.

Even worse, if we allow ourselves to enthrone

our own self, either body or soul, we will separate our souls eternally from God. We are unable to direct our own steps. By ourselves we are unable to overcome the manifold obstacles which stand in the way of true life. **We need Christ.**

In Christ there is life. To be spiritually minded is to allow the same Spirit which empowered Jesus to activate us. In order for that to happen, we must open our mind to the teachings of the Holy Spirit as found in the perfect law of liberty.

In such a case, we will find ourselves to be allies with the Godhead. Both in this world and in the world to come, there will be harmony with God, with his law and with his people.

ROM 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be.

One should not be deceived into thinking there are those who were born for a Devil's hell. Some would take the position this verse teaches no escape from the carnal mind. A man with a carnal mind could, thus, never be saved. He is predestined to eternal torment. This is a false position.

The carnal mind is the result of choice. God has presented his will. Man has had the opportunity of choosing between service to God, or service of self. He deliberately chooses self service over the will of Jehovah. The mind which operates like that cannot be subject to God.

But, the point is that as long as it remains a carnal mind, it cannot be subject to God. The mind

is not like a leopard. It can change its spots. The carnal mind may be replaced by the mind of Christ. When that happens, subjection to God is possible. In fact, it will automatically follow.

Throughout much of this chapter, we see the importance of bringing ourselves under the control of the law of God, the law of the Spirit and the law of righteousness. The entire chapter is a rebuttal of the doctrine that a man cannot change. It cries out for us to make a choice. Will we choose to walk after the flesh, or after the Spirit? You may decide.

But, if you choose to walk after the flesh, be informed that you make yourself an enemy of God. Being an enemy of God is not the most ideal condition for any person. It is not the Christian who is of all men most miserable. It is the enemy of God.

ROM 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

This verse helps us to understand several of the previous verses. Clearly, every man and woman finds themselves living in this earthly habitation of flesh. However, we are reminded of Jesus' words that we must live in the world, yet, not of the world. We must live in bodies composed of flesh; but, our lives must not be consumed in the worship and service of the flesh. We are being told in another way that we must not walk in the flesh.

What is more, if we do decide to live in the flesh, or walk in the flesh, we do not please God. In fact, we deliberately choose not to please God; but rather, to please ourselves. This is serious. After trying every

approach to the full life, Solomon declared the conclusion of the whole matter is to *“Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”*

ROM 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Now, we begin to assess the validity of a person's claim to be of God. One can be certain he is walking in the Spirit if the Spirit dwells in him. There has been much ado about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No one who calls himself a Christian would think of denying that the Holy Spirit dwells in a Christian; however, the manner in which the Spirit dwells in the Christian is a matter of much dispute.

To some, the indwelling is strictly a matter of happy assimilation of the Holy Scriptures. If the teaching of the Holy Spirit has been absorbed, the Holy Spirit dwells within the person. Others believe the Bible teaches the personal indwelling, such that one becomes a partaker in the divine nature of God.

What really happens in the new birth? Is it just a case of teaching the person, with a resulting change of action? Or, is it truly a new life, with the Spirit of God now infused into the very soul of the man or woman?

I can see no difference in the effects of the Holy Spirit and of the Word of God. Both are said to do the same things. It is evident the Holy Spirit works with the Word of God to accomplish his purposes;

however, the Bible is perfectly clear in stating the Spirit indwells. It does not always say, the *teaching* of the Spirit dwells in the person. For this reason, I conclude the Holy Spirit is present personally, working together with the Word in the Christian walk. As a lumberjack and an ax work together in the cutting of a tree, the Spirit and the Word work together in the life of a child of God.

The verse goes so far as to say that if the Spirit of Christ, which is clearly the Holy Spirit, is not found in a person, that person does not belong to God. The supreme hypocrisy is to claim to be a child of God and fail to possess the Spirit of Christ. We remember Jesus' statement again, that those who confess him before men will be confessed by him to the Father in heaven; but, those who deny him here will be denied by him before the Father.

ROM 8:10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

God told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die. When they ate, they brought death upon themselves. They were separated from the immediate presence of God, and their bodies became mortal. We do not share the guilt of Adam's sin; however, we do all face physical death as our bodies have descended from those corruptible ones. It is appointed unto man once to die. This death is the consequence of sin, and it is certain.

The physical death of the body is quite a different thing than the spiritual death of the soul. While the outer man may weaken and decay day by day, the inner man may be renewed.

Jesus told Nicodemus that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he could not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The seed by which a Christian is begotten is the Word of God. That Word is the sword of the Spirit. The new life in which we walk after baptism into Christ is a life brought about by the Spirit of God.

The same Holy Spirit which empowered Jesus in the working of miracles during his physical life, and which enabled him to rise from the grave and conquer death, also quickens the Christian. It gives him new spiritual energy to ward off the darts of Satan. It will also raise his body from the grave in the final resurrection. God lives in the Christian. The body of the Christian is his temple. When the Christian yields the members of his body as instruments of righteousness, the Spirit of God is pleased to use them. A corpse is physically dead because the spirit of the person has departed. A Christian is alive because the Spirit of God has entered.

The child of God has yielded to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He has resisted the law of the flesh—the law of sin and death. He is dead to sin. He is *ALIVE IN CHRIST*.

ROM 8:11 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.

We have hope. Death is not the end for the children of God. The time will come when death itself will be cast into the lake of fire. We live with our eyes set on goals beyond the grave. Once we have subjected our will to the will of God, the frailty of the flesh becomes nearly meaningless. As the temporal things flee away in the face of a new heaven and earth, we will find the life which was engendered in us through the Spirit of God will burn brightly and be incorporated into the new, immortal, incorruptible body as the saints are glorified.

Men argue over whether the quickening spoken of in this verse is speaking of this life, or of the resurrection. The question is not an either/or question. It deals with both the present life in Christ and the future quickening of the resurrection. We walk in the light here as we are vitalized by the Spirit. We will also be raised in the resurrection through the power of that same Spirit. As children of our Father in heaven, we follow the same general pattern as did the Only Begotten Son of God.

ROM 8:12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

A debt is an obligation. The Christian has no obligation whatsoever to honor the appetites of the flesh, or satisfy the pride of life. Our life should not be given to these activities. We have been purchased by the blood of Christ. We belong to him. To give our

time and energies to the flesh is to ignore the realities.

Obviously, we must attend to the physical necessities. Food, clothing and shelter are deserving of our attention. The passage is not teaching neglect or deprivation of the body needs. It very carefully spells out what it means. We are not to *live after* the flesh. Living after the flesh is quite a different matter than caring for the physical necessities. It is to let ourselves be completely dominated by the self. Christ said, seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and all these things will be added unto you. They do not come first!

ROM 8:13 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.

The flesh is corruptible, mortal and temporal. It is weak and unable to find a path out of its predicament. Death is its end. The man who follows the law of the flesh inevitably cuts himself off from life eternal.

There is an old man of the flesh. There is a new man of the Spirit. The new creature comes into being when one succeeds in crucifying the old man. To mortify is to kill. Paul said, "*It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.*" He was talking about exactly the same thing discussed in this verse. The works of the flesh must cease when one becomes a Christian.

In the place of the works of the flesh, we must establish the fruit of the Spirit. Those fruits are

proof we are alive with the second birth. As Christians, we are a part of the present body of Christ. We will do the type of work he would do if he were in a body of flesh today. Jesus said he that loseth his life shall find it. We are not the center of existence. God is! Only when we allow all of life to gravitate around God will we find life. There is life in the Son. There is no life eternal in self.

ROM 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

The children of God will do the will of the Father in heaven. The will of the Father is made known through his Holy Spirit. The Lord once chastised those who sought to kill him by telling them they were the children of Satan because they acted in harmony with the will of Satan. It is just as true that God's children will act on His will.

But, how are we led by the Spirit of God? There are two ways in which the Spirit of God can direct the actions of men. One is through the Holy Scriptures. The other is through providential encouragement and chastisement. The two will be completely compatible. God does not contradict himself.

On occasion, we hear of those who believe they have received a spiritual illumination which instructed them to perform a certain act or set of actions. Such comes in a dream, a vision, etc. This is denied in the Bible. According to Hebrews, God at one time spoke to men in such diverse manners. He now speaks to us through his Son, Jesus Christ. (See Heb. 1:1-2.)

HEB. 1:1-2 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Those who claim specific illumination in addition to the written Word, all too often contradict one another. Each claims to have the truth as God has revealed it to him; yet, they teach opposing doctrines. God is not the author of confusion.

God will see that our lives are channeled correctly, if we will ask for such assistance. We are not bastards. We are the children of God. He will work in his own ways to snatch us out of peril and provide open gates for our service. But, he does not promise to add to the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Prayer and study will combine to allow alignment with the will of God. Study of the Word of God in the Bible will allow a knowledge of the will and testament of the Godhead. Prayer assures that God has invited to use ways only he can arrange. With this arrangement, we shall be led by his Spirit. In this way, we demonstrate we are his children.

ROM 8:15 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.

Under the law of Moses, which depended upon the strength of frail men, there was no real hope.

The law pointed out the sin. It gave a set of commands to obey, but every man fell short of obedience. No sufficient sacrifice existed to remove that sin; therefore, every man faced the fear of death. Dependence upon the law was dependence upon the strength of the flesh. That was not enough.

The Christian finds himself in a far different situation. There should be no fear. Even death can be conquered. Christ proved that.

The Spirit which moves the Christian is of God. A human child at physical birth receives something of the very nature of its parents. When one becomes a Christian, something of the very nature of God is given to one. By providing of himself, God demonstrates he has sealed us as his own. We shall find in a later verse we have only the first fruits of that adoption in this life. The fullness awaits the redemption of the body at the time of the resurrection.

Because the Christian has received the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of adoption, there is no reason for fear. We follow the will of God in the law of the Spirit of life. As God's children, we have the privilege of crying out to him at any time. Our cry of Abba, Father, will not go unheeded. If a human father knows to give good things to his children, we may be sure our Father in heaven will not fail to respond to our needs and requests. We have been released from the fear of death in the bondage of the law of the flesh. We live in the protective arms of God who has adopted us.

ROM 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

This is a very comforting verse. As Christians, we can know that we are God's offspring. And, knowing that to be true, our fear must be cast out. I love my Father and do his will. He loves me and will care for me. Who can fear?

The verse speaks of *two* witnesses who cooperate in their testimony. One does not witness to the other. They both witness to third parties. Who receives this witness of the two spirits? And how does this witness occur? There are those who mistakenly believe this verse is talking about a feeling within which may actually contradict the teaching of the Bible. This cannot possibly be correct. The Spirit of God will not say one thing in the Bible and something contradictory to that in the heart of a man. No man may claim the privileges of a child of God without respecting the instructions of God as to being born into his family and living by the revealed will of Jesus Christ.

Just what does the Holy Spirit bear witness to? There can be little doubt. The Holy Spirit has witnessed to all men what the will of God is. This has been done through the Bible. The Holy Spirit also witnesses to the Father that the individual has or has not acted as an obedient child. The witness of the person testifies that the person has done what God commands his children. If the witness of the Holy Spirit testifies the person has done what the

Father commanded to become his child, and if the human spirit testifies in agreement with that of the Spirit, we have the testimony of two witnesses agreed. The Holy Spirit may say to the Father—this is thy child; he has done thy will. The spirit of the person will cry out also—I have obeyed thy will; I am thy child. God placed much confidence in the testimony of two or more witnesses. He indicates these two witnesses are quite sufficient to establish that we truly are his children.

There is more. Not only do the two witnesses testify to the Father, they also may bear their testimony to the world. If we are to determine whether or not one has become a child of God, we have only to compare the witness of the person with the witness of the Spirit. If the person claims to be a child of God, but has not done that which the Holy Spirit has testified is necessary to become a Christian, we may know that the claim of the person is unsupported. If the person claims to be a child of God, and it is clear they have done those things which the Holy Spirit has explicitly set out as the will of God, we may rest assured the person is truly a child of the Father in heaven.

If a person claims to be living the Christian life after the new birth, we have only to check that life against the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures to find out whether the testimony of the person is in agreement with the testimony of the Holy Spirit. If not, the person is making a false claim.

ROM 8:17 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.

If we have obeyed the will of the Father by being obedient to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we have become a part of the family of God. There are uncounted blessings associated with becoming associated with his family. No person would expect to share in the blessings of an earthly family, if he had not been accepted as a member of that earthly family. However, when the person has been accepted as a member of a family, he looks forward to rewards while the parents live, and an inheritance at the death of the parents. It is so with the family of the Father in heaven.

The protection of the hand of God is upon those who are marked with his seal upon their forehead. He constantly blesses them while they live upon this present earth. In addition, his children look forward to being heirs of God when this heaven and earth have been replaced with the New Jerusalem from above. It is one thing to be an earthly heir. It is a much more glorious thing to be an heir of *the Heavenly Father*. He will never die; but, his faithful children will share in all that is his, and that includes abundantly more than we can begin to imagine. Streets of gold and gates of pearl are only hints as to the inheritance which waits for God's children.

It is true God's children often suffer here in this present world. That suffering unites us with the Only Begotten Son of God. If he suffered, and he did, then we may expect to suffer. If he was glorified, and he was, then we may look forward to glorification

with him. United with the Spirit of Christ in suffering here, we will be united with him in glory later.

ROM 8:18 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.

There is certainly an abundant amount of suffering in this present world. With war, famine, disease, poverty, and a host of other difficulties, no one escapes. At times, it seems we are to be completely overwhelmed with the burdens.

Yet, this verse assures us that if all of these are placed on one pan of a balance and the glory which is ahead is placed on the opposite side, the balance will be infinitely heavier on the side of the waiting glory. We are told that not only does the balance tip toward glory, the comparison is utterly ridiculous. The cross we now bear is light and the yoke is easy when we see beyond it to the eternal rewards which await the joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Oh, if we could just see that future world! But, our present eyes are incapable of such discernment. Each day that we live, we are one day closer to the realization of that glorious world. Let us not grow weary in well doing. The neglect of so great a salvation is unthinkable. The last two chapters of the book of Revelation only whet our appetite for the enjoyment of the marriage of the Lamb.

The latter part of this verse is very intriguing. What is meant by the glory *which shall be revealed in us*? The fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians helps

us here. This incorruptible body must put on incorruption. This mortal body must put on immortality. There is a glory of this earth, and there is a glory of heaven. The glory of heaven is as much greater than the glory of the earth as the sun is more glorious than the stars. Our new bodies shall put the present ones to shame. We wait for the resurrection!

ROM 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The word “creature” in this verse is exactly the same word as used in the twenty-first verse and also in the twenty-second verse. It should have been translated as creation in all three instances. The entire universe has been harnessed with a state of corruption. Such began with the curse in the garden of Eden. It has continued through all the centuries.

As man labors, his brow is covered with sweat. Woman brings forth her children in pain. The soil brings forth thorns and thistles. The entire universe moves toward a state of chaos called the “heat death” of the universe.

The entire system groans under the terrible burden. It waits for a time when all this shall be changed. With the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead, we will see this old heaven and earth replaced by a wonderful new abode of the saints. With the glorification of the saints, there shall also be a new and glorified heaven and earth

with no more of the hideous pain, sorrow and death which grieves us at present.

ROM 8:20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.

The non-human creation was not responsible for its terrible condition. Unlike man, it did not willingly disobey the command of God; but, it was God himself who determined the curse be brought upon it. Moreover, it was not subjected to such conditions forever and ever. There is hope that a new and better condition will arise with the resurrection. God planned from the beginning that a better day awaited. Man bears the curse because of his own willing disobedience. Nature bears it as an instrument of chastisement until the plan of God is unrolled.

ROM 8:21 Because the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

There is a linkage in this verse. It is a linkage between the creation and the Christians who live in that creation. Something will happen to the creation at the same time the children of God are rewarded with their glory. It shall be delivered from the curse under which it has labored, just as the children of God will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

You may ask, “Does not the book of Revelation

state that the present heaven and earth shall flee away because there is no more room for them? And, does not the book of II Peter say that the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up? Are we not told that the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll?" Yes, all of these things are true. But, they must be made to harmonize with this statement that when the saints are glorified, the creation shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

This can only mean that as the present bodies of God's children are replaced by new bodies which are incomparably more glorious, even so, the present heaven and earth shall be replaced by an incomparably glorious new heaven and earth. Just as Paul could say the present body must be planted before it could be resurrected, we can also say the present heaven and earth must completely undergo "seasons of refreshing". The reader should very carefully examine Acts 3:19-21 at this time. These verses speak of a time of refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Acts 3:19-21 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Simultaneously with this time of refreshing, there is to be a restitution of all things. In addition, this

time of refreshing and restitution will come about when Christ is sent back to us. That, my friends, is the time of the judgment and the resurrection. Both *Christians* and the *creation* labor under the curse of corruption, which will be lifted at that time. A glorious liberty is waiting in the future.

ROM 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

What a terrible penalty has been paid for the entry of sin into the world! Our suffering is compared in this verse to a woman awaiting the delivery of her child. She groans in pain; but, she groans also in hope. Someday the pain will be gone and she will look with joy upon the child to which she has given birth. Both the saints and the entire system have borne the consequences of the rebellion against God. They shall not forever do so. Still, as Paul spoke then, and as we still wait today, the groaning and suffering goes on. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

ROM 8:23 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.

Everything groans. Both the living and the non-living world share in the groanings. Christians are not exempt. We are new creatures. However, we must await the resurrection to enjoy the full reward

of life eternal. The life begins here; but at present it must be enjoyed only partially. The new and glorious body of the resurrection must have been put on before the bliss is complete. We, therefore, wait for the adoption.

This is strange. Why does Paul state in verse fifteen that we have received the Spirit of adoption which allows us to cry out Abba, Father, as though the adoption had already taken place; and then in this verse, speak of the adoption as if it only took place with the resurrection? Perhaps this is parallel with many other passages in the New Testament which indicate that we simply taste of the heavenly blessings here, and that we will enjoy them fully only with the return of the Lord.

He speaks of the saints having the *“firstfruits of the Spirit”* even as we groan. Surely, this is clear. God has owned us as his children. He has given us such spiritual blessings as are spoken of in Ephesians where it declares that we have been blessed with *“all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”*. Hebrews, chapter six, tells of tasting the heavenly gift. All is partial here and now. It will be completed with the appearance of our beloved Bridegroom.

ROM 8:24 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?

The firstfruits of the Spirit give birth to the hope of later harvest. That hope keeps us moving toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If the Christian had no hope in the world to come,

he would cease to struggle against the opposing forces.

It is true that we do not see the prize before us. A man does not hope for that which he has in hand. The temporal things are seen. The eternal things are not seen. It is far better to strive for the eternal than for the temporal; however, such struggle will call for hope. We are not like others who have no hope.

ROM 8:25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Hope and patience are twins. Patience will always be found in the presence of hope. The entire eighth chapter of Romans is truly a chapter on hope. With the Spirit of God strengthening and guiding us, we should never faint. We groan here and now, but hope leads us to look beyond such groaning to that finer future where all such is a thing of the past. We must never give up following in the footsteps of Jesus.

ROM 8:26 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.

In the midst of all of our suffering and difficulties, we have been assured of divine aid. The Holy Spirit itself will be our helper. When we have no idea what to pray for, or when we have gone amiss in our

petitions, the Holy Spirit is ready to search our mind and present our needs to the Father. We may ask amiss. The Holy Spirit will not.

What really happens is that our inability to express ourselves will be presented in understandable form. The Spirit knows what we desire, and he also knows what we need. We may trust him to present us to the Father in a perfect manner. One feels a sense of confidence in a court of law when, unable to state his own case, a lawyer presents the case in eloquent fashion. This is the case with the Holy Spirit. When we are unable to know or ask, he is perfectly able.

ROM 8:27 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.

The Father is aware of all we think or do. In this case, the Spirit appears to be the source of the information. The Godhead searches our hearts through the Spirit which dwells within us. The Spirit, thus, becomes the intercessor between the mind of man and the mind of God.

We often pray that thy will be done, not ours. We may be confident that if we are sincere in such prayer, the answer will be forthcoming. Everything the Holy Spirit presents for us will be brought into harmony with the will of the Father.

This is one of the more comforting thoughts a person might have. When the Spirit dwells in a man, and when that man is led by the Spirit, every

prayer is guaranteed to be answered in the context of God's plans. And that, of course, is best for us.

ROM 8:28 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.

Why do all things work together for good to those described? Because even though the individual cannot express his own groanings, the Spirit has presented his needs in accordance with the will of God. Our own foolish reasoning will be superceded by the all-knowing mind of the Creator. We will then be blessed as he knows best.

As Christians, we must be greatly comforted. God is for us. Who can be against us? To be called according to his purpose is to have placed our lives in his hands to do with what he will. The man who will not make himself pliable need not expect to be fitted into the plans of God. But, the man who will yield his soul and listen to the call of God, will find himself intertwined with eternal life.

Things may not appear to be working together for good. We have extremely short eyesight. How often most of us have looked at our present circumstances and wondered how these things could possibly be working together for our good. Sometimes it is possible to look back and see how foolish our own desires were. Things were working for us when we were on the verge of giving up. An eternal perspective, as God has, would put an entirely new light on the matter.

As a personal illustration of the above truth, let me present an example. I had received a scholarship to attend the University of Michigan and become a chemical engineer. I failed three subjects out of the four which I took that first semester. I was convinced the world had caved in.

It had not. My brother had entered David Lipscomb College with plans to become a preacher. I went south to visit him. While there I observed the lessons he was preparing. I decided I was able to handle such assignments as those on which he was working.

The result was that I enrolled in Lipscomb. I graduated with above a B average with a major in speech and minors in Bible and chemistry. This prepared me for service in the kingdom of God which would not have been the case if I had graduated from the University of Michigan. There was no way I could know what was best. God did know!

ROM 8:29 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.

This passage, along with others, makes it abundantly clear that God knew from before the creation there would be some lost and some saved. The passage does not say God has predestined certain *individuals* to an eternal bliss or torment. What it is saying is the entire group of obedient children of God were involved in the plans of God from of old.

He has planned and cared for them all along the way.

It is, of course, perfectly possible God even knew the destiny of every individual ever created from the very beginning. However; to know what that person would do and to take away the freedom of choice of the individual are two different things. I may know that a hungry dog will eat a steak if I place the steak in front of him. That does not mean he could not have refused to eat the steak. It simply means that I know the circumstances well enough to predict what the dog will do.

This verse, however, is speaking of all those who are obedient to the will of God. God knew they would exist. He determined beforehand that those who were obedient would be given the example of Jesus Christ to model their lives after. Jesus is Emmanuel or “God with us.” He is the express image of God. We were created in the image of God; but, we have fallen away from that state of purity. We need Christ before us that we may be changed from glory into glory as we move back toward the heavenly home.

Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren in that he was the first of the family of God in the Christian dispensation. He is the Only Begotten Son. We are the “adopted” children. We join Christ through the second birth as both he and we seek to do the perfect will of the Father. He provides the path. We follow the “firstborn” who is our elder brother.

ROM 8:30 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.

God predestined that those whom he could see would be faithful children would be called. It would be inconceivable that God would know that people would respond if he called them, and then fail to do that calling.

When they respond to the call of the Lord, he is faithful to remove their guilt and wash away their sins. No child of God need worry about the Devil being able to make a true accusation against him. God has, through the blood of Christ, justified every one of his children.

Not only has God justified and made them clean, he has given them of his own glory. As the children of a prestigious father on earth partake of the prestige of that earthly father, the children of the Heavenly Father partake of the glory of their Heavenly Father.

But, did verse eighteen tell us the glory was yet to come; that we presently have sufferings which are minute compared to the glory which is to come? Yes, it did. Still, we must remember there are “*days of heaven upon the earth*”. We receive a foretaste of heavenly things while still living in these mortal bodies. Also, we may think of God assuring us that if we are true to him, the coming glory of heaven is so certain as to be considered already ours.

ROM 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

If God is so completely aware of his children, and if he has worked out his plans for protecting and caring for them, how could we ever think any hindrances could prevent us from our inheritance? It is absolutely unthinkable. To tear away one of God's children from his arms, when that child desired to stay in those arms, would be to overpower God's own infinite power. It cannot be done. There is no power comparable to that of our Father. We can meet every obstacle.

ROM 8:32 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?

Surely, there is nothing more precious to God than his own Son. I would give up much of my own possessions before I would give up an obedient son, particularly if that were my only son. God did just that. He gave up his Only Begotten Son that we might have eternal life.

Now, if he was willing to give up his Son, Jesus Christ, is there anything he would refuse us? The answer obviously has to be *NO!* He knows our needs perfectly. He will fill those needs in accordance with his own divine wisdom. We are told that God loveth a cheerful giver. He offers us the supreme example for that cheerful giving. He has offered his Son. He will also give us all else that might work together for our good.

ROM 8:33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

This verse contains a rhetorical question. It is clear no one can charge God's children with any sin. God has cleansed them from all sin through the blood of his Son. Verse one of this chapter made the statement there is no condemnation which may be made against those who are in Christ. This verse reiterates that statement. If God himself has removed the sin, it is ridiculous to make any accusation whatsoever.

It is a precious blessing to be counted as a child of our Father. Let us not be profane as Esau was, and sell such a precious inheritance for the paltry pleasures of a world which must some day pass away.

ROM 8:34 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.

One might have thought about making condemnation against those for whom bulls and goats died. Those sins were remembered again and again, every year. It is not so with the perfect sacrifice of our Lord. This is not just any sacrifice. This is the very Son of God.

In addition, he did not die as a bull or a goat, never to live again. Christ lives. His resurrection provides the permanent proof we will survive the grave.

Christ is active on our behalf throughout our lives here. He has taken his place at the right hand of God. There he speaks for us. The Devil can make

no accusation, for Christ stands ready to deny all such and to declare us pure and holy through the power of his blood. What a pleasant thought it is to view in our minds the Son of God presenting our case for us. What would it cost us to hire the best of human lawyers? Yet, Jesus has promised that if we give ourselves to him, he will confess us before his, and our, Father.

ROM 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

There are those who would take the greatest delight in separating us from Christ. The list of enemies of the Lord is a long one. The list in the latter part of this chapter is categorized. If one were to try, it would be possible to subdivide each category into many hundreds. This is why it is said Christ must reign until every enemy has been made his footstool.

Who could speak with more authority than the apostle concerning tribulation, distress and persecution. He had been exposed to each in the greatest degree. He stood in the face of all of them, true to Jesus. We must do the same.

What is this love of Christ which these things are not to separate us from? Is it the love of Christ for us, or is it the love we have for Christ? In verse thirty-nine, he will say it is the love of God which is in Christ. I assume it is speaking of the love Christ demonstrated toward us as he suffered and

died for us, and now continues to make intercession for us. We need have no fear that his love will fade in any way. It will remain as strong forever as it now is.

It surely is not wrong to consider the reverse side of this. Although the various enemies of God would stand between us, we must overcome every obstacle with our love for Christ undimmed.

ROM 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

The reference is Psalm 44:22. It regards difficulties suffered by the people of God. It is certainly true that persecution and difficulties come upon the Christian which might be avoided by evading the cross of Christ. We do suffer numerous things for our Master. Sometimes, it may well seem we are in the position of sheep who have no means of resisting their slaughter. Yet, these difficulties must never separate us from our commitment. We must never let them conquer us.

With Christ as the supreme example of doing the will of the Father while in jeopardy, and with Paul as a master teacher, we have much incentive to spur us on to the end of the Christian race.

ROM 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

The fact this verse speaks of being conquerors through Christ who *loved us*, leads me to think the

love of Christ mentioned in verse thirty-five is the love of Christ for us. When we see the love Christ had for us shining through his life and death, it kindles a similar devotion within our hearts toward him. This love we have toward him is sufficient to bring us through every tribulation and trial imaginable.

Revelation 1:6 tells us Christ has made us kings and priests. We can see how the two passages of scripture support one another. Through the mutual love Christ has for us, and we have for him, we do more than just conquer our enemies. We stand victorious over them, reigning over them with Jesus.

ROM 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Jesus gave himself for us in both his life and in his death. Nothing he faced in his life was sufficient to deter him in his course of love for us. When it came time to die, he did not waver. He died for us.

It should be the same with us. No difficulty of life, nor anticipation of death itself, should weaken our march for the Master. Angels are very powerful. In one night a single angel destroyed thousands and thousands of warriors who had surrounded Jerusalem. Yet, even the angels do not have the power to prevent our moving forward for Christ.

Neither political powers nor spiritual powers and principalities must ever get in our way. We are seen by those to whom God is teaching lessons about the

divine wisdom. We must prove God correct and the forces of Satan wrong.

ROM 8:39 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.

If we look upward into the heavens, we should not see anything above which is able to stop us. If we look down into the earth, it should be the same. Nothing alive or dead should get in our way to prevent the onward progress. Christ will continue to love us, and make intercession for us before the throne of God. Nothing will kill his love for us. We must continue to love him and serve him. Nothing must destroy or dim our love for him.

If we cling tightly to his outstretched hand, we need never fear. We will be safe, and we will be victorious over all foes. Only if we decide we do not need our Saviour, will we ever be torn from him. Sadly, it is quite *possible* for that to happen. If we deliberately remove our hand from his, the enemies will overwhelm us.

A Brief Summary

Because of the repetition for emphasis in this chapter, I would like to list a few major points which stand out in my own thinking.

1. There are two ways to walk:
 - (1) After the Spirit;

- (2) After the flesh.
2. Those who choose to walk after the Spirit are the children of God.
 3. Walking after the flesh leads to death. Walking after the Spirit leads to life.
 4. The same Holy Spirit which raised Christ from the dead has the power to raise God's other children.
 5. We may suffer many things here, but these things do not compare to the glorious inheritance waiting.
 6. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit make intercession for us with the Father.
 7. All things are working together for good to those who walk in the Spirit as God's faithful children.
 8. God has plans for his faithful children and those plans will not be foiled.
 9. God and Christ love us so much that no enemy can tear us away from them, *unless we allow it.*

Chapter 9

ROM 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

Chapter eight marked the close of a major pattern of thought. Paul was presenting the divinely inspired picture of God's plan of salvation for mankind. He is now ready to make a major appeal to his Jewish kin to accept the plan and become a part of it. It will not be an easy matter for the apostle to speak on these matters; however, he will do so because the truth must be proclaimed.

He wished for them to know his conscience was clear in all he was saying. He was speaking through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and was speaking only the truth.

ROM 9:2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

The opposition of the Jews to the gospel brought Paul great distress. He loved his Jewish kinsman deeply. It was likely they would never completely understand just how much he cared for their welfare. It was no personal offense that worried Paul. It was the fact that those who rejected Christ were lost and separated from the blessings which come through the Saviour.

ROM 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

I believe this verse is an exaggeration for emphasis. Surely, Paul could not actually consider eternal torment for himself. We use similar figures of speech. Sometimes we say, "I am dead on my feet". David once made the statement, "*My bones have melted.*" It seems to me Paul is just making an attempt to show as best he can the intense concern he had for his fellow Jews.

ROM 9:4 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;

To say these Jews were Israelites was not a minor thing. These were the people God had worked with for centuries as he prepared for the coming of the Christ and his gospel message.

They had been *adopted* as children of God.
They had been led by the *glory of the Shekinah*.

They had received the *covenants* presented through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc.
They had been presented with the *law* through Moses on Mount Sinai.

They had been provided a pattern of worship *services* for the tabernacle and the temple.

They had received the *promises* such as the seed promise and the land promise.

ROM 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

The promises had been given to their ancestors and had been carried down through the centuries. It was through those ancestors, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, that the Saviour had come into the world. Jesus Christ was of fleshly Israel. Christ now stands higher than any name under heaven. The Father has blessed his Son and has blessed the world through his Son.

ROM 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

Paul utters these words because of the friction between Jew and Gentile. The Gentile is now to receive salvation. This might seem to the Jew to be a reversal of God's policy. It was not. The term Israel may be used in more than one sense. The fleshly descendants of Abraham and Jacob were Israel in one sense. The spiritual descendants of Abraham, by way of a similar faith, were just as truly the Israel of God as were those of fleshly descent. The Gentile who became a Christian was just as much a part of the Israel of God as the fleshly Jews were.

ROM 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

God knew that not every fleshly descendant of Abraham would deserve to be called God's child. Some of them would live in rebellion to the divine will.

In fact, God did not make the promise through all of Abraham's fleshly children. It was only to Isaac the promise was made. Remember, Ishmael was also a son of Abraham.

ROM 9:8 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.

The important thing is to find out just to whom God did make his promises. It should be clear that it was not to all of the fleshly descendants of Abraham.

ROM 9:9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

The promise had come through Sarah. It was she who had been told she would bear this important son. Hagar did not receive the promise.

ROM 9:10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

There was even more to consider. As we move down to the time of Isaac, we find more than one child involved. Rebecca had twins. Yet, only one of the two was to transmit the promise originally given to Abraham.

ROM 9:11 (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;)

Jacob was not chosen because of the merit of his works. When God decided to work through Jacob, both children were still unborn. Neither of them had done either good or evil. God selected the one through whom his plan would be best put into practice.

ROM 9:12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

Ordinarily, the older child in the Jewish family took a more important role. The younger children looked up to him and respected him. This time, the situation was reversed. Jacob was to become the more prominent of the two. Because the Jews had first become God's children, did not mean God's Gentile children, who were to come later, could not be just as important.

ROM 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

God had chosen to work through Jacob rather than Esau. In addition, the statement did not have individual application. God had said, "*Two nations are in thy womb*". To say that he loved Jacob or Israel, and hated Esau or Edom, did not indicate

hatred as we might use the term today. It simply meant a preference for the one over the other. Jesus did not mean a person must hate his father and mother before he could follow him. He was saying the person must love him more than father or mother.

It is true that God can look ahead in time and see the future behavior of individuals. It is also true that Edom, as a nation, did not respect the will of God as they should have. If the student will look up the word Edom in the concordance and read the passages in which the word is found, he will find a very dismal picture of the relationship between God and the descendants of Esau. God may have known this would be the case while the two infants were still unborn.

ROM 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

The choice of Jacob over Esau did not make God a respecter of persons and, therefore, unrighteous. It was His right to make the choice according to His own divine wisdom. No man has the right to criticize Him.

ROM 9:15 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.

There is no man who has a right to claim the mercy of God. Every man has sinned and, thus,

forfeited any such claim. God can have mercy upon whomever He pleases. God has the capability of determining what the effect of extending His mercy and compassion will be. We may be assured His choices will be made with the ultimate consequences of the choice known beforehand.

ROM 9:16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

The will of man will not make such determinations. The past or present actions are not the determining factors. God will look at the entire picture, in terms of eternity, and will offer His mercy accordingly.

ROM 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Jehovah could have caused the death of Pharaoh at any time. In spite of this, Pharaoh was allowed to continue his rebellious ways for a time. God allowed him to live in order that God's own power might be made known. As a result of the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, multiplied millions have come to know the importance of working with God rather than against Him.

ROM 9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

If God has shown mercy to the Jews, He has that right. If He has shown mercy to the Gentiles, He has that right. If he allows some, such as Pharoah, to fight against him for a while, He has that right. Who has a large enough measuring stick to provide God with a standard for righteous action?

ROM 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

A ridiculous question appears. If God is in complete control, what right does He have to condemn any man for any thought or action whatsoever? The answer to this question is that God did not force Pharoah to act as he did—God only permitted or allowed it. No man does evil because the Lord leaves him no other choice.

ROM 9:20 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?

If only man could see the vast difference between himself as a creature and God as the Creator, he would not ask critical questions about his Maker. Man sees only from the limited view of time and space. God sees from the unlimited view of eternity.

Man is not justified in suggesting that the creation should have gone a different route or ended.

ROM 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Paul provided a very clear example of the sovereignty of God. He is like a potter who molds his vessels on the potter's wheel according to His will. It is certainly within His rights to make a vessel for a very high and noble purpose, or for a much less significant one.

Jeremiah 18:1-10 refers to this same divine power. Jeremiah was told to go down to the potter's house. There he found the potter discarding a vessel which did not meet his specifications. He, then made another vessel which did meet his requirements. God then told Jeremiah He had a similar right with respect to nations. He could pluck up a nation such as Israel, or He could pull it down and destroy it.

ROM 9:22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

What is the identity of these vessels of wrath, which are fitted for destruction? They must be those whom God has worked with in the past and attempted to form them to his desires, only to find they were not willing to be molded to his will. In this particular situation, they are no doubt the fleshly

nation of Israel who rejected His statutes and broke His covenant.

Such vessels fit for destruction are still around. We were created for God's pleasure (Rev. 4:11). Any who do not please God are fitted for destruction. God is longsuffering and not desirous that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Nevertheless, the day is coming when he will destroy those who have proven useless, or even destructive.

Pharoah was allowed to live in order that the seriousness of falling under the wrath of God might be demonstrated. Pharoah had fitted himself for destruction. It was not that God had created Pharoah for the purpose of destroying him. It was Pharoah who plunged himself into the way of death. God was longsuffering; but, the longsuffering ended and the wrath descended.

The same was true of the Jewish nation. God had given them many opportunities to serve and glorify Him. They had ignored them and turned away from the Christ in disgust. In doing so, they had placed themselves under the wrath of God.

ROM 9:23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

While *fleshly* Israel had turned away from God, He had long-laid plans for the salvation of *spiritual* Israel. God had continued to work through fleshly Israel in order that he might reach those, both Jew and Gentile, who would be vessels of righteousness. Through them, He would make known both his mercy

and his glory — mercy because their penitent nature paved the way for their forgiveness through Christ; glory because those who glorify Jehovah will be glorified by Him.

ROM 9:24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

The “called” here are those who have heard the voice of God and responded to that voice. They are called out of the world and into the Kingdom of God. They are now God’s people. They come from every tribe, tongue, kindred and nation. They may be male or female, rich or poor, servant or master. These are the vessels of righteousness which are pleasing unto God.

ROM 9:25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

There are a series of references to Old Testament prophets here. The first is from Hosea 2:23, which predicted God would take chosen people from those who had not been his chosen before. When the Gentiles were invited to share in the Kingdom, the prophecy of Hosea began to be fulfilled. A new spiritual Israel was formed.

ROM 9:26 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.

Hosea 1:10 states that those “*not my people*” will be “called” the children of God.

ROM 9:27 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:

Isaiah explained that not all of fleshly Israel would be saved; but, only a remnant (Rom. 10:22). How true this was. On Pentecost, there were some Jews who heard and obeyed. From then, until today, there have been a scattered few. It has, however, been as a few grains compared with the sand of the entire seashore.

ROM 9:28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

God had labored in the vineyard of fleshly Israel for a long time. The labor was about to be abruptly ended. Since they had shunned the righteousness which He offered through Christ, He would bring them to an end. God's work deals with righteousness. Israel did not accept that righteousness and was, thus, a vessel fit for destruction.

ROM 9:29 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.

This verse refers to Isaiah 1:9. God does not destroy the righteous with the wicked; nor, does He fail to keep his plan of salvation moving. Through the remnant of fleshly Israel, He had brought Christ into the world. If God had not been merciful, Israel would have been completely eradicated and found no more at all.

ROM 9:30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

A conclusion could be drawn from the facts above. That conclusion is that the Gentiles had been invited to attain a righteousness state. It was not a righteousness which came from the keeping of the law of Moses. It was a righteousness which came through faith in Jesus Christ.

ROM 9:31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

Even while the Gentiles were attaining a righteous condition, fleshly Israel had failed to achieve that state. The reason was they had placed their trust in the keeping of the law. It is necessary to keep God's law. Death is the penalty for transgressing it; but, since no man keeps it, the grace which comes through Christ is an absolute necessity. Only in Him can righteousness be found. Israel was misdirected.

ROM 9:32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

What a terrible thing. The Jews had stumbled over the very stone which was intended to be the foundation rock of their salvation. With all of the love and blessings God had offered them, they had chosen the way of death. It is little wonder Paul was grieved over their condition and had great sorrow and heaviness of heart.

ROM 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

If the fleshly Jews were to lay hold on any hope at all, they would find it necessary to rise from their fallen condition and believe on Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. In their present condition, they were headed for shamefacedness and embarrassment. In contrast, those who believe on Christ will evade the accusations of Satan and hear the words, *“Well done. Enter into the joys of the Lord.”*

Chapter 9 — Summary

1. Paul sorrowed greatly over the condition of his Jewish kinsmen.

2. God had provided them with many wonderful privileges.
3. God knew ahead of time that some of Abraham's seed would turn away.
4. He also knew some who were not of the fleshly seed of Abraham would hear.
5. Turning to the Gentiles did not mean God had broken his promise.
6. The Gentiles had found righteousness through faith in Christ.
7. The Jews had looked for righteousness through the law and stumbled over Christ.

Chapter 10

ROM 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

The use of the word "brethren" is an indication Paul is speaking to the church about fleshly Israel at this point. It is interesting that he speaks of Israel in the third person.

He wishes them to know his preaching to the Gentiles has in no way affected his concern for his fellow kinsmen. From the very depths of his heart, he desires their salvation. He prays toward that end.

His prayer would be wasted if it were not possible that they be saved. Yet, he knows salvation cannot come to them other than through the acceptance of Christ.

ROM 10:2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Like many misdirected religious persons of our present day, they certainly cannot be charged with a lack of zeal. Paul could testify to their zeal by his experiences with them as they sought to kill him repeatedly for preaching the gospel.

There are two very serious conditions. One is to have zeal without knowledge. The other is to have knowledge without zeal. The ideal is, of course, to have both knowledge and zeal. The person who has

knowledge without zeal never gets anything accomplished. The person who has zeal without knowledge gets a great deal done. However, that which he accomplishes usually does more damage than good. The Jews of whom Paul spoke fit into the latter class.

ROM 10:3 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.

He proceeded to explain the false direction in which their misguided zeal had taken them. They had deliberately ignored the plan God had provided for making men righteous. God had delivered the plan, but they had not accepted it.

What they had done was attempt to establish their own righteousness through keeping the works of the law. The law had been necessary in the divine order of things. Nevertheless, it only helped introduce righteousness; it did not provide it.

ROM 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The law led men to Christ. It was the schoolmaster who was to bring men to the Saviour. Jesus said, "*I came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it.*" Only those who believe in Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of men can be made righteous. It will not come through any other avenue. It is Christ who makes men righteous. See 1 Cor. 1:23-30 below:

1 COR. 1:23-30 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

The words of Jesus himself underscore Paul's words. *Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.*

ROM 10:5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

Moses told of a righteousness which could be had if a man kept the law perfectly. He stated in Leviticus 18:5, *“Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them:*

I am the LORD.” That was the righteousness which the Jews had sought for. They had sought it in vain. No man had ever kept the law.

ROM 10:6 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:)

Because of the weakness of the flesh, God had provided a righteousness which was available through faith. This righteousness did not require men seek it through their own perfection. No man needed to bridge the gap from heaven to earth to bring that righteousness into our presence. Christ already made that journey in the other direction. Faith in Christ is the means by which that righteousness may be attained.

ROM 10:7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

No man needs to conquer death, hell and the grave to escape the wages of sin. Christ has already fought that fight. It is not through human effort that men may find their way from mortality and corruption to immortality and incorruption. Christ is the way.

ROM 10:8 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;

The righteousness which comes through faith had been made so accessible it was already in the heart and the mouth of the Jews. It was there because they had heard the word of faith which Paul and the other apostles had preached. Moses had spoken of such a time as this. See Deut. 30:10-14. Moses' words had a primary meaning for the Israelites of his day, but they also had a greater meaning in the coming of the Word of God to men.

The question then is, "What does the Word of God have to say about the way men are made righteous"?

ROM 10:9 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.

The righteousness of God which comes through Christ requires confession that Jesus is the Son of God and that belief that God has raised him from the dead. See Rom. 14:11— *Every tongue shall confess.*

The belief which is described here is more than the devils who tremble but do not obey. This belief is a living active faith which is ready to keep the commandments of the Lord.

The confession mentioned here is also more than simply a sincere statement at the time of baptism. It is a willingness to confess throughout a lifetime. In addition, it will go farther than words. It will be spoken through actions as well.

ROM 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Thus, salvation follows both belief and confession. Both belief in Christ and confession of his Lordship are necessary in attaining the righteousness of God.

ROM 10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The word “ashamed” may well have two meanings in this one use. The true Christian will not be ashamed to let it be known he is a believer. It is only natural that a heart filled with faith will spill over into confession of Christ before others. The one who believes in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, will be proud to glorify his name. Paul said in Rom. 1:16, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ—.”*

Sometimes the word “ashamed” has to do with embarrassment. The one who declares Jesus as the Saviour and the Son of God will never need to feel a sense of embarrassment. He has followed the true and living Way. It is the sinner who shall someday find himself embarrassed at the outcome of his choice.

ROM 10:12 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.

For many long centuries, the Jew had seen himself as especially chosen by God. He had been guided and protected. He had been told not to intermingle with other people. God had had a reason for that isolation. The Jew was to be the instrument through whom the righteousness of Christ would come into the world. That righteousness was now present. The wall of partition was to come down. Salvation through faith in Christ was to be the possession of the Gentile as well as the Jew.

Every man who called upon the Lord would find him answering that call. Every man could call, and every man must call.

ROM 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The word “Lord” is sometimes applied to God the Father. Other times, it applies to Jesus Christ, the Son. This time, it refers to Christ. Those who call upon his name shall be saved. Those who refuse to do so will be lost, whether they be Jew, or Gentile.

This brings up the matter of what it means to “call upon the name of the Lord”. Christ once said it was not enough to cry, “Lord, Lord.” It was necessary to do the will of the Father in heaven. Joel predicted the Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh, as many as would call upon the name of the Lord.

Joel 2:32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall

be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Ananias told Saul (Paul) to arise and be baptized, calling upon the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

It becomes clear that calling upon the name of the Lord is such a confident trust in the Lord that one is ready to obey his every command.

ROM 10:14 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?

There are several ingredients in the inter-relationship between man and God which leads to justification and a state of righteousness:

1. Someone must be sent with the message.
2. That message must be preached.
3. Individuals must provide a willing ear.
4. Individuals must believe the truth when it is preached.
5. Individuals must bring that faith, or belief, to life in obedience.

ROM 10:15 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!

The messengers who bear the truth of the gospel to men are a particularly wonderful group. It began with the prophets of old. Then came John the Baptist and Christ himself. Then, Christ continued to speak through his apostles. Finally, men, from that day to this, have accepted the responsibility of carrying the message of salvation to others throughout the world.

The feet are well known to be one of the less beautiful members of the human body. They lose their ugliness and become exceedingly beautiful when they are carrying the hope of eternal salvation to a man dying in sin. We can have peace with God and release from the burden of sin. Those are tidings of good things. Anyone who preaches the gospel of Christ to another man should be welcomed with open arms.

ROM 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

Though the gospel had been preached to the Jews and was in their hearts and mouths, they had failed to believe it. Isaiah, many centuries before, had known this would be the case. He had foretold it in Isaiah. The rejection should not be a surprise. God had foreseen it. See Isa. 53:1.

ROM 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The righteousness of faith does not come through attempts to keep the law. It comes by hearing what

God has to say about Christ and responding positively to those truths.

How many men of our day have set about to do similar things to the Jews? Rather than hear the Word of God, they have subtracted from, added to, and distorted the scriptures in order to suit their own tastes. The result is a hodgepodge of religious sects which evade the righteousness of God and destroy the souls of men.

ROM 10:18 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.

Could Israel complain they had not heard the gospel? Could they argue they were not responsible because no one had been sent to preach to them? By no means! Paul was able to say the gospel had been preached to every man in the world he knew. The Jew had no excuse.

I find it interesting the words used here are so similar to those of Psalm 19:1-4.

PSA 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

It is as though God were saying to the Jew, I have made the Sun of Righteousness as available to

you as I have made the light of the sun, moon and stars. You have heard the preaching. You now must call upon the name of Christ or you will be lost.

Many men today are in precisely the same condition. The message has been made available. They have heard it over and over. Their blood will be upon their own head.

ROM 10:19 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.

Oh yes! Israel knew. Moses had gone so far as to warn them the time would come when, as a result of their hardened hearts and deafened ears, he would turn to the Gentiles to make the Jew jealous. As the Jew had provoked and angered him, he would provoke and anger them by turning to those who would hear and call upon him.

Deut. 32:21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

ROM 10:20 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.

The Gentiles who had not sought righteousness through the law had found the righteousness by

faith in Christ. When the call of Christ came to them, they had heard and called back. Though they had gone after their own ways and found terrible confusion, they still heard the word when it was preached. By calling upon the name of the Lord, they had attained unto a righteous condition.

ROM 10:21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

It was just the opposite with Israel. God had favored them with blessings of many kinds. Of all men on earth, they should have been prepared to hearken to the voice of the Great Shepherd. Instead, when God reached out his bountiful hand to them, they turned away in disdain. They would depend upon their own strength to keep the law as delivered by Moses. This was not God's plan! No man can earn his own salvation. He can work it out through the obedience of faith—but, he will never overcome sin through his own wisdom and power. Works of merit will fail. — Works of obedience through faith are vital and necessary.

Chapter 10 — Summary

1. From the depths of his heart, Paul desired that Israel might be saved.
2. They could not be saved while rejecting Christ, the righteousness of God.
3. Through Christ, God had made the way of salvation easy to discover.

4. Though the Word had sounded out the truth, the Jew had rejected it.
5. Israel had provoked God by trying to find righteousness through the law.
6. Therefore, God would provoke them by turning to the Gentiles.

Chapter 11

ROM 11:1 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.

A long hard road had been followed by this time to prove the Jew had been hardheaded and had rejected his Creator. After all God had done through the centuries, He had finally decided on using a new tactic in His dealings with mankind. He would turn to the Gentiles. Did this mean He was through completely and forever with every descendant of Abraham through the flesh? If the answer was yes, the Jew could give up hope.

Paul was aghast at the thought. He used an expression which he used at other times also to demonstrate the absolute impossibility of such a thing, "*God forbid.*" It was unthinkable that God would cast off any man who desired to serve him. It is not just any man who is under consideration here. It is "*His people.*"

The question is whether or not God would reverse himself so completely that those whom He had especially favored in times past would have no access to His blessings. The answer is no! If God had completely rejected all the seed of Abraham, Paul would not be preaching to them. He was a Jew. To reject all of Abraham's seed would be to reject Paul himself. He was not only of the seed of Abraham, he could trace his lineage through the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was a tribe which took special

pride in being true to God. They were jealous when left out of major events such as battles and selection of kings. Paul was a Jew, and he was proud of it. He was also living proof that God would receive Jews who would call upon his name.

ROM 11:2 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,

ROM 11:3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

The one who would ask such a question should realize this was the people God foreknew. The word “foreknew” may have two quite different applications. It may mean one knew before the fact those things which would happen at a later time. God does have foreknowledge in that sense. He is able to see from the beginning of time to the end whenever He desires to do so. But, the word “foreknew” may also carry the idea of being acquainted with the past. In that case, the word know would be used more in the manner it was used of Joseph knowing Mary. Not that it would have to be sexual knowledge. It would not. We do, however, talk of knowing somebody. God had known Israel and loved them. He had known them afore, or foreknown them. That foreknowledge had included caring for them as a husband cares for his wife. God would not cast away that people without remedy.

He reminded them that those who were faithful to Him were in much the same position as was Elijah long before. Elijah had bristled with courage in facing the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. He had been successful in defeating them; however, Jezebel had sworn to kill him. He fled before her wrath, thinking he was alone in all the world in being faithful to Jehovah. If he were to die, he felt God would have none left to serve him. Elijah had made intercession against Israel, not for them. He felt Israel had been so negligent in the service of God that they were now to be eliminated. He intimated that such elimination might be justly deserved.

ROM 11:4 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.

ROM 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

God had corrected Elijah and given him new confidence (I Kgs. 10). Elijah was mistaken. All of the people of God were not gone. Though Elijah did not know it, there were thousands who were still true. Surely, this was not an impressive number in comparison to the multitudes who had been blessed as his people previously. But, it was enough to prove God still had a people.

Just as there was a small portion of the people

who still followed Jehovah in the day of Elijah, there were some who were faithful as Paul spoke to the Romans. They were those who were elected through the grace of God. When the Bible speaks of the an election, and of the elect, it is speaking of something slightly different than we are speaking of in our elections. Some have the idea that God has elected certain individuals for admission to heaven. They take the matter farther and say that those who have been elected cannot be lost. And, they also believe that if one has not been elected, he can never be saved. This is incorrect.

Even in present day elections one cannot be elected to an office until he elects to run. For him to serve, he must elect to run for the office, and then the people must elect him to that office. It is somewhat the same in the election of God. You must choose to serve God. When you do so, God elects you as one of his own. Until both of these events take place, you are not a part of the elect of God.

This is an election of grace because no man deserves to be blessed as God's elect are blessed. Grace is unmerited favor. As one of God's elect, we have access to blessings which no man has earned by his own efforts. The Gentiles are not alone in the invitation of God to join his elect. Jews are invited. And, Paul makes it clear that some of the Jews have accepted the invitation. They were only a remnant of the many Jews who could have come to the grace of God, offered through the Saviour; but, they were there.

Thousands of Jews had responded to the invitation of Peter on Pentecost. That number had

been multiplied later. The Romans should realize, whether they were Jew or Gentile, God had elected some of the Jews, who had elected to serve Him. The majority had turned away. A remnant was true.

ROM 11:6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

A clear distinction is now made between grace and works. Grace cannot be works, and works cannot be grace. If one is to be saved by his own effort, he has earned his salvation. It can hardly be called grace under those circumstances. Grace is UNMERITED favor.

We must be careful here to avoid a most serious mistake. It is not true that works are unnecessary to salvation. The arrangement is this. —God extends His grace to us. Our faith in Him motivates us to obedience to His will. We then work because it pleases Him. Let us reverse the order. If we do not do the work He has commanded, He will not be pleased. Such refusal to work is clear evidence our faith is dead. God will then cut us off from His grace because of His displeasure.

There are two kinds of works. There are works of merit. These are works one might perform to earn salvation. This is the type of works Paul is saying will not bring righteousness. Then, there are works of obedience. These are works done simply because God commanded us to do them. They are not done in view of earning our salvation. These are the works

God will consider when He “rewards us according to our works”.

ROM 11:7 What then, Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

ROM 11:8 (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.

Israel had been seeking for righteousness. The trouble was they had expected to attain that righteousness by keeping the commands given in the law of Moses. If one had kept the law perfectly, he could have become righteous. That is what Christ did. None other has ever been sinless. Since all Jews, as well as Gentiles, had sinned and come short of the glory of God, their own righteousness by merit was absent.

Yet, some of the Jews had found righteousness. They were the remnant who had found it through the election of God. When they determined they had no righteousness of their own, they had elected to serve God through life in Christ. Upon uniting themselves with Christ, the righteousness of the Saviour was imputed to them. In this way, the election, both the Gentile and the remnant of Israel, had obtained it.

Though the remnant had found the righteousness of God in Christ, the rest had not found it because

they had been insensible to the gospel. They are described as being given the spirit of slumber. When one is asleep, the senses are diminished in their effectiveness. One does not hear, nor see, those things which are occurring around him.

Jesus had been in the midst of them. They could have seen, and they could have heard. They were determined not to. We are told they were given this spirit of slumber. This causes some to believe they could not have heard or seen, even if they had desired to do so. The situation here is the same as in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. In one passage, it declares that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. In another parallel passage, it says that Pharaoh hardened his heart.

The sense in which God hardened Pharaoh's heart was that he placed Pharaoh in a position where he had to make a choice. When the evidence was in, Pharaoh rejected it; thereby, hardening his heart. Acts tells us God opened Lydia's heart. He did so only in the sense that the evidence was presented to Lydia and she responded to God by allowing the message to enter. God had given the Jews the spirit of slumber only in the sense that they had stopped their ears and closed their eyes when Christ was preached. The Jew could have found what he sought if he had seen with his eyes and heard with his ears.

Long years before, it had been predicted this hardening and spirit of slumber would take place. The quotation of Paul is from Isaiah 29:10.

Isaiah 29:10 For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed

your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

Jesus reminded the Jews more than once they were acting in this manner. When asked why he spoke in parables, he answered that to some it was given to know of the kingdom of God; but, there were those who would not understand the parables because they had eyes which did not see and ears which did not hear.

ROM 11:9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:

ROM 11:10 Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

God had set the table of the Jews luxuriously. Abraham had been guided to a promised land. Through the Spirit of God, Moses had taken them from Egyptian bondage to the land flowing with milk and honey. They had been delivered from their enemies as long as they were faithful to Jehovah. They had been given the covenant of God. They had received the promises of the Messiah. Chapter nine listed all these blessings the Jews had enjoyed. It was David also who said, "*He prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies*" (Ps. 23).

Rather than using this table as it should have been used, the Jews had allowed it to become a trap, a stumblingblock, and a hindrance. The law and the

prophets had been presented to them to awaken them to the coming Christ. Instead, these feasts of blessing had resulted in lazy slumber. The foundation stone of the new temple of God had become a rock of offense and a stumbling block.

ROM 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.

Another question must now be answered. What is the end of their stumbling? Is it that God wishes them to lie on the ground forever? Does He wish to be rid of them, never to deal with them again? The previous question about whether He had cast away all of them had been answered by saying no, the seed of Abraham by flesh were not all cast away. There were some who were still in His favor. Now, the companion question arises. Can those who have hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes ever come to Him; or, must the Jew remain in darkness forever? Since the first question received the answer it did, we anticipate the response to the second question. God will receive any man, even if he be of the fleshly seed of Abraham, and even though he has previously spurned Him.

A rock may be placed directly in a man's path so that he will stumble over it. At the same time, a rock might have been placed in a position for other reasons. It is hardly conceivable that God would place Christ before the Jew for the sole purpose of damning the seed of Abraham forever. The rock of

our salvation was laid as a foundation stone for the building of the temple of God, the church. There was every reason for Christ to be where he was, when he was. If the Jew stumbled over him, it was not the fault of Jehovah. It was because the Jew turned his eyes away.

All was not lost. The ultimate purpose of God was, and is, to seek and save the lost. Millions of Gentiles could only be saved through the preaching of the gospel. As the old saying goes, "Two birds could now be killed with one stone." God would send the gospel to the Gentile world. This would provoke the Jew to jealousy and he would see his empty condition. The final result would be the salvation of both the Jew and the Gentile.

Again, we see the wisdom of God demonstrated. The Jew had read the scripture, and should have understood the prophecies about the entrance of the Gentiles into the family of God. Hundreds of years before it took place, God had predicted it. Isaiah had said, "*Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*" (Isa. 42:1) Again he said, "*I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.*" (Isa. 65:1) Malachi had said, "*for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts*" (Malachi 1:11). Moses had even predicted that the Gentiles would be used as a means of provoking the jealousy of the Jews. "*They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them*

to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,” (Deut. 32:21).

Here we must face up to an issue which has seen diligent scholars come to quite opposite conclusions. Did God anticipate this jealousy would bring an impressive number of Jews to Christ, or was he simply saying here that some remnant, or scattered few, would be acceptable to God when they turned to him through Christ?

The difficulties are compounded by the fact that many who believe large masses of Jews will be converted also hold to a premillennial position. These individuals believe that such a conversion of the Jews would be accompanied by their return to the land of Palestine, and the appearance of Jesus Christ to reign personally on earth for one thousand years. Others vigorously protest this series of events. They are convinced Jesus will not return to earth, except to gather up the saints to be with him in the New Heaven and New Earth forever.

It is not necessary to accept the premillennial system to believe the Jews might respond to the gospel in large numbers. I do not believe Jesus will come back to earth to reign here for one thousand years. I do not believe the fleshly seed of Abraham will be gathered from all nations to the earthly land of Palestine. I do believe the Bible teaches that an impressive number of the fleshly seed of Abraham will be provoked to jealousy through God’s attention to the Gentiles, and that they will then open their eyes to their condition of emptiness without Christ.

If there were no other references to the matter

in the Bible, I believe it is evident from the ninth through the eleventh chapters of Romans. The eleventh chapter is the capstone. The context of the entire eleventh chapter has to do with the Jews and Gentiles as two groups of people, not as individuals. The Jews rejected Christ as a people. In turn, they were rejected as a group. Every individual was not rejected. The pronouns *them*, *they* and *their* are used at least two dozen times before the chapter closes.

They shall not come back under an earthly king, as a political force. The old fleshly kingdom is gone forever. When they return, they will return to Christ as King, reigning from heaven. They will return from all nations to the Kingdom of Heaven. Although the old theocracy is gone, the Jews still exist as an ethnic group. Chapter eleven of Romans says God looks for his attention to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy and a return to him. Verse eleven is powerful, but not complete proof as it stands alone. We shall note support for it in the succeeding verses of the chapter.

ROM 11:12 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?

When the Jews as a people were rejected, God turned to the Gentiles. Luke closes the book of Acts with impressive words from Paul, the apostle, to the Gentiles—*'For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes,*

and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it” (Acts 28:27-28).

No longer would the blessings of God be primarily for the Jews. The unsearchable riches of Christ would be made available to the heathen of all nations. While the Jew was made poor, the Gentile would be made rich. While the Jew was to be diminished and emptied, the Gentile would be enlarged and made full.

The fall of the Jews and the diminishing of the Jews are similar terms. When they fell, they were diminished. Is this a diminishing of number? Is it a diminishing of political influence? Or, is it a diminishing of the quality of life? I believe the answer to this may be found in an investigation of the word “fulness”. If so, the verses which follow, dealing with the olive tree, make a great deal of sense.

The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Let us turn to several other passages in which the word “fulness” is used. Verse twenty-five of this same chapter is the closest to us. There, the fulness of the Gentiles is mentioned. Are we talking about the same kind of fulness? Some believe the fulness of verse twelve is speaking of the fulness of destruction of the Jewish nation. I do not believe this is the case. I believe the fulness of the Gentiles and the fulness of the Jews are similar circumstances. And I believe also that the fulness of the Jews mentioned in verse twelve is the opposite of the diminishing and fall mentioned in that same

verse. That fulness comes as a result of being engrafted into God's olive tree as discussed between verse twelve and verse twenty-five. Ephesians 1:7-10 speaks of both riches and fulness. *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the RICHES of his grace; which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him: unto a dispensation of the FULNESS OF TIMES, sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him I say."*

There is a fulness which comes through associating oneself with Christ. This is a dispensation of the fulness of times because through Christ one may be made full; otherwise, one is diminished and empty.

Look now at Colossians 2:8-10. *"Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world; and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth the FULNESS of the Godhead bodily. And in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power."*

When any man is cut off from Christ, he is made empty. If others seduce him through vain deceit and traditions of men, he is left with only the rudiments of the world. He is spoiled and made empty. He is the vine and we are the branches. Cut off from him, we have no spiritual nourishment. We will only be fit for pruning.

Why are the Jews fallen and diminished? Why are they empty? Because they have refused the spiritual food which now comes only through Christ. In this empty condition, they have made it necessary for God to cut them off his olive tree until they recognize their emptiness. When will they be made full? When they allow the veil to be removed from their heart and let it be turned to the Lord (2 Cor. 3:15-16).

As Paul wrote in this same book of Romans, the Jews were in a state of poverty and emptiness. As they had been made poor, the Gentiles had been made rich and full. The time would come when the Jews would once again be made full. This could only happen when the Jew allowed his heart to turn to the Lord. This return of the Jews to fullness in Christ would bring about even greater blessing than did his departure and diminishing.

ROM 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

ROM 11:14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

The church at Rome obviously contained both Jews and Gentiles. At one time, Paul directs his words toward one group. Then, suddenly, he will turn and address the other. He now writes to the Gentiles in particular in the next few verses. He says he has the right to speak to them because of

his office. In the ninth chapter of Acts, it is recorded that Ananias was hesitant to make contact with Paul, who was then known as Saul of Tarsus. Ananias was told not to shrink from this man. He had been chosen to bear the name of Jehovah to the Gentiles.

As Paul was making his defense, after his arrest in Jerusalem, he said, *“And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles”* (Acts 22:21).

If the Gentile does not like what Paul is about to say, he must remember that Paul is not following his own will. He is discharging the responsibility which was laid upon him by the Lord.

It would be wise for the Gentiles to listen carefully. By his words and actions, Paul hopes to bring blessing to both Jew and Gentile. He is persuaded that by his own preaching to the Gentiles, and by his concern for them, he may motivate other Jews to see their error and come to Jesus Christ. It is the Jew who is of his own flesh. He loves his people and desires that they not remain separated from God. He says he hoped to save some of them. He does not say all of them. The ones who will be saved are clearly those who allow their hearts to be turned, and the veil removed that they may see and believe. Paul does not expect all of them to do so. He does hope some of them will. The fraction is not specified.

ROM 11:15 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?

ROM 11:16 For if the firstfruit be holy the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

We have already noted the relationship between the rejection of Israel and the entrance of the Gentiles. As one was made empty, the other was enriched and made full. While the Jew who had been close to God had been separated from him, the Gentile who had been far off had now been brought near. The reconciliation of the heathen world had been the direct result of the separation of the Jew.

But, something even greater was yet to come. Before the Gentile had been enriched, he could look forward to a change which could only be described as the difference between life and death. Is this life and death comparison a description of the new state of a converted Jew as compared with his previous state of spiritual deadness? I do not think so. Paul was speaking to the Gentiles. He was saying the Gentile world had been enriched by the casting away of the Jewish world. He now expands upon that same thought. The same group who had been enriched before would now see a monumental change. It would defy description. It would bring the world to life! As the Jew turned to the Lord, both Jew and Gentile would rejoice.

There was a time when men of God envisioned such a victory for the gospel before the second coming of Christ. They saw in the prophets, as well as in the book of Revelation and in this part of the book of Romans, a picture of a better world where Satan was bound and the martyrs reigned. And, while they

held this vision, the church grew. The commitment was strong.

Then, the vision was lost. It was decided there would never be a victory such as this until Christ returned. When the vision was lost, the commitment died. Revelation nineteen and twenty do not describe a literal one thousand years with Christ reigning on earth from earthly Jerusalem. They describe the same condition Paul is talking about here when he says it shall be like life from death if the Jew be converted. When the Jewish world and the Gentile world are both ready to listen to the gospel message, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Not every Gentile will be converted at that time. Not every Jew will be turned to the Lord. But, there will be sufficient numbers that the world condition will be resurrected, as if from death to life.

Let us not confuse this picture with that of the new heaven and the new earth. The disappearance of the old heaven and earth will take place when the Lord returns in judgment. At that time, all that is evil will be completely removed. That change will come about in somewhat the same direct manner as did the original creation. God spoke and it was done. The change I speak of above is one which is brought about by the gospel, and by men's having observed the consequences of rejecting and accepting the truth.

In verse sixteen, firstfruit is mentioned. What is the firstfruit? It is the Jew. In Old Testament times under the law of Moses, firstfruits were sacrificed unto God before the rest of the harvest was acceptable. God was to receive his portion first. Then,

the people could partake of the rest of the fruit of their labor. The relationship between the firstfruit and the rest was that the firstfruit could render the rest of the harvest acceptable to God.

There are two figures used in verse sixteen. Both of them teach the same lesson. The nourishment traveled through the root before it reached the branches. If the root was healthy, the branches stood to receive nourishment.

Paul's point is this. Long before the Gentiles had taken nourishment from God, the Jews had done so. They had been close to God for century upon century. It would be an unnatural situation for the root of a plant, which was close to the source of nourishment, to be removed while the branches were receiving food. It would also be unnatural for the harvest to be received while the firstfruit was rejected. The natural state would be for the firstfruit to play a part in the holiness of the entire lump, and for the root to aid in bringing nourishment to the branches.

If the Jews as root and firstfruit could be brought back to a right relationship, it would serve to bless the Gentiles also.

ROM 11:17 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;

ROM 11:18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

The olive tree is a symbol for the group of people who live and grow through the sustenance of God. It is rooted in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It has Jewish natural branches, and Gentile branches have been grafted in. We are not talking about the church alone here. Before the Church of Christ existed, God had a people. That people began with Abraham and grew into Israel. Fleshly Israel was replaced by spiritual Israel; but throughout history, there has been a plan with God supplying the food and men feeding upon that nourishment and carrying it to other men.

There is a somewhat similar figure in the twelfth chapter of Revelation. A woman is seen there adorned with the sun, moon and stars. That woman is not the Church of Christ alone. She is the church in the Christian age; but, God's woman existed in the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations also. She was the bride of God. She gave birth to his children through every dispensation. Each of these figures aid in understanding the other.

Many of the Jews had refused the spiritual food supply which God had provided. There was nothing for him to do but prune them away. After they were cut back, there were still natural branches left; but, now God reached out to the wild olive tree for replacements. The branches of a wild olive tree would be neglected and short of the type of spiritual food which God supplied to the one within his vineyard. However, when they were grafted into the good olive tree, they would partake of the fatness of God's blessings. With Christ supplying the fatness, they

would be made full. They could then bear much fruit.

The plant had grown from its root. If there had been no root, the Gentile would have had no place to be grafted in. The spiritual blessings which had come down through time had come through the root of the good olive tree. If the Gentiles were about to take a haughty attitude toward the Jew and consider him an eternal castoff, they needed to take a second thought. God had not cast away the fleshly seed of Abraham completely and forever. He still cared about them and worked toward their return.

ROM 11:19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

ROM 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

ROM 11:21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Lest the Gentile get the idea that God rejected the Jew because he wished to make room for the Gentile, Paul speaks sharply in opposition. The Jew was not broken off because that would make room for the Gentile. He was broken off because he would not believe what God taught. Since he would not believe, he had not united himself with the Messiah. Outside Christ, he could bear no fruit and, therefore, he must be cut off.

Neither was it because God was showing partiality that the Gentile had now been accepted.

It was because he was receptive to Christ, who is now the source of food. The Gentiles fullness was a direct result of this receptivity and union with the "Bread of life".

Rather than being proud and haughty, the Gentile should beware. Pride goeth before a fall, and those that think they stand are warned to take heed, lest they fall. The Jews were natural branches. They had been a part of the olive tree for a long while before the Gentile had come in. God had cut off those branches which had been a part of the tree from its beginning. That being so, he could certainly cut off branches which had been grafted in later. Those who stood, stood because of belief. Those who were cut off were cast away because of unbelief. This was the sole factor.

ROM 11:22 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.

ROM 11:23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

There are several facets of God's nature. Among these are his severity and his goodness. Some cannot accept the severity of God as a part of his nature. According to them, he is loving, kind, merciful and patient. He *is* all of these things; but, he is also powerful, severe and a consuming fire. It is most

foolish to ignore the latter side of his personality.

Paul sees the Gentiles in danger of doing just that. They were then enjoying his goodness because they were living in harmony with his will. If they continued to live in that manner, they would continue to see the loving kindness of Jehovah. If they followed the example of the unbelieving Jews, they could expect to see the opposite side of God, just as the Jews had. God is not a respecter of persons.

Just as the Gentile needed to take heed lest he fall, the Jew still had hope, if he left his unbelief. There has been a long involved answer to the original question which was: *“Has the Jew fallen, never to rise again?”* After elaborating on the subject, the apostle puts it in a nutshell. The Jew may come back if he will turn from his unbelief. They are the natural branches. God can certainly graft them back in.

ROM 11:24 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?

It would be even simpler for God to graft the Jew back into the good olive tree than it would be for the Gentile to be grafted in. The Gentile should be more surprised at his own acceptance into the tree than at God bringing back the natural parts of the tree. The Jew was welcome through Christ, but only through Christ.

ROM 11:25 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.

Paul uses the word “mystery” repeatedly. To him, a mystery is not a matter so deep it is unintelligible. It is information which, at one point in time, either is hidden or has been hidden; but, at some later time was to be revealed. In Paul’s thinking, the greatest mystery of all is the mystery of godliness. It is a mystery which, when revealed, provides a pathway for the unity of both the Jew and the Gentile in Christ. He looks fondly forward to a time when the revelation of that mystery brings all flesh together as one new man in the Lord.

The blindness spoken of in verse twenty-five is the same as he has been elaborating on throughout the chapter. Many scholars and translations would render the word hardness. They had hardened their hearts, closed their eyes, and stopped their ears to the truth; however, the blindness or hardening had only been in part. It had not been total. There are two senses in which this is true. First, Paul had previously proved that not all Jews had been blind. Some had seen the Christ for what he truly was. Second, he pointed out that the blindness was not for all time. It would come to a halt.

He declares the blindness will remain until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. If we can find out when the fullness of the Gentiles was to come

in, we can determine when the blindness of the Jews is to cease.

More than one explanation is given to the meaning of this verse. First, there is a difficulty in the usage of the word “until”. It is possible for the word to be used in two different senses. In the first usage, the word is speaking of a series of events which have continued to a point in time, without considering what occurs after that point. Here is an example: John 5:17 says, “*My Father worketh even until now.*” Jesus is talking about God. He does not in any way mean to say God no longer works. He is saying God has not ceased to work to the point in time he is considering. There are many passages where the word “until” is used in this way.

However, there are also places where the word “until” notes an abrupt change in circumstances after the point in time is reached. An example is found in Matthew 1:25. There it says that Joseph knew not his wife Mary “until” she had brought forth her firstborn son and laid him in the manger. The point is absolutely clear here that until the child was born, she did not know Joseph; but that after that time, they changed to normal husband and wife relations. If I say, “I will not work for you any more until you pay me for my last work”, it is made clear that I am willing to work for you again after you pay me. Otherwise, I would have said, “If you ever wish for me to work for you again, you had better pay me for the last work.”

Some say the context here does not demand the latter meaning of the word “until”. I agree that it

does not demand it; however, I am firmly convinced it strongly implies it. The tone of the entire chapter is that God is working with two groups of people, the Jews and the Gentiles. He has known and blessed the Jews for long centuries; but, they have rejected him. He will now turn his major effort toward the Gentiles to provoke the Jews to jealousy. He expects that provocation to bear fruit in persuading the Jews to change their mind. You may argue he is talking about only a remnant of them coming back. I must disagree. The remnant spoken of has already played its part by this time. There was a “remnant” of the once glorious Jewish nation who returned to Palestine after the captivity. There was also a remnant of the Jews then living, who accepted Jesus as Messiah. That is not proof there shall never be more than a remnant of the Jewish ethnic group who will ever remove the veil from their heart. It seems to me this chapter is strong evidence for the opposite.

It is true they could leave as a mass and return as individuals. Still, when in verse fifteen he says the receiving of the Jews would be like life from death, that life from death is pointed at the Gentile also, not at the Jew only. He is not speaking of individual conversions there. He is looking at a massive return similar in some manner to the massive rejection.

We must now give attention to the “fulness of the Gentiles”. If the blindness of the Jews is to continue until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, we need to know the meaning of this phrase. One possibility is this is talking about most of the Gentiles who will

receive and obey the gospel. It would then refer to a certain number of them. The eleventh verse of the sixth chapter of Revelation is fascinating. The martyrs have been wondering how long it shall be that the destroyers of the earth will be allowed to continue their wicked ways. God replies the martyrs must be patient and wait until their brethren and fellowservants, who should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. The idea of fulness would refer to a major portion, or all of a particular group. As was hinted at earlier, I do not believe this is the meaning.

A second possibility is the Jews are to be blind until Christ returns, since the Gentiles will not be fully, or completely, come in until the end of time. This does not agree with the context of the chapter, which is that turning to the Gentiles is for the purpose of inspiring the Jews to receive the Messiah.

I believe the true meaning of the passage to be as follows. The fullness of the Gentiles is that fullness of life which comes in being united with Christ. Outside of Christ, life is empty. In Christ, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Jesus is the Living water, the Bread of life, the Great Physician, and the Shepherd who leads unto the green pastures. There is “life in the Son”. The Jews had once been full. Before the Christian age, fullness in God had come in a different manner. The Jew had enjoyed that fullness in a multitude of ways. Now that he had rejected God’s new channel of fullness, the Jew would suffer starvation of soul. While the Gentile was made full, the Jew had been diminished, or emptied.

To me, that was the thrust of the entire account of the olive trees. God had provided a source of fullness. Once the Jew had received the fatness and the fullness of God, he was a natural part of the good olive tree. When Christ was made the succourer of many, the Jew had refused the fullness and so was found empty.

So, what shall be the result? The Jew will look at his own miserable empty condition. Like the prodigal son, he will see that it need not be like that. In his Father's house, the Gentiles are living in fullness. They shall be made jealous and react to God's plan of action just as God had planned it. And, as he rejected the Lord in impressive numbers, he will also return to the Lord in impressive numbers. This return will so affect the entire globe that, both Jews and Gentiles will see a change so startling it will be like a massive resurrection from the dead. There will be no miracle other than the gospel. No return to the land of Palestine. No personal appearance of Jesus Christ. Simply the power of the gospel unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

The present condition of the earth is not that wonderful day predicted by the prophets when the meek shall inherit the earth. When the Jews and the Gentiles together receive and enjoy the fullness of the olive tree simultaneously, the kingdoms of this earth may become of the Lord and of his Christ (Revelation 11:15). When this happens, the Church shall have made known the "fellowship of the mystery—in order that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and

powers in heavenly places. God, Christ, the Church and the Word of God will demonstrate the foolishness of the rejection of God. And it shall be made evident through the fellowship of the mystery. (See Ephesians 3:8-10.)

There are three passages of scripture which should be noticed in connection with the fullness of the Gentiles. The present verse is one of the three. Another is Luke 21:24. A third is Revelation 11:1-3. Since we have explored Romans 11:25, let us look at Luke 21:24. Jesus appears to be referring to the end of the Jewish nation in the fall of Jerusalem. He says the Jews shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down until the *times of the Gentiles* be fulfilled. The question here is to whether the times of the Gentiles is identical with the fullness of the Gentiles mentioned in Romans 11:25.

The link between the two passages is evident. In Romans eleven, the Jews have been diminished and rendered empty. In Luke twenty-one, the same is true. The diminishment is for the same reason. God has been long-suffering until it is apparent that a new path of action is required. The Jews have been blessed bountifully. They have not responded. Therefore, God will remove his blessings, scatter them abroad, and turn to the Gentiles who will hear. The destruction of Jerusalem, predicted by Jesus, is a major event in the change of the Jews from fullness to a diminished state. The times of the Gentiles, or the fullness of the Gentiles, would replace the fullness of the Jews.

The passage in Revelation eleven is more difficult. It speaks of a time when the Holy City will be trodden down by the Gentiles for a time, times, and half a time. The Holy City is clearly Jerusalem; but, I believe it is the New Jerusalem, rather than the physical Jerusalem of old. There are many interesting types in both the Old and the New Testaments. It is likely the literal treading down of earthly Jerusalem prefigures the spiritual trampling of the New Jerusalem by those who are not spiritual Jews by faith. It appears there was a time of the Gentiles for physical Jerusalem, and then another time of the Gentiles for the church on Mount Zion.

ROM 11:26 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:

ROM 11:27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Two very important words are found in verse twenty-six. They are the words “so” and “all”. If we understand the use of these two words in the discussion, we will probably grasp the truth Paul was presenting. If we fail to gain a proper understanding of the use of these two words, we will go astray.

The word “so” can be used in the following sense. If Paul has been saying previously that the fullness of the Gentiles means all of the Gentiles will be saved, he might well follow this by saying that such

action might provoke all of the Jews to repentance, and they would follow. It would then say, all of the Gentiles will be saved. This will cause the Jews to follow. So, all of the Jews will be saved too. The word “so” would then indicate the last action took place because of the first action.

But, the word “so” can also be used to indicate manner of action. We might say, Betty rides her bicycle very well. So does Mary. In that case, the point of verse twenty-six would be that the Gentiles were saved through Jesus Christ as their Redeemer. So, or in like manner, must the Jews be saved.

Our previous approach to the matter of fullness should lead the reader to anticipate our stand. The fullness is not a matter of what fraction of the Gentiles or the Jews will be saved, it is the quality of life which comes through associating oneself with Christ as the source of spiritual nourishment and blessing. A Deliverer has been sent forth from Zion. That Deliverer is Jesus. He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Neither Jew nor Gentile can be saved without uniting themselves with the Lord. Any man who is saved must come through Christ. *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father; but by me.”*

Therefore, the word “so” in verse twenty-six means “in like manner”. This is the entire theme of Romans. Both Jew and Gentile are sinners. Both are worthy of death because of that sin. A redeemer has been provided to make a way of escape. If any man comes to the Father, that man must come through the Redeemer, not through his own deeds of merit.

But, does “all” mean that the entirety of fleshly Israel is to be finally saved? We must first ask if the Israel spoken of here is fleshly Israel, or spiritual Israel? Is it the seed of Abraham by flesh, or is it the seed of Abraham by faith? The use of the pronouns “they” and “them” in the next verses seem to clearly define the Israel of verse twenty-six. Those later verses definitely refer to fleshly Israel. Since that is the case, the antecedent of the pronouns must also be fleshly Israel. Every man or woman who is of the fleshly seed of Abraham must be saved in the same manner as were those of the remnant who had already accepted the gospel. All of fleshly Israel that will be saved must arrive in that saved condition by allowing the Redeemer to remove their ungodliness.

The word “for” is used in verse twenty-seven. This connects the two verses. God had a covenant with the Jews in the past. That covenant did not take away their sins. The blood of bulls and goats did not do that. A remembrance was made every year on the day of atonement. The new covenant replaced the old one. Under the new covenant, their sins could be totally removed. That would happen only through the Redeemer. The entire book of Hebrews, with its emphasis upon the new and better way, is relevant to verse twenty-seven.

ROM 11:28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

ROM 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

The Jews had, by their alienation from God, brought about much enrichment of the Gentiles. At least, that was true of the masses of the Jews; however, there was that remnant who had become a part of the election of God. They had chosen to receive his righteousness through Christ; therefore, he had elected them to be his people and share in his gifts and blessings.

It is good to know that we worship a God who is not fickle. God keeps his promises. Men change and break their promises. At times they are unable to keep their promises because of circumstances beyond their control. It is not so with Jehovah. He can, and will, perform that which he promises. We need not worry about him saying one thing today and another tomorrow. He told Moses that “I AM” hath sent you. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In him, there is no variableness of turning. God’s promises have been made concerning both Jews and Gentiles. He will keep those promises.

ROM 11:30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

ROM 11:31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

The “ye” in verse thirty is the Gentiles. In times before, the Gentiles had been far from God. Now,

the rejection of the gospel by the Jews had resulted in their having had the blessings of forgiveness extended to them. Through the Jew, the Gentile had been the recipient of the riches of Christ.

Now, he says, the tables are to be turned. Since the Gentile is now close while the Jew is afar off, the Gentile must not boast in his position and rejoice that the Jew is made empty. Contrariwise, the Gentile must look upon the Jew with mercy. If he does so, the Gentiles' mercy may result in the Jew coming to Christ and receiving the mercy of God.

ROM 11:32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

In the third chapter of Romans, Paul had shown that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The Gentile had broken the moral law which was written in his heart. The Jew had transgressed the oracles of God, or law of Moses, which had been given especially to him. The passage is not saying God caused all men to sin, and they had no freedom to do otherwise. It is saying that, before God can show mercy upon all men, those men must recognize their lost condition. When they find they are unbelievers, and turn to obedience, God will then bestow his grace and mercy upon them in Christ.

ROM 11:33 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!

ROM 11:34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or, who hath been his counsellor?

Paul had been speaking of the mystery of God. That mystery was difficult for man to accept. It had been hidden from the foundation of the earth, and had been gradually revealed through the prophets, and later through the Son of God and the apostles. God had a plan through which all men who would come to him might do so. It appeared at times as if the plan would not work. First, the Gentile was separated and the Jew was close. Then, the Gentile was brought nigh and the Jew was separated and cut off. However, ultimately, both Jew and Gentile were to be made one new man in Christ Jesus. Man could never have conceived or implemented such a plan. But, God's ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts are higher than our thoughts, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

There are two ways of finding out about God. One is through an examination of his handiwork. The heavens and the earth declare his glory, his wisdom and his power. They do not reveal the specifics of his will as to man's actions. No man can, by his own efforts, read the mind of God. No man has ever been able to give God counsel which God himself did not know of before it was offered. We may not like what he does. And, we may not understand what he does. But, in neither case, are we in a position to pressure or mold him to our own desires. The best we can do is request that he listen to our prayers and then respond to them as he knows best. The second way we may know of God is through

his revealed Word. Once he has spoken, we may know his mind. Before that, we must wait patiently.

ROM 11:35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

ROM 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be the glory forever. Amen.

We are dependent upon Him, not He upon us. His mind is greater than our mind. His knowledge and wisdom are infinitely above ours. We can give nothing to Him which He has not first given to us. It is then best that we not question His invitation to both Jew and Gentile to receive fullness in Jesus Christ, His Son.

The entire purpose of our creation was to please, honor, and glorify Him. See Revelation 4:11 and Colossians 1:16.

Chapter 11— Summary

1. God had not completely given up on all the Jews.
2. Paul himself was an example of the remnant whom God still claimed.
3. When the Jews turned away from Him, the Gentiles had profited.
4. If the Jews were to accept Christ, it would be a great rejuvenation.
5. God can nourish anyone who will believe in Jesus Christ.

6. He can also cut off anyone who refuses to believe in Christ.
7. Neither the Jew nor the Gentile has the right to question the wisdom or knowledge of God as He offers or cuts off His blessings.

Chapter 12

ROM 12:1 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.

The previous chapters have reached a conclusion. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, both to the Jew and to the Gentile. At one time, God's mercy was particularly extended to the Jew. Later, the Jew separated himself from the mercy of God through his rejection of Christ. God then extended his mercy to the Gentile. The ultimate purpose of God is to offer his mercies to both the Jew and the Gentile. Chapters nine through eleven were devoted to explaining the need for unity of both in Jesus.

Now that the argument is concluded, the obvious conclusion is presented. If God has been so gracious as to extend his mercies to all men, it is only reasonable they respond to his mercy by offering their lives as sacrifices to him. In fact, I can hardly conceive of anything more unreasonable than to have God offer his unsearchable riches to us, and then receive nothing in return. It is interesting that men are to present themselves as "living" sacrifices. The bulls, sheep and goats of the sacrifices of old were slaughtered upon the altar as they were presented to God. The only sense in which the man is slaughtered in the sacrifice mentioned in this verse is the crucifying of the old man of sin. The new man who serves Christ is truly alive. Having risen from the waters of baptism, he presents the members of

his body as instruments of righteousness, to be utilized in the service of the Father and His Son.

Paul uses a very strong word to appeal to them. He does not command. He does not suggest. He **beseeches**. Remember, this is an apostle speaking. He has enormous authority. Yet, he beseeches, or begs, them to offer themselves. They are his brethren because they have been born into the same family of God of which he is a member. In a special way, his brethren in the flesh, or Jews, should have willingly received his words. But, he speaks to Gentile brethren also.

This is only one of several places where Paul urges men to present their bodies for service to God. In Romans chapter six, he says, *“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”* (Romans 6:13). He goes further in a later verse, *“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”* (Romans 6:19).

If the presentation of the body is to be acceptable to God, it must be holy. Jehovah does not appreciate anything but the best we have. He wished for his priests in the Old Testament times to be without blemish. He also wishes for the bride of Christ to be the same as far as the soul is concerned. When men spread out hands filled with blood in worship to God, he turns away. When they offer a life contaminated with unholy desires and actions, they

must first repent before they may approach Him.

A very interesting related verse is Psalm 51:17: *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”*

ROM 12:2 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.

There are constant pressures on every man to follow the broad way which leads to destruction. The majority are moving on that route. It is all too easy to follow the crowd. But that is the way of death. If we allow ourselves to be saturated with wickedness, we will gradually be molded into a pattern of unrighteousness. I think the following illustration is very true to the case. If one takes a glass of rich and creamy milk and holds it under the water faucet for some time, it will soon be diluted. Before long, the milk will have been completely replaced by the water. If one allows a stream of evil to enter his life, that evil may steadily replace the righteousness which was originally there. We must not allow ourselves to be made into the image of the world.

If we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God, and perform our spiritual service, we must be transformed into the image of God by the renewing of our minds. Christianity is a religion which depends heavily upon teaching. The body acts under the control of the mind. When the mind is fed with the proper kind of spiritual food, the members of the

body will serve as instruments of righteousness. We are told to renew the inward man day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). This may be accomplished by looking into the law of the Lord with an open face (one which has no veil blinding it). When one looks into the law of Christ, he may be changed from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

The use of the word “prove” in verse two is in the sense of testing it to demonstrate its trustworthiness. By living the Christian life, one is able to come to a full appreciation of the fullness of God in Christ. Paul is encouraging such a procedure.

ROM 12:3 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.

ROM 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

ROM 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

We can still see the continuation of the line of thought presented in chapters nine to eleven. There was a tendency on the part of both the Jew and the Gentile to look down on the other. This is not a Christian attitude. Paul considers it an undeserved

blessing for God to have permitted a man, who had opposed the Son of God, to now preach the Christ as an example of humility. Paul has the privilege of telling these members of the body of Christ that they cannot live in a state of individual pride and still operate efficiently as a Christian organism.

All human bodies have many members. Nothing may be accomplished until the separate members coordinate their efforts. Much more is said about this in the twelfth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians. There he said we cannot all be eyes. We cannot all be ears. Every man and woman must do that for which God blessed them.

In the times during which the New Testament writings were being produced, God granted special abilities beyond the normal. It becomes clear as we proceed through the chapter the measures of faith here were related to the spiritual gifts of chapter twelve in the first letter to Corinth. God has never treated all men in exactly the same manner. At the time of Paul's writing of Second Corinthians, God had given some the gift of prophecy. He had given others a gift of teaching, etc. These were the result of their faith. They were the measures of faith. Note that a stronger faith received a gift of greater measure. All gifts were important. All were measured out to them because of their faith; and without faith, they would not have received them.

What is the application to modern times? The Word of God has now been confirmed. The type of gifts given those members of the Church are no longer needed; but, that does not take away from the significance of the lesson to us. Because of our

faith, we have become a part of the body of Christ. God has blessed us with unique talents and special opportunities no one else has. If we do not fulfill our part of the labor expected of the body of Christ, the entire body will be hindered to that degree. It is our reasonable service to lend ourselves sacrificially to the progress of the entire body, and the resulting glory of God.

Let each of us join the members of the Church at Rome, in presenting ourselves as living sacrifices. By ourselves, cut off from Christ, life is empty. Joined to Christ, and giving ourselves to the harmonious action of the entire Church, our own life will be made full and the wisdom of God will be made manifest to the principalities and powers in heavenly places.

ROM 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

ROM 12:7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Since God has provided different members of the body of Christ with different abilities, we must utilize these abilities effectively to be pleasing to him. The gift of prophecy was normally a miraculous gift in the first century. Joel had said long before that, "*Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.*" Peter reminded those at Pentecost the words of Joel were being fulfilled before their eyes. These miraculous

abilities came about either directly from God, as in the case of the apostles and the house of Cornelius; or, they were the result of the laying on of the apostles hands. A prophet is one who speaks for God. God reveals information to the prophet and the prophet transfers the message to listeners. Those who had the gift of prophecy were urged to use it to the very best of their ability. Through this whole twelfth chapter, Paul is imploring his readers to live in complete commitment to the cause of Jesus Christ. If God had given the ability to prophesy, the person was to make full and complete use of that gift.

But, prophesy is not the only activity men can perform in the service of God. There were those who had special ability to minister to others. The ministry mentioned here may well be that of miraculous healing. This was also a potent instrument in confirming the message of the apostles in their day. If a man had that ability, he was to use it with all his energies. If one needed his services, he was to provide for them whatever he was able to offer.

We must note the similarity of the gifts here to the list of offices in the church as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-15. Apostles, evangelists, teachers, and prophets were all important in bringing the church up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Teachers may have had some miraculous abilities above and beyond the normal. Whether or not this was the case, they were to do the best they were able to do. Teachers today are to do the same. There is absolutely no excuse for a teacher coming to a class without having prepared the lesson of the hour. This creates confusion,

boredom, and spiritual death. God will hold such lazy persons responsible in the judgment.

ROM 12:8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

ROM 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Ahbor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Now, we may be getting into gifts that are more of the natural type as opposed to the miraculous gifts of prophesying and speaking in tongues, etc. Exhortation would have been used after teaching had been done. Many good teachers in our day wish they had more power to exhort the listeners. Most effective preachers in the twentieth century are good at exhortation. On occasion, one may see the effects of a combination of teaching and exhortation. A local preacher may be more talented as a teacher than as an exhorter. His listeners will know what they should do because they have been carefully taught. But, the teaching preacher does not move them to action. Then the meeting preacher arrives and is good at exhortation. He reaches into the emotional depths of the audience and pulls at their very heartstrings. Things happen!!

Paul says that if one has been given the ability by the Lord to stir people to action, he should make full use of that gift. This would be true if it were miraculous, or if it were a natural ability.

He that ruleth is to rule in diligence. This is probably speaking of the rule of the eldership. If one has been given that extremely sober responsibility, he is to exercise it with enthusiasm. Halfhearted supervision of the flock of God will result in their being devoured by Satan who goes about like a roaring lion seeking the tender ones. They must be protected with great care.

He that showeth mercy is to do it with cheerfulness. One who shows mercy is in a position where the life of another is under his control. By giving to that unfortunate person, the one who shows mercy may make that life more pleasant. It would be possible for the one capable of showing mercy, to show that mercy in two contrasting styles. He could do it grudgingly; or he could do it cheerfully. The example of both God and Christ is that of cheerful giving. God does not constantly complain that he was forced to give his only Begotten Son for our salvation. Nor, does Christ spend all of his time telling us how he could have remained in heaven and let us die. Both of them surely would rather have had it some other way; but, each willingly and cheerfully gave of their mercy that we might live. We should do the same.

Love is to be unfeigned. Judas kissed his Lord as he betrayed him. That was a case of feigned love. Is there a worse sin than to warp and distort love?, When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, he said it was a matter of loving God and man. I think that, if we were in the place of our Father in heaven, we would look most unkindly upon the man who pretended to love when he did

not. Feigned love is easier to detect than one might suppose. Let us avoid it with great care.

Abhorance and cleavage, as used here, are opposites. One abhors that which he hates. He cleaves to that which he loves. We are told to “*shun the very appearance of evil*” (1 Thess. 5:22). It is altogether too easy to be conformed to this world when we allow ourselves to rub shoulders with it on a daily basis. The Christian is to be holy, even as God is holy. God cannot look upon evil; therefore, we should avoid it also.

If a young man loves a young woman, he wishes to spend much time with her, and vice versa. If we love the good and hate the evil, we will make every attempt to avoid the evil and associate ourselves with the good. In doing this, we will transform ourselves by the renewing of our minds and, thus, prove that perfect will of God. Hebrews 1:9 quotes from Isaiah 61. Speaking of the coming Messiah, it says, “*Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.*” This is the proper attitude for all who would unite themselves with the Son of God.

ROM 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

ROM 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

There are several kinds of love. The love spoken of in verse ten is a tender love, such as that demonstrated between a mother and her child or by

members of a family. After the long discussion of differences between Jews and Gentiles, Paul is now exhorting them to do more than just patch up the differences. He wants them to recognize their relationship as brothers and sisters under the Fatherhood of God. If they do so, they will find it necessary to place the other person higher than self. What a wonderful world it would be if we could accept Paul's challenge. To seek the honor of another rather than to seek our own honor would make life much more full for all concerned.

Another lesson can be drawn from verse ten. Christians are to hold the household of faith in special esteem. When there is a choice to be made between an association with a Christian and another association with a non-Christian, the partnership with the Christian is to be preferred. We do not isolate ourselves completely from unbelievers; otherwise, we could not convert them. We do prefer Christians as companions and partners.

A slothful person is a lazy person. The opposite of being slothful is being diligent. If a thing is worth being done by a Christian, it is worth being done with fervency. No one should ever be able to accuse a Christian businessman of running a slipshod operation. No one should ever be able to point a finger at a Christian employee for failing to give an honest day's work. Even when a Christian is engaged in recreation, the attitude should be one of enthusiasm and energetic participation. The Christian should always be aware of the fact that when he works for a human employer, he is doing far more than that. He is performing the business of

the Lord. A human employer may not know he is being cheated. The Lord will know.

ROM 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

ROM 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Without hope, there is no rejoicing. Starving people with no prospect of food do not rejoice. Slaves who are beaten without prospect of freedom do not rejoice. If the non-Christian comes to a realization of his wretched condition, he will not rejoice either. There is nothing in eternity for him except continuous misery. The Christian is not so. He has every reason to rejoice. Christ offers hope. No present difficulty is too much to bear. Someday it will pass and a brighter day will ultimately arrive.

The Christian can be patient in tribulation because the tribulation is temporary. Even in the great tribulation, which we all share as pilgrims in a world racked by sin, the righteous lift up their feeble knees and march on to glory. While others may curse their condition and throw tantrums, the Christian patiently perseveres. To the Thessalonians, Paul said, *“But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope”* (I Thess. 4:13). To the Romans, he had said in 5:3, *“We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.”*

There is an avenue available to the Christian,

setting him apart from others; that is the avenue of prayer. The Christian need never be alone. At any moment it is possible to call upon divine assistance. If that were not so, the tribulation might well be overwhelming. I have seen men dying of cancer with pain wrecked bodies. As they share a moment of prayer with a fellow Christian, one can detect the consolation which comes to them in communion with God. I have seen parents who had lost a baby within a few days after its birth. The tears flow unhindered. The only real remedy lies in reaching out to God, who knows and understands every need.

A part of the support a Christian enjoys during tribulation comes from fellowship with other Christians. True Christianity does not allow a brother or sister to suffer if that suffering can be relieved. Very early in the history of the Church, arrangements were made for sharing with those in trouble. When the Grecian widows were neglected in the daily ministrations, the problem was attacked immediately and eliminated. When a member of the body is suffering, other members rush to its aid. The body of Christ should enjoy the same cooperation.

Christians are to be given to hospitality. This meant a little more in early Christian days than it does now. To most of us, hospitality is a matter of inviting close friends to our home to visit and enjoy an evening. The hospitality of the early Christians was more closely related to our word hospital. It might be a matter of inviting friends in to eat. It might be a matter of inviting strangers in when they were passing through. It might be caring for the physical needs of one who had been beaten by

thieves. It might be visiting a brother who had been cast into prison and taking a little food to him. Whatever the need of another, the Christian was to do what was possible to relieve it. That was hospitality. Before an elder could be qualified for that office, he must have demonstrated his hospitable nature.

ROM 12:14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

ROM 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

ROM 12:16 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.

The command to bless them which persecute sounds an echo of Jesus' words in Matthew, chapter five. Verse fourteen makes a sharp contrast in two attitudes toward ones' fellow man. If one loves his fellow man, he will seek his good. This will include those who do us good; but, it will also encompass those who persecute us. We may despise the actions of another. We cannot despise his soul. It should be the desire of every Christian to bring everyone into the fellowship of the Christian family, with all the attendant blessings. We are told to do good unto all men, especially those of the household of faith. To curse is to desire damage and destruction for others. This is not the mark of a Christian.

We will find it necessary to endure persecution. If they hated our Master, they will no doubt hate us. If they hate us, they will persecute us. The persecution should only serve to purify our faith and build our Christian character. If we endure such persecution for a short time in this life, we shall live in the light of God's glory for all of eternity. Is it not worth the effort?

Verse fifteen reaches deep into the very soul of each of us. Life is a mixture of the sweet and the bitter. All men experience both extremes. I am impressed with Paul's attempt here to unite the Jew and the Gentile. He has not lost sight of his earlier goals in this Roman letter. Through this entire section, there is a desire to motivate each Christian to a greater concern for others. He is to subordinate self, and in that manner he will magnify the body of Christ. If his brother is happy and full of joy, he should share in that joy. It will take nothing from his brother; but rather will enhance that joy. If his brother is burdened, he is to take a share of the burden. This action will make the joy greater and the burden lighter for all involved.

This is one area where preachers find a difficulty. They, of all men, have more opportunity for such sharing. It is altogether too easy to become distorted, spending ones' self in one of these at the expense of the other. If one spends the majority of time rejoicing with those who rejoice, life may become a circus. As Amos put it, one may lie upon his bed of ivory while others suffer. If one spends the majority of time consoling and comforting the brokenhearted and infirm, life may become dismal and depressed. It is

not easy to stay on balance. Every dedicated Christian will find this true to some degree.

To be of the same mind, one toward another, is to feel a sense of fellowship with others. Other places in the New Testament teach that we should be in agreement in our doctrine, etc. This passage is not addressing that point. This verse is a caution not to either trample or forget others. We must have a sense of sympathy and understanding.

If one constantly desires to exalt self, he will fail to be concerned about the rest of the family of God. With sights set upon high things, or things which will exalt self, it is possible to completely isolate himself from the rest of the body. There are no Christians of such low estate that any other Christian is justified in ignoring them. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. One man may think he stands higher than another. If he thinks so, he has deluded himself. Pride is one of the most dangerous mental conditions of all. We cannot afford it. It tends to come just before a fall.

A man who is wise in his own conceits will see other men as fools, while his estimation of his own wisdom is most grand. No other man will ever have an idea worth considering. No other man will ever do anything worth praising. If each member of the human body were to adopt a prideful attitude toward the other members, we would have eyes disparaging feet and ears disparaging eyes. Instead, the members of your fleshly body support one another and encourage each other. It should be so in the Church. Isaiah said, *“Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight” (Isaiah 5:21)!*

ROM 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

ROM 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

To recompense is to repay. One is not to repay one who has done him evil with evil actions of his own. To do so is to multiply the amount of evil in the world. We need less evil, not more. Spiritual attitudes and actions are contagious. If one sows malice, there will be a harvest of malice. If one sows kindness, there will be a harvest of kindness. The best way to put out the fires of hatred is to quench them with love.

We are to provide an example of honesty. The selfish man will gain what he can regardless of the impact upon others. He will deceive and lie to obtain his desires. The Christian is dependable. He will tell the truth. He will go an extra mile to be sure he does not take advantage of another. He will not break contracts. He will give honest work for his pay. If there is any complaint about his having taken advantage, it will be without foundation.

If the Jew and the Gentile are to be brothers and sisters in Christ, they must make an effort to live in harmony. No husband and wife, no parent and child, no employer and employee, ever lives in peace without a conscious effort.

It is not possible to live peaceably with some persons. Even the Lord himself could not accomplish this. There are those who live with a chip on their

shoulder every minute of the day. It seems they make as great an effort to encourage conflict as the Christian makes to establish peace. On occasion, it becomes a matter of avoiding the presence of these people, if it is possible. Above all, one must not allow ones' self to be drawn into foolish backbiting and deliberately destructive conduct.

ROM 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Paul called his readers dearly beloved because they are members of the Christian family. All of their attitudes should reflect a spirit of love. This is especially true in their relationship with others in the family of God. When one offends a Christian, the response of the Christian should be one of warmth and concern for the offending party. It should never smack of spite.

Through both the Old Testament times as well as the age of Christ, God has provided a means of retribution for evil. It is true that it was said, "*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*" (*Lev. 24:17-20*). However, in both testaments, God has encouraged this vengeance to be accomplished through others rather than by the one offended. This promotes a less passionate punishment. Otherwise, the punishment may well exceed the need because of the human tendency to pay back with three or four times the damage originally done. Many a parent has told their children to let them handle an offense by one child against another. The parent

knows full well that if the offended child tries to handle the matter, it may well escalate into a full fledged war.

We are to give place unto wrath in that we allow God to take care of the wrath rather than we ourselves. There are many other mental attitudes which will help us to be stronger in the Lord than those of malice and vengeance. The confession of the prodigal son is informative in this regard. Upon his return, he said to his father, *“I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.”* A sin against our fellow man is a sin against God. He knows far better than we do what response should be made to it. We might punish too much, or too little. We might not fit the punishment to the sin in the way that God is able to do. We need to give place unto wrath then and let God see to it.

Allowing God to be the vengeance taker is not new by any means. We read in Deuteronomy 32:35, *“To me belongeth vengeance and recompense.”* Again in Psalm 94:1, *“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.”* Paul is then reinforcing a principle which had been in existence for centuries.

ROM 12:20 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.

ROM 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

The teaching of verses twenty and twenty-one are exactly in line with those of Jesus in Matthew,

chapter five. Jesus said, *“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”* In the fifth chapter of this book of Romans Paul wrote, *“While we were yet enemies of God, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:10)*. It is most difficult to do good to one who has done us wrong. That is no excuse for retaliation. God could hardly have found it easy to send His only Begotten Son to provide a way of salvation to a world who had rejected Him repeatedly; but, He did it. We have His example. Let us follow it.

It takes a mighty small man to continue to do one evil after he has had good returned for a previous wrong. I have taught school for many years. While teaching in high school, an irate parent would occasionally come to see me. Their child had gone home and told what a terrible teacher I was and how badly the child had been mistreated. The parent would believe everything the child told them and would come in with fire in their eye. To return fire for fire was a mistake. On the other hand, if I remained calm and let them know I truly cared for their child, they often began to melt before the warmth. I have had several parents enter my room with a face as red as a beet, and leave afterward, shaking my hand and saying, “Thank you for being so understanding.” The “overcome evil with good” approach does work! Not always; but, often enough to give it a chance. Overcoming evil with evil, multiplies the evil. Overcoming evil with good, cancels the evil out.

Chapter 12— Summary

1. Since our very being is from God, it is only reasonable that we present our bodies as sacrifices to him.
2. We must see ourselves as members of a single larger body which is the church, or body of Christ today.
3. Each of us must perform the functions God has allowed us.
4. Each is to live harmoniously and peaceably with all other members.
5. We are to do good to those who offend us.
6. Vengeance does not belong to us. It belongs to God.

Chapter 13

ROM 13:1 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.

Chapter twelve closed with the admonition to refrain from taking personal vengeance. Vengeance is to be taken in God's own way and not as a result of personal passion or impulse. Rendering evil for evil on a personal basis, multiplies the evil. God has established His own procedure for handling offenses. He has provided Christians with an approach to offenses occurring both within the church and within society as a whole.

His procedure is given for grievances within the church. One goes to the brother or sister who has offended him and explains the nature of the offense and why he is upset. The two of them attempt to work it out. If that fails, two or three witnesses are called upon to offer their advice in settling the issue. If that also fails, the differences are to be laid before the entire congregation for a decision.

There is still a problem. Many offenses occur between Christians and unbelievers, and also between unbelievers and other unbelievers. God has also made provision for this type of problem. His provision is found in civil government. This verse calls the civil government "higher powers." It calls upon all souls, whether Christians or otherwise, to be subject to those higher powers. Civil government exists because God allows it to exist. Not only has

he allowed such governments to exist, he has ordained them as a means of bringing order into society outside the church.

David Lipscomb felt civil government was inherently evil. He pointed out that it was established over the will of God. It maintained itself through force rather than education and example. And it would end when the Lamb of God had gained the victory over every enemy. Lipscomb felt that it was wrong for Christians to hold public office, to serve in the armed forces or to receive wages from the government.

J. Ridley Stroop, who was the first professor at David Lipscomb to gain the doctorate, held the position that Christians could call upon the government for protection either through the army or the police force because they were required to pay taxes. However, he also was convinced Christians were not to vote, hold office or participate in the government themselves. They could call the police; but, they could not be a policeman. Dr. Stroop pointed out that if all men were faithful Christians, there would be no need for either an army or a police force.

The difficulty with the positions of David Lipscomb and Dr. Stroop is that the vast majority of men and woman are not Christians, and some of those who wear the name Christian will not settle their differences with brethren in the manner prescribed by the Holy Scriptures. The verse under discussion here says, "Let **every** soul be subject unto the higher powers." Both Christians and non-Christians are to be subject.

Titus 3:1 and I Peter 2:13-15 should also be compared with this verse.

TIT 3:1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

I PET 2:13-15 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

There is, however, a time when it is permissible for the Christian to disobey the civil government. That time comes when the government has commanded action which is contrary to the law of God (Acts 5:29).

ACT 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

ROM 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

When one resists the civil government at a time when it is fulfilling its God-given role, the result is to bring the wrath of God upon one's self. To resist

that which God has ordained is to resist God. Such resistance brings damnation.

ROM 13:3 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:

The faithful Christian has no need to fear the civil powers. Only the evil-doer need fear. When the government acts as God expects it to, it will praise and encourage the good man. It will warn and punish the evil man.

I have struggled personally with the meaning of a part of this verse and the next. The context goes on to emphasize the duty of the civil government to act as a minister of vengeance for God. Is the role of the government limited to keeping order and punishing the evil-doer? I have taught for well over thirty years in the public schools systems. I was paid by the government. My question is, "Does the government have authority from God to build roads, educate young people, develop welfare programs for the needy and regulate the agricultural production of a nation? Do such activities fall under the category of praising the good man?"

If government has overstepped its authority by entering into activities other than encouraging the good man and punishing the evil man, we may have fed the beast of Revelation. Money represents power. Since taxes can be collected by force, the government has access to power in vast amounts. In the United States of America, we have adopted the principle of

separation of church and state. As the government continues to collect more taxes and regulates more human endeavors, it runs the risk of encroaching upon ground belonging to the church, the home and industry. To an alarming degree, government today has set itself up in support of value systems opposite to those prescribed in the Word of God.

ROM 13:4 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.

What is a “minister for good”? Is it one that controls the evil-doer and thereby creates a good environment; or, is it one who collects taxes in order to finance cooperative efforts in health, education and welfare? I confess, I need further light.

One thing is certain. God has given the civil powers authority to punish the evil man. This punishment goes so far as to use the sword on him. Swords were not made to tap someone on the hand. They were made for the express purpose of taking lives. I conclude that God has given the civil government the right to use capital punishment. I would go even further. These verses imply that the government has not only the right to use capital punishment, it has the obligation to punish severely enough to stop the criminal. If the punishment is not severe enough to stop the crime, the government is not fulfilling its responsibilities.

The individual is not to seek personal revenge.

God has established the higher powers for that purpose. They must be the ones to execute vengeance.

ROM 13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

The Christian is to be subject to the civil government for two reasons. First, insubordination will bring the wrath of the government down upon him. Second, he will have done that which he knows God has forbidden. To disobey the law of the land violates the conscience.

ROM 13:6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

We have the right to look to the government for the keeping of order. Therefore, we must provide the funds to finance that action. Jesus once said we must give to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar (See Matthew 22:15-22).

I have a sermon titled "What Belongs To Caesar?" Taxes and obedience both belong to Caesar. Other things are far less clear.

ROM 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Here is a list of four things owed to the government:

1. Tribute or taxes on property.
2. Custom is taxes paid for making trades.
3. Fear is respect which leads to obedience.
4. Honor is credit for doing a good job.

ROM 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

While Paul was dealing with what one owes to the government, he decided to widen the application. The Christian is to see that **every** debt he owes is paid. There is a law which is higher than that of the government. That law is that men owe love to both God and man. He who loves God and also his fellowman fulfills the highest law of all.

ROM 13:9 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.

Love is not as difficult to define as some believe. Love is the desire for the well-being of the object loved. If man loves God, man will promote the glory and will of God. He will not seek to destroy that which God holds dear. If man loves his fellowman, he will seek the well-being of his fellowman. Paul gives a list of several of the commandments found in the law of Moses. The ten commandments were

divided into two major types. There were those which dealt with man's relationship to God and those which dealt with man's relationship to his fellowman. Paul lists those of the latter group.

Since he has said the one debt we may never completely pay is our debt of love, he lists some of the means by which we may do the best possible job of trying to pay that debt. If we love another individual, we will not break down the solidity of marriage as adultery does. If we love him, we will not injure him physically, certainly not to the extent of taking his life. We will not take his possessions. We will not even desire those possessions to the degree that we would take them if we had the power to do that. We will not bear false witness against him by telling things which are not true and, thereby, destroy his reputation.

ROM 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Jesus was once asked which was the greatest commandment. His answer was that the entirety of the law and the prophets hinged upon loving God and fellowman. Paul is making the same point here, except he is going into greater detail. If we love another, we will do him good and not harm.

I will add that God is love. Jesus was Immanuel, or God with us. Jesus said he came to fulfill the law. In fulfilling the law, Christ demonstrated how to attack the debt which no man can ever fully pay — the debt of love.

ROM 13:11 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.

Dear friend, will you wait for tomorrow to put the Christian faith into practice? We must not do that. As has been fully proved in the previous chapters of the book of Romans, the gospel is God's power to save men from the wages of sin. All men are lost without Christ. To sleep through the time God has given to hear and obey is to neglect that salvation. Today is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time. To ignore it is to invite eternal separation from all that is good. We must not do that.

ROM 13:12 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.

Christ is repeatedly described in the Scriptures as the one who brings the new day of hope. Malachi calls Christ the "*Sun of Righteousness*." Peter speaks of him as the "*Daystar*." Christ himself said, "*I am the light of the world*". John called him the "*True Light*." With Christ available, why will men continue to live in confusion and guilt?

ROM 13:13 Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in

chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

We must leave the darkness of sin with all of its corruption of the soul. Rioting, drunkenness, sexual immorality, strife and envy only destroy the soul of the one who practices them. They seduce others into walking straight into outer darkness where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

ROM 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

In contrast to such a pattern of life, men must leave the reign of the Prince of Darkness and clothe themselves with the armor of light. They must walk in the light as He is in the light. Then, the blood of the Lamb will continually cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

Chapter 13 — Summary

1. God has ordained civil government and all men are to obey civil laws.
2. Those who disobey civil laws are also disobeying God.
3. The government is to punish evil-doers and encourage well-doers.
4. The Christian pays taxes to the government and should expect it to be God's minister for taking vengeance.

5. Christian love will reduce the need for vengeance.
6. The Christian, who walks in the light, will avoid strife and envy.

Chapter 14

ROM 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

This entire chapter deals with the possible destructive effect the actions of one Christian may have upon another. All of us have seen the faith of one Christian shipwrecked by the careless speech or actions of another. Sometimes such catastrophes occurred unknowingly upon the part of the offender. Other times, the offender knew and did not care. Paul says we must be extremely careful not to allow such to take place if we can avoid it.

There are some Christians who know a given action is a matter of indifference. Others may believe that same action is a sin. The one who is more completely informed is not to draw lines of fellowship which deny the blessings of the Christian family to the one who believes a matter of indifference to be a sin. The one who is stronger in the faith is to embrace the weaker Christian as a beloved brother. However, this fellowship is not to open a door for harping and censorship.

Doubtful disputations are disputes over matters which are of questionable importance, those which the stronger Christian knows are matters of opinion.

ROM 14:2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

There are Christians who are convinced one should not eat meat. They will refrain from eating

of meat and will become vegetarians. The strong Christian will recognize this is a matter of indifference. He will feel perfectly at liberty to eat both meat and vegetables.

ROM 14:3 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.

The one who knows it is alright to eat meat is not to look with disdain upon the one who thinks the eating of meat is a sin. Nor is the one who refuses to eat meat to call the one who does eat meat a sinner. God has accepted both as his servants.

ROM 14:4 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.

Both of these Christians are servants of God. They are not the servant of their brother Christian. They will be held accountable to God, rather than to man. If God says he is pleased with his servant, no man can reverse that condition. If God condemns his servant, there is no man who can alter that condemnation.

ROM 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Now we have another example of the same problem. One Christian knows that one day should not be set up as of greater spiritual importance than others. Another man considers certain days as being worthy of exaltation.

This would have been particularly true of the converted Jews who had observed sabbaths and holy days (See Col. 2:14-17). Some today celebrate religious feast days and holidays. The first day of the week is special.

Each man must carefully determine what he believes to be pleasing to God.

ROM 14:6 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.

Each of these Christians is acting according to his conscience. The one who honors a certain day as being of spiritual importance does so because he believes that is approved of God and he wishes to serve Him. The one who does not do so knows he is acceptable in ignoring such days. He feels no urgency in observing these special days.

ROM 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

All Christians must be very careful about their actions. Everything we do has an impact upon our

brothers and sisters in Christ. The Christian family is so closely woven into a unit that one may well cause another to either fall away from service, or move into greater service. We take others along with us either to heaven or to hell.

ROM 14:8 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.

One Christian does not own another Christian. While we are alive, we are the possession of our Lord. When we die, we will still belong to him. We cannot make laws regulating his spiritual life. Only God has that right.

ROM 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

It was not we who died and rose again from the grave. It was Christ. With his blood, he purchased the church. Therefore, He is able to determine the correct actions of his servants in life and the destiny of each after death.

ROM 14:10 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.

In view of the above, no Christian has the right to consider his brother as being worthless. It makes

no difference what course of action we might set up for him. Each of us will have to stand before the one who truly has the right to condemn or justify us. If Christ says, “Well done!”, no man can deny it. If Christ says, “Depart from me!”, no man can excuse the accused.

ROM 14:11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

A quotation is made from Isaiah 45:23. Every man who is guilty will someday find himself answering to the Godhead. God will not be asking a question of us as to how he should deal with our brother. It will not be to us that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.

ROM 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

I will not give answer for you, nor, will you give answer for me. We may have the ability to influence judges among men and bring about a change in another’s sentence of guilty or innocent. This will not be the case when the books are opened at the last day.

ROM 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.

It is time to put a stop to all harsh and unnecessary criticism of our brethren. Rather than to indulge in such disputings, we should judge our own actions and words to see if we are doing or saying things which will cause our brother or sister to act against their conscience and consider it a light matter that he might do that which he considers to be sin.

ROM 14:14 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.

The apostle now goes back to concentrate on the matter of meats. It is no longer true that some types of meats are unclean for eating purposes. When Peter was shown the sheet with both clean and unclean animals, God had said not to call that which he had cleansed unclean.

At the same time, if a man believes he is sinning against God by eating meat, he has sinned when he eats it. To do that which one believes to be a rejection of the will of God is to reject God's will.

ROM 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

If the eating of meat causes your fellow Christian to eat meat when he believes the eating of the meat is sin, you have become a stumbling block to him.

This would destroy a soul for whom Christ died. That is not the way of love, toward either God or the fellow Christian.

ROM 14:16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

Our good will be evil spoken of if we do that which our fellow Christian truly and conscientiously believes to be a sin. He will declare us to be sinners even though what we do is not condemned in the Word of God.

ROM 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

There was a time in which God gave strict instructions about which meats one might eat or not eat. With the coming of the Kingdom of God, these restrictions were removed.

In the Kingdom of God, we are far more concerned with the spiritual things; such as, righteousness in Christ, peace of mind and joy of eternal hope. Fastening our concerns on meats and holy days becomes a source of doubtful disputation.

ROM 14:18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

If we concentrate our attention on righteousness, peace and joy in Christ, we will be in favor with both God and man.

ROM 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

The conclusion is clear. Every Christian must avoid doing those things which will lead to unnecessary bickering and give his time to the promotion of such words and deeds as will build the character of all God's servants.

ROM 14:20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

The differences on eating of meats are known by the strong Christian to be matters of opinion. Though eating itself will not condemn the strong Christian, causing a brother or sister to eat when they believe it to be wrong is to cause that person to commit sin.

ROM 14:21 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.

It would be best for us if we were never to do anything which would lead a brother or sister to wound their own conscience and do that which they believed to be sin. This would include such things as the eating of meat or the drinking of wine.

Recall that Christians are told clearly we are not to be drunken with wine, but are to be filled with

the Spirit of God. Becoming drunken with alcoholic beverages is absolutely not a matter of indifference.

In the United States of America, I see no reason for a Christian to drink any beverages with alcoholic content. Alternative choices are available and far less dangerous. Some would argue drinking alcoholic beverages is not condemned in the Scriptures unless the individual becomes drunken.

I think you might be interested in experiments which were run with highly skilled arcade game champions. One drink of an alcoholic beverage caused a noticeable decline in the scores they were able to achieve. It seems one drink had made them drunk to a degree!

ROM 14:22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Honor that about which you have convictions concerning the will of God. Do not do that which you believe God has condemned. To do otherwise is to most surely condemn yourself.

ROM 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

The faith mentioned in this verse is the faith the individual has as a result of his exposure to the Word of God. It is a sin to do that which you believe to be wrong, even if it is not wrong. Try to be sure

everything you do is acceptable to God, and always be ready to alter your conduct when further truth is presented to you.

Teach the other man if you find him uninformed about matters of indifference. Be ready to **learn** from the other man, if he demonstrates that you are uninformed yourself.

Chapter 14 — Summary

1. We are not to create division and strife over matters of indifference.
2. Some believe it is wrong to eat meat, and some observe certain days as more holy than others.
3. These persons do so because they believe they are glorifying God.
4. In despising such persons, one is judging another's servants.
5. God is the Master while we are alive, and He will be the judge after death.
6. What we should be judging is whether or not we are causing a weak brother to do that which he believes to be wrong.
7. Any man condemns himself before God if he does that which he believes to be sin.

Chapter 15

ROM 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Here is the conclusion from the previous chapter. The strong are not to dominate and make a mockery of the weak. They are to teach and assist them. This was Jesus' teaching and it was also his practice. The strong are those who are able to differentiate between the matters of indifference and those of vital importance. The weak are those whose consciences might be easily offended. Other passages teaching a similar lesson are: Galatians 6:2, "*Bear ye one another's burdens,*" and Philippians 2:3-4, "*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*"

ROM 15:2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

Jesus identified my neighbor. It was he who had a need. In the case of the man who was beaten, robbed and left for dead on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, the need was for medical attention. In the case above, the need is for understanding and teaching. The stronger Christian is expected to fill the need of the weaker one. It may be necessary to even alter one's lifestyle in order not to offend and destroy the weaker man.

ROM 15:3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

It may be inconvenient to cater to the weak conscience of the less informed person; however, we are to suffer these inconveniences. Christ must have surpassed all of us in his ability to distinguish the vital matters from those of indifference; yet, he went so far as to bear the reproaches which should have been heaped upon each of us. (Psalm 69:9 is the reference cited.)

ROM 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

As can be seen repeatedly in the book of Romans, Old Testament references were used to clarify lessons. Very few persons study the Old Testament enough to draw from its pages that which has been preserved for our edification. Compare I Corinthians 10:11, *“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”*

ROM 15:5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

Much of the contention today among Christians could be avoided by putting into practice that which

Jesus advocated and practiced in attitudes toward others. Altogether too much time is spent in examining the weaknesses of our fellow man and magnifying them rather than in lending him our strength.

ROM 15:6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If we were to do that which is commanded here, we would be able to spend much more of our time in harmonious glorification of God rather than glorying in our own superiority.

ROM 15:7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

If Jesus received us, as weak and sinful as we are, surely we can find it in our hearts to receive a brother who is trying to do that which is right.

It is admitted, however, that it is often extremely difficult to distinguish the brother who is pridefully teaching error from the one who is sincerely mistaken.

ROM 15:8 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:

Now, we can see the heart of Paul's admonitions. He has been attempting throughout the entire letter

to the Romans to bring the Jewish and Gentile brethren together as one new man in Jesus Christ. He appeals to the Jews by saying Christ came to the Jews to fulfill the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

For these promises, see Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18; 26:3-4 and 28:13-14. Then, compare the entire third chapter of Galatians.

ROM 15:9 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.

Paul immediately followed by insisting Christ had come in order that the Gentiles might glorify God. In the Jewish scriptures, this had also been predicted. Both the Jew and the Gentile must come together if God's will is to be done. The references used here are: Deut. 32:43; Psa. 18:69; Psa. 117:1 and Isa. 11:10.

ROM 15:10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

ROM 15:11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

ROM 15:12 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.

The root of Jesse is Jesus Christ. See Revelation 22:16. To be the root of Jesse is also to be the root of David. Thus, both Jew and Gentile should realize the prophecies of God were being fulfilled in their own time. They must assist in the fulfillment rather than hinder such.

ROM 15:13 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.

Hope, joy and peace are all fruit of the Holy Spirit as it empowers the Christian. Where these are missing, the Holy Spirit has been hindered in his mission and the cause of Christ is held back. Where they abound, men glorify God together and watch the kingdom flourish.

ROM 15:14 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.

Paul was fully persuaded the recipients of his letter were capable of responding correctly. The only question was their willingness. They were good persons. They were informed. There was no reason they could not see harmonious and healthy growth as they labored together, with each of them correcting and strengthening the other in love.

ROM 15:15 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,

Sometimes, it is necessary for leaders to remind those who follow to do that which they know to do. Paul is doing that. He is certain they understand their responsibilities toward their fellow Christians; still, he was given a special charge by the Lord himself. Paul finds it necessary never to forget that charge to unite the Jew and the Gentile in Christ. God was most gracious to Paul and he would requite that graciousness by preaching the gospel to all men.

ROM 15:16 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.

For Paul's constant reminder of his divine appointment as an apostle, see the following: Acts 9:15; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 3:8 and I Tim. 2:7.

By preaching the gospel, Paul made it possible for the Holy Spirit to set both the Jew and the Gentile apart from the world for the purpose of serving God. He dwells particularly upon the Gentiles because there was danger they would not be accepted by the Jewish Christians. Every member of the family of God is to present their bodies as living sacrifices. The response of the Gentiles to the preaching of the Word of God meant they were filled with the Spirit of God and led by that Spirit; therefore, their lives were pure and holy and could be acceptable sacrifices.

ROM 15:17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

The apostle has some things in which he is willing to glory. They are things which have come through Jesus Christ and pertain to God. Paul will not hesitate to hold these things up high. That was his responsibility. He does not glory in himself, but delights in the glory of God.

ROM 15:18 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,

In contrast, he would not glory in the things which he as a man could provide. He had no reason to glory in those matters. To be sure, he had worked against Christ when he depended upon his own wisdom and power. He would never cease to be ashamed of that part of his life.

ROM 15:19 Through 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.

The power of the Holy Spirit had been granted unto him in such measure that he had been able to perform many mighty deeds. These signs and wonders had allowed him to reach the minds of

thousands of persons with the message of Christ. He had taken full advantage of the opportunities and had preached the Word of God throughout much of Palestine and on up into Asia Minor, even reaching across into Macedonia and Achaia.

ROM 15:20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

He was still somewhat saddened that he had not had the opportunity to visit with the Romans in person. However, he could not conscientiously come to them until he had preached in those areas where the gospel had not been heard. Someone has said, "No man has the right to hear the gospel twice until all have heard it once." Although, not completely true, this statement does indicate the general pattern of thought Paul held.

ROM 15:21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

How saturated Paul was with the teaching of the prophets. I am reminded of Jesus' method in dealing with Satan during the temptations. Time after time, Paul quotes scripture to justify his actions. This time, the reference is Isaiah 52:15.

ROM 15:22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

His efforts to make certain as many heard the gospel as was possible was the reason he had not come to the Romans in person. It was not that he did not care, it was that he had priorities he could not overlook.

ROM 15:23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

As he wrote to the Romans, he felt he had discharged his responsibilities in making the gospel known. He could now think seriously of making the visit he had so long desired to make.

ROM 15:24 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.

Paul planned to see the Roman Christians as he made his way to Spain. The man never ceased to think about preaching to those who had not heard. Spain was the next step. While on his way to that country, he would like to see the Romans. Their company would be very satisfying to him and they might well aid him in his journey. Notice, that Paul did not hesitate to ask those who had already heard the good word for assistance in reaching those who had not yet heard. He assumed one who had received the blessings of Christ would be eager to share those blessings with others.

ROM 15:25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

Before he could go to Spain, there was a long anticipated trip to make to Jerusalem. The saints in Jerusalem were in need and Paul had the wherewithal to relieve those needs. He looked forward to doing that. The contributions which had been given to relieve the poor saints in Jerusalem must be delivered.

ROM 15:26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

His resources had been provided by the Christians in Asia and Greece. They had been more fortunate than the Christians in Jerusalem. They had, therefore, been willing to give of their means to alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate in Palestine.

We really do not know what the reasons were for the destitute condition of the Jerusalem Christians. It could have been that they were ostracized by their kinsmen when they embraced Christ. It could have been from famine in Palestine. It could have been a combination of factors. Whatever the case, they were poor and their brethren and sisters in the Lord had given Paul gifts which needed to be gotten to them.

ROM 15:27 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.

Paul presented an interesting trade-off. Christ was a Jew and the first members of his church were Jews. Paul also was a Jew. Thus, the wonderful spiritual blessings which had been provided to the Gentiles had come about through the Jews, particularly those in the area of Jerusalem. The apostle is making it clear that reciprocation was in order. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem now lacked in material things. It was only right that the Gentiles, who had more of these things, provide for their Jewish brethren. He seems to say they recognized that responsibility and had been proud to offer their gifts.

ROM 15:28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

It was very important to the apostle that this endeavor be completed. It had fallen upon his shoulders to see that the gifts reached the intended needy ones. He could only go to Rome after he had seen to the delivery of the offerings.

So far as we know he never made the journey into Spain that he was so determined to make. From Jerusalem he was taken to Rome and imprisoned.

ROM 15:29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Once he had done that, he was certain God would be pleased for him to meet with the saints in Rome. He would be operating within the will of God and would be delighted in sharing with the Romans the fullness of the blessings found in the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

ROM 15:30 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;

Prayer for one another is very important. No person ever realized this more clearly than did Paul. He prayed for himself. He also prayed for others. And, he asked others to pray for him. If any man could have made it on his own, it would have been this man. He knew he could not. Many a time, he pleaded with his brethren to ask that God help him.

ROM 15:31 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;

Even now, he knew dangers were ahead when he arrived in the Jerusalem area. There were many unbelieving Jews there. They had an intense hatred for the Christians. Paul well understood the depth of this hatred— he had once led its fury.

He also was a bit fearful the rift between Jew and Gentile would cause the needy Jewish brethren to reject the gifts which he was bringing from the

Gentiles. He needed the prayers of the Romans that this would not happen.

ROM 15:32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

If the gifts were accepted, Paul would be able to come to the Christians in Rome with a happy heart. He would know God's will was being done. Fellowship with the Romans would refresh his soul and help him to move onward in his service to Christ with great rejoicing.

ROM 15:33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Grace and peace were two of the apostle's favorite words. His Lord was the Prince of Peace. The world lay in enmity against God. Christ had left this world saying, "*My peace I give unto you.*" Paul had found that peace and wished for all men to share it.

Chapter 15 — Summary

1. Those who are more mature should seek to edify a weaker brother.
2. Christ was willing to bear a great deal to lift his brethren up.
3. If Christ accepted us, as weak as we are, we should accept one another.
4. God expects both the Jew and the Gentile to glorify God together.

5. Paul had striven mightily to take the gospel to men of all nations.
6. He expected to visit Rome; but first, he must take the contribution from the Gentiles in Asia and Greece to the poor saints in Jerusalem.
7. Paul asked that the saints in Rome pray that the Jews in Jerusalem would accept the gifts from the Gentile territory.

Chapter 16

ROM 16:1 I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

Paul loves to commend. It should be so with all Christians. Before he closes the letter to the Romans, there are a number of persons who will receive his commendation. The first is Phoebe, whose home congregation seems to have been at Cenchrea which was near Corinth in Achaia.

Phoebe is not only a sister in Christ, she is a servant. A topic which has generated much discussion over the years is as to whether or not Phoebe held an official position as a *deaconess* in the church. Highly able men have debated both for and against this. The word translated as servant in this verse is the feminine of the word servant. Some believe her to have held the office of a deaconess. Others believe the word means no more than she was a servant in the sense that all Christians should be servants.

Personally, I believe she is simply a female servant and not an official deaconess. Qualifications are given in the scriptures for both the elders and the deacons. There is no set of such qualifications given for an office of “deaconess”. This is very convincing to me. There are, however, some who believe the qualifications of the deacons wives mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:11 are those of deaconesses rather than deacons wives.

ROM 16:2 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.

Phoebe was to be received in a manner appropriate for one who had been a faithful servant of the Lord. She was to be given whatever assistance the saints at Rome could give her. The fact that the word business is used leads some to believe she was a business woman of some type. It is certain that she had given assistance to others, including Paul. Now Paul desires the Christians in Rome repay her with their own aid.

ROM 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

ROM 16:4 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.

Priscilla and Aquila had worked with Paul for an extended time. They were tentmakers as he was. This provided the opportunity for them to serve the Lord together. They were good students of the scriptures and had taken the great orator Apollos aside and instructed him in the way of the Lord more perfectly.

We do not know just how they risked their lives for Paul. Whatever it was they did, Paul was exceedingly grateful to them. It may have been the churches among the Gentiles were grateful to

Priscilla and Aquila for saving the life of Paul and allowing him to preach the Word of God to them. It may also be possible these two had been in personal contact with many of the churches Paul established.

ROM 16:5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

A congregation of the Lord's church met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. This seems to have often been the case in the early days of the church. In many mission points today, members meet in the house of one of the brethren until the church grows in numbers to the point where it is able to construct a building for worship and study purposes.

All we know of Epaenetus is that which we read here. It saddens us to realize how little we know of many great men and women of the early church. Some day in heaven we will have the chance to associate unendingly with the entire family of God. Perhaps then, we may appreciate and honor them as they deserve.

ROM 16:6 Greet Mary who bestowed much labour on us.

The names follow in rapid fire order now. All we know about most of them is that which is placed beside their name in this letter. I will not belabor the point.

ROM 16:7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

ROM 16:8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

ROM 16:9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

ROM 16:10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

ROM 16:11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

ROM 16:12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

ROM 16:13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

ROM 16:14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

ROM 16:15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

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

We must pause here for a short discussion of the holy kiss. This is not the only place where Paul encourages the holy kiss. Is this command binding upon us as a religious activity today?

We first notice that the holy kiss was normally exchanged upon the cheek. Women kissed women and men kissed men. It was a greeting of similar nature to our own handshake.

I believe Paul was only encouraging Christians to be friendly and salute one another in the custom of the day. It would be highly questionable for a man today to kiss a visiting female on the lips. Whether it be a kiss or a handshake, the greeting of Christians is to be holy in nature. But, Christians are to be friendly now as they were to be friendly then.

ROM 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

This has been a concern from the very beginning of the letter. The church at Rome was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. It was difficult for them to accept one another as Christ would have them to do. Some of the Jews had great difficulty seeing the proper relationship between the law and the gospel of Christ. Because of this, much division had arisen.

The best thing to do when troublemakers begin to peddle their malicious doctrines is to recognize the error and avoid those who spread it.

ROM 16:18 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.

These false teachers were gainsayers, always looking to fill their own stomachs. They were very clever with words, thus, taking advantage of the ones with less ability to judge truth.

ROM 16:19 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.

The faithfulness of the Roman Christians had become recognized in many other places. Paul knew of their stability. In spite of this, he expressed the desire that they would become ever more knowledgeable about that which is good, and that they would remain ignorant of the lies of the servants of Satan.

ROM 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

We can hardly fail to remember the words of Genesis 3:15 when we read this verse. God predicted at that time that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. Sooner or later, the saints will be victorious. The grace of God will allow us to

defeat Satan and those who delight in spreading the darkness.

GEN 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

ROM 16:21 **Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.**

Now, Paul begins another list of persons. This time, the list deals with those who are at the other end of the letter. Before, he had listed many whom he knew and loved in Rome. This time, it will be recognition of those in the area where he wrote the epistle.

Timothy was special. We have said much in other places about Paul's special love for this young evangelist.

ROM 16:22 **I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.**

Paul often used an amanuensis to actually pen the letters he wrote. It is possible that his eyesight was poor and that it was easier if someone else did the writing. Tertius is the one who used the pen this time. There are those who think Phoebe may have delivered it to the church.

ROM 16:23 **Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the**

chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

Gaius was a common name. This verse means Gaius had provided Paul with room and board at the time he wrote.

ROM 16:24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Twice, in just a few verses, Paul prayed that the grace of God rest upon them. We deserve so little of that which God showers upon us. Let us, along with the Romans, thank God for his unspeakable gifts.

ROM 16:25 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,

The mystery of salvation for both Jew and Gentile had been hidden for centuries. Now, through the preaching of the gospel of Christ, Paul had unrolled it before men. Recall that he said in 1:16, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

ROM 16:26 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:

The prophets had declared the events which were taking place in the time of Paul. Centuries before, they had been announced through the commandment of the Father of Lights. Paul was given the honor of introducing these truths to all nations, in order that men of *every* nation might become obedient to the plan and the will of God.

ROM 16:27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

This closes the great and glorious book of Romans. It comes from the only original source of wisdom and the one who deserves all honor, all the praise and all of the glory. Paul is but his servant.

Chapter 16— Summary

1. Paul sent his greetings and salutations to a number of faithful Christians whom he had known in the past, including Phoebe, Aquila, Priscilla and others.
2. He gave a sharp warning that difference be made between the faithful and the unfaithful.
3. The faithful were to be greeted warmly.
4. The ones who caused division and strife were to be marked and avoided.
5. Paul added the greetings of several who were with him in Corinth as he wrote the letter.

6. He closed the letter with praise to God for providing men with the gospel through which all nations might come to the obedience of faith.

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