THE EPISTLE TO THE

ROMANS

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY

by

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LL roads in the Bible are seen most clearly from Romans, and when the message of Romans gets into a man's heart there is no telling what may happen.

J. I. Packer

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PREFACE

Every Christian pastor ought to preach through Romans, and the commentary that follows represents this pastor's attempt to wrestle with this magisterial revelation of the only gospel of the saving grace of God. Obviously editing has led to the addition of much material that, while not being suitable for the preaching mode, yet is helpful, indeed vital, for the discipline of preaching preparation.

THE EPISTLE TO THE

ROMANS

The Gospel of the Righteousness of God

INTRODUCTION

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF ROMANS

The Epistle to the Romans, written by the Apostle Paul, is arguably the quintessential book of the whole Bible when it comes to discovering the Christian gospel in its most clear, profound and soul-expanding expression. Therefore it is not surprising that the corridors of Christian church history are strewn with exultant and powerful testimonies to the glorious message of reigning grace that this Epistle so magnifies. Some examples are as follows.

1. Aurelius [Saint] Augustine of North Africa, that great victor over the man-centered and heretical doctrine of Pelagius during the early fifth century, was converted in 386 AD when he overheard a child sing in Latin, "Tolle, lege! tolle, lege!" meaning, "Take up and read! take up and read." Depressed over his sinful lifestyle, he picked up a scroll of Romans where he "randomly" opened it to 13:13-14 and read,

> not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof (Rom. 13:13b-14). No further would I read, nor had I any need; instantly, at the end of this sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away.[1]

There and then Augustine believed and was genuinely converted with the result that the Christian church gained one of its most notable theologians.

2. Martin Luther's quest to discover "a righteous God" eventually found its satisfaction in Romans. He explains:

> I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the justice of God,' because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. . . . Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. . . . Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that 'the just shall live by his faith' [Rom. 1:17]. Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of

[1] Aurelius Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 8, Chapter 12.

> Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.[2]

Later in the preface to his commentary on Romans, which passage was instrumental in the conversion of John Wesley, Luther writes:

> This Epistle is in truth the chief part of the New Testament and the purest Gospel. It would be quite proper for a Christian, not only to know it by heart word for word, but also to study it daily, for it is the soul's daily bread. It can never be read or meditated too much and too well. The more thoroughly it is treated, the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.[3]

3. John Calvin declared that, "when one gains a knowledge of this Epistle, he has an entrance opened to him to all the most hidden treasures of Scripture."[4] In the succeeding Puritan heirs of the Genevan expositor, William Haller describes how, "they urged the people to base their understanding of the word of God upon Paul's epistle to the Romans. If one began one's study of scripture at that point, William Perkins advised, and then went to the gospel of John, one had the key to the whole."[5]

4. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has more recently commented:

> It has been the universal opinion in the Christian church throughout the centuries that Romans is the Epistle above all which deals with fundamentals, and if you look at the history of the church I think you will see that has been borne out time and time again. There is a sense in which we can say quite truthfully that the epistle to the Romans has, possibly, played a more important and a more crucial part in the history of the church than any other single book in the whole of the Bible.[6]

5. John Murray, in the preface of his superior commentary, makes the following requisite acknowledgment:

> The epistle to the Romans is God's Word. Its theme is the gospel of his grace. And the gospel bespeaks the marvels of his condescension and love. If we are not overwhelmed by the glory of that gospel and ushered into the holy of holies of God's presence, we have missed the grand purpose of this sacred deposit. And it is only because the grace of God has put treasure in earthen vessels that we men have been given the task and privilege of undertaking exposition.[7]

6. Robert Horn, in his clear and helpful explanation of the doctrine of justification by faith, published under the title of Go*d Free!* gives us a contemporary and very

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[2] Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, pp. 49-50.

[3] Martin Luther, *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 1.

[4] John Calvin, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. xxix.

[5] William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, p. 87. He further quotes Thomas Draxe who said that, "The Epistle to the Romans . . . is like to nothing less than paradise itself, enclosing 'the Quintessence and perfection of saving Doctrine,' and the eighth chapter . . . is like a conduit conveying the waters of life; rather it is the tree of life in the midst of the garden," ibid.

[6] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans - An Exposition of Chapter 1*, p. 3.

[7] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. xi.

relevant illustration of the power of Romans to challenge this modern generation, in much the same way that Augustine and others have been challenged. He writes:

> We have to come to terms with God. We may not like the thought, but this is the root problem of living. Sometimes people recognize this almost in spite of themselves. This happened recently in one university. The Christian Union held a book week, selling a particular title from door to door in the student residences and also on four bookstalls round the campus. Along with the book they distributed a free hand-out in tabloid form, the contents of which were simply Paul's words in Romans (chapters 1 and 2) about the wrath of God and the nature and extent of human sin.
>
> Student reaction was very definite. One girl came up to a bookstall and said accusingly, 'You're making us all feel guilty!' The Gay Society took sharp exception to Paul's plain speaking. Some of the Student Union committee tried to get copies banned and the Christian Union ejected. The student newspaper published irate letters. Why were people so incensed? Why should a 1,900-year-old letter provoke them so much? Christian Union members commented that it was not the 'Smile, Jesus loves you' approach that prompted these reactions. It was the truth about the basic relationship of God and man - the truths of wrath and sin and judgment.[8]

B. THE BACKGROUND TO ROMANS

1. The Historical Setting.

a. Authorship.

Both conservative and liberal scholarship, as well as the early church fathers, agree that the Apostle Paul is the author of Romans as is plainly declared in 1:1, though 16:22 indicates that, as was customary, he used an amanuensis or scribe named Tertius.

b. The place of Paul's writing.

Having completed a tumultuous and fruitful ministry in Ephesus lasting near three years, Paul has moved to Corinth for three months and there writes Romans, approximately three years before his eventual arrival in Rome. He composed his epistle in the home of Gaius, his host (16:22), using Tertius as an amanuensis, 16:22, and most likely Phoebe for the purpose of hand delivery (16:1-2).

c. The time of Paul's writing.

The aforementioned brief stay at Corinth, in the midst of Paul's third missionary journey, was most likely during the spring of 58 AD. The Apostle is desirous of returning to Jerusalem and prefers that he would arrive there in time for the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

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[8] Robert Horn, *Go Free!*, pp. 7-8.

d. The destination of Paul's writing.

(1) Evidently the church at Rome had been established for some time, though the circumstances of its origin are unknown. The church that Paul addresses, or at least one of its assemblies, meets in the house of Prisca [Priscilla] and Aquila (16:3-5), who previously had met Paul in Corinth and then traveled with him to Ephesus (Acts 18:1-3, 24-26).

(2) Although the Jews had been expelled from Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius, yet at the accession of Nero they were permitted to return, about 54 AD. Acts 28:23-29 indicates a vocal Jewish community had resettled in Rome, though this is not to suggest that anti-Semitism had receded since, "The roster of ancient writers who expressed anti-Jewish feeling reads like a roster for a second-semester course in classics: Cicero, Tacitus, Martial, Horace, Juvenal, Persius, Dio Cassius, Marcus Aurelius, Apuleius, Ovid, Petronius, Pliny the Elder, Plutarch, Quintilian, Seneca, Seutonius."[9]

(3) While the constituency of the church that Paul addresses seems to include a considerable number of Jews (1:16; 2:1-29; 3:29-30; 4:11; 9:1-11:36; 16:1-23), yet there are good reasons for believing that this Christian assembly at Rome was predominantly Gentile. First, the introduction, as would be expected, addresses the predominant constituency, namely, "we [who] have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among *the Gentiles* [emphasis added] for His name's sake, among whom *you also* [emphasis added] are the called of Jesus Christ" (1:5-6; cf. the related inference, 1:13). Second, the manner in which Jewish concerns are injected, in an adjunct, though none-the-less significant, way (2:17-3:2; 7:1). This is particularly so with the distinctive Jewish emphasis of 9-11 that qualifies the universal thrust of the gospel in 1-8. Thus Gentiles are the primary addressees. Third, the conclusion (16:1-23) addresses various church members and associates, of which approximately 80% have Gentile names.[10]

2. The social setting.

While the architectural splendor of Rome is proverbial, along with its patrician government and polytheism, yet a broader plebeian perspective is necessary for us to understand the profound concerns of the Apostle Paul as he writes his Epistle:

> Within a circuit of little more then twelve miles more than two millions of inhabitants were crowded. . . . The free citizens were more than a million: . . . the vast number of these would be poor. . . . Yet were these pauper citizens proud of their citizenship, though many of them had no better sleeping-place for the night than the public porticoes or the vestibules of temples. They cared for nothing beyond bread for the day, the games of the Circus, and the savage delight of gladiatorial shows. Manufactures and trade they regarded as the business of the slave and foreigner. The number of the slaves was perhaps about a million. . . . Every kind of nationality and religion found its representative in

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[9] Mark Nanos, quoting J. Meagher, "As The Twig Was Bent," *The Mystery of Romans*, p. 65.

[10] Ibid., pp. 77-9.

> Rome. . . . Rome was like London with all its miseries, vices, and follies exaggerated, and without Christianity.[11]

It is significant that for all of its vaunted splendor and might in worldly terms, Romans does not contain the slightest intimation of the Apostle's admiration for any of the notable features of the imperial city, as is likewise the case in Acts when he visited Athens (Acts 17:16).

C. THE PURPOSES OF ROMANS

Whatever the peripheral circumstances may have been, such as the state of the church at Rome and the role of the Jews in that congregation, yet it seems to stand out with the greatest clarity that Paul's purpose in general was doctrinal with regard to many aspects of the gospel. In 1:11-15 he passionately desires that the saints "be established" or "strengthened" through his gifted ministry, v. 11, that there be mutual encouragement, v. 12, that spiritual fruitfulness be stimulated, v. 13, and that preeminently these ends might be produced through his eagerness, "to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome," v. 15. Note that Paul desires to "evangelize" true believers, that is preach the gospel to the converted here.[12] The whole of Romans is an eloquent testimony to the Apostle's primary desire that Christians in Rome should grow in their understanding and reflection of the gospel. It may be that the lack of problems at Rome, which characterized the church at Corinth, enabled him to present more mature doctrine in accord with his assessment that, "the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you." 16:19. A summary of Paul's gospel purposes is as follows:

1. Romans is designed to edify believers with an expanded understanding of the gospel.
    a. In the realm of sin's exceeding sinfulness.
    b. In the realm of justification through faith.
    c. In the realm of vital identification with Jesus Christ.
    d. In the realm of the reign of grace in contrast with the law.
    e. In the realm of sanctification through walking in the Spirit.
    f. In the realm of loving relationships in local church life.
2. Romans is designed to stimulate assurance with an expanded understanding of the gospel.
3. Romans is designed to explain the integral relationship of Jew and Gentile with regard to the gospel.

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[11] Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of Paul*, p. 737.

[12] "[I]t is more natural to take 'you' to refer to Roman Christians; in this case, 'preach the gospel' will refer to the ongoing work of teaching and discipleship that builds on initial evangelization." Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 65.

4. Romans is designed to stimulate practical Christian living as a consequence of faith in the gospel.

D. THE KEY WORD IN ROMANS - RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. The word "righteousness," δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosunē, is Paul's key gospel term, "the dominating theme of this epistle,"[13] not love, as a consideration of 1:17; 3:21-22; 4:6, 11, 13; 5:17, 18, 21; 6:13-20; 8:3-4, 10; 9:30-31; 10:3-10; 14:17 amply indicates. The cognates "justice," δίκη, dikē, and "justification," δικαίωσις, dikaiōsis, likewise reflect the fundamental meaning of moral straightness or rightness, whether essential, reflected, demanded, provided, or vindicated, that in both the Old and New Testaments is chiefly sourced in the holy or righteous character of God.

2. Righteousness as an Old Testament term.

   a. God *is* righteous, that is morally, ethically straight (Ezra 9:15; Ps. 7:9; 119:138-8, 142; cf. John 17:11, 25). Righteousness is the positive aspect of God's holiness (Is. 6:3).

   b. God *demands* righteousness, that is he requires that man be righteous in both his being and doing even as God is righteous (Deut. 7:9; Ps. 4:5).

   c. God *saves* with righteousness, that is he maintains holy moral consistency in the gracious saving of sinners (Isa. 45:8, 20-25; 46:12-13; 51:5-8; 61:1-3, 10-11). Thus Messiah is a righteous or just Savior (Zech. 9:9).

   d. God *sanctifies* unto righteousness, that is he communicates or imparts righteousness unto his children to whom righteousness has been gratuitously imputed, like a cloak (Isa. 61:10-11).

3. Righteousness as a New Testament term for the gospel.

   a. The gospel is the gift of righteousness from a righteous God (Rom. 3:21-24; 4:5; 5:17, 21) to unrighteous man (Rom. 1:18, 29; 2:8).

   b. The gospel is the gift of righteousness to the unrighteous that vindicates and justifies a righteous God (Rom. 3:25-26).

   c. The gospel is the gift of righteousness to the unrighteous that is productive of a righteous lifestyle (Rom. 6:13, 18; I John 2:29; 3:7;

   d. Illustration. Nicolaus von Zinzendorf's wonderful hymn well expresses the love of Paul for God's saving righteousness.

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[13] C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 29.

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

O let the dead now hear Thy voice,
Now bid Thy banished ones rejoice,
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, the Lord our righteousness.

E. SEVEN IMPORTANT GOSPEL PRINCIPLES

1. The gospel is primarily about God, not man. Certainly the gospel is for man, but at its heart, the gospel is good news about the being and doing of God (Rom. 3:21; I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:4-5).

2. The gospel is first of all a moral rather than a relational matter (Is. 59:2). The moral chasm of alienation between God as holy and man as unholy is a result of moral conflict; when this gulf is bridged by means of the gospel of the righteousness of God, then a true relationship is established. Thus a sinner must be right with God before he can be reconciled to God.

3. The bad news is essentially about man's unrighteousness and ungodliness, his thorough pollution before a righteous God on a vertical level (Rom. 3:9-18), not his tarnished self-image, his social imperfection, his relative righteousness on a mere horizontal level.

4. God's grace freely offered is yet righteous grace; His salvation is righteous; He, being absolutely righteous, saves with integrity (Rom. 3:36; I John 1:9) by means of a gospel of righteousness.

5. God's grace is sovereign and dynamic; it energizes, motivates, preserves, and triumphantly reigns over the plague of sin (Rom. 5:17, 21); such a gospel of grace is the ground of Christian sanctification.

6. Faith is non-meritorious, self-renouncing linkage with the God of the Bible who alone is the saving hope of the believer. Hence the transitive nature of faith, not being able to stand alone, must be gauged as true faith according the character of its object (Rom. 3:22; 4:13).

7. The grasp of the doctrine of Romans 1-11 is only proven to be genuine when the expectations of Romans 12-16 are demonstrable, especially 12:1-21; 13:8-15:6, within the perimeter of local church life.

CHAPTER I

ROMANS 1:1-7 - SALUTATION IN THE GOSPEL

NOT only is this salutation the longest in Paul's epistles, but also it is the most evangelistic, that is gospel-focused, and considerably more so than Galatians. There is good reason for this emphasis since it is immediately evident that the Apostle's passion is for the Christians at Rome to be edified by the gospel. It is for this reason that Luther was so insistent that Christians should be constantly immersed in this peerless, heartfelt composition, since he himself had been so personally blessed by such saturation. Thus "[This] letter of Paul . . . is like a stream that flows from Paradise and is like the Nile, which inundates all of Egypt. But this inundation must have its source somewhere. Thus the flood which the Lord creates through the apostle Paul covers the whole world and all people."[1]

Yet to take Luther's illustration further, it might be said that this gospel prologue is best represented by a gushing spring rather than a river. B. B. Warfield points out that here Paul's tangenital style is plainly indicated.

> [H]e no sooner mentions the Gospel than off he goes on a tangent to describe it. . . . No sooner does he mention Christ than off he goes again on a tangent to describe Christ. Thus it comes about that this passage, formally only the Address of the Epistle, becomes actually a great Christological deliverance, one of the chief sources of our knowledge of Paul's conception of Christ. It presents itself to our view like one of those nests of Chinese boxes; the outer encasement is the Address of the Epistle; within that fits neatly Paul's justification of his addressing the Romans as an authoritative teacher of the Gospel; within that a description of the Gospel committed to him; and within that a great declaration of who and what Jesus Christ is, as the contents of this Gospel.[2]

A. PAUL, THE APOSTLE OF GOD'S GOSPEL, V. 1

In all thirteen of the Apostle's epistles, the first word is "Paul," Παῦλος, Paulos, a Latin surname meaning "little," perhaps reflecting his conviction that he was "the least of the apostles" (I Cor. 15:9). In addition, this Gentile name may have replaced the Jewish "Saul," following conversion (Acts 13:9), for quite practical missionary reasons.

1. His commitment.

Paul perceives *himself* to be a "bond-servant of Christ Jesus." This is *his* estimate as a man who, having known the heights of scholastic achievement and religious sophistication, has been subdued even to the dust of the Damascus road. Here, says Luther,

> [b]oth majesty and humility are comprehended in this word: Humility insofar as he does not appoint himself lord and founder, as is the way of tyrants and of the proud, who abuse their power in such a way that they think of nothing but that they have power, as if their power had its origin in themselves and as if they had not received it from someone

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[1] Martin Luther, *Works*, 25, p. 156.

[2] Benjamin Breckrinridge Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, pp. 73-74.

else. Majesty, however, is implied when he rapturously boasts that he is the servant of such a great Lord.[3]

2. His calling.

In most of his epistles Paul is careful to qualify his apostleship using such terms as "through Jesus Christ," or by means of the " will of God " or "commandment of God." Here he is "called" as an apostle, ἀπόστολος, apostolos, simply meaning "sent one," which term in 16:7 and Philippians 2:25 most likely refers to esteemed messengers. But for Paul, his calling has come directly from the Son of God (Gal. 1:1) and not mere men, and as such he is under constraint to authoritatively speak as pleasing God (II Cor. 2:17; I Thess, 2:4) because a sacred stewardship has been entrusted to him (Acts 9:15-16; I Cor. 9:15-16). Paul's vocation is a "course" or "race" set before him (Acts 20:24; II Tim. 4:7). As a "called apostle," he did not "prove disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). He belongs to that special band of foundational stones in the church of Jesus Christ that abutted, through personal contact (Gal. 1:11-12; I Cor. 11:23), next to the Chief Corner Stone (Eph. 2:20).

3. His commission.

With regard to the appointment of the great men of God in the Bible, such as with Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Amos, etc., without exception they were subject to a sense of strong divine constraint, even coercion as in the case of Saul (Acts 26:14; Gal. 1:15), rather than mere solicitation as a volunteer. So Paul has an overwhelming sense of consecration, except that he constantly reminds us, as here, that it was God who did the setting apart, and not himself.

a. It is sacred.

He has been "set apart" or "separated" for a task that far transcends in importance the responsibilities of Roman senators and Caesars. The root of ἀφορίζω, aphorizō, means "to draw a line around," so that Christians are to be separate from unbelievers and paganism (Acts 19:9; II Cor. 6:17). However, here Paul was circumscribed by the effectual call of God (Gal. 1:15) for a cause of unparalleled proportions. Specifically, it was not simply a summons to an office, but to a unique message ministry of universal importance (Gal. 1:8-9), the gospel, which is "the gospel of God" or "God's gospel."

b. It is evangelistic.

The expression "gospel of God" may more particularly be understood as (a) the gospel "belonging to God," or (b) the gospel "about God," or (c) the gospel "sourced in God," or (d) the gospel "sent by God," (cf. Mark 1:14; Rom. 15:16; II Cor. 11:7; I Thess. 2:2, 8, 9; I Tim. 1:11). Both (c) and (d) seem to incorporate the primary truth here, though the Gospel that comes from God is at the same time His treasure to impart and very much descriptive of His glorious Being.

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[3] Ibid., p. 140.

(1) At the end of this twentieth century, when man in his technological and sophisticated arrogance has made subtle yet debilitating inroads into the Christian church and pervasively rendered it as man-centered, there is a critical need for the "gospel of God" to be proclaimed in all of its purity. Of course this presupposes that the "gospel of God in the name of man" must be demolished. After all, the Christian gospel is first and foremost about God, and this emphasis must be reinvested into faithful evangelistic ministry.

(2) Robert Haldane comments:

> It is the Gospel of God, inasmuch as God is its author, its interpreter, its subject: its author, as He has purposed it in His eternal decrees; its interpreter, as He himself hath declared it to men; its subject, because in the Gospel His sovereign perfections and purposes towards men are manifested. For the same reasons it is also called the Gospel of the grace of God, the Gospel of peace, the Gospel of the kingdom, the Gospel of salvation, the everlasting Gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God.[4]

(3) Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments:

> The gospel! Oh! How easily we use this term! How glibly we repeat it! I am as guilty as anybody else. It ought to be impossible for us to use the word 'gospel' without bursting forth, as it were, into a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Good news from God, that is the gospel. And that brings me to the most important thing of all - it is the gospel of *God*. In other words, it is what God has done about man, and about his salvation. And that is why, of course, it is quite unique and quite new.[5]

B. GOD'S GOSPEL, THE GROUND OF FELLOWSHIP, VS. 2-6

The remainder of this salutation is concerned with the summary features of "the gospel of God," such as "which" gospel, "who" is the chief gospel character, and "what" the gospel accomplishes. While Paul's lack of personal familiarity with this church may have encouraged him to commence with this authoritative gospel detail,[6] he is more likely driven by a sense of anticipation concerning the truth he is burdened to unfold in subsequent detail. Here is an encapsulation of the message of Romans.

1. It is one promised gospel, v. 2a.

   To draw our focus toward the historic grandeur of the gospel, Paul helps us to appreciate the cumulative revelation of this message over past centuries. This only magnifies the recent dawning of the Savior in fulfillment of Scripture, who, in Titus 1:1-2, is the source of "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ago."

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[4] Robert Haldane, *Romans*, p. 26.

[5] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 1:1-32*, p. 59.

[6] John Murray suggests this intent of Paul since he had not founded or visited the church at Rome, *Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 1.

a. In the light of human history since the fall of Adam, there has been only one gospel that has been designed by God as the remedy for man's hopeless predicament. This "gospel of God," explicitly promised in the Old Testament, was yet explicitly revealed in the New Testament. Thus it could be said that the New Testament gospel is the fulfillment of the Old Testament gospel promise. The gospel of the New Testament was not an afterthought, as if designed to be a substitute for a failed Old Testament gospel; it was not a superior gospel of "grace" designed to supplant an inferior gospel of "law," as Abraham will demonstrate in 4:1-5, 9-25. The only hope of salvation for Adam and Eve was by grace through faith in God's atoning provision, specifically the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15, 21).

b. In the Old Testament economy, amidst a world of pagan and false prophets, God appointed "My servants the prophets" (Jer. 7:25; Ezek. 38:17; Dan. 9:6, 10; Amos 3:7),[7] a divinely ordained company originating from the time of Moses, as His spokesmen. Not only did they promise judgment, but also salvation through Messiah (Luke 1:67-72; Rom. 3:21; 16:26). And Isaiah is representative when he proclaims, "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isa. 52:7; cf. 40:9; 61:1).

2. It is one inscripturated gospel, v. 2b.

The appointed vehicle of this promised "gospel of God" is the "Holy Scriptures," or "Sacred Writings," that is γραφαῖς ἁγίαις, graphais hagiais, a collection of objective, concrete records, and not oral tradition.[8] For Paul, the essential sacredness of these Scriptures is the fact that they have been exhaled from the truthful and unerring mouth of God (II Tim. 3:16) through the Spirit of God (II Pet. 1:20-21). As such, the Scriptures are unique in this world. And as a consequence, the message of the gospel is indivisibly related to the record of the Gospel, and thus they are identically sacred. In practical terms for today, only an infallible Word from God can reliably declare the "gospel of God."

3. It is one Christ-centered gospel, vs. 3-4

That "God's servants the prophets" specifically promised the Messiah as the coming Savior is abundantly declared throughout the Old Testament. However here this Savior is described as "His [God's] Son," that is the Son of He who has revealed "good news," v. 1. In other words, the gospel and the Son of God are intimately related. Haldane comments: "It is of Him [Jesus Christ] that the Gospel of God, promised by the prophets, treats; so that He is not simply a legislator or interpreter of the Divine will, like Moses, and the Prophets, and the Apostles. . . . But it is altogether different respecting Jesus Christ, who is exclusively the Alpha and Omega of the Gospel, its

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[7] Refer to Edward J. Young's classic study of this subject, *My Servants the Prophets*, 224 pp.

[8] While Warfield describes, concerning this verse, "Paul's conception of Scripture as the crystallized voice of God," he further states that the Apostle, "explicitly declares, not of the writers of Scripture, but of the sacred writings themselves, that they are theopneustic—breathed out, or breathed into by God (II Tim. 3:16)." *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, pp. 317-8.

proper object, its beginning and its end."[9] However, more about the uniqueness of this Savior is now unfolded.

a. A fully human Christ, v. 3.

(1) This Son of God, being preexistent,[10] was born into carnal, fleshly, human existence by means of the seed of David. In other words, coming from the bosom of the Father (John 1:1, 18), Jesus Christ was born of Mary, while espoused to Joseph (Matt. 1:1-16), and as such is descended from King David to whom the promise of Messiah was confirmed (Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6; John 7:42; Acts 13:22-23).

(2) More correctly, this Son of God was "made" (KJV) or "born" (NASB), aorist of γίνομαι,Ginomai, to take on "flesh" (Gal. 4:4), and to Paul this is a significant and necessary characteristic. While in 7:5, 18, 25, the context indicates that "sinful flesh" is in mind, here the context of v. 4 indicates that "sinless flesh," governed by "the Spirit of holiness," rather than "the spirit of holiness," is intended. Hence this Son qualifies as the "last Adam [who] became a life-giving spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). As Charles Wesley has written, this Christ is:

> Our God contracted to a span,
> Incomprehensibly made man.

(3) The incarnation is clearly taught here, namely that God in heaven, having a Son in heaven, has sent this Son from heaven to assume an earthly, human dress (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8); He took on sinless humanity to save sinful humanity (Heb. 4:15; 10:19-20). Upon this momentous event in human history hangs the substance of the gospel; it was of such epochal significance that the prophets long ago gave preparatory announcements of this incomparable and wonderful event (Isa. 40:3-5).

b. A fully divine Christ, v. 4a.

(1) But more than being "made" of human flesh, v. 3, he was "declared" or "designated" or "marked out," aorist of ὁρίζω,Horizō, as the Son of God (Ps. 2:7). This was the Father's doing, His begettal of the eternal Son in human flesh, His attestation, though with certain accompanying characteristics of deity.

(2) Consequently this "declared" Son of God was "with power," though exactly in what way? Strictly, the order here does *not* say, "declared with power the Son of God" NIV. Rather, he was "declared the Son of God with power" KJV, NASB, as "raised up again, . . . having been exalted to the right hand of God, . . . therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has

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[9] Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 27.

[10] John Murray writes: "There are good reasons for thinking that in this instance the title refers to a relation which the Son sustains to the Father antecedently to and independently of his manifestation in the flesh." *Romans*, I, pp. 5-6.

made Him both Lord [sovereign] and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:32-33, 36). Therefore the resurrection is the justification, the grand vindication of Jesus Christ as the only demonstrably valid saving object for the believing sinner (Acts 2:22-24; 13:29-33; 17:30-31).

(3) Further, in contrast with the "[sinless] flesh" of v. 3, the "Spirit [unlikely 'spirit'] of holiness"[11] was powerfully operative in this incarnate Christ who was inevitably raised from the dead (Acts 13:32-33).

c. A fully human and divine Christ, v. 4b.

(1) The KJV does not follow the Greek so accurately in vs. 3-4. The NASB and NIV are more accurate, especially as they rightly conclude this majestic doctrinal declaration with the encompassing declaration, "Jesus Christ our Lord." Lloyd-Jones comments that this, "is undoubtedly the right way to consider it, because it forms a sort of natural climax. . . . In other words, it is a kind of summing up of everything the Apostle has been telling us about Him in these two great statements [vs. 3-4]; it is because they are true of Him that He is Jesus Christ our Lord."[12]

(2) This God-man then, truly perfect in humanity and fullness of deity, is "Jesus Christ our Lord" (Col. 1:22; 2:9). This is the totality of his being, this "theanthropic" person. In his commentary on Romans, James Montgomery Boice devotes one whole chapter to this climactic expression.[13] He points out that it is akin to the early church confession that "Jesus is Lord," which means that Jesus is both God and Savior; further it means that Jesus is Lord for the believers in Rome as a whole, and not simply a smaller and more spiritual group who have also accepted him as Savior (Matt. 22:41-46; Luke 2:11; I Cor. 8:4-6; Phil. 2:5-11).

(3) The Athanasian Creed, c. 450 A.D., declares that, "the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man."[14] In church history, there have been two doctrinal extremes that have frequently produced opposite heresies.

(a) Jesus Christ is more human than divine.

1) Arianism, Jehovah's Witnesses = Jesus was a god.

2) Adoptionism = Jesus was a man adopted by the Father.

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[11] Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8*, pp. 49-43. Argument is here given that Paul has in mind the "Spirit of holiness" rather than the "spirit of holiness." In agreement, Bruce comments that, "*The spirit of holiness* is the regular Hebrew way of saying 'the Holy Spirit'; and Paul here reproduces the Hebrew idiom in Greek." *Romans*, p. 73. For further support, refer to Calvin, Haldane, Morris, and Murray. Contra are Hodge and Lloyd-Jones.

[12] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 1:1-32*, p. 128.

[13] James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, I, pp. 45-52.

[14] Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, II, p. 68.

3) Liberalism = Jesus was godly.

(b) Jesus Christ is more divine than human.

1) Gnosticism, Christian Science = Jesus was a phantom.

2) Docetism = Jesus seemed to be a man.

3) Marcionism = Jesus was chiefly revealed by Paul.

(4) The danger here is that in the mysteries of the truth concerning the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ, we become more absorbed with cerebral challenge rather than heart encounter. Yet it is obvious that here Paul is moved in the depths of his soul at the contemplation of this Savior's glorious person. He parallels the Apostle John's initial exaltation of Christ in John 1:1-18. Matthew Henry captures this apostolic wonderment as follows: "When Paul mentions Christ, how he heaps up his names and titles, *his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*, as one that took a pleasure in speaking of him; and, having mentioned him, he cannot go on in his discourse without some expression of love and honor, as here, where in one person he shows us his two distinct natures."[15]

4. It is one universal gospel, v. 5.

It is a wondrous truth that Jesus Christ is both God and man, divine and human, and vindicated as such by his resurrection from the dead. Yet this is but glorious fact, and beyond such truth purpose must be discovered. So in v. 5 we have revealed the design of the incarnation as it relates to both man and God.

a. The universal proclaimer.

(1) He, Paul, has been ordained by Christ, not men (Gal. 1:1, 15-16); but further, this divine vocation includes divine enabling. So Paul describes himself, using the plural of indirect identity, as "we [who] have received grace and apostleship." That is, he has received particular saving grace and particular apostolic calling, cf. v. 6.

(2) In his commentary on Romans, John MacArthur mentions the experience of both Donald Grey Barnhouse and himself in their being ordained, with the laying on of hands, by certain men who later departed from the faith. He then comments, "Like Dr. Barnhouse, I give thanks to God that my ministry did not come from men but from Christ Himself."[16]

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[15] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, VI, p. 364.

[16] John MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, p. 23.

b. The universal purpose as it concerns man.

(1) The ordained task is the obtaining of the "obedience of faith among all the Gentiles." Note that this Epistle ends by describing this same purpose, 16:26. Specifically, Paul's mission (Acts 9:15) is to have as its goal a definite quality of harvested faith which is to be distinguished from a more patronizing and casual faith that is representative of contemporary evangelism. Murray describes the nerve of Paul's thought as follows: "Faith is regarded as an act of obedience, of commitment to the gospel of Christ. Hence the implications of this expression 'obedience of faith' are far-reaching. For the faith which the apostleship was intended to promote was not an evanescent [quickly fading] act of emotion but the commitment of wholehearted devotion to Christ and to the truth of his gospel. It is to such faith that all nations are called."[17]

(2) So Paul has a broad missionary vision. As in 16:26, so here this "obedience of faith" is to be solicited from among all the "Gentiles [nations]," ἔθνος, ethnos. Again in 15:18, Paul's ministry has sought "the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed," through his preaching of "the gospel of Christ," v. 19. By way of contrast, in 10:16, 21 Israel has responded with the "disobedience of faith." In other words, Paul's ministry is to seek out that promised "obedience of faith" from among the Gentiles which will in turn eventually provoke Israel to jealousy (9:30-33; 11:11, 15, 25).C

c. The universal purpose as it concerns God.

While God's purposes have levels of intent, such as his will on earth, in heaven, and the building of His church, His ultimate purpose is His own glorification (Eph. 1:5-6, 12; I Pet. 4:11). Jesus Christ saves sinners and gives them glory so that they might return glory to Him (John 17:9-10, 22). So here, the saving of the Gentiles is to bring honor and glory to Christ (Rom. 11:33-36), that is "for His name's sake," or vindication. Haldane comments: "The world was created for God's glory, and His glory is the chief end of the restoration of sinners. . . . Men are very unwilling to admit that God should have any end with respect to them greater than their happiness."[18]

5. It is one sovereign gospel, v. 6.

The Christians at Rome are encouraged with the declaration that they are part of the calling of the Gentiles by Jesus Christ, even as Paul has received an apostolic calling, v. 1. Such a calling here is more than an invitation; it is a potent wooing, an effectual drawing with cords of sovereign grace (8:28; I Cor. 1:9; 26-29). All Christians, whether Jewish or Gentile, should have a strong sense of spiritual vocation according to God's particular summons. As James Grindlay Small has written:

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[17] Murray, I, *Romans*, pp. 13-14.

[18] Haldane, *Commentary on Romans, p. 40.*

I've found a Friend; O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him:
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him;
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which nought can sever;
For I am His, and He is mine,
For ever and for ever.

C. GOD'S GOSPEL, THE GROUND OF BENEDICTION, V. 7

Here, for the Christian, both reclusiveness and worldliness are repudiated. Rather the believer is in the midst of pagan Rome and yet consecrated or set apart from it through divine calling as beloved by God. Such insulation without isolation qualifies for the outpouring of "grace and peace."

1. The objects of benediction, v. 7a.

In all that follows in Romans, that is the comprehensive doctrine of the gospel and consequent exhortation to gospel living, here Paul succinctly incorporates this body of truth within the terms of the benediction, "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

a. Beloved of God.

Paul's true ecumenism incorporates all Christians in Rome who are "beloved of God," not simply those who claim to love God. No distinction is made with regard to Jew or Gentile, patrician or plebeian or slave, as he will elaborate upon in greater detail, 3:9, 22-23.

b. Called as saints.

The previously mentioned "calling," v. 6, is now defined in terms of purpose, which is the "setting apart," the definitive sanctification or particular consecration of the sinner, by God. This common term of address emphasizes the believer's distinctiveness. All genuine Christians are "saints," and not some special, super-holy class.

2. The blessings of benediction, v. 7b.

"Grace and peace" here are not identical with initial saving grace (Eph. 2:8-9) and peace with (from) God resulting from justification (Rom. 5:1). Here Paul, as is customary in most of his epistles, prays for grace and peace, that is daily sanctifying grace and peace, to be bestowed upon those who have received grace and peace. For the progressing Christian there is an ongoing supply of "grace upon grace" (John 1:16).

3. The source of benediction, v. 7c.

   The Father and the Son are linked here, according to an essential bosom and economic relationship (John 1:18), and thus together mediate "grace and peace." The dignity of this relationship is but a further reflection of the exalted description of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in v. 4.

CHAPTER II

ROMANS 1:8-15 - INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL

As the salutation has moved from definitive apostolic and gospel identification to a more particular address of the Roman saints, so Paul now becomes far more personal and spiritually intimate in his paving the way for instruction in the meat and marrow of the gospel. Here is evidenced heartfelt pastoral warmth, after the manner of a tender "nursing mother, . . . a father" (I Thess. 2:7, 11). Paul well knows that he intends to minister in his letter, "very boldly [daringly, τολμηρός, tolmēros, cf. II Pet. 2:10] to you on some points," 15:15, yet his anticipated visit will be marked by spiritual enjoyment, material assistance, rest, and "the fulness of the blessing of Christ," 16:24, 29, 32. In spite of his inherent authority, Paul also looks forward to mutual encouragement with a congregation that is in no way described as immature, 1:8, 12; 15:14.

A. PAUL'S PRAYERFUL DELIGHT IN THE ROMANS, VS. 8-12

His characteristic, prayerful manner of thanksgiving at the outset (I Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:3; I Thess. 1:2; II Thess. 1:3; II Tim. 1:3; Philem. 4-5) reflects his overall prayerful style of writing, 6:17; 7:25; 10:1; 12:12; 15:30.

1. Their gospel witness to the world, v. 8.

   a. The manner of Paul's grateful address is here, as elsewhere, to "my God" (I Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3, 12; 3:17) the Father "through Jesus Christ," that is the access that his atonement has obtained (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:17; I Pet. 2:5).

   b. The happy concern of Paul's address is the Roman saints' evident faith, or "the faith," or personal gospel witness that has been effectively "proclaimed," καταγγέλλω, katangellō, or witnessed/announced throughout "the whole world." This expression of universal outreach is not mere hyperbole for the whole inhabited earth, but rather, as similarly described in Acts 19:10, 20, indicative of the pervasive gospel witness that resulted through the agencies and populace of the Roman empire. Several years later, when imprisoned in Rome, the Apostle will send greetings to the church at Philippi from the saints "of Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22), that is converts of "the imperial household, the meanest slaves as well as the most powerful courtiers."[1]

   c. In these times of spiritual declension, such a commendation of the church at Rome by Paul ought to make us feel jealous for such an authentic and effective ministry. The Roman historian Tacitus tells us that, during the early years of the first century, Rome was a "receptacle for everything that is sordid and degrading from every quarter of the globe."[2] Yet while suffering unspeakable persecution as the

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[1] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 171.

[2] Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, p. 2.

objects of sadistic sport, the Christians made an indelible impression. Early in the second century the Letter to Diognetus, by an anonymous Christian, tells of how this holy influence challenged an unholy world. "Every foreign land is their fatherland and every fatherland a foreign land. They marry as do all; they beget children, but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh but do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all."[3]

2. His pastoral prayer for the brethren, vs. 9-10.

While Paul is constantly active in prayer, yet the substance of his praying is the cause of the gospel, and particularly those saved by the gospel and their gospel ministry. All of this interest subsumes under his soul's unqualified service of God and His gospel (1:1). The subsequent, grand exposition of this gospel only reinforces this point.

a. It is gospel grounded praying, v. 9.

As is common with the Apostle's manner of praying, he addresses God the Father through God the Son (I Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:16-17; Col. 1:3). Here, in the form of an oath as a way of being emphatic (cf. II Cor. 1:23; 11:31; Gal. 1:20; I Thess. 2:5), Paul passionately declares his commitment to the Roman saints. His service to God is singular, "in his spirit," and dominated by the gospel of the grace of God. Such devotion is thus directed through the saints at Rome; its transparent sincerity is intended to gain the ready acceptance of what follows. Paul's knowledge of such ecumenical proclamation by the Roman saints "throughout the whole world" indicates not only his regular contact through numerous couriers and missionaries with various Christian churches and settlements amongst the Gentiles, but also his promotion of this network of ministry.

However, for a man so committed to the sovereignty of God in all of his labors, does not such an emphasis on prayer inject a conflict involving contingency? Haldane comments:

> But since all events are fixed, even from eternity, in the counsels and wisdom of God, of what avail, it may be said are these prayers? Can they change his eternal counsels, and the settled order of events? Certainly not. But God commands us to pray, and even the prayers of his people are included in his decrees; and what God has resolved to do, he often gives to their prayers. Instead of them being vain, they are among the means through which God executes his decrees.[4]

b. It is a yearning to come to Rome, v. 10.

Why did Paul travel so much? It was not to see the sights of such places as Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, in conjunction with his missionary endeavors, but for the exclusive cause of the souls of men. Likewise his interest in Rome did not include

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[3] Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, pp. 135-6.

[4] Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 37.

a cultural regard for the Forum, Colosseum, Circus Maximus, Pantheon, etc., but "you," the "beloved of God in Rome, called as saints," v. 7. However, his personal desire in this regard must yield to God's timing. Hence Paul's mention here of the "will of God" indicates that he did not perceive his travels to be arranged according to his own itinerary.

3. His pastoral desire to stimulate maturity, v. 11.

   a. Paul particularly desires to "impart some spiritual gift" to the body of Roman believers, and obviously this necessitated his physical presence. Better, he desired to "share," μεταδίδωμι, metadidōmi, cf. I Thess. 2:8), that is his own spiritual ministry, cf. v. 12, with the intent of stimulating "fruitfulness," v. 13. Lloyd-Jones comments, "Surely the explanation is that he wants to visit them at Rome in order that he may do thoroughly for them what he is now doing in a summary form in the letter that he is now writing to them. . . . And the way in which he does that is by means of the teaching."[5]

   b. Whether with his letter or presence, Paul's primary interest in the Roman Christians is the stability of their faith. The word "to establish" here is στηρίζω, stērizō, and its use in 16:25 indicates that it is the gospel of "the only wise God," v. 27, mediated through Paul's preaching of "Jesus Christ" (cf. Acts 18:23; I Thess. 3:2). Again we see the significance of the sanctifying effect of the gospel and related truth.

4. His pastoral desire for mutual fellowship, v. 12.

   With gentle qualification concerning, "that you may be established," v. 11, Paul adds that he desires "mutual comfort/encouragement," συμπαρακαλέω, sumparakaleō. He has no desire to convey an air of apostolic dominance such as in an hierarchical sense represented by the papacy or episcopacy; rather he will stimulate spiritual growth with a sweet and humble spirit. As Charles Wesley has written:

   All praise to our redeeming Lord,
   Who joins us by His grace,
   And bids us, each to each restored,
   Together seek His face.

   He bids us build each other up;
   And, gathered into one,
   To our high calling's glorious hope
   We hand in hand go on.

[5] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 1:1-32*, p. 226.

B. PAUL'S RELUCTANT DELAY WITH THE ROMANS, VS. 13-15

The Apostle is like a frustrated parent who, having been separated from his children, anxiously longs for immediate reunion. He acknowledges this church to be aligned with the Gentiles and as such is part of his paternal concern, especially with regard to ministering the gospel to them.

1. He is prevented from coming to them, v. 13.

   a. The reason(s) are not revealed and can only be speculative, such as revelation, persecution, travel restrictions, pastoral needs, etc. However, Haldane comments: "His [Paul's] being hindered, by whatever means, from going to Rome, when he intended it, shows that the Apostles were sometimes thwarted in their purposes, and were not always under the guidance of Divine inspiration in their plans.[6]

   b. The fruit sought, while possibly a collection for Jerusalem as received from other Gentile churches, is most likely spiritual productivity that results in the "stability" mentioned in v. 11 (cf. "fruit" καρπός, karpos, used in this sense, 6:21, 22; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:11; also John 15:16). Paul was "results" oriented in his ministry, though not in any modern, carnal statistical sense; rather he longed for spiritual maturity in the Gentiles churches (Eph. 4:13-16), even safe and sanctified arrival before "our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming" (I Thess. 2:11-12, 19).

2. He is obliged to minister to them, v. 14.

   a. Why is Paul under "obligation"?

      (1) Because he has received a specific apostolic calling.

      He is a minister under authority, having been sovereignly called of God (1:1; Acts 13:2; Gal. 1:15). I Corinthians 9:16-17 best explains this weight of responsibility, where it is described as "compulsion" or necessity, and "stewardship entrusted unto me" or commission as a slave.

      (2) Because he has received a specific apostolic mandate.

      He is a minister under orders to primarily declare the gospel to the Gentiles, though not exclusively (Acts 9:15-16; 18:1-6; 19:1-10). Ephesians 3:6-7 best explains this universal directive where Paul is a "minister," διάκονος, diakonos, or servant commanded to "preach to the Gentiles [hence the whole inhabited earth] the unfathomable riches of Christ."

   b. To "whom" is Paul under obligation?

      The Christian assembly at Rome was undoubtedly composed of a large segment of Gentiles, among who were representatives of the various stratas of that society, though with the lower classes predominating. Hence Paul is intent on making

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[6] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 51.

clear that "his gospel" (2:16) is for sinners of every stripe without distinction; it is not merely for the intelligentsia. Of course the question of Israel's relationship to this gospel will be dealt with in chapters 9-11. His coming will not focus merely on patricians, as the following diagram illustrates.

PAUL'S MINISTRY
TO THE NON-JEWISH WORLD

Greeks	barbarians
ἕλλησινC	βαρβάροις
(hellēsin)	(barbarois)
articulate sinners	babbling sinners
wise sinners	foolish sinners
patrician sinners	plebeian sinners
upper class sinners	lower class sinners
free sinners	slave sinners
bourgeoisie sinners	proletarian sinners
educated sinners	uneducated sinners

So Lloyd-Jones expounds: "The gospel of Jesus Christ is needed by everybody. It does not matter whether you have been born in Great Britain or in Japan or in one of the countries of South America; the gospel is needed by *all*. There is no such thing as a 'Christian nation', and you are not a Christian because you are born in a so-called Christian country. It does not matter whether people are good or bad, morally speaking; they all need the gospel. So you need to preach it and to talk about it to the most respectable as well as to the most profligate and dissolute. The same gospel! And the learned people and the philosophers stand in exactly the same need of this as the most ignorant person conceivable."[7]

3. He is eager to preach to them, v. 15.

   a. Not only was Paul commissioned by God, but he was eager for the cause of God's gospel; he was enthusiastic under orders and thus delighted in evangelistic proclamation. Here he engages the attention of the Roman believers by expressing his passion, his great zeal for "preaching the gospel" upon his anticipated arrival. Paul was the antithesis of a professional man of religion. The word here is εὐαγγελίζω, euangelizō, which focuses on the *content* of the proclamation rather than the *method*, as κηρύσσω, kerussō, would indicate; cf. 10:5 where both words are used. Likewise Romans focuses upon the content of the gospel rather than the manner of its communication.

   b. But what does the Apostle mean when he describes his prospective audience as "you also who are in Rome"? Some might feel that he has in mind the evangelization of pagan Rome in general.[8] However the context strongly suggests

[7] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans*, 1:1-32, p. 248.

[8] Douglas Moo, while rejecting this perspective, points out that this is Paul's normal use of euangelizō, εὐαγγελίζω.

"you" refers to the Christian assembly in the imperial city. The overwhelming proof here is the subsequent doctrinal exposition of the gospel that immediately follows. In other words, Paul relished the preaching of the gospel to those who had formerly believed on hearing the preaching of the gospel.

c. Application. To evangelize those who have been evangelized may, to some, seem wasted effort, as if attempting to sell refrigerators to Eskimos! However, the substance of Romans indicates that Paul regards this body of gospel doctrine as vital for the ongoing life of the Christian. The gospel is not merely initiatory, as if a necessary requirement for entrance into heaven. The gospel saves for time and eternity, yet it has ongoing and sanctifying significance for the Christian. Having been saved by the gospel, the child of God needs to grow through an expanded understanding of the gospel. In other words the gospel, in which justification before God is obtained, is yet also the ground of progressive sanctification.[9] The Lord's Supper is the only *repeatable* Christian ordinance; it is in fact a gospel remembrance feast intended to constantly remind the believer of his reliance upon the gospel and result in his spiritual growth.

[9] J. C. Ryle makes this point crystal clear in pp. 15-33 of his classic work *Holiness*, and also includes the helpful comments in this regard by Robert Trail, pp. 326-330.

CHAPTER III

ROMANS 1:16-17 - THEME, THE GOSPEL OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

WHILE there is common agreement among expositors that vs. 16-17 here represent the definitive theme of Romans, yet they should not be considered in isolation because of their connection with the preceding and proceeding contexts. In v. 15, Paul's indefatigable boldness is sourced in the gospel which in vs. 16-17 finds its justification in terms of its essential and glorious nature. In vs. 18-3:20 the gospel finds its gracious necessity in the condemnation of God that continues to hover over all of mankind. Boice comments that here, "we come to sentences that are the most important in the letter and perhaps in all literature. They are the theme of this epistle and the essence of Christianity. They are the heart of biblical religion."[1]

A. GOD'S GOSPEL IS DYNAMIC, V. 16a

Since the birth of the Christian church at Pentecost, biblical Christianity has always been characterized as dynamic and never static, active and not passive, experiential as well as doctrinal. Orthodoxy sans orthopraxy has always resulted in frigid formality that shuns spontaneous manifestations of the life of God in the soul; such passion is condemned as "enthusiasm" and "pietism." During the revivalism of the eighteenth century in New England, Whitefield, Edwards, Tennent, along with their pastoral supporters, were termed "New-Lights" on account of their preaching zeal, in contrast with the more staid "Old-Lights" (Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 209-216). Doubtless Paul was a "New-Light" as well with regard to his regenerate fervor which is now more profoundly explained.

1. Paul's negative affirmation.

Being "not ashamed of the gospel" is the negative expression of Paul's "eagerness" described in v. 15. The inference is that the world in general, as well as nominal believers, regards the gospel, along with its followers, as something foolish, shameful, lowly, beggarly, disreputable (cf. I Cor. 1:22-23; 4:10-13). Though II Timothy 1:8 indicates that even a pastor is in need of exhortation in this regard.

a. But for what reasons does the world so despise biblical Christianity when at the same time it will at least patronize other world religions?

(1) Christ and his disciples condemn the world, and to this it responds (John 7:7; 15:18-19).

(2) Biblical Christianity denounces humanity in total as being thoroughly corrupt (Rom. 3:9-18).

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[1] James Montgomery Boice, *Romans 1-4*, p. 103.

(3) Biblical Christianity worships a crucified, non-Machiavellian Savior (Rev. 5:11-13).

(4) Biblical Christianity pursues heavenly/spiritual rather than earthly/material goals Matt. 6:33; Col. 1:5).

(5) Biblical Christianity praises humility, selflessness, and denounces assertiveness, pride (Jas. 4:6).

(6) Biblical Christianity confesses personal weakness and dependence (II Cor. 12:9-10).

(7) Biblical Christianity condemns human ability intended to impress God (Rom. 3:20, 27-28).

(8) Biblical Christianity is intolerant of moral relativism and pluralism (John 14:6; Heb. 12:14).

b. More positively, what Paul is declaring is that when he comes to Rome, as has been the case when he visited other notable cities, rather than being impressed with the culture and sights, he will arrive with the most glorious message that the patricians, plebeians and slaves have ever heard. It is a message Paul boasts and exalts in with every part of his soul and body (Gal. 6:14).

2. Paul's positive affirmation.

Positively, the reason Paul is "not ashamed" is the fact that this gospel is incomparable being "the power of God for salvation." What specifically is this distinguishing characteristic of "power," δύναμις,Œdunamis?

a. In Rome is evidenced the "power of man" that in fact portrays the impotence of its religion, the bondage of its corruption that knows no deliverance. However, in contrast with this moral void, this cause of and captivity to degradation, is something radically different, namely God's saving omnipotence that conquers the mighty power of sin. Such saving power was graphically described in the Old Testament (Ex. 32:11; Neh. 1:10; Ps. 77:14-15; Isa. 40:9-10; 52:10; 59:16).

b. It is the power of God in action, demonstrably evident in the resurrection of His Son (1:4; Eph. 1:19-20); He has not remained fixed on a pedestal, or stood silent with hundreds of other images under cover of a colonnade or shrine. He is the "living God" (I Thess. 1:9-10) who has marched through the earth "for the salvation of His people" (Hab. 3:12-13).

c. It is the power of God that effectually brings "salvation." The following context of 1:18-3:20 indicates that this salvation is from the wrath of God that hovers over sinful and guilty mankind (cf. 5:9-10, though 13:11 indicates that there is a consummate aspect as well (cf. 8:18-24).

d. It is the power of God applied in a converting manner, through faith, "to everyone who believes" (I Cor. 1:18, 24), that is "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:19-20). Here then is something worthy of boasting in; this gospel is matchless to such a degree that it makes the best of Roman religion to appear tawdry and shabby.

e. Illustration. Morris comments: "The gospel is not advice to people, suggesting that they lift themselves. It is power. It lifts them up. Paul does not say that the gospel brings power but that it *is* power, and God's power at that. When the gospel is preached, this is not simply so many words being uttered. The power of God is at work. When the gospel enters anyone's life, it is as though the very fire of God had come upon him. There is warmth and light in his life."[2]

f. Illustration. Lloyd-Jones explains: "The gospel is the power of God. It does not depend upon me and my faithfulness. If it did we would all be lost. It is God's power to keep, to justify and to sanctify and to glorify - to take us right into heaven itself. . . . nothing can stop it. It is certain. The gospel works and will work, until all that God has purposed by its means shall have been completed."[3]

B. GOD'S GOSPEL IS UNIVERSAL, V. 16b.

1. It is to the Jew and Gentile.

It is "to *everyone* who believes," that is Jew and Greek (non-Jew), but *only* to those who believe with works renouncing faith (3:22-23; 4:11; Gal. 3:22, 26-28). Here the *sola fide* (faith alone) emphasis of the Reformation is plainly and definitively stated. The power of the gospel is not in faith but in God Himself as faith's object. Faith, divinely generated, is non-meritorious linkage to the atonement of Christ. Here a universal gospel is offered on account of a universal problem that transcends human distinctives. Murray states: "There is no discrimination arising from race or culture and there is no obstacle arising from the degradation of sin. Wherever there is faith, *there* the omnipotence of God is operative unto salvation. This is a law with no exceptions."[4]

2. It is to the Jew first.

But why does Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, maintain that priority be given to the proclamation of the gospel to "the Jew first"?

a. The inauguration of the gospel by apostolic proclamation was wholly Jewish. Jewish disciples preached a Jewish Savior from Jewish Scriptures in the capital of Judaism with the result that the first Christian church was Jewish. The times of the Gentiles will conclude with the salvation of Israel (11:23-28; Luke 21:24).

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[2] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 67.

[3] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 1:1-32*, pp. 286-7.

[4] John Murray, *Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 28.

b. There is a priority given to Jews and Jerusalem, grounded in grace (Deut. 7:6-8), that is maintained in the New Testament (Matt. 15:24; Luke 24:47; John 4:22; Acts 1:8; 13:46). Paul never abandoned Judaism as a whole (9:1-5; 10:1); in fact he continued to identify himself as a Jew (Acts 21:39; 22:3). In his missionary endeavors, he habitually first visited the local synagogue (Acts 17:1-2) and just as regularly experienced fierce opposition. Because of this, on two occasions he declares his intention of subsequently ministering to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6), but this was only in a local sense since after spurning the Jews in Corinth (Acts 18:6), he moves to Ephesus and first ministers at the synagogue (Acts 19:8).

C. GOD'S GOSPEL IS RIGHTEOUS, V. 17a

The connection here with v. 16 is rooted in the pronoun "it," which clearly refers to "the gospel" which Paul so exalts in. Hence, what follows is an enlargement of this enthralling theme, though the essential term that describes this glorious gospel is "the righteousness of God." Thus in Romans 1:17 we come to that verse which for Martin Luther was, "the climax of his difficulties,"[5] although it appears Psalm 31:1 had earlier raised for him the same problem. However, it is also true that Romans 1:17 provided for the Reformer "open doors into paradise."[6]

1. How is the gospel to be understood as "the righteousness of God"?

This phrase occurs eight times in Romans (1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 twice), and its strategic importance is obvious. For Paul this was an imposing expression that he marveled at since it wedded with perfect harmony both God's holiness and grace. However, the source of this gospel truth is not so much Paul as the Old Testament. Our understanding of this point will only enhance our understanding of God's sole plan of salvation.

a. "Righteousness" in the Old Testament.

It means to be "straight" in a moral sense, "loyal without deviation." It is the positive aspect of God's holiness.

(1) Essential righteousness.

God is intrinsically "righteous" (Ex. 9:27; Deut. 32:4; Job 4:17; Ezra 9:15; Ps. 129:), though this attribute has its active manifestation (Ps. 145:17; Dan. 9:24).

(2) Required righteousness.

God demands righteousness from man that conforms to His own righteousness, and the law is a transcript of this expectation (Deut, 7:9; 12-13). This requirement is for perfect, total, everlasting righteousness. Man is to respond with righteous, active obedience (Ps. 4:5).

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[5] Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God*, p. 127.

[6] Introduction, p. 1.

(3) Judicial righteousness.

God maintains His righteousness in the economy of mankind, and while it is remunerative (Deut. 7:9, 12-13; Ps. 58:11), the pervasiveness of sin makes it more distinctively condemning (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 16:20; I Kings 10:9; Ps. 7:11-16; Jer. 22:3).

(4) Saving righteousness.

The predicament of sinful man finds relief in God's saving righteousness, that is a righteous way of saving unrighteous man.

(a) In Genesis 15:5 concerning Abraham (Rom. 4:1-5, 9-25), and Habakkuk 2:4 as quoted in this verse, we are told of righteous *standing* that comes from God to sinners through work's-excluding faith.

(b) Further, David cries out to God, "In Thy righteousness deliver me" (Ps. 31:1; cf. 71:2). However Isaiah, notably in the second division of his prophecy, gives repeated emphasis to "saving righteousness" for unrighteous sinners (Is. 45:8; 46:12-13; 51:5-8; 56:1; 59:16-17; 61:10; 62:1).[7] In these instances we have described the righteous, saving *activity* of God.

b. "Righteousness" in the New Testament epistles of Paul.

It is to be expected that Paul adheres to the Old Testament categories of this term. Here it is obvious that the apostle is focusing attention upon God's "saving righteousness." But specifically what meaning does he have in mind here?

(1) The context of Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 4:1-5, 9-25, and the vital role here of "faith alone," indicate that in the gospel, God has provided a righteous standing, a "gift of righteousness" (5:17; Phil. 3:8-9). Thus "the righteousness of God" is that judicial provision of an objective righteousness which He, the righteous God finds acceptable. In other words, the believing sinner, through faith, receives an alien, substitute, satisfactory righteousness.

(2) Illustration. Charles Hodge comments: "The righteousness of God, therefore, which the gospel reveals, and by which we are constituted righteous, is the perfect righteousness of Christ which completely meets and answers all of the demands of that law to which all men are subject, and which all have broken."[8]

(3) Illustration. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments: "The ultimate end and objective of the Christian gospel is to answer the question that was propounded by Job long centuries ago: 'How shall a man be just with God?' That is what it comes to. The business of the gospel is to make us righteous in the sight of God, to make us acceptable with God, to enable us to stand in the presence of God. Now you

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[7] Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 344-5.

[8] Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 32.

may have comfortable feelings, you may have had marvelous experiences, you may have had a great change in your life, and a number of wrong things may have gone out of your life, but I say that unless you have got something that enables you to stand before God, now, and in the day of judgment, you are not only not a Christian, you have never understood the gospel. This is the central purpose of the gospel - to make a man just with God, to enable us to stand with righteousness in the presence of God."[9]

(4) The context of Romans 3:21-22, 25-26 indicates that in the gospel, God actively saves with integrity; He is both a just and a justifying God. Thus "the righteousness of God" is that display or "revelation" as here of His holy mercy, His just forgiveness, His righteous grace, His virtuous love. It is a righteousness that *satisfies* God's moral requirements and enables grace to abound.

(5) Concerning the above two perspectives, Moo makes the following comment of reconciliation: "Could we not take 'righteousness of God' here to include both God's activity of 'making right' saving, vindicating - and the status of those who are so made right, in a relational sense that bridges the divine and the human?"[10]

2. How is the righteousness of God "revealed from faith to faith"?

A literal translation here declares that this gospel of the righteousness of God, "is being revealed [uncovered/unveiled] out of [from] faith into [to] faith."

a. Note the parallel with v. 18 where the wrath of God is being "revealed [actively poured out/inflicted] from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." It is now more than a "promised" gospel, v. 2. Hence, just as God's wrath is being actively outpoured on account of righteous necessity, so God's gospel of free grace is being actively showered upon Jew and Greek on account of righteous, universal compassion.

b. "From faith to faith" has been variously interpreted, but it is related to the continuity of "everyone who is believing (present participle)" in v. 16, and "the righteous man shall *live* [emphasis added] by faith," v. 17.

(1) It is speaking, not so much of progress as *continuity* in faith. Having been saved by initial faith, the genuine saved sinner continues to believe; in this earthly life he shall be continually justified by faith; his shall be the life of faith (II Cor. 5:7).[11] Habakkuk 2:4 describes the ongoing faith of the prophet who shall endure Assyrian captivity and national devastation (Hab. 3:17-18). For Paul, as salvation is initially by grace, so it is also continually by grace, as he makes so abundantly clear in Galatians 3:1-3; the same is true with regard to faith (Gal. 2:20; 3:25-26; 6:14).

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[9] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans*, pp. 300-1.

[10] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 74, also p. 75 for further explanation.

[11] H. P. Liddon comments: "The Righteousness of God in Man dates from the act of faith which receives Jesus Christ, and tends to produce faith, ἐις πίστινŒeis pistin, as a condition of its being continuously imparted. It is only given to the man who continues to believe." *Explanatory Analysis St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. 18.

(2) The NIV translation here describes this gospel as being revealed "by faith from first to last." Paul inclusively describes here "first" faith and "lasting" faith. Such a rather free rendering yet focuses on the heart of what Paul is declaring, namely that, as the German pietist Spenner states, "Faith in Christ, confidence in the grace of God in Christ, is the beginning of our salvation, and will remain its instrument to the end."[12]

D. GOD'S GOSPEL IS UNIQUE, V. 17b.

1. It is confirmed in the Old Testament.

As in Romans 4:1-25, where Genesis 15:6 and Psalms 32:1-2 are quoted to uphold the one saving gospel of justification through faith, so here Habakkuk 2:4 is referred to with the same purpose in mind.

2. It is claimed through the "faith alone" *sola fide* principle of Habakkuk 2:4.

The prophet Habakkuk complained to the Lord, with much righteous indignation, that He appeared to have neglected the judgment of His backslidden people (Hab. 1:1-4). In reply, the Lord advises Habakkuk that his punishment will be mediated through the savage Assyrians, and when it comes it will astound him with its severity (1:5-11). Habakkuk expresses his dismay that God would use a pagan nation to inflict discipline on relatively less godless Israel. So he awaits the Lord's response to his objection (1:12-2:1). Then the Lord replies that His plan is certain; yes, the Assyrians are proud and ungodly. However, for the true child of God, he will pass through such a trial on the basis of faith alone in His righteous dealings in this situation. That is, "the righteous [man] will live by [his] faith" (2:2-4). Habakkuk's ultimate understanding of this principle is declared in Habakkuk 3:16-19).

a. Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted three times in the New Testament, and on each occasion a distinctive nuance is given. Nevertheless, in all three instances, blessed holy union and acceptance with God is established and maintained through unalloyed faith in His saving and keeping.

(1) Romans 1:17. Here justification concerns the righteousness of God received by the unrighteous through faith in Christ.

(2) Galatians 3:11. Here justification concerns faith in Christ that totally excludes reliance upon the works of the law.

(3) Hebrews 10:38. Here justification concerns faith in Christ that is productive of endurance in the face of adversity.

b. However, Paul's quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 here admits of two possible renderings, which Murray succinctly defines: "Are we to render the proposition, 'The righteous by faith shall live' or 'The righteous shall live by faith'? Is the proposition to the effect

[12] Cited by Lange and Fay, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, p. 77.

that the righteous will live or to the effect of intimating how the righteous will live, namely by faith?"[13] In more simple terms, is the emphasis to be place on "faith" or "live"? To ask this question is, in context, to immediately opt for stress on "faith," as it relates to righteousness. Moo rightly concludes, "Of greatest significance is the way Paul in Rom. 1-8 consistently links faith with righteousness (cf. the summary in 5:1) and shows how 'life' is the product of that righteousness (cf. 5:18 and 8:10. These connections favor the translation 'the one who is righteous by faith will live.'"[14]

c. Of course there is a danger here that, in giving "faith righteousness" the place of primary emphasis, the "living" as a result of this "faith righteousness" is lost sight of. Nothing could be further from Paul's mind. So Luther gives balance here when he comments: "The meaning of this passage appears, then, to be as follows: the righteousness of God is entirely from faith, yet growth does not make it more real but only gives it greater clarity - according to II Cor. 3:18, and Ps. 84:7: 'They shall go from strength to strength.' And just so also 'from faith to faith,' by always believing more and more strongly."[15] Thus the truly justified through faith alone, those recipients of the free and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, are also made alive unto God so that they live through Him (6:11). The biblical Christian will be right with God and alive unto God (Tit. 3:5-7).

3. Illustration. A historical perspective is to be noted here since the essence of this verse is the very foundation of the post-medieval, western society that sprung, whatever its failings may be, from the Reformation with resulting light and liberation from religious tyranny and dark legalistic bondage. In devoting one whole chapter of his commentary to this verse under the heading of, "Martin Luther's Text," Boice concludes as follows: "Later in life Luther was to write many things about the doctrine of justification by faith, which he had learned from Romans 1:17. He would call it 'the chief article from which all our other doctrines have flowed.' He called it 'the master and prince, the lord, the ruler and the judge over all kinds of doctrines.' He said, "If the article of justification is lost, all Christian doctrine is lost at the same time.' He argued, 'It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God, and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour.' What a heritage! What a rebuke against the weak state of present-day Christianity! If justification by faith is the doctrine by which the church stands or falls, our contemporary declines are no doubt due to our failure to understand, appreciate, and live by this doctrine. The church of our day does not stand tall before the world. It bows to it. Christians are not fearless before ridicule. We flee from it. Is the reason not that we have never truly learned to stand before God in his righteousness?"[16]

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[13] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 33.

[14] *Moo*, *Romans*, p. 78.

[15] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, p. 19.

[16] Boice, *Romans*, I, p. 126.

CHAPTER IV

ROMANS 1:18-3:20 - THE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF MAN, THE BAD NEWS

In Romans 1:18-3:20 we now enter into the most devastating unveiling of man in sin and God's reaction to it in all of the Bible. Here sin, in both its hideous profundity and universal inclusiveness, is laid bare in all of its naked ugliness. Further, and even more disturbing for guilty mankind, is God's reaction toward sin which is his manifest wrath; He is not passive in this regard, as if benignly disturbed, but positively angry. Why does Paul, with obvious aforethought, present such a reasoned exposure of the essential human malady? Because the glorious gospel of the saving righteousness of God is predicated upon the loathsome leprosy, the plague of plagues,[1] that so thoroughly infects the whole race of Adam. Good news presupposes bad news; salvation presupposes being lost; mercy presupposes misery; grace presupposes guilt; and saving righteousness presupposes unrighteousness. Martyn Lloyd-Jones describes the vital importance of this passage as follows:

> If you understand this section you will never be in difficulties as to why it was absolutely vital that the Son of God should leave heaven and be born as a babe, be born under the law, be born of a woman and live life as He lived it, should go to the cross and die and be buried and rise again; you will never have any trouble in understanding why. But if you are not clear about this section, well then, you will always be in trouble about the gospel itself - as many people are.[2]

A. THE GENTILES ARE THOROUGH SINNERS, 1:18-32

The distinction commonly made of Paul addressing the Gentiles as sinners in 1:18-32 and the Jews as sinners in 2:1-3:8 holds true, though not absolutely, for the following reasons. First, in writing to Rome, Paul appears in 1:18-32 to be focusing upon Roman paganism and depravity. Second, the expression "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" in v. 18 appears to describe a universal corruption. Third, as Moo points out, "the knowledge of God rejected by those depicted in 1:18-32 comes solely through 'natural revelation' - the evidences of God in creation and, perhaps, the conscience. The situation with Jews is, of course, wholly different, for Paul holds them responsible for the special revelation they have been given in the law (cf. 2:12-13, 17-29)."[3]

1. Wrath is upon the ungodly who abandon God, vs. 18-23.

a. An introduction to the "wrath of God."

(1) "Wrath" here is God's *expressed* holy displeasure at man's persistent and escalating depravity; it is His reaction to deep-dyed and perverse unholiness.

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[1] The expression "plague of plagues," is borrowed from the title of Puritan Ralph Venning's penetrating work on the doctrine of sin first published in 1669.

[2] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 1:1-32*, p. 315.

[3] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 97.

In Romans it is mostly the wrath of God referred to (2:5, 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; cf. also Eph. 2:3; 5:6; ; Col. 3:6; I Thess. 1:10; 5:9), except for one reference to the wrath of human government (13:4-5). Paul does write of man's wrath (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; I Tim. 2:8). Murray declares: "Wrath is the holy revulsion of God's being against that which is the contradiction of his holiness."[4]

(2) Modern theology, as represented by C. H. Dodd, has reacted against the thought of God being angry and indignant toward sinful man since it is said to be unworthy of the New Testament revelation of the love of God. Old Testament expressions of the wrath of God (Num. 11:1; 25:4; Isa. 34:2; Jer. 4:8; 51:45; Zeph. 2:1-2) merely reflect a more primitive past. Hence, "wrath" here is the inevitable consequence of sin, that is inbuilt punishment, 1:27, rather than a divine expression of hatred.[5] Of course intrinsic to this aversion to the obvious teaching of Scripture is a misunderstanding of the character of God, which gives primacy to holiness as the regulator of love. This rationalization of the "wrath of God" in fact appears to be a vain attempt to escape from it.[6]

(3) But does God really get angry? Could not His wrath or anger merely be an "anthropopathism," that is a divine accommodation and representation of the ever-blessed God to a human emotional expression? And if God is truly angry, then how is it possible for Him to be loving at the same time? Both questions take us to the limits of human understanding and the danger of Stoicism on one hand and God as essentially man on the other. However, consider:

(a) The Bible never presents God's anger as a charade covering the reality of non-anger. Shedd helpfully explains:

> Now when the emotion of anger in a most pure spirit like God comes into contact with moral evil, there is harmony between the feeling and its object. It is a righteous feeling spent upon a wicked thing. When God hates what is hateful, and is angry at that which merits wrath, the true nature and fitness of things is observed, and he feels in himself that inward satisfaction which is the substance of happiness. . . . The feeling of wrath against the wickedness of man and devils, is constantly in the Divine essence. Yet God is supremely and constantly blessed.[7]

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[4] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 35.

[5] Leon Morris comments: "It is of course true that God is love. But it is not true that this rules out any realistic view of God's wrath. We must bear in mind that the opposite of love is not wrath, but hate. Wrath is perhaps not an ideal term, for with us it so easily comes to denote an emotion characterized by loss of self-control and a violent concern for selfish interests. But these are not necessary constituents of wrath, and both are absent from the "righteous indignation" which gives us the best human analogy. In any case, "wrath" is the word the Bible uses, and we need the strongest of reasons for abandoning it . It is a term that expresses the settled and active opposition of God's holy nature to everything that is evil." *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 76.

[6] R. C. H. Lenski adds: "This fact of the wrath "from heaven" constantly breaks through the clouds of human perversions, false reasonings and philosophies, blatant denials and lies, beneath which men seek to hide in helpless efforts to escape." *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. 94.

[7] William Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, I, pp. 177-78. See also John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, pp. 67-72.

(b) The Bible often describes God as both holy and gracious (Is. 6:1-7), just and a justifier concerning sin (Rom. 3:26), and here in Romans 1:16-18 He saves sinners while at the same time being angry with sinners. Robert Dabney illustrates this true biblical dualism from the life of George Washington who, in determining the destiny of a Major Andre, both loved him and signed his death-warrant.[8]

(4) Application. Arthur Pink writes:

> A study of the concordance will show that there are *more* references in Scripture to the anger, fury, and wrath of God, than there are to His love and tenderness. . . . The wrath of God is a perfection of the Divine character upon which we need to frequently meditate. First, that our hearts may be duly impressed by God's detestation of sin. We are ever prone to regard sin lightly, to gloss over its hideousness, to make excuses for it. But the more we study and ponder God's abhorrence of sin and His frightful vengeance upon it, the more likely we are to realize its heinousness. Secondly, to beget a true fear in our souls for God: 'let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire' (Heb. 12:28-29). We cannot serve Him 'acceptably' unless there is due 'reverence' for His awful Majesty and 'godly fear' of His righteous anger; and these are best promoted by frequently calling to mind that 'our God is a consuming fire.' Thirdly, to draw out our souls in fervent praise for our having been delivered *from* 'the wrath to come' (I Thess. 1:10). Our readiness or our reluctance to *meditate* upon the wrath of God becomes a sure test of our hearts' true attitude toward Him.[9]

b. The revelation of the wrath of God, v. 18a.

A more literal translation here reads, "For being revealed [uncovered, cf. Luke 12:2, emphatic position] is the wrath of God." The present tense here forces us to focus on the present rather than that future apocalyptic revelation of the wrath of God when Jesus Christ returns (II Thess. 1:3-10; Rev. 612-17; 19:11-21). A futuristic present is possible here, cf. Matt. 26:2, but unlikely in view of the present emphasis of the revelation of the gospel in v. 17. But how is the wrath of God being presently revealed?

(1) Lloyd-Jones suggests six ways in which God's wrath is *presently* being uncovered, namely: 1, in human conscience, its troubling, accusatory nature; 2, sin's inbuilt punishment; 3, a cursed, savage creation; 4, universal and inevitable death; 5, history, both biblical and general, the course of human degeneration; 6, the atonement of Jesus Christ.[10] Two of these seem to be most significant.

(2) Sin has inbuilt punishment; that is, whatever pleasure may be offered in temptation, yet bitter and unavoidable consequences follow. This seems, in

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[8] Robert Dabney, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, I, pp. 284-5.

[9] Arthur Pink, *The Attributes of God*, pp. 84-5.

[10] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 1:1-32*, pp. 342-50.

context here, to be of prime importance to Paul where, in v. 27, men and women involved in unnatural sexual relationships, are "receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." Surely this retribution includes disease as well as an evil, unclean, depraved environment. Further, this wrath involves God's abandonment of gross sinners in vs. 24-32. As Thomas Manton writes:

> It may be the greatest expression of God's anger, if he doth not check us and suffer us to go on in our sins: Hosea 4:17, 'Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone;' word, providence, conscience, let him alone: Ps. 81:12, 'So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels. It is the greatest misery of all to be left to our own choices[11]

God designs that the ungodly man will fall into a pit that his hands have hollowed out (Ps. 7:12-16).

(3) Concurrently with the revelation of God's gospel is the revelation of His wrath. For true believers, God's wrath, by way of substitution, was poured out upon His Son (Is. 53:6, 10; Matt. 27:45-46). For unbelievers who spurn the gospel, "the wrath of God is abiding [present tense] on him" (John 3:36). Haldane comments: "Above all, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven when the Son of God came down to manifest the Divine character, and when that wrath was displayed in His sufferings and death, in a manner more awful than by all the tokens God had before given of His displeasure against sin."[12]

c. The reasons for the wrath of God, vs. 18b-23.

Immediately following the sin of Adam and Eve, we are told that "they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and *the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God* [emphasis added] among the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8). As a result of this disobedience, God revealed his anger through punishment and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden. In simple terms, sin causes man to flee from God who in turn responds with anger. Yet in the midst of God's wrath there was the promise of redemption (Gen. 3:15). So here, man's perverse flight from God is graphically revealed, yet at the same time this revelation of wrath is the precursor to His saving, righteous grace.

(1) God in truth is suppressed, vs. 18-19.

On the surface, man's problem is described as "ungodliness," ἀσέβεια, asebēia, or active assault on God's person, and "unrighteousness" ἀδίκια, adikia, or active assault upon God's moral order. However, these are but symptoms of a more basic problem, that is rejection of "the truth" (John 3:19). The embrace of truth has moral consequences. It is truth or error embraced that governs a man's lifestyle (John 8:32).

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[11] Thomas Manton, *Works*, XIII, p. 300.

[12] Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 64.

(a) It is evident truth about God, v. 18.

1) What specifically is this truth that man spurns? Clearly it centers on the God of the Bible, as revealed to inward Gentile/pagan consciousness by means of the external created order, v. 19-20.

2) It is truth that is arresting, that addresses man's soul and finds resistance. Morris comments: "Paul evidently thinks of truth as dynamic, for it can be hindered, which means that it must be doing something."[13]

3) It is truth that frustrated man *attempts* to "suppress," or hinder, or sit upon. Here man's claims to fairly distinguish truth are demolished because sin renders man warped, prejudiced toward unrighteousness. In context, this "suppression" is especially in the religious and moral spheres of life.

4) Illustration. Consider the following contemporary religious/moral issues. In every instance the world scoffs at the plain biblical teaching.

a) Evolution. Creations is mocked as unenlightened, rather than the acknowledgment of a faithful Creator (Ps. 19:1).

b) Abortion. The unborn child is fetal tissue, not woven by God in the womb (Ps. 139:13-14).

c) Divorce. A lifetime union is an old-fashioned concept that does not allow for modern pressures; what matters is personal feelings rather than loyalty (Matt. 19:6).

d) Deviant sexuality. Heterosexuality is passe; any sexual relationship is legitimate provided it is loving and does not harm others (Rom. 1:24-32).

e) Liberal Christianity. Meaning, especially in the Bible, is subjective, existential, culturally conditioned, that which suits the times (Matt. 22:29).

5) Application. How important it is in evangelism and personal witnessing to be aware of this characteristic of man, of whatever educational level. The more educated or cultured a person may be, the more sophisticated becomes the suppression.

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[13] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 78.

(b) It is evident truth from God, v. 19.

For what reasons is man accountable concerning the knowledge of God which he suppresses according to v. 18? Why is it just that the wrath of God is outpoured upon ungodliness and unrighteousness? It is because man been given a sufficient revelation of God so that he cannot plead ignorance or agnosticism, and thus is "without excuse," v. 20b.

1) This knowledge about God is evident "within them."

a) While the context of v. 20 suggests that this knowledge is about the external created order, yet internal consciousness, cf. 2:14-15, seems the primary intent. Man is a creature with observatory powers, so that certain truth about God is evidently discernable; it inescapably confronts him, is *acknowledged within*, and then suppressed. Here is the root of man's "futile speculation" and "foolishness of heart," v. 21b.

b) Illustration. Calvin comments: "Men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him. . . . Upon his individual works he has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory, so clear and so prominent that even unlettered and stupid folk cannot plead the excuse of ignorance."[14]

c) Application. This is a vital point with regard to witnessing to a person who professes agnosticism or atheism, which response is in fact willful suppression. Lloyd-Jones comments:

> Anthropologists and research workers who have investigated this problem have produced this very vital bit of evidence: the most primitive tribes amongst the pygmies in the heart of Africa, tribes like the aborigines in Australia, and in certain parts of the north-west of the American Continent, wherever you find the most primitive people imaginable, even there is found this sense of a supreme Being, of a supreme God. It is universal in human nature. Even the man who tells you that he does not believe in God, and who boasts in the fact that he is an atheist, even he has got a sense of God. He has to argue against it, and that is why he does so. Whether he likes it or not, he has got it, and he does his best to drown it and to ridicule it and to dismiss it, but it is still there. A universal sense of God - 'that which may be known of God is manifest *in them*', deep within the consciousness of man's being.[15]

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[14] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, V. 1.

[15] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 1:1-32*, p. 369.

Of course such "God-consciousness" is not comprehensive or saving,[16] though it is sufficient to condemn man in his godless manner of living and pagan worship.

2) This knowledge is from God "to them."

a) Of prime importance are the questions, "Does man discover God?" (Paul everywhere answers "No"), and "Does God reveal Himself to man?" (Paul everywhere as well as here answers "Yes"). Morris comments: "God can be known only as he chooses to make himself known. The initiative is with him."[17]

b) In I Corinthians 1:21 Paul reveals that "the world through its wisdom did not come to know God," that is the world, by means of its strenuous searching and scholastic endeavor, was not able to come to a true and saving knowledge of God. On the other hand, Paul continues, "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." Such true knowledge and saving knowledge was revealed by God through the Gospel and its appointed heralds, cf. Gal. 1:11-12; 4:4; Eph. 1:9; II Tim. 1:8-11.

c) Hence, man's received God-consciousness and God's revelation of Himself in creation are His communication of Himself that, unlike man's perverted conception, is wholly authentic. So Haldane adds that, "there is no one who can manifest God to man except Himself, and consequently that all we know of Him must be founded on His own revelation, and not on the authority of any creature."[18] When man does attempt to discover God, he arrives at those conceptions described in v. 23, namely "an image [of God] in the form of corruptible man and of birds and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."

(2) God in creation is denied, v. 20.

Specifically, what is this evident knowledge about God that confronts all men, without exception, in their ungodliness and unrighteousness, as mentioned in v. 19? Clearly the challenge of man, "Show me God and I will believe," is untenable, that is its intimation that God is not evident.

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[16] "It would probably be a fair paraphrase of his [Paul's] argument to say that people have never lived up to the highest and best that they have known. But God intends that they should. They are guilty in his eyes when they do not." Morris, *Romans*, pp. 78-79.

[17] Ibid., p. 80.

[18] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 66.

(a) His invisible essential attributes, v. 20a.

To begin with, God is described as being essentially invisible. His fundamental attributes transcend visible definition (Ex. 33:20; John 1:18; 6:46; I Tim. 6:16; I John 4:12), and here they are described as "His invisible things [attributes]," more specifically "His eternal power" (infinite sovereignty and omnipotence) and "divine nature" (full deity).

(b) His visible expressed attributes, v. 20b.

1) Yet Paul declares a paradox when he further explains that the invisible God is clearly seen. How can this be? The answer is that while God in essence is not seen, yet that expression of his attributes in creation is a most visible display of His person. As Calvin plainly states, "God is in himself invisible; but as his majesty shines forth in his works and in his creatures everywhere, men ought in these to acknowledge him, for they clearly set forth their Maker."[19]

2) Psalm 19:1-6 presents a similar paradox. The creation of God "tells" and "declares," v. 1; it "pours forth speech" and "reveals knowledge," v. 2; yet, "there is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard," v. 3. Hence the Psalmist is describing the deafening proclamation of the silent heavens. As Spurgeon notes, "Sun, moon, and stars are God's traveling preachers; they are apostles upon their journey confirming those who regard the Lord, and judges on circuit condemning those who worship idols."[20]

3) Since the creation of the world, even before the Fall, God's expressed glory has been "clearly seen" in that same creation. It is not a dimly perceived vista, but a brilliant display that even now shines through even the disorder that corruption had brought about. However, it is a clarity with limitation, for this revelation is not of saving grace, but transcendent greatness and intricate design.

(c) His visible obligating attributes, v. 20c.

As a consequence, man, as described in v. 18, is without excuse. The assumption here is that man denies the force of this general revelation by offering countless reasons for his godless lifestyle; but this denial is unreasonable, irrational, and the greatest foolishness. In spite of these excuses, God denies their validity in the light of the evidence in creation

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[19] John Calvin, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 70.

[20] C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, I, p. 306.

alone.[21] Here then we are led to consider in the verses that follow man's innate hatred of God which causes him to oppose the most compelling evidence and perversely deny the natural order of things (Isa. 5:20).

(3) God in the heart is renounced, v. 21.

We now commence a descent into the vortex of the heart of sinful man. The rebellious rejection of evidence in v. 20 leads us to enquire as to what is at the root of this problem. It is more profound in its dark complexity that we could possibly imagine. Man is not merely in a state of denial, but rather he militantly opposes God at every hand (Ps. 2:1-3). Jonathan Edwards has a significant sermon on this matter entitled, "Men Naturally Are God's enemies" in which he declares:

> [Men] are enemies in the natural relish of their souls. They have an inbred distaste and disrelish of God's perfections. God is not such a being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God; yet from what they hear of him, *and from what is manifest by the light of nature* [emphasis added], they do not like him. By his being endowed with such attributes as he is, they have an aversion to him. They hear God is an infinitely holy, pure, and righteous Being, and they do not like him upon this account; they have no relish of such qualifications: they take no delight in contemplating them. It would be a mere task, a bondage to a natural man, to be obliged to set himself to contemplate those attributes of God. They see no manner of beauty or loveliness, nor taste any sweetness, in them. And on account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all his other attributes. They have great aversion to him because he is omniscient and knows all things; and because his omniscience is a holy omniscience. They are not pleased that he is omnipotent, and can do whatever he pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are enemies even to his mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like his immutability, because by this he will never be otherwise than he is, an infinitely holy God.[22]

(a) Through increasing dishonor, v. v. 21a

Here is an expansion upon the thought of man's inexcusability. "Knowing God [through the witness of creation], they did not glorify [honor] Him as God." Thus there is a vast gulf between the acknowledgment of God and love for God; He calls for praise and esteem, not grudging patronage. Yet to first concede that God is, and then attempt to contrive denial of Him, is to grossly insult Him; it is "ingratitude" as Paul here states , concerning our being and the world around us, of the highest order. It is like a child attempting to deny his known parentage and resultant upbringing. Lloyd-Jones writes: "Man does not thank God for His mercy, for His goodness, for all His dealings with us in providence. We take the sunshine for granted; we are annoyed if we do not get it. We take the rain for granted. . . . He is 'the Father of mercies'; and yet people go through the whole of their

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[21] Refer to James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, I, pp. 153-60, where he deals with many common excuses such as lack of evidence, the heathen, the truthfulness of the Bible, the problem of evil, etc.

[22] Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, II, p. 131.

lives and they never thank Him; they ignore Him completely. That is how they show their attitude towards God. In this way they suppress the truth that has been revealed concerning God."[23]

(b) Through futile speculations, v. 21b.

Man's condemnation here is heightened when it is understood that he "reasons" or "speculates," albeit vainly, so that the God of Scripture might be dethroned. In other words, with premeditation, man purposely distances himself from God. This he does by means of philosophic and abstract metaphysical reasoning. So Edwards declares: "The natural tendency of the heart of man is to fly from God, and keep at a distance from him, as far off as possible."[24] This attitude was evident when man determined to eliminate the Son of God and thus gain his "inheritance" (Luke 20:14; cf. John 1:10).

(c) Through darkening foolishness, v. 21c.

Foolish speculation leads to darkness which man finds acceptable. This fellowship in darkness leads to a pursuit for increasing degrees of darkness, as the following context suggests. Confronted with the light, man prefers darkness (John 3:19; cf. Eph. 4:17-19). Of course to such men, this darkness is light, and therefore the most intense and binding darkness (Matt. 6:23; John 9:41).

(4) God in glory is debased, vs. 22-23.

More specifically, how was God dishonored by means of foolish speculation according to v. 21? This raises the perspective of God by the Apostle Paul as being honorable, that is glorious in incorruption, or in a word, *holy*. Thus man degraded God to an unholy level, as was the case when Israel sinned at the foot of Mount Sinai, in His very presence (Ex. 32:1-10).

(a) His glory is exchanged for foolishness, v. 22.

1) "Asserting [themselves] to be wise" describes man as promoting his cleverness in the realm of theology, as he distances himself from God.

a) Through humanistic philosophy and arrogant scholarship.

b) Through progressive, evolutionary, cultural elitism.

c) Through rhetoric, oratory, and clever reasoning.

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[23] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 1:1-32*, p. 382.

[24] Edwards, *Works*, II, p. 131.

d) Illustration. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments:

> Instead of accepting revelation they became philosophers. And what is a philosopher? A philosopher is a man who starts by being skeptical about everything. That he is an agnostic. 'I am going to have the data', he says, 'and then I am going to apply my mind to it. I am going to reason it out and I am going to work it out'. And that is exactly what such men have done; they became foolish and wicked in their reasonings, in their thoughts, in their own conjectures and speculations and surmisings.[25]

And surely liberal theology and much of modern biblical criticism have been but children of this movement.

2) Yet in this boasted man-made advance comes the opposite result, that is man-made foolishness or ungodliness. The word μωραίνω, mōrainō, here is used in Matthew 5:13 of salt losing its savor, and in I Corinthians 1:20 of God making foolish the wisdom of this world. However here it is man making a fool of himself.

3) Application. Man became like Esau, skillful in the realm of the earthy, yet foolish in his carnal reasoning that cost him his birthright and disfavor with God (Gen. 25:27-34; Mal. 1:2-3; Heb. 12:16-17).

(b) His incorruption is exchanged for corruption, v. 23.

In view of Paul's exalted understanding of God, the extent of man's foolishness is now described as seemingly incomprehensible, the height of madness, involving the most irrational transaction in the history of the human race.

1) The only true and living creator God.

Paul speaks of "the glory of the incorruptible God," which confession is pregnant with transcendent and holy meaning (I Tim. 1:17; 6:14-16).

a) His glory.

This δόξα, doxa, describes the weight of magnificence of God's person, that is the fulness of His attributes.

b) His incorruption.

Focus is brought upon His righteous and undefiled character, or His holiness, so worthy of reverence and admiration.

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[25] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 1:1-32*, p. 377.

2) The hierarchy of created beings.

There seems to be a descending order here whereby man is portrayed as increasingly degenerate; he plumbs the depths of corrupt worship seeking ever more novel ways of debauched religion. This plunge of mankind may also be reflected in architecture, music, art, literature, etc., though the focus here is upon religion.

a) Man.

His worship of "an image in the firm of corruptible man" is but subtle self-worship, especially evident in Greek and Roman idolatrous human imagery. In worshiping works of human representation made by his hands, man in fact worships his own sinful image in his desire for non-threatening religion; his creativity here is sinful artistry.

b) Animals.

Birds, the ibis; *quadrupeds*, the bull, cat, cow, hippopotamus, wolf; *crawling creatures*, the crocodile, snake, scarab (dung) beetle.

3) The incredible trade-off.

The realm of the absurd is now entered whereby man trades wealth for rubbish, beauty for ashes, truth for error, light for darkness. Man attempts to divorce God, to force His abdication, and establish his own reign (Ps. 2:1-3).

a) The example of Israel.

God's people exchanged a cast metal calf for their saving God (Ps. 106:19-21), a fountain of living water for broken cisterns (Jer. 2:11-13), the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12-13; Matt. 27:3-10).

b) The exchange of God for man.

Robert Mounce comments:

> The essential sin which gives rise to idolatry is selfishness. When a man creates his own god he can control it. It exists for his own pleasure and profit. This sort of god requires from him no particular standard of ethical or moral behavior. To worship an idol is ultimately to worship oneself. Idolatry is self-deification. Disguised as a religious exercise, idolatry finds wide approval as an acceptable form of worship. It debases

> because it obscures the revealed purpose of God and leads man to the blind conclusion that he can worship himself as a viable substitute.[26]

2. Wrath is upon the ungodly who God abandons, vs. 24-32.

Whereas vs. 20-23 describe man's active and persistent rebellion against general revelation in creation, now God's response is described in a three-fold declaration of His "handing over" of sinful mankind to the fulfillment of unbridled desires. Such abandonment is reminiscent of God's "handing over" of Israel to its lusting for exotic food in the wilderness (Num. 11:1-34, especially vs. 18-20). Notice that in all three instances, vs. 24, 26, 28, outward sinful actions originate from lustful hearts, degrading passions, depraved minds.

a. God abandons the ungodly to their lustful hearts, vs. 24-25.

There is a judicial and punitive sense involved here. God delivers men in sin over to punishment by means of the affliction of their own sin (Ps. 7:12-16). For man, he discovers that the supposed sweetness of his sin turns to bitterness; his pleasure becomes a gnawing cancer. John Murray comments: "God's displeasure is expressed in his abandonment of the persons concerned to more intensified and aggravated cultivation of the lusts of their own hearts with the result that they reap for themselves a correspondingly greater toll of retributive vengeance."[27]

(1) Abandonment to carnal corruption, v. 24.

(a) Defilement by means of sexual perversion, lewd revelry, and cultic prostitution seem to be indicated here. It is as if mankind, not at peace in his sinning because of God's troubling of his conscience, says "Leave me alone; let me indulge my sin undisturbed; cease from convicting me." To this God eventually responds, "All right, I will abandon you, confront you no more, and withdraw the offer of grace."

(b) Notice that here we deal with lusting in the realm of the natural order, the misuse of revealed sexual functions; but in v. 26 we descend into the even lower regions of human depravity, that is the invention of unnatural functions, the reversal of God's plan for the union of a man and a woman.

(2) Abandonment to creature worship, v. 25.

(a) Here we see how man's perversity robs himself of objectivity; where the advancement of self is concerned, truth becomes dispensable and error preferable. Here Paul defines man's devolution rather than evolution, his decline into pantheistic humanism, which only the gospel can reverse (I Thess. 1:9). Man arrogantly prefers the worship of himself and the

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[26] Robert Mounce, *Themes From Romans*, p. 31.

[27] Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 44-45.

gods of his own making rather than the worship of God, and when such self-idolatry reaches a certain extremity, God responds as He did with Israel, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone" (Hos. 4:17). In his desire for autonomy, God consigns man to the tyranny of human rule. While, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31), it is infinitely worse to then be abandoned by that same God.

(b) However, Paul cannot allow even his mere mention of human defamation of the great Jehovah to stand alone. Rather, by way of contrast, he must eulogize and praise the transcendent glory of God by calling Him "blessed," εὐλογητός, eulogētos, and "forever."

b. God abandons the ungodly to sexual perversion, vs. 26-27.

Here Paul does not merely describe another category of sin, but rather a plummeting of mankind into the deepest crevices of human corruption, that which is unnatural, the reversal of natural sexual functions, the defiance of God's creative purposes. In general, this extremity of sinning causes God to abandon mankind to this sewer form of existence. However, this is not to deny that His mercy reaches down even to such perverted depths, as the Apostle indicates in I Corinthians 6:9-11, that is when the repentant cry is like that which Charles Wesley describes:

Depth of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?

I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face,
Would not hearken to His calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.

Pity from Thine eye let fall;
By a look my soul recall;
Now the stone of flesh convert,
Cast a look, and break my heart.

(1) Abandonment to unnatural lesbianism, v. 26.

(a) Why does Paul mention women first? Charles Hodge answers: "Paul first refers to the degradation of females among the heathen, because they are always the last to be affected in the decay of morals, and their corruption is therefore proof that all virtue is lost."[28]

(b) The Apostle does not hesitate to describe this relationship as a "degrading passion," that is a lustful attraction often mistakenly called love. Contrary to some modern opinions which give precedence to love

[28] Charles Hodge, *Commentary on The Epistle To The Romans*, p. 42.

over holiness in the character of God, such homosexuality is illicit because it is first unholy and an inversion of the natural order of sexual relations. Further, it is an arrogant attempt by woman to turn from her dependance upon man.

(2) Abandonment to unnatural homosexuality, v. 27.

(a) There may be the inference here that man neglectfully turned from his loving headship role over woman (Eph. 5:25) with the result that woman turned to woman.

(b) Elsewhere in the Bible homosexuality is plainly condemned (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; I Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1:9-10). However, in contemporary Christendom attempts have been made to avoid the obvious here, especially with the claim that idolatrous cult prostitution is described rather than a "loving" relationship.[29]

(c) Note that such a relationship involves "burning desire" (cf. Gen. 19:5) which Paul does not describe as natural or inherited, as if the homosexual was not responsible for his depraved cravings, but unnatural. On the contrary, such lusting remains unnatural, as is the case with pedophilia and bestiality. However, it must be born in mind that this present sensual age is more affected by the rationale of indulgent feelings rather than truth and righteousness.

(d) Such perversion reaps a designer reward, a recompense tailored to justly frustrate the sinner by turning his "delightful" sin into vexing punishment. This was the case with Haman's commensurate punishment when hung on the gallows he had fiendishly prepared for Mordecai (Esther 5:14; 7:10). So homosexuals "receive in their own persons the due penalty of their error," that is a variety of consequences including a violent and perverse lifestyle, reduced longevity, fearful diseases including Aids that offer the prospect of an agonizing death.

(e) Again, as with the lesbian, we do not declare God's abandonment to be absolute because homosexuals are converted and their desires can be reversed as specialist Christian ministries prove.

c. God abandons the ungodly to depraved minds, vs. 28-32.

Man's fundamental problem is his mind; above all else he has a mental disease that is the controlling influence in his existence. Everything else, his actions, motives, pursuits all flow from this root cause, so that he is mentally futile in his

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[29] In this regard a most blatant and biased article titled "homosexuality" is published by Inter-Varsity Press in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Especially note the concluding comment regarding the Apostle Paul's teaching: "His three scattered references [to homosexuality] fit together in an impressive way as an expression of God's will as he saw it," II, p. 657.

pursuits (Eph. 4:17), mentally hostile toward righteousness (Col. 1:21), and mentally defiled (Tit. 1:15). His only hope is a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2), the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16). However, man's predicament escalates, like a growing tumor that spreads corruption, while at the same time he claims to be perfectly healthy in his mind, never better. To such willful and increasingly entrenched blindness, such intense depravity in the mind that reaches its climax in v. 32, God eventually responds with His abandonment of man to his flaunted lifestyle. Such an overall way of mentally perverted living is now described.

(1) Abandonment to immoral behavior, v. 28.

(a) The assumption here is that man, though fallen, yet had a basically orthodox understanding of God in his mind (cf. 2:15). However, the mental sin tumor enlarged causing mankind "not to think it worthwhile to focus on the true knowledge [ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis,] of God any more," but rather false images, mental delusions.

(b) Consequently God responds by abandoning such men to this ingrained madness, that is those who are so advanced in their disease and thoroughly enamored with it. Such reprobates are punished by being left to their folly, namely consignment to innumerable wares and enticements at Vanity Fair where, claiming to see, they are left to the imprisonment of their darkness (John 9:40-41).

(2) Abandonment to a variety of sin, vs. 29-31.

Here is a symphony of sin comprised of various sinful symptoms or instrumentalities that are all used to play the Satan's music. They are indications of man's mental disease. Every sinner has his skilled speciality just as there are skilled specialists in an orchestra. That these are especially artful sinners is indicated by their description as being "filled" or highly proficient. The following three-fold division is based upon grammatical considerations.[30]

(a) Four sins commencing with "unrighteousness," v. 29a.

"Unrighteousness" focuses on unholiness, ungodliness, essential sin, with the following three being resultant.

(b) Five sins commencing with "envy," v. 29b.

The "fullness" of their corruption is manifest in the way their energy is so devoted toward these particular sins.

[30] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 95, n.

(c) Twelve sins commencing with "gossip," v. 29c.

The focus here is upon vocal, high-handed opposition that rages against civil standards and God Himself.

(3) Abandonment to the promotion of sin, v. 32.

(a) As pagan men indulge themselves in the aforementioned catalog of 21 representative sins, what is their moral state of mind? Certainly there is no ground for exoneration, as if they were ignorant, since they are "knowing well [ἐπιγνόντες, epignontes] the righteous decree of God." The emphasis here is upon present awareness, thus Murray observes: "The most degraded of men, degraded because judicially abandoned by God, are not destitute of the knowledge of God and of his righteous judgments [soul-hardening efforts notwithstanding]. In terms of 2:14-15, conscience asserts itself."[31]

(b) However this knowledge is inclusive not only of the fact of sin, but also guilt before God and its consequences, namely death, akin to the civil death penalty that also has spiritual ramifications (cf. 6:23). This penal judgment is readily acknowledged by man to be his due; further, he us unashamedly culpable, and at the same time a braggart about his exploits.

(c) Yet the bottom of the barrel has still not been reached, for it is one thing to be personally intoxicated with sin and quite another to boldly, arrogantly, and enthusiastically promote such a cause amongst others. This is most offensive of all to Paul for the reason that it reflects man's unholy attempt to storm the holy ramparts of heaven, to instigate a rebellion of the most insolent proportions. Certain deep-dyed sinners are content to debase themselves in relative isolation, but not here. Rather, the energetic advancement of human depravity is applauded. It is like the contemporary "gay pride" promotion of the homosexual community.

(d) Illustration. Dr. James Montgomery Boice relates:

> Dr. John Gerstner, Professor Emeritus of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, was teaching about the depravity of man, and to make his point he compared men and women to rats. After he had finished his address there was a question-and-answer period, and someone who had been offended by the comparison asked Gerstner to apologize. Gerstner did. "I do apologize," he said. I apologize profusely. The comparison was terribly unfair . . . to the rats." He then went on to show that what a rat does, it does by the gifts of God that make it ratlike. It does not sin. But we, when we behave like rats, behave worse than we should and even worse than rats. We are worse that "beasts" in our behavior.[32]

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[31] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 52.

[32] James Montgomery Boice, *Romans 1-4*, p. 198.

B. THE JEWS ARE THOROUGH SINNERS, 2:1-3:8

The identification of the addressees of the section that follows, especially in vs. 1-16, is of vital importance. Clearly Paul anticipates that many who have read thus far would have been disturbed at such an ugly revelation of the pagan world. They would have been eager to distance themselves from such revolting barbarism, as well as Greek and Roman debauchery. Who then might react this way? Obviously the religious who are moralistic would likely object. And it is for this reason, along with other more specific matters, that most commentators believe that in general, Paul primarily has the Jews in mind. This is not to deny that Paul has Gentiles in mind who are attending the church at Rome (cf. 2:9-10; 3:9; 7:1; 11:13). Yet the argument at this point strongly focuses on the self-righteous Jew for the following major reasons. First, according to Murray, "the propensity to judge the Gentiles for their religious and moral perversity was peculiarly characteristic of the Jew."[33] Second, v. 4 suggests by implication the Jews as being the objects of God's kindness, while vs. 9-10 lead up to the explicit statement of v. 17. Third, as Moo points out, "In 1:18-32, Paul describes those people whom he accuses of perverting their knowledge of God (Gentiles, primarily) in the third person: "they" turned away from God; God handed "them" over. In chap. 2, however, it is the second person singular, "you," that Paul uses in making his accusation (2:1-5, 17-29)."[34]

1. The Jews' accountability before God, vs. 1-16.

It is common for man to judge categories of sin according to certain outward features and physical manifestations, and describe them as perverted, savage, disgusting, and uncivilized. Whereas other crimes that are void of violence and brutality are regarded to be less serious. So Paul now addresses this problem in the light of the preceding catalog of such repulsive wickedness. The moralistic Jew would readily express self-righteous outrage at such a loathsome scene. However, God looks on the condition of the heart and judges intent, not mere symptoms (I Sam. 16:7). Thus it would be true to suggest that Christ's greatest condemnation fell of the Scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees rather than the criminal element of Jerusalem (Matt. 23:1-39).

a. The impartial judgment of the Jew, vs. 1-4.

Like Nathan the prophet who jolted King David with his accusatory declaration, "You are the man!" (II Sam. 12:7), so Paul now startles the Jew with a similar charge of serious guilt, notwithstanding his smug claim to relative civility. Dr. J. Gresham Machen recounts a French novel titled *The Disciple* by Paul Bourget.

> It describes . . . the simple and austere life of a noted philosopher and psychologist. He was engrossed altogether in the things of the mind. His lodging was up four flights of stairs. His daily existence was an inevitable routine. Coffee at six o'clock, lunch or breakfast at ten, walk until noon, work until four, visits of scholars and students three times a week from four to six, dinner at six, short walk, bed promptly at ten. An inoffensive, scholarly man if there ever was one, a man who, in the words of his caretaker, "wouldn't hurt a fly." But one day this peaceful routine was strangely broken into. The philosopher was summoned to a criminal inquest. A

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[33] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 55.

[34] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 125.

> former pupil of his was accused of murder. He had been a brilliant young man, who had climbed those four flights of stairs full of enthusiasm for what he regarded as liberating doctrines only too well. In the prison he wrote an account of his life for the eye of his revered master. In it the abstract becomes concrete. The terrible story is told of the way in which those supposedly liberating doctrines work out in actual practice.[35]

Who was the greater sinner, the violent student of his philosopher master?

(1) For their practice, vs. 1-3.

In considering the declared similarity of the Jews' sins with those of the Gentiles, one formal difference ought to be noted and that is the Jews' penchant for cloaking their transgressions in contrast with the more open display of the pagan world. This point is especially implicit in 2:21-23, 28-29, Matthew 23:25-28.

(a) Of Gentile sins, v. 1.

1) The "therefore" probably connects us with the major thought of 1:18-19, that is that the Jews qualify for judgment since they are, with the Gentiles, involved in "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." In judging they have a standard by which their own sin is judged. Thus they are sinners of the same kind, who sin just as the Gentiles do, and this is confirmed by their hypocritical spirit of judgment.[36]

2) The Jew is "without excuse," just as is the Gentile, 1:20, though on the grounds of greater accountability, 2:4, 9, 24.

3) But how can it be said that the Jews "practice the same things" as the Gentiles? Most likely Paul is referring to the catalog of sins in 1:29-31, which he on other occasions attributed in a similar way to society that included Judaism (Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:5, 8; I Tim. 1:9-10; II Tim. 3:2-4).

(b) Of God-defined sins, v. 2.

1) A more literal translation here reads, "Now we know that the judgment of God is according to truth [the real facts], on those practicing such things." The inference is that, in contrast with the partial judgment of the Jew in v. 1, God is impartial as v. 11 confirms. Because of God's omniscience, there must be agreement on the part of the Jews that God has all of the facts at hand, and thus His verdict is more reliable, indeed unimpeachable.

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[35] J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, pp. 95-96.

[36] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 129-130.

2) Illustration. Following John Bunyan's imprisonment for preaching at an illegal conventicle (assembly) in 1660, his trials before several magistrates proved to be less than the epitome of British justice. Later his wife made an impassioned plea before several judges as follows:[37]

> *Wom*. He preacheth nothing but the Word of God, said she.
> *Twis*. He preach the Word of God! said *Twisdon*; and withal she thought he would have struck her; he runneth up and down, and doth harm.
> *Wom*. No, my Lord, said she, it's not so; God hath owned him, and done much good by him.
> *Twis*. God! said he; his doctrine is the doctrine of the devil.
> *Wom*. My Lord, said she, when the righteous Judge shall appear, it will be known that his doctrine is not the doctrine of the devil.

(c) Of inescapable sins, v. 3.

1) "Hear me again, oh religious man! Follow my reasoning, consider the consequences of what I just proposed, v. 2, which you undoubtedly agree with. If you sin as the pagan does, and you certainly do, then how can you possibly escape from the universal, impartial Judge?"

2) So Paul raises the question of the natural man's inclination to hypocrisy, to regard himself as a modest sinner in the light of all of the big sinners out there! Why does a man regard himself as a modest sinner? Because he considers himself to be religious, pious, righteous, spiritually advanced, knowledgeable, moral, according to his *own* estimate.

3) But Paul pricks this empty bubble with the substance of his logic. If the pagans won't escape according to their actions, then neither will the Jew. The true judgment of God, v. 2, will find the religious man wanting; his boasted flimsy covering will be stripped away so as to leave him naked, exposed, cringing in guilt before God.

(2) For their presumption, vs. 4.

Paul now asks another rhetorical question which addresses the matter of the history of Israel and its rebellious attitude toward God, particularly its shameful presumption toward God's covenant faithfulness and forbearance, as reflected in Nehemiah 9:5-31.

(a) The Jew took God's "kindness" and "forbearance" and "patience" for granted and confused it with "just acceptance." His "temporary

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[37] John Bunyan, *Works,* I, p. 61.

tolerance" or "truce" was mistakenly understood as "reconciliation" and "peace."[38]

(b) Why did God patiently wait upon Israel while it arrogantly persisted in sin? It was His desire that such an extended opportunity would be an encouragement to repentance. So Peter alludes to this teaching of Paul in II Peter 3:15, "and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you." But God's people wilfully ignored this hiatus of grace, this long pause of mercy, being contemptuously persuaded that repentance was not necessary

(c) What is the repentance that is sought? It is a "change of thinking" regarding personal sin in particular, man, God, Christ, the Bible, etc. that issues forth in saving faith and resultant godliness. Does God call all men to repent? Yes (Acts 17:30). Can man naturally repent? No (Heb. 12:16-17). Is true repentance a gift of God? Yes, even as is faith (II Tim. 2:24-25). Is it man's responsibility to repent? Yes (Acts 26:20). If a man will not repent, then what? Judgment (Matt. 11:20-22).

(d) Illustration. Stephen Charnock comments:

> All the notices and warnings that God gives men, of either public or personal calamities, is a continual invitation to repentance. . . . [God's longsuffering] doth, as it were, take us by the hand, and point us to the way wherein we should go. . . . His patience stands between the offending creature and eternal misery a long time, that men might not foolishly throw away their souls, and be damned for their impenitency.[39]

b. The impartial judgment of Jew and Gentile, v. 5-16.

The warning of certain judgment for *all* men, introduced in v. 3, now dominates Paul's exhortation in vs. 5-16. The anomaly here is that whereas the pagan, with a less definitive revelation of God's righteous demands, needs no such warning, yet the Jew, "to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises," 9:4, needs a severe wake-up call, akin to being severely hit over the head with a piece of two by four.

(1) God's universal justice, vs. 5-10.

Whereas the Jew was forever making distinctions between himself and the Gentile, that is with regard to his racial superiority according to divine right, Paul is at pains to point out that in terms of His righteous demands, God is not so discriminatory. His election of Israel was unto holiness (Deut. 7:6-8; 14:2).

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[38] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 112-113.

[39] Stephen Charnock, *Works*, II, pp. 526, 527.

(a) This justice accumulates to the Jew first, v. 5.

1) God's patience presents a storehouse of gracious opportunity to the heart that is penitent. However, at the same time, the impenitent accumulate a storehouse of indignation that shall be inherited at the final day of judgment. For the impenitent, that day will be "the day of wrath;" for the penitent, that day will usher in "glory and honor and immortality, eternal life," v. 7, cf. v. 10.

2) Paul seems to recall the proverbial obstinacy and hard-heartedness of Israel which Stephen condemned in Acts 7:51, 53. But a day is coming of final settlement, and no one will be excluded from divine scrutiny (Rev. 20:11-15). Then will come that "revelation" and "righteous judgment"which is according to truth, that lifting of the lid whereby the "secrets of men" will be exposed, v. 16.

3) Illustration. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments:

> That is the day. The day the books will be opened and all this wrath that men have been treasuring up for themselves will be produced in evidence against them. They will be punished. And what will be revealed . . . is the righteous judgment of God. Nobody will have any complaint; everybody will see God's righteous judgment. And that is why the Book of Revelation tells us earlier that some people, when they see it, will say to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us' [Rev. 6:16]. There will be no excuse; there will be no plea. God's judgment is always according to truth, and on that great day the truth, the righteousness, the justice will be finally revealed.[40]

(b) This justice accumulates to the Jew first and the Gentile, vs. 6-10.

For the authentic Christian, these five verses have presented a seeming serious problem since, on the surface they seem to conflict with the essence of the Gospel, namely that the repentant and believing sinner is saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ's merits to the total exclusion of human deeds, (3:21, 24; 4:1-25; Gal. 2:15-16; 3:11; Eph. 2:8-9). Now undoubtedly this is the true gospel, so what in reality does Paul mean here? Recall that, as we have already seen, Paul is addressing the presumptuous Jew, especially as indicated in vs. 4-5. So at this point it is no use describing judgment in gospel and grace terms to this religious person who does not understand the gospel or grace. So leaving the gospel aside, Paul describes the outward justification of man as the self-righteous Jew will understand, namely the judgment of his works, whether good or bad. The good deeds here are in fact authenticating or external justification based on free justification (Eph. 2:8-10); the bad

[40] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 2:1-3:20*, p. 73.

deeds are also authenticating of judgment without grace (Rev. 20:11-15).[41]

1) It is established in the Old Testament, v. 6.

   a) In quoting Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12, Paul addresses the Jew on his own ground, that of the Hebrew Scriptures. However the declaration concerning "every man" is universally encompassing, and infers that the God of Israel is the moral Sovereign of the universe; in view of vs. 9-10, clearly Paul has this wider perspective. Yet for the Jew who hears Paul's exhortation, the issue is not covenantal security via circumcision, but "deeds" that are pleasing to God.

   b) The New Testament makes several references to the fact that God's judgment will be according to human works (Matt. 7:21; 16:27; 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; II Cor. 5:10; 11:15; Gal. 6:7-9; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 22:12). Certainly the unbeliever will be judged by his faithless deeds, his ungodly deeds, his unholy deeds. But so will the nominal child of God, and even the genuine child of God. In the latter instance, this fruit will be judged as validation, such as in Matthew 7:15-20, where the expectation of a good fruit tree is that it produce good fruit.

2) It recognizes heart righteousness, v. 7.

   a) God's righteous judgment delights in and approves of those who "obey the truth," in contrast with those who "disobey the truth," v. 8. To "obey the truth" is to respond to the gospel (Gal. 5:7) with a life of virtue and holy affections, akin to "the obedience of faith," 1:5; 16:26.

   b) This is a grace response, not a legal performance, even though the gospel is not made prominent. Here are the distinguishing responses of a true child of God that are reflective of the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-13). There is perseverance (Matt. 24:13; Heb. 3:14), unlike the seed that falls on rocky ground (Matt. 13:20-21); there is desire for the glory to come (5:2; 8:18-23), honor or recognition (II Tim. 2:19-21), immortality or incorruption (I Cor. 15:50-53), and eternal life in its consummate sense as intimate union with God (I John 5:20). God's judgment will be, "Well done, ood and faithful servant" (Matt. 5:14-30).

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[41] For helpful comment on this whole problem refer to MacArthur, pp. 125-130; Moo, pp. 139-144; Morris, pp. 147-149; Shedd, pp. 38-39.

c) Leon Morris describes those approved of God as follows:

> Their trust is in God, not in their own achievement. He [Paul] refers to those whose lives are oriented in a certain way. Their minds are not set on material prosperity or the like, nor on happiness, nor even on being religious. They are set on glory and honor and immortality, qualities which come from a close walk with God. The bent of their lives is on heavenly things.[42]

3) It recognizes heart unrighteousness, v. 8.

a) God's righteous judgment is displeased with and disapproves of those who "disobey the truth," whether for the Jew it be the Law written on tables of stone, or for the Gentile it be the Law written on the conscience (2:12, 14-15). After the manner of 1:25, truth is wilfully jettisoned while unrighteousness is embraced, the inevitable result being the outpouring of God's "wrath and indignation."

b) Here God is offended, even intensely angry with bold sinners, not merely irritated. The focus here is upon God's "wrath," ὀργή, orgē, reflected in active judgment (v. 5; Col. 3:5-6), His outward emotion, and "indignation," θυμός thumos, illustrated by the Jew's rage against Christ at Nazareth (Luke 4:28-29), His inner revulsion. John Gill comments: The wrath of God is *the heat of his great anger* (Deut. 29:24); it is his anger not only kindled and incensed, but blown up into a flame; it is the *indignation* of his anger, the *fury* and *fierceness* of it (Isa. 30:30; 42:25; Hos. 11:9)."[43] This divine abhorrence to sin will ultimately confront all men except a just means of placation be provided for the repentant sinner.

4) It is rewarding to the unrighteous, v. 9.

a) There is repetition here concerning God's nondiscrim-inatory justice, yet emphasis is placed upon the *experience* of His wrath and resultant *feelings*. Hence the souls of the wicked will undergo "tribulation," θλῖψις, thlipsis, anguish and affliction, as well as "distress," στενοχωρία, stenochōria, stressful confinement (cf. Rom. 8:35; II Cor. 6:4 where Christians have similar feelings). The fact that they will have like company will offer no consolation, as the ungodly often glibly claim.

b) First the Jew, on account of his high accountability (Jer. 25:29; Amos 3:2), and then the Gentile, representing the

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[42] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 116-117.

[43] John Gill, *A Body Of Doctrinal And Practical Divinity*, p. 69.

whole human race, will have their sin exposed and condemned. The Jew will not be able to claim exoneration through Abraham; the Gentile will not be able to claim ignorance as a mitigating circumstance.

5) It is rewarding to the righteous, v. 10.

a) Again there is repetition here, but added to "glory and honor" is "peace," holy contentment, the experience of soul bliss at being the object of God's approval. But does this whole fulness of blessing come *because* a person "does good"? No, in terms of "doing good" being a justifying ground of obtaining acceptance with God. Yes, but only in the sense that a father is pleased *because* his son does good; however, this "doing good" in no way obtains sonship, it merely reflects it.

b) Again, in blessing, the Jew is to have priority, and this may well have prophetic significance for Paul (11:12). Commenting on Revelation 16, Jonathan Edwards writes concerning the future of the nation of Israel:

> Without doubt, they will return to their own land; because when their unbelief ceases, their dispersion, the dreadful and signal punishment of their unbelief, will cease too. As they have continued hitherto, with one consent, to dishonor Christ by rejecting the gospel, so shall they meet together to honor him, by openly professing of it with one mouth, and practice it with one heart and one soul, together lamenting their obstinacy, as it is said they shall (Zech. 12:11-12), and together praising God for his grace in enlightening them. And as they have hitherto continued a distinct nation, that they might continue a visible monument of his displeasure, for their rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, so after their conversion will they still be a distinct nation, that they may be a visible monument of God's wonderful grace and power in their calling and conversion.[44]

(2) God's nondiscriminatory justice, vs. 11-16.

In mentioning God's certain judgment of both Jew and Gentile in vs. 8-9, Paul has raised a problem that continues to be asserted today with the oft heard question, "What will happen to the heathen, those who have not heard the revelation of the gospel, or even Scripture?" The implication is often that God would not judge those with diminished responsibility. So Paul responds here with the explanation that the Gentiles are indeed responsible for their sin.

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[44] Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, V, p. 135.

(a) It is intrinsic to His nature, v. 11.

1) Illustration. As John MacArthur comments, this impartiality is like "the popular symbolic statue of justice . . . a woman blindfolded, signifying that she is unable to see who is before her to be judged and therefore is not tempted to be partial for or against the accused. Sometimes she is also pictured with her hands tied, suggesting she cannot receive a bribe."[45] In other words, as Abraham well understood (Gen. 18:25), God, being omniscient and holy, is fair with all of mankind.

2) God will judge Israel according to righteousness, and not with deference to its favored elect status or responsibility in being the custodian of His Law. As He is (Acts 10:34), so He commands (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 10:17). Likewise with the Gentile, God's righteousness will fall on him with the same impartiality. However, note that God is partial and discriminatory in election, the distinction being that His sovereign choice of certain sinners unto life is always just through holy, justifying grace.

(b) It is according to appropriate revelation, v. 12.

1) The term "Law" here refers specifically to the Jewish Torah or first five books of the Old Testament; this is the meaning of 90 percent of Paul's use of this term.[46] Therefore the first statement in this verse refers to all who are not under its dominion, specifically the pagan world. Yet in not having Moses to guide them, the Gentiles still suffer the wages of sin, just as the Jew does. Paul is making a categorical statement that though the Gentiles do not have the Torah, yet they are accountable in terms of having offended God's righteousness. But how can this be? Clearly from v. 11 we conclude that this judgment of "perishing" must be equitable. But by what means then does the Gentile have any knowledge of God's righteous demands while being ignorant of the Law?

2) On the other hand, "all who have sinned under [with] the Law" obviously refers to Israel being especially accountable as a transgressing nation. In Luke12:41-48 the Lord Jesus particularly addresses this point of greater responsibility. But why is the Jew to be *judged* while the Gentile *perishes*? What meaning distinguishes these words? Lloyd-Jones answers:

> It is that the standard which God applies to the Jew is a higher and a severer standard than that which He applies to the Gentile. Now that does not make any difference to their ultimate destiny, but it

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[45] John MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, pp. 135-136.

[46] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 145 n.

> does seem to indicate that there is a difference in the punishment. God demands more of the Jew than the Gentile because He has given him the law.[47]

3) The overall point here is the reiteration of that already pressed home in 1:18; 2:6-10, namely the inevitable judgment by God of the whole human race. But further, as Moo concludes, "It is clear from these verses [vs. 11-12] that Paul argues for universal human sinfulness, and a sinfulness of such a nature that condemnation must be the outcome."[48]

(c) It is based on doing rather than hearing, v. 13.

1) In simple terms, what counts is not so much having the Law as was Israel's privilege, or the reading of the Law as was the custom in Synagogues, or even the hearing of the Law every Sabbath by the Jewish populace, but the doing of the Law. Obviously Paul believes that this priority has been inverted. While repeating the essential thrust of vs. 6-10, his focus is upon the disobedient and hypocritical Jew (Matt. 7:24-27; 12:50; 23:1-3).

2) The "justification" that Paul describes must be of the same sort that is implied in vs. 6-10, though it also incorporates the "justification" that James 1:22; 2:21-26 describes, that is the outward evidence that vindicates the profession of inward saving grace.

3) Application. Thus we might paraphrase here, "It is not the hearers of the gospel and doctrine and music and good Christian literature and Christian radio and preaching and tape cassettes who are acceptable before God, but those who evidence godliness resulting from this ministry." True heart religion is consistently effecting.

(d) It regards Gentile law-keeping, v. 14-15.

These verses form a significant parenthesis that answers the question raised, but not answered, in v. 12 concerning the Gentile's source of his knowledge of the righteous demands of God apart from the Jewish Torah.

1) Their law is not Mosaic, v. 14.

a) Paul posits the case of a Gentile who lives righteously as a God-fearer such as Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2). He lives a moral life that parallels the ethics of the Jew derived from the Law, yet he is ignorant of the Law. The answer is that he acts by

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[47] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 2:1-3:20*, p. 107.

[48] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 147.

"nature" or φύσις, phusis, which word was used in 1:26-27 to describe natural sexual functions. Murray describes this capacity as "done by native instinct or propension, by spontaneous impulse as distinguished from what is induced by forces extraneous to ourselves."[49] This is a universal capacity, and it concerns a fixed rather than a relative code. Hence, the heathen are not ignorant of right and wrong as some would suggest.

b) This innate moral sensitivity is to be distinguished from the witness of nature in 1:20. Boice quotes C. S. Lewis who perceptively recognizes this basic standard in man's everyday manner of living. In "the initial argument in his classic defense of the faith, *Mere Christianity*, Lewis begins with the observation that when people argue with one another, an angry person almost always appeals to some basic standard of behavior that the other person is assumed to recognize.

> They say things like this: 'How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you?' - 'That's my seat, I was there first' - 'Leave him alone, he isn't doing you any harm' - 'Why should you shove in first?' - 'Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine' - 'Come on, you promised.' People say things like that every day, educated people as well as uneducated, and children as well as grown-ups." What interested Lewis about these remarks is that the people making them are not merely saying that the other person's behavior just does not happen to suit them, but rather that the behavior of the other person is wrong.[50]

c) Thus the Gentiles are "a law to themselves," or literally, "they themselves are [a] law," that is, as distinct from the Jews they have their own law which is still a revelation from the same God. For this reason the Gentile is morally accountable, not innocent.

2) Their law is internal, v. 15.

The connection here is that the moral doing of the Gentiles, v. 14, indicates a state of moral being, v. 15. However, from whence comes this moral being, what exactly is it, and how does it effect the Gentile?

a) Clearly it is God who "writes" a moral transcript or "the work [singular, cf. plural in v. 14]" of the law" on "their hearts." Indeed it is God's inscription on "all hearts," even

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[49] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 73.

[50] Boice, *Romans*, I, p. 237.

the Jew. But what the Gentile has is sufficient to make him accountable even if it is not as definitive as the Torah.

b) Note that it is "the *work* [emphasis added] of the Law" that is inscribed on the heart and not the Law itself. This fine distinction, if valid, simply avoids, as Murray states, "a state of heart and mind and will far beyond that predicated of unbelieving Gentiles [cf. Jer. 31:33; II Cor. 3:3]."[51] On the other hand, could they "do instinctively the things of the Law," v. 14, without having the Law, at least a form of it, on their hearts?

c) What then has God inscribed on Gentile hearts? They seem to have no inclination to keep the Sabbath according to the Torah, yet there is an understanding of basic righteousness and accountability that results in a sense of guilt and a propensity to worship. Morris adds, "Theodoret pointed to Joseph's brothers and to Abimelech (Gen. 20:4-5) as people who gave evidence of knowing right and wrong and who lived before the giving of the law by Moses."[52] A significant passage that may address this issue is Ecclesiastes 3:9 where God is described as having "set eternity in their [the sons of men] heart." Concerning this Delitzsch comments that God,

> has also established in man an impulse leading him beyond that which is temporal toward the eternal: it lies in his nature not to be contented with the temporal, but to break through the limits which it draws around him, to escape from the bondage and disquietude within which he is held, and amid the ceaseless changes of time to console himself by directing his thoughts to eternity.[53]

This consideration probably incorporates not only the internal stamp of morality in 2:15, but also the comprehension of external omnipotence and design in 1:18. Thus God's revelation in these two passages is to be distinguished as follows:

Romans 1:20	**Romans 2:15**
external revelation	internal revelation
evidence of power/design	evidence of law
addresses mind	addresses heart/conscience
knowledge of God's being	knowledge of God's law

d) How then does this revelation of "the work of the Law written in their hearts" effect the Gentiles? Paul attributes to

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[51] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 74.

[52] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 126.

[53] Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, p. 261.

them a "conscience," συνείδησις, suneidēsis, literally meaning "knowledge with," which responds to moral engraving on the heart. This response is sometimes accusatory and sometimes gives approval. However, the moral engraving is the standard and *not* that of the conscience. Conscience is more human in its assessment as contrasted with God described in v. 16. We must beware of "Jiminny Cricket morality," derived from the fairy tale *Pinochio*, that glibly sings, "And always let your conscience be your guide." Morris warns, "If we are looking for the proper line of conduct, we should notice that in the Bible it is the revelation God has made that is to be our guide, not any subjective process. A conscience may be oversensitive (I Cor. 10:25) or not sensitive enough (I Tim. 4:2).[54]

e) To sum up, the Gentiles or heathen are sufficiently aware of God's being and His morality; therefore they are accountable, and thus qualify to be judged. Concerning this truth being evidenced in a wide variety of unevangelized pagan cultures, refer to Don Richardson's *Eternity In Their Hearts*.

(e) It regards the secrets of men's hearts, v. 16.

The theme of judgment introduced in 2:5, and especially directed toward the religious Jew, has veered once again toward the pagan in 2:11-15 so that Paul concludes his necessary detour with v. 16. The connection with the preceding vs. 14-15 is one of contrast. Whereas man is constantly judging himself via his conscience, either accusing or approving his response to "the work of the Law written on their hearts," and such personal estimation is flawed through human weakness and limited knowledge, God on the other hand, knowing "the secrets of men" will judge impeccably according to the gospel of Christ Jesus.

1) This "day" is the same as that in v. 5, "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The judgment of man will be of no account, and especially his own religious self-judgment. Why is this so? Because God alone truly knows the crevices of our heart, even every hidden nook or high shelf, and better than ourselves (Ps. 139:1-4; Heb. 4:13).

2) What will be the basis of God's judgment? To begin with Paul describes it as "my gospel," as in 16:15. This is not a "Pauline gospel," a gospel of his own conceiving or modification, but the one and exclusive gospel which came to him by revelation (Gal.

[54] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 127. Refer also to Franz Delitzsch who writes, "Nothing is more commonly read, than that conscience is a voice of God within us. Surely, literally and logically regarded, this is wrong." *A System of Biblical Psychology*, p. 159.

1:6-9, 11-12) and was recognized by James, Peter and John to be identical with the gospel they proclaimed (Gal. 2:7-9).

3) More specifically, the basis of God's judgment will be "through Jesus Christ." The Son of God will be the appointed judge (John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31), and his Messiahship the primary issue of judgment (John 3:18; 5:24). However, it is erroneous to suggest that men will be judged solely on the basis of their regard for Jesus Christ. Such unbelief may be the supreme sin, but it is not the only sin, otherwise the judgment of 2:3, cf. 1:28-32, would not be valid.[55]

2. The Jew's hypocrisy before God, vs. 17-29.

The thrust now toward the self-righteous, hypocritical Jew is more specific than ever. However it is one thing to observe hypocrisy and quite another to have it exposed in such a way that the hypocrite is convicted. A classic illustration of this problem is provided in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* where Christian and Faithful are confronted with the hypocrisy of Talkative. This child of Prating Row loves to talk about Bible doctrine when it suits, as well as base talk at the ale-bench, while at the same time his life at home and work "is as empty of religion, as the white of an egg is of savor." So the problem for Faithful is how this religious masquerade might be exposed. Christian's suggestion is that Talkative be challenged concerning personal sin and his own state of heart rather than that of others. This subject Talkative baulks at and in fact withdraws from the pilgrims' company claiming to be peeved at such judgmental enquiry.[56] But a further problem arises. Suppose the Jew were to confess his hypocrisy, at least to himself, and yet claim covenant security, especially by means of circumcision. How then is he to be confronted as still being in jeopardy under God's judgment? How is a hypocritical Christian to be dealt with who yet clings to hope in baptism?

a. What do they say? vs. 17-20.

Paul returns to the thought of v. 13, namely the anomaly of a Jew being a mere "hearer of the Law."

(1) They boast in Judaism, v. 17.

The conditional "if" statement here refers to a situation that is assumed to be true. Thus Paul describes *outward* and *confessional* religious symptoms that are very real, yet are void of any behavioral and moral parallel. Hence their nominal characteristics involve boasting in:

(a) "The name 'Jew.'" A "Jew" was originally a member of the tribe of Judah, though after the Babylonian exile the name more broadly encompassed any Hebrew or citizen of Israel. However, while Paul

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[55] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 78.

[56] Bunyan, *Works*, III, pp. 121-125.

continued to call himself a Jew (Acts 22:3), here the boasting is one of racial superiority based on physical descendancy, physical signification through circumcision, and physical nationalism. Yet he

(b) "The Law of Moses." Literally the Jew "reclines" (cf. Luke 10:6) on the Law, he is its exclusive custodian, he is its official interpreter, he is its visible embodiment, he claims that it is his ground of being and doing. Yet he does not obey the Law!

(c) "The God of Abraham." Boasting in the unique and only true God of the covenant was not in itself wrong, quite to the contrary (Jer. 9:23-24); but such bragging was akin to the false recognition given to God by the Pharisees in Matthew 23:14 and Luke 18:11. It was a carnal security that neglected personal accountability. John Murray adds: "That the apostle should have referred to this in connection with what is by implication an indictment demonstrates perhaps more than any other prerogative enumerated how close lies the grossest vice to the highest privilege and how the best can be prostituted to the service of the worst."[57]

(2) They are exercised in the Law, v. 18.

While being eager Bible students and *knowledgeable*, yet they are like the Pharisees and Sadducees who were reprimanded for their lack of biblical *understanding* (Matt. 22:29; John 5:39).

(a) They "know the [God's] will," unlike the Gentile (Ps. 147:19-20), that is they comprehend it agreeably.

(b) They "approve the things that are essential [best]," that is they especially appreciate the Shemah (Deut. 6:4), the Great Commandment (Deut. 6:5), and the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1-17).

(c) They have been well "instructed [catechized] out of the Law," by both parents (Deut. 6:6-7) and the Jewish leaders (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 24:8:33:10; Neh. 8:8).

(3) They have the light of God, v. 19.

From privileges and status we now move to perceived responsibilities which are inevitably corrupted. Here the Jew comprehends part of the truth, but it is the absent portion that results in the abuse of his partial knowledge. It is like believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ while being ignorant of the purpose of this event.

(a) Israel was to have been "a guide to the blind" and "a light to those who are in darkness," of course supremely through Messiah (Is. 42:6-7;

[57] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 82.

49:6; 60:1-3), though nationally as well (I Kings 8:41-43). What ought to have been is implicit in v. 24.

(b) However, the missionary prayer of King Solomon was not heeded (I Kings 8:57-61). For while the Jews of Paul's time wanted Gentile admiration and recognition that their God was the only true God (I Kings 8:60), they were not prepared "to be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments" (I Kings 8:61).

(4) They have wisdom and truth, v. 20.

There is no direct condemnation of the Jew here; rather it is implicit in terms of the hypocrisy already stated in vs. 1-8, and his proud and lordly presentation of the truth.

(a) Yes, the Jew ought to "correct the foolish" and "teach the immature." This is proper pastoral responsibility, but the Lord Jesus Christ also revealed the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders in this regard (Matt. 23:1-3).

(b) Yes, the Jew ought to uphold "the Law," though he should have understood it as more than mere "embodiment," or μόρφωσις, morphōsis, that is "outward form" or "framework" as used in II Timothy 3:5.

(5) Application. Before Paul "lowers the boom," so to speak, there is a fearful reality presented here, and that of the most insidious hypocrisy. For just as the police officer, a lawyer, and judge have sworn to uphold the law, yet while presenting the posture of a law keeper, they actually break the law! So it is possible for a Bible teacher, a church leader, the amen chorus of the church, to be no less hypocritical than the Jew here described. For this reason, as with Paul here, it is vital that doctrine always be presented along with its necessary practical expression.

b. What do they do? vs. 21-23.

Here is Paul's sudden put-down and piercing response to the set-up of vs. 17-20. But how does Paul know about the details of this exposure? Two areas are significant here. First, there was his rabbinical training in Jerusalem as a Pharisee that included tutelage under the esteemed Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:5). Second, there was his instruction by way of special revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12; I Cor. 11:23; 15:).[58]

[58] Cf. J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin Of Paul's Religion*, pp. 43-68.

(1) Knowing of teaching others, they do not teach themselves, v. 21a.

(a) Recalling the exalted roll of teaching in Judaism, even as he had personified while being rabidly anti-Christian, Paul obviously focuses on those exercising a responsible position of religious leadership, especially the Rabbi, Pharisee and Scribe, who Isaiah denounced (Isa. 50:1-20) and Christ exposed (Matt. 23:1-3; cf. Jas. 3:1).

(b) Similarly, Paul would today denounce conservative Christendom in this interrogative manner. It is the measure of sinful human nature that a man or woman of any number or reputable professions or callings may in fact live a life that denies the creed he or she has formally confessed, the politician who lives one way and campaigns another, the doctor who professes the Hippocratic oath and performs abortions, the attorney who seeks ways to avoid the law he has sworn to uphold, the liberal seminary professor who signs an orthodox doctrinal statement and teaches a liberal agenda, the Sunday School teacher who sweetly moralizes to children and is immoral during the week, , the church choir member who sings a different song at home.

(2) Knowing of stealing, they steal, v. 21b.

(a) The Eighth Commandment is invoked with regard to the "preacher" or "proclaimer," who would use his position of influence to "devour widow's houses" (Mark 12:40), to commit sophisticated larceny, under the guise of "needy religious causes"!

(b) However is Paul, in all of these situations as here, merely addressing Jewish leaders, that is teachers and preachers, and not the common people? No since he seems to be addressing both categories in vs. 21-23, especially in the light of v. 24 where Israel's ungodly reputation is revealed in Isaiah 52:5 as being attributed to "the house of Israel, " and "the house of Israel" in Ezekiel 36:17-20. There is also the possible inference that those who listen as pupils are no better than their masters.

(3) Knowing of adultery, they are adulterous, v. 22a.

(a) The Seventh Commandment is invoked by the "sayer" of the Law, that is concerning "adultery," or μοιχεία, moicheia, the more specific term for sexual infidelity.

(b) But what of the many who might claim not to be violators of this commandment? Surely Paul, the special student of the Lord Jesus, has in mind here not simply the "act" but also the "attitude" of heart (Matt. 5:27-28). In John 8:6-9, when Jesus Christ writes on the sand, it is a reasonable suggestion that he wrote specifically of the similar sins of these murderous Scribes and Pharisees, causing them to retreat, even their method of legalizing prostitution by means of allowing quickie

divorces for the most insignificant marital offences.[59] Though Moo's comment is important here, that "Paul's purpose in Romans 2 is to convince Jews of the inadequacy of their works."[60] Hence the Apostle focuses on the experts of the Law to show the demerit of their transgressions.

(4) Knowing of idolatry, they are pseudo-idolatrous, v. 22b.

The Second Commandment is invoked by the "abhorrer" or "loather" of such objectionably odorous idolatry. Such a person, typical of Judaism, finds the stench of pagan worship to be revolting. But while Paul does not charge the Jews with being overt idolaters, he does infer that they hypocritically "rob temples." The KJV is less literal, "Dost thou commit sacrilege?" What does he mean here? In general, it seems that while the Jew was expressly forbidden from gaining personal profit from a captured idol (Deut. 7:25), yet he devised ways by which he could gain and at the same time skirt explicit transgression, as the Talmud illustrates of a Jew "taking an idol and selling it to a Gentile."[61]

(a) The actual evidence for the Jews, contemporary with Paul, literally "robbing pagan temples" is quite slim. Though does not Acts 19:37 suggest this possibility?

(b) Alternatively the Jews, contemporary with Paul, did avoid paying their tithes and temple tax, and siphoned off, as Josephus indicates, money due to the temple treasury.[62]

(5) Knowing of the Law, they break the Law, v. 23.

(a) This reiteration of vs. 17-22 is encompassing and not simply incidental. But the final question is intended to be humiliating because of the assumed truth that the Jew certainly does bring shame to God's character. Murray adds, "Transgression of the law is a dishonoring of God; it deprives him of the honor due to his name and offers insult to the majesty of which the law is an expression.[63]

(b) Application. To give a contemporary paraphrase: "You who proudly carry in your hand a gold embossed, fine leather, reliably translated, full reference Bible, and vociferously defend its full inspiration, and at the same time are reputed to be a cheat in your money dealings and morally loose, do you in fact insult the God of that same book?" The answer is "yes" in a manifold way.

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[59] Alfred Edersheim, *The Life And Times Of Jesus The Messiah*, II, pp. 333-334.

[60] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 165.

[61] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 137.

[62] MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, p. 157.

[63] Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 84-85.

c. What does the Law say about them? v. 24.

Paul pointedly asks, "Do you in fact know what the Law you boast in [the Bible you carry] says about you?" So he quotes Isaiah 52:5, though Ezekiel 36:17-20 is more explicit (cf. II Pet. 2:2).

(1) Their lives are watched by the Gentiles, v. 24a.

While a watching world ought to have found God commended in the national lifestyle of Israel (I Kings 8:59-60), yet the opposite was the case. This was the supreme shame in the midst of God's creation.

(2) Their lives cause the Gentiles to blaspheme God, v. 24b.

In simple terms they responded: "If God is reflected by these obnoxious, complaining, hypocritical Jews who claim to be His chosen people, then we denounce that God as being a fraud, and partner to the crimes of the Jews." So as John MacArthur well comments concerning our parallel situation today: "It would be better for many Christians, true believers as well as false, to hide their religious profession. Their living is such an obvious contradiction of Scripture that the cause of Christ is mocked and scorned by the world,"[64]

d. What significance is circumcision? vs. 25-29.

An observer of Paul's confrontation with the Jew might well ask the question: "How is it possible for the Jew to so shamelessly maintain his proud self-esteem and nationalism in the face of such shameful condemnation by the Gentile?" as in v. 24. The answer, that really goes without saying, is in a word, "circumcision." Whereas the current teaching was that, "no person who is circumcised will go down to Gehenna [hell as the lake of fire],"[65] so Paul now commences to destroy the religious hypocrite's last bastion, namely sacramental/ritual/covenantal regeneration.

(1) It is significant, not effecting, v. 25.

(a) Some background on circumcision. According to Genesis 17:9-14, circumcision was ordained of God as signification of the covenant He had made with Abraham and his *seed*. For this reason the *seed organ* was cut. Note that at that same time, the name "Abram" meaning "exalted father," was changed to "Abraham" meaning "father of a multitude" (Gen. 17:5). As a modern conservative Jew puts it, "For Jews circumcision today, as in the past four thousand years, is not a detail of hygiene. It is the old seal of the pledge between Abraham and his Creator, a sign in the flesh, a mark at the source of life."[66] However,

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[64] MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, p. 158.

[65] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 167; also Hodge, *Romans*, p. 63.

[66] Herman Wouk, *This Is My God*, p. 140.

even Jeremiah became aware that a physically circumcised Hebrew could yet be "uncircumcised of heart" (Jer. 9:25-26).

(b) Circumcision is "significant," that is, it is an authentic "sign" when it points to a "practicer of the Law." But for the lawless, circumcision has no significance and in fact is invalidated; it is not regenerative. Later in 4:9-12, the point will be made that Abraham was justified through faith, and hence regenerated, before he was circumcised. Therefore Paul is *not* repudiating circumcision as a sign of national Jewish identity, as 3:1-2 indicates. Rather he is negating a function of circumcision that never really existed.

(c) Application. While Christian baptism does not identify with circumcision in every regard, yet here the parallel is close. Water baptism is significant when it points to a converted or regenerated heart, but it is impotent in producing regeneration. Nevertheless, many nominal Christians are vainly trusting in an outward washing or sprinkling while their hearts remain unclean. Refer to C. H. Spurgeon's confrontation with this heresy in his famous sermon titled *Baptismal Regeneration*.[67]

(2) It is significant for the Gentile, vs. 26-27.

The implications of this right teaching on circumcision are encouraging for the Gentile. Otherwise, he is *ipso facto* excluded from the favor and grace of God because of an absent physical qualification.

(a) His obedience is as circumcision, v. 26.

Positing that a Gentile "keeps the righteous requirements of the Law," this expression suggests the Mosaic law which an uncircumcised "God-fearer" reveres and obeys, such as Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2; cf. 13:26), or a lesser disciple of the God of Israel. How then is he to be regarded? God will reckon circumcision to him, even as any observer ought to do, because God regards the doing of righteousness as the justifying evidence of his sonship. He may not have the circumcision of Abraham, but he is nevertheless a child of Abraham because he does "the deeds of Abraham" (John 8:39).

(b) His obedience shames the transgressor, v. 27.

If a Gentile has a heart for God, a heart that is alive to God, a heart that loves God, a heart that *actively pleases* God, and thus is circumcised of heart, though he be physically uncircumcised, this man is the judge of the ungodly, circumcised Jew, since he pronounces shame upon him, he declares his hypocrisy (Matt. 8:5-12, especially vs. 11-12).

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[67] C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, X, 573.

1) The word "judge" is emphatic here, and it relates to the Jew "having the letter of the Law." This circumcised religionist has the Bible in his hand and mind, a comprehensive data bank, doctrinal comprehension, but his disgraceful godlessness will ensure severe condemnation by the mere presence of the godly Gentile, without a word being spoken (Phil. 3:2-3).

2) Illustration. In an office situation, the unbaptized member of The Salvation Army who manifests genuine graces of the Spirit will stand out in obvious silent judgment upon the baptized Baptist who manifests the works of the flesh.

(3) It is significant for the real Jew, vs. 28-29.

The definition of an authentic Jew, especially for Paul here, is a matter of different opinions by conservative Christians. Some suggest that in this church age, it is the true Christian who is now the real and only spiritual Jew, and that since God has finished forever with Israel as a nation, there is no such thing in His sight as a national Jew. This I believe is *not* what Paul has in mind here, especially in the light of 3:1-2; 11:1-36; Acts 22:3; Gal. 6:16. A genuine Jew is one who, having been circumcised of the heart, is also circumcised of the flesh, and identifies geographically with those of the same commitment, cf. 9:6.

(a) It does not signify a real Jew, v. 28.

A literal translation reads, "For not the one in outward manifestation is a Jew, neither is the one in the outward manifestation of fleshy circumcision." What is it that essentially identifies a Jew? Negatively, it is not the outward rite of circumcision, even though the rite itself is not nullified (3:1-2; Acts 16:3). At best, circumcision identifies a professing Jew.

(b) It does signify heart circumcision, v. 29.

1) The *sine qua non* of true Jewishness is "heart circumcision" which operation is "by the Spirit," which is more probable than "in the spirit," though as Morris writes, "either way gives good sense,"[68] (cf. 7:6; II Cor. 3:6-7). In such a case, the true Jew receives his affirmation of Jewishness from God, which for him is what really matters, and not as was commonly sought in Paul's time according to "the letter," the praise of man (John 5:41-44). Above all else, a true Jew has a heart that is made by God, owned of God, and consecrated to God.

[68] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 142. "Spirit" is supported by Calvin, Hodge, Moo, Morris, Murray, "spirit" by Haldane, Lloyd-Jones, Shedd.

2) Illustration. Dr. Lloyd-Jones concludes this section as follows:

> If we want to make sure that we are unlike the Jews in this respect [that Paul is challenging], we must examine ourselves. The Jews did not, they never would. They put up this citadel around themselves and said, 'We are the Jews, you must not talk to us. Go and preach to the Gentiles, do not preach to us.' They are like the lady, if I may say so, who once complained of my preaching in Westminster Chapel and said, 'This man preaches to us as if we are sinners!' Unthinkable! You see, if you erect that kind of citadel around yourself you will never know that you are a hypocrite. . . . So let every man examine himself. Let us take these searching questions which Paul addresses to these Jews of old and let us turn them upon ourselves. . . . You can only be sure that you have answered them truly and faced them honestly when you look at yourself and say, 'In me, that is to say, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,' when you abhor yourself and hate yourself, and get down on your knees quietly, in your own room, not on the street corner, not in a public place, but in your own room with the door shut and the blinds drawn and acknowledge it before God and break your heart before Him, reminded again that if we do confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and so cleanse us from all unrighteousness [I John 1:9]. Oh, may God give us honesty and truth in our inward parts that we may allow the Scriptures to search us.[69]

3. The Jew's status before God, 3:1-8.

Most translations reveal a barrage of nine questions in these eight verses.[70] Clearly they represent the anticipation of Paul to vociferous objections from the Jew who struggles to feel secure through covenant circumcision in view of his unmasked hypocrisy. The preceding context could especially cause the carnal Jew to question the viability of his national existence.

a. Concerning Jewish identity, vs. 1-2.

A literal translation here reads: "Therefore what advantage does the Jew have? What is the profit of belonging to the circumcision?" There are two parallel statements here so that "the circumcision" is a synonym, and an appropriate one here, for "the Jew."[71]

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[69] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 2:1-3:20* p. 158.

[70] It is for this reason that many commentators, including Lloyd-Jones and Moo, regard this passage as one of the most difficult to interpret in Romans.

[71] Morris seems almost alone in pointing out the use of the definite article here so that "the Jew" and "the circumcision" are in parallel, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 152. Paul does not forget to defend circumcision; rather he is speaking of corporate identity in both expressions, (cf. ἡ περιτομή, hē peritomē, Rom. 4:9; Gal. 2:7-9; Phil. 3:3;.1:10).

(1) Is the Jew still privileged? v. 1.

In the midst of his strong condemnation of the Jew who trusts in external religious insignia, Paul has plainly stated in 2:25 that there is "value," the same Greek word as "benefit" here in 3:1, in circumcision when it identifies the Israelite who evidently is circumcised of heart. Paul has not declared that Judaism does not exist anymore, as he will later expound upon in chapters 9-11.

(2) Yes, through the oracles of God, v. 2.

Concerning this forthright answer here, Murray comments that, "Paul was not afraid of being accused of bibliolatry when he thus assessed the inscripturated Word."[72] In other words, the written Word of God is identical to the spoken Word of God (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:19-21).

(a) Preeminently or chiefly, to Israel and no other nation has been given the sacred trust, the great responsibility of being the custodians of "the oracles of God" or literally "the speakings of God," τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ, ta logia tou theou, and circumcision identifies those who belong to such a privileged race. The point is that God has not only given an inscripturated book to His people, but He has spoken to them exclusively in a personal way giving many immutable promises (Deut. 4:7-8; Ps. 147:19-20) . Thus to the Israelites belong "the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh," 9:4-5.

(b) Thus the Christian is forever indebted to the Jew in this as well as other numerous ways. Concerning the Jewish Masoretes who, during the ninth century, produced the present text of the Old Testament, F. F. Bruce writes that,

> they treated it [the Old Testament text] with the greatest imaginable reverence, and devised a complicated system of safeguards against scribal slips. They counted, for example, the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurs in each book; they pointed out the middle letter of the Pentateuch and the middle letter of the whole Hebrew Bible, and made even more detailed calculations than these. . . . and they made up mnemonics by which the various totals might be readily remembered.[73]

(c) Illustration. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments:

> But I want to emphasize this by putting it to you negatively. If the greatest privilege that can ever come to man is to be spoken to directly by God, it is equally true to say that there is no greater loss that a man can suffer than that God should cease to speak to him. 'Behold', says the

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[72] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 93.

[73] F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 117.

> prophet Amos, threatening a recalcitrant people, 'Behold, the days are come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord' [Amos 8:11]. . . . The Christian is a man who ought to be wretched and miserable if he feels that he does not hear God speaking to him.[74]

b. Concerning Jewish unbelief, vs. 3-4.

Paul's theoretical (? cf. v. 8) antagonist is still smarting from the condemnation of 2:17-29. Hence, at the mention of "the oracles of God," he recalls that this present state of unbelief parallels Israel's past history even back to the rebellion in the Sinai wilderness. At the same time, back of this recollection and the whole argument is foundational trust in the Abrahamic covenant which the Jew clings to, notwithstanding disobedience to "the oracles of God." If this covenant is unconditional, is not Israel's existence guaranteed?

(1) Does unbelief nullify God's promise, v. 3.

Translate as follows: "If some of them were unfaithful [in Israel's past history], will not their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God?" As Hodge well explains:

> Has he [God] not promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed? Has he not entered into a solemn covenant to grant his people all the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom? This covenant is not suspended on our moral character. If we adhere to the covenant by being circumcised and observing the law, the fidelity of God is pledged for our salvation. We may therefore be as wicked as you would make us out to be, that does not prove that we shall be treated as heathen.[75]

(2) No, since God remains true, v. 4.

(a) Paul's immediate response is the strongest possible Greek negative, μὴ γένοιτο, mē genoito, "May it never be," or, "it is unthinkable," or "perish the thought." He is repulsed by such tricky reasoning, typical of casuistry.

(b) Such reasoning impugns the character of God since it makes Him to be indifferent to unrighteousness amongst His people, or complicit in the tolerance of sin; it is repulsive in terms of it demeaning His holiness. Rather, in the midst of a world where every man is a liar and godless, let the fact reign that God alone is righteous and true. In a world of pervasive wickedness, let the truth of God's integrity be upheld in *judgment* (as vs. 5-6 demand) along with covenant faithfulness (Neh. 9:32-33; Ps. 96:13; Amos 3:2).

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[74] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 2:1-3:20*, pp. 168-69.

[75] Hodge, *Romans*, p. 70.

(c) Paul quotes the Septuagint version of Psalm 51:4 to support his defense of God's character. David, in admitting his total guilt, was in effect saying that should anyone rise to defend him, then let his unqualified confession vindicate his judgment by God. In other words, let God's judgment stand as true and right. So here, though the whole world should testify falsely, let God's character stand as true and right; let God, above all else, be vindicated as just and righteous in every situation.

(d) Application. But is not the same sort of reasoning found in the Christian church today? It is the attitude that clings to an evangelistic decision and baptism and church membership and the doctrine of eternal security as the guarantees of going to heaven, in spite of disinterest in spiritual truth and blatant godlessness. But such belief insults God's character and the power of His gospel. Rather, true Christians shall be saved and false Christians shall be judged, and God shall be vindicated as always just.

c. Concerning God's righteousness, vs. 5-6.

The perverse line of reasoning increases in its intensity. While the previous argument of vs. 3-4 dealt with "their unbelief" in relation to God's firm covenant with Abraham, here, in a similar vein, the suggestion concerning "our unrighteousness" is a blatant and clever attempt to justify sin, to even present it as beneficial. Surely Paul draws from experience in personal encounter here, and is not merely theoretical. And surely the tenor of the argument is Jewish.

(1) Does God's faithfulness oppose His wrath? v 5.

(a) Major premise: "our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God." In other words, there are advantages to sin, and God ought not to overlook them; He should tolerate sin.

(b) Major conclusion: "therefore God would be unjust to inflict judgment upon those sinners who instrumentally enable God's righteousness to shine." But this is not necessarily so since God was righteous before sin actively originated. A rose in the midst of weeds has outstanding beauty, yet in standing alone its beauty remains. Evil means do not justify good ends.

(c) The prime concern of the troubled antagonist here using Rabbinical argumentation,[76] is that of God's "inflicted wrath," which plainly indicates that the wrath of God, cf. 1:18; 2:5, is more than an attitude; it involves active punishment.

[76] William G. T. Shedd, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 65.

(2) No, since He is also Judge of the world, v. 6.

Paul's revulsion at such a line of argumentation, the shamelessness of it, is indicated by his care in personally distancing himself from it by having declared in v. 5, "I speak according to human fashion." Now follows his repeated categorical denial of such even more obnoxious casuistry, cf. v. 4. The logical response is to declare that such reasoning in fact paralyzes God's righteous dealings with man, His judgment of man. Why? Because any sin in the universe would inevitably be confronted with God's righteousness. But this being so, then all sin, in enabling such a reflection, would have to be tolerated. Thus God would never be able to in fact judge any form of sin. As Hodge writes, Paul's "answer is complete and satisfactory; it is a *reductio ad absurdum*."[77]

d. Concerning God's glory, v. 7-8.

Paul's theoretical(?) antagonist, now extends the argument to a yet lower level of reasoned depravity. For to suggest that sin should be tolerated so as to reflect God's righteousness is one thing; but then to recommend the propagation of sin so that God's greater glory and goodness be displayed is to sink to an all time low.

(1) Why judge a Jewish sinner who glorifies God? v. 7.

The argument here is similar to that of v. 5, though there seems to be a throwback to vs. 21-23 as well. That is, Paul's Jewish opponent is reasoning, if you charged me with law breaking, then I also charge you with law mishandling. If I lie with the result that the contrasting truth of God being declared upholds His glory, then why should I be judged as a sinner? Should I not be allowed to continue being a stimulus to God's glory?

(2) Why not allow evil to be a stimulus to good? v. 8.

We take the main thrust of this verse to be an extension of the Jewish argument of v. 7, and not Paul's response.[78]

(a) This logical extension of the thought of v. 7 suggests, perhaps with a proud sneer, that the promotion of evil will in turn promote greater good. So again, Paul's former condemnation of Jewish sinners is really counter- productive; it opposes the promotion of God's glory!

(b) In the midst of this wicked inference, Paul suddenly injects a comment that indicates that he himself has been charged with such slander or blasphemy, βλασφημέω, blasphēmeō. This recalls the charge of 6:1 and the perverse accusation that Paul's gospel promotes licentiousness,

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[77] Hodge, *Romans*, p. 74.

[78] The commencement of v. 8 with καί rather than δέ is decisive here.

though the parallel is not exact.[79] In other words Paul responds, "What you recommend, I have already been charged with and strenuously denied. The principle of your reasoning is an affront to God's righteousness and grace."

(c) Thus Paul curtly responds, "Their judgment is just." The distortion and absurdity of such a challenge requires no further comment, especially since the response of v. 6 is equally applicable here. That is, if evil be promoted for the prosperity of good, then it is impossible for evil to be judged. As Hodge comments: "By reducing the reasoning of the Jews to a conclusion shocking to the moral sense, he thereby refutes it."[80]

(3) Application. While the Jew is specifically the object of Paul's concern here, it is also true that the religious Gentile is represented. It seems that the religious person in particular is so adept at justifying his ungodliness; he is devilishly clever in maintaining a cloak of righteousness while inwardly there is nurtured every manner of evil (Matt. 23:25-28). In simple terms, the charges that Paul has been facing in 3:3-8 fall into two timeless categories.

(a) Presumption in the face of God's grace, faithfulness, and forbearance.

Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ or baptism or church membership, my sovereign covenant status with God makes me secure. Therefore I need not worry about personal sin; in fact I should sin all the more so as to really enter into the greater riches of grace. This is human depravity at its worst and evidence of counterfeit faith.

(b) Making excuses for and rationalizing personal sin.

This religious person has been particularly disturbed by Paul's surgical exposure of deep corruption in 2:17-24. He writhes in the pain of personal guilt; but instead of expressing repentance, he uses contorted and deceitful logic to excuse himself. This is human evil at its worst which Isaiah 5:20-21 denounces, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight." Thomas Manton comments on these verses: "When men lean upon their own wisdom, they can expect to make no better judgment. Reason is not only blind, but mad. . . . Every sin hath a thousand shifts and fig-leaves. . . . Therefore take heed of making your bosom your oracle and neglecting constant application to God for wisdom."[81]

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[79] "In chapter 6 Paul is dealing with the abuse applied to the doctrine of grace, whereas in 3:5-8 he is dealing with an assault upon the justice or rectitude of God." Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 98.

[80] Hodge, *Romans*, p. 75.

[81] Manton, *Works*, XV, pp. 217-18.

C. THE JEWS AND GENTILES ARE THOROUGH SINNERS, 3:9-20

In all of Scripture there is surely no passage which so compactly and comprehensively indicts the human race as being thoroughly sinful as in vs. 10-20 here, even as there is surely no passage which so compactly and comprehensively presents the gospel to all of the human race as in vs. 21-26 that follow. This leads us to reflect upon what is such an important factor with regard to our basic understanding of anthropology, that is whether man is essentially good or evil. Here biblical Christianity is adamant that man's bent is toward unrighteousness, and upon this premise western civilization has been built. On the other hand, the assumption of humanism, secularism, and materialism that man is essentially good or amoral has not only required a focus that is myopic and highly selective, but is also a stubborn refusal to face the clearest evidence on a universal scale of man's natural corruption. Upon one's convictions in this area will be determined one's convictions concerning government, law and order, education, child-rearing, and social relations in general.

1. The universality of sin declared, v. 9.

a. An understanding of the main thrust of this verse is not difficult, although one word remains exceedingly difficult.[82] We might put it this way, "What then? Are we [Jews/Christians/Gentiles?] better/more advantaged than they?" or alternatively "excusing ourselves?" The negative response and context suggests, as most translations state: "What then? Are we [Jews] better than they? Not at all."

b. Paul the Jew, in identifying with a common Jewish form of boasting, yet repudiates such a claim. Thus, "Are we Jews superior, in view of our covenant standing 2:17, and advantages 3:2, and therefore qualify for judgment concessions, which the Gentile has no hope of receiving?" No, in terms of standing before God, the only test is manifest righteousness or unrighteousness, whatever the racial background may be. Here this prelude to the gospel knows of no recognition of racial superiority (Gal. 3:26-29). Here there is also no place for anti-gentilism by Jews or anti-semitism by Gentiles.

c. The reason that Paul gives for disallowing racial partiality on God's part indicates the grand purpose of 1:18-3:20, namely that he might "charge/accuse" both the Jew and Gentile. He has intended to meticulously slay human boasting of whatever sort and at the same time bring about a humiliation of man as being, not only thoroughly polluted, but also wholly captive to sin.

d. Thus man, the whole human race, Jew and Gentile, are "all under sin." The "all" factor of total and comprehensive universality will be taken up in the proof that follows in vs. 10-18. The fact of all being "under sin," demands further consideration. This term, ὑπ[ὸ] ἁμαρτίαν, hupo hamartian, while literally meaning "under sin," has a far stronger content, since it indicates being under captivity to sin, under the reign and dominion of sin, under sin's lordship. The point is than

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[82] The textual problem concerns the meaning of προεχόμεθα, **proech**ometha, and whether it be interpreted as a middle or passive voice. Older support for the middle voice, as followed here includes Luther, Calvin, then Alford, Hodge, Shedd, and more recently Moo.

mankind is not merely on parole, he is not in a limited detention center, but incarcerated in such a way that it is impossible for him to escape, at least humanly speaking. In other words, human nature is wholly enslaved to sin, and according to his nature, so man will respond. The extent of this enslavement will also be illustrated in the verses that follow.

(1) By way of illustration, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments:

> If you visited a foreign country, the thing which would be of primary interest to the people of that country, the first thing they would want to know about you, is not the color of your hair or your eyes, not your bank balance, or whether you are a nice person - the first thing they would want to know is what country you belong to. Are you a citizen of this country or are you a foreigner? They would want to know the realm to which you belong. And that is something which is absolutely basic to a true understanding of the Christian faith, the Christian gospel. It does not start with details. And that is where many people go wrong about this gospel - the people who think that if you are living a good life you are a Christian. You may live a very good life and not be a Christian at all because you are not in that realm. There are good people under sin, in the realm and dominion of Satan. It is the realm to which you belong that really matters and really counts. Now then, Paul says - and this is the staggering statement - *all*, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin, under the dominion of sin, and belong to the realm of sin. That statement, of course, includes such things as this: that all mankind by nature is under the guilt of sin, under the power of sin, and under the pollution of sin. It is his fundamental statement, and everything else follows from this.[83]

(2) In I John 5:19 we read, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." Here our perspective of man "under sin" is adjusted, since this subjection is also "under the evil one." If man is under sin, at the same time he is in subjection to the realm of Satan; his citizenship is in the kingdom of darkness. Hence the child of God is an alien and transient in this realm, and constantly subject to harassment; but the child of this world is at home in this environment, and readily yields under its overwhelming authority.

2. The universality of sin inscripturated, vs. 10-18.

This montage of Bible passages, drawn from the Septuagint, has every indication of being carefully crafted, especially when the repeated emphasis on universal corruption is noted in vs. 10-12, while a contrasting focus follows on individual body parts in vs. 13-18.[84] Alfred Edersheim describes such a collection of closely related passages of Scripture according to the rabbinic expression, "the stringing together of pearls."[85] This

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[83] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 2:1-3:20*, pp. 189-90.

[84] Murray well states the purpose here: "The apostle places together various passages which when thus combined provide a unified summary of the witness of the Old Testament to the pervasive sinfulness of mankind." The result is "the precipitate of the Biblical teaching and it is particularly relevant to the charge made in verse 9 that all are under sin." *Romans*, pp. 102, 103.

[85] Alfred Edersheim, *The Life And Times Of Jesus The Messiah*, I, p. 449.

concluding statement purposely draws attention to the finality of what God has repeatedly declared.

a. The breadth of human depravity, vs. 10-12.

"As it is written" could be more literally expressed, "As is has been written." The perfect tense of γέγραπται, gegraptai, as frequently used in the New Testament regarding the timeless authority of Scripture, means that the truth was written in the past and still stands written in the present with the same authority (Matt. 2:5; 4:6- 7, 10). This section relates directly or indirectly to Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20, and presses home the thorough pollution of the human race. Jonathan Edwards comments concerning Paul's emphasis here:

> If the words which the apostle uses, do not most fully and determinately signify an universality [of sin], no words ever used in the Bible are sufficient to do it. I might challenge any man to produce any one paragraph in Scripture, from the beginning to the end, where there is such a repetition and accumulation of terms so strongly, and emphatically, and carefully to express the most perfect and absolute universality [of sin].[86]

(1) None are righteous, v. 10.

Paul gives first place to his quintessential term, "righteous/righteousness/justify." The standard required of God must be His perfect righteousness (Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48), and thus all men are unrighteous. Note that concerning the use here of Psalm 14:1-3, David addresses the "atheistic fool" in v. 1 to begin with; then he moves from the particular in v. 1 to the more universal in vs. 2-3. This statement is not considering or denying particular grace, or variations in civil behavior on a horizontal level; it simply has regard to the whole human race, as the seed of Adam (5:12), in the sight of God, which therefore qualifies for judgment. If man attempts to relieve his feelings of guilt by considering himself with other men, on a relative basis, he deceives himself; there is even honor among thieves and the Mafia. Bur what really counts is God's estimate of myself in the ultimate "Supreme Court"! Note the climactic parallelism, that is the climax of absolute exclusiveness.[87]

(2) None understand God, v. 11a.

That is, no human being has rightly discovered God, or even independently understood God in terms of His revelation of Himself, both general and special. The finite cannot discover the infinite; man's focus is distorted because his perspective is always filtered through the dirty lenses in his soul. As a result he has "foolish understanding" (I Cor. 2:14), that is "darkened understanding" (Eph. 4:13). As Haldane states, "All men are naturally

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[86] Edwards, *Works*, I, p. 194.

[87] The categories of Hebrew parallelism used here are taken from Ronald Barclay Allen, *Praise! A Matter Of Life And Breath*, pp. 50-54.

ignorant of God, and by neglecting the one thing needful, show no understanding. They act more irrationally than beasts."[88]

(3) None seek for God, v. 11b.

This second line completes the synthetic parallelism in v. 11, that is the developed thought and further details added to the first line. Many in this world seek after understanding, but we are talking exclusively about the only living God of Abraham, and such understanding is not detached, but rather involves the pursuit of the whole heart, a passionate and singular thirst (Ps. 119:2, 10, 58). Notwithstanding God's particular invitations (Isa. 55:6; Jer. 29:13), man avidly seeks after religion and a pantheon of other gods, designer gods, security blanket gods, sentimental gods, all counterfeits.

(4) None are profitable, v. 12a.

Because they "are inclined to lean away from [God]," ἐκκλίνω, ekklinō, it is inevitable they "become useless," that is like sour milk, moldy cheese, a bad apple, bitter fruit, stale bread, rancid meat, etc. The corruption may have variety to it, but the root cause is defection from God, just as Adam and Eve fled from God (Gen. 3:8-9) with resulting universal consequences.

(5) None do good, v. 12b.

In 2:4, the "kindness" (NASB, NIV) or "goodness" (NKJV) of God is described, the word being χρηστότης, chrēstotēs. Shedd describes this characteristic as follows. It is "not the attribute by which God *is* good (holiness), but by which he *does* good (benevolence)."[89] So here, none does that which is morally good according to God's estimate because he has the wrong inclination. Note that whereas v. 10 speaks of a state of righteous being, here the conclusion of this section speaks of doing righteousness as a result of being, and in terms of Paul's argument to this point, 2:17-24, this is a vital matter.

(6) None is without exception, v. 12c.

Surely Paul is motivated here on account of the tendency of individuals who claim to be exceptions to the universal rule that has been declared. Sinful man delights in nominating himself as exceptional! The expression here intimates the comment: "But surely even just *one* might be the exception here on account of a special life that has been particularly good!" The response is an absolute and emphatic, "No!"[90] The awful truth is that none of us is exceptional, and just in case we think otherwise, the following vs. 13-18 force us to face ourselves individually.

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[88] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 126.

[89] Shedd, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 37.

[90] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans,* p. 167n.

b. The depth of human depravity, vs. 13-18.

When you tell a man that all men, including himself, are sinners, he still attempts to find refuge in the fact that there remains a certain camaraderie in such a corrupt association, which is very much misplaced. Some, in jest, will express the fact that in hell they will have plenty of company, that Satan will not be lonely, etc. Though the foolishness of such a conclusion is well illustrated by our common antipathy to the dentist's chair. When we painfully suffer in that situation, do we find solace in the fact that at that very time, and throughout the country, thousands of others are in fellowship with us in our hour of trial? No, of course not! So here Paul presses on with his conclusion in such a way that leading us from universal guilt to particular and thorough guilt, we finally cease to contrive excuses and shut out mouths under the weight of just condemnation.

The argument here revolves around body parts, six in all being controlled by a bad heart, though five of these are associated with the head. The first four all relate to speaking which is but a venting of a wicked soul. This section relates directly or indirectly to Psalms 5:9; 10:7; 36:1; 140:3; Isaiah 59:7-8. Paul seems to have purposely selected these verses for the reason that the distinctive body parts, each being an instrument of corruption, plainly describe the thorough corruption of the individual. When a man understands his own sinfulness in this light, he realizes the absurdity, indeed the impossibility of his ability to live righteously and acceptably in God's sight since, "a bad tree [cannot] produce good fruit" (Matt. 7:18). So Lloyd-Jones warns: "Are you ready for me to hold before you now the most terrifying mirror that you have ever looked into in your life? I warn you now, if you want to be on good terms with yourself, you had better read no further."[91]

(1) Their *throat* has the stench of sin, v. 13a.

The open throat, being the upper vent of the thoracic region of the human body, is especially useful for burping, though not necessarily so for friends when we have been eating garlic or onions! So, quoting Psalm 5:9, the outrush of speaking from a putrid heart is likened to the foul updraught that rushes forth from an opened grave (Matt. 15:18).

(2) Their *tongues* are deceptive, v. 13b.

If the throat is the vent of the inner human region, then the tongue is the exhaust fan that thrusts the bad breath outward. Here man is described as having spiritual halitosis! The imperfect here of δολιόω, dolioō, stresses that man continually "keep[s] deceiving." The fan never seems to stop! And what, more specifically, does man have to say? Certainly gossip, profanity, slander, and vulgarity are to be included. But surely deeper corruption is regurgitated, including pride, arrogance, boasting, ambition, self-assertion, atheism, rationalism, scepticism, humanism, etc.

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[91] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 2:1-3:20*, p. 210.

(3) Their *lips* are poisonous, v. 13c.

If the tongue thrusts forth man's bad breath, it is the lips that attempt to give an attractive presentation to that which is in fact a hidden deadly poison. Quoting Psalm 140:3b, which also presupposes the "sharp tongue" of Psalm 140:3a, the allusion may be to the Egyptian cobra that has poison bags beneath its lips. So as man speaks, the venom is hidden behind smiling, beguiling and appealing lips, that is until the unsuspecting victim draws close and is fatally bitten. "Poison" here is ἰός, ios, which describes that which corrodes metals, and in James 3:8 refers to the toxic poison of the tongue.

(4) Their *mouth* curses, v. 14.

Quoting Psalm 10:7, the fullness of the mouth is a result of the fullness of the soul; here the mouth of the wicked is the megaphone of the heart, and thus it broadcasts with vocal and public hostility. What specifically are his grievances? With shades of the rebellion of Psalm 2:1-3, he complains of God's existence and thus curses and mocks Him (Ps. 10:3-4, 11); he boasts in his autonomy (Ps. 10:5-6); he denigrates the virtuous, the unfortunate, the afflicted, since they have not asserted themselves as he has (Ps. 10:8-10). But how opposite is to be the mouth of the child of God (Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6).

(5) Their *feet* shed blood, v. 15.

In vs. 15-17 we have selections from Isaiah 59:7-8. Here the feet, which to be precise, are more vehicles of the arms that shed blood; further, they also give mobility to the mouth; yet all of these bodily features are but the unfailing servants of the sinful heart. However, the rapidity here indicates the zeal of the ungodly. John MacArthur comments that,

> a baby born in the 1980's [in the U.S.] is more likely to be murdered than an American soldier in World War II was of being killed in combat. Whether in peace or in war, man kills man. The mass exterminations of the Nazis and Marxists in our own century have their counterparts in past history. The notorious Chang Hsien-chung in seventeenth century China killed practically all of the people in Szechwan province. During that same century in Hungary, a certain countess systematically tortured and murdered more than six hundred young girls.[92]

(6) Their *paths* are warlike, vs. 16-17.

The picture here is a variety of paths before which man must choose. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for the advancing pilgrim there is the alternative path to the Village Morality that leads away from the path to the Wicket-gate; there is not only the straight and narrow way, but also the broad way; at the foot of the Hill Difficulty, where the straight way ascends directly ahead, are optional paths, one leading to Danger and the other to Destruction; there is the alternative of the more comfortable path that leads to Doubting Castle.

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[92] MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, p. 190.

(a) They lead to conflict, v. 16.

Job 5:4 correctly describes man as, "born for trouble, as sparks fly upward." James 4:1-2 explains the source of this turmoil, even though he addresses wayward Christians: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel."

(b) They don't lead to peace, v. 17.

It seems intimated that a way of peace is available, a way of truth,[93] righteousness and justice which Isaiah 59:8b, 14-15 describes. But, as Haldane comments, "the most savage animals do not destroy so many of their own species to appease their hunger, as man destroys of his fellows; so satiate his ambition, his revenge, or cupidity [avarice]."

(7) Their *eyes* are void of the fear of God, v. 18.

The final quotation is taken from Psalm 36:1 to draw our attention to the distinctive and fundamental role of the "eye." This verse is concluding and climactic, cf. with v. 10. All of the other bodily members have an expressive function, whereas the eye receives impressions which are stored in the mind to which the soul responds; the eye is a receptor rather than a transmitter (Matt. 15:11). Furthermore, we have here the root cause of all of the various sinful manifestations that have just been considered.

(a) What is it to "fear God"? It is to revere and rightly acknowledge His holy being, and not momentarily but continually as the ground of a person's living (Ps. 16:8a). Such perception is disturbing to the unbeliever and delightful, though undiminished, to the believer.

(b) What is it here to "not fear God"? In context, it means to have had some disturbing confrontation with God, cf. 1:19-21; 2:14-15, and yet at the same time, rather than respond with appropriate "terror,"[94] revolt against God himself in a most determined manner. Now this is an astonishing attitude since, as Haldane explains: "They are more afraid of man than of God - of his anger, his contempt, or ridicule. The fear of man prevents them from doing many things from which they are not restrained by the fear of God."[95]

(c) Here is the fundamental solution to the catalogue of particular sins enumerated from 3:18 to this point since, "by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil" (Prov. 16:6; cf. Ps. 128:1). If a person has now

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[93] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 128.

[94] Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 169.

[95] Ibid., p. 129.

come to see their sinfulness in a fuller and more fearful light, then certainly the fear of the Lord has begun to dawn upon us; if we fear God on account of our sin, then let us press on with Paul as he leads us to that fear of God resulting from the remedy of His saving grace (Heb. 12:28-29).

3. The universality of sin accentuated, vs. 19-20.

In this summation of the consequences of the preceding indictment of the human race, one truth rises above every other issue. In v. 19, man is to be accountable "to God;" in v. 20, man is considered "in His [God's] sight." This vertical relationship is Paul's supreme concern, and it remains the greatest issue for any person of any age, race, sex, or social status, since the fall of Adam. To this end the law is of instrumental significance, yet we have to be careful in discovering what exactly Paul means by "the law" in these verses.

a. The law brings accountability before God v. 19.

(1) So to retranslate, "Now we know [cf. 2:2]," or "it is common knowledge that whatever the law says, it speaks to those in [not "under"] the law."

(a) In view of the preceding context where only Psalms and Isaiah have been quoted, "law" here must refer to the whole of the Old Testament, and may even include that revelation given to the heart (2:15). Consider I Corinthians 14:21 where Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:11-12 and designates this as "the law." Hodge states,

> The word νόμος, nomos, means that which binds the reason, the conscience, the heart, and the life, whether it be revealed in the constitution of our nature, or in the decalogue, or in the law of Moses, or in the Scriptures. It is the word or revelation of the will of God, considered as the norm or rule to which men are to conform their faith and practice.[96]

"Law" is a representation to man of God's unchanging righteousness; the representation may change, but never the righteousness.

(b) Who are those "in the law"? While Paul has just quoted the Jewish law and the Jews remain the hardest to convict of their sin, the universality of the following "every mouth" and "all the world" must also guide us here. Surely if "all the world" is to become accountable, then Paul must have in mind the Jew first with inscripturated law, but also the Gentile with the law on his heart. Ultimately, both Jew and Gentile are "in the law," in a relationship with the revealed righteousness of God.

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[96] Hodge, *Romans*, p. 80. Also note Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 105-6.

(2) Thus the purpose of the law is revealed in a twofold sense.

The work of the law is now clearly distinguished from that of the gospel. Here the law of God is a merciless and relentless accuser that bludgeons the self-righteous to the ground. To attempt to rise up in proud protest is only to be rightly crushed.

(a) "That every mouth may be closed."

Here is a courtroom scene in which the accused is so confronted with the evidence of his crime, its enormity, ugliness and wilfulness, that he knows he is rightly to be condemned. Any protestations are utter foolishness. The head drops, the blush is of shame, the bubble of pride has been shattered (Dan. 9:7). This has been Paul's purpose from 1:18 onward. Man is naturally a prolific talker and boaster. But when the presupposition of the gospel, the bad news, is rightly preached as it ought to be, it so confronts man that his mouth becomes closed on account of undoubted guilt, like Job (Job 40:3-5; 42:1-6).

(b) "That all the world may become accountable to God."

The evidence is so compelling concerning man's guilt that he is required to answer. But what can he say? He is like a man whose crime is recorded on video tape, and at his trial the recording is played before he and the judge. So in Luke 12:2-3 we are told, "But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." Of course the startling truth is that God will have all men to come to this state of condemnation and speechlessness before His bar.

b. The law brings the knowledge of sin, v. 20.

(1) The law is not an instrument of justification.

This negative reiteration of the truth of v. 19 draws attention to the Jew's perverted use of the law, that is as a means of maintaining acceptance with God following circumcision. Paul's frequently used term "the works of the law" (cf. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10) focuses on the requirements of the law,[97] whether moral, civil, or ceremonial,[98] and the misplaced perception that fulfillment of such requirements, produced through cooperation with grace, would maintain justification before God is wholly negated. Such justification was ordained through faith (9:31-32). Such justification, or right standing

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[97] Moo comments, "'Works of the law.' then, as most interpreters have recognized, refers simply to 'things that are done in obedience to the law,'" *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 209.

[98] These terms are mentioned merely as a concession to some popular usage even though Paul makes no such distinctions.

with God, can only come through justification by faith in Christ's atoning righteousness (1:17; 3:21-26; cf. Ps. 143:2). The giving of the law *followed* Israel's redemption out of Egypt. So "Why the law? It was added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19), that is to accentuate the reality of sin.

(2) The law is an instrument of sin diagnosis.

In other words, the law is diagnostic rather than remedial; it exposes but it cannot heal; it accuses but it cannot pardon; it is essentially good but functionally impotent.

(a) To "all flesh."

1) All Jews, without exception.

No Jew will be justified by the law. According to the right use of this inscripturated law revelation of the Old Testament (2:17-24), all Jews are not only under the scrutiny of God's law righteousness, but also proven to be thorough sinners.

2) All Gentiles, without exception.

No Gentile will be justified by the law. According to the right use of this internal law revelation to the heart (2:15), all Gentiles are not only under God's law righteousness scrutiny, but also proven to be thorough sinners.

(b) Illustrations.

1) The x-ray machine.

An x-ray machine is an excellent diagnostic means of revealing deep-rooted disease not previously known. But an x-ray machine is quite useless insofar as healing the problem it exposes is concerned.

2) The scalpel.

The surgeon's knife is able to cut below the surface, usually with resulting pain, so as to expose internal corruption, but it cannot attempt to heal by means of eliminating vital organs.

3) The magnifying glass.

By means of close focus, a seeming small problem is shown for what it really is, a mortal disease. However, the magnifying glass is quite incapable of healing that which it exposes.

(c) The law is a revelation of God's ethic (righteousness) without dynamic.

The law, whether revealed to the Jew or Gentile, is a summary of the righteousness of God, but it is incapable of producing righteousness. You can plaster the Ten Commandments everywhere in a nation, but this will not in the slightest produce true heart righteousness. The law is a summary of righteousness without any power to produce righteousness. However, in the Lord Jesus Christ there is perfection of ethic and fulness of dynamic. Therefore the answer to the problem of sin in the Christian is the Lord Jesus Christ, not Moses (Rom. 7:1-4; 8:1-4).

(d) The law accentuates the knowledge of sin.

1) Therefore, "through the law comes the knowledge of sin." That is, through the revelation of the holiness and righteousness of God comes the "knowledge" ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis, of man's thorough sinfulness. The use of ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis, here is appropriate since its compound form stresses an advance in the knowledge of sin, a greater comprehension of personal corruption.[99] Without a knowledge of this truth, the gospel of justification through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ is meaningless.

2) Illustration. Lloyd-Jones comments:

> When you are speaking to a highly moral, good, philanthropic person, one who never seems to have done any harm to anybody, and is always doing good, but who does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, what you say to him is this, 'Is there this fear of God before your eyes? How do you stand before God?' You do not talk about their lives, you talk about their status, their standing, their position face to face with God in the judgment. And there they, like everybody else, are guilty, they cannot answer. 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God', 'all the world' is guilty before God. And the first thing that the gospel of Christ does is enable us to escape from the wrath to come.[100]

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[99] Cf. 1:28; 10:2; R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, pp. 285-86; Hodge, *Romans*, p. 86.

[100] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 2:1-3:20*, p. 227.

CHAPTER V

ROMANS 3:21-31 - THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD, THE GOOD NEWS

THAT which 1:17 introduced, 3:21-26 now fulfills, and especially with regard to the key term, "the righteousness of God." Concerning what exactly is the Christian gospel, here is the *locus classicus* [most authoritative] passage in all of the Bible. Other passages such as John 3:14-16; I Corinthians 15:1-5; Ephesians 2:1-10 are highly significant, but Romans 3:21-26 is both the most compact and comprehensive portion of Scripture revealing the one and only gospel in the canonical Scriptures. In the margin of the Luther Bible at Roman 3:23, the Reformer comments that this passage is "the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible."[1] Robert Mounce rightly declares,

> There is more theology compressed into these six verses than into any other comparable segment of Paul's writing. Here we encounter the central thrust of the apostolic message. In these verses he lays the foundation of his theology. To understand what Paul is teaching in this section is to have a firm grasp on the essence of the Christian faith. Everything else flows from this theological center.[2]

Consider that the root of "righteousness," δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosunē, occurs seven times in these verses via four nouns as "righteousness," two verbs as "to justify," and one adjective as "just." Then we have the subjects of "law (2), faith (4), sin (2), the glory of God, grace, redemption, propitiation by blood." Now to some this may appear as weighty truth that is more the domain of scholars and theologians. To this, Lloyd-Jones rightly responds:

> 'Ah but', you say, 'that will not appeal to people today, they are not interested in theology.' The answer is that they must become interested in theology if they are to become Christians; they must hear the truth and must believe it. Men have never been interested in theology, and never will be, until the Holy Spirit deals with them. So our business is to preach the truth to them, trusting to the Holy Spirit to open their eyes and their understanding, and to apply it to them with power. Here then, I say, is one of these crucial passages which indeed governs the whole of our preaching. It must always be within the bounds of this tremendous statement which we have here.[3]

In terms of contemporary evangelism, and present definitions of the gospel, it is here that we find the standard for the message proclaimed. Unfortunately, what we are about to study is not that gospel commonly proclaimed since substance has given way to sentiment, truth has yielded to methodology, doctrine has been supplanted by cultural relevance, and true saving faith has been replaced by decisionism. One has only to read gospel messages proclaimed by Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, Whitefield, Wesley, Edwards, Spurgeon, and Lloyd-Jones, to readily discern in general today not simply a different style that suits this twentieth century, but a divergence from that distinctive Pauline gospel which Romans so epitomizes.

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[1] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 218.

[2] Robert H. Mounce, *Themes From Romans*, pp. 36-37. Leon Morris writes that this passage, "is possibly the most important single paragraph ever written, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 173. C. E . B. Cranfield likewise comments, "This short section . . . is the center and heart of the whole of Romans 1:16b-15:13," *A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Epistle To The Romans*, I, p. 199.

[3] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 3:20-4:25,* pp. 31-32.

Neil Postman, certainly not a confessing conservative evangelical, has yet provided a most revealing analysis of twentieth century communication as it contrasts with past generations. He concludes:

> No clearer example of the difference between earlier forms of public discourse can be found than in the contrast between the theological arguments of Jonathan Edwards and those of, say, Jerry Falwell, or Billy Graham, or Oral Roberts. The formidable content of Edwards' theology must inevitably engage the intellect; if there is such a content to the theology of the television evangelists, they have not yet made it known.[4]

Perhaps the response might be made that while Edwards' had a brilliant mind, yet his writings are too ponderous and hardly represent the sort of ministry that would be effective at a practical evangelistic level today.

The simple answer to this misunderstanding is to quote from Edwards himself concerning the commencement of revival in Northampton, Massachusetts, with regard to the effects of his preaching on *Justification By Faith Alone* based upon the text, Romans 4:5. He writes:

> The following discourse of justification, that was preached (though not so fully as it is here printed) at two public lectures, seemed to be remarkably blessed, not only to establish the judgment of many in this truth, but to engage their hearts in a more earnest pursuit of justification, in that way that had been explained and defended; and *at that time*, while I was greatly reproached for defending this doctrine in the pulpit, and just upon my suffering a very open abuse for it, God's work wonderfully brake forth amongst us, and souls began to flock to Christ, as the Savior in whose righteousness alone they hoped to be justified. So that this was the doctrine on which this work in its beginning was founded, as it evidently was in the whole progress of it.[5]

A. THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS APART FROM THE LAW, 3:21-24

As others have acknowledged, there seems to be a division of expressed thought between vs. 21-24 and vs. 25-26.[6] In vs. 21-24 there is reference to the *fact* of righteousness through faith alone in Christ alone, that is the *fac*t and *availability* of free grace. However, in vs. 25-26 there is described *how* this free grace has been divinely made available.

1. It is righteousness through faith, vs. 21-22b.

   It would help if the notes on 1:17a concerning "GOD'S GOSPEL IS RIGHTEOUS" on pages 27-30 were reviewed.

   a. It is "now" as opposed to the past, v. 21a.

      (1) "But now," introduces a gloriously contrasting revelation of hope in the face of near despair. Here we are transported from death to life, darkness to light, condemnation to justification, works righteousness to faith righteousness, hell to heaven. We move from the Old Testament administration of shadows, types and promise to the New Testament administration of substance, antitypes, and fulfillment.

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[4] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, p. 56.

[5] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, I, p. 620.

[6] Refer to Boice and Lloyd-Jones.

(2) Here "But now," Νυνὶ δέ, Nuni de, is a great transitionary expression. Νυνί, Nuni, is an adverb of time that introduces what God has "now," in "the now time," v. 26, done in contrast with what has transpired in the past, v. 25. Νυνί, Nuni, is also emphatic,[7] so that Lloyd-Jones' exuberant whole sermon based on this expression is quite justified. He writes,

> 'But now.' There are no more wonderful words in the whole of the Scripture than just these two words. . . . We are all of us under condemnation, we are all under the wrath of God. We can never produce a righteousness that can stand up to God's searching glance and examination and investigation. We are altogether hopeless. Are you clear about that? If you are, you are ready to rejoice in these two words, 'But now.'[8]

(3) Note how "But now," Νυνὶ δέ, Nuni de, is similarly used in Ephesians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:6-8 with regard to the glorious contrast of the gospel. So William Matson has suitably penned:

Lord, I was blind, I could not see
In Thy marred visage any grace;
But now the beauty of Thy face
In radiant vision dawns on me.

Lord, I was deaf, I could not hear
The thrilling music of Thy voice;
But now I hear Thee and rejoice,
And mighty are Thy words, and dear.

Lord, I was dumb, I could not speak
The grace and glory of Thy name;
But now, as touched with living flame,
My lips Thine eager praises wake.

Lord, I was dead, I could not stir
My lifeless soul to come to Thee;
But now, since Thou hast quickened me,
I rise from sin's dark sepulcher.

For Thou has made the blind to see,
The deaf to hear, the dumb to speak,
The dead to live; and lo, I break
The chains of my captivity.

b. It is "apart from [the] law," v. 21b.

The emphatic position of this phrase, in relation to the prior teaching on "law" and the prospective emphasis on "[*the*] righteousness of God" cannot be over emphasized.

(1) More accurately the translation should read, "apart from law," with no definite article, the inference being that "law" of whatever category is

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[7] W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament*, p. 548.

[8] Lloyd-Jones, *Roman, 3:20:4:25*, pp. 25, 28.

eliminated. In the past economy of the Jew and Gentile, there was a "law" manifestation of "the righteousness" of God," even "wrath," 1:18. But "now" has come a manifestation of "the righteousness of God" which, via Jesus Christ, is "the righteousness of faith," cf. vs. 22; 4:11; 10:6.[9]

(2) However, in view of v. 20 where the purpose of the law is closely defined, so here this "righteousness of God" excludes that wrong use of the law where it is supposed to be a stimulus to righteousness.[10] Any attempt on man's part to be justified by law righteousness requires the keeping of the law totally, perfectly, and eternally (Gal. 5:3).

c. It is "[*the*] righteousness of God," v. 21c.

This is Paul's key term in Romans, and while it has been introduced in 1:17 as a synonym for the gospel, and in 3:5 it is differently used to describe God's essential moral being and its demands upon mankind,[11] here the full gospel force is expounded.

(1) The gospel is fundamentally a moral issue.

In our contemporary evangelical climate, it might be asked as to why Paul writes of "righteousness" here rather than "love." The answer is that while "love" speaks today of a relationship of acceptance and congeniality that is morally unanchored, the Bible declares man's fundamental problem to be moral; that is man is unrighteous before a wholly righteous God. The alienation of man from God is a result of sin (Isa. 59:2), so that the moral conflict must be dealt with for love to be expressed. As Warfield states, "The love of God is in its exercise necessarily under the control of his righteousness."[12] Indeed, the great problem for God, as man might perceive it, is how He can justly deal with sin and at the same time justify the sinner. We have already seen with regard to 1:17 that Isaiah, in many passages such as 46:12-13; 61:10, speaks of God saving in righteousness that is at the same time pardoning and gracious. So the same thought is now expressed.

(2) The gospel is "[*the*] righteousness of God."

(a) This phrase can be understood from four perspectives. (1) God is essentially righteous. (2) God demands righteousness. (3) God saves in a righteous manner. (4) God provides an imputed/declarative gift of righteousness. Clearly, points 1 and 2 cannot apply here since God's essential and demanding righteousness can only condemn unrighteous humankind and result in guilt and despair whereas the context here is of good news. Rather, the thought is akin to that which Isaiah writes about, as mentioned earlier. While point 3 is described in v. 26, yet the

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[9] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 222-3.

[10] John Murray, *The Epistle To The Romans*, I, pp. 109-10.

[11] As Moo, having considered several alternative views, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 189-90.

[12] Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*, p. 74.

immediately following prominence of faith in vs. 22, 26 must call for the prime meaning being "reckoned righteousness," 4:5, "the gift of righteousness," 5:17, that is, "not . . . a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:9). Therefore this is an alien, perfect, objective righteousness that is sourced in the wholly righteous Jesus Christ.

(b) John Bunyan comments: "Now, this righteousness of God, whatever it is, to be sure it is not a righteousness that flows from men; for that, as I said, is rejected, and the righteousness of God opposed unto it, being called a righteousness that is without the law, without our personal obedience to it. The righteousness of God, or a righteousness of God's completing, a righteousness of God's bestowing, a righteousness that God also gives unto, and puts upon all them that believe (Rom. 3:22), a righteousness that stands in the works of Christ, and that is imputed only by the grace and justice of God (Rom. 3:24-26).[13]

(3) The gospel is soul liberating, gratis righteousness from God.

Herein lies the glory of the saving grace of God, the emancipating news that transforms Martin Luther and a great and growing host of sinners. Imagine the sheer ecstasy that would erupt from the tax-gatherer of Luke 18:9-14 if he, having through faith declared, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner," then heard the Judge of all the earth declare, "this man went down to his house justified."

d. It is manifested, v. 21d.

The perfect tense in the translation "has been manifested [clearly revealed]" rightly calls attention to a prior "law" manifestation of God's righteousness that "now" comes in a far more glorious manner (II Cor. 3:7-11). God has, according to His determined timing (Gal. 4:4), actively made known the gospel in its glorious unclouded fulness, for promise has given way to fulfilment (Heb. 1:1-3).

e. It is witnessed, v. 21e.

This testimony "is being witnessed [present tense] by the law and the prophets." Hence, the emphasis here is upon the "now" witness in the Word of God concerning this new revelation of God's justifying righteousness. This term, "the Law and the Prophets" refers to the united testimony of the whole of the Old Testament, including "the writings" which Paul has already freely quoted (Matt. 5:17; 22:40; Luke 24:27, 44).

(1) In the Old Testament the gospel continues to be witnessed to, specifically in Habakkuk 2:4; cf. Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38, and also

[13] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, I, 309.

with regard to Abraham and David in Rom. 4:1-8. Then consider Genesis 3:15, Psalm 22, Isaiah52-53, and Daniel 9:24-26.

(2) Thus Paul is teaching us the importance of the Old Testament since it contains the one and only gospel of the grace of God. Hence the gospel that Paul proclaimed was not new, but rather that which had been abiding since the Fall. Paul has no thought of a new grace salvation revealed in his epistles that has superceded a law salvation revealed in the Old Testament.

f. It is "through faith in Jesus Christ," v. 22a.

Paul repeats his gospel phrase "[*the*] righteousness of God," and it gives clear proof for believing that "the righteousness of God" mentioned in v. 21 is "the gift of righteousness," 5:17, that is an objective righteousness.

(1) What is the right translation? The grammar here allows two legitimate variants. The objective genitive, as in the KJV, NKJV, NIV, ESV, translates "faith in Jesus Christ," and for many reasons is to be preferred, with parallel support from Galatians 2:16.[14] The subjective genitive translates "faith[fulness] of Jesus Christ."

(2) What is the role of faith? The gospel comes "through faith" and not "by faith." That is, faith is a mediate channel of salvation, not an instrumental cause of salvation; faith is linkage, a coupling; faith is works and self renouncing trust.

(a) J. Gresham Machen writes: "Faith is not a meritorious work; the New Testament never says that a man is saved on account of his faith. Faith is the means which the Holy Spirit uses to apply to the individual soul the benefits of Christ's death. And faith is a very simple thing; it simply means the receiving of a gift."[15]

(b) True saving faith involves a sinner, using intellect, will, and emotions, who first *encounters* gospel truth, then *acknowledges* this gospel truth to be true in general and in particular regarding himself, and then personally *embraces* this gospel truth, as is described in 6:17.

(c) By way of illustration, imagine that you have a problem slipping over in the bath. A friend suggests that you need a handle to hang on to, so you go to a hardware store and buy one. But consider how stupid it would be for you to then sit in the bath holding on to the new handle even though it was not attached to anything! Faith is not to be objectified; it

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[14] Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 110-11, 363-372; Moo, *Romans*, pp. 224-26, especially his comment: "Most damaging to the hypothesis in either form [faithfulness of Christ, or faith exercised by Jesus Christ], is the consistent use of πίστις, *pistis* throughout 3:21-4:25 to designate the faith exercised by people in God, or Christ, as the sole means of justification," p. 225.

[15] J. Gresham Machen, *God Transcendent*, p. 91.

is not therapeutic in itself; faith *must* have an object, and it is the character of that object that makes salvation viable or non-viable.

(3) What is objective justification? It contrasts with a subjective or internal, infused and progressive righteousness, produced in cooperation with the grace of the Holy Spirit, that is the ground of justification at the judgment day; it is essential Roman Catholic doctrine. Rather, objective justification is the guilty sinner, aware of his thorough corruption, looking away from and outside of himself toward the completed, atoning work of Jesus (Heb. 1:3; 10:11-14). This look is faith in the invitation and promise of the Savior Himself, that "he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). It is immediate justification. As Paul repeats in 3:26, and 4:5, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness."

g. It is "for all those who believe," v. 22b.

This is not a tautology concerning "faith in Jesus Christ" just mentioned. There the emphasis is about *saving union* with Jesus Christ, that is *through faith*; here the emphasis concerns *who* may enter into this saving union, which is "all." The "all" encompasses all Jews and Gentiles in a most inclusive and absolute and non-distinguishing sense. But the "all" must be "those believing" (present tense), whose justification will continue to be solely mediated through faith. The implicit invitation here is universal, notwithstanding the doctrine of particular election.

2. It is righteousness for the unrighteous, vs. 22c-23.

Logical connection is strong here. Why is the gospel offered to "all" who believe, without distinction? It is because "all" of mankind are sinful without distinction.

a. Sinners in sinful symphony, v. 22c.

(1) "For there is no difference" means that there is no distinction between men as sinners. From God's perspective, we are all related to Adam, hence we are sinners by nature and consequent choice. Our sins are a result of our sin nature just as a skin eruption will often be caused by a blood infection.

(2) Illustration. Jews and Gentiles are sinners, as are street bums and statesmen, paupers and presidents, murderers and mothers, prostitutes and 'nice people.' "But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of son' (Gal. 3:22 NIV), cf. 3:9.

(3) The word "distinction" or "difference" here, διαστολή, diastolē, is used in I Corinthians 14:7 of a musical instrument normally producing "distinction in . . . tones," while yet being a singular instrument. This well illustrates that while sin may have variety, yet is remains a singular, universal kind. We are all of the same moral kind, even if there is variety in our sinning. In other words, the world of mankind is like the variety of instrumentalists within a

symphony orchestra. They play different sounds, yet there is no ultimate distinction since they are playing the same music under one conductor. So mankind sins with variety while yet playing Satan's music under his conductorship. Some sin like the base drum, loud and strong; some sin like the flute, discreetly with culture, some prefer sin in chorus like the violins, some sin in a bold and brassy manner like the trumpets, some sin under the guise of religion like the harp, some sin and make a performance like a celebrity pianist. But remember, all are sinners in sinful symphony, 'for there is no distinction."

(4) Application. Some people sin with sophistication, charm, finesse, which is so often the case with learned, wealthy and religious people. Other people sin crudely, without polish, in an ugly manner; often they make headlines in the media. Some people sin overtly, with great display and exhibition, using the body. Others sin covertly, with most subtle disguise and secrecy using the confines of the mind. Nevertheless, 'the whole world is lying (present tense) in wickedness' (I John 5:19). As a race, we are common sinners, even if in our sinning we are uncommon in the way we sin.

b. Sinners in sinful shortfall, v. 23.

Thus here he have God's perspective of the human race, being unlike that of man who loves to make distinctions and excuses! Romans 3:23 is one of the most commonly used texts in modern day evangelism insofar as bringing men to a knowledge of their sinfulness is concerned. On most occasions it is only vaguely used in context because it is so isolated and deprived of its intended content. Several years ago I responded to a telephone number in a newspaper advertisement that offered to declare the "good news." In two minutes and fifteen seconds the "gospel" was presented, including the quotation of this verse, as well as a concluding invitation to "receive" Jesus Christ. Such is the banal communication of God's truth today. However, this passage presupposes some knowledge of the Old Testament, especially the fall of Genesis 3 as well as some recall of what Paul has taught thus far concerning sin in its breadth and depth.

(1) The *root* of man's sinfulness is his corporate identification with Adam's sin, for "all have sinned," v. 23a.

(a) A more precise translation here reads, "For all sinned," emphasizing the aorist tense, which lumps together all of mankind into a single class. Furthermore, in contrast with the present tense of, "and are falling short of the glory of God," there is strong inference here that man as a corporate race is perceived as having sinned from the beginning with Adam (cf. 5:12 where "sin" is used in the same aoristic manner).[16]

(b) What is sin? Here ἁμαρτάνω, hamartanō, means to miss the mark, coming short of reaching a defined goal, which up to this point has been

[16] Lloyd-Jones and Shedd emphasize Adam here, while Moo and Murray, though not denying this aspect, yet stress man's corporate identification with sin.

attaining to the righteousness of God, and now is described as "the glory of God." Of course such "missing" here is not slight, as if an archer just missed a bull's-eye, but by a vast degree that is way off the mark. Man is not slightly in debt, but totally bankrupt.

(c) By way of application, what does this mean for us in this twentieth century? When I travel the world or my neighborhood and observe man, and am confronted with his futile and pagan ways, though often accompanied with a civil secularity, I am not surprised or confounded for I understand man's basic problem, his universal disease. Therefore I repudiate evolutionary thought because it does not answer to the problem of continuing evil on a universal scale, though Scripture emphatically does. I repudiate materialism and relativism which in such a shallow way sees man as merely environmentally and socially in need of adjustment. I understand that man's problem is my problem, because of what I know about myself in the depths. Hence, the problem is radical and only thorough a radical solution of redemption in the heart by means of the Son of God will a man be saved (II Cor. 5:17).

(2) The *result* of man's sinfulness is continuous shortfall, for all "come short," v. 23b.

(a) The verb ὑστερέω, hustereō, means "to lack, to come short," and it is used in Luke 15:14 to describe the Prodigal Son who "began to be in need." In Philippians 4:12 it describes Paul "suffering need" in contrast with "having abundance."

(b) The continuous present tense here indicates that man sins on a day by day basis and not merely occasionally. His sinning is an inevitable result of sin as a principle. Because he is a child of Adam, he *will* sin, though he does so agreeably. Man can only walk along a straight line in a crooked manner; he staggers on and on as if intoxicated, and that being under the influence of sin.

(3) The *reflection* of man's sinfulness is "the glory of God," v. 23c.

While it is possible to consider this "glory" to be God's essential holy magnificence and outshining, before which man stands condemned,[17] yet the more likely meaning is that this "glory" is that which God designed for man, man repudiated, and Jesus Christ regains. Of course the original plan was for man to reflect God's essential glory. Again, man is like the Prodigal Son who, in departing from his Father's home, also degenerates in terms of the glory he originally possessed. The *imago Dei* has been severely marred, the original portrait has been grossly disfigured.[18]

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[17] Robert Haldane, writes of "coming short of obeying the law," *Commentary on Romans*, p. 151.

[18] Murray lists four possibilities and cautiously opts for, "to come short of reflecting the glory of God, that is, of conformity to his image." *The Epistle To The Romans*, I, pp. 112-3.

(a) Clearly, what Paul describes that man has lost, Jesus Christ restores, first in an initial sense as a result of conversion (II Cor. 3:18; 4:6; cf. John 17:22), but then consummately at the end of this age when Jesus Christ returns (Rom. 5:2; 8:18, 29-30; Phil. 3:21). This emphasis upon what redeemed man gains surely suggests what sinful man here is described as having lost.

(b) Martyn Lloyd-Jones eloquently states: "Never has the Apostle exposed the ravages of sin and the Fall in a more wonderful manner than in this twenty-third verse of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Sin not only makes a man unrighteous, it robs him of the glory of God. And if you understand that, you will realize how futile it is ever to think that you, by your works or activities, can ever be fit to stand in the presence of God. Before we can truly know Him, and have communion with Him, let alone stand before the glory of His presence, we must have something of His glory. . . . But without it we can never see God and never stand in His presence. But the Christian, as the Apostle Peter reminds us in the first chapter of his Second Epistle, is 'made a partaker of the Divine nature'. Is that true of me as a Christian? It is! . . . There is a new man in me, as a Christian, that is glorious, and he will go on 'being changed from glory to glory'."[19]

(4) By way of illustration, this whole verse may be likened to a rocket programmed to head toward a certain planet that, having just been launched, suddenly has a computer malfunction and veers off course in the opposite direction. It might be said that the rocket initially had "a program freeze" or "blew a fuse" (sinned) and as a consequence "it continued to come short of its design" (destiny, glory). So man, having been created malfunctions and veers off course away from his appointed destination. Like the rocket continuously plummeting into alien outer space, so man is continuously plunging away from his intended course; his every step takes him away from the intended "glory of God."

3. It is righteousness that is gratis, v. 24.

While Romans 3:21-26 presents the most concise and yet comprehensive declaration of the gospel in all of Scripture, yet in v. 24 we come to the most important verse in this passage, indeed one of the most important passages in the whole Bible in which we are told how God saves sinners. The overall thrust here is an expansion of the thought that, according to vs. 22-23, reconciliation with God for thorough sinners is *wholly, exclusively, gratuitously,* a work of God through Christ, appropriated through faith alone.

a. By way of illustration, imagine a man, having been justly imprisoned for a serious crime, the penalty for which he cannot pay, being confronted by a lawyer who hands to the prisoner a signed release from the state governor to which is attached a receipt for payment of the penalty by the lawyer. Furthermore, the lawyer tells

[19] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 3:20-4:25*, pp. 52-53.

the pardoned man to go and live at his residence, which the son learns is in fact the residence of the governor, for the lawyer is his son! Does this seem incredible, unheard of? Yes, it may seem so. But read Romans 5:6-8, and consider three aspects of v. 24 here.

(1) As a sinner with that pardon kept close to his bosom while living in the governor's residence, that man knows that he is declared to be fully pardoned while at the same time being a privileged, honored person, living with the rank of a son - he is *justified*.

(2) As he ponders his new standing, he asks himself *why* the governor was so motivated to do such a thing. After all, he was certainly guilty, the penalty was great. Yet such kindness was overwhelming at immense personal cost. This he concludes is pure *grace*.

(3) Then he wonders how his new standing came about. The governor could not declare him pardoned for no reason at all, according to mere whim. That would be irresponsibility. Instead he sent his son to pay the price for his release - that is *redemption*.

b. Free justification.

Paul has already used this verb, δικαιόω, dikaioō, in 2:13; 3:4, 20 where in all instances a judicial declaration is intended, and this same basic meaning is at the root of the subsequent usage in 3:26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30, 33.

(1) Justification defined.

The fundamental meaning of Paul here is that of a legal, forensic proclamation, to "be acquitted, be pronounced and treated as righteous."[20] We might liken it to the declaration of a judge who brings down his gavel with the verdict, "I find the defendant to be not guilty!" Such a statement is bound to stimulate a response of joy in the prisoner in the dock.

(2) Biblical illustrations.

(a) Luke 7:28-29. The people "justified God," that is they declared God to be vindicated through the ministry of John the Baptist.

(b) Luke 10:25-29. The lawyer "justified himself," that is he attempted to declare himself or appear righteous, although this was not the case..

(c) Luke 16:14-15. The Pharisees have a self-declared righteousness, but it is quite remote from actual personal righteousness.

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[20] Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 196.

(e) Luke 18:9-14. While the Pharisee boasted in a phoney personal righteousness, the repentant tax-gatherer received the declarative justification of Christ.

(3) Justification that is free.

(e) It is free by definition.

Salvation is "free," δωρεάν, dōrean, unmerited, unprompted, unsought. Compare John 15:25 where this same word is used; they hated Christ "without a cause," that is "freely," that is without any reason found in Christ himself. Likewise, there was no reason within the sinner why God should justify him. Such a reason resides alone within God's gracious heart. Salvation is an individual Divine donation and grant.

The thought here is not to be likened to a free sample, which in commercial terms often includes subtle tones of obligation. Rather the meaning is free blessing to those deserving of cursing, a full and free payment that cancels a crushing debt, liberty without price to the incarcerated, free entry for the disqualified entrant.

(f) It is free to man, but costly to God.

Many children have, later in life, freely received a rich inheritance from their parents, without cost to themselves. However, this same inheritance cost their parents much sacrifice and effort. So the believing sinner's justification, although free, has yet been at great cost to the God who gratuitously justifies, even the death of His Son, 8:32.

(g) It is free in God.

John Murray makes the point well: "No element in Paul's doctrine of justification is more central than this - God's justifying act is not constrained to any extent or degree by anything that we are or do which could be esteemed as predisposing God to this act. And not only is it the case that nothing in us or by us constrains to this act but all that is ours compels the opposite judgment - the whole world is brought in guilty before God (cf. vs. 9, 19). This action on God's part derives its whole motivation, explanation, and determination from what God himself is and does in the exercise of free and sovereign grace. Merit of any kind on the part of man, when brought into relation to justification, contradicts the first article of the Pauline doctrine and therefore of his gospel. It is the glory of the gospel of Christ that it is one of free grace."[21]

[21] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 115.

(4) Roman Catholic justification.

The necessity to contrast biblical justification with that which the Roman Catholic Church teaches is bound up with several vital matters. First, is the fact that we are not considering a slight difference of opinion, but rather an issue that takes us to the heart of the biblical gospel. Second is the historic significance of this matter since the Protestant Reformation was grounded upon the substance of the gospel, and the two divergent views have not changed in the slightest. Third is the matter of the Roman Catholic system of doctrine. The Roman view of justification is integral to a false gospel system.

(e) The Roman Catholic gospel.

To become a Christian, after instruction, belief, and agreement, the candidate is baptized by means of water. In this act, *ex opere operato*, the rite ensuring the result, the person is instrumentally regenerated and becomes born again, freed from all stain of sin, and saved.[22] A person may lose this salvation by committing a mortal as opposed to a venial sin, even a free-will repudiation of the faith. Maintenance of this salvation is through means of grace dispensed by the church, such as the mass, whereby the grace of Christ is substantially ingested, digested, and infused into the person. That person cooperates with this grace, progressively produces good works, is progressively justified, and hopes, though unsure, for final justification at the day of God's final verdict.

(f) Roman Catholic definitions of justification.

1) Thus Roman Catholic justification is really a sanctifying process, in which a person is infused with grace. However, this church vehemently denies the biblical and Pauline gospel wherein justification occurs at the point of initial saving faith, and such faith is in Christ's objective atonement whereby all sin is forgiven and his perfect righteousness imputed.

2) So the Council of Trent stated in 1547, Chapter 16, Canons 11-12: "If anyone saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favor of God: let him be anathema [accursed, excommunicated]. If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema."[23]

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[22] Murray significantly comments, "It is symptomatic of the total discrepancy between Rome's position and the teaching of Scripture that baptism should be conceived of as the instrumental cause. The efficiency that Scripture accords to faith Rome accords to baptism," *Romans*, I, p. 361.

[23] Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, II, pp. 112-3.

3) So a recent, highly authoritative Roman Catholic commentary declares concerning Romans 3:24: "As always within the symbolic universe presupposed by Paul . . . , the justification in question is God's verdict of acquittal to be pronounced [*sic*] at the judgment. Moreover, the contrast with the preceding statement about sin (v. 23) suggests that 'being justified' (δικαιούμενοι, *dikaioumenoi*) contains a significant ethical element: believers are being 'made righteous,' not simply 'declared righteous' and this is being achieved, not by a legal fiction - which would in effect be immoral (cf. Isa. 5:23; Prov. 17:15; Exod. 23:7) - but through a distinctive act of God's grace effective in the redemptive work of Christ."[24]

4) Concerning the charge of "legal fiction," commonly made by Roman Catholicism, Moo responds, "As Paul uses it in these contexts, the verb 'justify' means not 'to make righteous' (in an ethical sense) nor simply 'to treat as righteous' (though is really not righteous), but 'to declare righteous.' No 'legal fiction,' but a legal reality of the utmost significance, 'to be justified' means to be acquitted by God from all 'charges' that could be brought against a person because of his or her sins. This judicial verdict, for which one had to wait until the last judgment according to Jewish theology [and Roman Catholic theology in a perfect sense], is according to Paul rendered the moment a person believes."[25]. Also note that he who God justifies is at the same time regenerated (Tit. 3:5-7), and such life from the Spirit produces holiness in the acquitted.

c. His grace.

Here we move from the righteous character of the gospel into the realm of God's motivation and attitude toward the sinners He deems to justify. Why does God freely pardon and declare to be righteous? Why does He stoop from heavens holy glory and condescend to save thoroughly polluted individuals from their earthly pigsty? The answer is the "grace" of God, which is that distinctive characteristic of His goodness and love whereby he determines to rescue sinners.

(1) Grace adored.

For this reason, and especially for man who, in the depths of his heart finds himself despairingly engulfed in this pigsty, this term "grace" becomes the sweetest expression he has ever heard when it is personally applied. Lloyd-Jones rightly enquires: "What is your reaction to this word? In many ways this is what it means to be a Christian."[26] It is no wonder then that Christian hymn writers have reached their sublimest heights when attempting to

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[24] Brendan Byrne, S.J., *Romans, Sacra Pagina Series*, 6, pp. 125-6.

[25] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 227-8 . In addition, refer to Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 359-362, also the works of Buchanan, Bunyan, Edwards, Owen, Turrettin.

[26] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans*, 3:20-4:25, p. 58.

commend this wondrous doctrine,the acid test of any profession of the Christian faith. . . . Do you feel that this word 'grace' opens the very gates of heaven to you? That is really

(e) Philip Doddridge, 1702-51, writes:

> Grace 'tis a charming sound,
> Harmonious to the ear:
> Heav'n with the echo shall resound,
> And all the earth shall hear.

(f) Samuel Davies, 1723-61, successor to Jonathan Edwards as the president of Princeton College, writes:

> Great God of wonders, all Thy ways are
> Matchless, God-like, and divine:
> But the fair glories of Thy grace, more
> God-like and unrivaled shine.

(g) John Newton, 1725-1807, the converted, blaspheming and debauched slave-trader, writes:

> Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
> That saved a wretch like me!
> I once was lost, but now am found;
> Was blind, but now I see.
>
> 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
> And grace my fears relieved;
> How precious did that grace appear
> The hour I first believed!
>
> Through many dangers, toils and snares
> I have already come;
> 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
> And grace will lead me home.

(2) Grace defined.

Some rather loose definitions are commonly heard such as "unmerited favor," which is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Then there is the acronym, "God's Riches At Christ's Expense," which is quite inadequate since it gives no hint of man's condition.

(e) The word here is χάρις, charis, which can have a variety of meanings including graciousness, gratitude, favor, goodwill, etc. However, it is Paul's usage that, in cases such as here, takes on a specific meaning that is related to the character of God and man concerning the gospel.

1) Concerning *God*, "grace" is that kindness within Himself by which He is moved, "according to the kind intention of His will, . . . according to the riches of His grace, . . . according to His kind

intention which He purposed in Him [Christ]" (Eph. 1:5, 7, 9), to pardon and redeem thoroughly polluted and guilty sinners, the "ungodly" (4:5), those "dead in trespasses and transgressions" (Eph. 2:1-10).

2) Concerning *man*, "grace" is that kindness from God which may be defined as both "unmerited favor" and "demerited favor." John Murray writes, "We cannot think of sinners as merely undeserving; they are also ill deserving. The grace of God to sinners is, therefore, not simply unmerited favor; it is also favor shown to the ill-deserving, indeed to the hell-deserving. When Paul says, 'justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 3:24), the grace in view must be understood on the background of the judgment of God referred to in v. 19."[27]

a) "Unmerited favor" means that, in the sinner, he has *nothing* to offer, even a grain of moral virtue, that will gain God's acceptance.

b) "Demerited favor" means that man has positively offered cause for his condemnation, that is purposed rebellion, active hostility, and a catalog of iniquity.

(3) The God of grace.

"His" grace, in context, must refer to God the Father, the source of grace that is mediated through His Son. Here then we are considering the grace of the triune God, so that the grace of the Father is essentially identical with the grace of the Son.

(4) The grace of God.

"Grace" means that God is actively for prodigal man even though prodigal man is actively against God. However, it is the particularity of the grace of God that results in wonder, astonishment, and adoring worship. For biblical grace is not universal, but grounded upon God's individual choice of certain sinners and His abandonment of others.

(e) The example of Paul.

The saving of the Apostle Paul perfectly pictures God's eclectic grace. God laid hold of him while he was a militant rebel, so that having been converted he declares, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (I Cor. 15:10). From his mother's womb, God "called [him] . . . through His grace" (Gal. 1:15), and on later reflection he considered this "grace of our Lord was more than abundant" (I Tim. 1:14).

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[27] John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, I, p. 119.

(f) The example of John Bunyan.

> As a young believer, weighed down with the recollection of his sin, we read in *Grace Abounding To The Chief Of Sinners*: "[N]ow was I sick in my inward man, my soul was clogged with guilt; now also was my former experience of God's goodness to me quite taken out of my mind, and hid as if it never been, nor seen. . . . [N]ow I sunk and fell in my spirit, and was giving up all for lost; but as I was walking up and down in the house, as a man in a lost woful state, that word of God took hold of my heart, Ye are 'justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 3:24). But oh what a turn it made upon me. Now was I as one awakened out of some troublesome sleep and dream, and listening to this heavenly sentence. I was as if I had heard it thus expounded to me: Sinner, thou thinkest that because of thy sins and infirmities I cannot save thy soul, but behold my Son is by me, and upon him I look, and not on thee, and will deal with thee according as I am pleased with him."[28]

a. Redemption through Christ.

From the truth of "free grace" we move to the "costliness" of this free grace, which is "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." From the "why" of the gospel we now move to the "how" of the gospel, with the resultant explanation taking us through to v. 26. While God may have a gracious desire to save guilty sinners, yet His character will not allow a fickle or morally indifferent response. If He as God is morally unchanging, then His holy character demands that all sin be punished. And this being so, then the sin of all mankind must be satisfactorily punished. Therefore, the problem for the manifestation of the grace of God is revealed in the psalmist's declaration, "If Thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand?"(Ps. 130:3). The answer then given is encouraging, for in the next verse we read, "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4). But it is in v. 7 that we learn of the "how" concerning this act of pardon, for there we are told, "For with the LORD there is lovingkindness, and with Him is abundant *redemption*" (Ps. 130:3-4).

(1) Redemption defined.

> The word ἀπολύτρωσις, apolutrōsis, is a strengthened form of a word which, in its classical form, meant "to loose," hence to loosen clothing, armor, animals, etc. Then it became distinctively associated with loosing by means of a payment or price, and this ransoming aspect is its essential characteristic. Often it refers to the ransoming of a prisoner of war or slave. A master might, out of kindness, pay for a slave's freedom; sometimes the slave was purchased for a heathen god, though he was regarded as free but subject to that god.

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[28] Bunyan, *Works*, I, §§ 257-8, p. 39.

(a) In the Old Testament.

The most impressive definition here concerns the redemption of Israel from captivity in Egypt. From this representation is clearly seen three distinct elements that comprise the meaning of redemption.

1) *An assumed captivity*. Here is a nation in bondage (Ex. 2:23; Deut. 15:15). Of course it is assumed that the captive nation is incapable of freeing itself.

2) *The necessity of payment of a ransom price*. Here is a nation redeemed with a price (Ex. 12:13, 25-27). Of course inherent here is the gracious attitude of the Redeemer who is willing and able to redeem.

3) *A resultant freedom, liberation*. Here is a nation with consequent freedom (Deut. 8:7-10). Of course the possibility of returning to former captivity is thought to be absurd.

(b) In the New Testament.

More liberal scholarship, in parallel with its rejection of a substitutionary atonement, also rejects the payment principle of the word "redemption" and simply speaks of an "act of freedom." In response to this, refer to the thorough defense of "the payment of a ransom price" by Leon Morris.[29] Of course, the offering of Christ as a sacrificial, redemption payment does not mean payment to Satan. Rather it is the offering of God Himself, even satisfying Himself by paying the price to Himself.[30]

(2) Redemption in Christ.

(a) A presupposed bondage.

This is indicated in 3:9 where both Jew and Gentile are described as being "under sin," that is captive to sin, cf. Galatians 3:22-23. Likewise in John 8:31-33 Jesus Christ implicitly describes man as enslaved to sin. Even in 8:23, the believer in a corrupt body awaits for the redemption of this body.

(b) A price to set free.

Paul will take up this point in more detail when he speaks of Christ as a "propitiatory sacrifice" in v. 25. It is sufficient to point out here the moral, righteous necessity for the payment of a satisfactory price for the

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[29] Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, pp. 11-64.

[30] Moo, *Romans*, p. 229-30; cf. Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 179.

indebtedness of sinful, guilty men, so that God "might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus," v. 26.

1) This price is also the believing sinners substitute (Mark 10:45; it is of infinite value (I Pet. 1:18-19); it has everlasting efficacy (Heb. 7:25; Rev. 5:9-10).

2) This price is the Father's beloved Son (Matt. 3:17); the Father's delight (Prov. 8:29b-30); the Father's sole heir (Ps. 2:7-8; John 3:35); the Father's glorious image (John 17:5; Col. 2:9).

(c) A resultant freedom.

1) We are free by Christ (John 8:34-36; Gal. 2:4; 5:1).

2) We are free under Christ (John 8:31-32; 15:14; Gal. 5:13).

3) We shall be free with Christ (Rom. 8:21: I John 3:2).

b. By way of application, what a glorious gospel is this. Free *justification*, delivered from guilt and condemnation, declared as righteous as Jesus Christ. Sovereign *grace*, for the sinful rebel, through God's tender mercy. *Redemption* through the payment of Christ's shed blood, delivered from despairing bondage, established in liberty. Paul describes all three elements in Ephesians 1:7 (cf. Heb. 2:3): "In Him we have *redemption* through His blood, the *forgiveness* of our trespasses, according to the riches of His *grace*."

B. THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS CHRIST'S ATONEMENT, 3:25-26

1. Introduction.

a. At the commencement of vs. 25-26, the personal pronoun "whom" indicates the connection between "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" of v. 24 and the precise exposition of this matter which is to follow.

b. In vs. 25-26 we are told, more concisely and comprehensively than anywhere in the Bible, *why* there was the necessity for Jesus Christ to be delivered up to death by the Father (Luke 24:25-26; Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:32), *why* a divine ransom payment should be made.

(1) We do not merely suggest there are several theories of the atonement from which believers may select at random one view which suits their fancy. We desire the essential biblical reason why Jesus Christ died. Consider the evasive translation of the *Good News Bible* concerning Romans 3:24; I John 2:2; 4:10 where "propitiation" is simply, "the means by which our sins are forgiven." But such a translation purposely leaves open, for varying opinion, the purpose of the atonement, and ignores the precise details of Romans 2:25-26.

(2) There are four essential reasons given in vs. 25-26 why a redemptive payment was decreed by the Father.

(a) So that God might be *propitious* through the substitutionary death of Christ, v. 25a.

(b) So that God might be *vindicated* through the substitutionary death of Christ, vs. 25b

(c) So that God might be *just* through the substitutionary death of Christ, v. 26a

(d) So that God might be *the justifier* through the substitutionary death of Christ, v. 26b.

2. Through Jesus Christ, God is *propitious* toward mankind, v. 25a.

a. The display of Jesus Christ.

The phrase, "whom God hath set forth" KJV, is better translated "whom God displayed publicly" NASB. Again we see that the gospel is essentially what God has done in spite of man, yet for man.

(1) By way of illustration, when a man inaugurates a great plan or scheme, he publishes it abroad with television, radio, and press publicity, so as to gain national and international exposure. Likewise God, having designed salvation also displays it, He exhibits it, He advertises it.

(2) In Galatians 3:1 we are told that "Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified;" then in Galatians 4:4, "when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son; then in I Peter 1:20, "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you."

b. The death of Jesus Christ.

(1) As propitiation.

(a) The Greek word here is ἱλαστήριον, hilastērion, and in a broad sense it is defined by the following word "blood," that is the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ. However, ἱλαστήριον, hilastērion is an exceedingly important word that needs to be exactly defined since the character of God is at stake. In this regard refer to the detailed study of this word by Leon Morris.[31]

1) In classical ἱλαστήριον, hilastērion was used by pagan idolaters to signify the appeasing of a god and the averting of his anger by

[31] Morris, *Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, pp. 144-213.

means of an acceptable, propitiatory offering. However, such gods were capricious, moody, vindictive, arbitrary, open to bribes, inconsistent, or simply very human. Yet even up to the time of Christ, it is unquestioned that "to placate" was the primary and predominant meaning in everyday living.

2) In the Old Testament, the family of words, of which this is one, all continue to have this primary meaning of "to placate, turn away from wrath."

   a) However, here God is morally consistent and demanding, while there are over 580 references to His wrath, which is placated by the shedding of blood (Lev. 16:15-16; 17:11).

   b) The equivalent Hebrew word, for the Greek ἱλαστήριον, hilastērion, is often used in the Old Testament regarding the "mercy seat" in the tabernacle. So some have translated it as "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5, where ἱλαστήριον, hilastērion is used, such as the NASB, NKJV, ESV, cf. "atonement cover" NIV. In other words, the place of sprinkling was "the place of propitiation."

      i) The "mercy seat" was a solid gold lid that was placed over the ark (box) of the covenant, made with acacia wood covered with gold, 3'9" long by 2'3" square. Inside the ark was the word of the covenant, the Law (Ex. 25:21). At either end of the mercy seat (lid) were two golden cherubs, between which and above the mercy seat, God dwelt.

      ii) On the annual Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the High Priest sprinkled the blood of a goat upon the mercy seat as an atonement for all the sins of the children of Israel (Lev. 16:15-16). Thus the mercy seat with the blood intercepted between the Law's demands (Heb. 9:24-28) and God's consequent anger with law-breakers.

3) In the New Testament, "propitiation" or ἱλαστήριον, hilastērion, means likewise "to turn God away from His wrath," or "the cooling of the heat of His anger" when confronted with sin, based upon an acceptable sacrifice.

   a) Contemporary liberal scholars have repudiated this idea, notably C. H. Dodd who writes concerning the New Testament that, "anger as an attitude of God to men disappears, and His love and mercy become all-embracing."[32] William Barclay takes a similar stand.

[32] Ibid., p. 179.

b) But what of the doctrine of the wrath of God in Romans 1:17-18; 2:5-8; 5:9, as well as John 3:36; Ephesians 5:5-6; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 6:15-16? If God is not angry with sinners, then why the violence of the cross, or even its necessity?

c) Hence, certain translations, such as the NEB and RSV, substitute "expiation" for "propitiation" since this former term excludes the idea of appeasing wrath, though it retains the idea of sins forgiven, dealt with, pardoned.

(b) Hence "propitiation" in Romans 3:25 means the turning away of the wrath of God by means of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

1) "Propitiation" involves an attitude in God and not a change in man. It means that Jesus Christ did not come to preach the gospel, but that he as the gospel might be preached.

2) "Propitiation" in Romans 3:25 involves four major elements.

a) *Satisfaction* of God's justice due to His violated holiness and penal requirements.

b) *Pacification* of God's wrath due to His being moved within Himself to the hatred of sin.

c) *Expiation* of the believer's guilt due to the Father's satisfaction with His Son's righteous, atoning payment.

d) *Substitution* of the believer's punishment through Jesus Christ as the acceptable substitute.

(2) As the shedding of "His blood."

It is the shed blood of Christ that is propitiatory. However, "blood" here does not simply mean "life" (Lev. 17:11), but rather "life laid down in death," hence a sacrificial death as pictured by the Levitical offerings (Lev. 17:11). The blood of Christ was as of a "slain" lamb (I Pet. 1:19; cf. I Cor. 11:25-26).We often sing hymns about the "blood of Christ," and rightly so. But sometimes we lose sight of the deep significance of this terminology and move more into the realm of religious sentimentality and abstraction. We can sing, "there is power in the blood," but what really do we mean? Here the "blood of Christ" is the righteous God's instrumental means of saving unrighteous sinners; it is His blessed Son's satisfactory offering of himself unto a most vile death, the "just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God" (I Pet. 3:18).

(3) As the object of faith.

The display of Christ crucified may be universal, but the appropriation of His atoning righteousness is particular through faith, as John 3:16, 36 make clear. Further, it is faith alone that links the sinner to the wonder of the propitiated God. "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1), that is "peace from God." God has made peace with rebellious and guilty man! As Charles Wesley writes:

> And can it be that I should gain
> An interest in the Savior's blood?
> Died He for me, who caused His pain?
> For me, who Him to death pursued?
> Amazing love! How can it be
> That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

3. Through Jesus Christ, God is *vindicated* before mankind, v. 25b.

The atoning work of Jesus Christ accomplishes many things, and most prominent of all is the display of God's glory (Phil. 1:11; 2:9-11). From sinful man's perspective, the gracious forgiveness of his sin is of overwhelming concern; but from God's point of view there is something much more important, and that is the maintenance of his holy reputation in an unholy universe, that is His vindication, His justification when charges are brought against Him, especially concerning ongoing wickedness.

a. Why is Paul concerned about the vindication of God?

One of the most common criticisms that is brought against Christianity and the God of the Bible is the charge, "Where is there any justice in this situation? Why does God not intervene? If He is omnipotent and merciful, then why does He seem remote, unconcerned?" Usually this comment is designed to charge God with negligence in bad situations, while these same critics tend to take credit for the good situations.

However, the genuine Christian will desire to see that God is vindicated before such challenges, and indeed, if the God of the Bible be God, then He also will be careful to uphold his reputation. You may be interested *in* God, but more importantly, are you concerned *for* God? Are you desirous that God be glorified, vindicated, justified, that His name be hallowed, His kingdom come, His will be done, that His righteousness prevail (Matt. 6:9-10)?

(1) God's reputation in general.

The Bible frequently defends God in the face of evil, especially when punishment and calamity seem inappropriate, and sin seems to go unpunished; such vindication is called a theodicy. When Job feels unjustly accused of sin, he implies that God is to blame (Job 40:8), so that God responds to vindicate His ways (Job 38:1-40:1). When Habakkuk accuses God of indifference when sin is rampant amongst His people (Hab. 1:2-4),

God responds with a vindication that astounds the prophet (Hab. 1:5-11). However, the supreme vindication of God is the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Here Paul introduces this aspect which emphasizes the "God-centeredness" of his ministry, not mere utilitarianism.

(2) God's reputation in the face of sin.

(a) It is "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" that "demonstrates [shows forth] His [the Father's] righteousness," that is God's just and righteous character. John MacArthur makes this point by titling his chapter on vs. 25-26 here as, "How Christ died for God."

(b) Ask the average Christian today what the atonement of Christ declares, and the predictable answer will be "the love of God." This is not untrue, but it is a righteous love, a holy love, a satisfactory love, a love that in no way diminishes the demands of God's moral perfection.

(c) In other words, the atonement of Christ tells me something wonderful about God, something that the sinners of this world ought to rejoice in. Why? Because while the gods of this world lack integrity, the God of the Bible has perfect integrity, and as a sinner that is the only judge I want to confront.

(3) By way of illustration, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains this glorious truth about God as follows: "How can God forgive and still remain God? - that is the question. The cross is the vindication of God. The cross is the vindication of the character of God. The cross not only shows the love of God more gloriously than anything else, it shows His righteousness, His justice, His holiness, and all the glory of His eternal attributes. They are all to be seen shining together there. If you do not see them all you have not seen the Cross."[33]

b. What necessitates the vindication of God?

The KJV unfortunately translates here, "the remission of sins that are past," whereas the NASB, similar to the NKJV, is more accurate, "He passed over the sins previously committed."

(1) In that the Old Testament sacrifices did not actually take away the believer's sin, true satisfaction for sin was obtained by Christ for transgressions which God temporarily set aside, overlooked.

(a) The Old Testament sacrifices were promissory notes, but the value they represented was that which Christ provided for on the cross.

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[33] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 3:20-4:25,* p. 106.

(b) While, according to Acts 17:29-31, God "winked at" KJV, or disregarded past sin, yet God's justice required that it be ultimately dealt with.

(c) In Hebrews 9:11-15, the Levitical offerings were not efficacious, but they were indicative of that which was to come.

(2) Hence, Jesus Christ is the only ground for any man's sin being forgiven, whether he live in the Old Testament or New Testament dispensations. Further, the Cross is the proof that God never overlooks sin in a final sense. Further, the Cross is the great proof that God requires from men a penalty for their sins, except they be paid for by Jesus Christ.

c. Why did God "temporarily disregard" man's sins?

It was "because in the forbearance of God" He set aside the sins previously committed. "Forbearance," ἀνοχή anochē, means "a holding back, endurance," or more technically "pretermission," and in context here, temporary suspension of wrath.

(1) In justice, God could have rightly and immediately judged the world as guilty and implemented the penalty, even with Adam and Eve; but He exercised self-restraint, tolerance towards man (Acts 14:16; 17:30; He proposed a plan that would manifest *both* his justice and grace (Gen. 3:15).

(2) Some might be tempted to interpret this restraint as indifference, but such an interpretation of history is utter folly as was the case during the time of Noah (Gen. 6:3; I Pet. 3:20), even as it is today. We have only to consider the sudden intervention of the Cross to prove this. Sin has *not* ultimately been overlooked.

(3) We may take God's mercy freely, but never lightly. Hence, in 2:4-5 is the warning: "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

d. By way of application, Lloyd-Jones sums up this astonishing gospel exposition by Paul. "Test your view of the Cross. Where does this statement about 'declaring' His righteousness and so on, come into your thinking? Is it something that you just skip over and say: 'Well, I don't know what that means. All I know is, that God is love and that He forgives.' But you should know the meaning of this. This is an essential part of the glorious Gospel. On Calvary God was making a way of salvation so that you and I might be forgiven. But He had to do so in a way that will leave His character inviolate, that will leave His eternal consistency still absolute and unbroken. Once you begin to look at it like that, you see that this is the most tremendous, the most glorious, the most staggering thing in the universe and in the whole of history. . . . 'When I survey the wondrous cross . . .', says

Isaac Watts, but you do not see the wonder of it until you really do survey it in the light of this great statement of the Apostle. God was declaring publicly once and for ever His eternal justice and His eternal love. Never separate them, for they belong together in the character of God."[34]

4. Through Jesus Christ, God is *just* toward mankind, v. 26a.

Here Paul is even more assertive concerning the vindication of the holy character of God as it relates to the saving of unholy man. For the Apostle, this is a moral universe because the moral God reigns, and in spite of the presence of widespread immorality on earth, this same God deigns, at great personal sacrifice, to save man while maintaining His integrity.

a. For emphasis, Paul restates the latter half of v. 25.

It again concerns *why* Jesus Christ, "the Son of God . . . our Lord" 1:4, was a necessary "propitiatory sacrifice" for sinners to be justified, redeemed.

(1) "To declare [emphatically]" means, as in v. 25, to "show forth," or "manifest, clearly reveal, exhibit" the justice of God.

(2) "at this time," means "in the *now* time," cf. "but now" v. 21. God's temporary disregard of sin is past; His perfect righteousness or justice, His settlement concerning man's condition, has *now* been manifest. Thus the coming of Christ when he did was truly momentous.

(3) "His righteousness," means "His justice" in dealing with a sinful world, that is His just condemnation of sinners *and* His just salvation of sinners.

b. Why does Paul declare that God is just?

Because the God of Israel has revealed Himself as being perfectly just, and in the face of sin in the world, this revelation may be in question. Further, as a sinner man's understanding of God's justice is limited and needs explanation; in his guilty condition he sees only the condemnation that is his due. But there is another aspect of God's justice that the sinner ought to wonder at/

c. What does it mean that God is just through Jesus Christ?

(1) It means that *all* the sins of God's children must be dealt with completely; there is no lesser standard for them. It also means that *all* the sins of unbelievers will be finally dealt with (Heb. 9:27; Rom. 1:18; 2:1-3). Hence all and every sin will be dealt with; God's character demands it.

(2) It means that *all* seeming injustice in the world will be finally sorted out by God (Ps. 73:3, 17-19), that purity and righteousness shall prevail, that the King of righteousness shall reign (I Cor. 15:25).

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[34] Ibid., pp. 107-8.

(3) It means that *my* sin and unrighteousness must be dealt with. Justice for others demands justice for myself. Either my sin will be judged by God in myself or in an acceptable substitute (I Pet. 3:18). But I cannot escape the justice of God.

5. Through Jesus Christ, God is *the justifier* of mankind, v. 26b.

The order here is not insignificant. While God is unfailingly just, the astonishing good news is that He, at the same time, is a justifier, a pardoner, a Magistrate in the heavens who, in impeccably upholding the law, yet bountifully shows mercy to the guilty prisoner at the bar.

a. The God of the Bible is fully just and fully gracious.

While a God of justice without grace leads the guilty sinner to despair, so a God of grace without justice leads the guilty sinner to lack confidence. Further, a God who is partially just and partially gracious is not God at all. Rather, the guilty sinner needs a God who is both fully just and fully gracious, and this is the God of the Bible. There is no other God like this.

(1) God is both merciful and righteous (Ps. 85:9-13).

(2) God is both righteous and a Savior (Isa. 45:21).

(3) God is both righteous and a justifier (Isa. 53:11).

(4) God is both just and a Savior (Zech. 9:9).

(5) God is both righteous and forgiving (I John 1:9).

b. But how can it be known that God is fully just and fully gracious?

By looking at the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, this historic display, especially as described here in vs. 25-26.

(1) Look again at Zechariah 9:9. Who is it that manifests both justice and salvation? It is, "your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey."

(2) When does this King come so riding? On the Sunday commencing Passion Week (Matt. 21:1-11). The following Friday he shall be made an offering for sin, suffering justice yet manifesting abundant grace.

(3) Here is the most amazing of transactions, the most emancipating of all terrestrial events, the most glorious of all truths, that God Himself meted out the full fury of His justice upon His only beloved Son, that the believing sinner might be justified by a just God (I John 4:10). So Lloyd-Jones comments: "Somebody has described this [vs. 25-26] as the 'acropolis of the Christian faith'. We can be certain that there is nothing that the human mind

can ever consider which is in any way as important as these two verses. The history of the Church shows very clearly that they have been the means that God the Holy Spirit has used to bring many a soul from darkness to light, and to give many a poor sinner his first knowledge of salvation and his first assurance of salvation."[35] Isaac Watts describes this gospel truth as follows in his paraphrase of Psalm 85:10.

> Mercy and truth on earth are met,
> Since Christ the Lord came down from Heaven;
> By His obedience so complete,
> Justice is pleased and peace is given.

c. But for this truth to be savingly known, it must be personally embraced.

It is not enough to know that God is both righteous and gracious, just and a justifier toward sinners. As sinners, even Satan and his angels know this. Rather this truth must be personally appropriated. It must be known and experienced, according to God's specific and individual purpose, that He is both just and a justifier toward *me* (Gal. 2:20).

(1) That God will finally be just with *me*, few men will doubt even though they consider such a confrontation with dread. But how can *I* know that He will also be gracious and merciful toward *me* (Hab. 3:2)? The answer comes at the end of v. 26 where God is, "just and the justifier of *the one who has faith in Jesus*."

(2) To believe in Jesus is to put to your account his righteousness, while he took to his account your unrighteousness. It is this transaction that is alone acceptable to the only true and living God. To not believe in Jesus is to suffer personally God's justice for your sins, and supremely that of your unbelief.

C. THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH EXCLUDES BOASTING, 3:27-31

Man is a natural and extravagant "boaster," proud to the core, that is his fallen nature leads him to boast in himself rather than God. Notable instances take us back to the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:4) and on to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30). However, man's universal claim to autonomy wedded to his penchant for religion leads him to audaciously boast before God whether he be an aristocrat or commoner. That is, in his religion he attempts to impress with performance; he does not deny the need of God's help, but like the boasting Pharisee he deceitfully declares, "God, *I thank Thee* [emphasis added] that I am not like other people" (Luke 18:11). In the name and cover of religion, this man boasts in his own righteousness. This attitude is precisely that which Paul has been addressing in Romans, and now denounces in terms of the gospel he has just expounded in precise detail. Such denunciation then asserts the antithesis of boasting in human righteousness which is justification by faith in Christ's righteousness.

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[35] Ibid., p. 95.

1. It excludes boasting in law works, vs. 27-28.

The transition of emphasis here is well described by Moo. "In 3:27-4:25, Paul expounds the great theological thesis of 3:21-26. Or to be more accurate, he expounds one key element in that thesis. For we hear no more in 3:27-4:25 about atonement, or the demonstration of God's righteousness, or the provision for sins under the Old Covenant. Rather, Paul concentrates on the vital theme stated in v. 22: 'the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.' Faith is the topic in every paragraph of this section of the letter."[36]

a. Through the law of faith, v. 27.

In typical rhetorical style Paul asks, "Therefore, where is the boasting?" that is, what place has the self-congratulatory fulfillment of "the works of the law" according to 3:20? It has been "shut out" or "excluded." In fact the whole concept has been annihilated!

(1) The principle of law.

(a) Here again we see Paul's flexible use of νόμος nomos, since on both occasions in this verse it is better translated "principle," "basis," or "rule."[37] Hence, in strongly affirming that "boasting" in law-works has been eliminated through "faith in Jesus" v. 26, he then raises the question as to the "principle" upon which this elimination of boasting is based. Do law-works exclude boasting?

(b) The answer is an emphatic "No!" since "law-works" inherently stimulate boasting; they are offered for personal praise and reward. Further, at the root of man's sinfulness is his delight in boasting. In fact to boast in law-works is to increase transgression, not eliminate it; such conceit is a denial of man's dependence and the necessity of God saving power.

(2) The principle of faith.

(a) However, the "principle of faith," by its very nature, does eliminate the human tendency to boast in human righteousness since faith is dependent; it looks away from human ability to divine ability; it denies human righteousness and rests upon divine righteousness.

(b) John Murray well describes the works/faith antipathy as follows: "We are required to ask how the principle of faith is so rigidly exclusive of and antithetical to works of law in the matter of justification. The only answer is the specific quality of faith as opposed to that of works. Justification by works always finds its ground in that which the person is and does; it is always oriented to that consideration of virtue

[36] Moo, *Romans*, p. 243.

[37] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 185; William G. T. Shedd, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 85.

attaching to the person justified. The specific quality of faith is trust and commitment to another; it is essentially extraspective and in that respect is the diametric opposite of works. Faith is *self*-renouncing; works are *self*-congratulatory. Faith looks to what God does; works have respect to what we are. It is this antithesis of principle that enables the apostle to base the complete exclusion of works upon the principle of faith. Only faith has relevance within that gospel delineated in verses 21-26. And, if faith, then it is 'without works of law'".[38]

b. Through justification by faith, v. 28.

Here, more definitively, the "principle of faith" described in v. 27 is set forth. This is Paul's summary statement concerning the essence of the gospel with the word "faith [alone]" being the key term.

(1) The assertion of the gospel, "we."

"We reckon," may allude to Paul's identification of this fundamental gospel truth with that which the whole of Scripture has maintained since the Fall, including the proof soon to be offered in 4:1-9 concerning Abraham and David. This inclusive identification may also involve apostolic agreement.

(2) The object of the gospel, "man."

As has already been asserted in 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:9, 22, and immediately following in 3:29-30, that God does not discriminate within a universe of sinners on the basis of race, whether Jew or Gentile, or sex, age, education, etc. The human race is defiled and the gospel is for the defiled human race.

(3) The righteous kernel of the gospel, "justification."

In this key gospel verse, δικαιόω, dikaioō, refers to the necessity of a man or woman having a righteous or holy relationship with God. This is man's supreme problem on a vertical level, and God's gracious remedy is to provide a gratis righteousness, to declare a believing sinner to be righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ's righteous atonement.

(4) The hinge of the gospel, "faith."

(a) "Faith" attaches the sinner to his atoning Savior; it is linkage. Faith in itself does not save, only faith's saving object. Shedd illustrates: "Faith justifies in the same sense that eating nourishes. It is not the act of mastication, but the food, that sustains life; and it is not the act of believing, but Christ's death, which delivers from the condemnation of the law."[39]

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[38] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 123.

[39] Shedd, *Romans*, p. 86.

(b) Luther translated here, "faith alone," and while he added a word not mentioned in the original, he added nothing to the *sense*. Thus the *meaning* of his translation was entirely correct. Roman Catholic objection at this point overlooks the fact that Origen, Theodoret, Hilary, Basil, Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Bernard, and Theophylact, also added the word "alone" here.[40]

(5) The antithesis of the gospel, "works of the law."

The "works of the law," while most clearly illustrated within Judaism, yet refers more inclusively to any human endeavor that is intended to impress God, as a basis for bargaining with God. But man's epidemic pride is totally repudiated here, for it in fact concerns what are only putrid and corrupt offerings, filthy rags (Is. 64:6). So the Christian responds as Isaac Watts has written.

When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

However, while the gospel utterly excludes "the works of the law" as a basis of justification, yet it demands fruit that *authenticates* "faith alone" or "sola fide" (Eph. 2:8-10; Jas. 2:24).

2. It excludes racial boasting, vs. 29-30.

Paul as a Jew, anticipates the thinking of alarmed Jews concerning v. 28, namely that if justification with the one and only God comes solely through faith *alone*, then racial distinctives including circumcision are eliminated, and the door for salvation is wide open. Their conclusion is correct; their alarm is unwarranted. Man in general over the ages has tended to maintain belief in national and localized gods, that is the gods of the Romans, Greeks, Assyrians, Egyptians (Ex. 12:12), even the God of the Hebrews (Ex. 9:1, 13; 10:3), which tend to have localized features, such as a temple, etc. Thus God is marginalized. But Paul recognizes the incongruity of this tendency, especially amongst the Hebrews who jealously claim that there is only one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jerusalem.

a. One God owns all races, v. 29.

(1) More literally we read, "Jews only is He the God of?" "Jews" here is in an emphatic position. The obvious answer is "No," and the Jewish Scriptures indicate this (I Kings 8:41-43; Ps. 96:1-13; 98:2-3, 7-9).

(2) "Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes of the Gentiles." The principle of faith has already established this truth. Though as Murray adds, "this

[40] Moo, *Romans*, p. 250n., quoting the Catholic scholar, Fitzmyer.

ethnic universalism of the gospel must have dawned also upon the Gentiles with emotions of joy and wonderment."[41]

b. One God justifies all races, v. 30.

(1) Paul's argument here takes the boasted, exclusive monotheism of Judaism and turns it upon itself in a way that surely left the Jew scratching his head concerning a significant truth he had not given the attention it demands.

(2) Thus, "God is one," writes Paul. Biblically and logically this is an essential characteristic of God, as the Jews jealously appreciated. He explains in I Corinthians 8:4-6, "We know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one [Deut. 6:4]. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many Lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we existed through Him." Further, if there is a plurality of Gods, then none can be God.

(3) Therefore, all of creation and the human races in particular are under this one God's dominion and care. Hence this *one* God justifies the "circumcised" (Jew) and the "uncircumcised" (Gentile) without regard to racial distinction. For, "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for 'Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved' (Joel 2:32)" (Rom. 10:12-13).

(4) By way of application, here then is a revelation of the large-heartedness of God which Isaac Watts has well described.

> People and realms of every tongue
> Dwell on His love with sweetest song;
> And infant voices shall proclaim
> Their young hosannas to His name.
>
> Where He displays His healing power,
> Death and the curse are known no more;
> In Him the tribes of Adam boast
> More blessings than their father lost.

3. It establishes the law, v. 31.

So Paul anticipates the objection of the exclusive Jew who enquires as to the remaining role of the law in the light of this teaching; it seems to have been eliminated.

a. The law is not nullified, v. 31a.

(1) "Therefore do we nullify law through the faith?" But what does Paul mean here by the term "law" in its emphatic position? While it can mean Scripture

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[41] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 124.

broadly speaking as in 3:19, yet in 4:3 Paul asks, "What does the Scripture [not law] say?" Rather it is the demand of the Mosaic law that is inherent in the expression "works of the law" in 3:28.[42] It is the ethical imperative of the decalogue and pentateuch.

(2) So Paul vigorously denies that the ethical essence of the law of Moses has been "nullified,"cf. 3:3 where the same καταργέω, katargeō, is used. If the moral heart of the law has been "disqualified, voided," then God's character has been "disqualified, voided" as well. His μὴ γένοιτο, mē genoito, could be paraphrased, "perish the thought!"

b. Faith establishes the law, v. 31b.

There are two aspects of this "establishment of the law," and both have convincing aspects.

(1) In terms of immediate context, the gospel of justification by faith, which is about to be supported in the following chapter from the examples of Abraham and David, is the fulfilment of the law by means of Christ's satisfactory obedience to it, both active and passive. Thus in Matthew 5:17 the Savior declares: "I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill [the law]." Lloyd-Jones gives seven reasons in support of this point of view, declaring, "I am asserting that this way of salvation and redemption, above everything else, honors the Law in all ways."[43]

(2) On the other hand, while the law is not nullified by means of "the faith," that same "the faith" being the body of saving gospel truth, it in fact brings about the true fulfillment of the law, it draws forth, through the Holy Spirit, the righteousness of the law in authentic Christian embodiment.[44] The critical passage in this respect is 8:3-4, where "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Lloyd-Jones makes no reference to this passage, though in his subsequent sermon on these verses he does maintain, contrary to Hodge, that Paul here is emphasizing "righteousness imparted" and not simply "righteousness imputed."[45]

(3) To sum up, Paul indicates in Romans that the power and dynamic of the gospel fulfill the essence of the law *by* Christ and *in* the believer. Both are

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[42] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 3:20-4:25*, p. 141; Moo, *Romans*, pp. 252-5; Morris, *Romans*, p. 189; Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 126; Shedd, *Romans*, p. 88

[43] Ibid., pp. 142-9.

[44] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 254-5.

[45] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 7:1-8:4*, p. 304. "In other words, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us in two ways. The righteousness of Christ is 'imputed' to us; but, thank God, the righteousness of God is also 'imparted' to us. The second is the process of sanctification which the Apostle begins to deal with in v. 5. . . . There is the imparted as well as the imputed righteousness. We have to insist upon this exposition, as against Dr. Hodge, because of the immediate context."

certainly true,[46] though the question remains as to whether both are involved in the meaning of v. 31 here. In the simple terms of 1:16, the Lord Jesus Christ "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

[46] Morris, *Romans*, p. 189.

CHAPTER VI

ROMANS 4:1-25 - THE OLD TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION OF THE GOSPEL

In the light of Paul's comprehensive exposition of the gospel up to this juncture in 3:21-31, it now becomes abundantly clear that the essential thrust of this message is that of justification through faith alone. The proof of this assertion is the consequent substance of the section that now confronts us. Here the thrust of 3:24, 28-30 is upheld as a timeless gospel principle, contrary to a perverse legalistic gospel so dominant in Israel, that has been foundational since the commencement of the Hebrew nation. It is also evident that while the Apostle has a primary calling to the Gentiles, yet he appreciates a secondary emphasis which the Lord Jesus described to Ananias: "He [Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings *and* [emphasis added] the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Romans confirms this secondary concern, not only in 1:16; 2:1-20 and substantially in chapters 9-11, but also here in 4:1-25. To the Jewish mind, preeminently in Abraham, as well as in David, we have two of the most impressive faithful models, and these decidedly uphold Paul's gospel.

A. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ILLUSTRATED, VS. 1-8.

The supreme ongoing concern of Paul is how any human being, any thorough sinner, any earthly inhabitant, might acceptably stand "just before God," 2:13 (cf. 4:2; I Thess. 3:13). Hence we are not dealing here with a mere peripheral matter but that which concerns the most vital interests of a human soul and the totality of the human race. Therefore a comprehensive perspective is necessary that is based upon the fact of there being only one God over all, 3:30. The expectation then is that this God's gospel will have a changeless dimension that is not temporally or racially restricted. The racial aspect has already been dealt with, 3:29-30, and now the temporal perspective is considered which causes Paul to look back 2000 years to the basis of Abraham's standing before God.

1. Abraham was justified by faith, vs. 1-5.

Humanly speaking, or "according to the flesh" as Paul puts it in v. 1, Judaism has its origin in one man, that is Abraham, a Mesopotamian nomad of pagan ancestry originating from "Ur of the Chaldeans" (Gen. 11:27-32). As the father of the faithful, the destiny of the individual Jew was rooted in him, according to the boast, "We have Abraham for our father"(Isa. 51:1-2; Matt. 3:9; Luke 1:73; John 8:39). However, by means of accumulating tradition, extravagant and absurd legends became part of Hebrew life.[1] One significant aspect of this fanciful adulation was the merit of Abraham that was not only intrinsic, but also transferable. Thus, if anyone was justified by means of his own good works, it undoubtedly was Abraham; so his seed was to follow in these same meritorious steps! In *The Apocrypha*, Abraham is

[1] "The improbable and often unworthy and even grotesque features of Abraham's career and character in the later rabbinical *midrashim* are of no religious significance, beyond the evidence they afford of the way Abraham's unique position and piety were cherished by the Jews." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, I, p. 21.

described as sinless: "Therefore thou, O Lord, God of the righteous, hast not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against thee" (Manasseh 8). Further, he was blessed on account of his obedience rather than faith (Sirach, 44:19-22).[2] Edersheim comments, "'The merits of the Fathers,' is one of the commonest phrases in the mouth of the Rabbis. Abraham was represented as sitting at the gate of Gehenna, to deliver any Israelite who otherwise might have been consigned to its terrors. . . . In fact, the ships on the sea were preserved through the merit of Abraham; the rain descended on account of it."[3]

a. His standing in the flesh, vs. 1-2.

Paul seems to primarily have Jews in mind when he enquires about "*our* forefather according to the *flesh*." Abraham is τὸν προπάτορα, tōn propatora, Greek, "the forefather," according to carnal generation, in contrast with spiritual faith generation in v. 11, and the question therefore arises as to what his natural seed in particular can discover from investigating his life as written in the Word of God.

(1) Question: "Is it recorded that Abraham boasted in his flesh *before* God?" v. 1.

In other words, "Laying aside the 'the tradition of the elders' (Matt. 15:1-2) and the 'ancestral traditions' (Gal. 1:14), what fundamentally was the ground of Abraham's status before God? Did he offer personal works as the ground of his justification?"

(2) Answer: "No, for it is recorded that he did not boast of anything for personal justification *before* God." v. 2.

In other words, "Hypothetically, if Abraham is described in Scripture as being justified on account of his works, then he may well have had something to boast about in a given situation, perhaps before man. But that particular situation could not have involved his justification *before* God."

b. His standing by faith, v. 3.

What is recorded in Scripture is the primacy of faith in the life of Abraham. Hence the quotation of Genesis 15:6 in this regard is of great importance to Paul's argument, as in vs. 9, 22, 23, Galatians 3:6-7, for the following reasons.

(1) It is the first time that the word "believe" is used in the Bible., and it is closely associated with a "reckoned [not earned] righteousness,"[4] as the LXX use of λογίζομαι, logizomai, supports.

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[2] *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, ed. Bruce Metzger, pp. 187-8, 219.

[3] Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, I, p. 271.

[4] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 261.

(2) In the context of Abraham's life, it falls within that period of his conversion whereby the covenant promise of God was initially given (Gen. 12:1-9) and cut" (Gen. 15:7-21).

(3) The context of Genesis 15:6 indicates that Abraham was justified through faith's saving object, not the objectification of faith. We read that, "the word of the LORD [Jehovah] came to Abraham in a vision" (Gen. 15:1). Thus his faith was not in faith, nor was God pleased with the mere act of faith; rather, his faith was focused upon Jehovah alone being convinced that His sovereignty and integrity would certainly accomplish what He had promised. Hence we read that, "he [Abraham] believed in the LORD" (Gen. 16:6). As a result God was pleased that Abraham completely trusted Him for salvation. Thomas Olivers writes:

> He by Himself hath sworn, I on His oath depend:
> I shall on eagles' wings upborne, to heaven ascend;
> I shall behold His face, I shall His power adore,
> And sing the wonders of His grace for evermore.

c. His standing illustrated, vs. 4-5.

In vs. 4-8 Paul substantiates the key verse of Genesis 15:6, first by means of a secular commercial illustration and then subsequently with the case of David. The essential contrast remains between justification before God by means of either self-generated *works*, or *faith* alone, by "those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification," vs. 24-25.

(1) *Works* demand compensation, v. 4.

(a) This commercial illustration postulates a person, "the one working" (present participle), who is continuously laboring according to an employment contract. Hence the "salary" is based on "reckoning" at the end of the day and not according to a "grace" χάρις, charis, settlement, but what is "due" or "owed" or "earned." Thus the relationship of the employer to the employee is one of obligation. Hence Morris rightly comments, "It might fairly be said that Genesis does not speak of God as owing anything to Abraham or of Abraham as meriting anything from God, so that it was not works that saved the patriarch."[5]

(b) By way of application, this contractual depiction represents the most common misunderstanding of a relationship between man and his Creator, namely that of God being obliged to trade acceptance and heavenly residency for proffered merit, that is neighborliness, philanthropy, humanitarianism, sincere effort, etc. But what arrogance this represents on man's part who fails to recognize the corrupt and tawdry nature of his offerings as well as the infinite holy demands that God has revealed in His Word (Isa. 48:1; 64:6).

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[5] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans,* p. 197-8.

(2) *Faith* receives grace, v. 5.

(a) While the preceding illustration is drawn upon, yet the frame of reference changes from the secular to the sacred. Thus, when Paul writes of "the one not working" (present participle), he is not, as Morris puts it, "canonizing laziness"[6] in a secular sense but rather transposing the commercial scene into that of the right response of the sinner toward God. Here the analogy of v. 4 finds concrete fulfilment.

(b) However the honest sinner is to be "not working," but "believing on the one justifying the ungodly" (three present participles). Saving faith is ongoing as is justification (Heb. 7:25). This principle is well illustrated in the life of Abraham who believed initially (Gen. 15:6; Heb. 11:8-10), and continued to believe (Rom. 4:18-21; Heb. 11:17-19). This is the life of faith. Again the contrast is between *works* offered by the self-righteous and faith offered by the "*ungodly.*" Who are the "*ungodly*"? They are like any other member of the human race, but distinguished by the fact that they know and frankly confess what they are in the sight of God, such as did Job (Job 25:5-6), David (Ps. 51:3-5), Peter (Luke 5:8), Paul (I Tim. 1:15-16).

(c) The conclusion then is that for the ungodly, just like Abraham, "his faith [alone] is reckoned as righteousness." Again, it is faith which has its object clearly described in vs. 24-25. Thus Christ's perfect righteousness is "reckoned," λογίζομαι, logizomai, or "rightly accounted" to the believing sinner; God as Judge brings down the gavel in heaven's court with a verdict of "not guilty" on the grounds of a righteous settlement of the sinner's sin by means of an acceptable substitute's "account payment."

(d) By way of application, the essence of the biblical gospel is embodied in Paul's declaration that God "justifies the ungodly." This is the very antithesis of the obligatory relationship between God and man so universally believed as described in the comments on v. 4. One of Jonathan Edwards' most notable sermons is based on v. 5 here and is titled *Justification by Faith Alone* in which he states: "When it is said that God justifies the ungodly, it is absurd to suppose that our godliness, take some goodness in us, is the ground of our justification; as, when it is said that Christ gave sight to the blind, to suppose that sight was prior to, and the ground of, that act of mercy in Christ; or as, if it should be said that such an one by his bounty has made a poor man rich, to suppose that it was the wealth of this poor man that was the ground of this bounty towards him, and was the price by which it was procured."[7]

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[6] Ibid., p. 198.

[7] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, I, p. 622. It is significant that while Edwards also describes his experience of opposition to his proclamation of this doctrine, yet this sermon, the text here being an expanded form, was "remarkably blessed" as "God's work wonderfully brake forth amongst us [at

2. David was justified by faith, vs. 6-8.

The case of David is confirmation of the case of Abraham, though perhaps in a more obvious sense since this king of Israel was such a conspicuous sinner. Justification by faith is not explicitly mentioned. However, the emphasis upon a "reckoned/imputed righteousness" as opposed to meritorious "self-righteousness" leads to the inevitable conclusion as Murray states it: "When Paul speaks of God as 'imputing righteousness' v. 6, he must be using this expression as synonymous with justification. Otherwise his argument would be invalid. For his thesis is justification by faith without works. Hence to 'impute righteousness without works' is equivalent to justification without works."[8]

a. His blessing is freely reckoned righteousness v. 6.

The quotation of penitent David in Psalm 32:1-2a describes his blessed relief when just condemnation, imposed by God's heavy righteous hand, vs. 3-4, is relieved through the non-imputation of guilt (forgiveness) cf. v. 5, and the covering of his sin (imputation of righteousness). Here the essence of David's bliss is righteous standing before God on the basis of pure grace and not human toil, cf. v. 7. As Augustus Toplady has writen:

Not the labors of my hands
  Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
  Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
  Thou must save, and Thou alone.

b. His blessing is Scriptural justification, vs. 7-8.

Paul's quotation of Psalm 32:1-2b from the LXX is commonly agreed to have been David's joyous response, cf. v. 11, to that forgiveness he received from God following his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. Such a setting in the Writings of the Old Testament, in addition to the witness of Abraham in the Law, only enhances the argument of Paul that faith alone in God's saving mercy has always been the repentant sinner's only hope.

(1) Blessedness in transgressions forgiven, v. 7a.

"Lawless deeds" are transgressions of God's revealed righteousness, especially those which are inscripturated, and not simply the Ten Commandments. But the man who freely receives that smile from the pardoning God he has offended is truly blessed, and sings with Samuel Davies:

Northampton], and souls began to flock to Christ, as the Savior in whose righteousness alone they hoped to be justified," p. 620.

[8] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 134.

In wonder lost with trembling joy
We take the pardon of our God;
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

(2) Blessedness in sins covered, v. 7b.

The parallelism with v. 7a suggests a similar truth, another aspect of God's dealing with sin which involves it being concealed from His view, and thus not a source of divine aggravation. Of course implicit here is the covering of Christ's atonement which Isaiah 61:10 describes. Thus Toplady appropriately writes:

A debtor to mercy alone
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring;
The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.

(3) Blessedness in sin not chargeable, v. 8.

Negatively speaking, and reflective of 8:33-34, when transgressions and sins are hid from view having been covered, then there is no possibility (double negative) that God will condemn sin (singular). Thus happy is the man who worships God as a pardoning rather than a condemning Judge. So Charles Wesley has written:

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

B. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH EXCLUDES CIRCUMCISION, VS. 9-12.

That the principle of salvation by grace through "faith alone" has already been forcefully presented is abundantly obvious. The proven universality of sin has called for the response of faith alone, in Jesus Christ's satisfactory atonement, by Jewish and Gentile sinners alike, 3:9-19, 22-23, 29-30. In this context, circumcision has already been mentioned, that is its significance *when* heart circumcision is the case, 2:28-29. However, the Jew's trust merely in carnal circumcision is invalidated when lawless living abounds, 2:25. But now, in continuity with the teaching that Abraham was justified through faith alone and by implication is the father of all believers, and in anticipation of the Jewish insistence that physical circumcision was a distinctive medium of saving grace for a select people only, another powerful

argument is offered which must have severely jolted traditional Jewish teaching. From a logical point of view, the zealous Jew is bound to have objected that if faith alone saved Abraham, then his circumcision was of no vital saving importance.

It must be assumed that this crucial gospel teaching in v. 3 and here in vs. 9-10 is relatively new to Paul, that is only understood subsequent to his conversion. Hence, from where did this enlightenment come? The most likely explanation is that it resulted from the special biblical teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ himself (Acts 22:12-14; Gal. 1:11-12).

1. The insignificance of circumcision, vs. 9-10.

Circumcision, περιτομή, peritomē, is literally "a cutting around" of the male seed (descendant) organ, and was first instituted by God for Abraham and his seed or descendants (Gen. 17:10-13). The significance is that the succession of Hebrew males visibly indicated their incorporation into the covenant first given to Abraham, especially the promise of Genesis 12:2, 7; 13:15; 15:18, and in particular 17:8-11 where God declares, "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; *and I will be their God* [emphasis added]."

Thus circumcision was a "sign" and "seal" of the Abrahamic covenant, 4:11, that Jeremiah later acknowledged had become an outward form that bore no relationship with a circumcised heart (Jer. 9:25-26). Thus, the mere rite became a mechanistic guarantee of a right relationship with God. By the time that Paul writes, circumcision has become a ritual that, *ex opere operato*, guarantees salvation, akin to the contemporary mistaken belief of some in baptismal regeneration. Thus Jewish tradition at the time of Christ maintained that physical circumcision ensured entrance into heaven, but only destruction awaited the uncircumcised.

a. Abraham's faith alone gained righteousness, v. 9.

"This blessedness [David describes in v. 8]," of being truly right with God, "[does it come] on the circumcision alone or the uncircumcision as well?" This rhetorical question, which Paul postulates, arises in the light of the following reminder of the implications of Genesis 15:6. Actually the answer has been made exceedingly clear in 2:29-30. But the Apostle, knowing he has shocked the Jew, wishes to anticipate his expected objection and face the issue of circumcision head on.

b. Abraham's faith alone preceded circumcision, v. 10.

Now follows a rhetorical setup that leads to a devastating putdown. The question is raised as to *when*, in relation to his circumcision, was Abraham "reckoned as righteous" according to Genesis 15:6? The obvious biblical answer is that Abraham's circumcision in Genesis 17:9-14 followed at least fourteen years *after* his justification by faith; thus Abraham was saved *before* he was circumcised. Therefore salvation is solely by faith and thus circumcision has no saving significance.

2. The significance of circumcision, vs. 11-12.

In a strict sense, Paul does not here declare that circumcision has been invalidated on account of *sola fide*. Rather he establishes the true relationship that existed between Abraham's faith and his circumcision. When rightly understood, they are not mutually exclusive but rather related according to cause and effect. As Murray states, "Paul did not make the capital mistake of thinking that, because it [circumcision] had no efficiency in creating faith or the blessedness attendant upon faith, it had therefore no religious significance or value."[9]

a. It signifies the blessing of righteousness by faith for the uncircumcised, v. 11.

(1) It is a sign and seal.

"Sign" here is in the emphatic position, σημεῖον, sēmeion, meaning that which indicates, points or directs toward, cf. John 20:30-31. "Seal" here is in parallel with "sign," σφραγίς, sphragis, except that it adds the meaning of authentication, confirmation. Thus circumcision pointed back to and endorsed "the righteousness of the faith which he [Abraham] had while uncircumcised."

(2) It aligns Abraham with the uncircumcised.

For a people who so distinguished themselves from the Gentiles on the ground of circumcision, Paul's reasoned declaration that Abraham is the "father of all who believe without being circumcised " must have been shocking indeed to the Jew. Again, he is not denying the validity of circumcision in its rightful place as v. 12 indicates, but the primacy of faith alone incorporates both circumcised and uncircumcised into the body of the faithful children of God. Thus the Gentile, through faith alone, becomes an heir of a "reckoned righteousness," and equally as acceptable as the Jew!

b. It signifies the blessing of righteousness by faith for the circumcised, v. 12.

But in line with 3:1-2, the Jew as a physical descendent of Abraham with physical signification of this relationship retains the claim that God is "the father of [the] circumcision," but *not* exclusively.

(1) It is a sign and seal.

For the true Jew, circumcision has significance when it points to preceding saving faith in God who justifies by faith alone. But to trust in physical circumcision as an instrumental means of justification is to believe in a false gospel (Gal. 5:2-6). In other words, the physical descendent of Abraham is a child of God through faith alone, and a true Jew through consequent circumcision.

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[9] Ibid., p. 137.

(2) It aligns Abraham with the circumcised.

Thus, like the Gentile people, Abraham is also the father of the Hebrew people. But the Hebrew can only claim this lineage by means of his having the same faith and reckoning that Abraham did according to Genesis 15:6. Thus a Jew is not a Jew principally because of circumcision or in any causal sense., but rather through justifying faith (Heb. 11:1-40).

c. By way of application, in terms of the history of Israel in the Old Testament, while God ordained certain outward forms of worship and ceremonies, yet He repeatedly gave priority to the sincere, humble, attitude of heart with regard to His worship above all else (I Sam. 1:22; Ps. 51:16-17; Isa. 1:10-15). When man falls from this priority he always tends to trust in external form, and in this regard the Jew's reliance on circumcision is a classic example. That is, man takes legitimate ordinances and perverts them into either means of salvation or magical rites.

For instance, both Christian ordinances have suffered in this way. Instead of water baptism witnessing to prior saving faith, it has become an instrumental means of salvation with regard to children and adults. Likewise the Lord's Table, instead of simply portraying the significance of Jesus Christ's one offering for sin, has become, especially within Roman Catholicism, a supernatural re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice at the hands of a distinctive priesthood.

But Paul draws us back to the heart of a true relationship with God which is faith, that is a heart for God that is wholly dependent and not contributory or trusting in external means. Of course such faith in not merely cerebral or confessional, but intensely heartfelt as sinner David describes, "O GOD, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly; my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1).

C. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH EXCLUDES THE LAW, VS. 13-15.

While the general focus remains upon the witness of the Old Testament to the only gospel of justification by faith, the specific emphasis pans from Abraham, David, and circumcision to the role of the *law* in contrast with *promise*, that is two opposing lines of reasoning and hope.

Promise	→	Covenant	→	Grace	→	Faith	→	Certain
Law	→	Pentateuch	→	Performance	→	Works	→	Conditional

1. Faith righteousness comes by promise, v. 13.

Obviously "promise" here refers to Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:5-21; 17:1-8, which, it has already been established in vs. 1-5, was embraced according to faith alone, exclusive of law performance. By its very nature, "promise" involves a sovereign, unilateral guarantee or covenant, that is ultimately based upon the immutable holy character of God. In Galatians 3:17-18 Paul has pointed out that the law could not

have been a justification factor since it was not given until 430 years after the giving of the Abrahamic covenant, that is the promise, "previously *ratified* [emphasis added]" by God. But here, through to v. 15, the argument is based upon the reasoned fact that law obedience and faith response, by their very nature, are mutually exclusive.

However, it is important for Paul that this antithesis here, which upholds faith alone, applies not only to Abraham but also to "his descendants" or "seed" who by definition in v. 16 are *all* Jewish and Gentile believers. Thus "the promise," that offered "righteousness" or "righteous standing," solicited the response of faith alone, not works, especially those of a Jewish character.

2. Faith righteousness is voided by the Law, vs. 14-15.

Law and faith cannot merge or mingle, as Judaism would maintain in a synergistic sense, and was the problem with the Judaizers that Paul opposed in Galatians 3:1-29. The gospel cannot be, "believe and behave," nor is it a mixture of "promise and performance."

a. The Law nullifies faith in the promise, v. 14.

(1) Earned heirship.

A supposition is offered. What if those who trust in personal performance and law keeping are the true recipients of the kingdom of God, that is heirship in the family of Abraham? What if law works gain acceptance with God? Then faith has been voided, not merely diluted, and the promise is useless, disabled, because of the element of human contribution that has been injected.

(2) Promise nullification.

Illustration. Suppose a kind and wealthy man promises to give a poor and needy man $100,000 purely on a gratuitous basis. However, the needy man insists on providing labor for the next five years to offset the free nature of the gift. If the wealthy man accepts these terms, which tend to impugn his kindness, then the original promise is nullified. What remains is a different, conditional type of agreement. The poor man can always claim a degree of worthiness.

b. The Law brings about wrath, v. 15.

(1) The purpose of the law.

Here the explanatory point is made that the person who boasts in lawkeeping is denying the purpose of the law, which is to bring man to wrath due to guilt, not reconciliation. The law is a condemning rather than a saving instrument, (3:20; cf. Gal. 3:19); the law is an excellent means of diagnosis, but it is impotent to heal.

(2) The absence of the law.

Thus law and *transgression*, παράβασις, parabasis, not *sin*, are indivisibly related. If there is no law, whether in the conscience or on tables of stone, then there is no knowledge of sin; there can be no transgression of the law if there is no law! But the law has obviously been given, and with great clarity to the Jews. The reason the law was given was to reveal transgression, lawlessness, with equal clarity, and this it effectively does.

D. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH INCLUDES ABRAHAM'S SEED, VS. 16-25.

The flow of thought continues. If the right role of the law is appreciated as stated in v. 15, then justification by faith alone becomes the operative gospel principle in a most exclusive and universal sense.

1. Abraham's seed all have grace through faith, vs. 16-17.

"Faith," as emphasized in vs. 3, 5, 9, 11-14, and in contradistinction to "law," is to be the essential and sole response of any sinner toward God.

a. He is the father of all who believe, v. 16.

As a father produces like kind, so Abraham has produced a race of believers who have identical faith. The children of Abraham have the vital birthmark of justifying faith that identifies them as being authentic and not illegitimate.

(1) The gospel through faith is of grace alone.

Why? Because it is of faith alone. Grace and faith harmonize because faith is works-renouncing in a total sense and grace can only operate where works are totally renounced. Faith cleaves to the complete work of Another while grace offers the complete work of Another. Faith confesses personal bankruptcy while grace provides full payment of the debt. Human works nullify this relationship.

(2) The gospel through faith ensures the promise for *all* the seed.

Why? Because faith does away with racial distinctions. Law concerns only Jewish devotees. But faith is applicable to Jew and Gentile; it guarantees and validates the provision of the gospel to "all the seed," παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι, panti tō spermati, Greek. But how can we be sure that "all the seed" is a universal term and not exclusively Jewish? What proof is there that Abraham is "the father of us all [*all* the saints, especially in Rome]"? V. 17 explains.

b. He is a father of many nations, v. 17.

Here Paul reaches a climax in his argument that leaves no room for doubt as to the absolute nature of salvation by faith alone that totally excludes human merit,

energy. or contribution. The work of redemption of man dead in sin is nothing less that a new creation, the sovereign provision of life for the dead.

(1) The Word of God confirms.

The quotation of Genesis 17:5, given in proof of the applicability of faith to "all the descendants"of Abraham as comprising Jew and Gentile in v. 16, has two important aspects. First, "many nations" clearly refers to the Gentiles as heirs , with the Jews, of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. 11:17-18). Second, "I have made [appointed] you," perfect tense, τέθεικα, tetheika, establishes the sovereignty of the grace that has accomplished such a saving work.

(2) The works of God confirm.

So Paul is moved to now qualify the object of Abraham's faith, namely "God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist [has no being]." The allusion clearly seems to be to God's creative works *ex nihilo* (Ps. 33:6-9; Isa. 41:4; 48:12; Jer. 51:15-16). So God has determined to make a people for himself, out of the pit so to speak (Isa. 51:1-2). Thus, "the justified bring nothing; they are as dead, as those who do not exist. But because of God's creative call they are brought to newness of life"[10] (Eph2:1-10). As W. T. Matson has written:

> Lord, I was dead, I could not stir
> My lifeless soul to come to Thee;
> But now, since Thou hast quickened me,
> I rise from sins's dark sepulcher.

2. Abraham's faith was in God's promise, vs. 18-21.

In religious society in general, even during the first century, the term "faith" is common currency that falls from the lips of "believers" of every stripe and hue. Hence, the fact that Paul has given this term primacy of place, with regard to the only saving gospel, requires that he qualify its meaning and distinguish it from everyday parlance. It is one thing to refer to the faith of Abraham such as in Genesis 15:6; it is quite another to understand the specific quality and purity of this faith. In particular, it is common for "faith" to be spoken of while at the same time "works" are incorporated into that definition. But here Paul makes it clear that the outworking of Abraham's faith was wholly exclusive of any performance on his part and singular in its constant trust in God.

a. He hoped against hope, v. 18.

(1) Literally we read, "Who beyond [and without] hope, [yet] on the ground of hope, he believed." Clearly "hope" and "faith" are closely related. "Hope" is not weak "faith," but visionary in a concrete sense. "Faith" believes the truth, but "hope" perceives its certain fulfilment. A prospective bride believes

[10] Morris, *Romans*, p. 209.

the truth of the promise of her fiancé to marry her. But beyond this belief is hope, that is the confident envisioning of the happy day of marital union.

(2) What specifically then was this faith/hope of Abraham?

It was not, "as a 'leap into the dark,' a completely baseless, almost irrational 'decision' — as Christian faith is pictured by some 'existentialist' theologians — but as a 'leap' from the evidence of the senses into the security of God's word and promise."[11] Physical evidence indicated no possibility of fathering even one descendant; but Scripture truth declared in Genesis 15:5 the certain prospect of a host of descendants, a multitude of nations. Of course, such an astonishing expectation still required an initial descendant.

b. He contemplated his weakness, v. 19.

(1) Abraham's faith was reasonable in that it weighed up all the options. When the promise came in Genesis 15:5, he "contemplated," κατανοέω, katanoeō, or clearly discerned his physical condition. The facts were that Sarah and he were well past child bearing age (Heb. 11:12), "having been dead" in this capacity, or "worn out, impotent,"[12] the perfect tense stressing the present situation originating from a past condition. But while Abraham was "as good as dead" humanly speaking, from God's perspective he was, on account of his faith, very useful. Such is the value of mature saints!

(2) The age of "a hundred years" draws upon Genesis 17:1, which is 13 years after the birth of Ishmael (Gen. 16:15-16) and 14 years after the "cutting of the covenant" in Genesis 15, and specifically v. 5 which Paul has just quoted. Thus Abraham's contemplation of his impotence and the triumph of his faith were protracted.

(3) Application. "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" (Ps. 78:19). Can God cause the waters of the Red Sea to Part? Can God bring forth water from a rock? Can God bring forth streams in the desert so that it blossoms as the rose? Can God cause the barren to rejoice? Can Jesus Christ calm a raging storm? If a man dies, shall he live again? The world in general and man by nature answers, "No!" Abraham believed God, that is *His clear revelation* and not mere speculation, in spite of human reasoning, and affirmed, "Yes!"

c. He grew strong in faith, v. 20.

(1) The unwavering faith.

"With respect to the promise of God, he did not waiver." That is, Abraham never doubted *the fulfilment of the covenant*, though he did consider a

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[11] Moo, *Romans,* pp. 282-3.

[12] Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 537.

variety of ways that he speculated about concerning the actual outworking of the promise.

(2) The trials of faith.

With respect to the testing of faith, Abraham entertained a carnal means, at the suggestion of Sarah, by which the covenant could be fulfilled (Gen.16:2-4), and yet he accepts God's rejection of his proposal (Gen. 17:18-19), especially at the birth of promised Isaac, named according to God's command (Gen. 21:1-3).

(3) The progress of faith.

Thus Abraham "grew strong in faith", but how? Just as "muscles [do] when weights are raised; holiness when temptation is successfully resisted. So Abraham's faith gained strength from its victory over the hindrance created by the conflict between God's promise and the physical evidence."[13] At the *same time* he was "giving glory to God," that is "glorying in God," or growing in his understanding and acknowledgment of God, that is his holiness, integrity, sovereignty, etc.

d. He believed God would perform, v. 21.

The climax of the faith/growth process is described in terms of the *manner* of Abraham's glorification of God, and it is wholly attitudinal and confessional.

(1) The character of the response.

The true worship of God here is essentially in "spirit and truth" (John 4:24), that is the soul fully comprehending the promise and expanding in its confidence in it. But further, the glorification of God by Abraham here is solely that of a "faith" response and exclusive of any performance. Once again, *sola fide* continues to be the justifying principle. God delights in such "faith-full," self-denying worship.

(2) The character of God.

In the final analysis, it is the nature and understanding of God that determines the ground and strength of assurance. If there is doubt as to God's *ability* to accomplish what He has promised, then there cannot be strong faith. But Abraham believed that "He [God] was able also to perform," that is He had "the power to do." In Hebrews 11:17-19, concerning the offering up of Isaac, Abraham "considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead."

3. Abraham's faith establishes gospel faith, vs. 22-25.

The whole thrust of Romans 4 thus far has been a doctrinal argument concerning the essence of the gospel as personified in the life of Abraham and his justification by faith

[13] Moo, *Romans,* pp. 285-6.

alone. Obviously this reasoning has the greatest force with those addressees who have highly esteemed Abraham and the Scripture record of his life. Of further significance has been the use of the word "reckon," λογίζομαι, logizomai, up to this point in vs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 of chapter 4, which concerns the centrality of the doctrine of imputation in a forensic sense, that is the "reckoning" of God's righteousness to Abraham on the ground of *sola fide*. Now in conclusion, this doctrine is pressed home by Paul upon his readers even to the present day, and for unmistakable emphasis this key word "reckon," again as a consequence of faith, is used three times in vs. 22-24. Thus, out of 19 uses of "reckon" in Romans, 11 occur in chapter 4!

a. His faith establishes justification, v. 22.

In returning to Genesis 15:6 introduced in v. 3 and repeated in v. 9, we have a grand QED, so to speak. The cumulative effect of this evidence leaves not the slightest room for any synthesis of faith and human performance in the minutest proportion, or of faith even being productive of justifying works through the enabling of grace. Since the Fall, this timeless gospel message has been both perverted by man-centered religion and preserved by faithful heralds of God. So Paul now exhorts his readers to continue to personally embrace and defend this glorious, soul emancipating, God glorifying gospel message.

b. Our faith establishes justification, vs. 23-25.

Truth has consequences; doctrine calls for duty; principles require practice; mentors are productive of models; so Abraham is the father of the truly faithful. Of course Hebrews 11 gives a broader perspective of this"faith" lineage that encompasses Abel onward to "David and Samuel and the prophets" v. 32.

(1) It is the faith of Abraham as a mentor, v. 23.

We are reminded that Genesis 15:6 was "inscripturated," aorist of γράφω, graphō, and thus the purpose of this record was obviously not merely for the benefit of Abraham or even his immediate generation (cf. I Cor. 10:8-11). Implicit here is the useful concreteness of the written Word of God when the perpetuation of vital truth is at stake; verbal tradition is too unreliable.

However, the vital matter for permanent documentation is that of the principle of "reckoning," that is a grace relationship through faith alone in an "able" God, v. 21, as distinct from a works relationship through participation with a cooperative God.

(2) It is the faith of Abraham that is to be modeled , v. 24a.

The Scripture record is for the saints at Rome, and beyond. They too inherit the same gospel blessings, a "reckoned" righteousness through faith, and the intimation is that such readers are to stand more solidly than ever upon this truth; their *sola fide* is to be more "*sola*" than ever before. There is the further intimation that the church at Rome should review its gospel witness and make sure that it is precisely what Paul here declares.

(3) It is faith in Abraham's God, v. 24b.

While the "reckoning" is God's gracious means of providing "the gift of righteousness" (5:17), faith alone is the sinner's self-renouncing acknowledgment and embrace of *sola gratia*. It is for this reason that Paul often objectifies faith, that is describes it as if it were a saving object itself (3:28-30; 4:16), nevertheless here he makes it clear that in reality it is faith's object that saves. The object of true saving faith is Abraham's God, who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and raises the ungodly from their death in sin, v. 17.

Note here that "those who are believing in Him [God]," present participle, describes the ongoing character of justification by faith, even as the Lord Jesus remains an ongoing intercessor (Heb. 7:25).

(4) It is faith in God's justification, vs. 24c-25.

In this conclusion of Paul's argument and exhortation, he moves from the occurence of the Lord Jesus' atonement to its purposes (cf. I Cor. 15:3). The truth to be believed in a personal sense is summarized in the fact of "Him [God the Father] who [bodily] raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." The purposes of this mighty happening are twofold as he now describes them, and according to Moo, the Apostle may well be alluding to Isaiah 53, and especially v. 11-12.[14] These truths comprise, according to Hebrew parallelism, both sides of the one gospel coin, namely sin remitted or forgiven through Christ's death (negative justification) and righteousness imputed or reckoned through Christ's resurrection (positive justification).

(a) Jesus Christ was delivered up for our transgressions.

The agent of delivery is, from the divine perspective and according to 8:32; Isaiah 53:4, 10, the Father; from the human perspective according to Isaiah 53:3 and Acts 4:27, it is both Jew and Gentile. Of course for the believer it is the ultimate truth that Jesus Christ was delivered up for *my* transgressions, *my* iniquities, *my* rebellion (Isa. 53:5-6), the result being *my* justification, *my* pardon, *my* reconciliation (Is, 53:11-12).

(b) Jesus Christ was raised up for our justification.

The parallelism here helps us appreciate that Paul was not formally, but rather in a complementary sense attributing the justification of the sinner to Jesus Christ's resurrection, 5:9. Stephen Charnock illustrates: "Not that we are formally justified by the resurrection of Christ, but that thereby God declared that whosoever believes in him should be justified upon that believing; for if Christ has not risen, there had been no certainty of the payment of the debt. In his death he pays the sum, as

[14] Ibid., pp. 288-9.

he is our surety; and in his resurrection he hath his *quietus est* [receipt of proof of payment] out of God's exchequer [treasury]."[15]

[15] Stephen Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock*, V, p. 442. Similarly refer to *The Complete Works of Thomas* Manton, XX, p. 499.

CHAPTER VII

ROMANS 5:1-21 - THE REIGN OF GRACE OVER THE REIGN OF SIN

THE transition from the preceding gospel teaching of 3:21-4:25 to 5:1-21 may be likened to that situation in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* where Christian, having entered through the narrow Wicket-gate, is told by Good-will, who represents Jesus Christ, "An open door is set before you, and no man can shut it."[1] In other words, having commenced the pilgrim journey as a new convert, the way ahead to the Celestial City is one of glorious hope and sustaining life built upon a gospel foundation. So at this point in Romans, there is much more to the Christian life than mere entrance, that is initial justification, as vital a truth as that may be. Thus 5:1 introduces us to assuring prospects that do not leave the gospel behind so to speak, but rather build upon that same gospel, especially its foundational roots, so that an enlarged perspective concerning its trunk and branches is productive of the fruit of sanctification.

Shedd concisely explains the transition here as follows: "St Paul has described the *necessity* of the righteousness by faith, in Romans 1:18-3:20; and the *nature* of it, including its harmony with the Old Testament, in 3:21-4:25. He now proceeds to describe the *effects* of this righteousness, in 5-8."[2]

Among faithful commentators, there is broad agreement that at this juncture, Romans proceeds with a distinct change of emphasis, though there is disagreement as to Paul's purposes in continuity with regard to the sections that comprise chapters 5-8. Recollection of II Peter 3:15-16 is appropriate here where this Apostle confesses the difficulty of understanding some of the respected Paul's teaching. A summary of this writer's understanding at this point is as follows. Romans 5 has continuity with Romans 8, while Romans 6-7 represent a hiatus that deals with several problems which Paul anticipates with regard to the implications of his teaching.[3] Romans 5:1-11 is somewhat introductory, though it breaks into two related gospel grounded sections, vs. 1-5 and 6-11, that conclude with an *a fortiori* confidence and exaltation in the saving life of Christ which is built upon "the reconciliation." Thus in vs. 12-21 this saving life is heralded as a fulness of reigning grace that is reflected by means of antitheses between "the one and the many" and "Adam and Christ" and "law and grace" and "death and life." The consequence of this sovereign grace and life is expounded in Romans 8 as an exultant, triumphant certitude, transcending temporal earthly trials, that the true believer is forever secure in the love of God.

Here we have reached the vortex of Paul's teaching that is arguably the most profound in Romans. Moreover there is probably no other place in Scripture where the necessity of an acutely focused and renewed mind cf. 12:2, employing logic and reasoning, is more necessary. The implication of this fact is that biblical Christianity is based upon precise, rational truth and not flimsy sentiment. Of course it does not stop at this juncture as indeed Paul makes abundantly

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[1] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor, III, p. 97.

[2] William G. T. Shedd, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 110.

[3] Martyn Lloyd-Jones strongly argues for this position, *Romans, Assurance, An Exposition of Chapter 5*, pp. 3-7, as does James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, II, pp. 504-6, and Douglas J. Moo with more technical support, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 290-295.

clear in his teaching that follows; however, the obvious point here is that profound spirituality and consequent assurance is based upon this substantial doctrinal truth and no other ground.

A. GOSPEL RECONCILIATION HAS GLORIOUS PROSPECTS, VS. 1-11.

Notice that "reconciliation" as a gospel synonym, first mentioned three times in this section of Romans in vs. 10-11, is a very important term, and thus it is well to anticipate its significance at this point. In Romans 1-4, the doctrine of justification by faith has emphasized the objective character of the gospel, that is righteous acquittal of man for Christ's sake through faith alone. However, "reconciliation" stresses that the justification of the sinner allows union with that satisfied God. Thus justification by faith must never be separated from those more subjective and experiential elements that are integral to the gospel as a whole. The history of the Christian church is strewn with the lifeless wreckage of orthodoxy concerning justification that knows nothing of being alive unto God and thus exultant concerning the glory of God.

1. The glorious hope of reconciliation, vs. 1-5.

Clearly this bracket of verses is a contained unit that proceeds from chapter 4 and introduces the reader to the outcome of justification by faith. As a whole the spirit of Paul here becomes animated and jubilant.

a. Peace with God through faith, v. 1.

In terms of the intense exposition of the gospel in 3:21-4:25, this verse contains only one expression that stands out as adding new truth, and that is "peace with God." Every other concept has been dealt with in detail.

(1) Two technical matters concern "we have peace with God." First, the alternative as an exhortation, "let us have peace with God," while having better manuscript support is yet overridden by the far greater internal evidence for the indicative above.[4] Second, "peace with God" is not to be confused with the "peace of God." The point here is *not* that we have the "peace of God" (Phil. 4:7) infused within, but rather that we are at peace with God because He is at peace with us; the barrier of sinful obstruction has been dismantled, the chasm of separation has been bridged; hostility and enmity between God and the justified sinner has turned to reconciliation and concord. By *implication*, the believer responds with feelings of enjoyment, bliss, and contentment at the fact of the friendship that God has established. Murray explains: "Peace of heart and mind proceeds from 'peace with God' and is the reflection in our consciousness of the relation established by justification."[5]

(2) Implicit here is the truth that man is not naturally at "peace with God," but rather alienated from his Creator. That is, to use a collection of Pauline

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[4] So Cranfield, Godet, Hodge, Moo, Morris, Murray, Shedd, etc. agree.

[5] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 159.

terms, he is an "enemy" (Rom. 5:10), "subject to God's wrath" (Eph. 2:3), "alienated and hostile toward God" (Rom. 8:7; Col. 1:21). Explicit is the truth that the God of Adam's fallen race has arranged a permanent truce with sinners who yield to his faith terms. The Lord Jesus Christ's day of atonement is at the same time God's armistice day, his just cessation of hostilities to believing sinners. It is His doing, the terms being wholly of free and sovereign grace.

(3) God's verdict declared to the believing sinner not only grants full pardon and right standing, but it also provides the ground of His intent that a glorious adopted relationship be established by means of which the riches of His grace will be inherited. Thus in Romans 8:31-32 we move from justification through atonement to the hope of this spiritual wealth: "If God is for us [justification], who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

(4) By way of application, concerning the priority of being at "peace with God," Lloyd-Jones comments:

> So we start with 'peace with God.' Before we come to consider any blessings we must always consider the whole question of our standing and status and position before God. It is almost baffling to understand how anyone can miss this. . . . There is nothing wrong in seeking blessings, and we should thank God that He gives us such glorious blessings; but a man who starts with the blessings is a fool, for the reason that he may not be there to enjoy the blessings he is seeking. . . . The primary business of the Christian Gospel is not to give us blessings. I emphasize the *primary* purpose. Its primary function is to reconcile us to God.[6]

b. Access with rejoicing through faith, vs. 2.

In a court of law, a man on trial before a judge is remanded or under certain restraints until the verdict is established. Should the judge deliver a ruling of "not guilty," then the prisoner at the bar is free to enter into the enjoyment of normal civil life; it is highly likely that he will offer profound thanks to both the presiding judge and his attorney. So Paul here describes the consequences of biblical justification by means of God's gracious verdict, these all being grounded upon faith in the sinner's only effectual attorney, "our Lord Jesus Christ."

(1) We have *introduction*, by faith.

Jesus Christ the "attorney" obtaining qualifying pardon is also the "way," the means of "introduction" and "access," προσαγωγή, prosagōgē, cf. Eph. 2:18; 3:12, by which entrance is gained into the straight highway of "grace" that the progressing pilgrim is to walk upon with sure-footedness. Note that "faith" here is the same "faith" of v. 1 that links the believing sinner to *all* that God provides through Christ. As a result of entrance through

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[6] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, Assurance*, p. 10.

justification into the kingdom of God, an ever expanding panorama presents itself to the new believer.

(2) We have *grace*, in which we stand.

Thus entrance by justification is "into this grace in which we have stood, presently stand, and will continue to stand," consider the perfect tense here of ἵστημι, hisētmi. While in I Corinthians 15:1 we stand in the gospel, and here as well this stance is in the God of all grace, yet Paul has in mind the believer being constantly grounded upon grace as a fundamental, objective truth, literally "this grace."

Moo well describes this distinction when he explains that grace here is

> not the manner in which God acts, or the gift that God gives, but the 'state' or 'realm' into which God's redeeming work transfers the believer. It is the realm in which 'grace reigns' (5:21), a realm that is set in contrast to the realm or domain of the law (6:14, 15: the believer is not 'under the law' but 'under grace'; cf. also Gal. 5:4). Without denying the presence of God's grace throughout human history, Paul, along with the rest of the NT (cf. John 1:17), so focuses on God's work in Christ as that act in which God's grace was decisively and finally realized that he can picture the new status of the believer as one in which grace is characteristic and dominant. While this state of grace includes our justification as a key element, the notion goes beyond justification to all that is conveyed to us by God in Christ.[7]

As John Newton has written:

> 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far
> And grace will lead me home.

(3) We have *hope*, in which we exult.

(a) The exultant effect of grace.

When a sinner has been regenerated (made *alive* unto God) and justified (made *right* with God), his grasp of the truth that this saving work is all of grace will have an inevitable effect upon his life, and that particularly within the realm of assurance. Thus when a Christian stands upon the grace of God, it produces the result that Paul describes here, namely that of "exulting in hope of the glory of God." To "exult" here is to "boast" or "glory" in the consummation of salvation which is rooted in Christ (Gal. 6:13, 14; cf. Rom. 2:17:23). It involves the eruption of the soul, often in song, that cannot be contained. Thus Paul indicates here that the biblical Christian is much more than a person who is orthodox and cooly correct. Rather the warmed heart will desire to sing as John Bowring has penned:

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[7] Moo, *Romans*, p. 301. Here footnote 38 also mentions that, "Bengel, Murray, Cranfield, and others confine 'this grace in which we stand' to justification." However, Calvin, Haldane and Lloyd-Jones support the broader understanding.

In the Cross of Christ I glory:
Towering o'er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

(b) The consummate hope of grace.

To "hope" here is not the perspective of possibility or even probability, but God-guaranteed, grace-generated, joyful certainty, as 8:30 affirms. And on the horizon of that certainty is "the glory of God" which here refers to the Christian's final "glorification by God" in His presence. At the moment the child of God is undergoing transformation, "from glory to glory" (II Cor. 3:18); however, the completion or consummation of this process shall be that time when, "we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (I John 3:2). So Charles Wesley has written:

Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Romans 8 provides particular focus upon thus future tense aspect of salvation. The Christian is to be "glorified with Him [Christ]" (v. 17). There is the prospect of "the glory that is to be revealed to us" (v. 18). At the end of this age, "the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (v. 21). We are told that "whom He [God] justified, [without intervening conditions] He also glorified" (v. 30).

The consequence of this teaching then is that of unshakable confidence on the part of the Christian, and Paul will reinforce this truth over and over again as his epistle proceeds. So Lloyd-Jones comments:

> In other words, to understand the doctrine of justification rightly means that we have assurance and certainty of salvation. . . . If you are biblical you must take the same ground the Apostle Paul. Paul says that we must boast of this [justification], we must exult and glory in it. But how can you do so if you are uncertain about it? This is also the reason why any doctrine that teaches a possibility of falling away from grace is unscriptural. You cannot boast and exult and glory in the ultimate of salvation if you may suddenly loose it all. The answer is that it is all of God, it is all of Christ, it is all of grace and by faith.[8]

[8] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition of Chapter 5*, pp. 55-56.

c. Rejoicing in the fruit of tribulation, v. 3-5.

Whereas the focus at the end of v. 2 has been exultation at the hope of the consummate "glory of God," that is at the end of this age, Paul's mind immediately turns to the reality of exultation as well in the darkness of the present. Note how this same contrast is made in 8:18 between "the glory that is to be revealed to us" (future) and "the sufferings of this present time" (present). It could be asserted that while it is relatively easy to exult in the future it remains difficult to exult in the depressing features of the present. In anticipation of this estimate, Paul responds with "a graduated string of spiritual pearls," so to speak, that, like v. 2, climaxes with the thought of "hope." Moo adds here: "Sequences of this kind, in which suffering inaugurates a chain of linked virtues, are introduced as a stimulus to face difficulties with joy in two other NT texts (I Pet. 1:6b-7; Jas. 1:2-4) and must have been popular in the early church."[9]

(1) Rejoice that *tribulation* leads to perseverence, v. 3-4a.

(a) The "tribulation" that Paul exults or glories in is θλῖψις, thlipsis, being major and traumatic trial involving pain, ostracism, and deprivation (8:35-39; I Cor. 4:9-13; II Cor. 1:4-10; 11:23-28; 12:10; II Tim. 3:10-12). However it is not intrinsic rejoicing in suffering, in some masochistic sense, but rather delight in the fruit of suffering in much the same way that a mother rejoices in the midst of suffering because a child has been born to her (John 16:20-22). So in I Peter 1:6, to "greatly rejoice" is not with regard to "various trials" in themselves, but rather the anticipated "inheritance which is imperishable" and the "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," vs. 4-5.

(b) Thus there is a benefit in "tribulation" in that it " brings about perseverence," or alternatively, "works/produces, with effort/toil [emphatic κατεργάζομαι, katergazomai, cf. 4:15; 7:8], endurance. Thus persecution is a profitable teacher; it is fruitful in the true child of God; that is impatience is tempered, as with Joseph unjustly imprisoned for two years (Gen. 40:23-41:1; cf. Heb. 5:8).

(c) However, this resultant "endurance/perseverance" is also a teacher, so that it works/produces (understood) "proven character," again as in the character of Joseph. Persecution becomes the acid test that validates the regenerate heart quality of the believer. The word here for "proven character" is δοκιμή, dokimē, which is used in a similar vein in James 1:3, "knowing that the *testing* [emphasis added] of your faith produces endurance."

(d) At the conclusion of *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, John Bunyan bemoans his ongoing struggles concerning inward conflicts. Yet he acknowledges the resultant benefits that obviously encourage him:

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[9] Moo, *Romans*, p. 303.

> These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with; yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good. 1. They make me abhor myself. 2. They keep me from trusting my heart. 3. They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness. 4. They shew me the necessity of flying to Jesus. 5. They press me to pray unto God. 6. They show me the need I have to watch and be sober. 7. And provoke me to look to God through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world. Amen.[10]

Certainly of the tinker of Bedford it could be said that "perseverence led to proven character."

(2) Rejoice that *proven character* leads to hope, v. 4b.

The sequence continues so that "proven character" works/produces (understood) "hope," ἐλπίς, elpis, that is a favorable and confident expectation. Clearly " hope" is a key term here, cf. vs. 2, 5, and it is Paul's intent that this confidence be strengthened, even by means of an enlightened appreciation of persecution. "Hope" then strengthens by means of its antecedent stimulants. So Moo illustrates:

> Hope, like a muscle, will not be strong if it goes unused. It is in suffering that we must exercise with deliberation and fortitude our hope, and the constant reaffirmation of hope in the midst of apparently 'hopeless' circumstances [like Abraham in 4:18-19] will bring ever-deeper conviction of the reality and certainty of that for which we hope.[11]

Hence, the question is raised as to what is the object of that hope? and v. 5, in conjunction with v. 2, provides the answer.

(3) Rejoice that *hope* is confident in the love of God, v. 5.

(4) "Hope," like "love," must have a direct object on account of its transitive nature. Further, it is the character of the object hoped for that determines the legitimacy of the matter that we anticipate being realized. Many a person has hoped for that which, on account of it being unreal, has only resulted in disappointment and despair. Thus Paul specifies the exact direction of the hope which he has been describing; it is a hope that "does not disappoint," καταισκύνω, kataischunō, literally, it does not "put us to shame" as if it was an empty and impotent hope. There are two reasons why the hope that Paul describes is genuine and effectual. First, objectively speaking, we have the inscripturated knowledge of "the glory of God" 8:17-25, v. 2. Second, subjectively speaking, we have "the love of God [that] has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

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[10] Bunyan, *Works*, I, p. 50.

[11] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 303-4.

(a) The outpoured love of God.

This is the "subjective" love of God, that is His love for us rather than our love for Him, as v. 8; 8:31, 35, 39 plainly indicate. The direction of this love here is akin to the "peace of God" in v. 1 which is likewise directed toward man. This is not to deny that His love for us will generate, as a consequence through the kindling of the Holy Spirit, our love for Him (I John 4:19). However, it is important to understand here that mature Christian hope is grounded upon God's sovereign initiative rather than humanly generated feelings.

Moreover, this love of [from] God "has been poured out within our hearts." The perfect tense of ἐκχέω, ekcheō, stresses that which has and presently continues to be "outpoured" into believing hearts, and more particularly the hearts of the Christians in Rome. This word, also used in Acts 2:17, 18, 33 concerning the outpoured Spirit at Pentecost, cf. Titus 3:6, describes a bestowal with great abundance, "unstinting lavishness.,"[12] that is to be paralleled by the abundant outpouring of God's wrath (Rev. 16:1-4, 7, 10, 12, 17).

It should not be forgotten that for Paul, the former Pharisee who so narrowly conceived of the love of God in such exclusive nationalistic terms, the result of Pentecost was an overwhelming sense of the world being deluged with the love of God in tidal proportions that had now drenched the church at Rome. Warfield makes a similar point when, in distinguishing the new age of Pentecost with the past he writes:

> We live in the dispensation of the Spirit, a dispensation in which the Spirit of God is poured out upon all flesh with the end of extending the bounds of God's kingdom until it covers the earth; and that He is poured out in the hearts of His people so that He reigns in their hearts and powerfully determines them to do holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives.[13]

(b) The agency of the outpoured Holy Spirit.

Clearly, as no man can know the things of God except through the Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:11), so no man can know of the love of God for him except such truth is spiritually communicated. So Paul introduces here a theme which he will expound upon more extensively in 8:1-17. However, a question arises at this point which has led to some to suggest that this "love of God poured out within our hearts" refers to a post-conversion baptism with the Spirit, akin to the sealing of the Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14, not to be identified with the modern Charismatic movement, since it could hardly be said that every believer has received such an overwhelming effusion, especially at an experiential level

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[12] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 263.

[13] B. B. Warfield, *Faith And Life*, pp. 144-5.

Contrary to the opinion of Lloyd-Jones at this point, it would seem that here, as well as throughout Romans, Paul has in mind authentic believers in general rather than a Spirit-baptized group within the fellowship of saints.[14] This is not to deny levels of spiritual maturity amongst Christians. However, the text here quite plainly gives no indication that as we move from the nature of justification, the resultant Christian life involves a distinct experience transcending the normalcy of conversion. Whatever outstanding experiences a child of God may be blessed with, and their authenticity is not in question, they must not be allowed to impose themselves upon biblical exegesis.

2. The glorious life of reconciliation, vs. 6-11.

As the truth of vs. 1-5 commenced with the gospel, so vs. 6-11 also commence with the gospel. While vs. 1-5 represent a unit that establishes assuring conclusions based on the gospel of justification by faith alone, so vs. 6-11 likewise represent a similar unit that establishes related assuring conclusions based on the gospel of Christ's substitutionary atonement.

Now "the [objective] love of God [toward man that] has been poured out within our hearts" v. 5 is described in more effecting detail. Justification by faith is liberating truth for the guilty soul; however the loving purpose behind such a gospel needs to be enlarged upon since it is very stimulating in terms of reassurance of reconciliation in the face of past alienation.

a. We are saved by the love of God in Christ's death, vs. 6-8.

The emphasis in v. 6, "while we were still helpless . . . Christ died for the ungodly," and v. 8, "while we were yet sinners . . . Christ died for us," suggests that Paul may have been musing on the question as to his status at that very time when the Lord Jesus Christ was impaled on a Roman cross. In other words, he pondered the astonishing fact that at the very time in history when Christ was dying for him, he was involved in rebellion and militant sin that held him helplessly captive.

Note that the verb "die" occurs four times in these three verses, and this "death" of Christ "by his blood" delivers from "wrath" and results in "justification," v. 9.

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[14] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition of Chapter 5*, pp. 78-102. For Lloyd-Jones this baptism by the Spirit takes us to the highest level of assurance and usefulness that transcends a more common variety that immediately follows conversion. Thus he states, "You cannot be a Christian without the Holy Spirit, but you can be a Christian without having the love of God shed abroad in your heart. . . . All Christians have not had this experience, but it is open to all; and all Christians should have it," pp. 84, 85. So he refers to some remarkable experiences from the lives of great and lesser known saints such as Henry Venn, John Fletcher, Richard Robarts, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards. Refer also to Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition of Chapter 8:5-17*, in which he expounds on this view in greater detail and gives many more historic examples, as well as Lloyd-Jones, *God's Ultimate Purpose, An Exposition Of Ephesians One*, pp. 243-311. John Stott is correct when he writes: "It is not my purpose to deny that such post-conversion deeper, richer, fuller experiences of God's love are authentic, for they are well documented in Christian biographies. . . . My question is whether Romans 5:5 is primarily intended to describe unusual and overpowering experiences which are given only to some, even if they are 'open to all'. I think not." *The Message of Romans*, p. 143.

But these facts must be understood according to the loving purpose of God, which, when truly appreciated cause the Christian to "exult in God," v. 11.

(1) When helpless sinners, v. 6.

Paul focuses on man as ἀσθενής, asthenēs, literally "strengthless," as a person incapacitated by illness (Phil. 2:25-27), and the context refers to himself as living at the time of Christ's birth. Thus at that time, and of course including fallen human history overall, man was incapable of raising himself up from his captivity to sin as symptomatically represented. Surely this inability is essentially internal, involving an unholy soul, affections and choices. Greek and Roman culture had not been successful in affecting change in man's heart; rather both empires had tended toward class consciousness, corruption, and tyranny.

So Christ died "for" ὑπέρ, huper,[15] "on behalf of" the sinner void of good," that is "the ungodly"(4:5). Thus both representation and substitution are involved, not mere assistance and coaching (Mark 10:45; Gal, 3:13; I Tim. 2:6). This love, like that of the Good Samaritan who "felt compassion" for the man left for dead on the Jericho road (Luke 10:30-33), contemplates impotence along with pagan misery, but also, unlike the priest and the Levite, actively intervenes with saving mercy.

But what is "the right time" here? It is God's appointed time in world history suitable to His decree, the ripening state of the nations and man's predicament (John 2:4; 7:8; 17:1; Rom. 3:21, 26; Gal. 4:4). It is the right time according to the prophetic Scriptures, for the Jews to be provoked to jealousy and the Gentiles to be incorporated into the promise given to Abraham, the formation of the church, and the evangelization of the world. As Thomas Goodwin illustrates:

> There is, as you know, the first age of the world [the Old Testament], and the latter age of the world [the New Testament]. You may justly compare it to your hourglass, when the former age was expired, when all is run out, and the bottom glass is filled, then God cometh and turneth up a new administration, and beginneth another dispensation.[16]

(2) When unlovable sinners, vs. 7-8.

Using human analogy and *a fortiori* argument from a lesser to a greater situation, the puny, selfish, shabby love of man is mirrored against and wonderfully eclipsed by the determined love of God. So Paul reasons for an affecting appreciation of this love of God directed toward destitute sinners, to the end that the Christian will, like in v. 2, assuringly "exult [boast, glory] in God," v. 11. Such an ultimate response finds its supreme expression in

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[15] Refer to Moo, *Romans*, p. 307, n. 65, where an excellent summary of the relationship between CCCC here and CCCCGs given, also *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, pp. 696-7.

[16] Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, I, p. 201.

8:37-39; 11:33-36. Thus we should sing as Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane has written:

Content to let the world go by,
To know no gain nor loss—
My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all—the Cross.

(a) The lesser love of the world, v. 7.

Here human devotion is illustrated in its "best" light; yet it is partial and lacking in mercy. The major components are self-interest and worthiness. There is no thought of grace, only love that seeks a worthy object.

1) Analogy one, the "righteous" man.

Consider the man who fulfills his civic duty; he is a decent, law-abiding person; he is a status quo citizen, trustworthy, reputable. He has not distinguished himself in being admirable or noble, but he is sincerely religious. However, it is unlikely that anyone would actually sacrifice their life for him.

2) Analogy two, the "good" man.

He is certainly a cut above the "righteous" man, having distinguished himself as a compassionate and wise benefactor. He is "good" because his heart is kindly; he is considerate of the poor; he is sensitive concerning the troubles of others and one who would readily go the extra mile. In this case, because of virtue and merit, someone might possibly consider dying for such a person.

(b) The greater love of God, v. 8.

1) It is unified love.

The love of God is identical with the dying love of Christ. The atonement of Christ is God's atonement. The Father was not passive while the Son actively died for sinners. Rather, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor. 5:19). The cross demonstrates, not simply the love of Christ but the love of God (John 3:16).

2) It is superior, gracious love.

Who Christ is and what he has done and the object of his love prove the superior quality of the love of God. But the heart of the matter is God's love for sinners in the person of His Son. That is, the lover of God is essentially gracious love, as distinct from man's which is meritorious love. So George Goodman has written:

God commends His love—
  Greater could not be;
While I was a sinner,
  Jesus Died for me.

Jesus, Son of God,
  Now your grace I see;
You who loved the sinner
  Gave yourself for me.

b. We are secure by the love of God in Christ's death, vs. 9-10.

The fact that "Christ died for us," v. 8, introduces us to a broad vista of resultant benefits. So Paul reverts in both verses to his favorite *a fortiori* form of argument, cf. vs. 10, 15, 17, which Moo explains had its rabbinic form using "light and heavy" propositions.[17] Such a perspective comprehends great dividends that result from the investment of faith alone in Jesus Christ, the objective ground of justification. The future aspect of "much more then" here in v. 9 parallels the future aspect of "we exult in hope of the glory of God in vs. 2, 4b.

(1) From wrath as well as guilt, v. 9.

The *minor premise* is that we have been justified by Christ's "[shed] blood," and as a consequence personal sin has been justly forgiven; condemnation has become acquittal. Whereas in 3:24 we are justified by God's "grace" (His attitude), and in 3:28; 5:1 we are justified by "faith" (man's answer), here we are justified by Christ's "blood" (Christ's atonement, "death," v. 10).

The *major premise* is that we shall be delivered from the penal consequences of our sin, that is "the wrath [of God]," τῆς ὀργῆς, tēs orgēs, and the intimation is that therefore we shall be saved from the time of justification until the time of God's judgment day, cf. 8:30b. Shedd explains that this wrath of God "denotes a personal emotion, and not merely an abstract attribute. A divine emotion is a divine attribute in energy."[18] For the Christian this wrath has been placated and cooled by Christ's propitiatory offering, 3:25. However, here "the wrath" is future and anticipates "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," 2:5; (cf. Job 21:30; Zeph. 1:14-18; I Thess. 1:10; II Thess. 1:7-8; Rev. 6:17).

While the new believer is inclined to view his salvation with a narrow field of vision, namely justification as pardon, yet he is to grow with a broader vista concerning the multifaceted blessings of the gospel. Such comprehension will also result in not only wonder and praise, but also stability and assurance.

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[17] Moo, *Romans*, p. 309.

[18] Shedd, *Romans*, p. 116.

(2) By life as well as death, v. 10.

The *minor premise* is that, as former enemies before God, we have been reconciled to God by God through Christ's death, ("blood, v. 9). The "if" here assumes the statement to be true. Thus, having been regarded by God as enemies, Murray describes it as, "God's holy hostility to and alienation from us,"[19] that same God, though offended, was moved to justly remove the enmity, to bring about reconciliation. This is wholly God's doing, even as we have peace from God, v. 1 and love from God, v. 5; thus He is to be admired and praised for it (II Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:20). As with vs. 7-8, humanly speaking, who would think of offering a son unto death for a person who deeply offended you, to bring about reconciliation? Charles Wesley raises this question and gives the answer that it is God through Christ alone.

Depth of mercy can there be
  Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
  chief of sinners spare?Me, the

I have long withstood His grace,
  Long provoked Him to His face,
Would not hearken to His calls,
  Grieved Him by a thousand falls.

Whence to me this waste of love?
  Ask my advocate above!
See the cause in Jesu's face,
  Now before the throne of grace.

The *major premise* is that, having through Christ's reconciling death become children of God the Father, we shall be saved by the life of the Son of God, or better, "in his life." Note that the relational emphasis of "reconciliation" takes over from "justification." Now that the enemy is a friend or son of the once offended living Father; now that he is close at hand through the living and interceding Son of God, Heb. 7:25, shall not the friend or son have the guarantee of ongoing and future salvation by means of "His [Son's] life"? The goodness and consistency of God demands a positive answer. But what specifically is this future saving life of Christ? Certainly the sustaining life of Christ is indicated here (6:8-11; Gal. 2:20), yet there is also final deliverance by resurrection because of "Christ the first fruits" (I Cor. 15:20, 23) that is equally intended (7:24-25; 8:11, 23, 30); the sustaining aspect merges into the consummate event.

The point here is that future tense salvation, that is from now till the day of resurrection, is secure for the Christian who is presently an authentic child of God. Justification in a present sense is but our commencement (5:1). Thus as Murray states, "those who are the beneficiaries of Jesus' death must also be the beneficiaries of all that is entailed in his resurrection life."[20] The guarantee of this is the sovereignty of grace (5:21).

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[19] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 172.

[20] Ibid., p. 175.

c. We are exultant in God's reconciliation, v. 11.

Truth has consequences, and this is especially so with regard to the Christian gospel. Paul now concludes this section with a description of what ought to be the believer's response to the doctrine he has taught. Here we distinguish between the nominal and the regenerate child of God. The former responds to the truth of vs. 1-10 with polite agreement; the latter responds with heartfelt passion, usually evidenced by unstoppable testimony and fervent singing.

(1) The ground of exultation.

"Exultation" here, καυχάομαι, kauchaomai, means to glory or boast, cf. 5:2-3, and obviously excitement and exuberance of the *soul* are involved which transcend personality types. However, this enthusiasm is rooted in the truth of the gospel and not sensual stimulation for its own sake. "Exultation" is a generic term; what matters is that which stimulates us to jubilation. Paul sums up this gospel truth stimulant as "the reconciliation," a significant relational term that will find further exposition in vs. 12-21.

(a) The glorious person of God.

It is by means of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the arbitrator from heaven, that we are able to exult in God. Thus to praise Christ is to praise the Father who sent him (John 5:23).

(b) The saving work of God.

The key term for Paul here is the inclusive expression, "the reconciliation," τὴν καταλλαγήν, tēn katallagēn, which in the KJV is translated "the atonement." Shedd explains: "At the time when the [KJV] version was made, atonement = at-one-ment, or reconciliation. The present use of the word makes it equivalent to expiation or satisfaction."[21] The saving work of Christ, judicially bringing peace from the holy God who was formerly hostile toward the sinner, has also brought about rapprochement, the resumption of a harmonious relationship with resultant concord.

It is significant that the concept of reconciliation which Paul describes had no place in the Greco-Roman religions of the first century. Colin Brown explains: "[I]n general the thought of a personal relationship to God is far removed from Greek thought. . . . This [subject of reconciliation] is the theological novelty in comparison with non-Christian religious thought, which knows the deity only as the object of the reconciling work of man."[22] However reconciliation here is distinctively the sovereign grace of God whereby He moves with particular initiative toward the offending sinner (II Cor. 5:18-19) with

[21] Shedd, *Romans*, p. 119.

[22] Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, III, pp. 166-7.

overtures of peace and love (Rom. 5:1,5). The same point is true today with regard to Mohammedanism which knows nothing of adoption whereby the child of God cries out, "Abba! Father!" (8:14-17).

When this truth is experientially grasped by the pursued sinner, exultation is inevitable, not only by the adopted son of God, but also by the Reconciler and the inhabitants of heaven (Luke 15:4-7).

(2) The character of exultation.

But how exactly do we exult in God as Paul here describes? By means of a heart that responds in adoring and grateful prayer, by passionate testimony and proclamation, by spiritual fruit that has the savor of Christ, and by singing a new song such as Charles Wesley has taught us:

Glory be to God on high,
  And peace on earth descend:
God comes down, He bows the sky,
  And shows Himself our Friend:
God the invisible appears:
  God, the blest, the great I AM,
Sojourns in this vale of tears,
  And Jesus is His name.

B. GOSPEL RECONCILIATION HAS ASSURING ANTITHESES, VS. 12-21.

If Romans 3:21-26, as was earlier claimed, is the most important gospel passage in all of the Bible, yet it remains true that in Romans 5:12-21 we have reached the reasoned heart of Paul's epistle. Perhaps it is the woven intricacy of vs. 12-21 that has attracted so much interest. Be that as it may, more importantly the former passage views the gospel with narrow focus, whereas these latter verses perceive the gospel as through a wide-angle lens that provides a panorama of the history of redemption. One other contrast concerns that which John Murray mentions; whereas 3:21-26 is individualistic, here we consider opposite corporate entities, the solidarity of the seed of Adam versus the solidarity of the seed of Christ.[23]

The concluding emphasis in v. 11 upon "the reconciliation," and all the gospel doctrine that this articular reference assumes, appears to be the connecting element between vs. 1-11 and vs. 12-21 in the light of Paul's "therefore" commencing v. 12. Also consider the absence of any "justification" language in this section. In essence, reconciliation involves two parties that are presumed to be in a state of hostility, one being offended and the other being the offender; thus they are subsequently united in holy harmony. Hence it is significant that in vs. 12-21 there is constant reference to two parties that are in tension because of sin, Adam and Christ, that is until through Christ grace sovereignly abounds toward the seed of Adam and reconciliation is effected. This tension involving various antitheses is Paul's way of lauding the superior sovereignty of grace in Christ by means of a series of *a fortiori* arguments, v. 21.

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[23] Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 178-9.

The great emphasis given to the person of Adam, eight mentions in vs. 12-21, indicates just how vital this personage is to the teaching of Paul, and of course the attending doctrine of original sin. Therefore it is no little matter to consider here the fact of Adam's historicity as the original and sole father of the human race. Liberal commentator, C. H. Dodd, responds to this problem concerning Romans 5:12 as follows: "Thus Paul's doctrine of Christ as the 'second Adam' is not so bound up with the story of the Fall as a literal happening that it ceases to have meaning when we no longer accept the story as such. Indeed, we should not too readily assume that Paul did so accept it."[24] It is obvious that Dodd's critical presuppositions are in conflict with Scripture, and so much the worse it becomes for the Word of God! However, for Paul the former Pharisee it would be unthinkable to conceive of anything else other than an historic, biblical Adam. Further, Paul's argument here concerns an historical Christ and requires that his antithesis be historical as well.

Therefore Lloyd-Jones is correct when he states:

> We must assert that we believe in the being of one first man Adam, and in one first woman called Eve. We reject any notion of a pre-Adamic man because it is contrary to the teaching of the Scripture. . . . [T]hese early chapters of Genesis with their history play a vital part in the whole doctrine of salvation. Take for instance the argument of the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans 5:12-21. Paul's whole case is based upon that one man Adam and his one sin, and the contrast with the other man, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His one great act."[25]

Thus the importance of the creationist cause becomes evident since the biblical doctrine of sin is inseparably joined to a literal Fall according to Genesis. The *American Atheist* journal acknowledged this when it published the following comment that is essentially true:

> Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus' earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the Son of God. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing.[26]

1. The superiority of reconciliation through Christ over Adam, vs. 12-17.

   There is common agreement that v. 12 is an incomplete sentence, that is it presents a protasis without providing the expected apodasis. Such anacolutha are not uncommon in the intense style of Paul's writing, cf. 9:22-24.[27] Thus what follows in vs. 13-17

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[24] C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle Of Paul To The Romans*, p. 80. C. K. Barrett makes a similar comment based upon liberal presuppositions: "It need not be said that Paul, a first-century Jew, accepted Gen. i-iii as a straightforward narrative of events which really happened." *The Epistle To The Romans*, p. 111. Refer also to John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, pp. 162-6, where his commitment to theistic evolution, especially with the exegetical help of *Derek Kidner*, leads to a contorted explanation as to how God may possibly have taken over a hominid and formed him into Adam! It is evident that unquestioning acceptance of an evolutionary world view and time scale for human history necessitates the molding of Scripture to this presupposition.

[25] D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing The Times*, pp. 343-4. Refer also to Lloyd-Jones' confrontation with an ecumenical gathering arranged by the British Council of Churches in 1957-8 when he valiantly stood for the historic truth of Romans 5:12. Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, II, pp. 316-318.

[26] *American Atheist*, September 1978, p. 30.

[27] "Hence a man with the passion of Paul naturally breaks away from formal rules in the structure of the sentence when he is greatly stirred, as in Gal. and 2 Cor." A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar Of The Greek New Testament*, p. 435.

represent a parenthesis with a resumption in v. 18 of the main thought of v. 12. This interruption concerns the guilt of all men as sinners from the time of Adam beyond Moses who have yet lived during differing dispensations and revelations of sin.

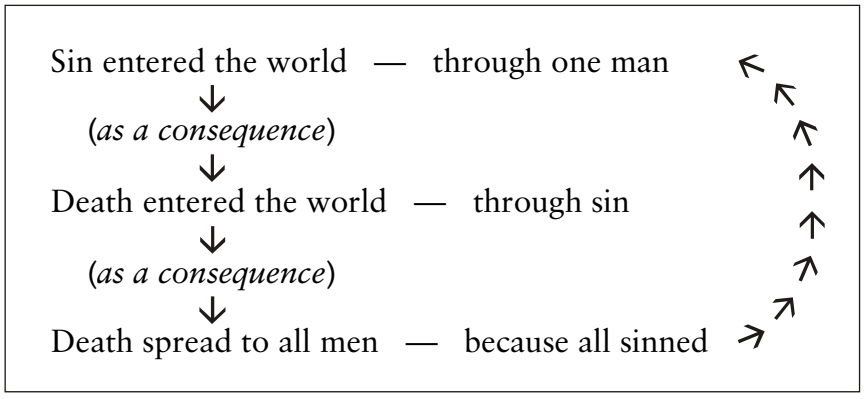
a. Sin reigns through the one man Adam, vs. 12-14.

Again, as in 1:18-3:20, the critical doctrine of sin is considered though here not so much as a prelude to an exposition of the gospel as an antithetical contrast with the reigning superiority of grace. Nevertheless, the perspective here of universal inherited sin and consequent universal death presents a horrendous scenario. Luther graphically describes it as follows:

> [T]his original sin is the very tinder of sin, the law of the flesh, the law of the members, the weakness of our nature, the tyrant, the original sickness, etc. For it is like a sick man whose mortal illness is not only the loss of health of one of his members, but it is, in addition to the lack of health in all of his members, the weakness of all of his senses and powers, culminating even in his disdain for those things which are healthful and in his desire for those things which make him sick. Thus this is Hydra, a many-headed and most tenacious monster, with which we struggle in the Lernean Swamp of this life till the very day of our death. It is Cerberus, that irrepressible barker, and Antaeus, who cannot be overcome while loose here on earth.[28]

(1) All sinned in Adam, v. 12.

The following diagram indicates the three main propositions of this verse that are logically related and present a circular argument.



[28] Martin Luther, *Lectures On Romans*, p. 300. Footnotes 14-16 explain that: "In Greek mythology [Hydra was] a monster that inhabited the swamps of Lerna in the Peloponnesus. When one of its nine heads was cut off, it was immediately replaced by two new ones, unless cauterized. Hercules slew this dragon. [Cerberus was] [t]he surly, three-headed dog that guarded the gates to Hades. In his most difficult 'twelfth labor' Hercules subdued this formidable beast. . . . [Antaeus was] [t]he giant whose strength was constantly renewed so long as he remained in contact with his mother, Earth. Hercules crushed him while holding him aloft."

(a) Sin entered the world through one man.

We focus on Genesis 3 where sin had its entrance, as distinct from its origin, into the human race at a point of time in history, aorist here of εἰσέρχομαι, eiserchomai. "Sin," always in the singular in this chapter, along with "the transgression," describes that state of pollution resulting from Adam's original act of sin; it is an invasive cancer contracted by serpentine infection, a principle of thorough sinful contamination involving the totality of Adam's being and faculties.

(b) Death entered the world through sin.

It seems understood that death similarly entered into human history at a point of time following after Adam's sin. This second assertion is also plain biblical truth upon which Paul is building his case; but up to this point we have been exclusively dealing with Adam. This death of Adam, at the age of 930 years, involved both separation from fellowship with God in innocence enjoyed in the garden of Eden, as well as separation from life. Of course the lurking question that immediately follows concerns the obvious fact that yet everyone in the human race dies? So why then is death universal?

(c) Death spread to all men because all sinned.

Now Paul declares that because the one man Adam died, it was an inexorable result that all of mankind should die. Because of Adam, death "spread to all men," distributed itself like a plague, a congenital disease. Hence universal death finds its cause in the original human death. But why is this connection so inevitable? The final clause becomes the linchpin of the whole argument; all of mankind is locked up to death, "because all sinned."

Logic suggests a connection between Adam's original sin and death, and humankind's resultant death; that is, man dies universally because he contracted sin from Adam. But the aorist of ἁμαρτάνω, hamatanō, cf. the aorist of 3:23, along with the teaching of vs. 18-19 give more solid evidence for the belief that the human race inherited sin from Adam, that is, "all sinned in, through, and with Adam."

However, while the inheritance of sin from Adam is clear Pauline teaching, yet the means of that inheritance in Calvinistic Protestantism has fallen into two camps. Charles Hodge and John Murray represent the "federal," corporate, covenantal understanding of imputation, which point is upheld in vs. 15-21. Augustine and William Shedd represent the "realistic," seminal understanding of imputation. Lloyd-Jones claims both aspects are essentially true, and he is especially influenced by the biblical force of Hebrews 7:9-10, ignored by Hodge,

where Levi is said to have offered tithes, being in the loins of Abraham.[29]

(d) An objection is considered. Hence Lloyd-Jones rightly concludes:

> What is clear then is this, that Paul is saying here quite plainly that all sinned in Adam, and that all are guilty before God on account of that one sin of Adam when he deliberately transgressed God's commandment. God has imputed to the whole of the human race, including ourselves, that one sin of Adam. Adam sinned and we all sinned. This is an essential part of the doctrine of Original Sin."[30]

"But," responds the objector, "such a condition is unfairly imposed upon mankind since we had no opportunity to resist the serpent's sinful overture." Augustus Strong and Jonathan Edwards respond to this matter in detail.[31] In support of Edwards, Shedd explains that a man, infected with sin, is justly and responsibly sinful when he assents and agrees to a sinful act. In other words, when a child of Adam sins, he does not sin reluctantly, but approves of what he does. The love of a parent for his child is good, admirable, and responsible, but it stems from original nature that approves of the child. So the sinner acts from original nature and yet is to be justly condemned for that which he does by nature and approves.[32]

(e) By way of application, the practical ramifications of the doctrine of Original Sin, and its rejection, are profound. A modern representation of this problem of human nature is portrayed in William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*, in which a group of schoolboys, abandoned on a deserted island, degenerate rather than improve over the years of their confinement. Consider the following realms of life.

1) *Government*. Law and order are established either to restrain man's evil tendency and grant freedom to do the good, or to engineer man, he being essentially neutral in morality. The former course stems from biblical revelation. The latter course stems from materialistic, evolutionary humanism. Inherent in law enforcement here will be an understanding of morality that is either objective or relative.

2) *Family life*. Parents, knowing themselves to be sinners, raise their children on the premise of their like tendency to sin, and the exhortation of the righteous God. Alternatively, the little innocents simply need exposure to the right social environment. Thus parents

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[29] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 5*, pp. 213-219. Cf. John Murray, *The Imputation Of Adam's Sin*, and the opposing view of William G. T. Shedd, II, *Dogmatic Theology*, pp. 59-63.

[30] Ibid., pp. 218-9.

[31] Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 629-37; Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, I, pp. 216-33.

[32] Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, II, pp. 168-257.

themselves, being inexperienced, need guidance from more knowledgeable government that denies Original Sin.

3) *Education*. Shall the teacher assume a flowering sinful nature that needs to be educated in biblical righteousness, or an environmentally conditionable nature that needs to be educated in a secular world-view? Shall the teacher assume that pupils have a spiritual soul that is first accountable to God, or a body of flesh that is only different from the animal world in its complexity?

4) *Religious life*. Original Sin requires revelation and church life that, by means of redemption and sanctification, effect change in a man's corrupt soul. Worship will focus on grace. On the other hand, a fundamentally neutral human being at birth needs platitudinous nurture that encourages the pursuit of perfectability, with the cooperation of either God or man. In this vein, worship will offer a degree of human worthiness.

(2) All sinned from Adam, vs. 13-14.

The concluding expression of v. 12, "all sinned," appears to trigger in Paul an anticipation that the readers of his epistle are well aware of Old Testament history, especially the distinctive epochs separated by the giving of the law to Moses at Mt. Sinai. Hence a parenthetical explanation is considered necessary.

(a) From Adam to Moses, like Adam, v. 13.

It seems basic to Paul's argument here that the codified law given to Moses was a distinctive revelation of the righteousness of God provided for Israel, and not a continuation from creation. Otherwise the discussion here would be quite unnecessary. On the other hand, the fact that the Mosaic covenant was a new revelation raises the question as to the character of the pre-Mosaic revelation of God's moral demands.

`The logic here leads to an inescapable conclusion. We know that sin is not chargeable if definitions and sanctions against sin have not been promulgated. For a man to be punished he must have known about the terms of his transgression. Therefore it follows that since death, as a punishment for sin, had universally reigned over man from Adam to Moses, it must be concluded that this first dispensation knew of a revelation of God's righteousness. Consider God's judgment on Noah's generation as well as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all explicit sinners.

`What specifically was this pre-Mosaic revelation of God's righteousness that was not identical with the Mosaic code? As Shedd puts it: "Although the decalogue was not yet promulgated, there must, nevertheless, have been some law of some kind against which πάντες ἥμαρτον, pantes hēmarton, [all sinned]; otherwise sin could not have

been charged to them."[33] The most common belief here is that this pre-Mosaic law was a revelation engraved on the conscience, 2:12-16, though in view of the numerous appearances of God in the form of a theophany during that period, a more concrete revelation ought not to be excluded.

(b) From Adam to Moses, unlike Adam, v. 14.

As sin became a universal inheritance as a consequence of Adam's sin, so it became inevitable that universal death would follow on from Adam's death to the generation of Moses. And this epidemic of death was in spite of the fact that not all, "sinned in the likeness of the offense [disobedient act] of Adam." The suggestion of some that Paul here refers to children and the mentally infirm who sin through Adam yet not against law, though upheld by Augustine, Owen, Edwards, Shedd, Haldane and Murray, seems unlikely. Rather, none of Adam's progeny sinned after the distinctive manner of their innocent father, especially with regard to eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:1-5, cf. v. 22-24).[34]

However, the distinctive nature of Adam's sin ought not to lead us to believe that there is no connection between Adam's fall and, "Him who was to come." Rather, Adam was a "type [pattern, representation]," τύπος, tupos, of the promised Christ, for "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). John Owen comments on this verse: "Adam being the figure of Christ, look how it was with him, with respect unto his *natural posterity*, as unto sin and death; so it is with the Lord Christ, the second Adam, and his *spiritual posterity*, with respect unto righteousness and life."[35]As John Henry Newman wrote:

O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! That flesh and blood
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.

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[33] Shedd, *Romans*, p. 131.

[34] John MacArthur writes: "Because Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden of Eden after they sinned, they had no more opportunity to disobey God's single prohibition. They no longer had access to the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, nor have any of their descendants. Consequently, it has been inpossible for any human being, either before or after Moses, to have "sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam." *New Testament Commentary, Romans 1-8*, p. 299.

[35] John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, V, p. 326.

b. Grace reigns through the one man Christ, vs. 15-17.

`The similarity/fulfilment relationship between Adam and Christ just mentioned at the end of v. 14 prompts Paul to immediately counter with a number of antitheses that describe the dissimilarity between the defiler of the human race and its Redeemer. These contrasts are diagramed as follows.

	ADAM	CHRIST
	↓	↓
v. 15	transgression	gift of grace
	↓	↓
v. 16	condemnation	justification
	↓	↓
v. 17	death	life

`Here two generals, two representatives of the human race, are juxtapositioned. There is Adam, the captive underling of the strong man Satan (Mark 3:27), through whom the universe has been captured and thoroughly polluted. To use John Bunyan's imagery found in *The Holy War*, Diabolus has taken captive the City of Mansoul. On the other hand there is the stronger man Christ who recaptures the universe and cleanses it. At the direction of King Shaddai, Prince Immanuel assails Diabolus and recaptures the City of Mansoul.

It should also be noted that the three antitheses presented here become the ground upon which Paul makes his climactic declaration in vs. 18-21.

(1) Grace reigns over transgression, v. 15.

A strong contrast, ἀλλά, alla, is made here between the universal affliction of death that Adam's transgression generated upon "the many," and the universal bestowal of free grace upon "the many." Note that in v. 18 the contrast involves "all men," while in v. 19 it is again "the many." Not surprisingly, those commentators who have a doctrinal proclivity toward liberalism and neo-orthodoxy also tilt here toward universalism, the ultimate salvation of all men.[36] However, refer to those references in Romans that declare the final condemnation of the objects of God's wrath, such as in 1:24-32; 2:3-5; 9:18as well as the forthright response of John Murray to Karl Barth in this regard.[37]

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[36] These include Barrett, Barth, and Cranfield.

[37] He first makes it clear that Barth does not believe in an original historic Adam who commenced human history. Then he comments: "[I]f there is distributive universalism in the apodoses of verses 18 and 19, as Barth's interpretation demands, there must also be in the apodosis of v. 21, and the reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life must embrace all men without exception. This is not Paul's teaching (*cf.* II Thess. 1:9; 2:10-14) and to maintain that the universalistic terms of Rom. 5:18b demand the ultimate salvation of all is to fail to apply to this text the canons of exegesis which obviously obtain in the interpretation of numberless universalistic expressions." Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 387-8.

Moo gives the probable meaning when he writes: "[I]n each case, Paul's point is not so much that the groups affected by Christ and Adam, respectively, are coextensive, but that Christ affects those who are his just as certainly as Adam does those who are his. . . . 1:16-4:25 makes it equally clear that only certain people derive the benefits from Christ's act of righteousness."[38]

(a) The one man Adam = transgression of the many.

"The transgression (contraction of sin?)," παράπτωμα, paraptōma, cf. 17, 18, 20, that is "sin (infection of sin?)" ἁμαρτία, hamartia, cf. v.20, is Adam's incendiary act that results in the ashes of death, even the ravaging of the whole human race. This tragedy might be likened to one infected immigrant entering a country who inevitably infects the whole populace with his disease. But here, in the realm of human sin, the plague is infinitely worse as are its devastating consequences.

(b) The one man Christ = gift of grace to the many.

However "the free gift," τὸ χάρισμα to charisma, Christ as a complete Savior, is the gloriously transcendent, "much more . . . grace of God" antithesis that freely provides, "a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of the spirit of fainting" (Isa. 61:3).This gospel is about "the one man Jesus Christ," who may be likened to an immigrant who brings with him a life-giving pharmaceutical patent that becomes a health-giving blessing to the whole populace. Isaac Watts describes Christ as God's great apodosis as follows:

Adam the sinner: at his fall,
  Death like a conqueror seized us all;
A thousand new-born babes are dead
  By fatal union to their head.

We sing thine everlasting Son,
  Who joined our nature to his own:
Adam the second from the dust
  Raises the ruins of the first.

(2) Justification reigns over judgment, v. 16.

There is both repetition and progression in this further consideration of the antithesis introduced in v. 15, while a climactic conclusion is to follow in v. 17.

[38] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 343-4.

(a) The one man Adam = condemnation.

The singular sin of Adam warranted judgment and the verdict of his condemnation. However, in parallel with v. 15, the participation of "the many" in Adam's sin brought about their condemnation as well. Thus the whole human race, on account of Adam, is legally, judicially condemned to death, and humanly speaking without hope. This sentence of death is portrayed as a horrifying pall that is the downside upon which the gospel of free grace is predicated.

(b) The one man Christ = justification.

Adam as the facilitator of condemnation now recedes in contrast, that is the logical thought of his reception to begin with of particular grace. Rather, "the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification [of the many who by faith have believed in Christ]." In other words, the grace of God so generously responded to the universality of the human predicament, and not merely Adam. Murray comments: What the judgment unto condemnation took into account was simply the one trespass; . . . But the free gift unto justification is of such a character that it must take the many trespasses into its reckoning; . . . In this way we can perceive the identity which the apostle has in view and we can see how the magnitude of grace is exhibited by the manifold trespasses with which grace reckons."

The climax of this verse, namely the fact that "the free gift results in justification," not only confirms the *sola fide* character of the gospel, but also how Paul exalts in the forensic nature of "the reconciliation," v. 11.

(3) Life reigns over death, v. 17.

If the contrast has been established in vs. 15-16, here it takes on a greater vividness and luster that all the more enhances the glory of the sovereignty of grace, especially as it relates to the recipient of such abundance. It is noteworthy that as with vs. 15-16, so here both χάρις, charis, "grace gift," and δωρεά, dōrea, "free gift," are closely connected. Moo suggests that, "'grace' denotes the motive or manner in which God works, while 'the gift' is the specific manifestation of this grace — the righteous grace and life conferred on 'the many.'"[39]

(a) The one man Adam = death.

The negative proposition is sober in the extreme, depressingly and despairingly so. It portrays a holocaust, a paralyzing scourge effected by one individual. Death has come to the whole human race through Adam with the result that it has established terrifying, tyrannical dominion.

[39] Ibid., p. 335n. Cf. Shedd, *Romans*, p. 136.

Lloyd-Jones writes: "The world is a place of cemeteries; it is a place of death and gloom and end."[40]

(b) The one man Christ = life.

While the torment of death has been the underlying human affliction introduced in v. 12 that has continued through to v. 21, in v. 10, but more particularly here in v. 17 the essential antithesis of "life" is upheld that reaches a climax as "eternal life" in v. 21. Cf. also 6:4, 11, 23; 8:2, 6, 10-11, 13. It is the "one Jesus Christ" who mediates the superior "much more" blessings of grace that are so transcendently glorious when compared with the "one Adam's" fearful legacy. These benefits include:

1) The abundance of grace.

Specifically this is gospel grace, as the qualifying "gift of righteousness" indicates. John Bunyan describes it thus:

> Thou Son of the Blessed, what grace was manifest in thy condescension! Grace brought thee down from heaven, grace stripped thee of thy glory, grace made thee poor and despicable, grace made thee bear such burdens of sin, such burdens of sorrow, such burdens of God's curse as are unspeakable. O Son of God! grace was in all thy tears, grace came bubbling out of thy side with thy blood, grace came forth with every word of thy sweet mouth. Grace came out where the whip smote thee, where the thorns pricked thee, where the nails and spear pierced thee. O blessed Son of God! Here is grace indeed! Unsearchable riches of grace! Unthought-of riches of grace! Grace to make angels wonder, grace to make sinners happy, grace to astonish devils. And what will become of them that trample under foot this Son of God.[41]

2) The gift of righteousness.

Here "the abundance of grace" is specified as "the gift of righteousness," which is reminiscent of 1:17; 3:22-23; Phil. 3:9; and vs. 15-16. Therefore it is the righteousness which comes through faith alone, the righteousness which justifies, the objective imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ which is the believing sinners covering according to Isaiah 61:10.

3) The reign in life.

The future result will be the "reign in life," since the justified sinner will also have been regenerated; his dead soul shall have been transplanted with a heart of flesh. Thus the "reign in life"

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[40] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 5*, p. 261.

[41] Bunyan, *Works*, I, p. 346.

here contrasts with the earlier declaration in this verse that "death reigned." While the future tense aspect of βασιλεύω, basileuō, may anticipate the believer's reigning participation in the new order established at Christ's second coming (Matt. 19:28; I Cor. 6:3), yet more likely it describes the future newness of life that follows conversion. In support of this priority consider 6:9-14, and especially v. 12 where βασιλεύω, basileuō, is used, as here, with obvious related meaning.

What then is it for the Christian to presently "reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ"? To begin with it is for the believer to recognize the singular reign of grace in his life, that is embodied in Jesus Christ, this being a supplanting of the former reign of death through sin by means of Adam. Therefore, 6:12 declares that the former tyrant is not to be heeded when he knocks seeking to gain entrance. According to 6:11, the child of God is to acknowledge that he is dead to Adam's corporate administration and overtures, and "alive unto God in Christ Jesus." This newness of life 8:2, 10, in spite of the condemned body of flesh, is variously described in the New Testament (II Cor. 3:6; Gal. 5:25; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 3:3; II Tim. 1:1). Thus the regenerate soul lives his present life, not under the dominion of sin and death, but as regnant, prevailing in life by the life of God that has made him alive. Therefore in 6:17-18, Christians, formerly "slaves of sin, . . . having been freed from sin [and death, through life become] slaves of righteousness."

So Lloyd-Jones describes what "reigning in life" means:

> We have lost the fear of death, we are no longer under the dominion of sin, we are no longer under the dominion of the devil, we can resist him and make him flee. Indeed, we are no longer under the tyranny of life itself. . . . Paul is reigning in life. He has mastered sin, Satan, life, death, everything; he is more than conqueror. This is true of us already in the present.[42]

2. The superiority of grace over sin, vs. 18-21.

It is commonly understood that here, on account of Paul's use of two conjunctions that combine to draw a strong inference concerning the past, we return to the continuance of the interrupted thought of v. 12, though with a cumulative effect. In other words, related issues concerning the main antithesis between Adam and Christ having been dealt with, a finale concerning the triumph of grace is played with the full orchestration of the Apostle's divinely inspired ability. Variations on the theme having been played out, now the final movement breaks forth.

With regard to emphasis, most of the key words that represent the doctrine of Romans thus far are mentioned in these verses, namely sin, transgression, condemnation, death, law, righteousness, justification, grace, and life, and these are all embodied in "the

[42] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 5*, p. 264.

reconciliation" described in v. 11. Yet it is "justification, grace, life" which exultantly sit at the apex of Paul's argument.

a. In man's status before God, v. 18.

The absence of any verb in this sentence, which most translations supply, such as "resulted" NASB, may suggest Paul's exclamatory enthusiasm at this point. At the same time, we have two parallel statements here that are virtually identical in their grammatical arrangement. The particular emphasis concerns man's standing before God, either condemnation or justification.

(1) Sin brings universal condemnation.

The repetition here is a reflection of Paul's pastoral heart. For him the doctrine of original sin is of the utmost importance since it is really the foundation of the gospel's universal significance. Further, it enhances our appreciation of the sovereignty of grace. The bad news here is that on account of Adam's one sin, the whole human race falls under God's encompassing condemnation.

(2) Grace brings universal justification.

The "one act of righteousness" could be more literally translated the "one [act of] justification," and Paul's intent is to contrast this glorious and incomparably greater work of grace with Adam's shameful act of disobedience that resulted in condemnation. The atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ is a singular, unrepeatable, saving event (Heb. 10:10, 14), the benefits of which are obtained through faith alone.

Furthermore, this justification is "of life to all men," or better, "justification resulting in life for all men." Here "justification" and "regeneration" are indivisibly related. The true child of God will be both right with God and alive unto God.

However, the universality here, described as "all men," incorporates all and only those who are of saving faith and the objects of Christ's designed efficacy, not "all men" in totality. Murray makes a telling argument here with reference to I Corinthians 15:22 where Paul similarly writes: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." "As the context will demonstrate the apostle is here dealing with the resurrection to life, with those who are Christ's and will be raised at his coming. The 'all' of the second clause is therefore restrictive in a way that the 'all' in the first clause is not.."[43]

b. In man's state of being, v. 19.

Once again, the close grammatical parallelism is maintained. However the change of emphasis concerns a return to the cause of man's condemnation and

[43] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 203.

justification as described in v. 18, that is original sin through Adam and original grace through Christ.

(1) Sin constitutes many sinners.

Through Adam's initial act of "disobedience," παρακοή, parakoē, his refusal to heed what God had commanded (as distinct from "transgression" in vs. 15-18), "the many," not "many," were "made," καθίστημι, kathistēmi, or better, classified by declaration and constituted as sinners. But what more precisely does this mean? Did the race issuing from Adam's loins become diseased without agreed participation? If so, how is it possible for man to be guilty as charged? Refer back to the consideration of this matter in v. 12.

Obviously Adam's progeny was not consulted concerning its father's original sin; nor was it consulted in terms of it coming into being. However, as there is responsibility incumbent upon those who have unsolicited being, so there is responsibility incumbent upon those who inherit Adam's sin. As man accepts his being in preference to nonbeing, so he accepts his nature and thus is accountable in his agreeable acceptance of it.

Here man is classified according to his parentage; man is what he is because of his filial roots and ethnicity; he is racially adamic and he agrees with his parental traits. However, whereas we are her considering man's *identification* with Adam, in v. 12 it was man's *participation* with Adam that was emphasized. Yet here, surely *identification* plainly suggests *participation*.

(2) Grace constitutes many righteous.

The parallelism at this point seems most intentional and it is packed with transcendent gospel truth. So through "the obedience of the One," that is Jesus Christ, "the many," or those under Christ's saving panoply through faith, are "made righteous," again καθίστημι, kathistēmi, or classified by declaration and constituted as righteous.

The first contrast here concerns Adam's "disobedience" and Christ's "obedience." As Adam refused to heed the will of God, so the Son of God declared, "My food is to do the will of Him [the Father] who sent Me and to do His work" (John 4:34; cf. Heb. 10:7). Hence the active obedience of Christ, his earthly conformity to the Father's will, qualified him as the One who offered passive obedience in his atonement.

The second contrast here concerns the seed of Adam being constituted "sinners" and the seed of Christ being constituted "righteous." Here the larger preceding context of Romans, especially from v. 12 onward, demands that as man has participated in the disobedience and unrighteousness of Adam, through inheritance and imputation, so the believing sinner participates in the saving obedience and righteousness of Christ by means of imputation and donation, cf. v. 17, through faith alone.[44]

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[44] Cf. Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 173-6; Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 203-6; Shedd, *Romans*, pp. 139-42.

Thus as the human condition, its inescapable tyranny, its universality, does engender despair, hopelessness, yet Paul would stimulate hope in a most logical manner. Consider that the problem started with one man; is it true that Adam originated the disease? Yes, the evidence of Scripture and experience is overwhelming. Then also consider the good news that the remedy originates with one man, the qualified Son of God. Therefore, to coin the thought of I John 4:4, "You have overcome your inheritance in Adam because greater is your adopted Second Adam, he that is for you and in you, than your father in the flesh, he that is in the world."

c. In man's reckoning with law, vs. 20-21.

Ever mindful of the Jew who sees the law looming between Adam and Christ, Paul returns to Mt. Sinai since, in view of v. 19, it is the right moment to deal with the ordained function of the law. This resolution will see Mt. Sinai as being complementary to gospel proclamation in Christ rather than in conflict. The law, rightly understood, only enhances the antitheses of condemnation and justification, sin and righteousness.

(1) Law is confronted with grace, v. 20.

"Law" here, without the article, surely refers to that "entering in" of the Mosaic administration of God's righteousness as revealed in the Pentateuch.

(a) Law stimulates sin.

The Law "entered in," παρεισέρχομαι, pareiserchomai, that is it "made its entrance alongside," though not in the sense that it merely crept in, so to speak. Rather it entered in the course of Israel's redemptive history so that "the transgression would increase," cf. 4:15; 7:13; Gal. 3:19. According to God's design, the Law was given to God's redeemed people so that they might become sensitive about the reality of their ongoing sinfulness. The remedy for such a revelation was found in the ordained sacrificial system.

More specifically, the Law was intended to bring focus on the gulf between the demands of God's perfect righteousness and man's universal unrighteousness in Adam; the purpose of the Law was as God's x-ray machine that reveals the depth and pervasiveness of corruption, "the transgression," that is all too easily hidden; while the Law is intentionally diagnostic, in no way is it remedial.

(b) Grace abounds over sin.

As the antitheses here indicate, Law and Grace are to be understood in a related manner rather than as separate entities. God's desire to manifest grace requires that it be predicated upon a confrontation with the reality of sin in all of its hideous breadth and depth. Thus, as "the sin increased," πλεονάζω, pleonazō, so "the grace abounded all the more," ὑπερπερισσεύω, huperperisseuō. The history of Israel forcefully

illustrates this truth, that is the abundance of God's grace that always dominates in the face of repeated disobedience (Neh. 9:5-31; Hos. 11:1-11). The emphasis here must not be thought of merely quantitatively but rather dynamically, even as v. 21 will emphasize. The thought that grace could super-abound only to be once again defeated by sin is unthinkable in the context here. Rather grace reigns over a foe that has been defeated once and for all. As John Kent has written:

> Join thou my soul, for thou canst tell
> How grace divine broke up thy cell,
> And loosed thy native chains;
> And still, from that auspicious day,
> How oft art thou constrained to say,
> That grace triumphant reigns.

(2) Death is confronted with life, v. 21.

Here the dynamic introduced in v. 20 is played out in full force since the thought that "grace abounded all the more" now becomes that of "grace reigning" in victorious power. Lloyd-Jones declares that here Paul, "puts the whole of the Gospel in one big, thrilling statement.,"[45] and not surprisingly he devotes four sermons to his exposition of this one verse.

(a) Sin reigns in death.

Here the power of sin is portrayed with such despotic force that it takes on personal meaning, as if it were a conquering monarch who, having taken captive a whole nation, employs this slave labor in a wide variety of devilish vocations and pays the "wages of death" (6:23).

1) Sin and power.

Thus it is sin that has "reigned," βασιλεύω, basileuō, that has held sway over the whole human race, and to such a degree that none have been able, of themselves, to escape such servitude. Man is wholly directed by the inherited nature of Adam (John 8:34). However, concerning the man in the street today, while he acknowledges sin in general as a universal problem related to imperfection, he declines to admit his helpless captivity on account of his boast in autonomy and self-determination.

2) Death and its captivity.

As a consequence, sin reigned "in [the] death [from Adam?]," that is sin reigned in the inevitable consequence of death. Man as a sinner will debate over the matter of sin; but beyond debate in human experience is the inevitability of death as an imposed divine

[45] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 5*, p. 313.

sentence. Although man will speak of death in naturalistic terms, nevertheless his inner fear and loathing of death causes him at the same time to inwardly "consider his ways" (Hag. 1:5, 7), whatever empty bravado he may outwardly express. Morris significantly points out: "The mention of *eternal life* in the second half of the verse indicates that we should understand *death* here as spiritual as well as physical."[46] Thus, in being reminded of our inescapable confrontation with the "wages" of sin, and hence the power of sin, we have a prelude to the greater power of grace. Suddenly grace becomes not an abstraction, a mere aid to virtue, but a mighty conquering force!

(b) Grace reigns in life.

We are now introduced, also by way of personification, to grace as a rival conquering monarch whose greater power presents the good news and prospect of real emancipation to citizens of the captive nation. However, by way of clarification, this reigning *grace* must be distinguished from other differing uses of the term.[47] First, assisting *grace*, according to Unitarianism, where God in general helps with grace those who help themselves. Second amoral *grace*, according to licentiousness, where God in general helps even blatant scoundrels since he overlooks their sin. Third, infused *grace*, according to Roman Catholicism, where the Church mediates grace via the sacraments to the baptized. Fourth, universal *grace*, according to Arminianism, where sufficient grace is given to all so that they might believe, if the will. None of these come close to the glory and majesty of reigning grace.

1) Grace and power.

Thus grace "reigns," again βασιλεύω, basileuō, that is it sovereignly conquers the "reign of death," including its root, and that individually as well as corporately. Then what precisely does Paul mean here by "grace"? "Unmerited/demerited favor" is surely included yet not inclusive enough as the following context suggests. Surely it must be the totality of the gospel that takes us back to God's eternal decree and gathers together the gracious saving of God's elect, as hopeless sinners, by means of the economic working of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not merely grace on offer, but grace effectively saving and keeping. John Newton has written:

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[46] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 242. Cf. Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, pp. 236-7, where death includes eternal misery in contrast with eternal life.

[47] The stimulus with regard to these negative categories comes from Lloyd-Jones' own classification at this point. *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 5*, p. 317.

Grace reigns to pardon crimson sins,
To melt the hardest hearts;
And from the work it once begins
It never once departs.

'Twas grace that called our souls at first;
By grace thus far we're come;
And grace will help us through the worst,
And lead us safely home.

2) Grace and righteousness.

Thus grace reigns "through righteousness," that is by means of the vindication of His righteousness, 3:25-26, and principally here "the gift of righteousness," v. 17. Whereas sin corrupts through disobedience, the dominion of grace, its effectual working, has absolute holy integrity, according to a "just and justifying God," 3:25-26; cf. 1:16-17. But further, it is not only the righteous character of God that is upheld and evident in this gospel of sovereign grace; rather this righteous God gratuitously imputes and imparts His righteousness to unrighteous sinners.

3) Grace and life.

Thus grace reigns "to eternal life," previously described in vs. 17-18, it having vanquished death. Of course this life is not simply linear and temporal, but rather the indwelling, saving life and "gift of God . . . in Jesus Christ our Lord" (6:23; cf. 2:7; I Tim. 6:12, 19; Tit. 1:1-2; 3:7). So "the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (I Cor. 15:45; cf. I John 1:1-3; 5:11-12, 20). Here we arrive at the living God's ultimate purpose, grace through righteousness being the means, namely bringing the dead to life so that they might "glorify Him and enjoy Him forever."

4) Grace and Jesus Christ.

Thus grace reigns "through Jesus Christ our Lord," and all of its power, righteousness, and life, are mediated through him. Thus Haldane concludes:

> Jesus Christ is that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; and the Father hath given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as He hath given Him. 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life.' The termination, then, of the reign of death over those whom He [Christ] represents, and the establishment of the reign of grace through the everlasting righteousness which He has brought in, are all by Jesus Christ. He hath abolished death. By Him came grace and truth; He brought life and immortality to light. He 'is the true God, and eternal life.' And 'to

> this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be the Lord both of the dead and the living.'[48]

(c) By way of application, Lloyd-Jones comments:

> Thank God for the power of the reign of grace. This is the ground of assurance. It is because of this that we can be certain He will never let us go. Our frail grasp often lets go of Him, but He will never let us go. Hudson Taylor used to translate the statement in Mark 11:22 which in most Bibles reads, 'Have faith in God'. He said it should be, 'Hold on to the faithfulness of God.' . . . Oh, the blessed, the powerful reign of grace! Do you feel it around and about you? Are you aware of its clutches and of its hold? Do you know of your security? It is all in the power of grace. Thank God for it![49]

Doubtless it is true that Paul intends to stimulate assurance by means of his presentation of the sin and death vanquishing gospel of sovereign grace. However, it would be equally true that the Apostle intends that such understanding stimulate the fervent worship of God as appears to be the case in 11:33-36. Genuine assurance will inevitably respond in this manner, and of course this is what Lloyd-Jones means when he concludes, "Thank God for it!"

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[48] Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 238.

[49] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 5*, pp. 354-5.

CHAPTER VIII

ROMANS 6:1-23 - THE REIGN OF GRACE AND SANCTIFIED LIBERATION

THREE interrelated elements confront the student of Romans 6 at this juncture that must be considered if a true and comprehensive understanding of the mind of God is to be grasped. They are continuity, progression, and polemic. To begin with, it ought to be obvious even from v. 1 that there is immediate continuity. Further, the vocabulary of this section covers most of the major doctrinal themes that have been taught thus far, even if not with the same proportion of emphasis. Here we continue to interact with grace, death, sin, law, life, righteousness/ unrighteousness, even justification in v. 7. However there is also progression with a polemical tone that is now injected and continues through chapter 7 as well. There is a necessary negative response that confronts the perversion of what Paul has been so passionately teaching thus far. In this same vein there is the incorporation of the new themes of "freedom" vs. 7, 20, 22, and "sanctification" vs. 19, 22, that necessarily result from the nature of the challenge that is brought against the true gospel. Hence, while it is correct to state that chapter 6 formally launches us into the realm of explicit teaching on Christian sanctification, yet chapters 6-7 emphasize this truth reactively while in chapter 8, the air having been cleared so to speak, there is a positive, climactic, and exalted presentation.

The broad connection here with chapter 5 concerns the fact that justification has resulted in reconciliation, and such union has included the supremacy of eternal life in Christ over sin and death in Adam. This triumph of Christ over Adam's sinful legacy and the Law's condemnation is climactically described in v. 21 as "the reign of grace" that has vanquished "the reign of sin and death." Hence, this sovereignty of grace, and the assurance it brings are yet open to gross misrepresentation, and thus the whole matter of the ongoing sanctified life of a true child of God is now dealt with in major detail.

Furthermore, the transition from justification to sanctification finds its fulfilment here without the necessary order, connectedness and distinctiveness of these doctrines being lost.[1] While the term "justification" is not mentioned in this chapter, yet this foundational truth undergirds the whole of its teaching. Therefore at this juncture it cannot be too strongly stated that the study of Romans in continuity is a most vital matter. Some holiness conventions have tended to focus only on Romans 5-8, and the relative neglect of Romans 1-4 in this regard has surely contributed toward a truncated understanding of biblical sanctification.

A. THE PERVERSION OF THE REIGN OF GOSPEL GRACE, VS. 1-14.

This section and vs. 15-23 are two units of thought that both commence with exclamatory questions concerning matters of great controversy. While some claim that Paul's intent here is one of teaching style after the manner of 3:1-8, in view of the Apostle's turbulent endeavors that have now reached the middle of his third missionary journey, it is difficult to avoid the inference here, concerning the matter of antinomianism, that we have a passionate

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[1] For a succinct statement on this vital matter refer to J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*, pp. 29-32, as well as pp. 326-30 where an extract from Robert Trail provides added explanation.

response to a frequently encountered objection, as 3:8 seems to plainly indicate (cf. Acts 21:21, 28; 24:5-6). When the gospel is faithfully upheld in all of its purity in holy grace, it ought to be expected that a world indulgent in sin will "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4).

1. A perverse proposition, v. 1.

In the light of the sovereignty of grace in 5:21, says Paul's challenger, ought we not logically conclude that such a doctrine gives no encouragement to quit sinning, but rather tends to promote continuance in sin and licentiousness? Further, could we not reason that the more we sin, the more that grace will be stimulated to rise to the occasion? Therefore, to sin more is to exalt grace. So let us give a round of applause for sinners and sinning! To use a human analogy, which reveals the absurdity of such reasoning, it could be suggested: "Let us encourage sickness so that healing might increase!"

Now this charge of antinomianism, which here surely envisages a disregard for law and moral conformity in the face of the certain availability of grace, seems to be the charge most often brought against Paul rather than legalism. And this rightly leads us to conclude that a true presentation of the gospel of free grace should tend to provoke such a response when the doctrine of sin is not rightly perceived. So Lloyd-Jones comments:

> There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the New Testament gospel of salvation than this, that some people might misunderstand it and misinterpret it to mean that it really amounts to this, that because you are saved by grace alone it does not matter at all what you do; you can go on sinning as much as you like because it will redound all the more to the glory of grace. This is a very good test of gospel preaching. If my preaching and presentation of the gospel of salvation does not expose it to that misunderstanding, then it is not the gospel. . . . This particular misunderstanding can only arise when the doctrine of justification by faith only is presented.[2]

2. A radical rebuttal, vs. 2-11.

It is significant that vs. 2-5, 7-11 all explicitly deal with the subject of death or dying, and this truth is also implicit in v. 6 where the "self was crucified." There is an obvious connection here with 5:21 where the "reign of death" is conquered by the triumphant "reign of grace" that results in eternal life. So here, the antithesis of death and dying is eclipsed by walking in "newness of life" v. 4 because we "live with him" v. 8 and are "alive to God in Christ Jesus." v. 11.

a. Grace brings a radical breach with sin, v. 2.

Paul's strong denial μὴ γένοιτο, mē genoito, literally, "Let it not come to pass," or "Never let it be said," unlike its usage in 3:4, 6 concerning unbelief and God's faithfulness, here the same Jewish casuistry confronts a warped understanding of the grace of God.

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[2] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, pp. 8-9.

The KJV less accurately declares, "How shall we, that are dead to son, live any longer therein?" Rather it should read, "Whoever we are who died to [the] sin [of Adam?], how shall we still live in it?" The Christian's *present condition* is not here described as being "dead to sin." Rather the aorist of ἀποθνήσκω, apothnē skō, points to a past event when we "died to [the] sin [of Adam?] But when did the believer "die to sin"? When he was truly converted, at that point of initial saving faith when he became justified and was joined in union with Christ. It was then that he was wrested from Adam's clutches and engrafted into Christ, as signified by baptism, vs. 3-4.[3] Thus Murray comments, "What the apostle has in view is the once-for-all definitive breach with sin which constitutes the identity of the believer. A believer cannot therefore live in sin; if a man lives in sin he is not a believer. If we view sin as a realm or sphere then the believer no longer lives in that realm or sphere."[4]

The exact meaning of this statement "died to sin" cannot be over stressed here on account of the vital teaching, presumably consistent, that follows using similar terminology in vs. 10-11. In particular v. 10 declares that Christ "died [aorist tense] to [not for] sin once for all" in a most decisive manner. For this reason in v. 11 the believer is to likewise consider himself "dead to sin" in the same conclusive way, and thus it is consistent to see the same finality intended here in v. 2.[5]

The corollary of this truth is that it is inconceivable that such a person, being alive unto God, should live a life that is indicative of being dead to God. Thus Paul addresses the professing Christian, "how shall we still live in sin [which signifies deadness]?" That is, how shall a child of God have a lifestyle that conforms to the god of this world's agenda? How shall a transient pilgrim seeking the Celestial City yet solicit entertainment and trade at Vanity Fair? The relationship between sin and grace is not that of necessary union, but of the widest contrast and exclusion. A patient just delivered from a serious infection does not return to the breeding ground of that infection. It is unthinkable that the prodigal son would desire to return to the pig pens he formerly served in the far country so as to stimulate more love from his father. Such reasoning is repulsive. Why would the son not do this? Because the father declares, "this son of mine was *dead* and has come to *life* again" (Luke 15:24). This then becomes the heart of Paul's subsequent reasoning, that is of the true Christian being "dead to sin [and its lifestyle]" and "alive unto God [and His righteousness]," v. 11.

b. Grace brings a radical identification with Christ, vs. 3-7.

Simply put, the almost cynical challenge of v. 1 evaluates Christianity in the most shallow of terms. It has no appreciation of the transformation that results from genuine conversion. Hence Paul responds with an explanation that involves a transfer between two opposing worlds, from death to life, from burial to

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[3] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 357-8; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 245.

[4] John Murray, *The Epistle To The Romans*, I, p. 213.

[5] James Montgomery Boice gives an excellent summary of the various interpretations that surround the meaning of "dead to sin." Indebtedness here is to his alignment with Godet, Murray, Lloyd-Jones, and Stott in this regard. *Romans, The Reign of Grace, 5:1-8:39*, II, pp. 649-656.

resurrection, from an old self to a new self, from bondage to sin to the emancipation of the life of God.

(1) Being baptized into Christ, vs. 3-4.

The fundamental truth concluding v. 2, that the believer "died to sin," becomes the stimulant of, what is to Paul patently obvious, the parallel truth of being "baptized into Christ Jesus," that is being "baptized into His death." When did the believer "die to sin?" At his conversion. So the "baptism into Christ" coincides with this conversion, and apart from theological predisposition, it is difficult to avoid the obvious truth that water baptism and its significance is involved in the thrust of this verse. Therefore, "Do you not know?" or literally, "Are you ignorant?" ἀγνοέω, agnoeō, suggests that the saints at Rome ought to understand what is about to be taught.[6] Hence it seems inconceivable that Christians, as addressees, would conclude that, as some commentators have declared, the ordinance of baptism has no meaning in vs. 3-4 whatsoever.[7]

(a) Baptism into his death, v. 3.

"Baptism" is a word that suggests, to most people, the application of water in a Christian ordinance. This being so, misplaced focus is directed toward the sign rather than the far greater importance of its significance. Certainly Paul has water baptism in mind here, yet only in a secondary sense. What is of supreme concern is that which water baptism pictures, and that is real and personal union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

1) Baptism as thorough identification.

The English words "baptize/baptism" are transliterations of βαπτίζω, baptizō / βάπτω, baptō / βάπτισμα, baptisma, and as such give no indication of their meaning. Greek lexicons are in common agreement that the essential meaning is to dip, immerse, wash (and cleanse in a thorough sense), plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm."[8] Note that in the New Testament there is an alternative word for "sprinkling," ῥαντίζω, rhantizō, (only Mark 7:4; Heb. 9:13, 19, 21; 10:22).[9] Thus Christian baptism, as an ordinance, is a literal overwhelming or plunging or dipping with regard to water (Matt.

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[6] Moo comments: "By the date of Romans, 'baptize' had become almost a technical expression for the rite of Christian initiation by water, and this is surely the meaning the Roman Christians would have given the word." In a footnote he also suggests that most, perhaps even all, of Paul's references to βαπτίζω, baptizō, are analogous to Christian water baptism. *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 359.

[7] Lloyd-Jones declares: "I go further and suggest that to argue that the Apostle has water baptism in his mind in any shape or form here is to give prominence to baptism that the Apostle Paul never gives to it." *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, p. 34.

[8] W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, pp. 131-2.

[9] Ibid., p. 741.

28:19; Acts 8:36-39). More figurative usage still retains the same basis idea of thorough identification, whether with suffering (Luke 12:50), the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13), or individuals such as Moses (I Cor. 10:1-2), Paul (I Cor. 1:13), or Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

2) Baptism as thorough identification with Jesus Christ.

Here the child of God was "baptized [aorist tense] into Christ Jesus," that is he has, through faith, really and intensely united to his Savior and also ritually identified with him as well, just as Israel intensely identified with Moses and this union was represented by their passage through the Red Sea (I Cor. 10:1-2). But further, the believer was also "baptized [aorist tense] into His [Christ's] death," that is he who was justly under sentence of death through sin identified with Christ's substitutionary death, as if entombed with Him. Death with Christ is a radical breach with the former life in which sin reigned. To die with Christ in intimate union is to renounce the dominion of the past economy of sin, especially in a personal, though not a perfectionist, sense.

In contemporary conversation, it is often said concerning a disputed matter: "That is a dead issue!" In other words, the point under discussion has become settled; it is over with and put to rest. That is the attitude of the Christian who, through justification by faith in Christ, has now become joined to Christ. As Christ died for sin, so we who are united with him have died to sin. Boice puts it this way: "[A]s a result of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection, that old life of sin in Adam is past for us also. We can never go back to it. We have been brought from that old life, the end of which was death, into a new life, the end of which is righteousness."[10] Therefore the suggestion that we can blithely put a word in for sin since grace will be enhanced is a travesty of gospel truth. Not surprisingly, in the history of the Christian church, baptism has always been regarded as a radical, once and for all, signification of Christian commitment. And dare I say it? It is the thoroughness of immersion that best pictures the saved sinners thorough renunciation of sin and envelopment in Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

(b) Baptism into his life, v. 4.

The "therefore" here indicates an obvious connection with v. 3, as does the word "baptism." However, added truth concerns the concept of being "buried," then "raised" and resultant "newness of life." The most contentious matter to be faced here concerns whether the baptism picture of vs. 3 continues on into vs. 4, that is whether the burial/resurrection picture is an extension of the baptism picture of the

[10] Boice, *Romans, The Reign of Grace*, II, p. 653.

believer's thorough identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. In rejecting the baptism/burial/resurrection association, as we shall see, John Murray "protesteth too much" when he declares: "The assumption of so many commentators, non-baptist as well as baptist, to the effect that the apostle has in view the mode of immersion as vividly portraying our burial with Christ and emergence with him in his resurrection is without warrant."[11]

1) Buried with Christ in his death.

Here the child of God was "buried together [entombed with Christ][12] through [the] baptism into the death [of Christ]," presumably at conversion. That is baptism also pictures placement in the tomb with Christ. Now the reality here is that the "I", that is my old sinful self was crucified and buried with Christ, v. 6. A radical and thorough disjunction took place that even the new convert probably did not fully grasp at that initial stage. Nevertheless, in true conversion such is the overwhelming breach that takes place. And the question that then must be faced is, in the light of water baptism being indicated in v. 3, what mode of baptism best preserves this thorough immersion into Christ's death?[13]

2) Raised with Christ in his life.

The obvious continuity drives us to the essential point that, negatively speaking, while the believer has thoroughly identified with Christ's death, that is his death to sin, positively speaking it is inevitably true that the genuine child of God has been made alive, regenerated, granted "newness of life," cf. 8:9-11, even as he thoroughly identified with Christ's resurrection according to "the glory of the Father."

Christ being "raised," ἐγείρω, egeirō, another aorist passive like "died" v. 2, "baptized" v. 3, and "buried" here, continues the

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[11] Murray, *Epistle To The Romans*, I, p. 215. *Boice* is similarly dismissive when he comments that, "the [6th] chapter [of Romans] has nothing whatever to do with baptism." Ibid., p. 641.

[12] Note that συνθάπτω, sunthaptō, here and βαπτίζω, baptizō, in v. 3 are not only appositional in the text but also both are aorist passives.

[13] To avoid the thrust of this argument, Murray makes a rather astonishing comment: "[W]e have no more warrant to find a reference to the mode of baptism in συνετάφημεν,Ϲταυρώθη [crucified together] in vs. 6, ἐνεδύσασθε, [clothed] in Gal. 3:27, all of which bear no analogy to the mode of baptism." *Epistle To The Romans*, I, p. 215. Yet here in vs. 4 there is the closest possible relationship drawn between "burial" and "baptism"! Further, where is there justification for demanding that union with Christ must be tied to one illustration? Certainly Luke 12:50 gives good reason for Christ's crucifixion being understood as "a baptism to be baptized with." As for Gal. 3:27, either it has no reference to baptism at all, and in context this perspective is difficult to digest, or else it incorporates a distinctive description of baptism into the essential truth of union with Christ. This being the case, which mode of baptism best parallels the thorough identification of being "clothed [thoroughly outfitted] with Christ"?

conversion identification that results in the new believer becoming "alive unto God" v. 11, and therefore a "slave to righteousness" v. 18. The agency of Christ's resurrection, and thus the regeneration of the child of God, cf. Tit. 3:5-7, is "the glory of the Father," an encompassing term probably focusing on, "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:17-19). This being true, it is inconceivable that a new believer would commence [14] to "walk in newness of life" and at the same time direct his steps toward his former life of carnal indulgence.

Of course, if the burial proposition commencing this verse is pictured by immersion in baptism, it is difficult to deny that the linked resurrection proposition is likewise representative of emergence in baptism. Thus Haldane gives an excellent description of the relationship that exists here between God's appointed sign and its significance.

> Christians are therefore represented as buried with Him by baptism into His [Christ's] death, in token that they really died with Him; and if buried with him, it is not that they shall remain in the grave, but that, as Christ arose from the dead, they should also arise. Their baptism, then, is the figure of their complete deliverance from the guilt of sin,[15] signifying that God places to their account the death of Christ as their own death: it is also a figure of their purification and resurrection and resurrection for the service of God.[16]

(2) Being united to Christ, vs. 5-7.

While the same essential truth is described as in v. 4, that of Christian conversion bringing about a radical breach with sin, yet it is presented here with new and developed features. The baptism representation recedes and a new picture, not wholly unrelated, emerges of the believer's close identification with Christ, that is of "growth together" that results in emancipation and resurrection. The major theme of death retains its importance in reflecting the glory of deliverance from bondage, and resurrection life.

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[14] The ingressive aorist here of περιπατέω, peripateō, indicates the beginning of this walk.

[15] Though this statement is good in general, we would at this point side with Moo's comment on v. 2: "The idea, then, is of a decisive separation from sin. This separation could be a separation from the penalty [guilt] due because of sin [referring to Haldane at this point], but the context demonstrates that Paul is talking not about the penalty, but about the power, of sin (cf. v. 6b)." *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 357. Lloyd-Jones rejects Haldane's reference here to the primacy of "guilt" on similar grounds. *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, p. 19.

[16] Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 253. Note that there is no explicit reference here to the mode of baptism. However, in the light of this exposition it is hardly necessary. In support of this baptism/burial/resurrection association, refer to C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle To The Romans*, p. 123; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 133; W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 162.

(a) Raised up with him from death, v. 5.

The "if" clause here assumes the assertion to be true. Hence, to paraphrase, "Since we have become joined with Him in the likeness [cf. 5:14] of His [Christ's] death, then certainly we shall [continue to be joined with Him in the likeness] of His resurrection." The term σύμφυτος, sumphutos, is stressing growth together while the associated meaning of planting or grafting is not altogether out of sight.[17] Moule well describes this union as being, "vitally connected. Not implanting but coalescence is the idea."[18] John 12:24 has application here in that the fruit of redeemed souls that Christ produces originates from the burial of he as a grain in the ground that then emerges as a fruit bearing plant. That spiritual produce comes forth with Christ in fruitful union.

The "likeness " of the believer to his Savior in death and resurrection must not be pressed too far any more than the analogy of John 12:24. However, the perfect tense of "become" γίνομαι, ginomai, indicates that this correspondence began at conversion and is ongoing, even maturing. Suffice to say that the Son of God and His spiritual progeny both encounter death and resurrection, even as one thief on the cross encountered death and life with the Lord Jesus.

(b) Raised up with him from our old self, v. 6.

The death and resurrection analogy continues, except that a new undergirding element called "our old self" NASB, NIV, or more literally "our old man" KJV, NKJV, is introduced; compare "the old man" (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9).

1) The old man identified.

Here and in Colossians 3:9, it is clear that this "old man" was put to death in the past, that is the point of conversion. Thus a present conflict between two natures is rejected. Rather the "old man" is, as Moo well puts it, "what we were 'in Adam' —the 'man' of the old age, who lives under the tyranny of sin and death."[19] Significantly, in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Faithful relates that, having been converted, he later encountered and spurned Adam the First who is further described as "the old

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[17] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle To The Romans*, pp. 306-7.

[18] H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Romans*, p. 113.

[19] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 373. Barrett similarly writes: "[T]he 'old man' is Adam—or rather, ourselves in union with Adam, and that the 'new man' is Christ—or rather, ourselves in union with Christ. Compare Gal. 3:27; I Cor. 15:22, 47 ff." *The Epistle To The Romans*, p. 125. Lloyd -Jones comments: "The 'old man' is the man that I used to be in Adam. . . . It is the man I once was, but which I am no longer." *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, pp. 62-3. Likewise Stott describes the "old man" as, "the person we used to be in Adam. So what was crucified with Christ was not a part of us called our old nature , but the whole of us as we were in our pre-conversion state." *The Message of Romans*, p. 176.

man."[20] Here a right understanding of the present imperatives in Ephesians 4:22-24 is illustrated, that is a present repudiation of "the 'powers' of that old age [that] continue to influence the believer and must be continually resisted."[21]

2) The old man crucified.

So this "old man" was "crucified," aorist passive again of συσταυρόω, sustauroō, for the purpose that, "the body of sin might be nullified [cf. 3:3], dethroned [aorist passive of καταργέω, katargeō]." This crucifixion is not to be confused with Galatians 5:24 where present mortification of the body is involved (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5). Rather here the decisive cleavage was made at conversion between sin's kingdom and its human head, and the Lord Jesus Christ's redemptive kingdom.[22] As a result "the body of sin," that is the present sin-dominated, earthly body, the vehicle of the new man, is rendered "de-fanged," alienated from its former head.[23]

3) The new man identified.

While the "new man" here is implicit, in Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9 he is explicitly described. He is what the believer is in Christ, that is a "new creature [species]" (II Cor. 5:17). However the identifying feature here is that, according to his new classification, he is no longer a "slave to sin [and thus Adam's racial legacy]." The "new man" has a new Master, and therefore he is not subject to the dominion of the former economy and its despotic head (6:9, 14). This new transfer of allegiance is well illustrated by Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* when he informs assailing Apollyon:

> I was born, indeed, in your dominions, but your service was hard, and your wages such as a man could not live on. . . . But I have let

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[20] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor, III, p. 118.

[21] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 374. Lloyd-Jones gives a similar and longer explanation concerning Ephesians 4:22-24, as well as a helpful illustration. *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, pp. 63-64.

[22] John Stott puts this matter very clearly: "There are in fact, two quite distinct ways in which the New Testament speaks of crucifixion in relation to holiness. The first is our death to sin through identification with Christ; the second is our death to self through imitation of Christ. On the one hand, we have been crucified with Christ. But on the other we have crucified (decisively repudiated) our sinful nature with all its desires, so that every day we renew this attitude by taking up our cross and following Christ to crucifixion. The first is a legal death, a death to the penalty [power?] of sin; the second is a moral death, a death to the power of sin. The first belongs to the past, and is unique and unrepeatable; the second belongs to the present, and is repeatable, even continuous. I died to sin (in Christ) once; I die to self (like Christ) daily. It is with the first of these two deaths that Romans 6 is chiefly concerned, although the first is with a view to the second, and the second cannot take place without the first." *The Message of Romans*, p. 176.

[23] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, pp. 68-80; Murray, *The Epistle To The Romans*, I, pp. 220-21.

> myself to another, even to the King of princes. . . . O thou destroying Apollyon! to speak the truth, I like his service, his wages, his servants, his government, his company, and country, better than thine; and, therefore, leave off to persuade me further; I am his servant, and I will follow him.[24]

4) The old man/new man illustrated.

> There was once a rugged horseman, advanced in years and renowned for his lusty ancestry and lifestyle. His lively horse seemed agreeably to know of his master's every sordid and profane haunt, so much so that where his master went, so his steed was eager to go as well. Likewise, where the horse desired to go, so the master was happy to comply; for the horseman and his horse were of one mind in their travels. Arriving at a favorite haunt, it was frequently said, "Hear comes the old man riding his old companion. But one day, this "old man" stopped for lunch at a roadside inn he had never visited before. Inside he found the food different from anything he had ever tasted in his life. There he also conversed with a man who told of good news which he gladly received; the result was that the "old man" was old no longer. He had, in repudiating his carnal ancestry, become a "new man," and now he pondered all of the new destinations he intended to visit. His whole itinerary would now change. Thus he went on his way, mounted his trusty horse, only to discover an unexpected problem. As a "new man" he now wanted to go to places his old companion did not want to go (Gal. 5:16-18). So he faced the necessity of commanding his horse to obey his orders. The horse continued to oppose its new master. But the "new man" was committed to keeping his rebellious horse in check. He learned to continually pull in and direct with the reins this earthly vehicle so that he might arrive at his newly assigned destination (I Cor. 9:27).

(c) Raised up with him by the power of justification, v. 7.

An accurate translation here is of vital importance. The KJV reads, "For he that is dead is freed from sin." The NASB reads, "for he who has died is freed from sin." Both correctly indicate the close connection with v. 6, but a more literal rendering would be, "for he who has died [aorist] has been justified [perfect of δικαιόω, dikaioō] from sin." Note that "being freed" as a result of justification in vs. 18, 20, 22, is a different Greek verb, [ἐλευθερόω, eleutheroō].

Hence Paul here has more in mind than an illustrative Hebrew proverb declaring that a dead man is free from sin, which thought is not ultimately true.[25] Rather, the believer "who has died [with Christ],"

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[24] Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 111-12.

[25] So Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 377, yet such a secular use of δικαιόω, dikaio, is so out of keeping with the Apostle's usage of this term elsewhere, namely always "to justify." Lloyd-Jones argues that Paul's use of

who has been "baptized into His death "v. 3, has been "buried with Him" v. 4, has "become united with Him in the likeness of His death" v. 5, has been "crucified with Him" v. 6, has been "justified from sin," raised to newness of life, emancipated unto righteousness, vs. 4-6, 8-10, 17-18.

Murray puts the matter so well:

> The decisive breach with the reigning power of sin is viewed after the analogy of the kind of dismissal which a judge gives when an arraigned person is justified. Sin has no further claim upon the person who is thus vindicated. The judicial aspect from which deliverance from the power of sin is to be viewed needs to be appreciated. It shows that the forensic is present not only in justification but also in that which lies at the basis of sanctification. A judgment is executed upon the power of sin in the death of Christ (cf. John 12:31) and deliverance from this power on the part of the believer arises from the efficacy of this judgment.[26]

Simply put, the justified believer, in his sin having been crucified with Christ, has been set free *from* that sin, its powerful claim, its ownership, its dominion. Such a release directs him to respond to grace, but not abuse it. As Isaac Watts has written:

Shall we go on to sin
  Because thy grace abounds;
Or crucify the Lord again,
  And open all his wounds?

Forbid it, mighty God!
  Nor let it e'er be said,
That we whose sins are crucified
  Should raise them from the dead.

We will be slaves no more,
  Since Christ has made us free;
Has nailed our tyrants to his cross,
  And bought our liberty.

c. Grace brings a radical reckoning with Christ, vs. 8-11.

While the effecting union of the believer with Christ remains Paul's ongoing concern, the focus now changes direction toward Christ's vital, risen, and exalted relationship with God. Such a perspective is then intended to enlarge the believer's appreciation of his vital participation with this risen Christ.

"he" here rather than the expected "us" suggests "a general, universal, axiomatic statement," *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, p. 88. But again, it seems better to regard this as perhaps a stylistic touch rather than blur the Pauline use of δικαιόω, dikaioō. Of course it is possible that in quoting a popular epigram Paul incorporates δικαιόω, dikaioō, to make a distinctive point, as Cranfield suggests, *Epistle To The Romans*, pp. 310-11.

[26] Murray, *Epistle To The Romans*, I, p. 222. In further support that v. 7 here involves the doctrine of justification, refer to Fraser, Haldane, Hodge, Morris, Moule.

(1) We are alive with Christ, vs. 8-9.

The thought of "walking in newness of life" v. 4 is now expounded upon. Formerly dead in sin, the Christian is now spiritually alive, awakened in his desolate soul, regenerated. Of course such animation is inseparably connected with God's holy character (John 14:26), so that the imparted life is morally pure and a stimulant to holy affections. Further, as in Ephesians 2:1-6, Christ is the initial and ongoing mediator of this life. Here is the feature that distinguishes a genuine from a counterfeit child of God.

(a) We live because he lives, v. 8.

Paul will not leave us contemplating the benefits of death as described in v. 7. To paraphrase here, "Since we died with Christ, we believe that we shall live in union with Him." The protasis is a repetition of the teaching of vs. 3-6, while the apodosis is the point of new emphasis, the transmission of sustaining life from Christ to those who are joined with Him in His resurrection. The future tense here of συζάω, suzaō, describes the enlivening that, having commenced at conversion, yet continues until the future day of resurrection.

Sterile evangelicalism tends to focus on Jesus Christ's substitutionary, transactional, justifying death as a notion to be acknowledged; but the necessity of consequent new life in the saved soul united to Christ is not accentuated as Paul does here and in the verses that follow. Such new life has evident symptoms that concern new appetites and capacities in much the same way as the man born blind in John 9, having received new sight, desired to know about Christ and testify about him, "one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see," v. 25.

(b) He lives because he mastered death, v. 9.

The doctrine of the believer's death/burial/resurrection identification with Jesus Christ is based on objective truth, the real, historic event of the Son of God's encounter with and conquest of death. The life that has come to the regenerated and justified believer, v. 8, is based upon the resurrection life that the dead Jesus Christ subsequently manifested.

However, this divine resurrection was unique and climactic. With regard to the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11-17), Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43), and Lazarus (John 11:1-46), here Jesus meets the *works* of death and temporarily defeats them. These were all instances of resurrection to physical life. But at his own crucifixion Jesus encounters death itself as the Son of God. J. Gresham Machen appropriately comments here:

> Do you not see, my friends? What we are trying to establish is not the resurrection of an ordinary man, not the resurrection of a man who is to us a mere *x* or *y*, not the resurrection of a man about whom we know nothing, but the resurrection of Jesus. There is a tremendous presumption against the resurrection of any ordinary man, but when you

> come really to know Jesus as He is pictured to us in the Gospels you will say that whereas it is unlikely that any ordinary man should rise from the dead, in His case the presumption is exactly reversed. It is unlikely that any ordinary man should rise; but it is unlikely that *this* man should not rise; it may be said of this man that it was impossible that He should be holden of death.[27]

So it is in this capacity that Jesus is "never to die again; death no longer is master [κυριεύω, kurieuō, has lordly dominion] over Him." His resurrection was unto eternal glory (Rev. 11"15). To Timothy the Apostle declares that this Christ, "abolished [nullified, canceled] death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). Thus Paul exalts, "thanks be to God, who gives us [in union with His Son] the victory [over death] through our [victorious] Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:57).

(2) We are alive unto God, vs. 10-11.

Now follows, as an expansion of v. 8, the theological truth concerning the historic reality of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection maintained in v. 9. This doctrinal explication leads to the believer's responsibility as he intimately participates in this truth.

(a) Christ has finally broken with sin, v. 10.

`For what *purpose* did Christ conquer death by resurrection, never to die again? Like I Corinthians 15:3, where "Christ died *for our sins*," so here, "He died *to sin* once for all." Yet the language here suggests that this was a death like none other, a distinguishing death.

1) He died to sin.

There is terrible encounter described here. The language, "He died *to* [not *for*] sin," is identical here with the believer having "died to sin" in vs. 2, 11, cf. vs. 6-7. Yet Jesus, being sinless, could not have died to sin indwelling his nature (II Cor. 5:21; I John 3:5). However, ask yourself, "When did Jesus Christ draw closest to sin and death? When did he descend into the deepest abyss of darkness?" The answer is obvious, so that as the believer is to have a radical death breach with sin, so the Son of God likewise, though in an infinitely greater, inaugural degree, had a death breach with sin; that is he met it, suffered by it, plunged to its very courts, yet still died to it in his absolute repudiation of its hellish nature and thus vanquished its overtures. Simply put, Jesus "died to death, and sin which it represents." Thus Jesus "died to sin" when, as he himself declared, "I have authority to lay it [My life] down, and I have authority to take it up again" (John 10:18).

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[27] J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, pp. 214-5.

Lloyd-Jones explains that, "He [Christ] died to that whole relationship to sin into which He once put Himself voluntarily for our salvation. He has died unto it as a power, as something that reigns, as we have seen in chapter 5 – something that has a realm and a rule and an authority."[28]

There is also decisive victory described here, for He died to sin "once for all" ἐφάπαξ, ephapax, (cf. Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10), a strengthened form. Thus Christ so dealt death a fatal blow, he so triumphed over sin, that his victory has an eternal finality to it, a complete satisfaction in it, and an unrepeatable glory about it. Therefore, that past historic triumph is also a present and eternal triumph for the Christian who is united to Christ.

2) He lives to God.

So the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension to the Father is a corollary of the fact that he "died to death and sin." Thus he now "lives to [or *for*] God," that is, in an exalted sense, he continues to "do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). In other words, that will relate to the practical thrust of v. 11, Jesus having returned to the Father is consumed with being godly in the presence of God.[29]

(b) Christians have finally broken with sin, v. 11.

Paul has not left behind the gross proposition of v. 1. Rather he now assaults it with new and logical vigor, except that his approach is one of practical exhortation. Vs. 1-10 have all been concerned with doctrine; now the application is forcefully pressed home to the Christians in Rome

Therefore, in the light of your identification with this Christ who really "died to sin" and now really "lives to God," so "reckon yourselves" to be "dead to sin" and "alive to God." Here λογίζομαι, logizomai, means "to account as true, to focus on the reality of a situation, to regard as the actual state of affairs." It does not mean to assert what in fact is not true, to mentally conceive above the reality of this world, to think with determination so as to bring about change.[30] Rather it means to live in

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[28] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, p. 103. Also refer to the similar explanation of Murray, *Epistle To The Romans*, I, pp. 224-5.

[29] While it is true, as Lloyd-Jones states, that "Christ is no longer 'in the realm of sin and death'. He is in the realm of God, and of glory, and of majesty," *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, p. 110, yet the text here describes a state of active being, of "living to God." Thus, "his [Christ's] resurrection has given him new power to carry out God's will and purpose," Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 379. Morris comments: "The life that follows is a life singly devoted to God (for living 'to' cf. 14:7-8). *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 255.

[30] As John Stott writes: "This 'reckoning' is no make-believe. It is not screwing up our faith to believe what we do not believe. We are not to pretend that our old nature has died, when we know perfectly well it has not." *The Message of Romans*, p. 179. Murray similarly states that, "it is not by reckoning these to be facts that they become facts." *Epistle To The Romans*, I, p. 226.

conformity with the reality of your being. Thus it is vital to understand that Paul's address is to genuine Christians. For the counterfeit believer, it is futile for him to attempt this accounting of one's self. Such reckoning becomes a fatal delusion.

Thus a life is to be lived that is consistent with and appreciative of the reality of authentic conversion, and this emphasis will be expanded upon in vs. 12-14. But first, the life lived starts with a mental reckoning and agreement. This is what Paul calls for here. The true child of God is to embrace who he is; he is to know who he really is.

Consider the Prodigal Son of Luke 15. Having been reconciled to his Father, yet imagine that his body, having been used to pig-pen living, makes some lustful suggestions to the soul of this young man. He in turn tells his father how disturbed he is about this. In response the father gives a strong exhortation: "My son, realize that you are dead to the kingdom of the pig-pen and alive unto your new home with me. You have died to that former lifestyle and are now live in my kingdom. Wake up to your present status; then live in accord with it."

1) The reality is, you *have* died to sin.

   Its power and reign, its condemnation and captivity, have been dethroned. Its establishment in the heart has been cast down, as has the law as a handmaiden (Rom. 7:4).

2) The reality is, you *have* become alive unto God.

   As a son of God (Rom. 8:14) and new species (II Cor. 5:17), your former life of servitude, degradation and shame has been supplanted by a new nobility and heirship (Rom. 8:17).

3. A radical exhortation, vs. 12-14.

We know move from the realm of right "reckoning," which really involves focus of the soul and mind,[31] to consequent "active response." A young man talks with a friend of the girl he loves, though with many doubts. But his friend responds. "Man, wake up! Realize that she truly loves you!" The young man, then revives. "Yes, she really does love me. How could I ever doubt it?" But this is not enough, merely to reckon on this fact. He must respond and go and ask her to marry him. So here, we are now to act upon that which we understand to be real concerning our Christian status.

The Apostle Peter addresses this same matter. As a Christian *is* holy being part of a "holy nation" in a declarative sense, having been "called out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9), so he has to grasp this truth as a present reality. Thus in

[31] John Stott is correct when he writes: "So the major secret of holy living is in the mind. It is in knowing, v. 6, that our former self was crucified with Christ, in knowing, v. 3, that baptism into Christ is baptism into his death and resurrection, and in considering, v. 11, that through Christ we are dead to sin and alive unto God. We are to recall, to ponder, to grasp, to register these truths until they are integral to our mindset that a return to the old life is unthinkable." *The Message of Romans*, p. 180.

accounting or reckoning the truthfulness of this present state of being , as a consequence he is to live a consistent lifestyle, that is "die to sin and live to righteousness" (I Pet. 2:24).

a. Do not let sin reign in your body, v. 12.

In this exhortation, a right understanding of the expression, "your mortal body," is of crucial importance. In an expanded translation we have described, "your physical body that is subject to death on account of corruption," and Haldane, Lloyd-Jones, and Murray have good reasons for strongly asserting this point.[32] Reasons for this include parallels with "our body of sin" in v. 6, "the members of your body," v. 13, "the weakness of your flesh," v. 19, being "in the flesh, [with its] sinful passions, . . . the members of our body," 7:5, "the law of sin which is in my members. . . . the body of this death," 7:23-24.

Clearly Paul describes our physical bodies as being the source of lustful propositioning, of desires that confront the "new person in Christ Jesus," so that a continuous conflict rages in this life (7:14-25; Gal. 5:17). These solicitations are of the nature of the human body so that it seeks "obedience to its lusts." But the "therefore" here, in the light of the "reckoning" of v. 11, directs us "not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies." In other words, the believer, with his heavenly nobility through being united with Christ, is to direct this vehicle of the flesh and not be driven by it. His renewed mind is to order his steps.

Lloyd-Jones well encapsulates this whole matter as follows:

> I myself as a new man in Christ am dead indeed unto sin, I have nothing more to do with it, and it has nothing more to do with me [cf. Gal. 6:14]. I have finished with it as such – I myself. But it is here still in my mortal body, and it will continue to worry me, and I shall have to deal with it as long as I am in the mortal body. Thank God, I know that it can never get me back under its dominion; never again can it master me, never again can it ruin my soul. Impossible! All it can do is to worry me in the body. It cannot affect my salvation, it cannot affect my final destiny – 'sin shall not have dominion over you.' 'Reckon ye yourselves therefore to be dead indeed to unto sin, but alive unto God.' Yes! but in the meantime it will go on worrying you. But do not let it master, do not let it reign over your mortal body.[33]

b. Do sanctify your body unto God, v. 13.

Here the relationship between the "new man" and his "mortal [carnal] body" is expounded upon. While the KJV translates here: "Neither *yield* ye your members . . . but *yield* yourselves" the NASB more accurately translates the verb as follows, "and do not go on *presenting* . . . but *present* yourselves," and thus avoids the misunderstanding that Paul is here exhorting a passive response of yieldedness.[34]

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[32] Haldane, contra Calvin who interprets "sinful nature," *Commentary on Romans*, p. 263; Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, pp. 151-5; Murray, *Epistle To The Romans*, I, p. 227.

[33] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, p. 155. Also refer to a similar exposition of this truth by Boice, *Romans, The Reign of Grace, 5:1-8:39*, II, pp. 681-3.

[34] A major thrust of J. C. Ryle in his classic *Holiness* is the repudiation of a popular view of sanctification that claims that the Christian life is advanced by a passive, decisive act of faith, a response to "let go and let God," akin to the prior act of faith that justifies. He writes that, "the word ['yield yourselves'] will not bear the

The meaning of παρίστημι, paristēmi, is to "[actively] present," that is "offer by way of sacrificial service" as 12:1 so well illustrates.[35] The "members of your body" refer, in parallel with "our body of sin" in v. 6, to the physical components that comprise the body as a whole that accommodates the "new man." Note the right dualism here where the person of the believer is distinct from the physical vehicle which he temporarily inhabits in this life.

(1) Negative sanctification, v. 13a.

The present tense here of παρίστημι, paristēmi, refers to a pattern of ongoing behavior that is to stop. Because of the radically new status and allegiance of the Christian, v. 11, he is to cease offering his bodily parts as "instruments/weapons" as if in the constant military service of unrighteousness personified, that is sin as a commanding, tyrant. As Thomas Manton suggests, this activity could be likened to spiritual treason, "because sin is a usurper, whereas God hath full and clear right both to our bodies and our souls, for he made them both. . . . Now he is a traitor to his country that supplieth the enemy with arms; you wrong God, and wrong your own bodies and souls."[36]

(2) Positive sanctification, v. 13b.

The (ingressive) aorist tense here of παρίστημι, paristēmi, refers to a pattern of behavior, a presentation that is to be immediately commenced and continued. The body is to be offered in the service of righteousness personified, that is Jesus Christ the righteous one (I John 2:1; cf. I Cor. 1:30). But from where comes the dynamic that initiates this commitment? It is the presupposition that such a person has become "alive from the dead," and thus alive unto God. Haldane adds: "Here again Christians are addressed as those who know their state. They are already in one sense raised from the dead. They have a spiritual life, of which they were by nature entirely destitute, and of which unbelievers are not only altogether destitute, but which they cannot even comprehend."[37]

c. Do yield to the reign of grace, v. 14.

Here is an inclusive, grand and triumphant declaration. In an expanded form we translate: "The accomplishment of serving God with your body shall be on account of the fact that sin shall not have lordly dominion over you. The reason

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sense of 'placing ourselves passively in the hands of another.' Any Greek student can tell us that the sense is rather that of actively 'presenting' ourselves for use, employment, and service. . . . But, on the other hand, it would not be difficult to point out at least twenty-five or thirty distinct passages in the Epistles [of Paul] where believers are plainly taught to use active personal exertion, and are addressed as responsible for doing energetically what Christ would have them do, and are not told to 'yield yourselves' up as passive agents and sit still, but to arise and work." p. xvi.

[35] Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 258.

[36] Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, XI, p. 249.

[37] Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 264.

for this is that you are not subject to bondage under the law's tyrannical reign, but rather are under the new and conquering administration of grace."

Because the obvious sense of this verse has been frequently challenged, some definitions are in order here. "Sin" in context here concerns "our body of sin," v. 6, that is the "presenting [of] the members of your body to sin," v. 13. "Be master," κυριεύω, kurieuō, describes the dominion that sin normally exercises over the "mortal body," v. 12. "Law" is the law of God incorporated in the Old Testament, but principally the Mosaic administration of that statutory righteousness in terms of demand and condemnation (Gal. 3:10-12, 19; 4:21; 5:3-4).[38] The parallel here with 7:1, 4, "you also were made to die to the Law," gives strong support for this definition. "Grace" in context here must refer to "the reign of grace," 5:17, 20-21, that is grace as a new gospel administration that triumphs over sin and law.

The expressions, "under law" ὑπο νόμον, hupo nomon, and "under grace" ὑπο χάριν, hupo charin, describe being "under," that is "being subject to the dominion and mastery of," as 3:9 illustrates where Jews and Greeks are all "under sin." The present tense here also confirms the fact that "n*ot* being under law, but under grace," is an essential truth with regard to ongoing sanctification, in contradistinction to the emphasis of Westminster Calvinism, which promotes the Decalogue as a sanctifying stimulus.[39] Thus spiritual growth in the Christian involves not being under the administration of Moses, but rather under the administration of reigning grace.[40] Jesus Christ does not embody or improve upon Moses; He has superceded him (Matt. 17:5; John 1:17). So John Bunyan writes in his pamphlet, *Of the Law and a Christian*, "[T]he Christian hath now nothing to do with the law, as it thundereth and burneth on Sinai, or as it bindeth the conscience to wrath and displeasure of God for sin; for from its thus appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ."[41] Joseph Hart has well written:

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[38] Consider the most immediate context of v. 15 which suggests Jewish casuistry, as well as 5:20 where "the Law came in" and 7:1 concerning "those who know the law," both of which references Murray attributes to Moses yet not here in v. 14. *Epistle To The Romans*, I, pp. 207, 228-9, 240. Refer to Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 387-91.

[39] The Westminster Confession of Faith describes the Moral Law, that is the Ten Commandments, as applicable to "true believers . . . as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; . . . It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin." Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, III, pp. 641-2. Presbyterian *Robert Dabney* writes: "A third and equally essential use [of the Decalogue] appears to the believer, after his adoption. He is 'chosen in Christ that he should be holy'; 'redeemed from all iniquity to be Christ's peculiar people, zealous of good works.' This great end, the believers sanctification, can only be attained in practice, by giving him a holy rule of conduct. Such a rule is the Law. It is to be as assiduously observed, as the guide to that holiness which is the fruit of adoption, as though its observance could earn adoption." Systematic Theology, p. 354. We would suggest that Paul here, and elsewhere, 7:1-4; I Cor. 9:20-21; II Cor. 3:1-18; Gal. 3:23-26, is teaching the opposite of these declarations.

[40] Moo writes of not being under "a force that brought condemnation of sin," that is "the old Realm [of Moses]," that which meant being "subject to the constraining and sin-strengthening regime of the old age." On the other hand, "to be 'under grace' is to be subject to the new age in which freedom from the power of sin is available [which teaching proceeds from 5:20-21]. *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 389.

[41] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor, II, p. 388.

The law was never meant to give
  New strength to man's lost race;
We cannot act before we live,
  And life proceeds from grace.

But grace and truth by Christ are given;
  To him must Moses bow;
Grace fits the new-born soul for heaven,
  And truth informs us how.

By Christ we enter into rest,
  And triumph o'er the fall;
Whoe'er would be completely blest
  Must trust to Christ for all.

(1) The relationship between sin and the law.

If "sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law," then it follows that, if "you are under law, [then] sin shall be master over you" (cf. Gal. 3:22-23; 5:18). How is this so? Because the law is free to enflame sin (7:8-9). The law locks me up to demands that cannot be personally attained; it magnifies this cancer; it condemns my tawdry, futile efforts at self-reformation and ethical performance that reveal my continued inability; it is incapable of providing ability; it leaves me more miserable, that is frustrated by a clearer perception of my pollution and captivity (John 8:34).[42]

(2) Living under law and grace in the life of a local church.

James 2:1-13 provides a clear and practical illustration of two groups of professing Christians, some of live under law and the others under grace.

(a) In vs. 1-4, 6-7, 9-11, 13a, these Christians are mastered by law, so that they make legal distinctions, are partial according to their own estimation, "judging with evil motives." Yet they are thoroughly condemned by that same law, even if they only "stumble at one point." They claim to be saved by grace through faith, yet are dominated by legal performance, especially that of others.

(b) In vs. 5, 8, 12, 13b, these Christians are mastered by grace, so that they make no judgmental distinctions; rather they are merciful without

[42] John Owen writes: "Wherefore, those who are 'under the law' are under the dominion of sin. . . . Those who are under the law will at some seasons endeavor to shake off the yoke of sin, and resolve to be no longer under its power. . . . They will attend unto what the law saith, under whose power they are, and endeavor a compliance therewith; many duties shall be performed, and many evils abstained from, in order to the quitting themselves of sin's dominion. But, alas! The law cannot enable them hereunto,—it cannot give them life and strength to go through with what their convictions press them unto; therefore, after a while they begin to faint and wax weary in their progress, and at length give quite over. It may be they may break off from some great sins in particular, but shake off the whole dominion of sin they cannot." "A Treatise of the Dominion of Sin and Grace," *The Works of John Owen*, VII, pp544-5. John Stott adds: "To be under law is to accept the obligation to keep it and so come under its curse or condemnation (Gal. 3:10)." *The Message of Romans*, p. 181.

discrimination even as their heavenly Father. Thus they are motivated according to grace stimulated desire rather than legal demand (John 13:34; Rom. 7:1-4; II Cor. 5:14-15; I Pet. 4:8; I John 2:7-8; 4:19) and fulfill "the royal law," that is "the law of liberty." Lloyd-Jones writes, commenting on vs. 12-14 here: "The Christian is not a man who is looking at a code of morals outside of himself; he has them inside himself. They are in his mind, and written in his heart [Jer. 31:3; Heb. 8:10;10:16], a vital principle of his being, within himself."[43]

(3) Living under law and grace according to John Owen.

A posthumous work of John Owen titled *A Treatise of the Dominion of Sin and Grace*, based on Romans 6:14, was published in 1688. The impotence of the law is described as follows:

> First, the law giveth no strength against sin. . . . Secondly, the law gives no liberty of any kind. . . . Thirdly, the law doth not supply us with effectual motives and encouragements. . . . Fourthly, Christ is not in the law; he is not proposed in it, not communicated by it,—we are not made partakers of him thereby. This is the work of grace, of the gospel.[44]

Owen further comments that,

> to be 'under grace' is to have an interest in the gospel covenant and state, with a right unto all the privileges and benefits thereof, to be brought under the administration of grace by Jesus Christ,—to be a true believer. . . . [T]he gospel, or the grace of it, is the means and instrument of God for the communication of internal spiritual strength unto believers. By it do they receive supplies of the Spirit or aids of grace for the subduing of sin and the destruction of its dominion. By it they may say they can do all things, through Him that enables them. . . . We are 'under grace' [when] [we are in such a state as wherein we have supplies in readiness to defeat all the attempts of sin for rule and dominion in us.[45]

B. THE PERVERSION OF THE REIGN OF GOSPEL EMANCIPATION, VS. 15-23.

The commencement here of the second major division of Romans 6 reminds us that Paul has an ongoing polemical intent, even if only for the purpose of using this approach as a preferred teaching method. Though as was earlier suggested concerning vs. 1-14, it is difficult not to assume that the Apostle here responds to another casuistical challenge that he frequently faced, particularly from the Jews (Acts 18:12-13; 21:21, 27-28; 24:5-6). Obviously the introduction of contrast between law and grace in v. 14 is the basis of the new outrageous hypothesis that the absence of the restraint of law encourages sin and

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[43] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, p. 187.

[44] John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, VII, pp. 542, 549-51.

[45] Ibid., p. 545, 547.

licentiousness. Though it needs to be kept in mind that the subject of the "law" is not dealt with in substance until Chapter 7.[46]

1. A perverse proposition, v. 15.

   An expanded translation reads as follows: "What therefore [shall we say] in response to your declaration that the Christian is 'not under [the reign of] law but under [the greater reign of] grace'? Shall we not find encouragement to sin with unconcerned abandon because we are 'not under sin [and consequent condemnation] but rather under ever available grace'"? A comparison of vs. 1 and vs. 15 is as follows:

Romans 6:1	**Romans 6:15**
Let us sin because this causes grace to abound.	*Let us sin because we are not under law but grace.*
Hence we can sin freely because grace is cheap, plentiful.	Hence we can sin freely because grace does not constrain.
This ignores the motive of righteousness through regeneration.	This ignores the motive of righteousness through regeneration.
This implies the love of sin remains.	This implies the love of sin remains.

Both propositions assail the truth of salvation by grace alone.

   In both instances, the expression, "Let us sin . . ." reveals a yearning after sinful indulgence that, having only been held back by legal restraint, ignores the change of heart for righteousness that true conversion brings about. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian disputes concerning this matter of salvation by grace alone with Ignorance, who protests:

> This conceit would loosen the reigns of our lust, and tolerate us to live as we list; for what matter how we live, if we may be justified by Christ's personal righteousness from all, when we believe it." To this Christian responds: "Ignorant thou art of what justifying righteousness is, and as ignorant how to secure thy soul, through the faith of it, from the heavy wrath of God. Yea, thou also art ignorant of the true effects of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ, which is, to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love his name, his Word, ways, and people, and not as thou ignorantly imaginest.[47]

2. Grace converts from sin *slaver*y to righteousness *slavery*, vs. 16-19.

   As Paul progresses in his teaching that is derived from the gospel, especially that which commences at Chapter 5, he injects a series of new, connected ideas and themes such as

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[46] The frequency of the word "law" or νόμος, nomos, is 3 in ch. 5, 2 in ch. 6, 21 in ch. 7, and 5 in ch. 8 up to v. 7.

[47] Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 158.

"reconciliation," 5:6-11, "Adam and Christ," 5:14-21, "death and resurrection," 6:1-11," and now "slavery and freedom," 6:16-23. This new emphasis expands upon the thought of v. 6, namely that Christians are no longer to be "slaves to sin." In the world in which he lived, the Apostle was able to draw a very meaningful analogy concerning the human soul's predicament and a large body of slaves, especially in Rome, that, in their misery and captivity, confronted everyday life. However, Paul's major thrust concerns, not the blessing of freedom in contrast with slavery, but rather the incomparable benefit of being a slave of righteousness, inheriting eternal life, rather than a slave of sin inheriting death. All of mankind are under one kind of slavery or another; the question then is simply what realm of lordship we are under, and which is best.[48]

a. Christian emancipation in general, vs. 16-18.

The argument here is not simple, and it needs to be carefully followed. Consider the situation here of a person offering himself for slavery rather than suffering forced servitude. Secular instances of this voluntary servitude were a practice that guaranteed a person a degree of basic security in a very insecure world. However, there is the Old Testament practice of voluntary servitude (Deut. 15:12-17), and the more likely allusion here to this practice may emphasize personal responsibility. It also needs to be remembered that the perverse understanding of "not being under law, but under grace," suggested in v. 15, is here more clearly exposed as being thoroughly fallacious. As Moo well states: "Those who are joined to Christ by faith live in the new age where grace, not the law of Moses, reigns. . . . But Paul sees in God's grace not only a liberating power but a constraining one as well: the constraint of a willing obedience that comes from a renewed heart and mind and, ultimately (cf. Gal. 5:17-24; Rom. 8:4-9), the impulse and leading of God's Spirit."[49]

(1) Slavery options, v. 16.

No middle ground is considered here. We are either in one realm of servitude or the other, and remember that Paul is here addressing professing Christians about their former and present allegiance. The idea of "presenting" as in v. 13, that of "sacrificial service," is reintroduced, and the direction of this "presenting" indicates particular allegiance. The parallel here is not exactly as we might expect.

(a) Offering servitude to sin results in death.

Our service of "sin" indicates our master (John 8:34); our activity reveals our allegiance (Prov. 23:7); our speech indicates our heart (Matt. 12:34-35; 15:18-19). If you habitually sin according to the sinful inclination of your heart, then clearly sin is your master, and he pays wages "to death." This principle ought to be obvious to all Christians, though v. 17 indicates that such status is the norm of the unconverted.

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[48] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 396-7.

[49] Ibid., p. 398.

(b) Offering servitude to obedience results in righteousness.

On the other hand, our service of "obedience" indicates an alternative master and he pays wages "to righteousness." But why is "obedience" rather than say "Christ" or "righteousness" contrasted with "sin"? The "obedience of faith" (1:5; 16:26; cf. v. 17; I Pet. 1:2, 22) may be in mind, or more likely the Christian life of holy obedience which is so contrary to the licentious suggestion of v. 15. Further, why is "righteousness" rather than "life" contrasted with "death"? Again the Apostle has a behavioral purpose in mind in answer to v. 15. Grace is productive of righteousness (Eph. 1:4). However, notice in v. 23 how "sin" is contrasted with "grace (the free gift)" and "death" is contrasted with "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(2) Slavery transition, v. 17.

Here the process leading to conversion is described as translation from darkness to light, death to life, sin to righteousness, that is from "you were" to "you became." Such a transformation is a decisive event rather than an evolutionary development. There is also the fundamental acknowledgment that such radical change in a man is all of grace: But thanks [free acknowledgment] be to God," χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ, charis de tō theō. An expanded translation reads: "But let thankful acknowledgment be given to God, for while you were living as obedient slaves of sin, you subsequently obeyed, from a sincere heart, that form of teaching to which you were sovereignly delivered." The order of Paul's thought is outlined as follows.

(a) Sovereign recruitment.

The passive expression at the end of this verse, "teaching to which you were committed/delivered," is more accurate than the KJV, "doctrine which was delivered you" (John 6:44, 65; Col. 1:13). Luther, in agreement with this passive voice translation, calls the active voice, "the wisdom of the flesh [which] is opposed to the Word of God, . . . For even to the ungodly the doctrine of the Gospel has been delivered, but they do not deliver themselves over to it or conform themselves to it; . . . Very similar is this statement to the Corinthians (cf. I Cor, 13L12; Gal. 4:9)."[50] God's elect are delivered over to saving gospel truth.

(b) Exposure to teaching.

So God opens up the way for the troubled sinner to hear that τύπον διδαχῆς, tupon didachēs, that "specific body/pattern of gospel teaching" that includes sanctifying influence. It is "the apostles'

[50] Martin Luther, *Works, Lectures on Romans,* pp. 317-8. C. K. Barrett similarly comments: "Christians are not (like the Rabbis) masters of a tradition; they are themselves created by the word of God, and remain in subjection to it. In fact, though being a Christian means on the one hand emancipation, on the other it means enslavement." *The Epistle To The Romans*, p. 132.

teaching" (Acts 2:42; cf. Titus 1:9), "my *gospel* . . . the *revelation* of the mystery" (Rom. 16:25), "*sound teaching*" (I Tim. 1:10), "the standard of *sound words*" (II Tim. 1:13), "*sound doctrine*" (II Tim. 4:3; Titus 2:1), "*the faith* which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3). Whether in the synagogue, marketplace, house meetings, or church assembly, the Gospel was delivered as living truth, a heaven bestowed deposit (I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 1:12, 14). Implicit in this teaching are the doctrines of revelation, God, man, sin, Christ, justification, etc., not a simple three point evangelistic message.

(c) Heart confrontation.

Clearly the truth received hits its mark and lodges deep within the soul, that is the "heart" (5:5), which in the New Testament represents the core of man's inner being that includes intellect (10:8), will (10:9-10), and emotions (10:1). Thus Thomas Manton explains that, "the doctrine of the gospel is in conversion imprinted on . . . the heart,"[51] as it were with a receptivity of acknowledgment. Such teaching came with the force of a "form/pattern" τύπον, tupon, with the result that the "very heart and soul was modeled [stamped] according to the tenor of the gospel and the truths revealed therein."[52]

(d) Obedience of faith.

The "obedience" here is that "obedience of faith" (1:5; 16:26) which more specifically contrasts with "lust/sin obedience" vs. 12, 16. It is thoroughly works renouncing and Christ embracing, yet also decisive as the aorist of ὑπακούω, hupakouō, indicates. Here the will is employed so that is agrees with the truth that has been embedded in the heart. Such a response is hardly casual or tentative; rather there is the intimation of a bowing in utter submission to Christ as Lord in contrast with a former obeisance given to Satan. This obedience represents a transfer of allegiance as v. 16 suggests.

(e) Holy casting.

The result is a heart that is gospel-formed and sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13) so that the new casting is set firm, completely different from its former shape. So Lloyd-Jones comments: "The man who is saved is a man who has undergone this profound change. He is in the 'mold', shaped by the doctrine. . . . God be thanked, that we, who were the slaves of sin, have been taken up by God and put into the divine mold, 'the form of doctrine', with the result that we now obey from the heart His every dictate, and it is our 'supreme delight' to do so."[53] And this being so, the proposition of v. 15 is proved to be absurd.

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[51] Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, XI, p. 320.

[52] Ibid. pp. 320-1.

[53] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, p. 220.

(3) Slavery righteousness, v. 18.

The "obedience of faith" in v. 17, that is the faith that yields to Christ's lordship and gracious salvation according to the gospel doctrine embraced, also admits a transfer of allegiance in terms of ownership and moral subservience. While the soul-gratifying thought of "emancipation" is introduced (cf. 8:2; Gal. 5:1), yet the necessity of the argument introduced in v. 15 requires that it yield to the idea of a new realm of custody, that is an inclination or captivity to righteousness. In other words, the freedom that Christ obtains results in total servitude to that Christ. Moo significantly comments:

> In a world in which 'freedom' has taken on all sorts of social and historical baggage, we must remember that Paul's concept of freedom is not that of autonomous self-direction but of deliverance from those enslaving powers that would prevent the human being from becoming what God intended. It is only by doing God's will and thus knowing his truth that we can be 'free indeed' (John 8:31-35).[54]

So George Matheson has written:

> Make me a captive, Lord,
> And then I shall be free;
> When by myself I stand;
> Imprison me within Thine arms,
> And strong shall be my hand.
> Force me to render up my sword,
> And I shall conqueror be.
> I sink in life's alarms

Thus we expand in our translation: "Therefore, [at conversion,] having been set free [from slavery to sin], at the same time you became enslaved to righteousness." The passive here of δουλόω, douloō, describes the new convert as becoming "enslaved" rather than actively a "slave" as the KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, and ESV translate.[55] The point here is not that we have aspired to righteousness at the beginning of conversion, but rather that we were taken captive by righteousness and thus became "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). Thus at the heart of Christian conversion is a resultant change in affections that is an inevitable consequence of justification. For the heart made right with God is also enlivened so that it is attracted to the righteousness of God in such a way that adoration and emulation are living principles of the heart, and not simply based upon legal statutes and requirements. Thus Jonathan Edwards writes:

> Holy persons, in the exercise of holy affections, love divine things primarily for their holiness [hence righteousness]; they love God, in the first place, for the

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[54] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 402.

[55] In support of the passive here refer to Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 208; Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter* 6, pp. 225-8; Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 396, 403; Murray, *Epistle To The Romans*, I, p. 233. Note the parallel passive references in vs. 17, 22.

> beauty of his holiness, or moral perfection, as being supremely amiable [agreeable] in itself. . . . The holy nature of saints and angels in heaven (where the true tendency of it best appears) is principally engaged by the holiness of divine things.[56]

b. Christian emancipation in the flesh, vs. 19.

The first sentence seems an interruption, an injected explanation, since Paul is aware that he is making much of the freedom/slavery analogy, even as it relates to the problem which the flesh presents. It is as if he were to say: "This illustration [predominant in vs. 6-18], so close to your daily lives, is necessary on account of your human weakness and carnal fallenness that require clarification. Yes, as already mentioned [vs. 6, 12-13], the lusting physical body in its opposition to righteousness [Gal. 5:17] is a constant foe. But let this illustrative exhortation direct you as follows." Especially note how Paul immediately returns to a consideration of the problems that our lusting bodily "members" present, and how these are distinguished from the new "you" who is "alive unto God" (v. 11), and a "slave of righteousness" (v. 18; cf. v. 12). The opposing propositions that follow are similar to those found in v. 13.

(1) Former bodily servitude to sin.

The concept of slavery under lordship, so prevalent in Paul's world, continues to be an illustrative base here. The "old you" of the past offered its body in active and devoted service to the tyrannical masters of "impurity," or "uncleanness," ἀκαθαρσία, akatharsia, and "lawlessness," ἀνομία, anomia, "upon lawlessness," that rolled on with ever-increasing infatuation and commitment. As sin commanded, so the sinner dutifully followed with relish and deepening involvement (1:32).

(2) Present bodily servitude to righteousness.

By way of contrast regarding the Christian norm, the "new you" of the present is exhorted to offer the same body, with the same intensity of devotion formerly offered to sin, in the singular service of "righteousness" or "right behavior" and resultant "sanctification" or "encompassing holiness." Why does Paul do this? Because true Christian conversion results in a change of heart (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) that is ready and able to obey when such teaching is proposed. Thus he repeats a fundamental point that destroys the argument of v. 15, cf. vs. 4, 11, 18. Therefore the grace that saves through faith alone also produces a radical, even revolutionary renewal of the soul that manifests holy motives and affections. As Thomas Manton states: "True grace is an effectual principle, both to produce its own operations and to restrain sin."[57]

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[56] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, I, pp. 279-80.

[57] Manton, *Works*, XI, p. 343.

3. Grace converts to sin *freedom* and righteousness slavery, vs. 20-23.

While v. 19 described the consequences of slavery to sin as increasing lawlessness and slavery to righteousness as sanctification, Paul now expands upon the "benefits [fruit]" of these opposite employments. For as a man invests, so there are inevitable dividends, or their lack, that are dispensed if a good master holds him captive. "Benefit" here is "[good] fruit," καρπός, karpos, since Paul never elsewhere implies "[bad] fruit," cf. 1:13; 7:4, 5; 15:28, but rather the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-23). The intent here is to prove the superiority of grace that results in righteousness and eternal life rather than law that fosters sin and resultant death.

There is also intentional parallelism in these verses, further expounding upon the paradox of freedom described in v. 18, which may be diagramed as follows:

Lord	⇨	Sin	*or*	God
		⇩		⇩
Relationship	⇨	Slavery (from righteousness to sin)	*or*	Slavery (from sin to righteousness)
		⇩		⇩
Employment	⇨	Works	*or*	Grace
		⇩		⇩
Wage/fruit	⇨	Shame & Death	*or*	Sanctification & Eternal Life

For Paul, freedom and slavery are not opposites, but complementary elements since perfect freedom is slavery to God while the most confining slavery is freedom to sin. The Prodigal Son left home to seek freedom in the far country with the result that he ended up in bondage. However, upon returning home he found perfect freedom having yielded to captivity in his father's house (Luke 15:11-24). Secular man's quest for freedom from God requires slavery to human depravity (Ps. 2:1-3; Acts 4:23-28), even as the demand for absolute free speech leads to the bondage of blasphemy, libel, perjury, profanity, etc.

a. Slavery to sin has a death benefit, vs. 20-21.

Further reflection by the Christian, on his unconverted manner of life, is intended to arouse his holy affections to a point of revulsion and shame concerning his former downward course that would have reaped a hellish destiny.

(1) The absence of righteousness, v. 20.

To paraphrase: "For when you were living as dutiful slaves to sin you claimed to be freemen,[58] that is you boasted in your moral autonomy and aversion to serving holiness (Matt. 6:24). However, this lifestyle only evidenced the absence of any yielding to the lordly claims of righteousness as mandated by the God of Abraham." While in v. 18 Paul describes the converted state, here in reversal he describes the unconverted state and thus adds further stimulus for obeying the exhortation of v. 19. For the sinner here to be "free in regard to righteousness" is for him to have the freedom of the rails that lead downhill to sin and death. Man has neither the power nor the inclination of heart to go uphill in a reverse direction that has righteousness and life for its destination.[59] Ephesians 2:1-2 describes this "slavery to sin" here as being "*dead* in trespasses and sins," while being "free in regard to righteousness" is expressed as "*walking* according to the course of this world."

(2) The outcome of death, v. 21.

To further paraphrase: "Therefore what good fruit were you having [producing] from that former sinful lifestyle which you now look upon as utterly shameful? There was no resultant good fruit whatsoever, only death as a suitable wage."[60] The intensive form of "utterly shameful," ἐπαισχύνομαι, epaischunomai, stresses the new attitude of heart that is "now" operative and thus averse to the suggestion of v. 15. But in the past, instead of being fruitful through the operation of grace, there was only harsh, shameless employment under sin with the resultant wages of death. However death here is a comprehensive term that encompasses not merely the body, but also the soul, its separation from God and ultimate eternal confinement in hell. Thus the unbeliever, presently being alive to sin, is dead to God in his whole being.

b. Slavery to God has a life benefit, vs. 22-23.

"But now," νυνὶ δέ, nuni de, introduces an emphatic contrast, cf. 3:21. The paradox of vs. 17-18, 20 reaches a climactic and enthralling explanation, namely that man's quest for freedom can only be fulfilled when he is "enslaved to God." Further, the wonder is that whereas man's works approach to emancipation leads inevitably to captivity to sin, God's emancipation through grace leads to captivity to God, or "the freedom of the glory of the children of God," 8:21. Furthermore, this gospel that results in sinners becoming captive and awakened to God is also

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[58] Note the contrast here between "slaves," δοῦλοι, douloi, and "freemen," ἐλεύθεροι, eleutheroi.

[59] Moo adds: "Paul makes it clear that those outside Christ, to varying degrees, can recognize right and wrong (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; 2:14-15); but the power to do the right and turn from wrong is not present. 'All are under sin' (3:9) and therefore incapable of doing God's will." *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 406. Also cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, pp. 273-7, where he exposes the "so-called good moral man who is not a Christian."

[60] This paraphrase follows the punctuation of the NASB and assumes a negative response concerning fruit. In support refer to Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 235-6. The alternative rendering of Moo reads: "Therefore, what fruit did you have then? That of which you are now ashamed. For the end of these is death." *Romans*, p. 406. Here "fruit" is given a negative quality and remains undefined, though shameful.

productive of the fruit of sanctification and eternal life, 7:4. Here is the final answer to v. 15 since such fruitfulness stems from a heart awakened to righteousness, not sin.

(1) The outcome of eternal life, v. 22.

The punctiliar aorists of "having been *freed* from sin and enslaved to God" describe initial conversion. As a consequence, "you have [present tense] your fruit," that is "sanctification," and then ultimately "the perfection/ completion," τὸ τέλος, to telos, which is "eternal life" in a consummate sense. Becoming "enslaved to God" is a result of being "obedient from the heart," v. 17; it is that glad submission which grace has obtained, just as a bride offers in being joined to her bridegroom. The resultant "sanctification," identical with v. 19, is "encompassing holiness" that includes the holy status that conversion brings along with consequent holiness of lifestyle. Thus such holiness is a present reality for the Christian. Lloyd-Jones writes: "You have got it! This is true of every Christian. There is no such thing as a Christian who does not bear fruit [holiness]; you cannot be a Christian without bearing fruit [holiness]. . . . Holiness is not a feeling, holiness is not an experience; holiness is to be devoted to God."[61]

(2) The grace gift of eternal life, v. 23.

By way of expanded translation: "For the wages that sin pays is death, but the free, gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." As described in v. 22, the superior lordship of God, in contrast with that of sin, is even more attractively portrayed. Not only is this a conclusion of great contrast, and a transitional statement that leads us into chapter 7, but also, as Murray points out, it is similar to the conclusion of chapter 5.[62] In particular, the distinction between law/sin and grace is illuminated. If we are under the lordship of sin, then appropriate remuneration is paid, or "the wages," τὰ ὀψώνια, ta opsōnia, that is monetary compensation such as that paid to a soldier by a general. Here sin suitably pays death to its subjects, as if acknowledging, "Here is what you have toiled for and earned." However God bestows "eternal life" to repentant, justified sinners on the basis of pure grace, τὸ χάρισμα to charisma, mediated through the Lord Jesus Christ. For a man aware of his bankrupt soul, this gospel of free grace is the bargain of human history!

As Isaiah 55:1-3 declares: "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and

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[61] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 6*, pp. 296-7.

[62] "The contrast between sin and grace is maintained. . . . In 5:21 the apostle had said that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life *through* Jesus Christ our Lord. Here in 6:23 he speaks of eternal life *in* Christ Jesus our Lord." *Romans*, I, pp. 237-8.

come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make en everlasting covenant with you according to the faithful mercies shown to David."

CHAPTER IX

ROMANS 7:1-25 – THE REIGN OF GRACE AND THE LAW

CONCERNING Alexander Whyte, the Edinburgh minister, theological professor, and collector of commentaries on Romans, there is an interesting account:

> He had a standing arrangement with his bookseller that whenever a new commentary on the Letter appeared, it should be sent to him on a sale-or-return basis. Whyte's habit was immediately to open the new work and read through the author's comments on Romans 7:14-25. If the work did not view the passage as an exposition of Paul's *Christian* experience, Whyte simply re-wrapped it and returned it with a note to the effect, 'This is not the commentary for me'.[1]

The conflicting opinions that face the interpreter of this chapter, especially vs. 13-25, present a daunting challenge, and the reason for this is not hard to understand. A somewhat romantic view of biblical Christianity has led many to believe that, following conversion, the problem of sin in the believer has been substantially reduced, if not eliminated, to a benign level of difficulty. On the other hand, a *prima facie* reading of the concluding verses of this chapter would lead one to believe that the Apostle himself is profoundly troubled with sin in an ongoing manner that hardly suggests the living of a continual victorious Christian life. For the moment, this problem must be held in abeyance until the preceding context is dealt with, and, as Lloyd-Jones rightly suggests, only then can the matters of contention be properly dealt with.[2]

However, several matters need to be considered as introductory principles that draw upon the argument thus far and find continuance through to the end of chapter 8. The most vital matter is the greater emphasis here upon " law" than in any other place in Romans, and indeed in any other of Paul's writings.[3] Further, in contrast with the pre-evangelism consideration of "law" in 1:1-3:20, here the teaching concerns "law" as it relates to the Christian. Thus we are confronted with the matter of what is, in Reformation terms, "the third use of the law," that is the role of the "law," if any, in the sanctification of the believer.[4] A further important matter concerns the ongoing teaching of Paul with regard to "the members of our body," vs. 5-6, cf. 6:6, 12-13, 7:19, 23-25. This is not an issue that merely arises at the end of this chapter. Hence, the earlier teaching is to be born in mind as a key to the understanding of vs. 13-25. Finally, Paul's concern remains for the problems raised in 6:1, 15, and he will not return, with sustained emphasis, to the exposition of 5:21; 6:22 until ch. 8. His liking for instruction that uses contrast and

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1 Cited by Dr. Sinclair Ferguson in his foreword to James Fraser, *A Treatise On Sanctification*, p. iv.

2 "Most people who fail to understand the final section [of Romans 7] do so simply because they have never understood the first section." Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 7*, p. 1. However, many conservative evangelical commentators have accepted this premise and yet arrived at differing conclusions.

3 The frequency of "law" or νόμος, nomos, in Romans is as follows: ch. 2 - 19, ch. 5 - 3, ch. 6 - 2, ch. 7 - 23, ch. 8 - 5 up to v. 7. The references in 1:1- 3:20, which mostly involve pre-evangelism, are 23.

4 These three distinctions are: one, the law is a restraint upon sin as a revelation of God's righteousness to the world at large; two, the law convicts of sin showing man's impotence, and thus as a tutor it directs the sinner to Christ (Gal. 3:24); three, the law is a rule of life for the Christian, a guide in sanctification. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 614-5; Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 353-4. Concerning this "third use of the law" as commonly defined, Calvin was supportive while Luther was not. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 416-8.

antitheses continues in this chapter. In ch. 5 it was distinction between Adam and Christ, law/sin/death and righteousness/grace/life. In ch. 6 it was between crucifixion/ death/burial/ and resurrection/ life/righteousness, as well as what "you were" and "but now." So in ch. 7 there is contrast between union with Moses and union with Christ, servitude to the flesh and servitude to the Spirit, the law of the body and the law of the mind, the inner man and the outer man.

A. THE ROLE OF CHRIST IN SUPPLANTING THE LAW, VS. 1-6.

The supposed necessity of the sanctifying influence of the law underlies the perverse propositions of 6:1, 15 which denigrate the sanctifying power of grace. So Paul makes further explanation in support of 6:14b. Like 6:16-19, 22, the argument here once again ends with the conclusion that salvation by grace inevitably results in "fruit for God" and "service in newness of the Spirit."

However what does Paul mean when he speaks here of "law"? If context is any indication, then undoubtedly he has the Mosaic code in mind, especially the decalogue, cf. 6:13-14, 20; 7:7-8, 12, 22, 25. Of course some, probably fearing the antinomian implications of vs. 4, 6 in this regard, that of the Christian having "died to the law" and being "released from the law," attempt to qualify the obvious intent here, even as is similarly done with 6:14b.[5] More specifically, Paul has in mind the Mosaic administration, signified by circumcision (Acts 15:5), and briefly codified in the Ten Commandments, that ministry of death and condemnation and fading glory, that is surpassed by the ministry of the Spirit and righteousness and remaining glory and liberty (Cor. 3:7-11).[6]

1. The reign of the law declared, v. 1.

In continuation from 6:23, with reference to the legal inference of "sin paying wages" to law breakers, but more particularly 6:14b, Paul focuses upon "brethren . . . those who know the law." That the church at Rome included a proportion of Jews is strongly suggested by the pervasive influence of at least 150 explicit Old Testament references in this epistle, and especially the necessity of chs. 9-11. However, most likely

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[5] Charles Hodge, very much a Westminster Calvinist, is a case in point here. Concerning Romans 6:14b he writes: "By *law* here, is not to be understood the Mosaic law. The sense is not, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you because the Mosaic law is abrogated.' The word is to be taken in its widest sense. It is the rule of duty, that which binds the conscience as an expression of the will of God." *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 205. Concerning Romans 7:4 he similarly writes: "[T]he law of which the apostle is here speaking, is not the Mosaic law considered as the Old Testament economy. . . . Paul here means by *the law*, the will of God, as a rule of duty, no matter how revealed. From this law, as prescribing the terms of our acceptance with God, Christ has delivered us. It is the legal system, which says, 'Do this and live," that Christ has abolished, and introduced another, which says, 'He that believeth shall be saved.' Ibid., p. 217. Yet the context here is *sanctification* whereby the law is excluded. *John Murray* agrees with Hodge, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 243, though James Fraser is closer to the truth when de declares *law* here to be that moral Sinaitic promulgation, excluding the ceremonial law, that includes light given to the consciences of the Gentiles. *A Treatise On Sanctification*, pp. 107-8.

[6] In support refer to Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 410-23, and the essential agreement of Barrett, Bunyan, Cranfield, Luther, Moule.

Paul is simply addressing Gentiles and Jews who have been substantially taught the gospel in the Old Testament, and the law of Moses in particular.

That "the [Mosaic] law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives" most likely draws upon known rabbinic expressions of this idea,[7] though it would also have been known that Roman law was of the same opinion. However more important is the inference that upon death the law of Moses has no validity. So the stage is set for making application of this point to 6:14b.

2. The reign of the law illustrated, vs. 2-3.

That the following illustration does not exactly parallel the applicatory thrust of v. 4 is something that has intrigued many commentators. The death of the husband in vs. 2-3 should be paralleled by the death of the law in v. 4. However, it seems ridiculous to suppose that the sharp intellect of Paul was unaware of this "inconsistency." Hence, Paul is governed by the principle of 7:1b where the person implicitly dies, and thus is no longer subject to the law. In vs. 2-3, the illustration is not intended to provide parallels at every point; rather its singular purpose is to reinforce the principle that death negates obligation.

a. The law upholds monogamy, v. 2.

A woman is legally bound to her living husband. She is a ὕπανδρος, hupandros, woman, literally an "under man" woman. This union is singular and binding. However, should her husband die, the woman is legally free from the demands of that former matrimonial union. The important point here is that the dead man has absolutely no claims upon the woman; she is no longer "under this man" and in union with him. The woman is "*released from the law*" that previously bound her.

b. The law condemns adultery, v. 3.

A married woman who is in union with another man is an adulteress. Her attempt to be in union with two men is illegal. On the other hand, if her husband dies, the original marital union is legally void, and her subsequent union with another man is not adulterous, but legally legitimate. The important point here is that in this new union, the former marriage has no legal claims whatsoever upon the subsequent marriage. The woman is "*free from the law*" that previously bound her.

3. The reign of the law superceded by the reign of Christ, v. 4.

This pivotal verse, which establishes so clearly Paul's teaching concerning Christian sanctification resulting from justification, is expanded in translation as follows: "So that as a consequence, my beloved brothers in Christ, you similarly were made to die to the law, that is be disengaged from any justifying and sanctifying union with the law of Moses, by means of the atoning body of Christ. At the same time this new covenant in

[7] "[I]f a person is dead, he is free from the Torah and the fulfilling of the commandments." Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 412.

his blood was intended to unite you to this Christ himself who is far greater than Moses, that is this Christ who, in being raised from the dead, gives life to those joined to him. The end purpose of this act of death/resurrection for the believer is that, in monogamous union with Christ, you might produce the fruit of sanctification for the glory of God." Lloyd-Jones is correct when he writes: "Here, then, we have, as it were, the gospel in a nutshell. It is one of the great basic definitions of what it means to be a Christian; and at the same time, and of necessity, it shows us the profound character of the Christian life."[8]

a. The believer has died to the law.

To begin with there is obvious repetition here, especially concerning the death/sin and life/righteousness aspects of 6:5-14, 17-18, 22. However, the closer focus is now, on the one hand, upon the sin stimulating *passé* law and its impotence with regard to sanctification, and on the other hand upon a new sanctifying law, namely fruitful union with Christ, or "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (8:2-4).

At this point two divergent interpretations face us. Calvin, representative of much Reformed opinion, comments:

> [T]his deliverance is not from that righteousness [which] is taught in the law, but from the severe exaction of the law, and that curse [which] proceedeth thence. Then the rule of life which the law prescribeth is not abrogated, but that quality which is opposed to the liberty purchased by Christ, namely, whilst it requireth absolute perfection, because we perform it not, it holdeth us bound under the guilt of eternal death.[9]

This qualified viewpoint retains the Ten Commandments, as Calvin plainly states it, as a "rule of life."[10] The unqualified viewpoint is represented by Luther who states:

> We will not have Moses as ruler or lawgiver any longer. Indeed God himself will not have it either. Moses was an intermediary solely for the Jewish people. It was to them that he gave the law. . . . Moses has nothing to do with us. If I were to accept Moses in one commandment, I would have to accept the entire Moses. . . . So, then, we will neither observe nor accept Moses. Moses is dead. His rule ended when Christ came. He is of no further service. . . . We will regard Moses as a teacher, but we will not regard him as our lawgiver—unless he agrees with both the New Testament and the natural law.[11]

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[8] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 7*, p. 29.

[9] John Calvin, *Commentary upon The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 170.

[10] Similarly Dabney, Hodge, many of the Puritans, along with the Westminster Confession of Faith, with some variation of thought, all desire to retain the Decalogue as a Christian "rule of life."

[11] Martin Luther, *Works*, "How Christians Should Regard Moses," 35, pp. 164-5. In this same sermon Luther does describe certain benefits of Moses' writings such as selective practical admonition, promises of Christ, and examples of faith and love. But this revelation is not a creation ordinance for all men. The Mosaic administration was temporal and Jewish. Notice how John Bunyan has a very similar estimate when he, in alluding to Romans 7:4, writes: "[W]hen this [Sinai/Hagar] law with its thundering threatenings doth attempt to lay hold on they conscience, shut it out with a promise of grace; cry, the inn is took up already, the Lord Jesus is here entertained, and here is no room for the law. Indeed if it will be content with being my informer, and so lovingly leave off to judge me; I will be content; . . . but otherwise, I being now made

Concerning the Apostle Paul, what stands out so clearly in his epistles and ministry described in Acts is the fact that, before a critical Jewish world, he makes no qualification such as Calvin represents, and especially here in Romans 6:14; 7:4. He means exactly what he writes, namely that the administration of the righteousness of God as revealed via Moses has been superceded by the more perfect revelation of God's righteousness in the person of the Son of God (II Cor. 3:4-18).[12] In Moses we have a summary of divine righteousness without any enabling dynamic. However in Christ we have a perfect revelation of the righteousness of God that includes enabling dynamic. To have died to Moses in this complete sense does not open the floodgates to antinomian licentiousness as 6:1, 15 suggest. Rather, such disjunction concerning the Law is replaced with a far more glorious union, even marriage to the righteous Lord Jesus Christ, and that without any bigamous recourse.

b. The believer has a new covenant.

The agent of change that transfers the believing sinner from the old to the new administration of God's righteousness is "the body of Christ," that is his atoning work that is based upon the death and resurrection of that "body" (Col. 1:22; I Pet. 2:24). The believer, through faith, has united with Christ's death and resurrection so that he participates in the gracious terms of this new "covenant of grace." Thus the "old/first/Sinai covenant" is supplanted by the "second/better/new covenant" (Heb. 8:6-9). Further, "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear" (Heb. 8:13). Thus it is "God who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (II Cor. 3:6). Notice that in Hebrews 10:5-10 it is "the body of Jesus Christ" which "takes away the first [covenant] in order to establish the second [covenant]."

c. The believer has married Christ.

There is close association between the illustration of vs. 2-3 and the new covenant union that is here described. Only because the old union is dead is it possible for this new union to be valid. An ambiguous relationship, as though Moses was a concubine in the house of Christ, is unthinkable here since the believer is monogamously "joined to another." Clearly, in this relationship, the spiritual health of the new covenant disciple is exclusively dependent on a pure marital union. Necessary spiritual nutrition is inherent in being united to he who rose

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upright without it, and that too with that righteousness, which this law speaks well of and approveth; I may not, will not, cannot, dare not make it my savior and judge, nor suffer it to set up its government in my conscience; for by so doing, I fall from grace, and Christ Jesus doth profit me nothing (Gal. 5:1-5). . . . [S]o long as thou art alive to sin, and to thy righteousness which is of the law, so long thou hast them for thy husband and they must reign over thee: But when once they are become dead unto thee . . . when thou closest with the Lord Jesus Christ; then I say, thy former husbands have no more to meddle with thee, thou art freed from their law." *Works*, II, p. 388. Also refer to Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 414-8.

[12] If it be maintained that the Christian will now conform to the Decalogue through new affections of the heart that conversion has produced, such an allegiance to Moses would in no way invalidate his death sanctions against transgressors of certain laws and required conformity to the whole sabbath system.

from the dead; such union with him guarantees life from him (v. 6; 6:4; Phil. 3:9-10). So in Galatians 2:19-20: "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in [union with] me; and the life which I now live in the flesh [the present life of sanctification] I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

d. The believer has a fruitful union.

Here is the end purpose of Paul's teaching, namely that the grace of justification inevitably, inexorably leads to the grace of sanctification, or the "bearing fruit for God." The normal expectation of physical marriage is "the fruit of the womb" (Ps. 127:3). So spiritual union with Christ is to produce "benefit [fruit]" resulting in "sanctification" (6:21-22), or according to Calvin, "holiness and righteousness," [13] and specifically the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This Spiritual fruit comes forth as a result of union with Christ (John 15:4-8), not Moses, even though vs. 7-12 will uphold the distinctive purpose and essential righteousness of the Law. Lloyd-Jones comments:

> Here is the real purpose of the marriage; we need One whose seed is so powerful, who can so impregnate us with His own holy nature that He will produce holiness even in us. That is why we are married to Him, in order that 'we should bring forth fruit unto God'. His strength is so great, His might is so potent, that even out of us He can bear this progeny of holiness.[14]

In Hebrews 13:20-21 it is "the blood of the eternal covenant" that will "equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

4. The reign of the law superceded by the Spirit, vs. 5-6.

The former union to the law, having been represented by the first husband, is now described in greater detail. Reminiscent of 6:21-22, we are further led to another "you/we were" and "but now" contrast that significantly introduces the first mention of the ministry of the Holy Spirit since 1:4; 2:29. At the same time, Murray points out that, "with the possible exception of 6:19 in which there may be some reflection upon 'flesh' as used here, this is the first occasion in this epistle in which the word 'flesh' is used in its fully depreciatory [derogative] ethical sense, a sense which appears later on in this epistle [v. 18, 25; 8:3, 8] and frequently in other epistles of Paul [Gal. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:3]."[15]

a. The law aroused the flesh to sin and death, v. 5.

Prior to conversion, "we" agreeably lived as sinful "old men" in the body of flesh polluted by sin with the result that the law, by challenge and innocent suggestion, easily inflamed those carnal affections that inevitably reaped the fruit of death.

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[13] Calvin, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 172.

[14] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 7*, pp. 66-7.

[15] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 244.

More specifically, the "we" is the degenerate soul that is encased in a degenerate body comprised of distinctively sinful members. It is the soul that has sinful passions, τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, ta pathēmata tōn hamartiōn, that is sinful inclinations, with which the body heartily concurs, cooperates, and contrives. The law, in its denunciation of unrighteousness, yet is a stimulant to the unrighteous soul. The end result is the wages that sin pays, namely the death of body and soul.

In the light of the illustration and its application in vs. 2-4, here paradoxical truth is revealed concerning the law. Whereas it is thought by the natural man, and even the untaught Christian, that the law promotes righteousness, in fact its ministry is the very opposite. Consider the First Commandment, "You shall have no other God's before Me" (Ex. 20:3). Such a right mandate yet foments greater defiance in naturally rebellious man. This truth is beautifully taught in *The Pilgrim's Progress* at the house of Interpreter and the scene of the thoroughly dusty room. A man, intending to sweep the room clean with a broom, that is the polluted human heart, in fact arouses the dust all the more. It is the lady who sprinkles the water of gospel grace that brings cleansing. So Bunyan explains:

> Now, whereas thou sawest, that so soon as the first began to sweep, the dust did so fly about that the room by him could not be cleansed, but that thou wast almost choked therewith; this is to show thee, that the law, instead of cleansing the heart (by its working) from sin, doth revive, put strength into, and increase it in the soul, even as it doth discover and forbid it, for it doth not give power to subdue.[16]

b. The Spirit arouses the new man to righteousness, v. 6.

Another "But now," νυνὶ δέ nuni de, 3:21; 6:22, further highlights the fact that a biblical Christian is a person who is radically different from a natural citizen of this world. The control and dominion of the law over the unbeliever is likened to that of "bondage," or "captivity," κατέχω, katechō, meaning "to hold down, to suppress, to confine." So the language here reverts back to that of slavery and freedom found in 6:16-19. At conversion the believer has been "released," καταργέω, katargeō, "to render inactive," from the law which formerly held in bondage, and such emancipation unto grace is likened to that final separation brought by death. Hence the Christian has "died to the law" and works righteousness as a justifying and sanctifying principle, and that being so, the question arises as to how it could be possible for the child of God to "have no other God's before Me" (Ex. 20:3), which mandate must be an eternal obligation. The answer follows, and this vital matter will be enlarged upon in 8:2-4. The believer now "serves in newness of [the] Spirit[17] and not in the oldness of [the] letter." Through regeneration, in association with justification, has come a recovery of the *imago Dei* as well as an inclination within the soul toward the righteousness of God (Tit. 3:4-7). The contrast here is between the impotent "oldness of the letter"and the potent "newness of the Spirit" (2:29; II Cor. 3:6-8),

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[16] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, III, pp. 98-9.

[17] It is legitimate to translate here "in newness of spirit," though such renewal of the human spirit amounts to the same truth, that is the necessity of divine regeneration by means of the Holy Spirit.

that is "between the Old Covenant and the New, the old age and the new."[18] While the law arouses the flesh to sin, the Spirit arouses the soul to holy servitude; while Moses' revelation of the law to Israel at Mt. Sinai resulted in the response of idolatry, the revelation of Christ at Mt. Calvary resulted in a great harvest at Pentecost through the Spirit; while the "ministry of death in letters engraved on stones came with fading glory," the "ministry of the Spirit came with greater and remaining glory" (II Cor. 3:7-11); while the ministry of Moses brought the hardening of hearts, the Spirit of Christ has brought liberty and glory (II Cor. 3:12-18). Thus, "the law came in so that the transgression might increase; . . . even so grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life" (Rom. 5:20-21). In this vein of the triumphant effectiveness of grace, its Spirit animated constraint to righteousness as distinct from legal demand (John 13:34; II Cor. 5:14; Eph. 4:32-5:2; I John 2:7-8), Robert Robinson has written:

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.

Hence, at this point, one could easily anticipate the continuity of thought that Romans 8 presents. However, Paul must respond to two questions that are bound to arise in his audience. First, if the Christian is dead to the law through the law, are you suggesting that the law has inherent weakness? Second, supposing a Christian attempts to be sanctified through the law, what symptoms can be expected to arise?

B. THE RIGHT ROLE OF THE LAW IN CONVERSION, VS. 7-12.

The repeated emphasis by Paul that the gospel of free and sovereign grace has supplanted the purported justifying and sanctifying role of the law (6:14; 7:4, 6) raises inevitable questions for those readers who have learned of this same gospel via the Old Testament. Further, Paul has just addressed "those who know the law." Hence, his most recent declaration in v. 6 that the Christian has been "released from the law" needs elaboration, and this is now forthcoming with a defense of the law's proper role and character.

What exactly is the meaning of "the law," ὁ νόμος, ho nomos, here? Primarily, v. 7 indicates the Ten Commandments, or moral law as some distinguish, though the whole Mosaic code of the Pentateuch is almost certainly assumed including the moral, civil and ceremonial elements. However, when the correct use of "the law" is now explained in terms of its pre-evangelism/pre-conversion usefulness, in view of the broader meaning of the Old Testament that 3:19-20 requires, so here "the law" must implicitly incorporate the whole objective revelation of the Old Testament. Hence a vital question must now be addressed. How can "the law" be discarded, even spoken of so negatively, when at the same time it is acknowledged to be a revelation from God that has been so highly venerated since the days of Moses?

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[18] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 421-3. Fraser designates the "letter" here as the moral law. Refer to his excellent description of the contrasting dominions of "Spirit" and "letter," *A Treatise On Sanctification*, pp. 167-9.

A further controversial matter must also be considered at this point. It concerns the identification of the conspicuous "I" and "me" of vs. 7-11, and then vs. 13-25. Doubtless anticipation of the truth that follows is the cause of a variety of opinions at this point. Unquestionably Paul is speaking of himself in v. 1, particularly as one deeply acquainted with "the law" of the Hebrews. In v. 7 the obvious literal meaning of "I" would similarly refer to the Apostle while also identifying with other Christians, even as it is generally agreed that the testimony of v. 9 is similarly a personal recollection. So for the moment, and until we consider v. 14 onward, we shall assert that here Paul describes his own confrontation with "the law" of Israel, and that prior to his conversion as the several past tenses here indicate.

1. The character of the law slanderously accused, v. 7a.

   Reminiscent of 3:5; 6:1, 15; 9:14, Paul rhetorically asks, "Is the law sin?" This is a stronger statement than, "Is the law responsible for sin?" Rather, the charge is more extreme, "Is the law essentially sin?" So Paul responds to such an absurd proposition with an emphatic negation that he believes should be the obvious conclusion of anyone. However, the opponent here, whether theoretical or real, is probably intending to argue that because the law is holy, then the real problem must be with Paul's doctrine.

2. The character of the law variously upheld, vs. 7b-12.

   Having already taught that the law arouses sin (5:20; 7:5), this point is now expounded upon in greater detail to avoid misunderstanding. Much Bible doctrine involves dual concepts that must be carefully distinguished, such as faith and works, justification and sanctification, deity and humanity, flesh and Spirit, etc. So here the right relationship between law and sin must be carefully discerned.

   a. Through the law comes the knowledge of sin, v. 7b-11.

      Literally we read, "But I did not know [aorist] sin except through law," and in the light of v. 9, Paul probably has in mind a past personal encounter. However, does this statement suggest the principle that apart from the "law," there is no knowledge of sin? Most commentators agree that for several reasons the answer must be "no." First, 2:14-15 describes the "law" engraved on the heart. Second, 5:12-14 describes "law" of some kind existing from Adam to Moses; then "the law [of Moses] came in" (5:20). Thus man has always had an innate sense of God's righteousness. But here Paul has in mind the true character and purpose of the law, especially as he has come to be confronted by its diagnostic capacity to reveal the profundity and gravity of sin. A man may be aware of a personal illness, yet a prescribed x-ray analysis reveals the seriousness of the problem, even though that diagnostic instrument has no remedial ability. Further, the x-ray machine should not be maligned on account of the narrow confines of its usefulness.

      (1) The law of Moses informs of sin, v. 7b.

         The instance here of quoting the tenth commandment (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21) is one of only three specific quotations of the decalogue by Paul (cf.

13:9; Eph. 6:2-3). To "covet" here means to lust after, to have illicit desires, and the selection of this commandment may well reflect Paul's personal experience in this area, or his sensing that the saints at Rome would particularly appreciate this point, or, as Moo demonstrates, "it stands as a representative summation of the whole law."[19] Morris describes this commandment as, "the only one that explicitly goes beyond the outward action to the inner root of the action."[20]

(2) The law of Moses is recruited by sin to stimulate, v. 8.

Sin is now personified; it is revealed to be the real and deceptive culprit for it exploited the law's legitimate ability so as to seize the "opportunity," ἀφορμή, aphormē, as if using military initiative. Sin, in detecting a ripe time to attack, grasped that "occasion" when the law was in operation (cf. I Tim. 5:14). Through the agency of the law, sin deceitfully "produced/performed in me [Paul]" a whole catalog of lustings. Suddenly the full ugly measure of his covetous heart was comprehended. Thus a legitimate law such as is found in a produce store, "Do not squeeze the fruit," yet inflames the sinful heart so that it rises up in rebellion against the commandment.

The corollary then is that, "apart from the law, sin is dead," or relatively dormant, and the meaning here initiates Paul's personal recollection in v. 9. Thus sin being implicitly "dead" here is somewhat defined by the Apostle's own experience, that is of being "once alive apart from the law [and sin's arousal]" (v. 9). In earlier days, while knowing about the law and sin cognitively, yet he was not troubled by it. So sin being dead refers to a lack of holy sensitivity to the demands of God's righteousness because of the absence of the law's revealing work.[21]

(3) The law of Moses impacts the early life of Paul, v. 9.

By way of expanded paraphrase: "Yes I Paul [emphatic] was once living apart from sensitivity to the law. But having become awakened to the law's infinite and righteous demands upon my life, sin was so aroused [revived] that it slew me and as a result I died in despair of self-reformation." There is general agreement that here Paul is personally testifying to his own awakening to profound sinfulness by means of the law, though wide disagreement as to the specific occasion. Did this enlightenment come - (a) at his 'bar mitzvah' on his thirteenth birthday, (b) just prior to his conversion at Damascus, (c) just following his conversion having been instructed by Ananias and Christ, or (d) later in his Christian life? The context of vs. 4-6, or conversion being preceded by "arousal to the law" and "death to the law" (cf. Gal. 2:19) would strongly suggest (b), that is Paul's arousal just prior to

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[19] Ibid., p. 435.

[20] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 279.

[21] "That sin was 'dead' does not mean that it did not exist but that it was not as 'active' or 'powerful' before the law or after." Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 437.

his conversion (Acts 7:58; 26:14), but following that proud period when he regarded himself as "blameless" before the law (Phil. 3:6).[22]

So the law has come to "shut the mouth" of the self-righteous (3:19), to cause man "to die" at the revelation of his deep-rooted corruption. When a doctor holds up an x-ray film to the light and soberly declares: "Do you see that large mass that attaches to the brain," then the patient as it were dies on the spot; he is brought face-to-face with stark reality; denial becomes absurd! So the law has this distinctive function of making man aware of the cancer of his soul, and in this regard the law fulfills is divinely designated purpose (3:20).

(4) The law of Moses results in death rather than life, v. 10.

Hence, this law that was supposed to have brought life, that was promoted to Paul in a Pharisaic environment as an instrument stimulating righteousness and law-keeping, in fact became an instrument of death. In v. 11 this same deceitful twist of purpose seems to be suggested. Of course the law, not given until Sinai to a redeemed people, did promise life for those who responded with perfect obedience (Lev. 18:5; Ezek. 20:11; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12),[23] though this offer was to a people already corrupted by Adam. Here is revealed that moment of shocking truth that shakes a man when he, having confidently believed that his human performance would obtain acceptance, discovers by revelation that, in the sight of God, "all of his righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6). For Paul, the law that had been identified as a friend became a savage and merciless assailant; yet the cause of this onslaught was his own sin!

(5) The law of Moses is recruited by sin to slay, v. 11.

There is obvious similarity with the thrust of v. 8, except that here a more comprehensive explanation is given concerning the ultimate and devious design of sin. Whereas in v. 8 sin recruits the law so as to arouse sin, here the more deceitful intention of sin is exposed, including its ultimate design for death to the soul through the increasing burden of crushing guilt.

Of course underlying the idea of "deceit," ἐξαπατάω, exapataō, an intensive compound meaning, "to beguile thoroughly/wholly," is that of personal intent which goes deeper than the personification of sin. In other words, it is Satan who conspires to mislead, after the manner of the serpent in Gen. 3:1, 13 (cf. II Cor. 11:3; I Tim. 2:14, where the same Greek word is used). The commandment, "You shall not eat from it or touch it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil]," was used by the serpent when he deceitfully suggested to Eve that in eating the forbidden fruit she could be "like God" (Gen. 3:5). The law, although impotent according to its essential character, is yet an innocent tool that is satanically used to delude man into thinking that by this means he may attain life and righteousness. However, this supposed

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[22] Supported by Augustine, Calvin, Haldane, Hodge, Luther, Murray, Owen.

[23] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 439.

deliverer snaps back to savagely devour its devotee so as to make it a slaughtered victim, evicted from the garden of Eden and fellowship with God.

So, as Lloyd-Jones writes: "Sin does this work, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:17, by 'darkening our understanding'. It prevents our thinking clearly, it misrepresents everything; it gives us rose-tinted spectacles; it perverts everything, changes everything, transforms everything."[24]

b. Through the law come God's good, righteous demands, v. 12.

Thus the law of Moses, having been on trial so to speak because of the charge of v. 7, is thoroughly vindicated according to its essence and purpose. It is a transcript of the righteous character of God insofar as He requires us to be like him in *certain* ways that relate to our distinctive creatureliness. He does not command us to be independent, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent; He does command us to be holy, faithful, truthful, gracious, etc. Hence the law remains "holy" in that it has been "set apart" by God for a specific purpose, while at the same time it reflects the holy character of God (Is. 6:3). Clearly the fulness of the Mosaic law has elements that are linked in time with the distinctive applicability of this code to Israel; yet this Jewish outer framework contains the unchanging core of the nature of God. The law remains "righteous [just]" in that its proper administration or working, according to its purpose, is equitable and fair, never partisan. The law remains "good" in that it is morally pure and profitable for man, even as the tenth "commandment" represents.

Such a declaration does not in any way detract from the fact that the Christian is "not under law but under grace" (6:14), has "died to the law" 7:4), or has been "released from the law" (7:6); however it does eliminate any charge that man's problem is due to the fault of the law, or indeed God, even if that law was misused by sin. It should be borne in mind that in 8:2-3, the believer will be informed that he has been "set free from the law of sin and death," that "the law was weak through the flesh," and that a new "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has supplanted the Mosaic administration. The old code remains "holy, just, and good" in its heart and setting, yet "Christians [ought] never to return to the law — whether Mosaic or any other list of 'rules' — as a source of spiritual vigor and growth."[25]

C. THE FRUITLESS ROLE OF THE LAW IN SANCTIFICATION, VS. 13-25.

Paul now reverts back to his concern that the law is *unproductive* regarding sanctification in the life of the Christian even if the regenerate soul agrees with its essential goodness. While he again speaks of it as "good" and "spiritual" in vs. 13-14, 16, thus reiterating the thought of v. 12, yet he returns to the dark side of the law insofar as, unlike Jesus Christ, it does not produce righteousness, but rather is "the law of sin and death" and "weak through the flesh," vs. 23, 25; 8:2-3. Thus the key terms that must be distinctly understood here are,

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[24] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 7*, p. 160.

[25] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 441.

first"law," then "sin/evil," "I/ego/inner man," and "flesh/body/members," especially with regard to their usage up to this point. Note that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is not mentioned here until v. 25, and the Holy Spirit until 8:2.

That the Apostle describes in this section the realm of his present experience is maintained for the following reasons. 1. The conflict of vs. 14-25 is paralleled by Galatians 5:17 which appears to describe Christian conflict. 2. The present tense emphasis of vs. 14-25 indicates the likelihood that Paul refers to his Christian experience.[26] 3. Paul's religious experience before his conversion seems proud and confident (Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:4-6), while here his soul seems in a turmoil. 4. The preceding context of 5:1-7:7 addresses the sanctification of the believer. 5. The triumphant cry of v. 25, surely that of a believer, yet describes the mind serving the law of God while the flesh serves the law of sin. 6. The inner man is repeatedly described as being inclined, according to heart and will, toward the law of God and the good. The chief objection to this perspective,[27] which sees Paul as describing an unregenerate seeker, concerns the seeming less than victorious reign of sin as described in vs. 14, 19, 21, 24-25, and this matter will be dealt with in subsequent comments.[28] Lloyd-Jones rightly declares concerning v. 14: "'I am carnal, sold under sin'. We have here what is, in many ways, the key statement of the whole of this section; . . . all the commentators are agreed that this is the most significant statement in the whole section."

1. The right role of the law restated, v. 13.

   While this verse, with its three "aorist tense" verbs that are the last of this chapter, expands upon the cumulative truth of vs. 7-12, yet the importance of its connection with v. 14 requires that it be more closely associated with the repetitive "present tense" truth that is now about to be set forth. Again Paul is emphatic, as in vs. 7-8, that the law is essentially "good" even though he will continue to maintain that it is functionally weak. Now he denies that the law is responsible for punitive death, let alone that it is intrinsically sin and thus evil. The challenge here may be the thought, "Well, if the law is not evil in itself, yet it certainly was responsible for my condemnation to death!"

   But Paul again responds, "No." Rather, the culprit remains to be "sin," that manipulative foe previously described as using the law as an innocent tool so as to "slay" sin's victim, vs. 8-9. So here sin delights to use the law so that the sinner might recognize his "exceeding sinfulness" and consequently be subject to an unwitting agent of death through condemnation. Thus the law, while not in any way being culpable with regard to sinful man's mortal condition and destiny, is sin's x-ray machine, magnifying glass, and scalpel, whereby the human cancerous soul is exposed in all of its ugliness so that the patient is brought to utter despair and the only hope of death.

   Hence the concluding emphasis of this verse reiterates Paul's perception of the law as being analytical, diagnostic, and informative, not remedial and sanctifying. Further,

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[26] Lloyd-Jones rejects this proof on the grounds that Paul is here using "the dramatic present" that can in fact refer to a past event. While this may be a possibility, yet the surrounding and predominant use of the common temporal present, especially in contrast with the prior aoristic emphases of vs. 8-11, makes his suggestion improbable. *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 7*, pp. 183-4.

[27] Supported by Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, Owen, Haldane, Hodge, Shed, Morris, Murray, Cranfield, Packer, and rejected by Wesley, Sunday and Bedlam, Lloyd-Jones, Moo.

[28] For an excellent survey of the opposing views here refer to Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 284-8.

there is obviously the suggestion here that the law, while being good in itself, yet can be deceitfully used by sin; in this way a Christian is deluded into believing that the law will encourage him to grow in his spiritual life, while in fact, like a seeming tamed animal, it suddenly rises up to devour the one who holds it close to his breast. It is this thought in particular that readies us to understand the truth of v. 14.

2. The work of the law in relationship to the flesh, vs. 14-20.

The ensuing conflict is perhaps best understood if we ask ourselves whether, apart from this passage, any other parts of Paul's writings include a somewhat parallel account. Surely our response here must be positive. Consider Romans 13:14 where the exhortation, obviously addressed to the believer, implicitly understands the propensity of the flesh to militantly lust against the Christ clothed new man. As a result, in I Corinthians 9:26-27 Paul declares, "I discipline [rigorously control] my body and make it my slave [rather than my master]." Then in Galatians 5:16-17, the tension here in the believer, which Luther associates with Rom. 7:14, 23-4,[29] is similarly described as being between the Spirit controlled new man and his rebellious vehicle of flesh, as Colossians 3:5 likewise suggests. Also consider the "groaning" of Romans 8:23; II Corinthians 5:2-4. Thus we remind ourselves that, according to our study of Romans 6:6, the implicit revelation of the new man is set against the tyranny and vanquished power of "our body of sin." Here the same biblical dualism is described in more profound detail.

a. The Christian self muses about the *law* and his *flesh*, vs. 14-16.

The connection here with v. 13 concerns the innocent holiness and sin exposing character of the law, and now a far more intimate consideration of how sin, inherent in the flesh, uses this law to arouse sin in the believer to an excruciatingly disturbing level, sans any gracious remedy.

(1) The law and corrupt flesh by definition, v. 14.

"For we know," in itself suggests that Paul expects his Christian audience to appreciate, almost as an axiom now readily accepted, that what he is about to say concerns their present common experience.

(a) The spirituality of the law.

Obviously the "spirituality" of the law wraps together the aspects of "holiness," "righteousness," and "goodness" described in v. 12, yet there are shades of II Tim. 3:16 here as well. The law has come from God, and thus it is Spirit generated; it has an impeccable character.

(b) The believer's carnality under the law.

But when the law is used by sin in the flesh, then this self-condemnation is to be expected. What is meant by Paul being σάρκινος, sarkinos, here? This is a vital matter. The word means "composed of flesh;"

[29] Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle To The Galatians*, p. 502.

Goodspeed's translation of "physical" is probably best here while the NIV having "unspiritual" is probably the worst.[30] Some make much of the parallel of spirit/flesh here with spirit/flesh in I Corinthians 3:1-3, where Paul's addresses weak believers, so that "flesh" here means "carnal person." It is this understanding that introduces problems here in understanding v. 14. To be "carnal" in Corinth was not the same as here being "composed of flesh."[31] Rather, the related terminology and overall picture of Romans 6:6, 12-13, 19; 7:5, 23-24, concerning our "body of sin," "mortal body," bodily "members," "body of this death," etc. seems far more determinative in that Paul here is primarily describing the physical body, as Luther affirms commenting on 6:6.[32] Lloyd-Jones objects to this interpretation since Paul is saying that "I" am carnal here as opposed to "my body is carnal." But vs. 16, 18 indicate that the Apostle can describe "I/himself" as "carnal" when in fact he means "my flesh." In other words, the bodily component of a Christian, as sinfully impregnated, constitutes the believer as being carnal.[33] Thus the exposure of the law to this carnal realm will stimulate a sense of sin, personal corruption, and groaning.

(c) The believer's captivity under the law.

Paul's confession that he is "sold in bondage to sin" in an expanded form means "having been sold over to ownership and dominion by sin." So it is the absolute sense here that causes Moo to write that this statement, "clinches the argument for a description of a non-Christian here."[34] Lloyd-Jones argues at length for a similar opinion."[35] However, it is significant that Moo defines "body" in 6:6, 12-13 as "the whole person." Certainly if "the whole person" here is "sold in bondage to sin," then a seeming insuperable problem arises with regard to that same person being a Christian.[36] However, if it is the believer as

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[30] Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 290.

[31] James Fraser, *A Treatise On Sanctification*, pp. 270-1; also Murray, *Romans*, I, pp. 259-50.

[32] "Therefore the term 'body of sin' ought not be understood as something mystical, as many people do who imagine that 'body of sin' refers to a whole mountain of evil works, but rather it refers to this very body which we are carrying around. It is called the 'body of sin' because it inclines against the spirit and toward sin. And the seed of the devil dwells in it." Martin Luther, *Works*, "Lectures On Romans," V. 25, p. 314; also Theodore Zahn.

[33] Let it be emphasized here that "carnal" or being "composed of flesh" must be understood according to 6:6, "our body of sin." That is, the body and its members are polluted with sin (7:18, 23, 25). Notice here in v. 14 that it is the flesh that is in bondage to sin. Thus pure material flesh is not intrinsically evil, yet it is, according to the fall, spiritually diseased and subject to dissolution. Concerning Ephesians 6:12 where Paul declares that, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood," the context suggests conflict with external foes that are spiritual in nature, and not "mere frail men (Gal. 1:16), with all their physical and mental infirmities (respectively I Cor. 15:50 and Matt. 16:17). William Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, p. 272.

[34] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 454.

[35] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition Of Chapter 7*, pp. 176-257. He denies Paul is describing either the regenerate or unregenerate state, but rather a person in transition and partially awakened, being troubled by the law and near conversion.

[36] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 375, 382-4.

"composed of flesh" who is "sold in bondage to sin," then such captivity is not necessarily to be attributed to the Christian "new man." Further, the following tension between the "I" that wants to do the good as opposed to what "sin does" vs. 19-23, makes v. 14 consistently explicable. So Luther comments on Galatians 5:17 (cf. Ps. 38:1-10; Matt. 26:41; Rom. 8:23; I Cor. 9:26-27; Heb. 12:1):

> Here [and Rom. 7:14, 23-4], not only the schoolmen, but also some of the old fathers, are much troubled, seeking how they may excuse Paul. For it seemeth unto them absurd and unseemly to say, that that elect vessel of Christ should have sin. But we credit Paul's own words, wherein he plainly confesseth that he is sold under sin, and that he is led captive of sin, that he hath a law in his members rebelling against him, and that in the flesh he serveth the law of sin. Here again they answer, that the Apostle speaketh in the person of the ungodly. But the ungodly do not complain of the rebellion of their flesh, of any battle or conflict, or of the captivity and bondage of sin: for sin mightily reigneth in them. This is therefore the very complaint of Paul and of all the saints[37]

Again, it needs to be stated, as John Stott confirms,[38] that the law in particular causes the believer to make such a cry of anguish since it is such an able stimulant of sinful flesh, which is the point that v. 13 reminded us about.

(2) The law arouses the corrupt flesh, v. 15.

The axiom of v. 14 having been established, particularly a distinction between Paul as the representative "I" and his "sinful flesh," there is now an invitation for the Christian to inwardly reflect upon how the law, given its earlier defined role in vs. 7-13, impacts upon his life as a new person in Christ who yet inhabits a corrupt mortal body.

The "I/flesh" conflict is mysterious, frustrating and paradoxical. Exposed to the law, as v. 16 suggests, there arise conflicting responses. As the law is comprehended, the "I" approves of its positive and negative moral imperatives and disapproves of its opposites. On the other hand, the sinful body naturally acts in opposition to these imperatives and pursues that which is unlawful. More specifically, if I pursue sanctification by looking to the law, while I may admire the holiness that is commanded, yet that very law stimulates the "sinful flesh" so that it rises up in active opposition to that which the "I" approves. Thus my actions surprise me since they are in opposition to the desires of my heart that is alive unto God. Therefore such perplexity calls for careful analysis and understanding on the part of the Christian. What needs to be grasped is that, as with vs. 8, 11-13, the real

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[37] Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 502.

[38] "The right way of applying Romans 7-8 is to recognize that some church-goers today might be termed 'Old Testament Christians'. The contradiction implied in this expression indicates what an anomaly they are. They show signs of new birth in their love for the church and the Bible, yet their salvation is law, not gospel; flesh, not Spirit; the 'oldness' of slavery to rules and regulations, not the 'newness' of freedom through Jesus Christ. They are like Lazarus when he first emerged from the tomb, alive but still bound hand and foot. They need to add to their life liberty. John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, p. 210.

culprit here is "the law of sin which is in my members," and not "the law [that] is good," v. 16.

(3) The law is approved by the dominant new self, v. 16.

The conditional or "if" sentence here assumes the overall premise to be true. Hence, "Since I find myself [that is my body of sinful flesh] doing that which I [the new self] do not approve of, then in fact I [my body of sinful flesh] is the culprit doing that which I [the new self] disapprove of!" Thus the focus moves from the law's impeccable character, even if a carnal stimulant, to the resultant tension that now results between the flesh and the new self. It is as if the law, albeit good, has been used to stimulate an argument, and then draws back to let the disputants fight it out, as vs. 17-20 relate.

What is this acknowledgment by the new self that "the law is good"? It is the ready acknowledgment that the law, though functionally weak as 8:3 plainly states, is yet essentially holy; that is the law is morally pure and unsullied; it is just and beneficial in its prescriptions.; it is in no way a willing accomplice in carnal crime!

b. The Christian self muses about *himself* and his *flesh*, vs. 17-20.

Here a great depth of somber, agonizing self-contemplation is reached; and while the law is not specifically mentioned, yet its distinctive ministry of condemnation underlies the whole of the introspective conflict thus described. For while 8:3-4 describes, "what the law could not do [in terms of producing the righteousness of the law], weak as it was through the flesh," here we observe what the law can do as a stimulus to sinful flesh. There also needs to be a reminder of the conspicuous absence here of mention concerning the indwelling Holy Spirit, so that we are presently considering a more deficient form of Christian sanctification.[39] It is that condition whereby an authentic Christian is deceived by attempting to use the law as a means of attaining spiritual maturity (Gal. 3:1-3). Paul could presently understand, drawing from earlier experience, the soul-chilling effect of such a focus. This is not at all meant to subscribe here to a "carnal Christian" perspective. At any time a mature believer may descend to this appreciation of himself as a "wretched man," and the law will ably help him in this plunge. But surely Paul does not teach that he must be perpetually *locked into this focus*? It is undeniable that Romans 8:1-17 describes a contrasting ascent of the smitten, redeemed soul to a more blessed plain where, "the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" v. 6.

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[39] John Stott writes: "Many commentators have paid insufficient attention to what Bishop Handley Moule called 'this absolute and eloquent silence' in Romans 7 about the Holy Spirit. He is mentioned only in verse 6. Since that verse characterizes the Christian era as the age of the Spirit, one would have expected this chapter to be full of the Spirit. Instead, Romans 7 is full of the law (mentioned, with its synonyms, thirty-one times). It is Romans 8 which is full of the Spirit (mentioned twenty-one times) and which calls the indwelling of the Spirit the authenticating mark of belonging to Christ (8:9). If then we are looking for a description of the normal Christian life we will find it in Romans 8; Romans 7, with its concentration on the law and its omission of the Spirit, cannot be held to describe Christian normality." Ibid., pp. 208-9.

(1) "I" do not do what law-aroused "sinful flesh" does, v. 17.

The temporal emphasis here, "Now, no longer am I [the new self] the one working it [that which I hate]," implies a former unconverted state when the old self was working in agreeable conjunction with the overtures of sinful flesh; but now any evil intent and lawlessness is caused by sin that inhabits my fleshly body. Thus sin is again personified and described as the corrupting guest that defiles the residence, and offends and propositions its owner! But is this an escape from responsibility concerning personal sin? Cannot the believer, in antinomian fashion, be unconcerned about personal sin because, "I [the new self] am not doing it, but rather it is my detached body of sin"? Consider this reasoning through to v. 20.

(2) "I" am willing to do good in opposition to law-aroused "rebellious flesh," v. 18.

With greater clarity, description continues of the biblical dualism that distinguishes between soul and body in the Christian. Paul's body of sinful flesh is wholly corrupt and rebellious, yet implicit is the truth that something "good" does inhabit this carcass, and that obviously is the "new self." Thus the tension is described as between the inclination of the "new self" toward "the good" and the disinclination of the body to perform "the good." What is "the good"? Two different Greek words are used here. Paul's body is void of "[essential] good" ἄγαθος, agathos, and it is not disposed to doing "the [noble, praiseworthy] good," τὸ καλόν, to kalon, both of which related qualities are derived from God (Ps. 118:29; Mark 10:17-18).

(3) "I" am in active conflict with law-aroused "sinful flesh," v. 19.

The polarization that the Christian endures is now clarified as a conflict between "good" ἄγαθος, agathos, and "evil," κακός, kakos, but more particularly "good as opposed to evil desire" and "actual [not possible] evil practice." In other words, agreeable contemplation of the law and its essential goodness yet results in the stimulation of sinful flesh. The frustration is like that of a person with an itchy rash; the temptation is to scratch the irritation, though the result is greater itching. What is really needed is a healing balm. But why does the flesh here seem to dominate in terms of evil being actually practiced, in spite of good desires? Because the law is incapable of producing righteousness, as 8:3 plainly indicates; the law in fact scratches the sinful flesh only to make it more irritated and active. Contemplation of the law for the purpose of practicing the good, though with the best of intentions, is utterly deceitful, and just as counterproductive as the thought of scratching an infectious itch; the thought may seem reasonable, but the result is greater irritation. The only healing balm is the soul sanctifying Spirit of grace which is productive of life and peace in the mind (6:14; 8:6; Heb. 13:9).

(4) "I" am not deceived by the doing of law-aroused "sinful flesh," v. 20.

Another "if" clause assumes the premise to be true. "Since I [my sinful body of flesh] is doing the evil that I [the new self] disapprove of, then I [the new self] am not the active perpetrator of this sin that inheres within and erupts by means of my body." So through vs. 17-20, this dualism could be understood as justification of avoided responsibility." Murray responds:

> The following propositions are clearly implied. (1) The flesh is wholly sinful—no good thing dwells in it. (2) The flesh is still associated with his person—the flesh is *his* flesh and it is *in him*. (3) Sin is also associated with his person, for it is in his flesh that sin inheres. Hence verse 17 [and vs. 18-20] cannot be interpreted as a disavowal of responsibility for the sin that dwells in him or for the sin committed in frustration of his determinate will.[40]

Further, the purpose of Paul needs to be kept in mind here, namely the situation envisaged as to what happens when the Christian resorts to the law for sanctification; in such a scenario, the question of responsibility is not a matter that Paul is concerned about.

3. The work of the law in conflict with the "new self", vs. 21-25.

In this conclusion of his thesis, Paul explicitly reverts to the distinctive roll of "the [Mosaic] law of God," although νόμος, nomos, used seven times in these five verses, takes on additional meanings.

a. The law of God and "the new self," v. 21.

This is acknowledged to be one of the most difficult verses to interpret in Romans. The NASB commences, "I find then the principle that evil is present with me," while the NKJV reads, "I find then a law, that evil is present with me." Yet "the principle" or "a law" is ὁ νόμος, ho nomos, more probably referring to "the law [of Moses]."[41] Thus H. C. G. Moule gives a good literal translation as follows: "So then I find the Law, with me willing to do what is good, [I find, I say,] that with me what is evil is present."[42] Here the Christian persists in seeking sanctification through the supposed encouragement of the law, and an element of deception is present in that the inner appreciation of the law's essential goodness leads him to believe that he must surely be on the right track. The only problem is that strong solicitation to evil is present, even increasingly so as the law is pursued. Hence the law appears to be admirable; its purity is glorious, most desirable, especially according to the diseased; yet their malignancy only finds encouragement, not healing.

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[40] Murray, *Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 263.

[41] The articular ὁ νόμος, ho nomos, is the predominant and frequent expression in ch. 7 here, and the context, especially as paralleled in v. 22, strongly suggests that the definite article should be emphasized.

[42] H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, p. 133.

b. The law of God and the conquest of man v. 22-25.

The remainder of Paul's argument concerning misguided appreciation of the role of the law is portrayed as a battle, or a "Holy War" so to speak. The conflict described in the preceding vs. 17-20 is now illustrated, using military metaphors, in parallel with Galatians 5:17-18.

(1) The vocal cry of the *inner man* that brings rejoicing, v. 22.

"For I muse with inward delight in the law of God according to the inner man." Most likely, in the light of v. 22, a broad understanding of "law" is in mind here that certainly incorporates the Mosaic code. Of course this enjoyment must be within the parameters of the right use of the law as described by Paul (3:19-20; 4:15; 7:7; I Tim. 1:8-10), since he also warns concerning the misuse of the law (Acts 13:39; Rom. 8:3). As a Jew in particular, Paul reverently appreciates that the law has come, uncorrupted, from the mouth of God, and thus is "holy . . . righteous . . . good . . . spiritual," vs. 12, 14. Thus Paul can happily reflect on the character of God revealed in the law, as well as its ability to cause men to understand their bankruptcy as thorough sinners. The law is excellent as a "ministry of condemnation [having fading glory]" (II Cor. 3:9-11). While Paul could be said to appreciate that "the law leads to grace," yet he never speaks in terms of "the grace of law."[43]

(2) The vexed cry of the *smitten man* that brings captivity, v. 23.

This complex statement restates the dichotomy of vs. 14-21 except that the "inner man" of v. 22 is now described as "the law of my mind," that is the "renewed mind" 12:2.The Christian then is not a spiritual schizophrenic having two egos designated as an old man and a new man. Rather he is a new man, a singular regenerate ego, that, while highly esteeming the law of God, at the same time finds an opposing law arising that is intrinsic to "the members of his body;" it is "the law of sin in his bodily members" cf. 6:6, that is a principle natural to all of Adam's race. Indeed it would seem that, based on v. 8, the law of God that is so admirable yet at the same time is used by sin to arouse conflict, even "wage war against the law of his mind." Thus sin in the flesh assails the ramparts of Paul's spiritually renewed mind; in spite of his high regard for the good law of God, Paul has a raging battle that, should he continue to look to the law of God, will lead to his captivity. In other words, to look to the law in neglect of gospel grace will lead to sin overwhelming the regenerate soul. This man, while recognizing the good in

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[43] Ernest Kevan's *The Grace Of Law* is an excellent study of Puritan theology. In the Foreword he comments: "The title of this book may seem to require justification, but it is my hope that this has been sufficiently provided in the substance of the work," p. 14. The overall argument, derived from systematic Covenant Theology, is reasoned as follows: "This subservient aim of the Law [in driving sinners to Christ according to Galatians 3:24] means that the Law is nothing less than the Divinely-appointed instrument of grace," p. 125. However, especially in Paul's writings, there simply is no such plainly stated synthesis. For all of his love of the law, yet the Apostle frequently and passionately distinguishes the antithetical and subordinate role of the law with regard to grace.

the law, is yet impoverished and lacking in appropriate defense, that is gospel accouterment and union with Christ through the Holy Spirit. The cry of v. 24 is that of a man taken captive by sin through the law; such imprisonment is that of a Christian who is looking in the wrong direction for the keeping of his saved soul.

(3) The vanquished cry of the *wretched man* in captivity, v. 24.

Now Paul admits to incarceration that inevitably results from his infatuation with the law of God; he postulates his status as a Christian who, although saved by the gospel, yet has suffered from a flirtatious relationship with Moses in neglect of the gospel, which wrong bigamous relationship is excluded in 7:1-4. The cry, "O wretched man [assailed new man?] that I am" concerns this believer's misery and agony that consumes his regenerate soul or ego, with regard to longed for "emancipation from the body of this death," that is "the law of sin in my members" according to v. 23. This tormented saint yearns for deliverance, expressed in the future tense of ῥύομαι, rhuomai; cf. 11:26 where Christ is "the Deliverer" of "all Israel."

However, surely this pathetic cry, though emanating from a mature believer,[44] is not to be understood as that of a triumphant child of God; rather we have here the expressed pain of a soul lashed by the merciless aggravation of the law! Yet, even for the man who rejoices in the balm of gospel grace there remain the distressing overtures of the flesh so that "groaning" continues as a periodic response (8:23; II Cor. 5:4, 8). In our earthly pilgrimage the flesh remains a perennial problem for all believers; nevertheless, the greatest relief will come from the application of an ointment called "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" rather than flagellation by means of "the law of sin and of death" (8:2-3).

In John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* this principle is well illustrated. Faithful describes to Christian his encounter with aged Adam the First, representing the flesh and the old man (6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9), who offers him his three daughters in marriage, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life. At first, in a moment of carnality, Faithful is inclined to accept this proposal; then he roundly spurns it only to be pinched in his flesh by the old man so that he cries out in pain, "O wretched man that I am!" Then Adam the First sends an assailant after Christian, in fact Moses, who beats the pilgrim to the ground and continues to batter him. Though Christian cries out for mercy, Moses declares, "I know not how to show mercy." Then another man comes who beats of Moses, and he is recognized on account of "the holes in his hands"![45] The point here is that the remedy for carnality and the anguish of guilt in the Christian is not Moses but Christ.

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[44] He is mature in his self-analysis and appreciation of the law even though, for a time, he has become entangled with the law; legalism could easily ensnare Peter (Gal. 2:11-14) who had earlier confessed his commitment to the gospel of grace for Jew and Gentile (Acts 15:11).

[45] *John Bunyan, The Works of John Bunyan*, III, pp. 118-9.

(4) The victorious cry of the *liberated man* through Jesus Christ, v. 25.

The opening exultant response here may well be better joined to v. 24 so that the subsequent comment, appearing as enigmatic to some, might stand alone as a conclusion that is more related to the whole issue of dualism introduced at v. 13.

(a) The triumph of the grace of God through Jesus Christ, v. 25a.

Since v. 4, the name of Christ has not been mentioned until here, and thus it is right to conclude that a whole new emphasis is about to dawn. Thus we might expand in paraphrase this tone of hope as follows: "Let free acknowledgment be given that God alone, through His Son Jesus Christ, delivers from that captivity which the law ruthlessly secures."[46] But is Paul here describing a present gospel oriented deliverance, or that which is the believer's future, victorious, consummate hope when "this mortal [body] must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53, 57; II Cor. 5:4), or both? The answer here must surely arise from four conclusions that have been deduced from the text thus far. First, consideration of the triumphant reign of grace revealed in 5:15-21, having been interrupted in chapters 6-7 by several challenges to this truth, is now about to be resumed in 8:1-25. Second, Paul has described his own Christian experience, and this verse adds considerable weight to this opinion. Third, he continues to deal with conflict that arises when the Christian attempts to be sanctified by means of the law, and this verse, along with the explicit legal references in 8:2-7, makes this point undeniable. Fourth, it follows then that the cry of v. 24 refers to desired rescue from the misery of the overwhelming struggle that has been considered from v. 13; in other words the yearned for deliverance concerns a legal conflict and not simply carnality in general; again, 8:2-7 seems to make this exceedingly clear.

Admittedly, many commentators have exclusively understood this expression of triumphant hope as a confident declaration of future emancipation from this corrupt body of flesh at the day of resurrection.[47] Yet the connected contrast with chapter 8, while undoubtedly incorporating this perspective, yet also appears to include a present realization of emancipation.[48] Concerning a future aspect, the later verses of chapter 8, specifically vs.11, 18-25, stimulate hope, anticipation of the day of resurrection, "the redemption of our body," v. 23. However, the future tense of "Who will set me free from the body of this death?" in 7:24 surely finds a present realization in the fact that,

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[46] Murray is correct when he concludes that, textual variants notwithstanding, "[t]his is the answer to the question of vs. 24." *Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 269.

[47] Haldane, Moule, Murray, Pink.

[48] Morris rightly declares: "Clearly Paul's words express gratitude for a present deliverance, but it is likely that they also have eschatological significance. The deliverance we have today is wonderful, but it is partial and incomplete. It is but a first instalment of greater things to come, and Paul looks forward to that great day with his burst of thanksgiving." *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 297.

"the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death," 8:2.[49] Further, 8:1-10 as a whole appears to have a present emphasis whereby "the requirement [righteousness] of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit [of Christ]," v. 4.

(b) The conflict of the legal mind with the law of sin, v. 25b.

Liberal commentators, being so perplexed by this seeming resignation to the ongoing dominance of the flesh that so starkly contrasts with the prior triumphant declaration juxtaposed in this verse, feel free to amend the text without the slightest manuscript justification.[50] Of course such arrogant "scholarship" is an affront to the doctrine of biblical inspiration. A more literal translation reads: "So then, on the one hand I myself, with my mind, am serving the law of God, but on the other hand with [my] flesh [I am serving] the law of sin." Is therefore the "ego" divided here so that its affections oscillate between the good and evil, between the "law of God" and the "law of sin"? Does indeed the "new man" at times act in *agreement* with the flesh? The preceding context would suggest "no," especially vs. 17, 20. Hence, the inferential "ego" is but a concession to the fact that the flesh is very much a part of the overall person, though strictly it is not identical with the "I myself with my mind."[51]

However Paul is not saying that the flesh is in reality regnant over his redeemed ego, any more than this is the case in Galatians 5:17. What he is saying is simply that while there is a measure of present deliverance by means of the reign of grace through the Spirit in 8:1-5, yet the conflict is ongoing and heightened when the law is sought as a helper; there is no present truce with or final overthrow of the enemy; indeed sin is strengthened and emboldened through the law when it confronts the "new man." The present indicative here of δουλεύω, douleuō, "to serve," describes the reality of continuous conflict, while the subsequent truth of 8:2 prescribes the gospel grounded means of victory over "the law of sin and of death," which here in vs. 25 is "the law of sin." Thus while v. 25a has introduced us to the glory of gospel sanctification, v. 25b sums up the conflict that attempted legal sanctification engenders and has been described in vs. 13-24. As John Stott states: "God's purpose is not that we should be Old Testament Christians, regenerate indeed, but living in slavery to the law and in bondage to indwelling sin.

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[49] Here the verb "to set free" is the aorist of ἐλευθερόω, eleutheroō.

[50] Moo rightly describes this subjective emasculation as, "little more than desperate attempts to make the text say what we think it *ought* to say, when we should be figuring our what it *does* say." *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 466n.

[51] Moule explains: "In strict grammar it [I myself] belongs to *both* clauses; to the service with the mind and to that with the flesh. But remembering how St. Pail has recently dwelt on the Ego as 'willing' to obey the will of God, it seems best to throw the emphasis, (as we certainly may do in practice,) on the *first* clause." *Epistle of Paul to the Romans*," p. 135.

It is rather that we should be New Testament Christians who, having died and risen with Christ, are living in the freedom of the indwelling Spirit."[52]

[52] Stott, *Message of Romans*, p. 215.

CHAPTER X

ROMANS 8:1-39 – THE REIGN OF GRACE THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL

Superlatives abound when commentators reflect upon the esteem that has been accorded to this eighth chapter of Romans, and such acclaim is entirely justified. James Montgomery Boice titles his commentary on this passage, "The Greatest Chapter in the Bible."[1] J. I. Packer declares: "Now, as Romans is the high peak of the Bible, so chapter 8 is the high peak of Romans."[2] Keeping in mind Paul's grand purpose in writing this epistle, which was his intent to heighten the addressees' understanding of the gospel so that both sanctification and assurance might result, here the pinnacle of such a purpose is reached.

In appreciating the truth that a right understanding of Romans 8 is gained from first grasping the thrust of Romans 1-7, it has become common parlance to speak, agreeably or disagreeably, of the thought that the defeated, carnal or legal Christian ought to move from living in Romans 7 to the more victorious realm of living in Romans 8. It is certainly true that some glib convention ministry and perfectionist "higher life" writings have conveyed this idea.[3]

On the other hand, it is also true that others, in attempting to uphold the normalcy of Romans 7 for the mature believer, have seemed to become blinded to the obvious triumphant contrast that Romans 8 presents.[4] In simple terms, the determining factor here is the question as to whether the believer of 7:24, in crying out "Wretched man that I am," is responding to a general principle of inward carnality or a more specific inflammation of his body of flesh by means of the law.[5] The former course perceives the contrasting standards of Romans 7 and 8 as oscillating normal experiences; the latter course perceives these standards as contrary experiences that present a preferable standard in Romans 8. This commentary is committed to the latter course as being the intent of the biblical text.

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[1] James Montgomery Boice, *Romans, the Reign of Grace, 5-8*, pp. 781-88.

[2] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 232.

[3] The Keswick Convention movement originating from England gained a reputation for this emphasis in its regular ministry format of expounding through Romans 5-8. One of its founders, Rev. W. E. Boardman, had a perfectionist/holiness bent, and B. B. Warfield quotes him as describing deliverance from the bondage of sin "having passed out of the seventh chapter of Romans into the eighth." *Perfectionism*, p. 241.

[4] Arthur Pink writes: "To talk of 'getting out of Romans 7 into Romans 8' is excuseless folly. . . . This moan, 'O wretched man that I am,' expresses the normal experience of the Christian, and any Christian who does not so moan is in an abnormal and unhealthy state spiritually. The man who does not utter this cry daily is either so out of communion with Christ, or so ignorant of the teaching of Scripture, or so deceived about his actual condition, that he knows not the corruptions of his own heart and the abject failure of his own life." He further declares that those who disagree with him at this point, or suggest a present deliverance is included in Romans 7:25a, are influenced by the spirit of Laodiceanism." *The Christian in Romans 7*, p. 00.

[5] It needs to be remembered that this aggravation of "the body of this death," which is arousal of "the law of sin" according to 7:23, finds such stimulation to be in the instrumentality of the law as 7:7-11 has taught and 8:2-3, 7 confirms. In accepting that Galatians 5:17 presents a parallel with the expressed conflict of 7:24, it should be noted that Galatians 5:18 also suggests that this condition is stimulated by the law.

A. PRESENT LIBERTY THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF GOSPEL GRACE, VS. 1-17.

While the subject of the law continues to hold a place of prominence here in vs. 1-8, and thus could be included as part of the subject matter that precedes, as does Lloyd-Jones at least in the title of his commentary that covers 7:1-8:4, yet the new triumphant emphasis on "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" in v. 2 leads us to retain the accepted chapter break here.

Given that Romans 6-7 is parenthetical concerning some objections that Paul addresses with regard to the abuse of grace and the role of the law, while Romans 5 and 8 present a degree of continuity, does it follow that there is no connection between Romans 7 and 8? Lloyd-Jones is quite emphatic here when he writes: "You cannot deduce from what Paul has just been saying [in chapter 7] that 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' There is no natural connection here."[6] However, this appears to be an astonishing comment when the following is considered. First, the issue of the law has not concluded at this point even though its last mention in this chapter is 8:7; rather verse 1 here directs us to the potency of being "in Christ Jesus" in contrast with the impotency of the law in sanctification described in verse 3. Second, the cry concerning felt "condemnation" in 7:24 finds its answer in "no condemnation" in 8:1. Hence the thought here of "no condemnation" focuses on the fact that union with Christ delivers from the condemnation of the Law. Thus C. K. Barrett comments concerning 8:1: "It is the law that leads to condemnation, both because sin fastens its grip upon man through the law, and because judgment takes place on the basis of law. Christians, however, are dead to the law and therefore escape judgment."[7] It is in this regard that Augustus Toplady's verse is so applicable here.

A debtor to mercy alone,
  Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with thy righteousness on,
  My person and offerings to bring.
The terrors of law and of God
  With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood
  Hide all my transgressions from view

1. There is life in the Spirit of Christ, vs. 1-11.

It is significant that, while in 7:7-25 the mention of life in Christ is totally absent, in 8:1-13 the concept in general is dominant. Put another way, while the doctrine of regeneration is absent in 7:7-25, it is emphasized in 8:1-13 as being especially important in terms of the believer's present sanctified life.

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[6] D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 7:1-8:4*, p. 259.

[7] C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 154. Murray similarly comments at this point: "In this context, . . . the apostle is not dealing with justification and the expiatory aspect of Christ's work but with sanctification and with what God has done in Christ to deliver us from the power of sin. Hence what is thrust into the foreground in the terms of 'no condemnation' is not only freedom from guilt but also freedom from the enslaving power of sin. If . . . this view of 'condemnation' is adopted, then this verse, as inference, can be connected with what immediately precedes, either restrictedly (7:25) or more inclusively (6:1-7:25). *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 275.

a. Walking in the Spirit of Christ, vs. 1-4.

Focusing on the present, Paul transfers us from the realm of legal dominion and sanctification, the law's condemnation, carnal arousal, and weakness, to the realm of spiritual union with Christ, that is the relationship of being "in Christ" by means of the Spirit. This spiritual realm is a pilgrimage in which the believer is to progress toward heaven with a spiritual gait that distinguishes him from a carnal style of walking (Gal. 5:16; 25).

(1) There is no condemnation in Christ, v. 1.

The KJV includes a segment, identical to that found at the end of v. 4, which is strongly believed to be a scribal addition, and thus is excluded from the NASB and NIV.

It is difficult to avoid the impact here of, as Morris puts it, "a different atmosphere from that in chapter 7."[8] The emphatic conclusion and the immediacy of "now" both add to the impact. Further, the reintroduction of Paul's favorite term for union with Christ, that is being, "in Christ," last mentioned in 6:11 as the conclusion of vs. 1-10, paves the way for the emphasis of 8:2, 10, 39. Charles Wesley has well conveyed this joyous status:

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

It is true that "no condemnation" is a negative declaration of "justification;" but it needs to be asked why Paul uses this expression since the preceding broad context appears to provide a ready answer, including 5:16, 18 where κατάκρινα, katakrina, is used, as well as 7:1-25 where the tenor of the struggle is bound up with legal condemnation. Man's fundamental problem is that he qualifies for condemnation, chiefly at the hand of God, even as Job rightly understood (Job 15:14-16). The law only aggravates this truth; it presses it home remorselessly; it increases the misery; it helps not one whit in providing a sanctifying remedy. But to those "in Christ," to those who are justified, who are clothed with a perfect and acceptable righteousness, condemnation is obliterated; God will not hear it in His court! His verdict is final, total, and binding for eternity (Ps. 34:22)! Surely this causes the prisoner in the dock to jump for joy and sing as Philip Bliss has taught us:

My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

[8] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 300.

(2) There is freedom from the law of sin and death, v. 2.

Clearly following on from v. 1, Paul describes the liberated status of "me" (NKJV, NIV) rather than "you" (NASB, ESV),[9] which the context of 7:21-25 would support. Here is the reason why the condemnation of the law does not fall upon those in a saving union with Jesus Christ. It is true that much perfectionist/holiness ministry has stressed that here a higher level of sanctification is reached through the now dominant Holy Spirit. However, while a blessed change is evident here in comparison with 7:13-25, it is the result of the free grace of the Spirit communicated and liberating gospel that is now uncompromised and unrestricted by legal interference (Gal. 3:1-3; 5:25).

(a) The instrument of liberation, the law of the Holy Spirit.

The "[new gospel] law of the Spirit" is intended to contrast with the "[old Mosaic] law of sin and death" described at the end of this verse, which comparison will be heightened in v. 3. Indeed "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is given expanded definition in v. 3b-4. This is the superceding "law of the gospel of Spirit communicated grace, embodied in Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 3:7-18). In other words, Paul is now focusing on the importance of regeneration as it relates to justification.[10] These doctrines are distinct yet vitally related, both with regard to conversion and sanctification, the latter mentioned being considered at this juncture. This emphasis, while having been more implicitly broached in 5:5; 6:4, 11; 7:6, is now pressed home with explicit force through to v. 27.

Thus it is "the law of the gospel" that regulates the Christian's sanctification, and especially as that gospel is an internal reality through the Holy Spirit, not merely some external testimony. Beyond the objectivity of the gospel in terms of historic reality, inscripturation, and true confession, there must be a soul, formerly of stone, made flesh that throbs with life and holy affections.[11] Thus the gospel here takes on fuller dimensions than those perceived when we first believed. Jesus Christ is the root and ground of the gospel, yet here there are explained the facts of life and union with this Savior. To savingly believe is to be made alive unto Christ and engrafted into Him. Such a relationship is the real ground of Christian fruitfulness (7:4; John 6:63; 15:4-5; Gal. 5:16-26) and not the administration of Moses. Thus, in a sermon on Romans 8:2, Thomas Manton declares:

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[9] To decide here on which pronoun is correct is difficult. The UBS Greek text, second edition, opts for "me" with a low "C" rating. Then in the third edition it changes to "you" with a lower "D" rating!

[10] Many commentators differ as to whether the "law of the Spirit" here refers to the gospel or the Holy Spirit. However, it appears that for Paul these entities are not unrelated (Tit. 3:5-7). Refer to Morris, *Romans*, p. 301.

[11] "The thought [here] moves in the realm of internal operation and not in that of objective accomplishment. We must not assume, however, that the basis upon which it derives its power is far from the apostle's thought." John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 277.

> [T]he new covenant is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. . . . [T]he new covenant giveth liberty (to all that are really under it) from the slavery of sin, and the condemning power of the law. . . . The gospel, which is both our rule and charter, is the law which in Christ's name is given to the world. . . . It is his [Christ's] law that is written upon our hearts by the Spirit.[12]

(b) The emancipation, the past act of justification and regeneration.

"Has set me free," is correct with its perfect tense connotation, according to Paul's intent, though "set me free" most accurately translates the aorist of ἐλευθερόω, eleutheroō. In other words, Paul refers to the decisive act of justification when the Holy Spirit was given at that same point of conversion and thus presently indwells, the past event, that obtained emancipation in terms of right standing and newness of life, which continues to have sanctifying effect (Gal. 5:1).

(c) The instrument of captivity, the law of sin and death.

What is this enslavement by means of "the law of sin and death"? Surely 7:23-25, but especially v. 24, presents the obvious answer. In the context of sanctification, this "law" is the law of Moses[13] which stimulates "sin and death" and the cry of agony, "Wretched man that I am!" Here is the Christian whose dalliance with Moses is productive, not of hoped for holy improvement, but a revelation of misery producing unholiness and condemnation.

(3) There is fulfillment of the righteousness of the law, v. 3-4.

The contrasting "laws" of v. 2 are now described in more practical and dynamic terms. The inability of the law, according to its misuse and wrong expectations, is eclipsed by the ability of the Spirit of the gospel.

(a) Christ is stronger than the law, v. 3.

Here God the Son is the obedient administrator of the Father's plan of redemption, while in vs. 2, 4, God the Holy Spirit is both the communicator of the Redeemer's work and the enabler of the redeemed.

1) The law's impotence through the flesh.

"For what the [Mosaic] law [of God] could not do" supports the contention that in chapter 7 there was a false assumption concerning the purpose of the law and its ability. Further, the obvious reference here to the Mosaic code supports the same identification of "the law of sin and death" in v. 2. This law is an excellent ethic without dynamic. Morris quotes T. W. Manson:

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[12] Thomas Manton, *Works*, XI, pp. 397, 399, 408. Cf. Barrett, *Romans*, p. 155.

[13] So Barrett, Haldane, Hodge, Lloyd-Jones, Moo, Stott.

"Moses' law has right but not might; Sin's law has might but not right; the law of the Spirit has both right and might."[14] But why does Paul not say, "For what the flesh could not do, weak as it was, in the face of the law . . .", which statement is in fact true? Because the law has been misunderstood as an instrument of sanctification and it must be exposed in all of its sanctifying impotence. Thus the law is ἀδύνατος, adunatos, "without power." In this regard it is vital to again appreciate that the context here concerns sanctification and not justification.

Luther's initial comment on this verse is a follows: "Where now is free will? Where are those people who are trying to affirm that we of our own natural powers can produce the act of loving God above all things?"[15] Of course Paul has already argued concerning man's moral impotence through corruption (3:9-18) so that here it is couched in terms of "[sinful] flesh" being "weak" and "lacking strength [ability to acceptably obey the law]," that is apart from the renewing and enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit. Man's ultimate problem is not simply the fact of sin but rather its congenital root that produces incapacitating paralysis. How pathetic then is man, as the paralytic, when he claims ability that he manifestly does not have.

2) God's potency through His Son.

"God did," is in fact saying "God the Father had power to do what neither the law nor sinful flesh could accomplish." These two words sum up the Christian gospel which is principally about God, that is who He is and what He has done. Here the evangel is again encapsulated for the sake of grasping more fully its sanctifying effect.

a) His sending of His Son.

It is "His own Son," the Son of His heart (John 1:1-2), the Son rich in heavenly glory (II Cor. 8:9), the Son in whom He delights (Prov. 8:30), His "only one (darling, KJV)" (Ps. 22:20), directed in the counsels of eternity (Ps. 2:7-8; Heb. 10:5-7) to leave His Father's bosom (John 1:18; 17:5); this was divine forfeiture that is astonishing when the intent to save sinners is kept in mind.

b) His identification with sinful flesh.

This was condescension, beyond christophany in the Old Testament, when the Son of God took on humanity and was "made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:5-8). Here this Son,

[14] Morris, *Romans*, p. 301.

[15] Martin Luther, *Works*, XXV, p. 344.

"not unsympathetic regarding our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15), was sent in the "likeness/resemblance" of literally, according to Stott, "[the] flesh of sin," but not "in sinful flesh."[16]

True humanity was revealed in Adam before the Fall, hence Christ being perfected in humanity (Heb. 5:8; Luke 2:51-52) did not necessitate a yielding to the temptations of Satan, as if sympathy for thieves could only come from thieves., or only a thief could judge a thief. Rather Jesus Christ was "of David according to the flesh" (1:3) or descended from "the fathers . . . according to the flesh" (9:5). In the same way he mingled with publicans and sinners without the slightest participation in their sinful lifestyles. Thus he closely identified with sinful and leprous human flesh in the colony of this world while in no way knowing the contagion.

c) His sacrifice for sin.

Jesus Christ not only confronted the diseased of this world, but also the disease itself in the sense of himself being offered as the only effective antidote. The language here may well convey the more specific idiomatic Hebrew thought of Christ being offered as a "sin offering" NIV.[17] This truth naturally leads to the next thought of sin being vanquished.

d) His subduing of sin allied to the flesh

This is the point that Paul wishes us to dwell upon, namely that by means of his atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ "decisively judged/condemned/passed sentence upon [aorist of κατακρίνω katakrinō] sin in its unholy alliance with the flesh," cf. 7:8, 11, 13. However, the ongoing context concerning "walking in accord with the Spirit," v. 4, surely demands more than an objective and judicial meaning, for the fact of such a conquering judgment also requires a conquering ability. So Toplady describes the necessity of sin being not only sentenced, but subdued.

> Be of sin the double cure,
> Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Thus Murray explains at length that "the forensic term 'condemn' can be used in this instance to express the judicial judgment executed upon the power of sin in the flesh of Christ," so that sin is both "sentenced," and its power "overthrown, vanquished," (John 12:31; I Cor. 11:32; Col. 2:15; II Pet. 2:6).[18]

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[16] John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, p. 219.

[17] Moo, *Romans*, p. 480; Morris, *Romans*, 303.

[18] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 279, with support from Alford.

(b) The Spirit is stronger than the flesh, v. 4.

The resultant, dynamic, effectual saving work of Christ is now explained. Thus, "Christ wrought judgement against the power of sin in the flesh so that the righteous requirement of the law of Moses might be fulfilled for us and in us, that is the Christian whose pilgrim life is now directed by the indwelling Holy Spirit rather than carnal overtures."

1) The fulfillment of the law.

The expression "the righteous requirement of the law [of Moses],"[19] refers to God's demand for righteousness that ought to be expressed in the believer's lifestyle, his manifest life of practical righteousness. Of course the vital matter here concerns how these demands are met and this life is inaugurated and maintained. Further, is the result that of the Christian now inwardly suffused with a specific commitment to the keeping of the Ten Commandments or the law written on the heart? In other words, what exactly is this expression or fulfillment of righteousness to be?

Moo first points to the singular form of "righteousness," cf. 2:26, in contrast with the more common plural usage in the Septuagint, which strongly suggests a more essential principle, such as love being the fulfillment of the law, 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14. Then he emphasizes the passive aspect of "fulfilled," namely what is fulfilled for us rather than by us.[20] Morris makes a similar point "Notice that Paul does not say, 'we fulfill the law's righteous requirement', but that 'the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us', surely pointing to the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer."[21] Hence the believer's personal performance is not so much the initial emphasis here as Christ's performance. It is Christ who has done the fulfilling for us, even as v. 3 describes his "condemnation of sin in the flesh." This being so, Christ has fulfilled all righteousness "for us" and "in us," that is Christ has perfectly satisfied the law's essential demands for those in saving union with him through the Spirit. So Moo translates, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."[22] Christ has settled all accounts with the law through our union with him, 7:1-4; now the superceding New Covenant "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," v. 2, has been established (John 13:34) and the believer now walks under this new administration of the Spirit.

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[19] Literally, "the righteousness of the law," except that we have δικαίωμα, dikaiōma, here focusing on expressed righteousness, 1:32; 2:26; 5:16, 18, rather than δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosunē, meaning the standard of what is right, 3:5, 25-6.

[20] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 481-3.

[21] Morris, *Romans*, p. 304.

[22] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 470, 484-5.

2) The regeneration of the Spirit.

We might have thought concerning the preceding emphases of Romans that Paul assumes the act of regeneration to be implicit in the act of justification. The new birth is not dealt with so categorically as justification in the early chapters, yet at this point the doctrine of Christian vitality, at a personal and experiential level, takes on a primacy that sharply transfers us from the objective truth of being right with God to the subjective truth of being alive unto God. Of course both truths, while being distinct, yet are also indivisibly related. Thus, "if anyone [claiming to be justified by grace through faith] does not have the Spirit of Christ [the Spirit of God], he does not belong to Him [God]," v. 9.

Life is a pilgrimage, and the Christian walks a narrow way directed by the Holy Spirit in contrast with the broad way where pilgrims are directed by the flesh (Matt. 7:13-14). For Paul the flesh is the source of dynamic carnality, with its seductive lustings; this is because the body is captive to sin (7:5, 18, 25; 8:3; Gal. 5:17);[23] the Holy Spirit is the source of dynamic spirituality, with its energizing unto righteousness. Thus the Christian is "walking" (present tense) according to the Spirit.

Here the negative and positive aspects of holiness are plainly described, and this contrast between flesh and Spirit will be enlarged upon through to v. 17. The marks of such spiritual journeying will focus on the arena of the mind which embraces either life or death, peace or hostility, adoption or slavery.

b. Thinking in the Spirit of Christ, vs. 5-8.

Up to this point, "sin in the flesh" has been acknowledged as not only the driving force behind the walk of the natural man, but also the irritating force of the Christian dominated by the impotent law. Now we are taken to a deeper level where the power of the renewed/regenerate mind is acknowledged as having potency over "sin in the flesh." As in Romans generally (7:23, 25; 12:2, 16), so here Paul upholds the vital role of the mind in the life of the Christian. Four references in four verses to the "mind" describe the activity of thinking, of rational interaction with knowledge, especially in the New Testament, with regard to revealed moral truth.[24] Such "thinking" is to be both a ground of sanctification

[23] Moo defines "flesh" here as, "not the flesh of our bodies, or the bodies themselves, but the 'this-worldly' orientation that all people share." *Romans*, p. 478. But such disassociation from the actual body, which Paul has considered since 6:6, is too vague and extreme. In 6:6 he referred to "our body of sin" and in 8:3 it is "sin in the flesh." Thus "flesh" as distinct from the "Spirit" is our sinfully polluted, influential humanity; in the unbeliever it has an agreeable alliance with the "old man in Adam," while in the believer it has a disagreeable alliance with the "new man in Christ." This latter relationship is especially evident in 7:18, 24 where a clear distinction is made between "me" and "my [sinful] flesh."

[24] The root of φρονέω, phroneō / φρόνημα, phronēma, is φρήν, phrēn, meaning "diaphragm," since this part of the body was regarded, in early times, to be "the seat of intellectual and spiritual activity," Kittel, Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, IX, p. 220.

as here, as well as unity amongst believers who are exhorted to "be of the same mind" (15:5; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2; 4:2). This emphasis does not sit well with the modern Christian who is more inclined to be directed by sensuality and sentiment. But for Paul, gospel truth rightly apprehended in the mind, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, is foundational for a resultant spiritual walk. Hence, "practical Christian living" has its genesis in the mind (I Pet. 1:13-15), even as does carnal behavior (Eph. 4:17; Col. 1:21).

(1) Spiritual thinking repudiates the flesh, v. 5.

It is the carnal/natural mind of the unbeliever that prompts him to vigorously trade at "Vanity Fair" which is under the patronage of "Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, . . . [also their friends] Lord Old Man, the Lord Carnal Delight, the Lord Luxurious, the Lord Desire of Vain Glory, my old Lord Lechery, Sir Having Greedy."[25] It is the spiritual/heavenly mind of the believer that prompts him, in traversing Vanity Fair, to respond to the innumerable solicitations, "'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity [Ps. 119:37]'and look upwards, signifying that [his] trade and traffic [are] in heaven; . . . . [declaring] 'We buy the truth [Prov. 23:23].'"[26] Here is the root of Christian sanctification. Moo significantly points out that Paul Ais not warning Christians about two possibilities they face [since] . . . 'being in the flesh' (vs. 7-8) is not a possibility for the believer. . . . Paul is contrasting two groups of people: the converted and the unconverted."[27] Thus the carnal Christian/spiritual Christian dichotomy of recent days is clearly repudiated here.

(2) Spiritual thinking results in life and peace, v. 6.

Mental contemplation has consequences so that knowledge digested, depending upon its quality, effects destiny, in much the same way that the food we eat effects our health and longevity. Hence a carnal or spiritual mentality produces inevitable results, even as specific sowing produces a predictable harvest (Gal. 6:7-8). Again, here are not options but consequences. The carnal person, with a mind-set, a bent toward carnality, surely is "death" (6:23), that is presently exists as dead to God in the mind (Eph. 2:1-3). He sees but is blind; he hears but is deaf; he lives but is dead; he is exposed to the truth but has no appetite or thirst for it; his body has a pulse, but his soul is cold as a stone.

But on the other hand, the regenerate mind that presently focuses on spiritual truth is alive unto God, 5:17-18; 6:4, 8, 11, 22-23; 8:2, not hostile, 8:7, is at peace with God, 5:1; 8:1; 15:17, not subject to His condemnation and wrath, 3:16-17. Here then is the fulness of true conversion. Lloyd-Jones significantly comments:

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[25] John Bunyan, *Works*, III, pp. 127, 130.

[26] Ibid., p. 128.

[27] Moo, *Romans*, p. 486. Also Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 8:5-17*, p. 11.

> In many ways this [life from Christ and life in Christ] is the major theme of the New Testament; everything, including justification, leads up to it, and centers in it. The doctrine of regeneration is absolutely foundational. It is because so many do not realize this that they have a wrong view of evangelism, and become interested overmuch in decisions, and they believe that people can fall away after they have become Christians. It is all because of a failure to understand the idea of regeneration and of life, that we really are born again as the result of the operation of the Spirit, and are made 'partakers of the divine nature [II Pet. 1:4].'[28]

(3) Carnal thinking results in hostility toward God, vs. 7-8.

Why is the mind that is set on the flesh described as "death" (v. 6)? Because that mind is militantly opposed to God and thus proves its "deadness." Thus men reveal their deadness with regard to God by their attitude toward God.

(a) Carnal thinking is averse to God, v. 7.

> By "the mind set on the flesh" is meant the soul's chief focus, its primary interest through mental activity, contemplation and consequent affection concerning this world's varied menu. Thus such a person proves to be a militant opponent and enemy of God. Here is no neutrality, no slight acknowledgment or token appreciation of God (Col. 1:21; I John 2:15); the natural man is not even tinged with regard for the Divine. Rather he wars against God and His holy demands in particular (Ps. 2:1-3). Like Judas, he may well fraternize with the friends of God and mingle close to the courts of God, yet he would nevertheless crucify God for thirty pieces of silver!
>
> Further proof of this defiance is the carnal mind's lawlessness, its opposition to "the law of God" in contrast with the Christian's "inner man" (7:22). In other words, the carnal mind, faced with the unavoidable demands of God's moral universe, His essential righteousness which is intrinsic to the Decalogue, the Pentateuch, the Old Testament, the two great precepts (Matt. 22:37-39), and human conscience, chafes at the bit or bucks, so to speak, at God's moral imperatives.
>
> But why is this mental attitude against the righteousness of God so intractable, so invariable, so thoroughly pervasive in this world? It is because the carnal mind "is not able," οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται, oude gar dunatai, it does not have the innate power and ability to reverse its bias so as to love that holy will of God which it formerly regarded with contempt. In other words, the natural man does not have the capacity for self-renovation in his soul, that is with regard to a reversal of moral affections, any more than a pig can reverse his love of the pig-pen or a dog can reverse his taste for his own vomit (II Pet. 2:22). Here is no free will, no seed of goodness in human nature, no universal prevenient grace, for thorough depravity produces total moral inability. Herein lies

[28] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 8:5-17*, p. 34.

the necessity of a gospel of sovereign, effectual saving power since a gospel merely on offer has not the slightest prospect of being fruitful. Jesus Christ does not merely call men out of the human pig-pen, but rather enters that realm of corrupt human debris for the purpose of actually, individually delivering them, their nature, intellect, will and affections, from their hopeless, leprous captivity.

(b) Carnal thinking displeases God, v. 8.

Logically, because the carnal man is incapable of obeying the righteous demands of God, it follows that he is also incapable, "is not able," οὐ δύναται, ou dunantai, of pleasing the righteous God. But further, consider that the essence of his carnality is, as Luther describes it, "[T]his crookedness, this depravity, this iniquity" whereby "man turns in upon himself" and thus "seeks his highest good."[29] So that those "who are in the flesh," view themselves as being at the center of the universe; they pamper themselves, their physical, sensual, intellectual and Adamic beings, and at best allow God a peripheral role. Thus if man shunts God to one side, it is impossible for that same God to have pleasure in the one who attempts to dethrone Him. This is especially true concerning religious and social liberalism, for any token acknowledgment of a revisionist and man-shaped god is overwhelmed by vaunted and humanitarian concerns which are but sophisticated carnality that stimulates no heavenly pleasure.

c. Living in the Spirit of Christ, vs. 9-11.

Contrariwise, the only people who please God are those who are "in the Spirit," as these verses now explain. To them, God is the center of the whole universe, indeed they belong to God, are alive to God, and identify with His righteousness. This contrast marks out the radical distinction between a true believer and an unbeliever.

(1) The Spirit of God indwells, v. 9.

Now the doctrine of regeneration takes on a significance that ranks equally with the doctrine of justification that so dominated the earlier part of Romans. Likewise in the life and ministry of a Christian, both doctrines should be regarded as being of equal importance.[30] Here we come to

[29] Martin Luther, *Works*, 25, p. 351.

[30] In the early part of his ministry, Lloyd-Jones, like George Whitefield, gave greater emphasis to preaching on the need of regeneration while the doctrine of the atonement and justification by faith were more "assumptions." However it was a Calvinistic Methodist minister who made the Welsh preacher aware of this lack. *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The First Years 1899-1939*, pp. 190-2. In the case of Whitefield, apparently it was John Wesley who helped his fellow field preacher in a similar way. Today we have likewise witnessed the "born again" movement, although many preachers err in the opposite direction by emphasizing a sterile justification at the expense of regeneration. Biblically speaking, the true Christian must be both alive unto God and right with God. J. C. Ryle adds: "You need not only the atonement of Jesus Christ, but *the quickening, sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, to make you a true Christian, and deliver you from hell." Old Paths*, p. 275.

understand that regeneration is very much integral to the gospel (Tit. 3:5-7), and should be regarded as coterminous with justification and conversion. We expand in translation, "However, you are not now living according to the dominion of the flesh but rather that of the indwelling Spirit of God, that is if (and it is assumed to be the case) this same Holy Spirit is presently dwelling in you believers who congregate in Rome."

(a) Positively, the Spirit inhabited Christian lives "in the Spirit."

It is the indwelling "Spirit of God" that marks out a believer from an unbeliever, not a carnal from a Spiritual believer, or a regular Christian from a Spirit baptized Christian. For Paul, it is conversion that brings both death to sin in justification and renewal of the heart in regeneration, through "the Spirit and the water and the blood" (I John 5:7-8). Thus John Stott writes, "To know Christ and to have the Spirit are one. Bishop Handley Moule was wise to write that 'there is no separable Gospel of the Spirit'. Not for a moment are we to advance, as it were from the Lord Jesus Christ to a higher or deeper region, ruled by the Holy Ghost."[31] Here is the distinguishing dynamic of a true Christian since the residency of this Spirit is eclectic (II Pet. 1:3-4), and it is this life of God that makes him distinguishable in his contrast with the common carnality of this world.

(b) Negatively, the person vacant of the Spirit of God is not owned of God.

Here "the Spirit of Christ" must be synonymous with "the Spirit of God."[32] The inference is akin to that of John's Gospel where the ministry of the Holy Spirit is, to "bring to your remembrance all that I [Christ] said to you. . . . [That] He will testify about Me. . . . He will glorify Me" (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:14; cf. I John 3:24). Note the triune inference here in which Christ through the Spirit brings union with the Father. Categorically, to have the Spirit of God is to have the Spirit of Christ and thus a saving, living appreciation of this Son of God. To be void of this Spirit of Christ is to be void of any saving union with the God of Abraham.

(2) The Spirit of Christ indwells, v. 10.

Expanded translation: "If (and it is assumed to be true that) Christ through the Spirit indwells you, then on the one hand the body is dead on account of sin, but on the other hand the S(s?)pirit is life on account of righteousness." As the preceding context indicates, literally "Christ in you" (cf. Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17; Col. 3:11) does not equate Christ with the Spirit or declare that the second person of the Trinity indwells the believer. Rather Jesus

[31] Stott, *Romans*, p. 225; also Moo, *Romans*, p. 490.

[32] Note that Paul does not use the title "Holy Spirit" in this eighth chapter. Here he is concerned about the Spirit sourced in the Father and the Son rather than the sacred character of the third person of the Trinity.

Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father, is represented by the person of the Holy Spirit (I John 3:24). J. C. Ryle comments:

> I do not say that the expression, 'Christ in us' is unscriptural. But I do say that I see great danger of giving an extravagant and unscriptural importance to the idea contained in the expression; and I do fear that many use it now-a-days without exactly knowing what they mean, and unwittingly, perhaps, dishonor the mighty work of the Holy Ghost.[33]

That the body, σῶμα, sōma, as distinct from flesh, σάρξ, sarx, is dead means that the physical vehicle of the redeemed soul is intrinsically defiled, judged, and decaying on account of sin, 6:6, 13. As such it is unresponsive to God and on a course of dissolution; it is a corpse with only the motion of death throws![34] On the other hand, "the Spirit of Christ" is the life of God that has, through grace, invaded this condemned carcass because of the gospel of the righteousness of God, that which is both imputed and imparted.[35] Such a conquest means that the "death throws" are under the dominion of the Holy Spirit.

(3) The Spirit of resurrection indwells, v. 11.

Here is glorious, irresistible logic that builds upon the reality of the Spirit of God indwelling the Christian. Thus, by expansion, "But if (and it is assumed to be true that) the Spirit, that is of He who raised Jesus from the dead, is dwelling in you, then that same One who raised Christ from the dead will also make alive your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." Thus the matter of the saving of the body is taken up in view of the prior description in v. 10 of its seeming consignment to inevitable and just decay. Consequently the Spirit that instrumentally saves the soul will also save the body rather than replace it. Hence this "mortality" will be clothed with "immortality" which transformation is simply the culmination of gospel victory (I Cor. 15:53-57; II Cor. 5:4). Yet also note here that while the Spirit is the agent of indwelling and enabling, even so the Father commands this gospel work while the Son is its holy executor.

Again Stott quotes Bishop Handley Moule: "Wonderful, is this deep characteristic of Scripture: its gospel for the body. In Christ, the body is seen to be something far different from a mere clog, or prison, or chrysalis, of the soul. It is its destined implement, may we not say its mighty wings in prospect, for the life of glory."[36] For Paul, the term "mortal bodies," τὰ θνητὰ σώματα, ta thnēta sōmata, that is our bodies subject to corruption through sin, surely has in mind much of his earlier emphasis introduced in

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[33] J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*, pp. xiii-xiv.

[34] "The body is, as it were, the seat of death; there is a principle of decay and of death in the bodies of all of us, and the process of decay is increasing and growing. Ever since the Fall, the moment we enter into this world and begin to live we begin to die. Your first breath is one of the last you will ever take!" Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 8:5-17*, p. 69.

[35] Both Lloyd-Jones and Morris understand this broader meaning; Haldane, Moo, Shedd, Stott, an objective righteousness; Hodge, a subjective righteousness.

[36] Stott, *Romans*, p. 227.

6:6 regarding "our body of sin" that has continued to be a major concern up to this point. Indeed this focus is ongoing, except that it now concerns the anticipation of triumph when we, who presently "groan within ourselves," finally experience "the redemption of our body," v. 23, which indeed shall be transformation "into conformity with the body of His [Christ's] glory" (Phil. 3:21).

2. There is life in the Spirit of adoption, vs. 12-17.

Thus this indwelling Spirit is a "mighty Spirit" in terms of our present interim pilgrimage (Eph. 1:19; 3:7, 16, 20; Col. 10-11), and the expectations of holy Christian living are now presumed to be based upon this fact, especially as the doctrine of adoption incorporates such truth. In practical terms, Thomas Manton comments: "Now the Spirit would not put us upon the labors of the body, and take no care for the happiness of the body; these two always go together: 'The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body' (I Cor. 6:13). Christ expecteth service from the body, and gave up himself for the redemption of it, as well as the soul (I Cor. 6:20)."[37]

a. The obligations of sonship, vs. 12-13.

Like the strong inference commencing v. 1, here there are emphatic and weighty consequences with regard to the Christian so potently indwelt by the Spirit of God. As the well equipped soldier is responsible, under obligation in terms of using those accouterments which are designed for his safety, so the child of God is indebted to the reign of the Spirit of God in his life with regard to an appreciation of His might, holy dominion and exclusive claims. The word ὀφειλέτης, opheiletēs, describes a person in debt; for Paul in 1:14 it is divine obligation according to his calling; in 15:27 it is the Gentiles' material obligation to Jerusalem for their spiritual inheritance; in Gal. 5:3 it is the legalist's obligation to keep the whole law. So here it is the weight of responsibility which the indwelling Holy Spirit brings, as a Master who although capable of being "grieved" (Eph. 4:30) and "quenched" (I Thess. 5:19), yet here upholds His rightful demands upon the children He has adopted.

(1) Not to the flesh, vs. 12-13a.

Implicit is the understanding that while the flesh was formerly the governing lord of the Christian when unconverted (7:5; 8:3; Eph. 2:3), now the indwelling lordship of the more potent Holy Spirit has supplanted this reign. Therefore a new allegiance is incumbent upon the child of God, in two realms. First, in the realm of Scripture knowledge, we are to yield to the truth lodged in the mind concerning the Spirit's dominion. Second, in the realm of regenerate experience, we are to yield to the dynamic concerning the Spirit's indwelling life and influence . Thus the Christian is not merely a person who has, through a commitment of will, spurned carnal overtures; rather he is under constraint of the life of God in his soul God, a new bias, a

[37] Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, XII, p. 24.

new tilt of affections, to repudiate the lustings of the flesh by means of the new resources bestowed at conversion.

But does the warning here imply the possibility of defection? The "if" proposition can be translated: "For if, and this axiom is certainly true, you are living [present tense] according to the dictates of the flesh, then you are destined to a damnable death." Lloyd-Jones responds that Paul uses, "a form of speech which we use when we say to a person, 'If you put your finger into that fire you will be burned.'"[38] That is, here we have a warning which the true child of God will certainly heed. The present tense focus here, as well as that of the "deeds," πράξεις, praxeis, of the flesh in v. 13b, is reminiscent of I John 3:8-9 where a similar concern describes those "practicing sin" as being "of the devil." Yes a Christian can and will sin according to the promptings of the flesh (I John v1:8, 10), but not as a matter of habitual routine. Rather he will truly repent, seek cleansing and forgiveness (I John 1:9), and pursue a course of "mortification," that is a "putting to death the deeds of the body."

(2) But to the Spirit, v. 13b.

An opposite destiny awaits those who actively pursue mortification of the body through the Spirit, namely that of "life." Surely this incorporates both a present perspective as vs. 14-17 describe, though primarily a future hope as vs. 18-25 anticipate.

"Mortification" or "putting to death" is ἀποθνήσκειν, apothnēskein, a present active infinitive describing a continuous process that the believer initiates, in contrast with the death resulting from carnality just mentioned. Moo explains Paul's point here as, "you will not 'die' if you cause your sin to die."[39] However it is vital to note here that such responsible activity is that of a regenerate child of God "by the Spirit," that is the Spirit of God the Father "who raised Jesus from the dead." This subject of mortification has been the object of much perverse teaching, especially by the Roman Catholic Church in terms of physical containment and even flagellation. On the other hand, Puritans in particular have contributed greatly to our understanding of Paul's teaching here, perhaps preeminently in John Owen's work, *Of The Mortification of Sin in Believers, Etc.* based on this verse.[40] In summary he declares:

(a) There is no "sin killing" unless a person be a true believer. "There is no death of sin without the death of Christ. . . . All attempts, then, for mortification of any lust, without an interest in Christ, are vain."[41]

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[38] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 8:5-17*, p. 109.

[39] Moo, *Romans*, p. 495n.

[40] John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, VI, pp. 5-86. In a similar vein, also refer to Owen's *The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers*, ibid., pp. 153-322.

[41] Ibid., pp. 33, 35.

(b) There must be "universal sincerity" or a thorough concern regarding sin. "So, then, it is not only an intense opposition to this or that peculiar lust, but a universal humble frame and temper of heart, with watchfulness over every evil and for the performance of every duty, that is accepted."[42]

(c) There must be faith in the succor of Christ. "Set faith at work for the killing of thy sin. His blood is the great sovereign remedy for sin-sick souls. Live in this and thou wilt die a conqueror; yea, thou wilt, through the good providence of God, live to see thy lust dead at thy feet."[43]

(d) Particular directions to follow. 1. Be alert to symptoms of lust, 2. Be aware of the results of sin, hardening, loss of peace and strength, wounding, loss of usefulness, discipline. 3. Allow guilt its full dimensions. 4. Cultivate the longing for deliverance. 5. Consider the nature of the body (I Cor. 9:27). A man may have leanness of body and soul together. 6. Watch for situations that cause eruptions. 7. Quickly oppose the first actings of sin. 8. Let the soul contemplate the excellence and majesty of God. 9. Seek peace only from God, not self delusion.

Of course, such a disciplined Christian life is ever the fruit of justification, as the order here in Romans clearly indicates. However, the Christian saved by sovereign grace is to vigorously "consider [put to death][44] the members of his earthly body with regard to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed" (Col. 3:5). Or, he is to "crucify the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24).[45] Notice the paradox that Paul describes as resulting from our investment in either the flesh or the Spirit. Living in the flesh brings death; inflicting death on the flesh brings life (S. of S. 2:15; Matt. 5:29-30). So Morris well describes these fundamental options that confront us in this modern era when he concludes: "There is a living that is death and there is a putting to death that is life."[46]

b. The marks of sonship, vs. 14-17.

As Paul has recently given sudden focus to an aspect of sanctifying truth that receives concentrated emphasis, namely that of the role of the "mind" in vs. 5-8, so here the doctrine of "adoption" is given the same abrupt prominence. The reason for this injection of teaching concerning the believer's sonship with the Father through Christ appears to be further explanation about the Spirit's effective operation in sanctification, but especially "mortification." In other words, the dominant leading of the Spirit, v. 14, is that by which mortification

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[42] Ibid., p. 42.

[43] Ibid., p. 79.

[44] Here Paul uses "to put to death," νεκρόω, nekrōw, probably emphasizing the condition of death whereas ἀποθνήσκειν, apothnēskein refers to the act that brings death about.

[45] Here Paul uses "crucify," σταυρόω, stauroō, emphasizing the strictness and severity of the mortification.

[46] Morris, *Romans*, p. 312.

becomes a possibility, reality, and evidence of adoption; but further, this is in fact the "Spirit of adoption," v. 15, by which an array of reassuring inheritance privileges have been obtained, vs. 16-17.

The concept of "adoption" is described by the terms of "sonship," v. 14, "son placement," v. 15, and "children," vs. 16-17. In vs. 14-15 the root term concerns υἱός, huios, while in vs. 16-17 it is τέκνον teknon, the distinction perhaps being the "relation of nature" in the former and the "position of honor" in the latter.[47]

(1) Living sonship from the Spirit of the Father, v. 14.

Since v. 13 was very much concerned with lifestyle, whether according to the flesh or Spirit, here Paul further declares and qualifies who are really the sons of God. Confession of this relationship is one thing, but manifestly "being led by the Spirit of God" is quite another. So, and the text is emphatic at this point, only those "who are being led [present tense, passive voice] by the Spirit of God" are authentic Christians. Thus, such teaching indicates that all men are not universally, in terms of salvation and thus distinct from Acts 17:28, "children of God," according to "the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God." The fact that Jesus Christ charged certain Jews with being "children of the devil" (John 8:44) is sufficient proof of this point. Further, the "like father like son" principle applies here. As the natural child bears the physical likeness of his parentage, so the child of God inherits the spiritual likeness of his heavenly Father, and that of His Spirit in particular. Children of God are spiritual by inevitable derivation because "God is S[s?]pirit" (John 4:24). Now when such a child of God becomes aware of such a relationship, especially its internal witness, then great confidence results, as v. 15 indicates.

But more specifically, what is this "leading"? The word ἄγω, agō, in its basic form simply means "to lead," as in Luke 4:1 where Christ was "led around by [under the influence of] the Spirit in the wilderness." But here the context, as well as the passive force, suggests a more personal constraint. So Lloyd-Jones comments: "What [the Spirit] does is to persuade them. He leads us by persuasion; not by brute force, not against our will. He persuades the will, which is a very different thing. . . . What the Spirit does is to enlighten and persuade. . . . It is a matter of powerful persuasion."[48]

(2) Adoptive access through the Spirit to the Father, v. 15.

Paul continues to use antithesis, as in vs. 4-6, 9, 12-14 to stress the radical character of a regenerate child of God, who, previously under the dominion of the flesh, is now under obligation, that is inevitable constraint to live confidently according to the indwelling Spirit of God, v. 11. Here "flesh" seems paralleled with "spirit of slavery" and "Spirit" with "spirit of adoption," though now heightened passion is injected based upon a privileged filial relationship.

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[47] Frederic L. Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 311.

[48] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 8:5-17*, p. 167.

(a) The spirit of slavery leads to fear.

The term "spirit of slavery" refers to a former "inward principle" or "guiding mind set" which, according to the preceding context, especially 7:14, 23, would be a legal dominion that has captivated the unwary Christian (Gal. 2:4; 4:1-7; 5:1-2; Col. 2:16-23; I Tim. 4:1-5; Heb. 12:18-24).[49] Lloyd-Jones best captures the thrust here when he writes of those believers who are subject to this bondage:

> I am thinking of people who are quite clear about their relationship to the law the —Ten Commandments, or the moral law —as a way of salvation. They have seen clearly that Christ has delivered them from that; . . . they are quite clear about their justification. However, they now begin to look positively at the Christian life, and in a very subtle way — quite unconsciously to themselves —they turn it into a new kind of law, with the result that they get into a spirit of bondage and of serfdom. . . . In other words, holiness becomes a great task to them, and they begin to plan and organize their lives and introduce certain disciplines in order to enable them to carry it out. . . . We can easily impose upon ourselves a new law.[50]

Sometimes a child lives in a "spirit of slavery" before its parents; it lives in the household, in submissive, trembling fear, addressing the father as "Sir," in military style, but not as one who confidently cries "Abba! Father!" and runs toward his gracious embrace. So here Paul is concerned that the slavish Christian is robbed of the joy of his secure standing through sovereign grace, his ready welcome, his privileged inheritance; he lacks confidence; he has doubts concerning his acceptance and approval before God. Now he distinguishes true sonship as being based, not upon conformity to principle, but vital constraint of the Spirit of adoption.

(b) The Spirit of adoption leads to access.

As is Paul's frequent method (6:11;Col. 3:3-5), so here he reminds the Christian of his real status; it is as if he were to say: "Child of God! Wake up to your high calling! Being an authentic Christian, you have received the Spirit of adoption who mediates sonship. Therefore be bold, even as you sense the constraint! Confidently address Him as, 'Abba! Father!'" The key term here is πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας, pneuma huiothesias. We opt for the Holy "Spirit" here based upon Galatians 4:6, who communicates and seals the new adoptive relationship, which is literally, "son placement." Bruce explains:

> The term 'adoption' may smack something what of artificiality in our ears; but in the first century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary

[49] Surely this slavery is not a reference to the unconverted state as Hodge and Murray maintain, which, as we have earlier considered, is not the concern of Romans 7.

[50] Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression, Its Causes And Cure*, pp. 165-6.

> course of nature, and might well enjoy the father's affection more fully and reproduce the father's character more worthily.[51]

So the Christian "is crying out," present tense of κράζω, krazō, being onomatopoeic, sounding like its meaning, as the call of a raven (Gal. 4:6; cf. Rom. 9:27; John 7:28, 37; 12:44). The actual cry is "Abba! The Father."[52] "Abba" is also onomatopoeic, an Aramaic term expressing a child's parental affection, though forbidden to be used by household slaves. Its use in Mark 14:36 by Christ indicates fervent, intimate relationship rather than distress. Thus the believer responds with intimate, confident, albeit respectful, fondness for God who he knows with a depth of experience. But is this a normative description here? Lloyd-Jones does not believe so. We respectfully disagree since, while not denying a gradual heightening of assurance following conversion, the context here does not support a higher level of assurance, akin to Lloyd-Jones' understanding of a post-conversion baptism of the Spirit.[53] Such a view must describe the "sons of God" in v. 14 as a distinct group of believers, whereas the context of vs. 9-13 distinguishes between the spiritual believer and the carnal unbeliever.[54] Furthermore, a natural child is not always crying out "Abba, father," though it does so periodically. So the Christian has not only intervening valleys of diminished confidence but also periodic seasons of heightened assurance, of course initially at conversion. "t those times he delights to sing Charles Wesley's verse:

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[51] F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, p. 166.

[52] Israel was to regard Jehovah as "Father" (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16), in contrast with Mohammedanism.

[53] At this point in Lloyd-Jones' commentary, he deals at length with the view that Romans 8:14-17, in parallel with Romans 5:5 and Ephesians 1:13-14, describes the assured, Spirit baptized Christian. However not all believers have this depth of experience or Spirit baptism. He writes, "that the 'Spirit of adoption' is not essential to salvation, for a person can be a Christian and yet know little or nothing about this Spirit of adoption. As I say this I am well aware that the majority of the Protestant Reformers would not have agreed with my statement, for they tended to teach B Luther and Calvin in particular, but others also B that assurance of salvation was necessary to salvation. They failed to draw a distinction between salvation itself and the assurance of salvation. So they tended to teach that a man was not saved unless he knew he was saved, that is to say, unless he had assurance." *Romans, 8:5-17*, p. 246. On Romans 5:5 he writes: "You cannot be a Christian without the Holy Spirit, but you can be a Christian without having the love of God shed abroad in your heart." *Romans 5*, p. 84. He musters numerous testimonies in support, including Thomas Brooks, Philip Doddridge, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, John Flavel, Thomas Goodwin, Howell Harris, D. L. Moody, John Owen, Edward Payson, J. Philpot, Charles Simeon, C. H. Spurgeon, John Wesley, and George Whitefield.

[54] More contemporary commentators who would not agree with Lloyd-Jones at this point include Boice, Haldane, Hendriksen, Hodge, Moo, Morris, Murray, Shedd. Stott comments, "I have no wish whatever to call in question the authenticity of the experiences described [by Lloyd-Jones]. Nor do I doubt that many Christian people continue to be granted similar profound encounters with God today. Nor is there any problem in affirming that the ministry of the Spirit of adoption (v. 15) and the inner witness of the Spirit (v. 16) are designed to bring us assurance. My anxiety is whether the biblical texts have been rightly interpreted. I have the uneasy feeling that it is the experiences which have determined the exposition. For the natural reading of Romans 8:14-17 is surely that *all* believers are 'led by the Spirit' (v. 14), have 'received a Spirit of adoption' (v. 15), and cry '*Abba*, Father' as the Spirit bears witness to them that they are God's children (v. 16) and therefore also his heirs (v. 17). There is no indication in these four verses that a special, distinctive or overwhelming experience is in mind, which needs to be sought by all although it is given only to some." *Romans,* p. 236.

My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child,
I can no longer fear;
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And Father, Abba, Father! Cry.

(3) Internal witness by the Spirit from the Father, v. 16.

Here is the quintessential verse concerning the highest category of Christian assurance. A believer may be assured from reading the Bible that he is an adopted child of God, yet if that Bible is taken from him, what then? But if that same believer be in prison, none can take from him that witness of the Holy Spirit engraved upon his soul that speaks in biblical terms of adoptive blessings. John Wesley warns us: "How many vain men, not understanding what they spake, neither whereof they affirmed, have wrested this scripture to the great loss, if not the destruction, of their souls! How many have mistaken the voice of their own imagination for this witness of the Spirit of God, and thence idly presumed they were the children of God, while they were doing the works of the devil! . . . [I]t is the more necessary to explain and defend this truth, because there is a danger on the right hand and on the left. If we deny it, there is a danger lest our religion degenerate into mere formality; lest having 'a form of godliness,' we neglect, if not 'deny, the power of it.' If we allow it, but do not understand what we allow, we are liable to run into all the wildness of enthusiasm."[55]

The context concerns "being led by the Spirit of God" in v. 14 and the exuberant cry of "Abba! Father!" in v. 15. The initiative rests with the Holy Spirit, for it is "He himself" who "testifies with out spirit that we are the children of God." The word συμμαρτυρέω, summartureō, cf. 9:1, means "to witness with." Whereas in the context of justification 5:5 declares "the love of [from] God has been poured out within out hearts through the Holy Spirit," here the witness of the Spirit is portrayed as a constant presence. Moo comments that Paul explains, "how it is that 'receiving the Spirit of adoption' enables us to cry out 'Abba, Father!' The Holy Spirit is not only instrumental in making us God's children; he also makes us aware that we are God's children."[56] Here is the impetus that constrains the exclamatory, familial cry of being owned of God, as Charles Wesley expresses:

My God I am thine; what a comfort divine,
What a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine!
In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,
And my heart it doth dance at the sound of His name.

Hence Paul defines a fundamental, normative attitude of the Christian which marks out true conversion. Lloyd-Jones teaching at this point, though unintentional, suggests a lesser standard that is rectified by a baptism of the

[55] John Wesley, *Fifty-Three Sermons*, pp. 123, 136-7. Refer also to B. B. Warfield's dealing with this problem in *Faith And Life*, pp. 187-9.

[56] Moo, *Romans*, p. 503.

Spirit. Rather, we agree here with Calvin who comments: "Therefore, this sentence standeth sure, that none can be called the son of God who doth not acknowledge himself to be such [an] one (I John 5:19)."[57] This is not to suggest that initial conversion has assurance in full bloom; but it is to affirm that there must be some budding of confidence that declares, "one thing I do know [is] that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25).

(4) Glorious inheritance with Christ from the Father, v. 17.

The witness of the Spirit does not stop at reassuring the Christian of his adoption; there is so much more that is to be appreciated as a consequence of being a child of God, and this involves future inheritance and glorification preceded by inevitable suffering, all of which is associated with Christ.

(a) The child of God has an inheritance with Christ.

Probably drawing on the Old Testament concept of "inheritance" that commenced with Abraham, 4:4, and focused on "the land" under future Messianic reign (Ps. 25:13; 37:9;Is. 60:21), the child of God now has a more glorious prospect. Having received the Holy Spirit only as "a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph. 1:14), as an heir the Christian is to confidently anticipate the fulness, or "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). Thus the believer, as an "heir of God" (cf. Gal. 4:7), is the future recipient of all of the "riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7; 2:7). But further, the language here suggests that we, together with Christ, inherit God himself. Haldane comments: "God is the portion of His people; . . . God is all-sufficient; and this is an all-sufficient inheritance; It is God Himself, then, who is the inheritance of His children. . . . 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee!' (Ps. 73:24)."[58]

(b) The child of God has present suffering with Christ.

With the assurance and hope that adoption stimulates, the believer is able to traverse the inevitable sufferings that he experiences, for Christ and like Christ. As Christ anticipated his inheritance of the Father and endured earthly trial for this cause (John 17:1, 4-5), so his disciples tread the same path. They persevere because of an inheritance perspective (Heb. 12:1-2).

(c) The child of God has the hope of glory with Christ.

Travail culminates in triumph so that co-glorification, like unto Christ's glorious body (Phil 3:21), becomes the moment of inheritance. Peter describes "the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (I Pet.

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[57] John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 214.

[58] Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 373. Also refer to Murray in support, *Romans*, I, pp. 298-9.

1:11)" which the child of God is to likewise anticipate. So Paul in v. 18 declares, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." This is the appointed pathway for the church of Jesus Christ.

> Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war,
> She waits the consummation of peace for evermore;
> Till with the vision glorious Her longing eyes are blest,
> And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.

B. FUTURE GLORY THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF GOSPEL GRACE, VS. 18-25.

There is an obvious connection with v. 19b that is at the same time transitional concerning the whole of vs. 1-19a. The present reign of the Holy Spirit in the believer, the present dominion of the godly mind over sin, the present life of God in the soul, the present adoptive relationship with the Father, the present internal witness of the Spirit, these are all experienced in an environment of present suffering and persecution. Nevertheless the best is yet to come when we shall "be glorified with Him [Christ]."So Paul launches forth from this point with the assurance that, for the Christian, future prospects are incomparably glorious.

For the child of God, like Job, his future blessings will far transcend present trials (Job 42:10-17). In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan portrays the authentic pilgrim as frequently anticipating the transcendent glory of the Celestial City. When the prospect of persecution tempts Christian to retreat, it is his assessment and vision of his final destination that encourages him to press forward. So here Paul presents a vision of "the freedom of the glory of the children of God, . . . the redemption of our body," vs. 21, 23, that is intended to cause spiritual salivation.

2. There is hope of incomparable glory, v. 18.

The "consideration" or "reckoning," λογίζομαι, logizomai, here, cf. 2:3; 3:28; 6:11; 14:14; II Cor. 10:11; 11:5; Phil. 4:8, is the focused activity of the Spirit animated mind of vs. 5-8. First, as with any normal Christian, it is sensitive to "the sufferings of this present [now] time." While our self-inflicted troubles are excluded, and persecution may be a subsidiary concern, yet the primary cause of anxiety here is the inherent corruption of the human condition, as 7:18, 23-24; 8:20-23 indicate. These struggles include sickness, the aging process, poverty, bereavement, etc. Now the believer with poor or short-sighted focus will be a spiritual hypochondriac, much like Little Faith in The Pilgrim's Progress, who was more complaining than forward looking pilgrims. But the child of God whose clear vision is set heavenward will be transported to a more blessed plain of existence that finds the impact of earthly trials to be greatly diminished.

For Paul, it is "the glory that is to be revealed in [εἰς not πρός] us," that is glory imparted to thee believer and not merely beheld by him. This "glory" or δόξα, doxa, especially its Hebrew equivalent, כָּבוֹד, kabod, includes the idea of weight of honor that a king would display. So in II Corinthians 4:16-17, "we do not loose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For [our] momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." So here Paul describes this "glory" as "incomparable" insofar

as earthly glory is concerned. But more specifically, what is this "glory" yet to be received? Surely it is the fact that, "we shall be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (I John 3:3).

Two days before Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones passed away, having refused further life-sustaining medication, he wrote a note to his wife and family members: "Do not pray for healing. Do not hold me back from the glory."[59] David Brainerd responded similarly on his deathbed: "I am almost in eternity. I long o be there. My work is done: I have done with all my friends: all the world is nothing to me. I long to be in heaven, praising and glorifying God with the holy angels. "All my desire is to glorify God."[60] This is what Paul writes of here, and it is intended to make us be more reassured in our faith as we look beyond ourselves to the anticipated privileges and delights of the Celestial City.

3. There is hope of creation redemption, vs. 19-22.

The following extension of thought now encompasses "the creation," or "whole creation," v. 22, which term seems to contrast with "we ourselves" in v. 23, so that the "subhuman creation" is envisaged."[61] In other words, a polluted universe will be the object of God's saving power. The effects of the Fall will be fully reversed so that the original creation will be redeemed as a whole so as to vindicate God.[62]

a. The creation yearns for redemption, v. 19.

An expanded translation reads: "For the intense, absorbing, neck-stretching expectation [ἀποκαραδοκία, apokaradokia] of the subhuman creation is eagerly awaiting the apocalyptic revelation of the sons of God." This "unveiling of the sons of God" looks to that future time of fulfilled glory when those presently saved are then consummately saved. Such redemptive perfection (I Thess. 5:23), when "this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:54), when "there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; . . . [when] there will no longer be any curse" (Rev. 21:4; 22:3), is fervently awaited by a creation under human dominion (Gen. 1:27-28).

Since v. 18 has spoken of "the glory that is to be revealed in us," so here that future glory is assumed when "the revealing of the sons of God" is described, as does I John 3:2: "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because

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[59] Iain Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The Fight Of Faith, 1939-1981*, II, p. 747.

[60] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, II, p. 384.

[61] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 513-5, also Cranfield, Hendriksen, Lloyd-Jones, Stott. Haldane adds that, "the prophets introduce the earth as groaning, and the animals as crying to God, in sympathy with the condition of man (Joel 1:10-20; Jer. 12:4; Isa. 13:13; 24:4-7; 33:9; 34:9; . . . . On the other hand, the Prophet Isaiah (49:13;) predicates] . . . a better state of things. [So also] in Psalm 98:4-8," *Romans*, pp. 378-9.

[62] Such redemption of the material universe or "the whole creation" is basic to a premillennial eschatology. Erich Sauer comments: "God does not abandon His plan for His creation, and even as in the beginning there was an earthly condition before sin broke in, so will there be finally a renewed and transfigured earthly creation, a perfected condition of the earth after sin has been overcome; and the last will surpass the first." *From Eternity To Eternity*, p. 19. Refer also to Carl Hock's defense of "new heavens and a new earth" (II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1) as renovation rather than re-creation, *All Things New*, pp. 197-200, also George Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, II, pp. 479-93.

we will see Him just as He is." The strong inference here is that the creation is longing for that time when it can applaud, "clap its hands" (Ps. 98:7-9; Isa. 55:12-13), at that time when the sons of God "will be revealed with Him [Christ] in glory" (Col. 3:4).[63] Thus Lloyd-Jones makes application:

> We have already considered Paradise lost. But Paradise is to be regained. This is a part of the great salvation, and the whole creation is involved. . . . But this is literally what is going to be true of all of us who are the children of God. Can we ever again allow anything to get us down in this world? Will you ever grumble and complain again? Will it worry you very much what man may do to you? You are being prepared for this indescribable glory which is awaiting the children of God. It is to be manifested and revealed. Lift up your heads, life up your hearts, by faith keep your eye on the coming glory. 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth' [Col. 3:2]. All here is passing and temporary; but we belong to the kingdom which cannot be moved, the kingdom which God has prepared for His people, His children, 'before the foundation of the world' [Eph.1:4].[64]

b. The creation has need of redemption, vs. 20-21.

For Paul, the material creation is not a carnal diversion that should yield to a more lofty spiritual mode of comprehension. His understanding of the Old Testament hope must incorporate the anticipation of a renovated world, a true, righteous theocratic utopia that triumphs, through the agency of Christ, over a past fallen era.

(1) Due to bondage to assigned failure, v. 20.

Why is the material, sub-human creation in this state of pining for full human redemption? Because it also has suffered degeneration since "it was subjected to futility," that is God consigned it to "vanity" or "purposelessness," ματαιότης, mataiotēs, as frequently used in the Septuagint version of Ecclesiastes, to dissolution and decay and death, when He declared, "Cursed is the ground because of you ["dam]; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life" (Gen. 3:17). Haldane adds: "For as the leprosy not only defiled the man who was infected with it, but also the house he inhabited, in the same way, sin, which is the spiritual leprosy of man, has not only defiled our bodies and our souls, but, by the just judgment of God, has infected all creation."[65] Therefore the creation in its agony (Is. 24:4-7; 34:4) longs for similar redemption; it does not have thoughts of evolutionary improvement, of progress from randomness to ordered complexity.

(2) Due to bondage to inevitable freedom, v. 21.

Yet this appointment to corruption by God purposed not only degradation but also deliverance, so that the "hope" KJV at the end of v. 20 anticipates

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[63] Shedd comments: "Material nature is metaphorically in sympathy with redeemed man, and shall be restored with him. . . . Such personification of material nature is common in Scripture. Cf. Deut. 32:1; Job 12:7-9; Ps. 19:1-6; 96:11-12; 148:3-10; Isa. 1:2; 14:8; 56:12." *Romans*, p. 252.

[64] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 8:17-39*, pp. 76, 81.

[65] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 380.

the emancipation described in v. 21, that is the "regeneration," παλιγγενεσία, palingenesia, or earthly rebirth of Matthew 19:28. Thus the creation, the material universe including the flora and fauna, will know emancipation from its former "slavery to corruption," a world of entropy and dissolution that is "red in tooth and claw." Just as the children of God will experience glorious renovation, so the world at large will undergo similar conversion. Charnock comments:

> As the world, for the sin of man, lost its first dignity, and was cursed after the fall, and the beauty bestowed upon it by creation defaced, so it shall recover that ancient glory, when he shall be fully restored by the resurrection to that dignity he lost by his first sin. As man shall be freed from his corruptibility, to receive that glory which is prepared for him, so shall the creatures be freed from that imperfection or corruptibility, those stains and spots upon the face of them, to receive a new glory suited to their nature, and answerable to the design of God, when the glorious liberty of the saints shall be accomplished. . . . The earth hath both thorns and thistles and venomous beasts, the air hath had its tempests and infectious qualities, the water hath caused its floods and deluges. . . . It is convenient that some time should be allotted for the creature's attaining its true end, and that it may partake of the peace of man, as it hath done of the fruits of his sin; otherwise it would seem that sin had prevailed more than grace, and would have had more power to deface, than grace to restore things into their due order.[66]

c. The creation groans for redemption, v. 22.

"For we know" suggests a specific Christian appreciation and sympathy concerning the present state of the universe, "the whole creation" exclusive of believers, due not merely to dissolution, but innate disturbance. The "groaning" here, represented by the compound, συστενάζω, sustenazō, literally "to groan together,"[67] suggests intertwining fellowship in distress, whether by means of flood, earthquake, fire, and hurricane, or famine, pestilence, plague, and chaos, or rust, corrosion, decay, and resultant dust, or war, rape, pillage, and all manner of evil. Yet this anguish is not to be comprehended in terms of futility as the world is prone to do; rather the child of God has an opposite perspective, that of "birth pangs" that will usher in glorious deliverance (Isa. 24:1-23; Matt. 24:6-8, 29-31), which principle v. 18 introduced.

4. There is hope of human redemption, vs. 23-25.

Reverting to the thought of v. 18, Paul now associates "birth pangs" with the believer who, like the expectant mother, hopefully anticipates or "waits eagerly" for consummated adoption, that is "the redemption of our body." More specifically, "the whole creation" is the womb that shall, after much writhing, eventually usher forth "the revealing of the sons of God," v. 19. Conception has taken place; troublesome gestation is in progress; but "the glory that is to be revealed to us," v. 18, is yet future.

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[66] Stephen Charnock, *Works*, I, pp. 377-8. Peters also quotes Tyndale, Henry, Toplady, Wesley, Gill, Delitzsch who express similar opinions. *Theocratic Kingdom*, II, pp. 484-5.

[67] For Cranfield it is an intensity and accord in groaning, *Romans*, I, pp. 416-7.

a. We groan for completed redemption, v. 23.

The tension which the Christian experiences between the indwelling Spirit and his mortal flesh, 7:21-8:8, his present earthly endurance and future glorious hope, receives yet further clarification.

(1) The believer has present first fruits..

The believer presently has "the first fruits of the Spirit," an initial bestowal of the Holy Spirit that both anticipates and promises the full harvest. Note the use of ἀπαρκή, aparchē, here also in 11:16; 16:5; I Cor. 15:20. In the same way God has provided a "down-payment" or "pledge" of the Spirit to begin with, an ἀρραβών, arrabōn, (II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14).

(2) The believer has present groaning.

Like creation in general, though contrary to expectation, the Christian groans due to his participation in God's curse upon a fallen race. He too experiences inevitable, inescapable bodily dissolution (Eccles. 12:1-8) Thus at conversion, the believer does not receive all of his inheritance, that is perfection and glory in every regard, though he constantly longs for its reception. Hence, the groaning here has a twofold aspect. First there is the groaning that results from the conflict that the human condition presents (II Cor. 5:2, 4), and was distinctively described in 7:14-25.[68] So Stott comments:

> [I]t is not only our fragile body (sōma) which makes us groan; it is also our fallen nature (sarx), which hinders use from behaving as we should, and would altogether prevent us from it, were it not for the indwelling Spirit (7:17, 20). We long, therefore, for our sarx to be destroyed and for our sōma to be transformed. Our groans express both present pain and future longing.[69]

Second there is the groaning that anticipates, that longs for "the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph. 1:14).

(3) The believer has future adoption.

The encompassing term here is the yearned for "adoption as sons," the accomplishment that fulfills original appointment, which climactic event includes fully realized union with God, total glorification, the plenitude of the Spirit, and reigning participation in new heavens and a new earth. Then

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[68] We reject as too categorical Lloyd-Jones' statement that, "the groaning of Romans 8:23 has nothing to do with the 'wretched man' of Romans 7:24. . . . So there is nothing in common between the groaning of Romans 8:23 and that of the wretched, miserable man of Romans 7:24. It is an entirely different matter. This groaning is the result of certainty, that 'wretchedness' was the result of uncertainty which cries out 'Who shall deliver me?'" *Romans, 8:17-39*, p. 92. It is true that the man of Romans 7 is aggravated by his dalliance with the law, yet his accentuated problems are of the same character as that groaning which Paul presently describes.

[69] Stott, *Romans*, p. 242. In basic agreement are Calvin, Haldane, Moo, Moule, Shedd. Surely the forward looking groan in hope is stimulated by the present groan in travail over conflict with the flesh.

shall the Son of Man say, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). The specific future focus is "the redemption of our body," that transformation from mortality to immortality, from the perishable to the imperishable (I Cor. 15:51-53), which has repeatedly been Paul's concern since 6:6. The Christian does not simply receive a new body that displaces the old. Rather "redemption" indicates that God will reclaim that which was formerly abandoned; He will have holy triumph over that which was defiled (Phil. 3:21). And thus such a prospect becomes the ground of "waiting eagerly" for the best that is yet to come, of indomitable hope.

b. We hope for completed redemption, v. 24.

So "we are saved by hope" KJV, or better, "in hope we have been saved [aorist]" NASB. Thus "hope" is not an instrument of salvation, but rather the sphere in which salvation first came to us. Thus "hope" is a fundamental characteristic of being a Christian from the point of conversion onward. Moo comments: "Always our salvation, while definitively secured for us at conversion, has had an element of incompleteness, in which the forward look is necessary."[70] Hence the present does not incorporate that consummation of our salvation just described as adoption/redemption, otherwise it would be realization rather than hope. Rather we hope for that which is revealed and promised as future, and yet is not presently observable.

c. We await completed redemption, v. 25.

However, in hoping for that which is not presently observable and realized, our understanding of the substance of this hope causes us to persevere with eager expectation. The child of God is like the engaged bride, looking hopefully at her engagement ring. She perseveres with eager expectation; she endures the days of preparation; she is "saved in hope," that is she lives the days of her engagement in the sphere of hope, longingly awaiting that which she only perceives through the eye of faith, namely the wedding celebration, the day of consummated union. So the child of God "eagerly awaits" his consummated union with Christ, while at the same time contemplating the pledge/token of his engagement (Eph. 1:14). Such contemplation involves "being led by the Spirit, . . . walking by the Spirit, . . . sowing to the Spirit" (8:14; Gal. 5:16; 6:8).

C. INTERIM SECURITY THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF GOSPEL GRACE, VS. 26-39.

Whereas in vs. 1-17 we considered the believer's *present* liberty that the dominion of the Holy Spirit has established, and in vs. 18-25 that same token Spirit encouraged us by means of the promised *future* glory that shall have dominion over this groaning human and sub-human creation, now we revert back to that *present* intimate dominion of the Holy Spirit which is productive of triumphant assurance, vs. 26-39.

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[70] Moo, *Romans*, p. 522.

1. Through the help of the Spirit's intercession, vs. 26-27.

In the midst of a world evidencing violent death throws, the child of God not only exercises hope but also a prayerful disposition in that hope. Such an attitude is one of expressed longing while personal conflict continues. Thus the Christian prays "in the Spirit," Jude 20, yet so often his cry to heaven seems feeble, and thus, as Morris comments, we "become discouraged in our praying, for we are conscious that we do it so badly. But here, too, we are not left to our own devices. The Spirit intercedes for us."[71]

a. The Spirit intercedes with intensity, v. 26.

The expression, "In the same way," ὡσαύτος, hōsautōs, connects us to the parallel encouragement that "hope" engenders in v. 25, and the aspect of forward looking "groaning," v. 23, that accompanies such anticipation.[72] Thus, as we have "groaning expectation concerning our consummate adoption," so in the same manner we are further assisted by the "groaning of the Holy Spirit" in the realm of our poverty in prayer.

(1) Our weakness for which the Spirit of God intercedes

The believer's "weakness" or "lack of strength," ἀσθένεια, astheneia, is that "we do not know how to pray as we should," a specific manifestation of his overall frailty (cf. II Cor. 12:5, 9-10). But this is not a lack with regard to desire as much as prudent knowledge. Dana and Mantey more accurately translate: "we know not what we should pray for as we should."[73] Warfield rightly comments on Paul here: "It is not lack of purpose—it is a lack of wisdom, that he intimates. We may have every desire to serve God and every willingness to serve Him at our immediate expense, but do we know what we need at each moment?"[74] We often pray glibly, generally, remotely, even searchingly, concerning the will of God, yet without certainty. Consider Paul's prayer in II Corinthians 12:7-8.

(2) The Spirit of God's intercession for our weakness.

Even as Jesus Christ promised, "I will not leave you as orphans" (John 14:18), so the Holy Spirit as "the Helper" (John 14:26) will similarly be the one who "helps our weakness" in prayer, and specifically in that "the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. This "help," συναντιλαμβάνω, sunantilambanō, literally means "to assist alongside by bearing in the place of"(cf. Matt. 11:28-29). Murray adds:

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[71] Morris, *Romans*, p. 326

[72] Lloyd-Jones associates v. 26 here with vs. 16-17, that is "the Spirit also helps our weakness" in a manner similar to that in which "the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." Thus vs. 18-25 present a digression. *Romans, 8:17-39*, p. 121. However, Paul's use of this connecting adverb in seven other instances is always with reference to the immediate preceding context.

[73] Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 146.

[74] B. B. Warfield, *Faith & Life*, p. 198.

> The children of God have two divine intercessors. Christ is their intercessor in the court of heaven (cf. vs. 34; Heb. 7:25; I John 2:1). The Holy Spirit is their intercessor in the theatre of their own hearts (cf. John 14:16-17). . . . The glory of Christ's intercession should not be allowed to place the Spirit's intercession in eclipse.[75]

Hence, the Holy Spirit helps the believer in his quest to pray according to the will of God. Thus the Holy Spirit "intercedes for us," or "petitions on our behalf" since His pleading is better able to direct our praying according to the will of God. Warfield adds that,

> it is not an intercession through us as mere conduits, unengaged in the intercession ourselves; it is an intercession made by the Spirit as our helper and not as our substitute."[76] Further, the Spirit's support is "with groanings too deep for words," literally "nonverbal, incomprehensible, profound stirrings and longings," even as the whole creation and the believer presently groans, vs. 22-23.[77]

Thus the Christian, in his weakness in prayer, yet will have promptings, "gracious inclinations" according to John Owen,[78] originating from the indwelling person of the Holy Spirit that will give him both constraint and direction. It is as James Montgomery has written:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

So when the impulse to pray comes with regard to a specific situation or person, he should not hesitate but rather immediately respond to this divine stimulation. Consider Peter in mortal danger in Acts 12. Yet the church is praying for him in prison, vs. 1-5, and upon his supernatural deliverance, he finds the saints praying for him as he arrives at their gathering, vs. 11-12.

b. The Spirit intercedes with knowledge, v. 27.

Now we consider the divine perspective of God the Father with regard to what we have just understood in terms of human deficiency in prayer. An expanded translation reads: "and God the Father, who searches the hearts of all men

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[75] Murray, Romans, I, pp. 311-2.

[76] Warfield, *Faith & Life*, p. 199.

[77] Lloyd-Jones, as with Morris and Murray, identifies this groaning with that of the believer, such as when in v. 15 and Galatians 4:6 he crys out, "Abba! Father!" *Romans, 8:17-39*, p. 136. However, this understanding is gramatically improbable, Cranfield, *Romans*, I, p. 423; Hendriksen, *Romans*, pp. 275-7. Glossalalia or speaking in tongues is excluded here since it was verbally understood in Acts 2:8, or otherwise called for verbal interpretation (I Cor. 14:13, 26-28).

[78] John Owen, *Works*,IV, p. 259-60; also refer to pp. 271-6.

universally, certainly knows with appreciation the mind and petitions of God the Holy Spirit, because that same Spirit intercedes in prayer, according to God the Father's good will, on behalf of the saints in particular."

The expression, "and He who searches the hearts," recalls the universal truth of I Kings 8:39; I Chronicles 28:9; Proverbs; 15:11; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Acts 1:24; Hebrews 4:13. It is not a pretty picture, that is the heart interests of the human race in general. However, He, God the Father, also knows the purposes of God the Holy Spirit, and in particular His groaning concern and intercession for those who He savingly indwells. Therefore the Father is aware of the Spirit's holy intentions concerning His holy will, even as they are channeled through the soul of a weak yet redeemed sinner. This aspect of divine omniscience is of special delight to the Father, and consequently suggests that such Spirit directed praying will certainly be heeded, even if so much vain prayer in the world is spurned.

2. Through the assurance of certain glory, vs. 28-30.

Here we confront a well known verse that is commonly understood in isolation, rather than retrospectively and prospectively, and in so doing a wonderful panorama of gospel truth is neglected. The overall point is that God, in delighting in the Spirit's intercessory pleading concerning His holy will for the groaning Christian, has an expansive and glorious agenda for that same believer which will never be thwarted, weakness notwithstanding. Further, this course is safely guarded for the Christian, and such security is guaranteed by the Spirit's sovereign participation. So Luther comments:

> On this text depends the entire passage which follows to the end of the chapter. For He wills that to the elect who are loved by God and who love God the Spirit works all things for good, even things which in themselves are evil. He approaches , yes, from this point on begins to discuss the matter of predestination and election, which is not as deep a subject as is commonly thought, but rather is a wonderfully sweet thing for those who have the Spirit, but a bitter thing and harsh above all things for the prudence of the flesh.[79]

a. A good end for the called, v. 28.

An expanded literal translation reads: "And we know that, to those who are loving the only true God, all things are working together toward a good, consummate and glorious end, that is to those who are the called ones according to His electing purpose." We could also say, "To those who are the called according to the predestined purpose of God and thus love Him, to such ones only all the particulars of life are presently working together so as to ultimately coalesce when God's good and holy objective is obtained, that is glory."

"We know" declares an expectation concerning firm Christian assurance at this point, doubtless because it is the indwelling and shepherding Holy Spirit who witnesses concerning such a secure relationship. But what is the "good" here? Surely it is the climactic "glorification" of vs. 29-30, or "the blessings of the coming age,"[80] to which terminus the Holy Spirit safely and certainly transports. Thus Joseph could declare to his trembling brethren, "As for you, you meant evil

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[79] Luther, *Works*, 25, p. 371.

[80] Moo, *Romans*, p. 529n.

against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." The particulars of Joseph's life were often troublesome, yet an overriding providence ordered that they coalesce at a point of ultimate salvation.

What then are the "all things" that are eventually eclipsed by "the good"? Not simply the adversities of life in general that unendingly confront the Christian. But rather the conflicts that Paul has recently detailed, namely the opposition of the "flesh" described in ch. 7, as well as the "groaning" and "weakness" more recently described in ch. 8. Warfield comments:

> He [God] will so govern all things that we shall reap only good from all that befalls us. All, though for the present it seems grievous; all, though it be our sin itself, as Augustine properly saw and as the context demands (for is not the misery of the seventh chapter the misery of indwelling sin, and is not the joy of the closing verses of the eighth chapter the joy of salvation from sin?)—all, there is no exception allowed: in all things God cooperates so with us that it can conduce only to our good . . . our eternal good obviously.[81]

Who then participates in this divinely planned journey? Only those who are "the called (1:7) according to His purpose," that is His πρόθεσις, prothesis, or "setting/placing before(Eph. 1:11; 3:11; II Tim. 1:9)." They are those effectually called, according to sovereign appointment, who consequently "love [the] God." Again, it is the Holy Spirit who conducts safe passage so that He has no defections (John 17:12; Phil. 1:6; II Thess. 2:13-14). He is the administrator of the Father's sovereign will. Warfield further adds:

> The fundamental thought here is the universal government of God. All that comes to you is under His controlling hand. The secondary thought is the favor of God to those that love Him. If He governs all, then nothing but good can befall those to whom He would do good. The consolation lies in the shelter which we may thus find beneath His almighty arms. . . . [Nevertheless] [i]t is concerning sinners that he [Paul] is writing .[82]

Certainly Joseph's brethren, participants in an earthly salvation, qualified in this respect.

Thus we recall the present situation of Christians to whom Paul writes. They suffer without and experience conflict and weakness within. But reassurance is stimulated by the thought that the sovereign indwelling Spirit will preserve them unto a good and glorious end. Through the indomitable perseverance of the Spirit, they shall consequently persevere. Hence the authentic Christian can join with Paul in agreeing, "Yes, this blessed truth we do assuredly believe and know!"

b. Predestined conformity to the image of Christ, v. 29.

The striking certainty of Paul's preceding assertion, and his expectation that Christians generally should appreciate such truth, prompts explanation that has been called the "Golden Chain" comprised of five aorist verbs or links, namely *foreknowledge*, *predestination*, *calling*, *justification*, and *glorification*. The

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[81] Warfield, *Faith & Life*, pp. 204-5, 210. Also Haldane, *Romans*, pp. 401-2.

[82] Ibid., pp. 204, 210.

sequence here may be likened to an architect who first conceives of an attractive building project in his mind (*foreknowledge*); then he produces specific plans based upon this thinking (*predestination*), after which construction materials are selected (calling); then the foundation is laid (*justification*) that inevitably leads to completion of the edifice (*glorification*). The sovereign connectedness here expounds in greater detail upon God's good purpose for the called who love Him.

(1) *Foreknowledge*, προγινώσκω, proginoskō, can mean simply to know in advance (Acts 26:5; II Pet. 3:17), yet other references (Acts 2:23; Rom. 11:2; I Pet. 1:2, 20) suggest that here Paul describes God's "forelove" (Deut. 7:7-8; Jer. 1:5; Amos 3:2). As Murray contends in rejecting prescience or the mere foresight of saving faith, "It should be observed that the text says '*whom* he foreknew'; *whom* is the object of the verb and there is no qualifying addition. . . . It means 'whom he set regard upon ' or 'whom he knew from eternity with distinguishing affection and delight' and is virtually equivalent to 'whom he foreloved'."[83]

(2) *Predestination*, προόριζω, proorizō, logically, if not chronologically, describes "setting a boundary around beforehand," akin to foreordination, whereby God marks out in eternity past those who he set His love upon (Acts 4:28; Eph. 1:4-5, 11; I Cor. 2:7). Paul's doctrine here is rooted in, as Warfield states,"a personal God . . . according to whose will . . . all that comes to pass must be ordered [by Him]." But further, "he [Paul] too was a predestinarian because of his general doctrine of salvation, in every step of which the initiative must be taken by God's unmerited grace.,"[84] as Ephesians 1:5-6 indicates. Further, the Apostle reveals a motive of love and not some dispassionate decree concerning why He chooses who He chooses (Eph. 1:4-5; 2:4; Col. 3:12; I Thess. 1:4; II Thess. 2:13, 16).[85]

But the distinct point here is the design of God's predestinating love which is that those particularly chosen unto salvation might "become conformed to the image of His Son." In other words, "He [God the Father] chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him [God the Father]." (Eph. 1:4). Thus election is not unto presumption, but inner as well as outer conformity, σύμμορφος, summorphos, to the εἰκών, eikōn, or likeness of the glorified Christ. While present spiritual metamorphosis is not excluded here (12:1-2), yet the thrust of encouragement is that future hope of vs. 18-19 (cf. Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 15:49). So at that climactic occasion, Christ shall be acknowledged as "the firstborn [high ranking, honored heir, most blessed] among many brethren" (cf. I Cor. 15:20), that is the "head of the body, the church" (Col. 2:18), the Bridegroom who receives His purchased bride (Rev. 19:7-9).

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[83] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 316.

[84] B. B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, p. 308. Refer also to the whole article on "predestination," pp. 270-333.

[85] John Murray, *Collected Writings*, 1, pp. 70-71.

c. Predestined glorification, v. 30.

The resumption of the argument reminds us that we are considering "*these* whom He [God] predestined," that is the "called" and "we" or saints of v. 28, indeed the "sons of God," vs. 14-15.

(1) *Calling* bridges predestination and justification; it is directed by the plan of God toward those whom He foreloved so that by it the elect might be gathered for their salvation and incorporation into the body of the redeemed; here God moves out of the arena of His decree so as to address this polluted world and focus His word of sovereign grace upon the elect presently dwelling in the far country. Therefore "calling" involves that particular prevenient grace of God whereby the chosen are drawn with cords of love to the embrace, through faith, of Christ crucified. Again, this is "effectual calling" that is ultimately irresistible since the thought of forfeiture is not consistent with the obvious certainty that is essential to Paul's argument here (cf. I Cor. 1:1, 2, 9, 24, 26; II Tim. 1:9). This calling is addressed to the predestined, not the world at large. It is as Packer defines, "God summoning men by his word, and laying hold of them by his power, to play a part in and enjoy the benefits of his gracious redemptive purpose."[86]

(2) *Justification*, notwithstanding the earlier emphasis on faith alone as the linkage to salvation, is the work of God, as the other four links and v. 33 amply support. It is He who brought the Christians at Rome to this point of righteous standing with their Maker. The backward linkage suggests that such decisive reconciliation is associated with the wooing and regenerating Spirit (II Thess. 2:13; I Pet. 1:1-2); the forward linkage suggests that such abiding reconciliation will result in inevitable glorification. Hence, the Christian is to reflect, not merely on the fact of his justification, as significant as it is, but rather the continuum of God's dealing with him from eternity past to eternity future since this panoramic perspective will be far more reassuring.

(3) *Glorification* refers to "the glory that is to be revealed to us," v. 18, "the revealing of the sons of God," v. 18, and "the redemption of our body," v. 23. Like the other links, it is also an aorist that describes this future event proleptically, that is so certain as to be considered accomplished in the present. Most significant is Paul's linking of justification with glorification without any mention of intervening sanctification. Actually it would be better to suggest that for Paul sanctification is implicit here. As Lloyd-Jones explains: "[T]here is no need to mention it [sanctification] as a separate step. Indeed, as Paul points out, the very facts that we have the new nature and the new outlook, that we are dead to sin and risen with Christ, that we are 'in Christ' and 'alive unto righteousness'–all this guarantees sanctification."[87] However, this manner of expression here does reinforce the Apostle's repeated emphasis concerning the security that the Christian presently has.

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[86] J. I. Packer, "Calling," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, p. 108.

[87] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 8:17-39*, pp. 260-1.

The point is that the believer who is genuinely justified will certainly be glorified. "[I]f you are called, you are justified, and if you re justified, you are glorified. Your glorification is as certain as the fact that you are now a Christian. No matter what may happen to you, or what the world, the flesh, the devil and all hell may do to you, nothing can ever make any difference to your position."[88]

3. Through the assurance of ultimate conquest, vs. 31-39.

Now Paul makes a mighty thrust by way of application based upon the preceding truth. Here is doctrinal extrapolation of the highest order; it is a rapturous finale that is intended to elicit intense and fervent agreement, a quenchless and joyous certitude. Notice the Godward thrust of Paul's argument here, that is the fact that the sum total of his reasoning concerns the saving and securing character of God as the believer's ultimate hope.

a. God the Father is for us against all opposition, vs. 31-32.

In a world that scrambles to find God, that believes God is to be discovered by human reasoning and investigation, we find the Bible declares the opposite, namely that God is only known by His self-revelation. This saving initiative is judicially represented here. After all, in any trial it is the character of the judge that will determine the destiny of the accused. Hence Barrett comments: "The question is not whether we are on God's side, but whether he is on ours."[89]

(1) The Father defends us against all things, v. 31.

Like 3:5; 4:1,"What then shall we say to these things?" invites sacred argument concerning the force of truth embodied in both the preceding golden chain and overall gospel revelation that vs. 32-34 appear to encompass.[90] The "if" clause assumes the proposition to be true so that we could translate, "Since God is for us, who is against us?"

Literally we read: "If the God [*of Abraham*] is on our behalf [*one who defends our case,"*], then who is [*able to sustain any accusation*] against us?" Cranfield explains, like Calvin, that "God is on our side," and such a statement is "a concise summary of the gospel."[91] What evidence then is there that supports this more effectual advocacy of God? Included in the gospel would be substitution, representation, adoption, and grace endowment; but surely the thrust here is the eternal and unstoppable design of God for us that originates in eternity past and will certainly be accomplished in eternity future. "God for us" is guaranteed by the golden chain, void of any weak link, that God has forged.

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[88] Ibid., p. 259.

[89] Barrett, *Romans*, p. 172.

[90] Stott sees "five convictions" in v. 28, "five affirmations" in vs. 29-30, and here the first of "five questions" in vs. 31-35. *Romans*, pp. 246-60.

[91] Cranfield, *Romans*, I, p. 435. He refers to the parallel use of ὑπέρ, huper, here in Mark 9:40.

However, it is soberingly implicit that God is not for everyone, but rather against a great multitude. The Old Testament supports this truth, both with regard to backslidden Israel (Num. 25:3), and especially paganism as represented by Babylon (Jer. 51:24-5), Nineveh (Nah. 3:5), Egypt (Ezek. 29:9-10), Tyre and Sidon, Edom (Ezek. 26:3; 28:22), etc.

"Who" then is against participants in the golden chain of God's sovereign mercy? Those children of "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10) who indict God's elect, the seed of the world, the flesh, and the devil, who inflict every imaginable form of evil, vs. 33-36 But in spit of this onslaught, nothing that man engineers can break the chain that God has forged, for nothing is "able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," v. 39. So Charles Wesley has written:

> Surrounded by a host of foes,
> Stormed by a host of foes within,
> Nor swift to flee, nor strong to oppose,
> Single, against hell, earth, and sin,
> Single, yet undismayed, I am:
> I dare believe in Jesu's name.
>
> What though a thousand hosts engage,
> A thousand worlds, my soul to shake?
> I have a shield shall quell their rage,
> And drive the alien armies back;
> Portrayed it bears a bleeding Lamb:
> I dare believe in Jesu's name.

Thus we conclude that if God is for us in the manner that is here described, in spite of the whole world being against He and us, consequently we are most enthusiastically for God in worship, praise, and faith obedience.

(2) The Father gives us all things with Christ, v. 32.

Further evidence of "God being for us" is now forthcoming through the use of sanctified logic (cf. 5:9-10), that is arguing from a greater premise to a lesser conclusion. The major premise may be expanded in translation: "God the Father, prefigured by Abraham's offering of Isaac (Gen. 22:16), did not spare His own Son, Jesus Christ, as pagan gods might, but on behalf of us all He determined to deliver Him up as an atoning sacrifice." The emphasis here is upon what God has done by sovereign determination, certain accomplishment, without any thought of contingency. God did it! Period! He offered His Son; the world did not originate this sacrifice even though it accountably participated in it (Isa. 53:4, 6, 10; Acts 2:23; 4:27-8). Further, the divine intent was to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21), that is "us all" here, and not potentially or hopefully but actually. Further, and the context bears this out, such an offering was not provided in a vacuum, but rather as integral to that accomplished via the inseverable chain of vs. 29-30.

Thus the minor conclusion is posed in the form of an unanswerable question. How then is it possible for "God the Father *not* freely to give us all

[the] things, in conjunction with Christ?" But what are "the all things"? Strictly they are not the "all things" of v. 28 which oppose our Christian progress, but the broad spectrum of the gracious benefits incorporated in the golden chain.[92] Thus if we have become united with Christ, then we have become partakers of "the all things" that are included from foreknowledge through to glory (cf. I Cor. 3:21-23). Therefore the Christian under trial is secure in the knowledge that present spiritual union with Christ, vs. 14-18 guarantees ultimate deliverance and glorification.

So Lloyd-Jones concludes in commenting on this verse:

> If He [God] has 'foreknown' you He has 'predestinated' you, and if He has 'predestinated' you He has 'called' you, and 'justified' you: and if He has 'justified' you He has already 'glorified' you. His love sees the end from the beginning, and He has given you absolute proof of it on the Cross in order that you might enjoy the assurance and the happiness of salvation even while you are in this world of sin and woe and evil and shame. Do you constantly work out this mighty logic?[93]

b. God the Father justifies us against any accusation, vs. 33-34.

While there is one saving purpose with regard to "those who are the called according to His [God's] purpose," yet a distinct saving relationship becomes evident between the Father who delivers the verdict concerning justification of His elect, v. 33, and the Son who obediently obtains the righteous ground of that justification, v. 34. More broadly, and in drawing upon Isaiah 50:8-9, this scene may be likened to the relationship between a righteous judge, the accused for whom the judge has merciful interest, and the counsels for the prosecution and defense, in a courtroom setting.[94]

(1) God the Father declares justification, v. 33.

It is the wielding of His gavel that determines the outcome of the prisoner in the dock, not the accusations of Satan or his agents. However, his every ruling must be just. The "elect of God" here are the "foreloved" and "predestined," the "chosen" ones, ἐκλεκτός, eklektos, (cf. 16:13; Col. 3:12; II Tim. 2:10; Tit. 1:1), from which is derived the English "eclectic." Hence, "Who can *successfully* obtain a guilty verdict against God's elect? Obviously none since, "God is the one who is justifying [present tense] these accused," cf. I John 1:9. Thus Lenski comments that here, "lies the entire doctrine of justification as presented in 3:21 etc. The elect are constantly justified. God does not ignore the sins they still commit, he pardons them for the sake of Christ whom the elect embrace through faith: 'he daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers'

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[92] John Gill, *The Cause of God and Truth*, p. 102. Gary Long, *Definite Atonement*, pp. 10, 111; Murray; *Romans*, I, p. 326; *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 9.

[93] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 8:17-39*, p. 399.

[94] Lloyd-Jones expounds upon this whole legal scenario in a most illuminating and practical way. *Romans, 8:17-39*, pp. 404-412.

(Luther)."[95] The inference then is that to accuse God's elect is to in fact impugn His righteous jurisdiction, which behavior He will not tolerate in His courtroom!

However, what specifically is this declaration of justification? It is both the negative verdict of acquittal (guilt justly removed) and the positive verdict of approval (righteousness justly imputed). The following verse elaborates on the Judge's full righteous provision in this regard.

(2) God the Son implements justification, v. 34.

In v. 31 the troubled believer faces those "against" him; in v. 33 he faces a related accusatory "charge," while here he comes under "condemnation." This adversarial onslaught is both subjective involving his "own heart" (I John 3:20), and objective concerning the trials of v. 35 as well as personal, even justifiable criticism from without, both presently and at the day of judgment. However, as was noted with regard to Warfield's comment concerning "all things" in v. 28, it is the subjective, inner wrestlings with personal sin, weakness, and self- accusation that most easily shake Christian assurance and are in mind here.[96] Nevertheless, the assailed child of God has "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our [his] sins" (I John 2:1-2). Thus Paul describes this defense attorney as he who, through acceptable atonement (substitutionary payment), enables God to be both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (3:26). Christ's advocacy involves four elements. The first two (both aorist tense) describe what Christ has done, namely "died" and "risen" from the dead. The second two (both present tense)describe what Christ is presently doing , that is "sitting" and "interceding" for those he has redeemed. Indeed it is the fourth element that is most crucial to Paul's argument, in harmony with Hebrews 7:25; I John 2:1. The point is that those Christians who are presently assailed with "conflicts without, fears within" (II Cor. 7:5) yet have ongoing legal representation before God in His heaven, even such an attorney who has never lost a case and is the most intimate of friends with the presiding Judge, that is His beloved Son!

Thus the answer to subjective woundings and piercings that result from accusatory arrows, is to be found in the objective saving work of Christ, not my own inner reasonings which are so frail, fallible, and clouded by misunderstanding. It is the outer concrete advocacy of Christ that gives me solid ground to stand upon. So Jonathan Edwards declares:

> The sweetest joys and delights I have experienced, have not been those that have arisen from a hope of my own good estate; but in a direct view of the glorious things of the gospel. When I enjoy this sweetness, it seems to carry me above the thoughts of my own estate. It seems, at such times, a loss that I

[95] R. C. H. Lenski, *Romans*, 573. He also draws attention to the present tense of δικαιόω, dikaioō in 3:24, 26.

[96] So Moo, Godet. Thomas Manton especially lists unbelief, dullness, deadness, lust, sorrow, discouragement, poverty, sickness, and conscience in general, *Works*, 12, pp. 321-2., 349.

> cannot bear, to take off my eye from the glorious pleasant object I behold without me, to turn my eye in upon myself, and my own good estate.[97]

So Johann Rothe, the German Moravian, directs us to this same ground of assurance.

> Now I have found the ground wherein
> Sure my soul's anchor may remain—
> The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
> Before the world's foundation slain;
> Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
> When heaven and earth are fled away.
>
> With faith I plunge me in this sea,
> Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;
> Hither, when hell assails, I flee,
> I look into my Savior's breast:
> Away, sad doubt and anxious fear!
> Mercy is all that's written there
>
> Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
> Though strength, and health, and friends be gone,
> Though joys be withered all and dead,
> Though every comfort be withdrawn,
> On this my steadfast soul relies—
> Father, Thy mercy never dies!
>
> Fixed on this ground will I remain,
> Though my heart fail and flesh decay;
> This anchor shall my soul sustain,
> When earth's foundations melt away:
> Mercy's full power I then shall prove,
> Loved with an everlasting love.

c. God the Son loves the called unto triumph, vs. 35-37.

From the moment of his conversion, the Christian commences an earthly journey fraught with opposition of every kind, and this was the life pattern of the Apostle Paul, even as he followed in the steps of his Master. Hence the great challenge for any Christian pilgrim is overcoming these difficulties (Matt. 10:22; Acts 9:14-15;I Pet. 2:21; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). So Romans has addressed this same problem insofar as the ongoing life of the believer is concerned. It is appropriately introduced in 5:1-5 as "tribulation" which follows as a consequence of justification. Then in chapters 6-7 the internal aspect of this struggle is confronted, that of the "law in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind" (7:23), followed in chapter 8 by a Spirit of adoption that causes hope to rise above present "sufferings" and "groanings" (8:15, 18, 23-25). In vs. 31-34 the conflict is described in legal terms. Now a more broad portrayal of a

[97] Quoted by Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening*, p. 214. William Bridge the Puritan similarly writes: "When a man draws his comfort only from something that he finds within himself; from grace that he finds within, and not from grace without; from Christ within, and not from Christ without, then his comfort will not hold." *A Lifting up for the Downcast*, pp. 35-6.

whole catalogue of potent adversaries is described as being vanquished by the omnipotent and redeeming love of God.

(1) We are inseparable from the love of Christ, vs. 35-36.

Again recall the oppression which the Christians in Rome endured. For as Shedd points out: "The Roman regarded the Christian as a cheap and common victim."[98] While they might have gained a reputation of love for one another within a despised lower class, yet in their worldly poverty and torment the mocking comment would have been hurled at them: "But where is the love of Christ for you now?" even as Christ was ridiculed, "He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him" (Matt. 27:43).

(a) In spite of death variously, v. 35.

An expanded translation reads: "Who will separate *us* from the love of Christ which he has actively directed toward *us* (subjective genitive)?" Here Paul draws upon his own experience of opposition that attempts to alienate him from his Redeemer (I Cor. 4:11-13; 15:30-31; II Cor. 11:26-27; 12:10). We might add here not only the threat of sickness and false religions, but also the contemporary foes of secularism, modernity, liberalism and socialism. The implicit negative answer is reserved for the finale of vs. 37, 39.

(b) In spite of death daily, v. 36.

For Paul persecution is a daily matter (I Cor. 15:31), an expected hazard that nevertheless may surprise less mature believers. Hence he quotes Psalm 44:22 in support of v. 35. "For Your sake," would suggest that for the sake of Christ, "we are being put to death all day lone," while in Psalm 44:22 the reference is to "God." The apostolic expectation is that Christians will distinguish themselves in their contrast with the world, not their capitulation to the world. Further, the Christian response is not one of that militancy which the world employs; such judgment must be left to the Shepherd of the sheep and his example (I Pet. 2:21-23; Rev. 6:15-17).

(2) We are conquerors by the love of Christ, v. 37.

An expanded translation reads: "But by way of stark contrast, in all of these various trials that oppose our faith, we are continuously and gloriously excelling in victory by means of he, that is Christ, who loved us." The victory here is ὑπερνικάω, hupernikaō, a compound that strengthens the idea of victory to supravictory or supreme victory or ultimate victory. The means of this victory is through Christ who "loved us" aorist, cf. 5:6-8; this is not love in general, but rather that atoning love which was manifest at a point of time, in death, resurrection, session, and intercession, v. 34. Hence, this

[98] William Shedd, *Romans*, p. 269.

victory includes the conquest of death by Christ for his seed (Eph. 4:7-10; Col. 2:13-15), and thus no opposition can take away the prospect of consummate life and dominion with Christ. And for "the called according to His purpose," such a destiny is secure and certain. But further, as Cranfield points out, such triumph "is not through any courage, endurance or determination of our own, but through Christ, and not even by our hold on Him but by His hold on us"[99] (I John 4:19).

d. God the Father loves the called in His Son, vs. 38-39.

"For I am convinced" or "I have become persuaded" is not only a logical conclusion with regard to Paul's argument thus far, but also an expression of his desire for the Christians at Rome to have a similar measure of assurance. For such faith can conquer an empire rather than be subject to it. Paul's martyrdom was not a victory for the power of Caesar, but rather a confessions of its failure to subdue the truth, even as was the case with the crucifixion of Christ. Further, it is arguable that one man Paul, as a servant of God, accomplished infinitely more in this world than ever any one Roman did!

(1) His infinite love overcomes all opposition, v. 38-39a.

Concerning opposition to biblical Christianity, Paul concludes by moving from the more personal of v. 35 to the universal, from the material to the spiritual, from the immanent to the transcendent. Concerning the religious climate of the first century, Barrett comments: "Paul turns to what his readers probably regarded as their chief and most dangerous enemies, the astrological powers by which (as many in the Hellenistic world believed) the destiny of mankind was controlled."[100]

(a) Death and life. The frustrations of temporal human existence and destiny are conquered by Christ and not vice versa. Death frustrates life and life is shrouded in death. Death is so pervasive, humiliating and inevitable while life is so fleeting. But this tyranny cannot subdue Christ; the reverse is the reality, even as Christ presently "is at the right hand of God," v. 35.

(b) Angels (good/bad?) and principalities or rulers (earthly/spiritual?) The context would lead us to conclude that these are opposing spiritual forces. But "angels" usually refers to "good angels," in which case Paul may be using hyperbole (cf. Gal. 1:8).

(c) Present and future things or things to come. Christ has conquered the temporal world with the provision of eternal life. But the emphasis here on "things to come" certainly punctures the idea that human autonomy alone can "disqualify the called," "break the golden chain," and here be

[99] Cranfield, *Romans*, I, p. 441.

[100] Barrett, *Romans,* p. 174.

the unspoken future exception to Paul's train of thought. Rather Christ is the absolute guarantee of a secure future.

(d) Powers. These may be higher ranking spirit beings with regard to the "miracles" and "wonders" which they are able to activate (cf. I Cor. 15:24; II Cor. 12:12; Eph. 1:21). Whatever, no inexplicable manifestation, no wonders from the magicians of Egypt, can keep us from the riches of grace that are in Christ Jesus.

(e) Height and depth. To be even more encompassing, in an exalted manner of speaking, Paul includes the spectrum of from heaven to earth to hell itself, which perspective so deflates the size of our present anxieties. So we sing:

> From Him who loves me now so well
> What power my soul can sever?
> Shall life, or death, or earth, or hell?
> No I am His forever.

(f) Any created thing. Thus no power outside of God the Creator can thwart His sovereign and gracious intention for His elect. This final hedge around Paul's premise of absolute security in Christ allows for no exceptions, otherwise a believer may yet slip through God's fingers!

(2) His infinite love is mediated by Jesus Christ, v. 39b.

Thus the conclusion is that, "nothing, except or plus nothing, is able to alienate the authentic Christian from the love of God toward us, namely that same love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Again the subjective genitive focuses on the sovereign love which God exercises toward those who He has called. The administration of this love is mediated through the Lord Jesus Christ, yet the love of the Father and the Son are essentially identical.

But for the oppressed Christian in Rome, there can be little comfort if the whole of this triumphant declaration yet rests on the vital pivot of our own choosing to continue in the faith. The whole argument here falls apart if the will of man is the ultimate determinant in his destiny; it then in fact becomes the supreme issue which yet, some would say, is an assumption. Rather, the Christian in Rome would have read this climactic assertion with renewed confidence for, as Jonah acknowledged in a most threatening situation that he was enabled to rise above, "Salvation is from the LORD" (Jonah 2:9).

Thus Lloyd-Jones concludes: "God never starts a process and then gives it up uncompleted. What God starts He finishes. . . . To say that a man whom God starts saving could subsequently be lost would mean that God has been defeated by the devil. That is impossible. God's character and honor demand that a man who has been justified should finally be glorified, and His power guarantees it."[101]

[101] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, 8:17-39*, p. 456.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I cannot, desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

CHAPTER XI

ROMANS 9:1-33 - THE GOSPEL AND ISRAEL'S ELECTION

A MORE superficial assessment of Romans 9-11 might lead one to believe that this section is a distinct unit, especially since there appears to be little continuity with the exultant conclusion of chapter 8. Furthermore, it has been noted that some degree of continuity can be discerned, after the manner of Paul's other writings where doctrine is followed by duty, if chapters 8 and 12 are read consecutively.[1] Nevertheless there do seem to be substantial reasons why Paul makes this seemingly abrupt injection of the whole matter, concerning the righteousness of God in relation to Israel and the gospel, that in fact has deep connectedness.

First there needs to be recollection of 1:16 where the gospel is to be offered "to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek," which principle the Lord Jesus revealed to Ananias, namely that Paul was to bear My [Christ's] name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). As a result Paul consistently witnessed to the Jews at every opportunity, even from the beginning at Damascus following his conversion (Acts 9:22). His first missionary journey saw initial synagogue witness at Salamis, Pisidian Antioch, and Iconium (Acts 13: 5, 14; 14:1). Note that Acts 13:46 reveals: "It was necessary that the Word of God be spoken to you [Jews at Psidian Antioch] first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles." Nevertheless, at the next stop at Iconium, Paul first visits the synagogue. His second missionary journey finds him seeking the Jews first at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus (Acts 16:13; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19). Note that Acts 18:6 records, "Your blood [that of the Jews at Athens] be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." Nevertheless, at the next stop at Ephesus, Paul first visits the synagogue. His third missionary journey finds him returning to Ephesus, but first to the synagogue (Acts 19:8). Paul's final journey, in which he is led captive to Rome for trial, commences in Jerusalem where he witnesses in the Temple (Acts 21:26), declares to the Jews that, "I am a Jew" (Acts 22:3), and three days following his arrival at Rome, he "called together those who were the leading men of the Jews," and declared that, "I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:17, 20). It should be born in mind that Romans was received in Rome from Corinth approximately three years before this arrival in Rome just described. Thus the Apostle, although repeatedly scorned and assailed by the Jews, yet manifested an indefatigable and gracious persistence with those to whom he nevertheless felt so indebted (9:4-5). Paul was decidedly prosemitic, even when faced with the most stubborn unbelief and spiritual adultery (9:1-3; 10:1; 11:1, 11; cf. Hosea 11:8-9). Indeed he manifests a degree of ongoing Jewishness that, while used pragmatically (Acts 16:1-3; 21:26), yet is reflective of deep love for "my kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:3). Hence, no Christian should be of any lesser attitude, though sad to say, some Christians have been anti-Semitic both racially and theologically.[2]

Second, other references in Romans indicate an underlying interest in the destiny of God's covenant people (2:9-10, 17-29; 3:3:1-2, 9, 29), and particularly the character of true Jewishness (2:28-29, cf. 9:6-8). It may well be that this emphasis, but especially as now considered in

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[1] John Murray, *Romans*, II, p. xi.

[2] Martin Luther is one case in point. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, pp. 296-8.

Romans 9-11, incorporates much of the repeated thrust of Paul's frequent synagogue ministry. Thus this former Pharisee and student of Gamaliel was constantly sensitive to the ramifications of Christian gospel truth as either an apprehensive unbelieving Jew or a recently converted Jewish Christian might assess it (7:1). Consider how often Paul, on being rejected by the Jews in his journeyings, would have reflected upon the certain covenant promises given to national Israel and the overwhelming unbelief he encountered. Here his frequent ruminating on this matter finds detailed expression.

Third, the theme of God's saving righteousness (1:16-17; 3:21-26; 5:17-21; 8:4) has highlighted the integrity of God in saving sinners, whether Jew or Gentile. Paul is dominated by this fundamental truth, so that in 3:3 God's righteousness is not to be questioned even "if some [Jews] did not believe." Hence it ought not surprise us if, in the light of Paul's confessed Jewishness, this upholding of God's character should arise again, in view of the covenant status of Israel, following such a complete vindication of the fullness and universality of the gospel. Therefore at this juncture there is good reason for maintaining that 9:6a is of crucial importance when it declares: "But it is not as though the word of God has failed." Thus John Piper rightly argues that 9:6a declares, "the main point which Romans 9-11 was written to prove, in view of Israel's unbelief and rejection. What is at stake *ultimately* in these chapters is not the fate of Israel; that is penultimate. Ultimately God's own trustworthiness is at stake. And if God's word of promise cannot be trusted to stand forever, then all our faith is in vain."[3] Hence, the Word of God has not failed, and neither has its promised dealings with Israel.

Fourth, we should consider if Romans 9-11 contains any terminology that is reminiscent of Romans 1-8. Most significant is the use of "righteousness," especially in 9:30 where the Gentiles "attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith," and 10:4 where "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Again in 10:6, 9-10a, "the righteousness based on faith" is "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness." Surely this is recapitulation of the gospel earlier described in Romans. The reference to "grace" in 11:5-6 is similarly drawing upon previous gospel doctrine where "grace" by its very nature is exclusive of "works," as in 4:4-6, 13-16.

So this excursus of Paul is very much integral to Romans as a whole. Moo wells states the issue here:

> Those who relegate chaps. 9-11 to the periphery of Romans have misunderstood the purpose of Romans 9-11, or of the letter, or of both. . . . Once we recognize the importance of this Jewish motif in Romans, we can give Romans 9-11 its appropriate place in the letter. In these chapters Paul is not simply using Israel to illustrate a theological point, such as predestination (according to Augustine, [and Luther][4]) or the righteousness of God. He is talking about Israel herself, as he wrestles with the implications of the gospel for God's 'chosen people' of the Old Testament.[5] . . . If Jewish rejection of the gospel creates the problem Paul grapples with in Romans 9-11, Gentile acceptance of that same gospel exacerbates it. It seems that Israel has not only been disinherited but replaced. Paul earlier categorically but briefly rejected the conclusion that his teaching implied the cancellation of all the Jews' advantages (3:1-4). Now he elaborates. Of course, Paul could have cut the Gordian knot by

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[3] John Piper, The Justification of God, p. 19.

[4] In Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 25-6, he subtitles chapters 9-11 "Predestination or Election," and fails to even mention Israel in this section.

[5] In summary of this most vital point, refer to Murray, *Romans*, II, pp. xii-xv. However, more substantial support will be found in, Johannes Munck, *Christ & Israel*; Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*; Joseph Shulam with Hilary Le Cornu, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans*.

simply claiming that the church had taken over Israel's position and leaving it at that. But what, then, would become of the continuity between the Old Testament and the gospel? For the Jewish claim to privileged status arises not from a self-generated nationalistic fervor; it is rooted in the Old Testament (Deut. 7:6b).[6]

A. THE APOSTOLIC APPRECIATION OF ISRAEL, VS. 1-5.

There is tremendous passion in this opening declaration of Paul's heartfelt concern for national Israel. Doubtless he is reflective of his own past, the sheer bigotry of it all (Acts 26:5, 24; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5-6), and there is nothing like sensitivity to our own sin making us compassionate toward others who sin in a similar fashion (I Pet. 4:8). Notice that while Paul may have expressed anger with the Jews in past encounters (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 23:2-5), yet recall that following their attempt to kill him in Jerusalem (Acts 21:30-32, 36) he nevertheless begged for permission to preach free grace that extended to the Gentiles before these violent accusers (Acts 21:39-40; 22:21-22).

1. Appreciation born of kinship, vs. 1-3.

This is a carnal kinship, yet Paul does not deny its existence or validity, as with 3:1-4. So the Christian today should have similar esteem, even if the Jews he witnesses to are scornful of the gospel. We ought to remember that we are saved by a Jewish Savior, have the gospel from the Jewish Scriptures, as well as mostly Jewish writers in the New Testament. Further, the first mother church at Jerusalem was Jewish, as were all of the twelve apostles, while Paul continued to call himself a Jew. A Christian, like Paul, ought to dearly love the Jews, in spite of their hardness of heart.

a. Through the Spirit of Christ, v. 1.

There is tremendous force of conviction in this oath-like declaration, cf. 1:9. If the composition of the church at Rome is comprised of more Gentiles than Jews, as the greetings offered in 16:1-23 could indicate, then Paul may be attempting to cover the charge that his more recent teaching, with its universal distinctions, has inferred that national Israel no longer has any place in the new church age (3:9, 22; cf. Gal. 3:28). So he immediately responds by indicating just how intensely his heart aches for national Israel. The reality of his yearning is akin to that of Christ (Matt. 23:37-39), for it is "in Christ," that is in union with Christ, to which conviction of conscience the Holy Spirit bears witness. It is not unreasonable to propose that Paul, in his earlier instruction by Christ (I Cor. 7:6, 12, 40; 11:23; Gal. 1:12), learned much of what he now relates concerning the gospel and Jewish unbelief. Here is burning concern that has divine attestation.

b. Through heartfelt concern, v. 2.

In the light of Paul's missionary travels, it is not difficult to contemplate the incessant anxiety of soul that has resulted from the incessant opposition he has faced from the Jews, at virtually every port of call and especially Jerusalem; his

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[6] Douglas Moo, *Romans*, pp. 548-50.

agonizing is suitably described here in the present tense. He certainly knew of a converted remnant; but the vast majority of Israel has continued in its militant opposition to his gospel. Yet in the light of what is about to be revealed in 9:3-11:36, this soul unrest is more akin to birth-pangs, for the Apostle is well aware of the ultimate glorious destiny of Israel. In this regard, as Moo indicates, Paul laments after the manner of the Old Testament prophets;[7] they likewise were grieved at Israel's unbelief and prospective dispersion, yet at the same time anticipated Israel's metamorphosis at the "last days" (Deut. 4:25-31; Hos. 3:4-5; Zech. 12:10-14; 14:8-11).

c. Through racial alliance, v. 3.

We expand in translation here: "For I was seriously contemplating [imperfect tense] the possibility of my submission to damnation [ἀνάθεμα, anathema], that is consignment to hell from Christ, if by any means my fellow Jewish brethren, according to the flesh, might be united to Christ." The Puritans were known to pose the question as to whether a Christian should be willing to be consigned to hell for the glory of God, most likely on account of this statement of Paul.[8] Both situations are hypothetical since they propose an attitude that could only be generated in the heart of a child of God, and God does not send *His own children* to hell for His own glory; such an idea would be monstrous.[9] This is not to deny that apart from what God would never do, yet the child of God may selflessly so love another that he postulates the impossible, by way of hyperbole, as Paul elsewhere suggests (II Cor. 12:15), after the manner of Moses (Ex. 32:31-32). Of course it could also be argued that Christ was certainly willing to enter the realm of the damned for the sake of the Father's elect (I Pet. 3:18-20). However, the large truth here is the Apostle's profound love for God's prodigal people, the nation of Israel, which frustration can only be blissfully relieved at the saving of this same nation.

2. Appreciation born of the covenants, vs. 4-5.

Here Paul passionately identifies with his Jewish heritage by exalting in biblical Judaism that reaches its apex in Jesus Christ who is "God over all." In the luster of this catalogue of blessings is the reason why Paul would, if it would help, offer up his soul for the saving of Israel. But as Moo well states, there is also a hint here, "why that sacrifice will not be necessary: God 'has not rejected his people whom he foreknew' (11:2)."[10] Thus Paul's brethren are "Israelites," Ἰσραηλῖται, Israēlitai, the descendants of Jacob,[11] and the following characteristics must be carefully born in mind in the light of greater clarification being made in vs. 6-13.

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[7] Moo, *Romans*, p. 557. He cites the examples of Jeremiah 4:19; 14:17; Lamentations 1-5; Dan. 9:3.

[8] Thomas Manton, *Works*, XXII, p. 137.

[9] Robert Haldane comments: "That anyone should desire to be eternally separated from Christ, and consequently punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, is impossible." *Romans*, p. 450.

[10] Moo, *Romans*, p. 560.

[11] This first of eleven references to "Israel/Israelite" in Romans 9-11 clearly has a national connotation.

a. Old Testament covenant blessings, vs. 4-5a.

All of the following seven categories, each identified with the definite article, pertain to Old Testament benefits which, in 3:1-2, were but alluded to by the singular mention of "the oracles of God." Here Paul accepts the legitimacy of such "boasting," except that in 2:17-24 it was void of holy consistency.

(1) *The adoption*. In the light of Paul's teaching in 8:15, 23; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5, the application of "the adoption," "the son-placement" to unbelieving Israel as a present reality is significant, though consistent with the Old Testament (Ex. 4:22; Deut. 14:1-2; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9-20; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 2:10). While Hodge and Murray reject any connection here, Piper is of the opposite and more convincing opinion.[12]

(2) *The glory*. The immediate thought must be the coming of God's glory to Israel in visible presence, theophany (Ex. 3:2-6), tabernacle worship (Ex.. 40:34), especially during the Exodus and wilderness wanderings (Ex. 16:10). This visitation was unique among the nations of the world (Deut. 14:2), the subject of boasting in spite of God declaring the reason for their election (Deut. 7:7). However the context in Romans also causes us to look forward to coming glory as the major thrust here (2:10; 9:23; 11:12, 15, 26-27). So Piper concludes: "It is precisely this destiny of Israel that makes the problem of Israel's unbelief so intense!"[13]

(3) *The covenants*. The plural usage here, akin to "the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12), would include the Mosaic Covenant, but especially the Abrahamic Covenant as well as those ratifications given to Isaac (Gen. 26:1-5), Jacob (Gen. 28:10-16), and David (II Sam. 7:8-17; 23:5) that reach toward fulfillment in the New Covenant (11:27).[14] Implicit here is the understanding of the irrevocable nature and certain fulfillment that is at the heart of these "big promises" (Gen. 15:1-21; Deut. 7:7-9; Rom. 11:27-29[15]).

(4) *The law*. Literally we have ἡ νομοθεσία, hē nomothesia, or "the legislation," that is the whole Mosaic legal system, moral, civil, and ceremonial, which in total was a divine revelation exclusively given by God to newly redeemed Israel. No other nation on earth was given this

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[12] "Lexical considerations are all in favor of construing the sonship of Rom. 9:4b with the fullest saving significance of Rom. 8:15, 23. What Murray seems to overlook is that the olive tree analogy in Rom. 11:17 implies that whatever blessings the Church enjoys, it does so because it has been engrafted into the cultivated tree to share in its rich root (11:17). It is the Jews who are the 'natural branches' (11:21) which, though now broken off (by a temporary hardening 11:7, 25), will be grafted in again (11:24): 'all Israel will be saved' (11:26). If the Church enjoys divine sonship, it must remember that it does so by participating in the people of God which is historical Israel 'by nature' (i.e. by a special act of sovereign election)." *Justification of God*, p. 32.

[13] Piper, *Justification of God*, p. 34. Moo has preference for this view of eschatological glory, *Romans*, p. 563.

[14] Here, as in all of Paul's writings, there is not the slightest indication that he embraces an overarching, systematic "covenant of grace" under which the "covenants of promise" are administered.

[15] Concerning Romans 11:29, Moo, Morris, and Murray agree that "the gifts and the calling of God [that] are irrevocable" refer to the listing here in vs. 4-5 of Israel's national blessings.

legal package (Ps. 147:19-20). Hence, in spite of its condemning characteristic, the law was a gift of the engraven, inscripturated, righteous will of God that none else had received except the race of Abraham. Thus "the law" was an exclusive and precious legacy.

(5) *The* [*temple*] *service*. This ἡ λατρεία, hē latreia, or "the service," used in 12:1 to describe "spiritual service of worship," is the whole sacrificial system, again a revelation from God that was unique to Judaism in a world full of paganism. While the law revealed the righteous will of God to redeemed Israel, and thus the sin of God's people, the offerings maintained fellowship. Cranfield suggests that synagogue worship, piety in the home, prayer, recitation of the Shema (Deut. 6:4), etc., are likely to be included here.[16]

(6) *The promises*. Primarily they are the promises given to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (4:13-22; 15:8; Gal. 3:16-29; cf. Gen. 17:4-8; 26:3-5; 28:10-17), yet more broadly incorporate the promised blessings of right fellowship (II Cor. 6:16-7:1). They subsume under the larger covenantal promises, but particularly find their consummation in Messiah (Rom. 15:8; II Cor. 1:19-20; Gal. 3:16, 29). Yet again, these promises were only given to one, seemingly insignificant, chosen nation.

(7) *The fathers*. The expression, "*whose* are the father's" has "Israelites" in v. 4 as its referent, not "the promises."[17] Thus it is the *fathers* who are the progenitors of the "Israelites;" it is the *fathers* who are the "rich root" of the olive tree (11:17-18) that has given rise to the "natural branches" (11:21, 24). But further, in spite of Israel's unbelief and severance (11:17, 19-21), yet "God is able to graft them in again" (11:23). Why is this so? Because, "from the standpoint of the gospel they [unbelieving Israel] are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved *for the sake of the fathers* [emphasis added]"(11:28), that is the certain covenantal promises.

b. New Testament covenant blessings, v. 5b.

Here we transfer from the covenants and promises to their supreme fulfillment, and the smooth though radical transition leads us to the primary reason why neither Israel has been finally abandoned nor the Word of God has failed. Again, "from *whom* is the Christ" has the "Israelites" in v. 4 as its referent. Here is the supreme glory of the Jew, namely that he is the progenitor of the Savior of the World; further, the Savior of the World is a Jew.[18] But Piper adds: "Paul is saying far more than that the Messiah is a Jew. He is stressing that, with the coming of

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[16] C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 463.

[17] Piper makes it clear, with support from H. A. W. Meyer, that "whom" v. 4, ""whose" v. 5a, and "whom" v. 5b, all refer to "Israelites" in v. 4. *Justification of God*, p. 21.

[18] Calvin adds: "For if he [Christ] honored all mankind, when he coupleth himself to us by communicating our nature, much more did he honor them [the Israelites] with whom he would have a nearer bond of conjunction." *Romans*, p. 248.

Christ, the privileges of Israel have reached their decisive climax."[19] However a danger arises in suggesting too comprehensively that Messiah has come from Israel. So Paul immediately qualifies his prior statement. He refers us to truth previously taught in 1:3-4, concerning Christ as the theanthropic person, except that now he makes his point even more forcefully.

(1) Christ *according to the flesh*. We expand in translation, that from the "Israelites" of v. 4, the blessed people of God, comes "the Christ, the one who is according to the [Israelite] flesh." Or as 1:3 declares, this Christ, "was born of a descendant of David according to [the] flesh."

(2) Christ *the blessed God*. A great debate has centered on the question of punctuating the following statement. If a period concludes, "who [Christ] is over all." then what follows is simply a doxology: "God [the Father is] blessed forever. Amen." which the NIV has as a marginal alternative. Thus here Christ is not explicitly declared to be God. But a comma after "all" leads to the translation, "who [Christ] is over all, [who is] God blessed forever. Amen." which the KJV, NKJV, and NASB have without any marginal alternative. In this case Christ is explicitly declared to be God, and there are very good reasons for defending this translation.[20] However, given this to be wondrously true, the point is that in the midst of a catalog of distinctive benefits that have graced the nation of Israel, the crowning blessing is that of it being the earthly incubator of the Son of God, Emmanuel (Isa. 7:14). Hence, the Apostle cherishes this whole incubation process; it is not to be denigrated, even though the rank unbelief of the Jews is a present grief. The Word of God has recorded all of this birthing process; but it has not failed because of where we are presently observing this Abrahamic saga. We need wide-angle lenses when we attempt to comprehend God's dealings with Israel, and Paul in Romans 9-11 helps us to have this comprehensive focus.

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[19] Ibid., p. 43.

[20] The main objection to the punctuation that declares Christ to be God is the argument that nowhere else does Paul make such a claim in his writings, and that in spite of Philippians 2:6; Colossians 2:9; II Thessalonians 1:12; Titus 2:13. However, the evidence upholding the expression here of Christ's deity is substantial. 1. Most of the early church fathers were of this opinion. 2. The grammar is decidedly in favor of Christ being described as "God blessed forever." The word order here does not follow the common expression of a doxology that would have been second nature to Paul, the highly trained Jew. Barrett comments. "[I]f Paul wished to say 'Blessed be God', he should have placed the word 'blessed' (εὐλογητός) first in the sentence, as he does not." *Romans*, p. 179. Cranfield writes that, "the superiority of the case for taking v. 5b to refer to Christ is so overwhelming as to warrant the assertion that it is very nearly certain that it ought to be accepted." *Romans*, II, p. 468. Nigel Turner supports the NEB marginal translation, that is "from them [the patriarchs] sprang the Messiah, supreme above all, God blessed for ever." *Grammatical Insights*, p. 15. 3. The thrust of Paul's reasoning strongly supports the reference to Christ's humanity and deity in parallel with 1:3-4; the Israelites have given birth to Christ from their flesh, yet he is also divine. But simply to declare Christ's human/Jewish roots and then proclaim the Father blessed, is to suddenly change course while leaving the doctrine of Christ in mid air, that is in terms of 1:3-4 and Paul's doctrine of Christ described elsewhere.

B. THE MERCIFUL ELECTION OF ISRAEL, VS. 6-33.

Having given us a panoramic view of the blessings that accrue to Israelites, and the intimation that God is by no means finished with the tribe of Abraham, yet Paul well knows just how easy it is for Jewish Christians in particular, as well as Gentile Christians, to be confused in this matter, and especially with regard to, first, the essential characteristics of a Jew in the sight of God, second, the basis upon which the Jews came into being, and third, of course their ultimate destiny.

1. Distinguished as children through promise, vs. 6-13.

So Paul goes to four portions of the Jewish Scriptures, to deal with the first two of these problems at this stage, that most likely the congregation at Rome has already pondered. This sacred corpus especially embodies the much vaunted blessings just enumerated. At the same time the gospel he has so passionately and carefully expounded in chapters 1-8, as well as fruitfully proclaimed to the Gentiles, is closely related to this concern. Does national Israel in its present unbelief indicate that the gospel, while clearly being effective amongst the Gentiles, is yet a failure amongst the Jews, inscripturated blessings notwithstanding? Therefore, has this comprehensive "word of God," this grand plan of redemption failed?[21]

a. Israel's distinctive children of promise, v. 6.

Because of the glory of the aforementioned blessings that attach to an Israelite, a conflict has arisen. On the one hand, Paul has expressed profound sorrow at the present state of Israel with regard to Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, who has been spurned by the nation that gave him birth. On the other hand, he has just listed the glorious benefits of being an Israelite. So is the integrity of God's Word brought into question at this point? If the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are so wonderful, how come they do not find present fulfillment in national Israel as a whole with regard to its Messiah? Is the Word of God, the revelation of God's sure covenant promises, at fault here so that there is in fact no certain destiny for national Israel in the light of the expansion of the Christian gospel amongst Gentiles? In no way, although clarification is now needed.

Basic to the problem is a misunderstanding as to the definition of an "Israelite." Hence, "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel," or, "they who are of the totality of [present national] Israel are not [all true] descendants of Israel [Jacob]."[22] From the outset, let us clear away a common misunderstanding. Paul is *not here*, by implication, indicating that a real Jew at heart now has no national connection with the previously listed blessings; further, he is *not here* teaching that there are, along with believing Gentiles, only "spiritual" Jews in that they are descendants of Abraham by faith alone. Paul is *not here* saying there is a more broad, encompassing understanding of what it is to be a Jew. The Gentiles are not

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[21] Piper, *Justification of God*, pp. 48-50.

[22] Here the second and third instances of "Israel" in Romans 9-11 both refer to national Israel, though with a distinction. "[T]hey are not all Israel" refers to the present inclusive nation; those "who are descended from Israel" comprise the remnant about to be described, 9:27; 11:5, as part of the eventual "fulfillment" or "all Israel" of 11:12, 26.

in mind here; they are not mentioned until v. 24 where Paul writes of, "us [the Roman congregation as a whole], whom He [God] also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.[23] Quite the opposite, the Apostle is saying there is a more narrow, restrictive focus that finds, as John Murray puts it, "an 'Israel' within ethnic Israel."[24] Carefully consider the context of the following vs. 7-13. The Jews boasted that they were of the descendants of Abraham (Matt. 3:9; John 8:39) while Paul makes it disturbingly clear that you may be born of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob and not be an Israelite! Indeed the forthcoming Moslem claims to be a descendant of Abraham as well! A real Jew must be defined in sharper terms with regard to "the fathers," cf. v. 5! Moo explains: "Paul is not saying 'it is not *only* those who are Israel that are Israel,' but 'it is not *all* those who are of Israel that are Israel.'"[25]

b. Isaac as a distinctive child of Abraham, vs. 7-9.

Keeping in mind Paul's loving anxiety for unbelieving Israel, he upholds the Word's integrity by expounding the unfailing hope that it offers even to a nation presently hardened. His argument in this vein will continue till the exultant doxology at 11:33-36. Thus he resorts to "the father" of the "fathers," that is Abraham, and, in parallel with v. 6b, points out that not all of his physical descendants or "seed" are in fact his "children."

(1) Isaac received the promise, not Ishmael, v. 7.

It is explicitly stated that, "through Isaac your descendants will be named" (Gen. 21:12) while it is implicitly indicated that Ishmael has not been chosen to be a vehicle of the covenant promise (Gen. 17:18-21), even though the firstborn was circumcised (Gen. 17:23-26), blessed (Gen. 17:20), and promised national prominence (Gen. 36:1-43). Rather Isaac is to be the means by which the promise made to Abraham would be passed on to its climactic fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). Yet not even all of the seed of Isaac are to be regarded as true children of Abraham. So what is

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[23] Phillip Mauro is mistaken in writing: "This Scripture [Romans 9:6-8] gives us, in addition to the important truth that not all Israelites are included in the 'Israel' of God's prophetic purposes, the closely allied truth that 'the children of God,' that is, those who are saved by the gospel, are "the children of the promise" (definite article in the original); and that they are 'counted for the seed' (of Abraham)." *The Hope of Israel*: *What Is It?* p. 204. Grover Gunn is likewise incorrect when he makes the same inclusive generalization: "The spiritual seed of Abraham are all those who truly share Abraham's faith (Rom. 4:11-12), and these alone are the seed of Abraham in the most fundamental sense of the term (John 8:39; Rom. 9:6-7; 2:28. Only these will inherit the promises of the covenant in terms of real spiritual rest and an eternal inheritance." *Dispensationalism, Today, Yesterday, And Tomorrow*, p. 234.

[24] Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 9. Walter Gutbrod similarly states: "[W]e are not told here that Gentile Christians are the true Israel. The distinction at Romans 9:6 does not go beyond what is presupposed at John 1:47 [concerning pious Nathanael]." " Ἰσραὴλ" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, III, p. 387.

[25] Moo, *Romans*, p. 574. Also Fred Zaspel notes that the previously listed Jewish blessings are not expounded here by Paul as being "now realized in the church; . . . they belong to Israel; . . . they have not become ineffectual for them; they offer no less a real hope today than ever." *Jews, Gentiles and the Goal of Redemptive History*, pp. 12-13.

it that distinguishes the lineage of the godly seed, that passes from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob? The answer is in the fact that Abraham was "called" (Gen. 12:1; 15:7; Acts 7:3; Heb. 11:8), and became a child of "promise" (Gen. 12:2-3; 15:5-6; Gal. 3:16-19; Heb. 6:13-15), even as did Isaac and Jacob. Paul will make further explanation concerning this point. Suffice to say here that for the Apostle, as we have already seen, "calling" (4:17; 8:28, 30 and "promise" (1:1-2; 4:13-21), are wholly of elective, works excluding, sovereign grace.

(1) Isaac hoped in the promise, not the flesh, v. 8.

For all of his earthly blessings, yet Ishmael is designated as belonging to "the children of the flesh" (8:5) even as his life was void of the faith of his father. He was to be, "a wild donkey of a man, his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him, and he will live to the east of his brothers" (Gen. 16:12). Thus his descendants became known as Arabians as well as the troublesome Edomites. The essential distinguishing feature between the half-brothers was "promise," which in Pauline terms means that Isaac was chosen, according to pure grace, to be an heir of the promise given to his father, in spite of Abraham's initial preference for Ishmael (Gen. 17:18-19). Thus those children of Abraham who inherit "the promise" are "regarded [reckoned, λογίζομαι, logizomai, cf. 4:3; 8:18, 36] as [true spiritual] descendants," as true Israelites. By an act of divine will, not intrinsic human merit, the promise is given with particularity, such as to Isaac but not Ishmael.

Luther comments: "Therefore it inexorably follows that the flesh does not make sons of God and the heirs of promise, but only the gracious election of God. . . . Therefore, why does man take pride in his merits and works, which in no way are pleasing to God? For they are good, or meritorious, works, but only because they have been chosen by God from eternity that they please Him."[26]

(2) Isaac was born of Sarah, not Hagar, v. 9.

The fact of Isaac being a child of promise, born in spite of all natural expectations to Sarah, is proved from Genesis 18:10. Here also is implicit contrast with the rejection of Ishmael, the child of Hagar according to human design (Gen. 16:1-4). Isaac is designated by divine sovereign will, not the advice of Abraham (Genesis 17:18-19), to be the true spiritual descendant according to the promise, the Abrahamic Covenant. Sarah was a free woman who gave birth "through the promise" while Hagar was an Egyptian maid who gave birth "according to the flesh" (Gal. 4:23). Thus, in spite of the "Ishmaels" and carnal seed of Abraham throughout Hebrew history, the promise originally given has not been invalidated, "the word of God has not failed," v. 6a, for the seed of Isaac remains even to this day, and shall remain because "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable"

[26] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Lectures on Romans*,25, p. 385.

(11:29). This concern then for "the justification of God" is the dominant matter that Paul is careful to maintain.[27]

a. Jacob as a distinctive child of Isaac, vs. 10-13.

The generation succeeding Isaac provides an even greater representation of the sovereign will of God that continues to work within the seed of Abraham in general. Whereas Isaac and Ishmael, as descendants of Abraham, were born separately to different mothers with contrasting status, in the case of Jacob and Esau, as descendants of Abraham, they were born as twins from the same mother. Consequently, the divine purpose, according to sovereign calling and promise, is alone the cause of the constituency of the true spiritual Israel, not the external forms and especially circumcision, cf. vs. 3-5, though for the Jewish Christian they may have significance. This principle applies to the constituency of the Christian church, even though the ordinances have significant legitimacy (Eph. 1:3-6).

(1) Jacob was born with his brother Esau, v. 10.

While Isaac represented the distinction of promise as opposed to flesh within the general seed of Abraham, now we have the same distinction made within the general seed of Isaac. This distinction within the ongoing lineage of the children of God only reinforces the mystery of God's elective purposes that defy human contribution and allow God to populate heaven as He sees fit. Even the traditional seniority, which would normally accrue to Esau in his coming first from Rebekah's womb, is turned on its head (Gen. 25:21-34; 27:1-38; 28:10-17; 32:24-32).

(2) Jacob was chosen as distinct from Esau, v. 11.

However, the distinction that God makes between Jacob and Esau must be appreciated in the most absolute sense of excluding human cooperation, and that preceding their earthly struggles and conflicts that commenced as Jacob clung to Esau's heel at their birth (Gen. 25:26). Prior to their birth they had not "practiced [πράσσω, prassō, aorist, as active habit, cf. 2:3] anything good or bad."[28] Hence, God had a particular "elective purpose [cf. 8:28]" that distinguished between the two, before "they," obviously "the twins," had done, through personal action, "anything good or bad [foul]." The divine intent here was that God's individual election of Jacob be upheld, human works be excluded, and His "[effectual] calling" be acknowledged in all of its humbling, pristine sovereignty!

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[27] It is fitting that Piper's study of Romans 9 is titled, *The Justification of God*.

[28] Shedd comments: "St. Paul does not exclude sin altogether, so as to imply innocence, because one of these individuals was elected to salvation, and salvation presupposes sin and condemnation." *Commentary on Romans*, p. 284. Of course the Pelagian would claim innocence at birth with sin originating from personal choice. However 5:12, 19 declares that sin is inherited, and inheritance certainly precedes birth.

(3) Jacob was favored over Esau, vs. 12-13.

Paul's argument is humbling to the proud human condition, that boastful spirit of autonomy and self-determination, and especially the Jew who trusts in physical lineage with Abraham. Challenge can be expected. Hence proof must be forthcoming from Scripture. Two quotations follow.

(a) In the area of employment, v. 12.

Genesis 25:23. To Rebekah the Lord declared that, "the older [Esau] shall serve the younger [Jacob]," though this subjection is not evident during their lifetimes. However, as Paul writes he and others in Rome would be aware of the conflict and subjugation of Esau's seed, the Edomites, by David, Amaziah, Uzziah, and finally the Maccabees.[29] Such a reversal of the custom of privileged inheritance for the firstborn is solely according to divine prerogative. Thus promise overrides not only a patriarchal norm, but preeminently works, also faith, and even foreseen merit since "doing good [following birth]" is excluded, v. 11. Therefore this calling and covenantal promise, rooted in Abraham, is according to pure grace and mercy.

(b) In the area of esteem, v. 13.

Malachi 1:2-5. The prophet writes, "Jacob I loved [aorist], but Esau I hated [aorist]," suggesting prior determination. The Hebrew word here is שָׂנֵא, sane, which usually means "intense detestation" and "loathing," especially with regard to evil (Ps. 97:10; Prov. 6:16-19; Amos 5:15), idolatry (Jer. 44:3-4), divorce (Mal. 2:16), even hatred of those who hate God (Ps. 139:21-22); yet there is a weaker sense of "alienation" which the synonymous parallelism of Ezekiel 23:28 indicates.[30] So here as well there are distinct reasons for the idea of "rejection" or "spurning" rather than "hatred" as emotional despite.[31] Of course this interpretation in no way detracts from the absolute and particular choice of God. In the same vein Calvin declares of God at this point, "I have chosen him [Jacob] and refused this [Esau]. . . . I have rejected the Edomites, the progeny of Esau."[32]

It should be remembered that while Esau and his descendants led profane and sinful lives (Gen. 26:34-35; 27:41; Obad. 10-14), and Jacob lacked integrity, the elective/reprobate distinction made before

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[29] Ibid., p. 286.

[30] Vine, Unger, White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, p. 105.

[31] So Cranfield and Moo. Haldane similarly remarks: "It is evident that the quotation from the Old Testament of these words, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,' is here made by the Apostle with the design of illustrating the great truth which he is laboring through the whole of this chapter to substantiate; namely, that in the rejection of the great body of the Jewish nation, as being 'vessels of wrath,' while He reserved for Himself a remnant among them as 'vessels of mercy,' verses 22-23, neither the purpose nor the promises of God had failed." *Romans*, p. 469.

[32] Calvin, *Romans*, p. 257. Likewise Edwards, *Works*, II, p. 852.

their birth was *not* based upon intrinsic or prospective "good or bad." Hence the "hatred" or "rejection" here, not being based upon moral focus, means that the choice was within the inscrutable, sovereign counsel of God. Of course this thought of "rejection" appears here to be more than "preterition," or the mere passing by of Esau. There was both a choice of Jacob in grace, and the abandonment of Esau to reprobation.[33] However, the main point is that it was wholly God's decision and as such exclusive of human merit or contribution. Therefore, the covenant, saving plan of God channeled through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is certain to be accomplished; thus "the Word of God has not and will not fail"!

Hence, God's love for Jacob was grace in election and promise, and it was both corporate and particular. The partial quotation of Genesis 25:23 in v. 12 follows the Lord's statement to Rebekah that, "two nations are in your womb." The broader context of Malachi 1:1-5 certainly indicates a corporate meaning with regard to not only Israel, but also God's rejection of Esau who incorporates his descendants, the nation of Edom. Nevertheless the fact of particular election/reprobation is in no way excluded here, as some would hope to accomplish.[34] Surely corporate election is but the outworking of particular election, even as the corporate "remnant" (11:5) is comprised of individual, elect Jewish Christians. Further, the following reference to Pharaoh (v. 17) is most particular. Moo responds with three main arguments for the primacy of individual election at this juncture that are summarized as follows. First, Paul describes Jacob and Esau as individuals with regard to their conception, birth, and "works." Second, Paul uses familiar, individualistic salvation words such as "election" and "calling" that are difficult to apply to a nation. Third, to assert the choice of Israel over Edom does not fit with his former argument regarding a "physical" and "spiritual" discrimination being made within Israel.[35]

2. Distinguished as children through mercy, vs. 14-18.

The objection of v. 6a has been answered. However, knowing human nature, especially the jealous claim of autonomy, of self-determination, of human initiative, Paul is quick to anticipate another major objection that challenges the justice of God concerning the aforementioned election/reprobation and finds expression in three questions (vs. 14, 19). First, in v. 14, "Is not election/reprobation in conflict with human moral accountability and thus an indictment of God's justice?" In other words, how can man

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[33] This positive act of reprobation ought not to be pursued, especially by means of logical scrutiny, further than does Scripture, otherwise we may find our finiteness coming to a precipice that leads to being dashed to pieces by wrong conclusions. Probably the intricacies of lapsarianism fall into this category. Refer to L Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 118-125.

[34] This is probably the most popular attempt used by many to avoid any thought of particularism at this point, such as with R. Shank, *Elect In The Son*. Refer to Murray's detailed response to this concept, *Romans*, II, pp. 15-21.

[35] Moo, *Romans*, p. 585.

be judged by God for his moral stance before God if it has been predetermined by God's arbitrary decree?

a. The principle of God's justice upheld, v. 14.

Paul's rhetorical question (cf. 3:5; 6:1; 7:7) is surely drawn from past experience, even as the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty has never ceased to stimulate the defensive human reaction of "Yes God is sovereign, but man is not a robot," or "man has free-will." The question, "There is no injustice with God, is there?" expects a negative answer, along with the emphatic, "May it never be!" In the light of v. 6a, the Apostle's emphatic denial here cannot be overstated, especially as the term "injustice," ἀδικία, adikia, is literally translated in the KJV as "unrighteousness." To charge God with a crime is a very serious matter indeed; it has an unholy audaciousness, an impudence about it which is hardly fitting for the finite creature to bring as a charge against the infinite God. But man in sin has never lacked insolence before the Almighty!

b. The principle of election through mercy upheld, vs. 15-16.

It is significant that as Paul raises a contentious issue, even as Romans 9 is probably the most contentious chapter in all of Romans, in response he provides more separate Scripture quotations, eleven in all, to uphold his overall case, than in any other comparable section in this Epistle. The Apostle appears to logically deal with the ramifications of God's election of Jacob first with reference to Moses, vs. 15-16, then the reprobation of Esau second with reference to Pharaoh, vs. 17-18.

(1) This sovereign mercy is according to Scripture, v. 15.

Here the quotation of Exodus 33:19 is based upon Moses' ongoing desire for the saving, reassuring presence of the LORD so that, "I and Your people [already backslidden, cf. ch. 32] be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth," v. 16. So the LORD favorably responds declaring that Moses, as Israel's representative, will witness the glory of His name, signifying that, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious [Israel], and will show compassion to whom I will show compassion," in spite of the Golden Calf incident. Here the covenant given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was maintained, in spite of offending sin, solely on account of sovereign "mercy" and "compassion." Both terms are distinguishable as relieving love and pitiable love, yet the parallelism here simply suggests "grace" (11:5-6). Hence, the election of Jacob according to v. 13 was based solely upon the same divine prerogative described here. The parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16) is illustrative of the selective mercy described here, when Christ declares, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own?" v. 15. Thus Stephen Charnock declares:

> The apostle joins mercy and this sovereignty of his will together (Rom. 9:15), . . . He is so absolute a sovereign that he will give no account of these matters but his own good pleasure. Why he renews man is merely voluntary; why he saves renewed man is just; why he justifies those that believe is justice to Christ

> and mercy to them; but why he bestows faith on any is merely the good pleasure of his will. . . . [O]ur Savior himself renders this only as a reason of his distinguishing mercy, wherein himself doth, and therefore we must, acquiesce (Matt. 11:27), 'Even so, Father, for so it pleased thee.'[36]

(2) This sovereign mercy is exclusive of human capacity, v. 16.

From the divine declaration there is derived the divine principle. "Therefore, it surely follows that [it is] not of the one willing or the one who is running, but of the God of Abraham showing mercy." However, the implied subject "it" must first be identified, and the preceding context suggests God's "mercy" and "compassion," directed toward the seed of promise flowing from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In more simple and timeless terms, the contrast is made between man and God. In more broad terms, with man in his unholy predicament on earth and God in his holy glory in heaven, the question arises as to how man may be reconciled with the offended God.

One alternative is for man to attempt "willing" and "running," the present tenses reflecting persistent effort; here he offers self-determination and self-exertion, and both are excluded, though not absolutely. For as Luther comments:

> This is not to be understood in the sense that this is a matter only of God's showing mercy, as if it were not necessary for a person to will or exert himself, but rather the fact that a man does will or exert himself is not of his own power but of the mercy of God, who has given this power of willing and doing, without which man of himself can neither will or make exertion.[37]

Thus faith is not excluded here, except it be regarded as a work of autonomous man, as the free-will response of man, even as vs. 30-33 indicate. However, in contemporary evangelicalism there is much evangelism that is a vain display of "willing" and "running," of decisionism, rationalism, ritualism, abstract believism, etc.

The other alternative is with regard to God "who has mercy." Here this mercy is not simply on offer, but active in a most particular and effectual sense. In other words, "Salvation is from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), and the self-renouncing, works-renouncing faith that truly lays hold of this gospel principle is that which wholly trusts in the mercy of God. Indeed such faith may well not be too much aware of the profound distinctions being made by Paul at this point concerning election and reprobation. Luther warns against the unconverted becoming engrossed in such matters,[38] as does J. C. Ryle.[39]

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[36] Stephen Charnock, *Works*, III, p. 268.

[37] Luther, *Works*, 25, p. 388.

[38] "I am issuing the warning that no man whose mind has not been purged should rush into these speculations, lest he fall into the abyss of horror and hopelessness; but first let him purge the eyes of his heart in his meditations on the wounds of Jesus Christ. For I myself would not even read these things if the order of the lection and necessity did not compel me to do so. For this is very strong wine and the most complete meal, solid food for those who are perfect, that is, the most excellent theology, of which the apostle says: 'Among the mature we do impart wisdom' (I Cor. 2:6). But I am a baby who needs milk, not solid food (cf. I Cor. 3:1-2). Let him who is a child like me do the same. The wounds of Jesus Christ, 'the clefts of the rock,' are

But simply mention the rich and free mercy of God to such a newly saved sinner and he will affirm it with the greatest enthusiasm. Then follows enlarged understanding.

> I sought the Lord and afterward I knew
> He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
> It was not I that found, O Savior true;
> No, I was found of Thee.

c. The principle of reprobation through hardening, vs. 17-18.

Here the antithesis of sovereign "mercy", as reflected in God's love of Jacob, is declared to be sovereign "hardening" as reflected in God's rejection, even reprobation of Esau. The sober nature of this aspect of God's dealings with fallen man is reflected in Calvin's notable comment that, "[t]he decree [of reprobation] is dreadful indeed [decretum horribile], I confess."[40]

(1) This sovereign hardening is according to Scripture, v. 17.

The specific reference here is to Exodus 9:16, where, following the fifth plague of cattle disease, the sixth plague of boils has struck Pharaoh and all the Egyptians. In vs. 14 God declares that the plagues have been designed so that, "you [Pharaoh] may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth." He could have rightly judged and crushed Pharaoh in an instant, v. 15; however, "I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth," v. 16, cf. 10:1. Hence, God's intention is that by means of his saving and judging power manifest toward Israel and Egypt, Jacob and Esau, His unique glory might be displayed. Thus the God who has decisively spoken and given mercy to Moses, v. 15, is the same God who has decisively spoken and given hardness to Pharaoh, v. 17, all according to His just and inscrutable will. Haldane declares that, "the birth, the life, and the situation of Pharaoh were all of Divine appointment."[41]

Pharaoh was particularly "raised up" in no different sense than were Judas (John 6:70), and "Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your [God's] hand and Your purpose predestined to occur" (Acts 4:27-28; cf. 2:23). Yet none of these who were reprobate would have claimed to be under divine duress. Herein lies the

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sufficiently safe for us. The strong and the perfect may discuss the first book of the *Sentences* [a theology volume by Peter Lombard dealing with predestination, etc.], which properly should not be the first but the last book. Many today rush into this book heedlessly and strangely also become blinded." Comment on Romans 9:16, *Works*, 25, pp. 389-90.

[39] "A man must first go to the little Grammar-school of Repentance and Faith, before he enters the great University of Election and Predestination." *Old Paths*, p. 473.

[40] John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III, 23, 7.

[41] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 479.

transcendent truth of antinomy,[42] the particularity of God's dealings with man, even as the potter forms the clay according to his design, vs. 20-21. God is totally sovereign over man who is at the same time fully responsible for his actions under this sovereignty. As Loraine Boettner has written: "Predestination and free agency [thus accountability] are twin pillars of a great temple, and they meet above the clouds where the human gaze cannot penetrate."[43] Hence, humble caution is required here. Haldane warns that while the "truth respecting Pharaoh is what the Scriptures declare; . . . we ought never to pretend to go further into the deep things of God than they go before ***us***, but submissively to bow to every Divine declaration."[44]

(2) This sovereign hardening is exclusive of demerit, v. 18.

Again, from the divine declaration there is derived the divine principle. "Therefore it follows that He, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, shows mercy [present tense] to whoever He desires, and likewise He hardens [present tense] whoever He desires." For Paul this hardening, σκληρύνω, sklērunō, appears to be an ongoing process, rather than a past appointment, that is associated with "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction," v. 22. Such a process is consistent with the repeated description of this hardening action by God (9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8), so that Pharaoh's heart becomes increasingly unyielding. However, as Edwards well points out, the method of God's hardening activity here is not to be construed as direct so as to make God the indictable author of sin. Rather, God introduces circumstances that will aggravate Pharaoh's recalcitrant heart.[45] These circumstances are God's irritant that, like the law (7:7-13), aggravate the sinner to the point where, without the grace of the Spirit, the soul is increasingly hardened. However, Boice rightly warns us: "God's raising Pharaoh to this position [of dominion] does not mean that he made him sin. Pharaoh sinned because he chose to sin, and he resisted God and hardened

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[42] By "antinomy" is not meant "contradiction" or "paradox," but the fact of two undoubted truths that, while *appearing* to be in conflict, yet are both acknowledged to be true in spite of man's inability to comprehend reconciliation. Consider the question of whether light is wave and/or particle.

[43] Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 222.

[44] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 479.

[45] "When God is here spoken of as hardening some of the children of men, it is not to be understood that God by any positive efficiency hardens any man's heart. There is no positive act in God, as though he put forth any power to harden the heart. To suppose any such thing would be to make God the immediate author of sin. God is said to harden men in two ways: by withholding the powerful influences of his Spirit, without which their hearts will remain hardened, and grow harder and harder; in this sense he hardens them, as he leaves them to hardness. And again, by ordering those things in his providence which, through the abuse of their corruption, become the occasion of their hardening. Thus God sends his word and ordinances to men which, by their abuse, prove an occasion of their hardening. So the apostle said, that he was unto some 'a savor of death unto death' [II Cor. 2:15-16]. So God is represented as sending Isaiah on this errand, to make the hearts of the people fat, and to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed' (Isa. 6:10). Isaiah's preaching was, in itself, of a contrary tendency, to make them better. But their abuse of it rendered it an occasion of their hardening. As God is here said to harden men, so he is said to put a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets (II Chron. 18:22). That is, he suffered a lying spirit to enter into them." Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, II, p. 849. Similarly Shedd, *Romans*, pp. 291-3.

his heart because it is the nature of sin to harden hearts."[46] Even so, it is the supremacy of the divine will dominant in this verse that, like v. 16, is the humbling principle with regard to the constituency of the true and spiritual seed of Abraham.

Some have suggested that God hardens the heart of Pharaoh, to begin with in 9:12, only after Pharaoh himself first hardened his own heart in 8:15, 32.[47] However, this overlooks the prophecy of 4:21; 7:3 and, as Moo points out, the lack of such an explanation in response to the objection of v. 19.[48] According to the process Edwards annunciates, God may justly harden, any sinner that He chooses.

3. Distinguished as children through sovereignty, vs. 19-29.

Surely Paul responds here just as he has on countless occasions in witnessing to Jews who have wrestled with the question of the sovereignty of God and human responsibility. Conservative "Pharisees held that all was not predestined and that though divine providence governed all things, man still had freedom of choice. . . . [Liberal] Saducees denied predestination and any [specific] divine influence on men's doings, good or bad." [49] Hence the preceding instruction would be regarded as "predestinarian," to use Jewish terminology, and definitely unorthodox.

a. Man's objection to sovereign mercy/reprobation, v. 19.

The essential complaint is that God appears to be unfair if He determines individual human destiny while at the same time holding the individual to be accountable for his belief or unbelief. How can God judge or "find fault" with faithless Esau and Pharaoh if He also determined the bent of their choosing? Surely they were unable to "resist His will"! While a polarized situation is envisaged here with regard to the relationship between man and God, it is obvious that the objector, representative of the natural man, is far more concerned with the cause of man than of God.

b. God's vindication of sovereign mercy/reprobation, v. 20-29.

Paul's response commences with a more jealous regard for God rather than for man, even as this priority is always an indication of true Christian conversion (Gal. 4:9). Yet he weaves his fervent response in such a way that we are soon returned to the sovereignty of God's calling of not only the righteous remnant at the present within national Israel, but also the Gentiles.

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[46] James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, III, pp. 1094-5.

[47] So Lenski, Morris, Stott. C. H. Dodd, representative of liberal opinion which tends to impose a human perspective, comments that here Paul's "thought declines from its highest level. . . . He pushes what we must describe as an unethical determinism." *Romans*, p. 158.

[48] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 598-9.

[49] Abraham Weinfeld, *Basic Jewish Ethics and Freedom of Will*, p. 7. Josephus makes the same assessment, though he adds that the Essenes were strict predestinarians. *Antiquities*, XIII, V, 9.

(1) He has full rights over the creature, vs. 20-21.

Does man have the "right", assumed to be allowed by God, to question the purposes of God? Does the creature have the "right" to question the ways of the Creator? Of course the answer here can only be determined when the origin of these "rights" is discovered. Surely God alone establishes the "right," not man. Sinful, rebellious man may claim "rights," while they may not have connection with the "righteousness of God." So here, Paul responds to an objection that suggests necessary "rights," especially autonomy, that are in fact "wrongs" that emanate from the aspirations of fallen man.

C. H. Dodd makes pompous and consistently liberal comments at this point, not unlike the objector that Paul responds to:

> Has the potter no right over the clay? It is a well-worn illustration. But the trouble is that a man is not a pot; he *will* ask, 'Why did you make me like this?' and he will not be bludgeoned into silence. It is the weakest point in the whole epistle. . . . [Paul] has just represented [God] as a non-moral despot. . . . [W]hen Paul, normally a clear thinker, becomes obscure, it usually means that he is embarrassed by the position he has taken up[50]

We will respond to this as the argument further unfolds.

(a) Who is man that he questions God's design?, v. 20a.

Paul does not give a direct reply to v. 19 since the question is born of proud impertinence. God is not answerable to man, though man is answerable to God even as Job discovered (Job 38:1-40:2); yet without an explanation for his troubles he was humbled to the point where he confessed: "I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth" (Job 40:4-5). Again, without an explanation concerning Job's troubles, yet submission to, rather than understanding of, the sovereignty of God resulted in rest and greater blessing. So Jonathan Edwards writes:

> Let us, therefore, labor to submit to the sovereignty of God. God insists, that his sovereignty be acknowledged by us, and that even in this great matter which so nearly and infinitely concerns us, as our own eternal salvation. This is the stumbling-block on which thousands fall and perish; and if we go on contending with God about his sovereignty [as Paul's objector and Dodd do], it will be our eternal ruin. It is absolutely necessary that we should submit to God, as our absolute sovereign, and the sovereign over our souls; as one who may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and harden whom he will.[51]

Certainly vs. 22-23 further expand upon the *purpose* of God rejecting Esau/Pharaoh and loving Jacob/Moses; but Paul regards it as unnecessary that he reply to the charge of divine injustice.[52] As Morris

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[50] Dodd, *Romans*, p. 159.

[51] Edwards, *Works*, II, p. 854.

[52] Moo comments: "Paul never offers here–or anywhere else–a 'logical' solution to the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility that he creates. . . . Paul is content to hold the truths of God's absolute

adds: "Paul is not saying there is no answer to the question; he is saying that the question is illegitimate."[53] Again, the infinite God does not have to explain everything to finite man; on the other hand, finite man ought to acknowledge his finiteness and submit (Deut. 29:29).

(b) Does the molder have to answer to the thing molded? v. 20b.

The illustration concerning clay manufacture might be freely translated here: "Shall the plastic and formable substance [πλάσμα, plasma] say to the plastic fabricator and substance former [πλάσσω, plassō, cf. LXX Gen. 2:7; I Tim. 2:13], 'Why did you make or fabricate me according to this particular design?'" Paul draws upon Isaiah 29:16; 45:9, which indicate that the divine Potter in question does not act capriciously, but always righteously. However, this does not deny Him the right to fashion both premium items for "honorable use" and standard items for "common use, v. 21.

(c) Does the potter have to answer to the clay? v. 21.

The same basic illustration draws upon familiar Old Testament imagery (Isa. 29:15-16; 45:9; 64:8-9; Jer. 18:1-10), and probably from the Apocrypha (Wisd. 15:7).[54] Further, from v. 20 where πλάσσω, plassō, means to form or manufacture with existing substance or clay, not to create, so here the potter takes a common lump of preexisting clay, such as from the womb of Rebecca by "one man, our father Isaac" v. 10, and makes "one vessel for honorable use and another for common [dishonorable] use" (cf. II Tim. 2:20). Paul is not saying that God *creates* men as sinners, but rather that he takes the common lump of sinners and deals with them individually, not merely as a sinful nation as the context of Isaiah 29:15-16; 45:9; 64:8-9; Jer. 18:1-10, suggests, according to His purposes of election and reprobation. So Hodge comments: "It is not the right of God to create sinful beings in order to punish them, but his right to deal with sinful beings according to his good pleasure. . . . He pardons or punishes as he sees fit."[55]

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sovereignty–in both election and in hardening–and of full responsibility without reconciling them We would do well to emulate his approach." *Romans*, p. 601.

[53] Morris, *Romans*, p. 364.

[54] "For when a potter kneads the soft earth and laboriously molds each vessel for our service, he fashions out of the same clay both the vessels that serve clean uses and those for contrary uses, making all in like manner; but which shall be the use of each of these the worker in clay decides." Wisdom of Solomon, 15:7. Refer to Piper's study of this passage, *Justification of God*, pp. 195-6.

[55] Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 319. So Boice, Haldane, Murray, Piper, Shedd. Luther quotes Augustine: "For grace alone distinguishes the redeemed from the condemned, all having been mingled in one mass of perdition by the common cause of their common origin." *Works*, 25, pp. 388-9. Logic *may* lead to a conclusion that God has predestined and created sinners. However, such a logical conclusion also leads to the indictment of God as being complicit in sinful origination. Such an inference has a very obnoxious and unholy ring about it. Further, Scripture nowhere explicitly declares God to be the creator of sinners; the wicked angels and man are solely represented as being responsible for their sin.

With regard to Dodd at this point, his protest that in relation to the Potter, "man is nor a pot," has the inference that "man is more than a pot, man is something, man was made in the image of God." But Paul here is not dealing with relative status, rather origination. So that whether we consider a pot, a petunia, a pussycat, or a person, all are creatures and all equally have their existence at God's sole discretion. Dodd's protest is tinged with the arrogance of vaunted autonomy. This is further indicated when he writes that man, "*will* ask, 'Why did you make me like this?" On the contrary, man in innocence would not have so complained. Sinful man certainly would have done so. On the other hand authentic Christians are to "entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (I Pet. 4:19).

(2) He has full rights in showing mercy/reprobation, vs. 22-29.

Paul's rhetorical method often includes the rejoinder of a series of questions concerning which he does not give direct explanation since, by their very nature the answers are all too obvious. This was God's way of dealing with Job (Job 38-39), even as Paul uses the same method in 2:21-23; 3:5-8; 11:33-35; Gal. 3:1-5, and here. While God is not obliged to answer the implied charge of injustice in v. 19, Paul is anxious to reveal a divine purpose in God's dealings with men that the objector has not considered, but ought to understand. The Potter's ways are not capricious, but glorious in their outworking, even as they incorporate both Jew and Gentile; it is the perspective of the Potter that Paul is anxious to uphold.

(a) Enduring vessels prepared for ruin, v. 22.

"Suppose," says Paul indicating reality rather theory, "that God, while being immediately desirous to bring his wrath and power upon vessels prepared for destruction,[56] after the manner of Pharaoh's heart being hardened, yet had good reason to be exceedingly patient for a time [cf. 2:4] so as to delay his judgment? Have you thought of such a possibility? because it is in fact the case!" So Hodge expounds:

> The preparation intended is that illustrated in the case of Pharaoh. God did not make him wicked and obdurate; but as a punishment for his sin, he so dealt with him that the evil of his nature revealed itself in a form, and under circumstances, which made him a fit object of the punitive [hardening?] justice of God. The dealings of God as a sovereign are often, by the Jewish writers, spoken of in the same terms as those here used."[57]

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[56] Haldane comments that, "they are vessels of wrath, and by their sins they are fitted for destruction." Romans, p. 493; likewise Stott. However, while the agent of this "preparation for destruction" is not explicitly stated, the most likely identification is God, after the manner of the potter who makes some vessels for "common [dishonorable]" use, v. 21. Literally, these vessels, "having been prepared [perfect passive participle of καταρτίζω, katartizō, not aorist] for destruction," are involved in a hardening process, cf. vs. 18-19, as 1:24, 26, 28 reflect, that comes to a climax of judgment (Phil. 1:28; 3:18-19). Refer to Cranfield, *Romans*, II, pp. 495-6.

[57] Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 321-2.

(b) Honoring vessels prepared for glory, v. 23.

The supposition of v. 22 is now asserted as truth, except that the focus now turns to the reason for the divine forbearance. God purposely delayed judgment so that the "vessels of mercy . . . prepared beforehand[58] for glory," might display the "riches of His glory." This delay was when God "overlooked the times of ignorance" (Acts 17:30), when "in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Rom. 3:25). This temporary tolerance was exemplified in God's dealing with Pharaoh. The major divine intent is the proclamation of the radiant glory of God's sovereign grace by means of redemptive glory being given to particular, chosen vessels, in "the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4). This was the result of God's patience with Pharaoh that ended with the display of God's glory through the glorious redemption of Israel from Egypt. This contrast in God's dealing with both the reprobate and elect only heightens the glory of God's ways. As Piper comments: "It behooves every great artist to demonstrate in the variety of his work the full range of his skill and power."[59] Thus these "honorable vessels" reflect or refund glory back to its source. Such recipients were "chosen in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world" (Eph1:4; cf. Rom. 8:29-30). So, "He [God the Father] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:5-6). Thus Isaac Watts sums up this whole truth:

What if, to make his terrors known,
He lets his patience long endure,
Suff'ring vile rebels to go on,
And seal their own destruction sure?

What if He means to show his grace,
And his electing love employs
To mark out some of mortal race,
And form them fit for heav'nly joys?

But, O my soul! If truths so bright
Should dazzle and confound thy sight,
Yet still his written will obey,
And wait the great decisive day.

(c) Calling vessels as a holy remnant, v. 24-29.

However the expression "vessels of mercy" in v. 23 requires qualification. Bearing in mind that the church at Rome is probably

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[58] In contrast with the perfect tense used to describe the vessels of wrath "having been prepared" for destruction in v. 22, here the aorist is used to describe the vessels of mercy "prepared beforehand" for glory. Here we also have the use of προετοιμάζω, proetoimazō that has more the idea of preordination, rather than καταρτίζω, katartizō, in v. 22. Cranfield emphasizes this distinction, *Romans*, II, p. 497.

[59] Piper, *Justification of God*, p. 187.

comprised of more Gentiles than Jews, an explanation is warranted here since the preceding focus could easily be misunderstood, as if the elect was solely comprised of the Jewish remnant enumerated in 9:6-13. While such a conclusion ought to be easily dismissed in the light of Paul's ministry, yet a biblical explanation is called for, and is now forthcoming. His earlier canvas becomes refined and inclusive of greater detail, specifically the additional incorporation, equally effectual, of the Gentiles within God's "vessels of mercy," and thus to prove that, "in you [Abraham] all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:6-9). The "us" then of v. 24 is inclusive of all the saints at Rome, yet as they are distinguished as "called Gentiles" and "called Jews."

1) A Gentile remnant according to Hosea, vs. 24-26.

Hosea was a prophet to the ten apostate northern tribes distinguished, from the southern kingdom of Judah, as the kingdom of Israel. His ministry was during the last 25 years of that decaying nation, prior to Assyrian exile in 722 BC.

a) God's distinguishing mercy, v. 24.

Notice that not all Jews *or* Gentiles are "called." Paul reverts to a favorite grace term, that is sovereign "calling," cf. 8:28, 30; 9:11, so that we are reminded once again of God's selective dealings in pure mercy, though now with broader focus on the nations of the world.

b) God's distinguishing calling of Gentiles (Hos. 2:23b), v. 25.

This free quotation from the LXX, similar to the usage of Peter (I Pet. 2:10), refers to Israel as "not being God's people" on account of spiritual and material adultery. Yet through the sheer mercy of God, He "will call them My people." Further, "I will have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion" (Hos. 2:23a). But could not Paul have chosen more explicit proof of the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God? (Ps. 22:27; 86:9; Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 56:6-7; Jer. 3:17; Mic. 4:1-2; Zech. 2:11). Probably the language of contrast is helpful to Paul's argument. However Keil explains that this is not mere application: "Through its apostasy from God, Israel had become like the Gentiles, and had fallen from the covenant of grace with the Lord. Consequently, the re-adoption of the Israelites as children of God was a practical proof that God had also adopted the Gentile world as His children."[60]

[60] Keil, *The Minor Prophets*, pp. 49-50. Also Hodge, Shedd: "[A]s they [the tribes of Israel] had been excluded from the theocracy, and so were virtually heathen, the apostle regards them as the type of the Gentiles

c) God's distinguishing calling of Gentiles (Hos. 1:10), v. 26.

In full from Hosea this quotation reads: "Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured and numbered; and in the place [of exile?] where it is said to them, 'You are not My people,' it will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God." Paul renders the last statement, "There they shall be *called* sons of the living God." This is the main point, namely that the Gentiles shall be engrafted into the people of God according to purest sovereign mercy (11:17).

2) A Jewish remnant according to Isaiah, vs. 27-29.

Isaiah was a prophet, contemporary with Hosea, who ministered during c. 740-690 B.C. to the two southern tribes known as the kingdom of Judah. Both quotations concern apostasy that preceded the Babylonian captivity which was followed by the return of a remnant to Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah. Paul's immediate concern is with regard to the present state of the nation of Israel, that is its pervasive unbelief that is yet not total.

a) God's distinguishing call of Jews (Isa. 10:22-3), vs. 27-28.

Isaiah's impassioned "cry" is onomatopoeic, κράζω, krazō, being an intense shout, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sands of the sea, it is a remnant that will be saved," that is only about 55,000 in the first three contingents. "For the LORD will execute His word on the earth thoroughly and swiftly," that is, His judgment of exile as well as the preservation of a remnant. However for Paul, the big point is the maintenance of this remnant until the present time, and thus the fulfillment of God's covenant, not its negation. Thus God's calling to the Jews remains, Q.E.D, v. 6.

b) God's distinguishing call of Jews (Isa. 1:9), v. 29.

This is prophetic confirmation of the preceding truth, namely that only God's covenant mercy in His calling and preservation of the remnant, but here designated as a "seed" and likewise in v. 8 as "the children of promise," distinguishes Israel from such dregs as the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Again, the distinctive characteristic of this remnant is not even faith or intrinsic righteousness, but "God who has mercy," v. 16 (cf. Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:28-29).

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universally." *Romans*, p. 301. See W. Edward Glenny in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church*, pp. 176-9, also S. Lewis Johnson in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom*, pp. 203-6.

> Thus Haldane comments: "Had it not been for this election, through which God had before prepared vessels of mercy unto glory, neither Jew nor Gentile would have escaped, but all would have remained vessels of wrath fitted for destruction."[61]

4. Distinguished as children through the righteousness of faith, vs. 30-33.

It is significant that the role of faith has not been referred to in this chapter up to this point, though it will now be mentioned three times, and especially the key expression, "the righteousness which is by faith. This leads us to conclude that Paul, while having emphasized the significance of faith, especially in chs. 3-4, now reverts to its non-meritorious characteristic, its pivotal importance following the establishment of God's absolute sovereignty in the saving of sinners.

In a similar vein, it is also significant that the terms "faith" and "righteousness," so dominant in Romans 3-8, not having been mentioned in 9:1-29, are now once again given familiar prominence. It would seem that while divine sovereignty and particular election are of fundamental importance, especially as they relate to the saving of the remnant Jew up to the present, yet the particulars of the gospel are not to be disregarded now that we have just been reminded of the incorporation of the Gentile in vs. 24-26. This reclaimed thrust will continue into 10:1-21 where "faith" and "righteousness" remain as prominent terms, though still with particular application to Israel as a nation.

a. Faith righteousness that the Gentiles attained, v. 30.

> "What shall we say then?" is a rallying call that redirects focus from God's sovereign dealing with the Jew and Gentile to a paradox that relates to the present status of the Jew and Gentile in terms of the gospel of justification by faith. Presently, we have the condition of "Gentiles who did not pursue [were not running as an athlete, hunting, pressing for as a passionate pursuit, present tense of διώκω, diōkō] righteousness." There they were in the "streets and lanes" of this world minding their own defiling business and pagan religion, without a thought for Moses and his distinct righteous claims, when suddenly they found themselves invited to a divine banquet. Without any pretension, while aware of their poverty and unworthiness, as with the centurion who confessed, "Lord, . . . I am not worthy for You to come under my roof" (Luke 7:6), they accepted, they "attained" or "seized" at the point of faith [aorist καταλαμβάνω, katalambanō] the free grace that confronted them. They believed the offer of grace and were accepted! They were "the poor and crippled and blind and lame" who were invited to God's "big dinner" (Luke 14:16-24).[62]

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[61] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 501.

[62] Refer to the helpful exposition of R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, pp. 127-31 in which he not only distinguishes this parable from that of the Marriage of the King's Son in Matt. 22:1-14, but points out that the slave represents those initial "preachers, evangelists, [and] apostles" who were spurned by Israel in general and subsequent "ambassadors of Christ" who urge the Gentiles to partake of this feast of grace.

The result is that Gentiles obtained "righteousness," but more specifically "the righteousness of [solely obtained through] faith," as distinct from righteousness derived from "the law of works" (3:27). As the following context indicates, this righteousness is wholly disassociated from the law of Moses, and obviously is that righteousness which is perfectly embodied in Jesus Christ's atonement and imputed through faith alone. Such *sola fide* is that of Abraham, "who believed God , and it was credited to him as righteousness" (6:3). Hence, this is a righteousness of legal standing; the idea of a progressive righteousness, which in fact they were not pursuing, is untenable in the light of the ungodly status of Gentiles here described. This is the righteousness that justifies through faith alone (1:16; 3:21-22, 28, 30; 4:3-5, 9-12), the gift of righteousness (5:17).

b. Faith righteousness that Israel squandered, vs. 31-33.

But what of Israel, that is the nation as a whole? To begin with, by way of contrast, it had a "law of righteousness" set before it; but what was that "law"? Contrast with the lack of Gentile pursuit would suggest the distinctive law of Moses, the law that elicits the "practice of righteousness" (10:5), rather than law as a general principle [63]

(1) Striving, they did not achieve, v. 31.

It was "hunting, pressing for, as a passionate pursuit [present tense of διώκω, diōkō], righteousness," which legal standard of required perfection it did not arrive at or attain (Gal. 3:10; 5:3). This was "a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge" (10:2), as embodied in Saul before he became Paul (Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:14). However, Israel did not achieve that which it sought, and implicit here is human inability in this regard (8:3-4),[64] as well as a misunderstanding concerning the true purpose of the law (Gal. 3:19, 21).

(2) Working, they did not believe, v. 32a.

But why did not Israel achieve God-pleasing conformity to that "Mosaic law of righteousness" which it so zealously pursued? To begin with, Paul does not answer that Israel's failure here was due to the fact that the "Potter" created an insufficient number of "vessels of mercy" (cf. vs. 21-23)! Here he is simply concerned with accountability. In a sense the nation became seemingly so near and yet in reality so far from a saving knowledge of God. While having privileged status, yet the Jews were void of the true characteristics of that status. So how could Israel be such a contradiction?

(a) *Israel did not pursue God by faith*. As a people already redeemed, it misused the law by attributing to it saving rather than sanctifying power. As the children of God through the grace of redemption from Egypt, their redeemed status was perverted. The Jews did not deny

[63] "Law of Moses" is supported by Cranfield, Hodge, Lenski, Moo, Morris, Stott; "law as principle" is supported by Murray.

[64] Moo, *Romans*, p. 627.

faith, but rather believed in synergistic, bilateral religion, whereby faith and works unite to consummate salvation. Redemption out of Egypt was certainly all of grace; the only response required was faith in the passover lamb (Ex. 12:13) and God's saving power (Ex. 14:13). However, following this deliverance of God, the place of the law for an already redeemed people was misapplied. In other words, Israel bought into Galatianism (Gal. 3:1-3).

(b) *Israel did pursue God by works*. Again, the Jews did *not* seek salvation by works alone. Their attitude is best reflected by the Pharisee who prayed, "God, *I thank You* that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this [contemptible] tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get" (Luke 18:11-12). Of course the gratitude for grace was merely patronage, while the declaration of works was proud publicity. Faith here was for infused grace, not faith in the sole saving power of God! The result was failure in several realms. First the Jews did not achieve the standard they aspired to. Second they did not gain justification with God, but rather condemnation. Third, they degenerated into proud hypocrisy. Fourth, they ended up crucifying their Messiah who had become "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense," v. 33.

(3) Pursuing, they stumbled, v. 32b-33.

It may well be that here Paul further alludes to a favorite athletic representation of spiritual pilgrimage. "Pursuing" in vs. 30-31, present tense of διώκω, diōkō, and by inference in v. 32a, is qualified by the tragedy of a "fall" with regard to the Jews. They "stumbled over [aorist of προσκόπτω, proskoptō] the stumbling stone [πρόσκομμα proskomma]," that is in their strenuous pursuit of works righteousness, a "stone" of pure redeeming grace appeared in their way that caused them to be confounded and fall.

(a) The "stone" is Christ, cf. v. 33b; 10:11, a "living stone," ordained to be "the very corner stone" of "a spiritual house" (I Pet. 2:4-7), "a holy temple in the Lord, . . . a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22), who gets in the way of attempted salvation through works righteousness; he is a sore irritant to all legalism. Thus he becomes a disturbing interruption, an "offense" or "stumbling block," σκάνδαλον, skandalon (I Cor. 1:23; cf. Gal. 5:11). One option is to attempt to run over and crush that which gets in the way of human works religion (John 11:47-50), v. 32b.

(b) The "stone" of Christ's righteousness conflicts with legal works. The quotation of Isaiah 28:16; 8:14 declares that God set such a disturbing stone in the center of Judaism or "Zion," again, so as to build "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). Contrary to militant efforts to eliminate such humiliating intrusion, this same "stone" of Christ's atonement, his righteous person and redemptive work, elicits solitary faith that repudiates self-righteousness and wholly

believes in this propitiatory, substitutionary righteousness. Further, concerning the opponents of this "stone" (God the Son) which God the Father has firmly set in Jerusalem, "the stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; . . . and he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust" (Matt. 21:42, 44), v. 33.

(c) Just as the Gentiles attained "the righteousness which is "*by faith*," v. 30, and Israel did not pursue this same acceptable righteousness "*by faith*," v. 32, so *sola fide* is the vital principle of v. 33. In context, the point here is that, "he [the Jew] who exclusively believes [is believing, present participle] in Him [Jesus Christ as the lamb of God] will not be disappointed [put to shame at the day of reckoning, cf. 'be disturbed,' Is. 28:16]." Why is this so? The hymn writer pens the divine response :

> The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
> I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
> That soul, tho' all hell should endeavour to shake,
> I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

CHAPTER XII

ROMANS 10:1-21 - THE GOSPEL AND ISRAEL'S DEFECTION

THE conclusion of 9:30-33, having focused on the significance of absent *sola fide* with regard to unbelieving Israel in contrast with the Gentiles, now leads to ongoing concern about this lack of saving faith in the nation as a whole. Such heartfelt anxiety is introduced with restated passion being reminiscent of 9:1-5. While Paul acknowledges that "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel," v. 6, and that presently there is "a remnant according to God's gracious choice" (11:5; cf. 9:27), yet we notice that a wider national hope is here envisaged that finds climactic exposition in 11:1-36.

A. Israel needs salvation from self-righteousness, vs. 1-13.

Not unlike the flow of ch. 9 where the particular concern of God for "vessels of mercy" within Israel as distinct from "vessels of wrath," vs. 22-23, gives way to the universal principle of "the righteousness which is by faith," vs. 30 concerning "he who believes in Him," v. 33, so here Paul's particular concern for unbelieving Israel, vs. 1-3, again gives way to that same universal principle with regard to "everyone who believes," v. 4. "the word of faith," v. 8, "whoever believes in Him," v. 11, and "whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved," v. 13.

1. Salvation by God's righteousness, vs. 1-3.

The key term here which identifies the essential void in religious Israel is also that which is the key term for the gospel in Romans, namely "the righteousness of God," v. 3, (cf. 1:17; 3:5, 21-22), which is also closely related to "the righteousness which is by faith," (3:22; 9:30; 10:6; Phil. 3:9).

a. From divine alienation, v. 1.

"Brethren [in Christ in Rome], the goodwill [εὐδοκία, eudokia] of my heart, in entreating [δέομαι, deomai] God on behalf of them [national Israel], is for their salvation." Clearly Paul is concerned here for the larger unbelieving segment within Israel rather than the believing remnant. Further, at this point he does not believe that God has given up on the nation as a whole otherwise his prayer would be senseless. Bengel makes a frequently cited comment: "Paul would not have prayed if they [Israel] had been absolutely reprobate."[1] Lenski makes the startling comment that this prayer was not in vain since it "won the forty years of

[1] Quoted by A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, IV, p. 387. Bengel was a highly esteemed Lutheran scholar of the eighteenth century whose exegesis of the New Testament, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, remains a classic. Shedd, though accepting a national conversion in 11:26, attempts to explain here that, "the Apostle's prayer would have been natural and proper, even though it were a fact in the divine mind that the subjects of the prayer were reprobated." *Romans*, p. 311. Given that this is so, it still makes Paul's inspired prayer to have been a vain exercise.

grace for Israel, and many were saved."[2] Assuming he is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and Romans was written c. 55 AD,[3] then in fact this period of grace would only be for 15 years, according to the perspective of Paul! However, this comment illustrates the poverty of such a suggestion that Israel's existence forever ceased at 70 AD. To begin with, there is simply no statement in Scripture that following this second major destruction of the temple, the church would become the permanent replacement for Israel. After Christ wept over the bankrupt leadership of Jerusalem, he declared, "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" However he continues: "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matt. 23:38-39). Even the promise, "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it" (Matt. 21:43) follows the quotation of Ps. 118:22 where v. 26 declares, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" (cf. Matt. 23:38-39). Further consider Luke 21:24, "Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," also the compelling argument of 11:1-32.

Again we encounter an attitude toward unbelieving Jews, still retaining a covenant relationship with God while dispersed in unbelief (Hos. 3:4-5), that ought to be a model for all Christians, in much the same way as we ought to lovingly act toward unbelieving relatives.

b. From ignorant zeal, v. 2.

Zeal is the dynamic of sincerity, yet both characteristics lead to running adrift amidst dangerous shoals of error when there is no direction by means of the rudder of substantial knowledge (Prov. 19:2). So from personal experience Paul testifies, "I bear witness about them [national Israel] that they are ceaselessly zealous for the God of Abraham; however such enthusiasm is void of direction by means of comprehensive knowledge about this gospel of the righteousness by faith which I desire for them." "Zeal" itself is neutral, so that it is a quality of the Lord Jesus (John 2:17), the pagan populace of Ephesus (Acts 19:34), and particularly unconverted Paul (Acts 22:3; 26:5, 9; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:6). Here he describes that religious mania which lacks discrimination. As John Stott writes: "The proper word for zeal without knowledge, commitment without reflection, or enthusiasm without understanding, is fanaticism. And fanaticism is a horrid and dangerous state to be in."[4] In fact it is a close cousin of bigotry!

Rather the validation of zeal is "knowledge" or ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis, an intensive form of γνώσις, gnōsis, meaning a more mature, profound compre- hension of the saving grace of God rather than that which is merely superficial and basic (cf. 1:28; 3:20). The absence of such spiritual discernment results in "learning" while "never [being] able to come to the knowledge [ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis] of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7). Naked zeal in religious pursuits will be counterproductive; the only

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[2] R. C. H. Lenski, *Romans*, p. 646.

[3] According to Barrett, Morris, though 57-58 A.D. is commonly held.

[4] John Stott, *Romans*, p. 280.

zeal that counts is the zeal of faith and the zeal that faith produces. As Toplady has written:

> Could my zeal no respite know,
> Could my tears for ever flow,
> All for sin could not atone;
> Thou must save, and Thou alone.

c. From human righteousness, v. 3.

"For not knowing [ἀγνοέω, agnoeō] about God's [saving, faith] righteousness" while retaining comprehensive Bible knowledge, v. 2, means that Israel was willfully "agnostic" due to a monumental misconception in the light of revealed, inscripturated truth. Certainly the Jews were aware of God's essential moral righteousness, but they had blinded themselves to "the righteousness of faith," 9:31-32; 10:6, the faith of Abraham and David, 4:3-8. As a consequence, Israel set about "to establish [lay a foundation of] their own [righteousness]," a whole system whereby faith and works were amalgamated, and the sacrifice of Christ rendered unnecessary. Thus, when confronted with "the [saving/faith] righteousness of God," or when "faith [righteousness] has come, . . . when the fulness of time came, [and] God sent forth His son" (Gal. 3:25; 4:4), then "they [Israel] did not subject themselves [aorist of ὑποτάσσω, hupotassō, "to rank under,"] to the righteousness of God." That is, they would not "submit themselves [with the obedience of faith]" to their saving Messiah. Rather, in "stumbling over a rock of offense," 9:32-33, the Jews repudiated Christ (Luke 19:14; John 19:15), God's incarnate revelation of pure saving grace, and clung to their own man-centered scheme of religion, the error of Galatianism, a broken reed that would pierce them through with many a sorrow (Is. 36:6-7).

2. Salvation by Christ's righteousness, vs. 4-5.

The conclusion of v. 3 injects the *historic* fact of "the righteousness of God," an event preceded by a dispensation whereby "we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed" (Gal. 3:23). However, now that Christ has come, "the righteousness of God [faith] has been revealed," 1:17, that is, "now that faith [the righteousness of faith] has come, we are no longer under a tutor [the law]" (Gal. 3:25). Therefore, and this is the point now to be emphasized, in the course of God's salvation plan in history, Moses has come to a point of concluding fulfillment whereby, to allude to John the Baptist's humble confession, "He [Christ] must increase, but I [as representative of the passing Old Testament economy] must decrease" (John 3:30).

a. Culmination in Christ's fulfilling righteousness through faith alone, v. 4.

We expand in translation this definitive statement[5] concerning Christ and the law as follows: "For Christ is the culminating end [τέλος, telos, of the law

[5] Cranfield describes it as "clearly one of the fundamental theses of Pauline theology as a whole, since, in whatever way it is taken, it is obviously a decisive statement concerning the relation of Christ and the law." *Romans*, II, p. 515. Likewise Moo.

administration of Moses, that is for those who in believing embrace the gospel administration of the righteousness of faith alone in Christ."[6] An alternative expanded translation would be: "For Christ is the culminating end of the corrupt abuse of the law by the Jews[7] that more correctly leads to justification, that is for those who in believing embrace the righteousness that is solely through faith and as a result continue to submit to the moral administration and law of Moses."[8] The significant difference here concerns whether the law of Moses has ongoing usefulness in the sanctification of the Christian. There are three key issues to be considered here.

The meaning of "law," which for most commentators is the law of Moses, is more specifically the Mosaic administration or institution that includes the moral law or ten commandments, as the context of 9:31, 10:5 seems to plainly indicate. The meaning of "end" or τέλος, telos, in an emphatic position, could be, (i) "termination/end in time" (I Cor. 15:24) being most predominant, or (ii) "goal/end completion" (I Tim. 1:5), or (iii) "fulfillment/result" (Rom. 6:21), and in combination. Hence, most likely Christ's coming has brought about the end of the Mosaic administration, both its right and wrong use, yet not in a detached sense since the Son of God has instituted a new era for which Moses was both preparatory and a stimulus (Gal. 3:23-26). So Moo well states: "Paul is implying that Christ is the 'end' of the law (he brings its era to a close) and its 'goal' (he is what the law anticipated and pointed toward). The English word 'end' perfectly captures the nuance; but if it is thought that it implies too temporal a meaning, we might also use the words 'culmination,' 'consummation,' or 'climax.'"[9] So Matthew 5:17 closely parallels this understanding of "the end of the law": which in 7:12 is described as "holy and righteous and good." Christ did not come "to abolish [the law] but to fulfill," not "to disannul but to bring full realization"[10] through the supplanting of "the ministry of death and condemnation" by means of the transcendently more glorious "ministry of the Spirit and righteousness" (II Cor. 3:7-9).

Thus the new administration has become inaugurated through "the righteousness of faith" superceding circumcision through which entrance was made into the whole of the old administration of Moses (Acts 15:5, 11). However, we hasten to

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[6] For detailed grammatical support of this rendering, refer to Moo who translates, "Christ is the *telos* of the law, with the result that there is (or with the purpose that there might be) righteousness for everyone who believes," rather than as the NASB, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." *Romans*, 636-8, also Cranfield.

[7] This is the language of Calvin, *Romans*, pp. 284-5. However, Murray comments here: "Paul is speaking of 'law' as commandment, not of the Mosaic law in any specific sense but of law as demanding obedience, and therefore in the most general sense of law-righteousness as opposed to faith-righteousness." *Romans*, II, p. 51.

[8] As Walter Chantry describes this point of view, "the New Testament binds the Ten Commandments upon Christian consciences." *God's Righteous Kingdom*, p. 114, being directly contradicted by John Bunyan who writes, "I may not, will not, cannot, dare not make it [the law of God] my savior and judge, nor suffer it to set up its government in my conscience; for by so doing I fall from grace, and Christ Jesus doth profit me nothing (Gal. 5:1-5)." *Works*, II, p. 388.

[9] Moo, *Romans*, p. 641.

[10] This is Gary Long's excellent translation. *Biblical Law and Ethics: Absolute and Covenantal. An Exegetical and Theological Study of Matthew 5:17-20.* p. 25.

be reminded that the "righteousness" which faith looks to is exclusively that of Christ. This must be kept in mind as "faith" predominates through to v. 13. While righteousness has ever been the requirement of God for His personal creation, it has ever been provided only through faith. It was available to the pre-Israel generation through faith alone (4:9-11; Heb. 11:4-7), likewise to Israel throughout its history even though it added a works principle to faith, and beyond to the Gentiles who more readily grasped the principle (9:30-31). The principle of "righteousness by faith" or free grace nullifies the supposed instrumentality of law in the transformation of the unholy to the holy, yet the law according to its most comprehensive meaning, retains its rightful place. "[T]he Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane" (I Tim. 1:8-9). For this reason, the Law "was added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19).

To sum up, Moo explains that,

> [Paul] is picturing the Mosaic law as the center of an epoch in God's dealings with human beings that has now come to an end. The believer's relationship to God is mediated in and through Christ, and the Mosaic law is no longer basic to that relationship. But Paul is *not* saying that Christ has ended all 'law'; the believer remains bound to God's law as it now is mediated in and through Christ (Gal. 6:2; I Cor. 9:19-21). Nor is he saying that the Mosaic law is no longer part of God's revelation or of no more use to the believer. The Mosaic law, like all of Scripture, is 'profitable' for the believer (II Tim. 3:16) and must continue to be read, pondered, and responded to by the faithful believer.[11]

b. Exclusion of Moses' righteousness requiring legal obedience, v. 5.

Here is explanation of v. 4, and specifically how "Christ is the end of the law."[12] The free quotation of Leviticus 18:5 is intended to describe the *modus operandi* of the Mosaic administration that Christ has supplanted. That is, under the Law, "you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD" (Lev. 18:5). While Murray declares this to be, "an adequate and watertight definition of the principle of legalism," nevertheless he then proceeds to assert that these words, "do not find their place in a legalistic framework but in that of the grace which the [Mosaic] covenant bespoke."[13] This understanding rests heavily on a strict understanding of Leviticus 18:5. However the apparent sense is akin to the contrast of 9:30-31; 10:3, while the use again of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12 seems to conclusively indicate that Paul is describing a legal as distinct from a faith proposition. The key here is the expression concerning the man who, "*practices* [aorist of ποιέω, poieō] the

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[11] Moo, *Romans*, p. 642.

[12] Cranfield succinctly states that, "without much fear of contradiction: (i) the γάρ indicates that either v. 5 by itself or the whole of vv. 5-8 is thought of as being in some way explanatory of v. 4; (ii) there is a contrast between v. 5 and vv. 6-8 (hence the δὲ in v. 6); (iii) the verse contains a quotation from Leviticus 18:5.

[13] Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 51-52. Refer to his Appendix B, pp. 249-51 for an extended defense of this interpretation, which upholds the concept of "grace in law." Barth and Cranfield have a similar perspective. Morris sits on the fence, while Calvin, Lenski, Luther, Moo, Stott, assert that Paul describes a legal rather than a faith righteousness.

righteousness which is based on law," which is so obviously antithetical to Paul's repeated emphasis on "the righteousness based on *faith*," v. 6. Such zeal for legal living through which the righteousness of God might be attained, by means of bold human initiative, will be described with the use of hyperbole in vs. 6-7.

Here again, Paul is contrasting the administration of Christ, v. 4, with that of Moses, v. 5. So in vs. 6-7, the zealous faith and works administration will be contrasted with that of faith alone righteousness in vs. 8-13. Here we are faced with two opposing world views, not merely a slight gospel variation. Luther comments:

> Nothing but faith can accomplish this [salvation], for it puts out the eyes of all wisdom of the flesh, causing men to know nothing, to be prepared to be taught and led and to hear promptly and to give in. For God does not require a magnitude of good works but the mortification of the old man. And he is not mortified except through faith, which humbles our own feeling of self-importance and makes a person subject to that of another. For the whole life of the old man is concentrated in the feelings, mind, or wisdom and prudence of the flesh, just as the life of a serpent is in its head. And so when the head is crushed, the entire old man is dead. As I have said, what causes this is faith in the Word of God.[14]

3. Salvation by faith righteousness, v. 6-13.

The forgoing understanding of v. 5 accentuates the dominant thrust of vs. 6-13, namely justification by faith alone, "for all those who believe, for there is no distinction" (3:22). The contrast between "the one who works" and "the one who does not work, but believes" (4:4-5) receives further prominence While Paul's concern for faithless Israel will be regathered at v. 14, for the moment his passion for the essence of gospel purity finds yet another carefully reasoned eruption. The repeated emphasis here on "faith" all the more nullifies the error of both Galatianism and Roman Catholicism.

a. It is *accessible* to all, vs. 6-10.

While for Paul "faith" presupposes its glorious saving object because he is so intent on upholding the unalloyed character of saving grace, there are periodic reminders of the specific focus of faith in Christ. Here we are exposed to the wondrous truth that a man does not have to labor to reach out to God, wherever He may be; rather "the Son of Man has *come* to seek and to save that which was lost" (Matt. 19:10), with the result that "He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). Therefore, human exertion in a religious quest, the scaling of heaven or searching of the depths, is not necessary; the sole requirement is faith in the "publicly portrayed" Christ (Gal. 3:1), "the Man whom He [God] has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 18:31).

(1) As negatively illustrated by Moses, vs. 6-7.

There is an intended contrast here between "Moses" who "writes" in v. 5 and "faith" who "speaks" in v. 6. Here are two opposite revelations, the former concerning human salvation activity that is feverish and zealous, the

[14] Luther, *Romans*, 25, p. 407.

latter concerning salvation rest through faith in the accomplished activity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole analogy of "ascent" and "descent" is reminiscent of Ephesians 4:7-10; it is also possible that Paul may have in mind Moses' ascent and descent on Mt. Sinai when he received from God the tables of the law covenant.

(a) Not by ascending to heaven, v. 6.

An expanded translation reads: "But the righteousness of God that proceeds from and is grounded solely upon faith in Christ speaks quite differently from the tenor of Moses as represented by the allusion to Leviticus 18:5 just quoted. Therefore, according to the grace orientation of Deuteronomy 9:4-6,[15] do not respond in your heart toward salvation with the works/activist orientation reflected in Deuteronomy 30:12 where Moses describes the difficulty of ascending to heaven (cf. Prov. 30:3-4; Isa. 14:12-13). That is, don't think of salvation as a task that you have to initiate by scaling heaven so as to bring Christ down upon earth to die for you!" Such human endeavor is not only impossible, but also unnecessary since God declared to Israel, "But the word is very near you" (Deut. 30:14); so now the revelation of the gospel of Christ is likewise accessible to Jew and Gentile without the contribution of human righteousness. When man contemplates, "What must I do, what effort must I expend to be saved?" he needs to hear God's gospel message, "I have already done it all. Believe and be saved."

(b) Not by descending to the abyss, v. 7.

Further in expanded translation, "Do not respond in your heart toward salvation with the works/activist orientation reflected in Deuteronomy 30:13 where Moses describes the difficulty of crossing the ocean, which is analogous to descending into the abyss of death. That is, don't think of salvation as a task that you have to initiate by personal descent through the portals of death so that you might call upon Christ to rise from the dead so as to save you!" Why? Because Christ has already risen from the dead. Again, sovereign and gracious initiative has accomplished a complete saving work. In vs. 6-7 we have the natural man's religious efforts exemplified. He must not only seek God, wherever He may be found, but also be energetic in his religious efforts to a spectacular degree; his quest for God must be impressive. Whereas God declares: "Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, who are far from righteousness. I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off" (Isa. 46:13).

[15] Moo rightly draws attention to the fragment of Deuteronomy 9:4, "Do not say in your heart," cf. 8:17, which, in the larger context of vs. 4-6, describes God's gracious covenant faithfulness, and supports the contrasting legal righteousness view of Romans 10:5. *Romans*, pp. 650-51.

(2) As positively applied from Moses, vs. 8-10.

In each of these three verses "mouth" and "heart" are prominent due to the stimulation of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:14. The "heart" is the vital organ, representing a man's personal/mental/moral core, where salvation is rooted, while the "mouth" is the expressive instrument of the converted "heart." It is significant that the state of the heart must inevitably express itself. If every action has an equal and opposite reaction, then every truly converted child of God will manifestly respond when the heart is renewed, even as ignition leads to radiation, as germination leads to the sprouting forth of shoots, buds and flowers. As Paul writes in II Corinthians 4:14, quoting Psalm 116:10, "But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,' we also believe, therefore we also speak."

(a) The *preached* word of faith is near for mouth and heart, v. 8.

The personification of "the righteousness of faith" is identical with v. 6, and again in contrast with v. 5. The quotation here of Deuteronomy 30:14 follows on from vs. 12-13 just cited, concerning which v. 11 has declared, "this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach." Hence Paul concludes with the same point here, namely that right now "the word" τὸ ῥῆμα, to rēma, which more specifically is "the word of the faith," τὸ ῥῆμαΦτῆς πίστεως, to rēma tēs pisteōs, is readily accessible and plain. As the Word from God via Moses had been taught to the Hebrews at Sinai and consequently had lodged in their souls, so Paul infers that the saints at Rome, both Jew and Gentile, have likewise received the preached word. "Word" or ῥῆμα, rēma, here, also vs. 17-18, is infrequently used by Paul, and it is distinguished from λόγος, logos, or "the objective record," as "the proclaimed gospel message." Such preaching, that Paul and his companions have been occupied with in Rome, is of "the word that calls for faith."[16] Israel longed for life in the carnality of Egypt, whereas life from God was immediately available through faith; the prodigal son sought life in the far country, whereas life from his father was immediately available through faith. Barrett adds: "Faith, as a divine possibility, is an immediate possibility. That which man might seek in heaven or hell in vain is at his side. Faith alone is what God seeks, and that he himself provides."[17]

(b) The *offered* word of faith is near for mouth and heart, v. 9.

The assumption is, according to v. 8, that faithful preaching has resulted in the truth of the gospel lodging in the soul; yet there has been no embrace of faith. For some this received message is "foolishness" (I Cor. 2:14), while for others it is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). The conditional offer here is,

[16] Ibid. p. 657.

[17] Barrett, *Romans*, p. 199.

according to A. T. Robertson, third class, or "undetermined, but with the prospect of determination."[18] The order concerns confession that results from the renewed heart, whereas v. 10 deals with the renewed heart that results in confession. To "confess," ὁμολογέω, homologeō, means to say the same thing, that is to express agreement with, to declare, avow, (cf. I Tim. 6:12-13; I John 1:9). Specifically, the voiced agreement from the heart is that "Jesus [is] LORD," that is deity (I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:9-11), as opposed to saying that "Caesar is LORD." Such confession results, at the same time, in submission to the sovereign authority that this understanding of Christ's deity demands. However, implicit here is the body of doctrine that leads to this conclusion that "Jesus [is] LORD," namely the whole gospel whereby Jesus Christ, "was delivered over [to death] because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification," 4:25. Paul is not describing a two-tier mode of conversion, but rather the expectation that faith in the heart will bloom; faith incognito is not a soft option. Haldane comments: "Confession of Christ is as necessary as faith in Him, but necessary for a different purpose. Faith is necessary to obtain the gift of righteousness. Confession is necessary to prove that this gift is received. If a man does not confess Christ at the hazard of life, character, property, liberty, and everything dear to him, he has not the faith of Christ."[19]

(c) The *operative* word of faith is near for heart and mouth, v. 10.

Whereas in v. 9 the witness to the word lodged in the heart is emphasized, here the process that incorporates faith and confession is explained. As if to offer clarification, Paul returns to the fundamental centrality of faith alone (present tense) that results in righteousness, 4:13; 5:17; 9:30; 10:6. Again, the resultant effect of faith is confession (present tense) that results in future, fulfilled salvation. Thus faith, in all of its focused simplicity, in all of its renunciation of self and works of any kind, in all of its singular apprehension of Christ's substitutionary righteousness, in all of its acknowledgment that salvation is wholly of the Lord, yet must be distinguished from the counterfeit and validated by its fruit (Jas. 2:26). Again, true faith will inevitably manifest itself.

b. It is *universal* to all, vs. 11-13.

From v.6 on, in contrast with a legal righteousness, faith alone in the accessible, imminent word of the gospel results in free justifying righteousness. But whereas faith alone is the sole operative principle for the guilty sinner, that is all that he has to do, there is at the same time an inherent universal principle that excludes human distinctions. If faith *alone* justifies, then *all* who have the faculty for faith are accountable for it *alone* being solicited. The issue here is not personal ability,

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[18] A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar Of The Greek New testament*, p. 1016; also *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, IV, p. 389.

[19] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 516.

or the reception of the gift of faith, or identification of vessels fitted either for mercy or destruction. The sole concern of Paul is the ready availability of the gospel for mankind without distinction. Therefore a universal solicitation of faith from all of mankind is plainly implicit, though as vs. 14-15 indicate, this call to believe presupposes the preaching of the gospel to begin with.

(1) The Scripture invites whoever believes, vs. 11.

Isaiah 28:16 was more fully quoted in 9:33, whereas here a partial quote assumes the object of faith to be "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." The emphatic thrust concerns, "whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." The addition by Paul of "whoever" or "everyone" πᾶς, pas, is legitimate extrapolation, supported by Joel 2:32 quoted in v. 13, that prepares the way for v. 12. Barrett adds: "In the back of his [Paul's] mind, the dominant question is still, Why have the Jews been rejected? And a major part of the answer to this question is (see ch. 11), In order that the gospel may be preached to *all*, Gentiles as well as Jews. Paul proceeds to emphasize this."[20] The Apostle's heritage of narrow, bigoted Judaism must have heightened his subsequent wonder at the universality of the gospel.

(2) The Lord is rich toward Jew and Greek, v. 12.

"For there is no distinction" positively refers to both Jew and Gentile being equally recipients of the riches of grace through Christ, that is according to the sole requirement of earnest faith. Romans 3:22b uses the identical expression except that negatively both Jew and Gentile are equally sinners in the sight of God. Thus God is the one God of both Jews and Gentiles, "who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith" (3:29-30). Here the operative term is "faith," or "calling on Him," where ἐπικαλέω, epikaleō, means "calling on the Name of the Lord," as v. 13 confirms. This is the exclusive name of Jehovah/Yahweh which is here identified with Jesus. Implicit here is the readiness of God, specifically God the Son who in v. 9 is designated as Lord, to mercifully heed the cry of either Jewish sinners or Gentile sinners. Such willingness is amply demonstrated in Jesus Christ's kind reception of the Roman Centurion (Matt. 8:5-13), the Syrophoenician woman (Matt. 15:21-28), as well as his appreciation of the mercy that the widow of Zarephath and Naman the Syrian received (Luke 4:25-27). Here the wealth of divine compassion is demonstrated in terms of depth, not simply universal breadth.

(3) The Scripture invites whoever calls, v. 13.

The quotation here of Joel 2:32 recalls Peter's use of this same text at Pentecost when he addressed "men of Israel"(Acts 2:21-22). Of course Joel's exhortation to "call on the name of the LORD" was with reference to Jehovah/Yahweh, while here, as with Acts 2:21-22, it clearly means to "call [believe] on the name of the Lord [Jesus Christ]" (cf. Acts 4:12) who is, as

[20] Barrett, *Romans*, p. 202.

God the Son, that same LORD. Here is universal availability that brings universal accountability without the assumption of universal ability. The "whoever" or "anyone/any person" relates to the "all" of v. 12. The particularity of 9:16, 18 ought not to cloud the universal offer that is plainly indicated here.

So Spurgeon, fully convinced of particular election and redemption, preached concerning this verse:

> Do you say, 'I am excluded. Surely, you cannot mean that he would save me?' Hark you; it says, 'Whosoever' — 'whosoever' is a great wide door, and lets in big sinners. Oh, surely, if it says, 'whosoever,' you are not excluded if you call — there is the point. . . . Oh! I would to God I might know that some soul could lay hold on this promise! Where are you? Are you standing away among the crowd there, or sitting here in the body of the hall or in the topmost gallery? Are you feeling your sins? Do you shed tears in secret on account of them? Do you lament your iniquities? Oh! take his promise —'Whosoever (sweet whosoever!) — whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Say thus. The devil says it is of no use for you to call; you have been a drunkard. Tell him it says, 'Whosoever,' 'Nay,' says the evil spirit, 'it is of no use for you, you have never been to hear a sermon, or been in the house of God these last ten years.' Tell him it says, 'Whosoever.' 'No,' says Satan, 'remember the sins of last night, and how you have come up to the MUSIC HALL stained with lust.' Tell the devil it says. 'Whosoever,' and that it is a foul falsehood of his, that you can call on God and yet be lost. [21]

B. Israel needs salvation from obstinacy, vs. 14-21.

In line with vs. 2-3, 16, 19, "they" brings the focus back to national Israel. The accessibility of the word being "near you, in your heart and mouth," and thus this availability for "calling on the name of the Lord," vs. 11-13, has brought accountability. However, a further aspect of the nearness of the gospel message concerning "the word of faith" is that it requires "preaching" v. 8, even as Paul's ministry epitomized. Indeed in the history of Israel the inscripturated word was to be proclaimed, whether by parent in the home (Deut. 6:6-7), or prophet and priest in the temple and synagogue. The context of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 previously considered is that of Moses making proclamation to the Israelites as distinct from mere recommended reading. In other words, God reveals that mere literary availability is not enough. There must be preaching, as Paul now makes clear. Dare we suggest then that, in these more recent centuries of the abounding printed page, and with ready acknowledgment of the great blessings that literature distribution has brought through missionary outreach, yet preaching of that printed word must have the greater prominence.

1. Israel has need of the preached gospel, vs. 14-15.

The logical sequence here of four questions is not what might be expected; an evangelistic perspective would suggest that sending leads to preaching, then hearing, then faith, then calling on the Lord. Instead Paul provides the opposite order so that the focus is upon the sent preacher.

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[21] C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, "Seeking Souls," III, Sermon 140, pp. 454, 6.

a. The necessity of *faith*, v. 14a.

From the assertion of v. 13 comes the necessity of faith, which probably means agreement with propositional, biblical, gospel truth. In other words, there must be genuine agreement with the truth that Jesus Christ is the Savior, that there is an invitation for the sinner to call on this Savior for salvation. But more than believing this, there must be the smitten lamb's cry or call for mercy to the Good Shepherd. There is a vast distinction between knowledge of the gospel and casting your soul upon it, even as there is a difference between going to hell or heaven.

b. The necessity of *hearing*, v. 14b.

However, before faith lays hold of the truth with agreement, it must first be heard with understanding. There must be the broadcast of gospel truth on the same waveband as the receiver. There must be distinct communication in a "known tongue [language]" since "if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for the battle?" (I Cor. 14:8-9). There will be recognition and reception of a coherent message about biblical reality.

c. The necessity of *preaching*, v. 14c.

However hearing is vain if there is nothing to hear. Hence there must be "heralding," κηρύσσω, kērussō, that is proclamation, preaching, but specifically the message of Christ that is preached. In Paul's day there were few books, no video, audio media; personal declaration was everything. But is the personal element so vital today? History would indicate that there has been no revival without the primacy of personal preaching. Other means are useful, but all have a degree of remoteness about them. Whereas the preacher is an ambassador speaking on behalf of his King, not simply a truth mediator.

d. The necessity of *sending*, v. 15.

Here is what distinguishes the authentic Christian preacher from the false (Jer. 14:14; 23:21; 27:15), that is his authoritative commissioning, his being *sent* by divine appointment, ἀποστέλλω, apostellō, cf. 1:1, 5. Lloyd-Jones explains that,

> preaching is never something that a man decides to do. What happens rather is that he becomes conscious of a 'call.'" He goes on to give five elements of this "call" being, 1. a consciousness within the human spirit, 2. encouragement from others, 3. a concern for others, 4. a constraint or compulsion, 5. a sense of unworthiness. He further adds: "[A] man who feels he is competent, that he can do this easily, . . . has never been 'called.' . . . The man who is called by God . . . so realizes the awfulness of the task that he shrinks from it.[22]

So Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 as support for the preaching office. With an *a fortiori* sense, as captive Judah in Babylon was to rejoice at the messengers announcing the good news of deliverance, so New Testament gospel messengers are even more delightful. Thus allusion may also be made to Paul and his associates as

[22] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, pp. 104-7.

preachers, v. 8, for the word of the gospel is not only near, but also preached to the Jew as was always his custom in a new region, as well as the Gentile. However, he was all too aware of the rejection in general that he experienced, and so he responds in vs. 16-21.

2. Israel has shunned the preaching of Isaiah, vs. 16-17.

Remember that Paul the preacher, v. 8, in upholding the primacy of preaching, is very much recalling his own experience of being called to proclaim (Acts 9:15). At the same time, like every faithful herald, he appreciates the divide that separates him from his congregation which only Spirit wrought faith can bridge. How often he would pour out his heart to the Jews with an expectant passion only to receive a scornful rejection. Many a time he pondered, with a sorrowing and incredulous heart, the riddle of such stark unbelief that God's covenant people so resolutely maintained; such contemplation inevitably led him to the recollection of Israel's scandalous past according to Scripture.

a. Faith then was to be in the preacher's report, v. 16.

There is a strong contrast here with the significant role of the preacher described in v. 15. "However, Israel as a whole did not respond with obedient faith [ὑπακούω, hupakouō, cf. 1:5; 16:26] in the preached gospel," even though a remnant did. There has been preaching and hearing, even as Isaiah rhetorically lamented, literally, "who has believed that which is to be heard" (Isa. 53:1); but there has been no faith, and thus no revelation of the saving arm of the Lord (John 12:36-38). Thus the course of Israel's history has been marked with unbelief until Pentecost. Even then the response was relatively small when compared with the overall population.

b. Faith today is to be in the word of Christ, v. 17.

So the missing yet vital element is faith, and Paul is anxious to analyze the question of responsibility in this regard. Hence, in parallel with v. 14, faith is predicated upon hearing, while hearing is predicated upon exposure to "the word of Christ [ῥήματος Χριστού, rhēmatos Christou]," which is the content of the preaching of v. 14. Therefore, in the light of Israel's entrenched unbelief, the implied question might be put colloquially, "Did Israel really hear what God was proclaiming? Their endemic unbelief might lead one to believe otherwise."

3. Israel has heard the word and is accountable, v. 18.

Like v. 16, Paul uses another strong adversative; his question using a double negative is in fact an emphatic denial: "But surely, in no way could it possibly be said that they [Israel][23] did not hear [the word of Christ]?" Such a thought is emphatically rejected. Proof of Israel's accountability is the use of Psalm 19:4 by way of logical extension rather than exact interpretation. This verse, being representative of vs. 1-6, describes

[23] Calvin and Haldane believe that the Gentiles are described here, especially in view of the quotation of Psalm 19:4, though the broad context as well as most commentators, including Alford, Barrett, Cranfield, Lenski, Moo, Morris, Murray, Stott, would seem to be against this.

the universal testimony of natural revelation to the glory of God, specifically the extensive "loud" witness of the "silent" heavens. Therefore the witness of the gospel is similarly universal. That is, Israel has heard the gospel since "their voice," that is of preachers, "has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." Murray writes: "Since the gospel proclamation is now to all without distinction, it is proper to see the parallel between the universality of general revelation and the universalism of the gospel."[24] Even by the time of c. 55-8 AD as Paul writes, the gospel has spread throughout the universe of Judaism (Acts 1:8; 2:8-11; 19:10).

4. Israel has known the word and is accountable, vs. 19-21.

As with v. 18, a similarly structured question is asked that, using a double negative, indicates an emphatic denial. Thus, by way of expansion, "Although Israel heard the facts of the word of Christ, that is the gospel inclusive of both Jew and Gentile, did they actually know [comprehend] about that which their ears received?" Again, this suggestion is definitely rejected, and proof follows from the words of Moses and Isaiah that focus on the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's saving purposes. Thus Israel is fully accountable for its strident opposition to the saving righteousness of God which is through faith alone for Jew or Gentile, cf. vs. 12-13.

a. The Law revealed God's provocation of Israel to jealousy, v. 19.

The quotation of Deuteronomy 32:21 draws upon the preceding context of vs. 15-20 where Israel "forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation. . . . [Israel] neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth. . . [Israel] provoked Me to anger with their idols." Consequently, God incorporates the Gentiles, "which is not a nation" alluding to Hosea quoted in 9:25-26, in His gospel intentions so as to provoke Israel to jealousy, cf. 11:11, 14. This provision of grace to the Gentiles that stimulates a jealous response from the Jews is well illustrated in the parables of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Such riling of the Jew nevertheless has his salvation as God's ultimate intent, 11:28-31. The point is that Israel is not ignorant of the gospel of free grace; it is accountable for its blatant unbelief.

b. The Prophets revealed God's seeking of the Gentiles for salvation, v. 20.

The quotation of Isaiah 65:1 is said to be "very bold," that is forthright in its declaration of God's graciousness toward the Gentiles when compared with the stubborn rebellion of His covenant people described in v. 2.[25] The thought is similar to 9:30 where the Gentiles "who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness." So here the Gentiles who "did not seek Me, . . . did not ask for Me," yet were confronted with God freely presenting Himself to them. Stott rightly describes this as "dramatic imagery for grace, God taking the initiative to

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[24] Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 61.

[25] Clearly Paul contrasts the Gentiles in Isaiah 65:1 with the Jews in v. 2. However, many scholars, including Delitzsch, consider Isaiah 65:1, in context with ch. 64, as a reference to Israel, which Moo describes as the majority view. Contra are Alford, Lenski, Stier, Young.

make himself known."[26] To recall the thought of vs. 6-8, God does not have to be sought either in the heights of heaven or the depths of hell; rather He is "near" because He has determined to make Himself near, to "come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

c. The Prophets revealed God's endurance of recalcitrant Israel, v. 21.

Here, as with v. 19, "Israel" clearly means the nation as a whole, but particularly that greater unbelieving proportion. There is intentional contrast with the preceding thought, namely that "the word of Christ," so graciously presented to unclean and relatively responsive Gentiles, yet is so vigorously rejected by "kosher" Jews. The quotation of Isaiah 65:2 portrays an exceedingly forbearing God with arms outstretched, and, from a human perspective, intolerable contempt from the redeemed of the Lord. Having "heard" and "known" concerning the extensive grace of God, the Jews are utterly without excuse. Thus in terms of failure, Israel's qualification is total. Murray adds: "The perversity of Israel, on the one hand, and the constancy and intensity of God's lovingkindness, on the other, are accentuated by the fact that the one derives its character from the other. It is to a disobedient and contradicting people that the outstretched hands of entreaty are extended. The gravity of the sin springs from the contradiction offered to the overtures of mercy."[27]

So the vital question now concerns God's ultimate response. Does He break or keep covenant with Israel? If God saves a people, is it possible for them to be finally lost? Romans 11 provides an unequivocal answer.

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[26] Stott, *Romans*, p. 289.

[27] Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 63.

CHAPTER XIII

ROMANS 11:1-36 - THE GOSPEL AND ISRAEL'S SALVATION

In the history of human kind, there is one race that stands out above all others with regard to resilience in the face of persecution and unstoppable existence; it is plainly the Jew, whose very name is synonymous with the most malicious slander and persistent vilification that any group of people has ever experienced. We have already maintained that Paul was decidedly pro-Semitic in spite of the intense persecution which he, "a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1), "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5), frequently faced from his fellow co-patriots; at times he was not beyond responding with intense indignation (I Thess. 2:14-16), yet love for his "brethren according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3) proved to be unquenchable. If ever an opportunity presented itself for Paul to renounce unbelieving Israel once and for all it would be at this juncture where the argument of chapter 10 has so conclusively demonstrated the accountability of the Jew for his blatant rebellion against the light of the gospel. A similar situation presented itself in 2:28-29 where we were told that, "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God." Surely at that point the extinction of national Judaism could have here been affirmed once and for all. But we immediately read: "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect." So here at the commencement of Romans 11 we find another passionate endorsement for the national descendents of Abraham that has aroused intense investigation in challenging anti-Semitism and a-Semitism, both racial and theological, at their roots.

During the Nuremberg Trial of the Nazi war criminals in 1945, one of the most despicable of all of these unsavory defendants was Julius Streicher, a man obsessed with hatred for the Jews. In the course of his defense he audaciously quoted the rancorous, anti-Semitic writings of Martin Luther, concerning which the Luther scholar, Jaroslav Pelikan, has called for frank acknowledgment that this animosity was simply beyond defense.[1] However, we ought not to think that the German Reformer's attitude was distinctive. Another important Luther Scholar, Heiko Obermann, also concluded that "all of the great figures of the [Reformation] age, as diverse as they were on almost every other issue, stood united as anti-Jew" thus providing "a point of continuity from medieval to modern society."[2] Hence the Reformers were but participants in ongoing antipathy, toward conceding any God-acknowledged status for the Jew, that had originated in the early church and been fostered, especially since Constantine, on through the Medieval centuries. Thus *Calvin Theological Seminary* Professor, David E. Holwerda writes:

> From the early days of the Church the opinion that the Jews had been disinherited as a result of their unbelief was widely held. Many believed that the Jews' role in the history of redemption had come to an end. Already in the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr, in his famous *Dialogue with*

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[1] Clark M. Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People?* p. 101. "Luther's last sermon, preached a few days before his death, importunately appealed that all Jews be driven from Germany," p. 102.

[2] Eugene J. Fisher, "Anti-Semitism and Christianity: Theories and Revisions of Theories." *Persistent Prejudice: Perspectives On Anti-Semitism*, edited by Herbert Hirsch and Jack D. Spiro, p. 23.

> *Trypho*, argued that Christians, not Jews, were the children of Abraham, those who formed the new nation that would inhabit the Holy Land during the millennial reign of Christ. God's covenant with Abraham was in effect established with Gentile Christians, not with Jews. The Jews had been excluded from the purposes of God. This expressed view became dominant for centuries in the Church, and the Reformation did not significantly change it.[3]

Certainly the most notorious example of such early anti-Semitic acrimony comes from the fourth century "golden-mouthed" expositor and Bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom. From a series of sermons entitled, "Eight Orations Against The Jews," Catholic scholar Edward Flannery provides the following quotations:

> How can Christians dare 'have the slightest converse' with Jews, 'most miserable of all men' (Homily 4:1), men who are '. . . lustful, rapacious, greedy, perfidious bandits.' Are they not 'inveterate murderers, destroyers, men possessed by the devil' whom 'debauchery and drunkenness has given them the manners of the pig and the lusty goat.' . . . '[T]hey have surpassed the ferocity of wild beasts, for they murder their offspring and immolate them to the devil' (1:6). . . . Indeed Jews worship the devil; their rites are 'criminal and impure;' their religion is 'a disease' (3:1). Their synagogue, again, is 'an assembly of criminals . . . a den of thieves . . . a cavern of devils, an abyss of perdition' (1:2, 6:6).[4]

Not surprisingly, Chrysostom understood, concerning Romans 9-11, that "[T]he event of Christ and the New Covenant for the Gentiles have divested the Jews as a people of any special standing before God."[5] In a similar manner, for Augustine, "Judaism is simply relegated to the latter [non-elect] category, and its status in salvation-history assigned to the pre-Christian past."[6] So we better appreciate the similar estimate of the sixteenth century Augustinian monk of Wittenberg born of a shameful legacy within the Catholic church.

However, while we might ponder the course of western history had their been a different estimate concerning the future of Israel according to Scripture, and thus a more respectful attitude toward the Jew, nevertheless there has been a lineage of Christians that has evidenced a more considerate, indeed Pauline appreciation of the Hebrew people. While acknowledging the hard-heartedness of the Jew to this day and the jeopardy of his soul on account of unbelief, yet they have maintained an appreciation for the legacy that the Christian has nevertheless inherited from this people, and that chiefly being salvation by a Jew according to a Book that is largely Jewish. Because of love for this Jewish inheritance, an inevitable result has been interest in Jewish evangelism, as originated in Scotland during the last century that resulted in the conversion of such Hebrew Christians as Alfred Edersheim, David Baron, and Adolph Saphir.[7] Horatius Bonar, in being associated with this movement and at the same time convinced of a national future for Israel according to Romans 11, wrote the following verses based on v. 1.

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[3] David E. Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel, One Covenant or Two?* p. 2. He draws upon Jeffrey S. Siker's significant book, *Disinheriting The Jews*, which documents the gradual change that overtook the early church whereby the inclusion of the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:17) was supplanted by the concept of the exclusion of the Jews.

[4] Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish Of The Jews*, pp. 50-51.

[5] Peter Gorday, *Principles Of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9-11 in Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine*, p.129.

[6] Ibid., p. 333.

[7] This thrust sprung from the interest of Robert Haldane and Thomas Chalmers in the Jews, and included the involvement of Robert Candlish, Robert Murray M.Cheyne, and Andrew and Horatius Bonar. During that period the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Jews, founded in 1809, was flourishing and received the support of C. H. Spurgeon. David L. Larsen, *Jews Gentiles, & The Church*, pp. 128-9.

Forgotten; no that cannot be;
All other names may pass away,
But thine, MY ISRAEL, shall remain
In everlasting memory.

Forgotten! No, that cannot be;
Inscribed upon My palms thou art,
The name I gave in days of old
Is graven still upon My heart.

Forgotten! No, that cannot be;
Beloved of thy God art thou
His crown forever on thy head,
His name forever on thy brow.

Forgotten! No, that cannot be:
Sun, moon, and stars may cease to shine,
But thou shalt be remembered still,
For thou art His and He is thine.[8]

It is important to note that the last stanza of this hymn makes reference to Jeremiah 31:31-37 in which God makes a new covenant with "the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" in which "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people," vs. 32-34. This promise is certified to be as sure as the fixity of the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, vs. 35-37, and it would seem that Paul has this same conviction regarding the certainty of national Israel's restoration and regeneration since, "they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:28-29). Ultimately the issue here is one of God's covenant faithfulness in fulfilling His promises, and that without redefining the term "Israel." Thus Haldane, in commenting on v. 27, concludes: "Israel, then, shall be restored to their own land, which God gave for an everlasting possession. God hath said that He will make a full end of all the nations whither He had driven them, but He will not make a full end of them (Jer. 46:28; Ezek. 37: 21, 25). 'And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God' (Amos 9:15)."[9]

However, even amongst Christians of this twentieth century, who are indebted to the Reformation for the recovery of the gospel of the free grace of God, there has been vigorous disagreement with regard to the future destiny of Israel. And this writer has no hesitation in declaring, from the outset, his strong commitment to God's promise of a regenerated nation of Israel in Palestine under its acknowledged Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is believed that a prima facie reading of Romans 9-11 will readily lead to this conclusion; it is only when a preconceived system of doctrine becomes dominant, such as in the magisterium or teaching authority of the Catholic Church, or entrenched covenant theology, or denominational/creedal loyalty, that an alternative interpretation is desperately sought. Nevertheless, this being asserted, let one practical test be put to this whole contentious situation, and that is the question as to how one looks today upon Jews in general, and consider how it measures up to Paul's indomitable love that was sorely tested yet never diminished. In meeting a confessing Jew, does one secretly regard that individual as a non-person, as self-deceived, as nationally beyond hope in the sight of God, as wholly deluded in terms of claiming to be a biblical Jew, as having carnal Zionist hopes,

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[8] Horatius Bonar, in *Knight's Master Book Of New Illustrations*, p. 337.

[9] Robert Haldane, *Romans*, p. 552.

while one outwardly gives token and polite acknowledgment to that person being a Jew? Or does one yet regard this person as an exile, an unbelieving family member, "a kinsman [through Christ] according to the flesh" (9:3)? Surely this latter response is closer to the Apostle's attitude and that which caused him to so vehemently respond: "Perish the thought; let it be unthinkable to suggest that God has rejected His people." Cranfield is right to designate Paul's dogmatic exclamation here as being not only reflective of national Israel, but also the theme of this chapter.[10]

A. Israel's rejection by God is denied, vs. 1-10.

In vs. 1-10 we have an introductory unit in terms of Paul's climactic purpose expressed in vs. 11-36. It establishes the fact that within Israel as a whole, only a remnant is presently saved, yet this in itself proves that God has not forsaken His people, even in an anticipated inclusive sense.

1. The proof of a remnant in Israel, vs. 1-6.

Paul probably expects his readers to recall earlier remnants in the history of Israel, such as that which returned from the Babylonian captivity (Jer. 50:20) as well as that which in the future will be regathered after being scattered abroad (Jer. 23:3). This fact of Israel's continuance in the past, in spite of considerable defection from the faith with resulting divine discipline, is good reason for confidence in Israel's future.

a. Paul is an Israelite, v. 1.

An expanded translation reads: "Therefore I raise a critical question in the light of such abject unbelief [10:21]. God has not rejected His people, the present unbelieving nation of Israel, has He? Surely not! No, a thousand times, no! For I myself am presently an Israelite, that is a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe and land allocation designated as Benjamin." This denial is most emphatic, though the reason for such certainty is connected with the term for Israel as "His people," those belonging to God through covenant and purchased by God through redemption (Deut. 31:6; I Sam. 2:22; I Kings 6:13; Ps. 94:14). The point is that God will not cast aside, in a final sense, those who belong to Him since His integrity would be at stake. In the light of the preceding context, Paul has more in mind than the present remnant, and that is the salvation of the larger national body, his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:3; cf. 10:1).

We believe that Paul is not speaking here of himself as an "Israelite" in the present tense as replacement theology might postulate, that is by claiming to be a secular Israelite without believing in any divine, covenantal, national recognition. Therefore we must conclude that here is a declaration that supports the relevant comment of John McRay that, "the book of Romans in its first century context, . . . will demonstrate that Paul was not a 16th century Protestant Reformer but a first century Jewish Rabbi who accepted Jesus as his savior."[11] Hence while Paul

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[10] Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 542, 574-77.

[11] Cited by Joseph Shulam with Hillary Lecornu, *A Commentary on The Jewish Roots of Romans*, p. vi. McRay is Professor of New Testament and Archaeology at Wheaton College Graduate School.

includes himself with the remnant, yet at the same time he identifies with the nation of Israel "according to the flesh" presently comprised of "Israelites, to whom belongs [present tense] the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises" (9:3-4). In boasting of being a Benjamite, as were Saul, and Jeremiah, Paul identifies with a distinct people whose strategic territory included Jerusalem.[12]

There are those who in reality deny Paul's affirmation here while using language that is ambiguous. Some like Lenski and Pieters agree with Paul simply because the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus had not yet taken place; however, after 70 AD they would affirm that God has finally finished with Israel and the Jews. Others such as Calvin support Paul by using "Israel" inclusively of believing Jews and Gentiles in the church, though again national identity has been lost. Still others such as Hendriksen believe that Paul only has in mind a remnant to the end that does not have any national standing in the sight of God. All of these views refuse to let the meaning of "Israelite/Israel" have its contextual national sense as do Cranfield, Haldane, Moo, Morris, Murray, and undoubtedly associated with this perspective is a dominant, regrettable Reformation legacy concerning the Jews that lacks any passionate Pauline regard (9:3).[13]

b. Israel was foreknown, v. 2a.

Paul returns to the thought of election when he exclaims: "God has not rejected [spurned/permanently pushed aside] His people who in eternity past He foreknew [foreordained] according to pure forelove." Here the meaning of προσγινώσκω, proginoskō, describes God's love in eternity past for His people themselves, and not simply things about them according to prescience. This word is used to describe Christ being "foreknown" (foreordained, KJV) in I Peter 1:20, presumably by the Father. Jeremiah was similarly "foreknown/ foreloved" even before he was born (Jer. 1:5). So here Paul has the same thought concerning the Father's love for Israel which Amos 3:2 describes: "You only have I chosen [known] among all the families of the earth." Further, such "foreknowledge" is

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[12] To suggest, as some do such as Bruce, Stott, that the New Testament and Paul in particular are silent with regard to the land is to ignore the common Hebrew appreciation of "the covenants [and] . . . the promises" (9:4), the legacy of "the fathers . . .[and] the gifts and the calling of God" (11:28-29) as well as here being a "Benjamite" that would never dream of making such a disassociation. Refer to Walter Kaiser, "The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6-12)," *Israel, The Land And The People*, ed. H. Wayne House, pp. 209-27. Johannes Munck, in his classic work *Christ & Israel*, p. 12, notes that, "There," ἐκεῖ, in 9:26 is "a natural designation for Palestine, in order to imply that the Gentile nations will gather in Jerusalem and the Messianic kingdom will be established there (cf. 11:26)."

[13] Consider Albertus Pieters who in his *The Seed Of Abraham*, pp. 132-4, as a professor of Dutch Reformed convictions, writes that following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the subsequent Jewish lineage was comprised of illegitimate usurpers. Thus, "their program [turned out to be] the exact opposite of Christ, and in this unholy endeavor they were only too successful, with the result that untold calamities were brought down upon themselves and upon the whole world. Ignorant that their separateness from the rest of the world was in the divine purpose temporary, they strove to render it permanent. Thus that which had been in itself good and holy became through their error a source of poison in the life of the world; and 'The Jew' became the great persistent international problem." Thus replacement theology has its unpleasant consequences, whereas, in general, those who see a divine future for national Israel, especially premillennialists, have been respectful and kindly toward the Jew even in his unbelief. For proof of this assertion refer to David Rausch, *Fundamentalist Evangelicals And Anti-Semitism*, pp. 206-8.

surely intended to prompt recollection of that particular first link which attached to the "golden chain" of God's predestinating purpose in 8:28-30. In the light of this, Israel's participation in such a course determines that rejection, as proposed here, be regarded as quite impossible.

However, is this "foreknowledge" concerning "His people" with respect to the nation as a whole or the elect remnant within the nation? "His people" here is a restatement of this expression in v. 1 where the context is surely with reference to "a disobedient and obstinate people" described in 10:21.[14] Thus Murray comments that, "Israel had been elected and peculiarly loved and thus distinguished from all other nations."[15] There is no twist of meaning from the nation to the elect. What follows with regard to evidence of a past and present remnant is offered as proof concerning the divine perpetuity and future of the nation. God, in eternity past, loved a nation comprised of twelve tribes having a destiny guaranteed by covenant (Gen. 13:1-3; Ezek. 37:21-22). It is the fixity of the Abrahamic covenant that guarantees a present and future existence for Israel as a nation, even as vs. 28-29 affirm.[16]

c. Elijah represents a past remnant, vs. 2b-4.

Following the victorious contest with the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, and immediate drought relief, Elijah flees from the fury of Jezebel in Jezreel to a cave at Mt. Sinai (I Kgs. 19:8-9). He had earlier felt alone (I Kgs. 18:22), received divine relief from hunger and depression (I Kgs. 19:4-8), and yet again becomes depressed feeling solitary in the prophetic ministry. All of Israel seems lost; divine intervention has not resulted in significant repentance.

(1) He is blind to God's remnant, vs. 2b-3.

In despair, Elijah pleads with God "against Israel," because of seeming total spiritual bankruptcy (I Kgs. 18:21), which contrasts with the Gentile kindness of the widow of Zarephath (I Kgs. 17:8-16), so that he seeks divine judgment. The quotation of I Kings 19:14 may suggest the belief of Elijah that the day of final rejection has come. Jewish tradition indicates that: "The

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[14] Morris explains that "Paul is referring to 'the people he foreknew', not 'those of his people whom he foreknew.'" *Romans*, p. 399. Likewise Moo, Murray.

[15] Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 68.

[16] It is astonishing therefore, to note that a number of Calvinist writers and commentators, while strenuously upholding the unconditional nature of the New Covenant, that is the security of its participants according to particular electing grace even though subject to sober warnings, yet are reluctant to grant the same characteristic to the Abrahamic Covenant with regard to Israel's early participation that also included sober warnings, and especially the unconditionality so plainly revealed in Genesis 15:1-21. William Cox writes that, "In Genesis 15:6 we read that Abraham 'believed God' and that it (Abraham's belief) was counted unto him for righteousness. Belief here was a condition (understood). . . . the Old Testament promises to Israel were conditional and . . . Israel failed to observe these conditions." *Biblical Studies In Final Things*, pp. 50-55. Yet this author's Calvinism would certainly confess the conditionality of faith in the New Testament to ultimately subsume under the biblical truth that saving faith is a sovereign bestowal. Also refer to Crenshaw and Gunn, *Dispensationalism, Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow*, where Appendix Three, "Conditional and Unconditional Covenants," pp. 321-25, does not so much as mention Genesis 15, let alone consider the vital ramifications of the sovereignty of God here.

misdeeds of the people had swelled to such number that they could no longer reckon upon 'the merits of the fathers' to intercede for them; they had overdrawn their account. When they sank to the point of degradation at which they gave up the sign of the covenant, Elijah could control his wrath no longer, and he accused Israel before God."[17]

(2) He is informed of God's remnant, v. 4.

So Paul confidently reasons: "But what is the divine authoritative response [χρηματισμός, chrēmatismos, oracle]? 'I have kept for myself seven thousand men [households?] who have not bowed the knee to Baal' [I Kgs. 19:18]." Within the comprehensive nation of Israel in the flesh God had preserved, according to His gracious working, a remnant, even larger when women and young people are included, comprised of Jews in flesh and Spirit. Elijah had a vision that was too exclusive since in those days God had neither forsaken Israel nor abandoned the Abrahamic covenant. Hence there is implicit hope here for Israel in the present and future.

So in times of declension, we may be like Paul at Corinth who appears to have been so depressed and fearful that the Lord found it necessary to visit him and declare, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10

d. Paul describes a present remnant, v. 5-6.

"In the same manner[18] there has also come to be, at the present [now time], a remnant according to God's gracious choice." The word λεῖμμα, leimma, means "that which is left over," such as II Kings 19:4 where the besieged Jerusalem is a "remnant" when compared with the nation as a whole, the northern kingdom having already gone into captivity.

(1) It is according to gracious election, v. 5.

The point here is not the meager size of the present believing Jewish population, but the very sovereign origination and maintenance of this small Christian community. Now, as in Elijah's time, the remnant's divine existence is attributed solely to the grace of God. This being so, and with support from the vehement denial of v. 1, then implicit is the certain future of national Israel since it is ultimately dependent upon this same elective will. Hence the divine purpose, according to unconditional covenant promise, is bound to triumph over those who are "a disobedient and obstinate people," 11:21. Such an accomplishment is described by Ezekiel as follows: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, . . . I will give you a new heart, . . . I will put

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[17] Louis Ginzberg, *Legends Of The Bible*, p. 588.

[18] The use of οὕτως, houtōs meaning "in the same manner" or "even so" should be noted in view of its disputed meaning in v. 26. Here there is an obvious temporal association concerning the past era of Elijah and the "now time."

My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, . . . I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life" (Ezek. 36:25-27; 37:5).

(2) It is exclusive of law works, v. 6.

Here, with regard to the past and present remnant, conditionality is not a factor, and therefore it will not be a factor when the "transgressing" multitude comes to "fulfillment" v. 12. As Haldane comments, "It was an unconditional choice, resulting from the sovereign free favor of God."[19] Faith here is not eliminated, nor is it elevated, but rather subordinated to the pure grace of God. And the pure grace of God must eliminate works of any sort, but especially the thought of a little worthiness or gratitude from unbelieving Israel.

From a broader perspective, it is abundantly plain that for Paul both Jew and Gentile, individually and collectively, are saved according to God's gracious election that will not admit of human works in the most absolute terms. Grace, which for Paul becomes here a synonymous term for election, and works are mutually exclusive. Again, means of grace are not eliminated, but neither are they elevated to a point where man retains the initiative over God. Here we are faced with the question as to whether the dominion of grace, the reign of grace will rise above the paralysis of sin that is so embodied in the nation of Israel as a whole. Such recalcitrance is further described in vs. 7-10 that raises the inevitable question of v. 11.

2. The proof of hardening in Israel, vs. 7-10.

These verses appear to recall the teaching of 9:18-24 that expounded upon God's hardening of Israel on account of its obdurate heart; the purpose of this reemphasis concerns the need of maintaining a focus on God as being in full control of Israel's ultimate destiny. Further, such a reminder, in conjunction with the ensuing prospect of national salvation, will only enhance the purity of grace that v. 6 has delineated.

a. The hardened nation of Israel according to Paul, v. 7.

We expand in translation: "Then what is the meaning of national Israel's ongoing state of unbelief in the light of the present remnant that exists solely on the basis of grace? Certainly in Israel's present zealous seeking of the law-principle of righteousness [9:31; 10:2-3] it has not attained that which it aspired to achieve. However the elect remnant did attain to the faith-principle of righteousness while the rest of the nation became hardened according to God's just intervention." Here Paul, from personal experience, clearly distinguishes between the nation of Israel as a whole and its components that comprise the elect remnant and the hardened remainder. And it is this larger part that he now emphatically describes as presently abandoned by God; yet the stage is at the same time being set for explaining the ultimate triumph of sovereign grace over "the rest," as well as "the remnant," when God "will remove ungodliness from Jacob," v. 26. How often Paul must have reflected upon, in his volatile Jewish opponents, that hardness of

[19] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 534.

heart which he formerly manifested. But then he would also have mused that if sovereign grace could save him, the chief of sinners, then there was similar hope for the nation of Israel as a general whole.

b. The hardened nation of Israel according to the Old Testament, vs. 8-10.

This montage of Scripture quotations incorporates the three major divisions of the Old Testament, the law, the prophets, and the writings,[20] and thus establishes the punishment of divine hardening with comprehensive authority.

(1) The testimony of the law, Deuteronomy 29:4; v. 8a.

Emphasis on the divine imposition of hardening upon Israel is indicated by Paul's turning of the negative, "the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear," into the positive, "God gave them . . . eyes to see not and ears to hear not." Even just prior to crossing the Jordan into the promised land, there is recollection of Israel's continuing dullness

(2) The testimony of the prophets, Isaiah 29:10; v. 8b.

Here the words "a spirit of deep sleep" are injected into Deuteronomy 29:4 and become "a spirit of stupor." Again, it is God who has appointed this comprehensive spiritual coma that includes the prophets; in particular there will be a national blindness to the Word of God (Isa. 29:10-12). However what God imposes in judgment is a result of accountable sinfulness so that the preceding v. 9 declares, "Blind yourselves and be blind."

(3) The testimony of the writings, Psalm 69:22-23; vs. 9-10.

In this psalm as a whole, quoted in the N.T. with reference to Christ's sufferings, David is deeply distressed on account of the assaults of his enemies. The fact that David laments, "I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons. . . . Those who sit in the gate talk about me, and I am the son of the drunkards," vs. 8, 12, indicates that his opposition is from "the rest" of the nation in general while he identifies with the faithful "remnant." Thus for Paul this prayer to God was answered in that the requested judgment became a fact of history. Note that these verses, describing, as Paul puts it: "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever," v. 10, immediately follow the Messianic reference of Ps. 69:20-27, cf. Matt. 27:34, 38. Thus the imagery of a "table becoming a snare," of "eyes being darkened," of "backs being bent," strongly suggests a divine subjection to suffering and humiliation that history has all to clearly demonstrated. Consequently we are poised at a most crucial point since this terrible divine consignment raises the inevitable question that was earlier raised in 9:6: "But it is not as though the Word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." Of course there the point was that a godly remnant remained within national Israel. But now we are

[20] Moo, *Romans*, p. 681.

concerned about the unbelieving "rest" of the nation. Has God abandoned the larger part of the nation forever? Romans 11:11-32 addresses this point.

B. Israel's stumbling at Christ is temporary, vs. 11-24.

The preceding stark definition of Israel's blindness, even as the church at Rome could so plainly observe, might lead to the belief that the nation as a whole had been finally abandoned by God. Further it would then be assumed that the saved Gentiles now constituted the new spiritual nation comprised of all races, including a Jewish remnant. Sadly the early Christian church, in embracing replacement theology, did eventually come to this conclusion, and with tragic consequences for the Jew.[21] Hence Paul most adamantly rejects such a denial of the promises given to the "fathers," 9:4-5; 11:28-29. What follows reveals how the dark night of Israel's present sojourn will give way to the bright day dawning when, "the Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob," v. 26.

1. God will bless the Gentiles to bless the Jews, vs. 11-15.

Here is a fourfold portrayal of a basic gospel theme, namely that national Israel, presently bound in unbelief, shall achieve salvation through their being prompted to jealousy by the saving of the Gentiles and ultimately through the resurrection power of God, vs. 11, 12, 13-14, 15. For Paul, while his own distinctive Gentile ministry is significant in this divine saga, yet his ultimate vision concerns the saving of Israel, "their fulfillment," and "life from the dead."

a. Portrayal one - Israel's jealousy through Gentile salvation, v. 11.

An expanded translation reads: "Therefore I raise a further critical question in the light of such ongoing abject unbelief [10:21]. National Israel did not trip/stumble and yet recover in its earthly pilgrimage so that a fatal, irrevocable fall eventually resulted, did it? Surely not! No, a thousand times, no! Bur rather through their transgression/unbelief salvation has come to the Gentiles for the purpose that the Jews be made jealous [10:19]." Simply put, while Israel's rejection has not been total, v. 1, now we understand that it has not been final. Thus when Jesus Christ declared, "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you [the nation of Israel] and given to a people, producing the fruit of it [the Gentiles]" (Matt. 21:43), it is eisegesis to suggest that this abandonment is permanent. Israel's "stumbling" v. 11, is "transgression" v. 11, is "failure" v. 12, is "rejection" v. 15, is "branches broken off, . . . the rich root of the olive tree" v. 17, which is on account of "unbelief" v. 20, which must surely be with regard to the rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Lord's Messiah, 9:32-33.

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[21] While the first century was dominated by the Jewish mother church at Jerusalem that acknowledged the inclusion of the Gentiles into the blessings of Abraham, during the second to the fourth centuries a change evolved so that by the time of Constantine the Jews were believed to have forever forfeited the blessings of Abraham that had now been inherited by the Gentiles. Refer to H. Wayne House, "The Church's Appropriation Of Israel's Blessings," *Israel, The Land and the People*, ed. H. Wayne House, pp. 77-110; Walter Kaiser Jr., "An Assessment Of 'Replacement Theology,'" *Mishkan* 21, (February 1994), pp. 9-20; Ray Pritz, "Replacing The Jews In Early Christian Theology," *Mishkan* 21, (February 1994), pp. 21-27; Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting The Jews*, 296 pp.

However, "salvation has come to the Gentiles" v. 11, which is "riches for the world" v. 12, which is "the reconciliation of the world" v. 15, which is "wild olive branches, . . . grafted into the rich root of the olive tree" vs. 17, 24, which is according to "God's kindness" v. 22, which is "to make them [the Jews] jealous" v. 11. In God's plan, the Gentile church does not supercede national Israel, but rather is instrumental in the restoration of the Jewish people to God. Notice the importance of the *purpose clause* here, "to make them jealous." But why? Obviously unbelieving national Israel is in mind, yet if this people has no future, this is meaningless, even worse, since it suggests a divine teasing of those who have been abandoned!

But specifically, how are the Gentiles intended to provoke jealousy amongst the Jews? The intensive παραζηλόω, parazēloō, cf. Deut. 32:21; Rom. 10:19, means zealous desire on account of acknowledged personal poverty, so that, "I will make them [Jews of the synagogue of Satan] come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you [Philadelphia Gentiles]" (Rev. 3:9). Clearly Paul feels a compulsion to contribute toward this process, v. 13-14; he must proclaim and demonstrate that with "a [foolish] nation without understanding will I anger you," 10:19, in a way similar to that of the elder brother becoming jealous at the rich grace being poured out upon the repentant prodigal (Luke 15:25-32). Thus the Jews are to become desirous of God's evident blessing poured out upon the Gentiles, not that they might become Gentiles, but fulfilled Jews under their covenant head and Messiah. David Larsen comments: "Christian love, instead of arrogance [cf. vs. 18, 21], ought to foster 'envy or jealousy' among the Jews for what Christians possess in Christ (Rom. 11:11). How frequently has this phenomenon been in evidence in Christian history or now?"[22]

b. Portrayal two - Israel's fulfillment through Gentile enrichment, v. 12.

An expanded translation reads: "For if the transgression of national Israel leads to the riches of gospel mercy being poured out *upon the world* at large, and their faith failure results in rich grace for the Gentiles, then how much more abundant will the nation of Israel's ultimate fulfillment be *for the world*." Paul uses the familiar a fortiori form of argument here, cf. 5:9, 10, 15, 17, from the lesser to the greater, so that the major question concerns how the lesser "faith poverty of national Israel" will become the greater "fulfillment"? The word πλήρωμα, plerōma, means "full measure" or "completeness" that can be understood either qualitatively or quantitatively.[23] The contrast with "the [large numbered] fullness of the Gentiles," v. 25 and implicit here, strongly suggests "the prospective large numbered fullness of the Jews."[24] That is the Jews will ultimately experience the "much more," πόσῳ μᾶλλον, posō mallon, cf. v. 24, fulfillment, that is national salvation (Ezek. 37:1-28; Hos. 3:4-5; Zech. 8:1-8; 12:10-14; 31:1-2; 14:9-11), including union with the remnant, that transcends the preceding blessing of the

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[22] David L. Larsen, "A Celebration of the Lord our God's Role in the Future of Israel," *Israel, the Land and the People*, ed. H. Wayne House, p. 319.

[23] Moo, *Romans*, p. 689.

[24] Johannes Munk, *Christ and Israel*, pp. 119-121, 132-136.

Gentiles. Thus Alford comments: "If then the *disgrace of Israel* has had such a blessed accompaniment, how much more a blessed a one shall *Israel's honor* bring with it, when His own people shall once more be set as a praise in the midst of the earth, and the glory of the nations."[25] The language of Paul hardly envisages a mere totality of the remnant, as Hendriksen suggests.[26] Then will be fulfilled the words of Christ: "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD'" (Matt. 23:38-39). As Barrett states: "Paul looks beyond the advantages conferred on the Gentiles by the unbelief of Israel to the far greater eschatological bliss which Israel's return will inaugurate."[27]

c. Portrayal three - Israel's provocation through Paul's ministry, vs. 13-14.

Aware of his enthusiasm for the glorious future rebirth of Israel, as well as most likely the large Gentile constituency of the church at Rome, the Apostle is careful not to disassociate his own distinctive calling from the present saving of Jews. In other words, in ministering to Gentiles, Paul constantly has evangelistic interest in mind for his kinsmen according to the flesh.

(1) It is glorious for Gentile ministry, v. 13.

As many today mischaracterize Paul's calling to the Gentiles as being detached from his former involvement with Judaism, so similar clarification is needed for the Gentile Christians in Rome. "Yes," says Paul, "I am an apostle of Gentiles." But further, "I boast and exalt in my [appointed] ministry, even as you are its fruit; nevertheless there is a greater goal in view here that you need to keep in mind. There is a transcendent purpose, going beyond your salvation, that I always have in focus." Thus he corrects "Gentile Christians [who] might appeal to Paul himself, 'the apostle to the Gentiles,' as further reason to disdain Jews and Jewish Christians."[28]

(2) It is provocative in Jewish evangelism, v. 14.

Expanded translation: "My Gentile ministry is fulfilled since by it I also have hope that it might provoke my kinsmen according to the flesh [9:3; I Cor.

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[25] Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, II, p. 403.

[26] "His [Paul's] words 'their fullness' pertain to the salvation not of a physical unit, 'the people of Israel'; but of the sum of all Israel's remnants." Hendriksen, *Romans*, p. 368. This author is committed to the denial of any national restoration and future for Israel; refer to his *Israel and the Bible*, 63 pp. Thus he finds a difficulty here using tenuous exegesis in that the "remnants" hardly reflect the greater glory of Israel that Paul so enthusiastically describes as being future, vs. 17-32. Further, if the "their transgression" refers to *national* Israel, as v. 11 indicates, then surely "their fulfillment" refers to a similar and related comprehensive body of people, that is, national Israel. Of the same amillennial exegesis are Bavinck, *The Last Things*, pp. 104-107, and Hoekema, *The Bible And The Future*, pp. 142-145. Back of this opinion is an overriding presupposition that the Christian church has superceded the nation of Israel as the one people of God. Thus the concept of the nation of Israel being saved according to Romans 11 is quite inadmissible. For further refutation of this interpretation, refer to v. 26.

[27] C. K. Barrett, *Romans*, p. 214.

[28] Moo, *Romans*, p. 691.

10:18] and result in some of them being saved." In other words, Paul desires that Gentiles, in all of their godless paganism, might embrace the God of Abraham through faith in Christ, and thus stimulate carnal Jews to be partakers of the same rich blessing through the same means. The expression, "and save some of them" indicates that the carnal Jew, outside of Christ, is lost. But who are the "some of them"? Surely in the light of the future hope of national Israel's "fullness," v. 12, here Paul has in mind present additions to the remnant that are "no more than a modest contribution."[29] However, "[s]uch conversions of individual Jews, though few in number, are a precious foretoken of the salvation referred to in v. 26."[30] Thus for Paul, his pro-Semitic stance is unfading since "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew," v. 2, and especially because "the natural branches [will] be grafted into their own olive tree," v. 23, at a future time when "all Israel will be saved," v. 26, with a glory that shall eclipse "the fullness of the Gentiles," v. 25. Here Paul participates in the prelude, the theme of which subsequent centuries have ill-maintained; but he always has in view God's grand finale.

d. Portrayal four - Israel's resurrection through Gentile evangelism, v. 15.

The use again of the *a fortiori* form of argument returns us to the same basic proposition of v. 12, yet with added emphasis here on divine initiative. The downside is the nation of Israel's "rejection," ἀποβολή, apobolē, its being "cast away" (cf. Ezek. 37:11), which is parallel with the cause of this abandonment, that is the "transgression" of unbelief. As a result comes "the reconciliation of the world," which is parallel with "riches for the world," certainly not universalism, yet "a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9; cf. Matt. 24:14; 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:17; Col. 1:23). Consequently the up side for the nation of Israel is "their acceptance," πρόσλημψης, proslēmpsis, or "receiving," which is parallel with "their fulfillment," which is more wonderfully described as nothing less than "life from the dead." While it is grammatically possible that this last expression could refer to physical resurrection of the Gentile and/or Jewish world, yet the ongoing emphasis on the destiny of Israel suggests radical national conversion, after the manner of the language of 6:13.[31]

Added support for the future national conversion/resurrection of Israel is found in Simeon's prophecy that, "this Child [Jesus Christ in his arms] is appointed for the

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[29] Morris, *Romans*, p. 410. Also Moo, Murray, so that Paul does not anticipate that he will usher in the "fullness."

[30] Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 561.

[31] Barrett, Cranfield, and Moo support a literal general resurrection that climaxes national Israel's national conversion. However Murray provides more convincing proof that a figurative expression is used, Romans, II, pp. 82-84. Nanos comments: "Even though Paul is bringing the gospel to gentiles it is in the service of Israel's eventual restoration, which will be incomparably superior to the present circumstances that have been benefiting the gentiles, even as life is incomparably superior to death." *The Mystery of Romans*, p. 248. Even amillennialist Hoekema comments, "'Life from the dead' does not refer to a literal resurrection; these words are probably used as a figure to describe the happy surprise that will be ours when Jews who have been rebellious turn to the Lord," though we do not agree with his further comment that, "[t]here is no need however to restrict this acceptance to a period of history at the end-time." *The Bible And The Future*, p. 143.

fall and rise [resurrection, ἀνάστασις, anastasis, of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34). Furthermore, the expression "life from the dead" being descriptive of national Israel's future spiritual resurrection is strongly suggestive of Ezekiel 37:11-14 where the vision of the valley of dry bones is interpreted.[32] As Spurgeon comments: "I wish never to learn the art of tearing God's meaning out of his own words. If there be anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage [Ezekiel 37:21-22] – a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualized away – must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land, and that a king is to rule over them."[33]

So Charles Simeon comments on Ezekiel 37:15-22:

> The Jews are spread in almost every part of the world. Their conversion to God being simultaneous in every country, it will attract the attention of all, and create a vast sensation through the whole world. The victories, too, which they will gain over all who shall oppose their establishment in their own land will yet further demonstrate, not only that God is with them, but that there is no other God but He. They will be struck, as Baal's worshippers were by the fire which descended from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice; and will exclaim, with wonder and amazement, 'The Lord, he is the God! The Lord, he is the God!' Instantly will multitudes, in every place, 'lay hold on the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we see that God is with you of a truth [Zech. 8:23].' In truth, it will be a signal to all mankind to acknowledge Christ as their Lord and Savior; and it will 'be as life from the dead' [Rom. 11:15] to the whole world.[34]

2. God will bless the Jews through wise cultivation, vs. 16-24.

Since 9:6, the overriding concern of Paul has been the vindication of God in the face of national Israel's continuing unbelief. While the remnant is reassuring in terms of proving God's ongoing covenant investment, 11:1-5, yet it does not fully satisfy with regard to God's original promise of great blessing to Abraham that is repeatedly ratified in the Old Testament. Hence, while many a man quits a difficult task, the burden of Paul is now to demonstrate God's resolve in the saving of national Israel (Gen. 18:14; cf. Phil. 1:6) as reflected by two Old Testament images in vs. 16-24 that will stimulate the climactic declaration of vs. 25-32. So that in spite of Gomer-like spiritual adultery (Hos. 3:1), all of the vicissitudes of human history, the conflict of the centuries in which the Jew has suffered unspeakable persecution, being "for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols" (Hos. 3:4), yet "the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days" (Hos. 3:5).

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[32] See Alford, *The Greek Testament*, II, p. 404, and John Gill who both make this same association.

[33] C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 582, pp. 536-37. W. J. Grier declares, in commenting on this chapter, that "[w]hen Ezekiel speaks of the people being restored to their own land, he gives us clear hints that we are not to take this literally." *The Momentous Event*, p. 35. However, when the literal meaning of Ezekiel 36 becomes an indisputable necessity concerning "the house of Israel" and "the land" and "the scattering," cf. vs. 16-20, 24-28, 33-36, the suggestion that Ezekiel 37 describes not Israel restored to the land, but believers collectively who inhabit a heavenly paradise, is hermeneutical schizophrenia.

[34] Charles Simeon, *Horæ Homileticæ*, IX, p. 474.

a. The analogy of Israel as a lump of dough, v. 16a.

Translation: "So if the firstfruit [ἀπαρχή, aparchē] is holy, the lump is also holy." The "firstfruit" is described in Numbers 15:17-21 as the offering of a cake made from the first grain obtained from the threshing floor in celebration of entering the land of promised abundance. Thus the consecration of this first production of dough meant that the whole remaining lump, the produce to follow, was likewise consecrated, as Leviticus 6:14-18 well indicates. The "firstfruit" represents the Abrahamic covenant or partriarchs[35] while the "lump" is the resultant Jewish nation, even as there is a parallel with the "the root" and "the branches" of the olive tree as is immediately described. Hence the "sanctification" of Abraham guaranteed the "sanctification" of the resultant nation, discipline and exile notwithstanding. Haldane puts it this way: "[A]s the lump is holy, through the offering of the first-fruits, so this is a pledge that the lump, or body of the nation, will yet be made holy."[36]

b. The analogy of Israel as natural olive branches, vs. 16b-24.

This section is dominated by Paul's expansion of the olive tree analogy. He intends to provide his most compelling reasons as to why national Israel has glorious prospects in spite of ongoing obstinacy in unbelief and dispersal in the face of Gentile dominion. In a word, the reason is "grace" through sovereign promise (4:13-16; 9:8). However, while this Gentile dominance continues, such privilege for saved barbarians should stimulate humble gratitude and loving respect for the severed natural branches rather than arrogance and conceit.

(1) The biblical analogy introduced, v. 16b.

The olive tree is symbolic of national Israel in the Old Testament, especially insofar as the members are branches united by one root and trunk, both with regard to rebellion (Jer. 11:16-17) and restoration (Hos. 14:4-6). This individual/corporate unity is similarly reflected by rocks hewn from a quarry (Isa. 51:1-2), and a holy seed that will sprout from the stump of an oak tree hewn down in judgment (Isa. 6:13). This leads us to the widely held belief that the "root" here is the patriarchs, and the Abrahamic covenant in particular, which grows natural branches, Jews, and engrafts wild branches, Gentiles.[37] Further, not only is the headship of Abraham through promise emphasized in 4:1, 11-13, 16-17, but 11:28 especially accentuates the fact that Israel's temporary abandonment is eclipsed by the nation being "beloved

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[35] This is the most common understanding which is derived from the more specific parallel of the analogy of the fig tree that follows.

[36] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 544.

[37] Alford, Bruce, Calvin, Haldane, Hendriksen, Hodge, Moo, Morris, Moule, Munck, Murray, Shedd, Stott. There are two other interpretations of the olive tree representation. First, the root is Christ who engrafts both Jew and Gentile, yet even Messiah is of the seed of Abraham (Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16). Paul still claims to be "an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham," 11:1, cf. v. 28, and this is his present mindset. Second, the root is the remnant of Jewish Christians, but this is unlikely since they are the remaining natural branches, v. 17. Furthermore, as Hodge points out, "[t]he Gentile Christians are not said (v. 17) to be grafted into the stock of the converted Jews, but as branches with them they are united to a common stock." *Romans*, p. 367.

for the sake of the fathers." Thus Murray comments: "This fact of consecration derived from the patriarchs is introduced here by the apostle as support for the ultimate recovery of Israel. There cannot be irremediable rejection of Israel; the holiness of theocratic consecration is not abolished and will one day be vindicated in Israel's fullness and restoration."[38] Surely this is the intent of Paul here in his emphasis upon the inevitable holiness of the branches. In other words, there is a prospective olive tree that shall be luxuriant in glory and splendor because of the Divine Orchardist/Cultivator.

(2) The ingrafting of the Gentiles, vs. 17-22.

Most likely Paul has in mind some Christians in Rome who have assumed that Gentile favor in the sight of God is elevation that has permanently replaced the nation of Israel, v. 19. The whole tenor of vs. 17-22 is warning to the Gentiles against vain presumption in this regard since they remain dependent upon the "root," v. 18.

(a) Wild branches replace natural branches, v. 17.

The severing of "some of the [natural] branches," indeed a high proportion of the branches (Isa. 6:13), portrays severe pruning by the Divine Orchardist/Cultivator due to fruitlessness (Matt. 3:7-10; 21:43; 23:38). Such destitution is the problem of Romans 9-11.

However, to magnify the grace extended to the Gentiles that ought to admit of no boasting, they are pictured as limbs of "a wild olive tree," that is "Greeks and barbarians," 1:14, "a nation without understanding," 10:19, that are "grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, v. 24; they are commoners married to royalty. To graft the natural into the wild was a known practice, whereas Paul describes the reverse procedure. C. H. Dodd's objection that here Paul exhibits the horticultural "limitations of a town-bred man," has been adequately answered by William Ramsay.[39] However, the point here is that the wild branches are engrafted so as to receive rather than provide benefit, v. 18, specifically "the rich root of the olive tree," that is "fatness," πιότης, piotēs. Surely this lavish spiritual nourish- ment is that promised through Abraham who was told by God: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Here we are introduced to the vital point that the Church is not a new creation that has supplanted Israel, but rather a derivative of the same stock of Israel, that is Abraham.[40]

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[38] Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 85.

[39] C. H. Dodd, *Romans*, p. 180. Ramsay, quoted by Munck, *Christ & Israel*, pp. 128-130, cites instances where the grafting of an uncultivated shoot into a fruitless cultivated tree is able to stimulate regeneration and fruitfulness.

[40] Walter Kaiser well addresses this issue as follows. "The most basic problem [with the major concepts of the relation between Israel and the Church] is that each begins with the church and then considers Israel from within the church, trying to fit the Jews within this framework. Each of these . . . [concepts] . . . fails to reckon with one or more of the following three primary assertions of Scripture:

(b) Wild branches receive needed advice, vs. 18-22.

The dominant issue that now concerns Paul is *not* the attitude of the Gentiles toward the grace of their engrafting so much as their attitude mainly toward the severed limbs of national Israel, v. 19, although the remnant later represented in 14:1-15:13, most likely as the "weak," cannot be excluded.

1) Shun arrogance before God, 18-19.

The "arrogance" of the Gentiles is κατακαυχάομαι, katakauchaomai, an intensive form of "to boast," or "to proudly declare," or "to assert superiority over," hence "to be arrogant *against* [the Jews] with proud zeal." As the Jews had earlier been warned about a distorted appreciation of their election (Deut. 7:7-8), so the Gentiles need a similar exhortation.

a) Arrogance toward the broken branches, v. 18.

Moo comments that, "Gentile believers were apparently convinced that they belonged to a new people of God that had simply replaced Israel,"[41] and consequently their derisive attitude was showing. Haldane adds that here is well described, "the [overbearing] spirit that has long prevailed among the Gentiles who profess Christianity. What marvelous ignorance, folly, and vanity, are often displayed even in God's people!"[42] However, while Israel is under discipline in the Lord's woodshed, Gentiles are to show them loving respect, even if the task is at times frustrating, though church history does not reflect a good record.[43] On the other hand the attitude of Paul, already considered in the introduction to Romans 9, becomes a model in terms of what is here commended. One scholar of this shameful period declares:

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1. The church is grafted into Israel, not Israel into the church.
2. The new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 was made with "the house of Judah and the house of Israel," not with the church. It is not a covenant made with all humanity, but all humanity may be grafted into it.
3. God has had a faithful remnant ever since the beginning of the human race. The church is that portion of the faithful remnant that was called out of the Gentiles, since Pentecost, to be grafted into the faithful remnant in Israel. There is a distinction between Israel and the church, but not a separation; there is a oneness in which distinguishable aspects of that oneness may be seen without implying or necessitating a division of identity or destiny." "An Epangelical Response," *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, eds. Blaising and Bock, pp. 360-361. Further read pp. 367-369.

[41] Moo, *Romans*, p. 704.

[42] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 546.

[43] A study of church history regarding the treatment of the Jews by Christians is vital at this point. Refer to Paul E. Grosser and Edwin Halperin, *The Causes And Effects Of Anti-Semitism*; David L. Larsen, *Jews, Gentiles, And The Church*; David Rausch, *A Legacy Of Hatred*; Clark M. Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People?*

> The Holocaust was, of course, the bitter fruit of long centuries of Christian teaching about the Jewish people. From the time of the gentile Church Fathers and the legal establishment of a triumphant ecclesiastical and philosophical control system with Constantine the Great, Christendom treated the Jewish people with contempt and taught contemptuously of them. . . . [T]he baptized gentiles succumbed to that wrong-headedness against which Paul had warned: they turned in jealousy and envy against the very root that bore them (Rom. 11:18).[44]

Surely the Gentile, in not being arrogant, in "continuing in the kindness of God," v. 22, is to allow grace received to be a stimulant of graciousness that is to be directed toward the unbelieving Jews, and thus promote jealousy, vs. 11, 14. It is well worth contemplating here how a Christian, whose eschatological system denies the existence of Jews in the sight of God since 70 AD, can adequately respond here in parallel with Paul.

The role of the Christian church in relation to the Abrahamic covenant is significant and humbling here since, contrary to popular opinion down the centuries, it originates out of Judaism and does not replace it. Here is the heart of the "mystery which for ages has been hidden in God" (Eph. 3:8-10; cf. Rom. 15:8-12; Eph2:11-13, 19; 3:6; Col. 1:25-27), namely the engrafting of the Gentiles *into* the stock of Abraham. Amidst all of the illustrious saints of the Bible, including Adam, Noah, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, and the Apostles, Abraham rises above them all in both the Old and New Testaments because of the singular call of God and his response of faith (Gen. 15:6-7).

b) Arrogance toward Gentile ingrafting, v. 19.

"Therefore you [the Gentile] will say," leads to a representation of proud self-importance: "But some [natural Jewish] branches were cut off for the purpose that I [even I the more evidently worthy Gentile] might exclusively be engrafted into the stock of privileged blessing in Abraham]." In view of the humble reminder of v. 18, the Gentile is now perceived as accepting his roots and yet still boasting in his replacement of the Jew. Paul did not write in vain here, as the shameful history of the main stream of thought issuing from the church fathers indicates. As Grosser and Halperin explain, Hilary, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Cyril, Augustine, etc. are,

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[44] Forward by Franklin H. Little, Chairman, Department of Religion, Temple University. Paul E. Grosser and Edwin G. Halperin, *The Causes And Effects Of Anti-Semitism*, p. xii.

> not bishops and fanatical monks or mendicant preachers, they are the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. . . . Their anti-Semitism just as their other writings had widespread profound and lasting impact. They bestowed a sanctity and respectability on anti-Semitism that survived the struggle between Judaism and Christianity of their times.[45]

2) Seek fear before God, vs. 20-21.

When Christians turn, ever so slightly, away from God, and focus upon their condition relative to others, there is the inevitable temptation to exude Pharisaic pride (Luke 18:11). So in Church history the Gentiles have frequently despised the Jews and sanctimoniously accused them of being "Christ-killers," as if they were far less guilty (Acts 4:27). Chrysostom declared: "The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the devil, their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon."[46]

a) Fear God's dealing with the Jews, v. 20.

By way of expanded translation: "In the main it is true what you say. The greater proportion of Israelites were faithless and consequently broken off from the olive tree. However, you are to stand upon faith that hopes in mercy rather than self-congratulatory posturing. Do not place yourself on a pedestal by having a high opinion of yourself, but rather fearfully consider your own status before God." As Israel's fundamental sin was "unbelief," 3:3; 9:32; 11:31; 15:31, so the Gentile is warned about proudly claiming immunity.

b) Fear God's dealing with the Gentiles, v. 21.

While God is partial in His elective purposes, He is impartial insofar as the requirement of faith is concerned. Hence faithlessness in Israel resulted in severance so that faithlessness amongst the Gentiles can expect identical discipline. Haldane adds that this warning, "appears to be a prophetical intimation of the apostasy of the great body of the professors of Christianity under the mystery of iniquity."[47] In other words, the fullness of blessing for the Gentiles will

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[45] Grosser and Halperin, *The Causes And Effects Of Antisemitism: The Dimensions Of Prejudice*, pp. 78-81.

[46] Ibid., p. 78.

[47] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 547.

end in apostasy while the apostasy of Israel will end in fullness of blessing, cf. vs. 22-26.

3) Sustain gratitude before God, v. 22.

Paul contemplates how God's dealings with both Jew and Gentile should cause us to ponder the polarity of His justice which is differently viewed according to the perspective of either faith or faithlessness. Both "goodness" χρηστότης, chrēstotēs, cf. 2:4, and "severity" ἀποτομία, apotomia, cf. 1:18, were manifest to Jew and Gentile, and comprise aspects of God's righteousness, that is His judging and justifying righteousness that originate in the Old Testament (Ps. 85:10; Hab. 3:2; Is. 46:12-13) and culminate in the righteous Christ becoming the believing sinner's righteousness (Rom. 3:26; I Cor. 1:30; I John 1:9).

Thus, up to the *present*, faithlessness amongst the Jews has resulted in severity, while faithfulness amongst the Gentiles has resulted in goodness. But regarding the *future*, if the Gentiles persevere in faith there will be ongoing goodness from God, though if they become faithless there will be severity poured out upon them even as the Jews have experienced. Thus Paul stresses the responsibility of the Gentiles in Rome lest they presume upon the sovereignty of God, though the conditional "if" clause here expresses probable fulfillment.

(3) The engrafting of the Jews, vs. 23-24.

As the olive tree analogy commenced with reference to Israel, and then focused on necessary warning for the Gentiles, so now we revert to the major concern of Israel's future destiny, that is the unbelieving nation as a whole apart from the remnant.

(a) The Jews can yet be engrafted, v. 23.

"And they [the unbelieving nation], if they do not continue [same present tense of ἐπιμένω, epimenō, as in v. 22] in unbelief," is the same type of third class conditional sentence expressing probable fulfillment as was in v. 22.[48] Hence, whatever conditionality is valid for Israel is equally valid for the Gentiles, though God's underlying elective purposes are also equally valid and will not fail.[49] Thus the probability is that "they [unbelieving Israel as a nation, not the remnant, cf. vs. 19-22] will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." Humanly speaking, Israel's condition is hopeless, even as is the case with any lost

[48] Refer to A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, IV, p. 397, also Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 289-90.

[49] It is astonishing to read the Calvinistic amillenialists who at *this* point emphasize conditionality whereas, in elsewhere vigorously upholding unconditional election especially with regard to the Gentiles, they are emphatic concerning the gift of faith and the perseverance of the saints. So Hendriksen, *Romans*, p. 375.

sinner or backslidden believer. However, "God is able to graft them [the unbelieving nation of Israel] in again [into the olive tree and root of Abraham]." That is, He has the sovereign power and covenant commitment whereby Israel as a nation can indeed be saved.

Haldane comments: "He [God] is able to make the dry bones live [Ezek. 37:1-14], and to restore the severed branches of the Jewish nation."[50] Here then is Paul's implicit denial that national Israel has been irrevocably cast aside, otherwise such a comment would be out of place. If God has previously determined that Israel has been permanently rejected as a nation, surely Paul would not imply the opposite in declaring that "God is able [has the power]" to save them," unless His power could not rise to conquer their unwillingness!

(b) The Jews can lay claim to being engrafted, v. 24.

This *afortiori* argument, from the lesser to the greater, seemingly injected to accentuate the truth of God's saving power in v. 23, also introduces a glorious prospect that will now be developed and reach a climax in vs. 26-27. Thus: "If you Gentiles were broken off from a wild olive tree and unnaturally grafted into a cultivated olive tree, then *how much more* is it likely that those severed natural branches [that is the nation as a whole] will be grafted back into their own olive tree?" Simply put, the Jews will not lose their national identity but rather return home from whence they came, that is the root of Abraham. Further, the apodasis suggests something even more glorious than that which the fullness of the Gentiles conveys. It is a future hope expressed with the future tense of ἐνκεντρίζω, enkentrizō, meaning to engraft. For this reason Paul here could not merely be referring to the remnant within Israel which has been engrafted on an ongoing basis; such a conclusion would be anticlimactic in the argument here whereas Paul anticipates something climactically, transcendently wonderful.

Thus Moo concludes concerning this exhortation for the Gentiles:

> The picture Paul sketches reveals the danger of the simple and popular notion that the church has 'replaced' Israel. For this formula misses the stress Paul places on historical continuity in the people of God. Paul suggests that the church, defined as the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ, is simply the name for the people of God in this era of salvation history as —'Israel' was the name of that people in the previous age. To be sure, the dual nature of OT Israel—both spiritual and national —complicates the matter, but in neither sense does the church simply 'replace' Israel. As a spiritual entity, Israel is organically connected to the church; and as a national entity, as Paul has made clear (11:1-2), Israel continues to exist as the object of God's care and attention.
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> What is particularly pernicious in the 'replacement' model is the assumption so easily made that 'church' = Gentiles. This assumption was apparently beginning to be made by Paul's contemporaries. And it has

[50] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 548.

> certainly been embraced by many Christians throughout history, contributing (albeit often inadvertently) to anti-Semitism that has too often stained the name of Christ. . . . The coming of Christ did not for him [Paul] involve ethnic subtraction, as if Jews were now eliminated, but addition, with Gentiles now being added to believing Jews. Paul's boundary for the people of God is a religious one—faith in Jesus Christ—not an ethnic one. We must not become so focused on the theology of Paul's teaching here that we miss its purpose: to criticize those of us who are Gentiles for arrogance toward believing and unbelieving Jews and to remind us that our own spiritual heritage is a Jewish one.[51]

C. Israel's hardening in unbelief is impermanent, vs. 25-32.

Since the beginning of Romans 9, the overriding concern of Paul has been the justification of God in His covenant dealings with the nation of Israel. Now a climactic thrust is reached that seals the dogmatic assertions of 11:1, 11. The emphasis upon the nation as a whole continues in large focus, especially since for Paul the Old Testament manifestation has ongoing New Testament significance. The evidence for this is best grasped by reviewing the eleven references to "Israel" in Romans 9-11, thus far in 9:6, 27, 31; 10:19, 21; 11:2, 7, here also in v. 25, and yet again in v. 26; in these the nation is always in view. Even the concept of the lesser remnant mirrors the remaining greater unbelieving portion that together comprise the nation of Israel as a whole, which is the exact meaning in verse 26.

1. The hardening of Israel will conclude, v. 25.

It is common for a too hasty attitude to focus on v. 26 because of its prophetic significance without giving sufficient weight to the preceding context. The reason for such intense and often impatient interest is that the major millennial schools of eschatology set their sails according to the place of Israel in their distinctive schemes. So Horatius Bonar writes: "[T]he prophecies concerning Israel are the key to all the rest. True principles of interpretation, in regard to them, will aid us in disentangling and illustrating all prophecy together. False principles as to them will most thoroughly perplex and overcloud the whole Word of God."[52] Even now it is vital to carefully study v. 25 since it really establishes the course of v. 26.

a. The exhortation of the brethren.

"For I do not want you to be ignorant/uninformed [ἀγνοεῖν, agnoēn], brethren, of this mystery, so that you will not be conceited/wise according to your own perception." Paul continues the thought of v. 25 concerning the greater apodosis, the much more glorious prospect of natural branches being engrafted back into the root of Abraham. But who does he address with a note of reprimand? Surely it is the proud Gentiles, already chastised, lest they think that world history will climax with their exaltation. There is wide agreement at this point; Moo

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[51] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 709-10. Here, along with the brief remark of Haldane previously noted, is an honest encounter with the shameful historic ramifications of Paul's teaching at this point that is uncommon amongst commentators.

[52] Horatius Bonar, *Prophetical Landmarks*, p. 228.

comments that Paul "leaves no doubt about what he wants his readers to learn from this mystery: to stop thinking so highly of themselves in comparison with Jews (v. 25a). We who are Gentiles should likewise take these verses as a reminder that we are only part of the great salvation-historical plan of God and that that plan has its climax in the salvation of Israel."[53] They are not to act with an "elder brother" attitude (Luke 15:25-32). Trench, in expounding the Parable of the Prodigal Son, explains: "[W]e Gentiles must not forget that at the end of the present dispensation all will be reversed, and that we shall be in danger of playing the part of the elder brother, and shall do so if we grudge at the largeness of the grace bestowed upon the Jew, who is now feeding upon the husks, far away from his Father's house."[54]

b. The revelation of the mystery.

What is this "the mystery," τὸ μυστήριον, to mustērion, which the Gentile believers need to comprehend? It is a revelation of God, previously undisclosed during the Old Testament dispensation, that has now been made known; it especially focuses on the inclusion of the Gentiles into the root of Abraham, as 16:25-26 confirms, without the ultimate exclusion of national Israel (cf. Eph. 3:3-10, which intimates revelation from Christ; Col. 1:25-27). Hence, this mystery is not the supplanting of Israel by the Gentiles, but rather the incorporation of the Gentiles followed by Israel's salvation, v. 26a. Thus the mystery includes the sequence of Jewish hardening, Gentile fullness, Jewish salvation.

c. The fullness of the Gentiles.

What then is this "fullness [τὸ πλήρωμα, the plēroma] of the Gentiles"? Of vital importance here is v. 12 where we saw that "the riches of gospel mercy [are] being poured out upon the world a large" (Matt. 24:14; Acts 2:17), and this is parallel with and yet outshone by the subsequent πλήρωμα, plēroma of gospel blessing that will come to the unbelieving nation. While a remnant of national Israel is presently being saved during the blessing of the Gentiles, yet there is an anticipated "much more fulfillment" that will unite and bless the nation as a whole. Luke 21:24 describes this same sequence in world history when, "Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until [ἀχρί, achri, temporal preposition indicating sequence] the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Thus at the end of Gentile blessing through the gospel, there will follow even greater fullness of gospel blessing upon the nation of Israel. This does not mean that no more Gentiles will be saved following this transition any more than there were no Jews saved before it.[55]

Hence πλήρωμα, plēroma means, "the [large numbered, but not elect totality] fullness of blessing" of the Gentiles when they "come in" to the kingdom of God's

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[53] Moo, *Romans*, p. 713. Also Barrett, Cranfield, Haldane, Hendriksen, Hodge, Morris, Murray, Shedd.

[54] R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 152. Cranfield makes a similar comment: "The order of salvation thus described marks significantly an inversion of the order in which the good news is preached according to 1:16 ('both for the Jew first and for the Greek'). *Romans*, II, p. 572.

[55] Refer to Murray, *Romans*, II, pp. 91-96 for the best consideration of this whole matter.

redeemed people. This fullness is reflected in the Parable of the Great Supper where the master, having been spurned by the initial invitees (Jews), instructs his slaves to give repeated invitations to the disreputable Gentiles: "Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them [the Gentiles] to come in, so that my house may be filled" (Luke 14: 23).

d. The partial hardening of Israel.

Thus "a large segment/part of Israel has become hardened/calloused [πώρωσις, pōrōsis]." Hence Israel here is imperfectly comprised of both "the remnant" and "the hardened part," though this present disjunction will eventually become a perfect union when "all" Israel is saved, v. 26. Such a radical change will take place in chronological order, "until," ἀχρί, achri, temporal preposition,[56] and hence following that time when "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." In other words, "I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep my ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (Ezek. 31:17-19; cf. 36:22-28). Then, as Spurgeon preached, "the nation of Israel . . . shall be effectually and permanently converted, the hearts of the fathers shall be turned with the hearts of the children unto the Lord their God , and they shall be the people of God, world without end."[57]

2. The salvation of Israel will come from Zion, vs. 26-29.

While Paul has already revealed that national Israel has a future day of glory which he designates as "their fulfillment," v. 12, "their acceptance," v. 15, their being "regrafted" into the olive tree, vs. 23-24, their hard-heartedness being ended, v. 25, now he is even more forthright that such salvation is covenantally inevitable and climactic in world history. While it is inferred that the engrafting of the Gentiles is through the saving work of Christ, the regrafting of Israel is now explicitly declared to be through "the Delivering One" (cf. I Thess. 1:10).

a. The Deliverer will save national Israel, v. 26-27.

The controversy that surrounds this verse is closely related to systems of eschatology that have espoused three main perspectives. 1. "Israel" here refers to the redeemed of the New Testament era who comprise the church, whether

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[56] Consider the use by Paul in 1:13; I Cor. 11:26; 15:25; Gal. 3:19; 4:2; Phil. 1:6 where a future change of circumstances is envisaged. Moo adds, "But decisive for this interpretation is the context, for Paul has throughout vs. 11-24 implied that Israel would one day experience a spiritual rejuvination that would extend far beyond the present bounds of the remnant ("their fulness" contrasted with "their defeat" in v. 12; their "acceptance" contrasted with "their rejection" in v. 15; the "holiness" of even the broken-off branches in v. 16; the hope that these branches might be grafted in again in v. 24)." *Romans*, pp. 717-8.

[57] C. H. Spurgeon, "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 10, p. 538, Sermon 582.

converted Jew or Gentile. Thus the Christian church has become the new Israel that has replaced the former Old Testament nation. This view of Calvin has diminished support because of obvious exegetical weakness. 2. "Israel" here refers to the totality of the saved remnant of national Israel 11:5, that, while being comprised of Jewish Christians, yet is merged with the church which is the new Israel. Both of the above views can admit to a larger number of Jews being converted at the end of this age, though without there being any national significance with regard to the future. Such an increase, again, merges with the church. This view is especially supported by Dutch and Reformed scholars. 3. "Israel" here refers to a future national conversion of Israel, the larger unbelieving segment in particular, that results in Israel serving under Christ in the promised land with restored glory. This view, with variations, is most widely held today.

(1) The national salvation of all Israel, v. 26a.

The meaning of πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ, pas Israēl, is the key here. The context of v. 25 where "Israēl" must refer to the nation as a whole is decisive, as is the consistent use in the other 9 instances in Romans 9-11 that never refer to Gentiles. The "all" incorporates the implied "remnant" and the "unbelieving remainder" of v. 25. Thus Murray comments, "that it is exegetically impossible to give to 'Israel' in this verse any other denotation than that which belongs to the term throughout this chapter."[58] The remnant has not been explicitly mentioned since vs. 5, 7. Again in vs. 24-25, the regrafting is portrayed as climactic in the future, and not periodic throughout the church age.[59] If only the remnant was in mind here with regard to this age, the present tense would be more appropriate. Rather, "Israel will be saved [future tense]" parallels "will be engrafted [future tense]" in v. 24. Thus, the meaning of "and so," καὶ οὕτως, kai houtōs Added support for the future national conversion/resurrection of Israel is found in Simeon's prophecy that, "this Child {Jesus Christ in his arms] is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34.s, is not the operative concern here. It can mean "and then" in a temporal sense, as Bruce and Barrett uphold,[60] or it can mean "and thus" in accord with the Scripture about to be quoted, or most

[58] Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 96. So Barrett, Boice, Cranfield, Haldane, Hodge, Lloyd-Jones, Moo, Morris, Moule, Stott. Roman Catholic scholar Brendan Byrne comments that equating "all Israel" with "the totality of believers, Jewish and Christian . . . is generally rejected today in favor of a reference to the whole of ethnic Israel," *Romans* (Sacra Pagina), p. 354. However, such agreement does not necessarily imply the belief that national Israel will inherit the promised land of Palestine.

[59] The suggestion that Israel here is the accumulation of the remnant over the centuries, according to Bavinck, Hoekema, Hendriksen, Palmer Robertson, is, according to Schreiner, "stunningly anticlimactic," *Romans*, p. 617. Reymond betrays this weakness in stating: "This view still allows *enough* [emphasis added!] Jewish conversions to Christianity throughout this age to meet the demand of the 'riches' (CCCCCCC, *ploutos*, 11:12) and 'life from the dead' (ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν, *zōē ek nekrōn*, 11:15) which Paul envisions 'all Israel's' salvation will bring to the world." *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p. 1029.

[60] Bruce describes "the well attested use of Gk. *houtōs* ('so', 'thus') in a temporal sense." *Romans* (Tyndale), p. 222. Barrett, *Romans*, p. 223.

likely it means "in the same manner," that is concerning how the thrust of vs. 7-25 works out, which is very much time/sequence oriented."[61]

But more specifically, what is the nature of this future national conversion of Israel? Most likely it comprises the nation in general without absolute totality, as is reflected in the approximate numbering of Israel (Num. 2, 26). Further, it is paralleled by numerous Old Testament prophetic references that present a harmonious picture of the resurrected nation, v. 15, that has returned to its land and become the object of unequalled blessing and universal acknowledgment, and are not adequately fulfilled in Israel's post-exilic blessings (Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 43:1-7; Jer. 23:3; 30:1-11; Ezek. 11:14-21; 20:39-44; 36:22-37:28; 39:25-29; Hos. 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 3:4-5; 14:1-7; Amos 9:13-15; Zech. 10:6-12).[62] So Jonathan Edwards describes this restoration:

> Without doubt, they [the Jews] will return to their own land; because when their unbelief ceases, their dispersion, the dreadful and signal punishment of their unbelief will cease too. As they have continued hitherto, with one consent, to dishonor Christ by rejecting the gospel, so shall they meet together to honor him, by openly professing of it with one mouth, and practice it with one heart and one soul, together lamenting their obstinacy, as it is said they shall (Zech. 12:11-12), and together praising God for his grace in enlightening them. And as they have hitherto continued a distinct nation, that they might continue a visible monument of his displeasure, for their rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, so after their conversion will they still be a distinct nation, that they may be a visible monument of God's wonderful grace and power in their calling and conversion. . . . But yet, we are not to imagine that the old walls of separation will be set up again. . . . For they shall look upon all the world to be their brethren, as much as the Christians in Boston and the Christians in other pats of New England look on each other as brethren.[63]

(2) The national Deliverer of Jacob, v. 26b.

The salvation of all Israel is confirmed and explained in the Word of God, specifically Isaiah 27:9; 59:20-21a; Jer. 31:33-34, which Paul freely adapts to complement the revelation of the "mystery," v. 25. Thus, "Out of Zion will the Delivering One come." The future tense suggests the return of Jesus Christ, after the manner of, "Jesus, who rescues [delivers] us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:10; cf. 2:4, 8), having come from the heavenly Zion and his throne of intercession (Heb. 12:22-24); this complements the other future aspects of vs. 24, 26. However, Paul's flexible manner of using the Old Testament is evident when, as distinct from the LXX declaring "the deliverer

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[61] Moo provides the most comprehensive study of v. 26a and comments "that *houtōs,* while not having a temporal *meaning*, has a temporal *reference*: for the manner in which all Israel is saved involves a process that unfolds in definite stages." *Romans*, p. 720. This is the identical situation in vs. 4-5 where οὕτως, houtōs is used in a temporal context with regard to the past concerning Elijah and the "present time."

[62] It is surprising that Moo, Morris, Murray, but not Haldane, make no reference to this broad canvas and obvious association, even though the following quotations of Isaiah and Jeremiah draw from this pervasive Old Testament theme and reflect Paul's ongoing Jewish connection with it.

[63] Jonathan Edwards, *Works* (Yale), V, p. 135. Iain Murray indicates that many English Puritans were of this same opinion concerning the national conversion and restoration of Israel. *The Puritan Hope*, pp. 175-8.

shall come for Zion's sake" in basic agreement with the Hebrew, he uniquely writes that Christ shall come "out of Zion," ἐκ Σιὼν, ek Siōn, and probably with the thought in mind of Psalm 14:7, "Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores His captive people, Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad." This is further indicated since this Delivering One "will remove [future tense] ungodliness from Jacob" (Isa. 27:9; cf. vs. 6, 12-13 which, according to Paul's reference here, must transcend the return from Babylon). This scene is repeatedly eschatological, and for this reason we reject Lloyd-Jones' interpretation.[64] It is well reflected in William Cowper's poem, "Israel's Redemption."[65]

On the mountain's top appearing,
Lo, the sacred Herald stands!
Welcome news to Zion bearing,
Zion long in hostile lands;
Mourning captive,
God Himself will loose thy bands!

Has thy night been long and mournful?
All thy friends unfaithful proved?
Have thy foes been proud and scornful?
By thy sighs and tears unmoved?
Cease thy mourning;
Zion still is well beloved.

Lo, thy Sun is risen in glory!
God himself appears thy friend;
All thy foes shall flee before thee;
Here their boasts and triumphs end;
Great deliverance
Zion's King vouchsafes to send!

Enemies no more shall trouble;
All thy warfare now is past;
For thy shame thou shalt have double;
Days of peace are come at last:
All thy conflicts
End in everlasting rest.

(3) The national covenant of cleansing, v. 27.

The continuing quotation of Isaiah 59:21a, now incorporating the thought of covenant and cleansing from Isaiah 27:9; Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34, indicates that the basis of the aforementioned salvation of Israel will be the atoning

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[64] "The Zion out of which He will come is indeed heaven itself; His influence will come from there. I am not saying that this is the Second Coming, I am simply saying that the Apostle is saying here that in this spiritual manner the Redeemer will exert this tremendous influence upon the nation of the Jews and will turn iniquity from them and will bring them to faith and salvation and bring them into membership of the Christian church." *Romans* 11, p. 191. Also note that in vs. 23-4 the Jews are regrafted into their former stock, the olive tree or root of Abraham, not the wild olive branches.

[65] James A. Begg, *Extracts on Prophecy*, pp. 343-5.

"Seed" of Abraham. The "newness" of this covenant (Heb. 8:8-13; 12:18-24) is in relation to the old covenant made at Mt. Sinai, while it is but the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, v. 28. Cranfield rightly concludes that such unilateral deliverance, "dashes Israel's self-centered hopes of establishing a claim upon God, of putting Him under an obligation by its merits, making it clear that the nation's final salvation will be a matter of the forgiveness of its sins by the sheer mercy of its God."[66]

3. The salvation of Israel will be comprehensive, vs. 28-32.

The whole problem for the Gentile has been one of misplaced focus, that is self-centeredness; the overriding purpose of Paul has been to correct this narrow vision so that it encompasses the broader perspective of Jew and Gentile in God's plan of redemption. Notice the contrast between "they" (Israelites) and "your" (Gentiles), v. 28, between "you" (Gentiles) and "their/these/they" (Israelites), vs. 30-31. By way of concluding summation, Paul now continues to address the Gentile in much the same way that God needed to address the narrow focus of Peter (Acts 10:44-11:18).

a. According to irrevocable covenant, vs. 28-29.

Here biblical covenantalism, with regard to God's saving purposes, is brought to the forefront, and this in turn causes us to grasp that God's gospel is rooted in His sovereign will and commitment rather than human cooperation. Hence we are constrained to view God's dealings from His point of view rather than that of either the Gentile or Jew, and here this calls for continued emphasis on the Gentile having his vision expanded even as this thrust was introduced at v. 17. The necessity may be due to the glorious deliverance of vs. 26-27 that could easily arouse Gentile discomfort, again after the manner of the "elder brother" (Luke 15:25-32).

(1) The covenant incorporates God's choice of Israel, v. 28.

"On the one hand, according to the gospel, they [the Israelites] are enemies for your [the Gentiles] sake, but on the other hand, according to the election, they [the Israelites] are beloved for the sake of the fathers [the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob]." The first part of this proposition would not surprise the Gentile; he would gladly accepted that according to divine purpose, v. 1, the Jew has been spurned by God on account of hostility to Christ.

However an overriding principle must be kept in mind being God's covenant transaction with Abraham that preceded the revelation of the mystery through the church, namely the original election of Israel that was irrevocable, according to "foreknowledge," vs. 1-2 (cf. Ps. 33:11-12; Isa. 44:1-2; Amos 3:2).[67] Deuteronomy 7:7-8 declares that God's election of

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[66] Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 579.

[67] Here "the election" is descriptive of "they" and thus the nation rather than a reference to the "remnant according to God's gracious choice," v. 5. So Cranfield, Haldane, Hodge, Moo, Morris, Murray, contra Lenski.

Israel was not on account of national merit, but rather "the LORD loved you [Israel] and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers. So here Paul brings to mind this same foundational truth, namely the fixity of the Abrahamic covenant that guarantees the salvation of national Israel. The point is well expressed by the hymn writer Thomas Olivers who wrote, "The God of Abraham praise."

He by Himself hath sworn–
I on His oath depend–

Of course Paul is not writing here of the merit of the patriarchs which the Jews mistakenly lauded, but the faithfulness of God to them, His unilateral promise that rested solely in His holy character, His "loyal love" that is based upon elective mercy and divine integrity which results in Israel being "beloved" according to pure grace. Hence what was promised to Abraham shall certainly be accomplished. The loss of Israel would be the defeat of God; the saving of Israel is to the praise of His glorious grace (3:3; 11:1, 11).

(2) The covenant incorporates God's immutable calling, v. 29.

"For irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God." The emphatic position of ἀμεταμέλητος, ametamelētos, meaning something done without regret and hence not to be taken back, draws attention to Paul's passionate conviction that the details of the Abrahamic covenant have not been rescinded. Specifically, the grace gifts (τὰ χαρίσματα, ta charismata) cataloged in 9:4-5 along with the effectual calling of God intrinsic to these have not been abrogated. And witness to this is the whole history of God's dealings with Israel, not only throughout the Old Testament (Isa. 49:14-16), but also on into the New Testament era that will climax with "all Israel being saved." In other words, fundamental to God's dealing with Israel is His immutable promise to Abraham that finds fulfillment through David and Christ that includes the engrafting of the Gentiles (Eph. 2:12-13).[68] Here we see that God's moral character, his holy integrity, is at the heart of His saving work.

b. According to universal mercy, vs. 30-32.

It is a common quirk of human nature that we more readily focus on grace bestowed upon ourselves and at the same time sin manifest in others (Matt. 7:3-5). Likewise the Gentiles, particularly in their ascendancy, have tended to look with admiring exclusivity at themselves and disparagement toward the Jews. Hence Paul is persistent in communicating God's inclusive perspective which,

[68] Walter C. Kaiser has maintained that this is the fundamental motif of the Old Testament. He writes: "In the main, this view [promise theology] agrees with the distinction between Israel and the church. But instead of continuing to say, as classical dispensationalism did, that there are two separate peoples (Israel and the church) with two separate programs (the earthly kingdom and the heavenly kingdom of our Lord), this view stresses that there is one people ("the people of God") with a number of discernable aspects within that one people (such as Israel and the church), and there is only one program of God (the "kingdom of God") with numerous aspects under that single program." "An Epangelical Response," eds. Blaising and Block, Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, p. 367. Also refer to Kaiser's *Toward an Old Testament Theology*.

though none the less particular, intends that Gentile and Jew should be accepting of each other even as He has been equally gracious in showing "mercy to all."

The significance of Paul continuing to exhort the Gentiles in particular from v. 13 up to v. 32 ought not to be missed. The point is that a wider perspective is necessary concerning God's design for human history. So often we are blinded by a narrow and exclusive frame of reference, v. 18a, that requires divine enlightenment, vs. 24-29.

(1) God's mercy overcomes Gentile disobedience, v. 30.

In the form of a protasis, the Gentile as "you" is exhorted to recall his former disobedience that found present mercy at the expense of Israel's present disobedience. In other words, the Gentiles' received mercy is to be pondered in terms of past pagan unworthiness or "disobedience to God," not relative worthiness when compared with Israel, which arrogance is reflected in vs. 18-20.

(2) God's mercy overcomes Israel's disobedience, v. 31.

In the form of an apodasis, the Gentile is exhorted not to be less merciful in attitude than God with regard to "these/they" or the Jews. Mercy received ought to beget a merciful attitude that reaches out toward those in need of mercy (Matt. 18:23-35). Thus Gentile disobedience followed by mercy received is to be paralleled with Jewish disobedience followed by mercy received. The Gentile who has received mercy ought to rejoice at such a prospect.

(3) God's mercy overcomes universal disobedience, v. 32.

So Paul's grand conclusion is that, "God has shut up together [συγκλείω, sunkleiō, cf. Luke 5:6] [the] all [both Gentile and Jew] unto disobedience for the purpose that He might show mercy to [the] all [both Gentile and Jew]." The definite article here identifies classes previously described, namely the totality of saved, engrafted Gentiles, and "all Israel" previously indicated,[69] and not "all men" in a possible universalist sense.[70] The "confinement" here, reminiscent of 1:24, 26, 28, describes these Gentiles and Jews as being hopelessly captive, without distinction, 3:9, through willful sinning and divine abandonment, so that boasting is eliminated. Yet such consignment is intended to be eclipsed by sovereign divine mercy that finds ultimate exaltation, especially in vs. 33-36.

Thus God's elect, "a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9; cf. 5:9) being comprised of Gentiles and Jews, has been hewn from the pit of pagan disobedience, through Abraham (Isa. 51:1-3), according to divine, magnanimous loving kindness. Thus, "where sin increased, grace abounded

[69] A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, IV, p. 400.

[70] So Origen, Dodd, Cranfield.

all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," 5:20-21. As Frederick W. Faber has penned:

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

So this principle is true of human history as this verse also declares. Lloyd-Jones comments:

> [T]he fact that you ever become Christians is entirely and solely the result of God's grace and mercy and power. There is our general philosophy of history. Man made perfect, he sins, the world becomes chaotic. Civilizations try to put things right–it is no good, they are only going round in circles, or think that there is no purpose at all. But then you come to the Bible and you see this great purpose going right through, ending in the vision of the Book of Revelation; the final deliverance, the return of Christ, the conquest and destruction of evil and the setting up of this glorious kingdom which is eternal. That is the biblical view or philosophy of history.[71]

That is the triumph of divine mercy.

D. Israel's salvation by God is glorious, vs. 33-36.

When the gracious saving work of God is rightly appreciated, there will be an inevitable response of worship, praise, and adoration, personality variations notwithstanding. So here Paul reflects the attitude of David who, in acknowledging that God "brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay," then responds, "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to out God" (Ps. 40:2-3). But also notice the further focus of David's hymnic worship. "Behold, I will not restrain my lips, O LORD, You know. I have not hidden your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation. You, O LORD, will not withhold your compassion from me; your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me" (Ps. 40:9-11). So Paul cannot "restrain his lips." He must let the "fire of grace in his belly erupt." He would agree with these further lines of Faber:

My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy Majesty how bright!
How beautiful Thy mercy-seat,
In depth of burning light!

It is significant that Robert Haldane, whose commentary on Romans was the result of his earnest teaching of some ignorant theological students at Geneva in 1816, gives the

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[71] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 11*, p. 243.

following extract of a letter he wrote in 1824 to Mr. Cheneviere, the well-known Socinian, and yet Pastor and Professor of Divinity at Geneva. "There was nothing brought under the consideration of the students of divinity who attended me at Geneva, which appeared to contribute so effectually to overthrow their false system of religion, founded on philosophy and vain deceit, as the sublime view of the majesty of God presented in the four concluding verses of this part of the Epistle [11:33-36]."[72]

But what is the context here? The weight of evidence must come down on the side of the preceding Rom. 9-11,[73] but especially 11:11-32. Paul is overwhelmed with a sense of the triumph of God's mercy that will crown that time when "the Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob," v. 26.

1. The praise of God's transcendent Being, v. 33.

   Paul's emotional exclamation, his adoring and worshipful "Ὦ", cf. 2:1, 3; 9:20; Gal. 3:1; I Tim. 6:20, has been ignited by the concluding thought of v. 32, that is the unalloyed mercy and grace of God that has been exalted since 1:1-6, 16-17, and 3:21 onwards. It is mirrored against the futility of human law works, of boasting by the Jews, 2:17-29, and more recently that of the Gentiles, 11:13-32.

   a. His depth of being, v. 33a.

      "O the depth [βάθος, bathos] of [the] richness and [the] wisdom and [the] knowledge of God" suggests not simply God's character in general, but three perfections that have distinct gospel significance and all coalesce in the person and work of Christ (2:4; 9:23; 10:12; I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:7; Col. 2:3). Paul is reflecting wonderment more than frustration concerning "this mystery" v. 25, cf. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-3, 8-9; Col. 1:26-27; it is astonishing rather than incomprehensible. So Lloyd-Jones comments that because Paul has been expounding God's great plan and purpose of redemption, "he is amazed at it himself and he feels there is only one thing to do, and that is to praise God with the whole of his being."[74] Like most new believers, the Gentile and Jew had learned of the mercy of God, but Paul expounds on a quality of mercy that provokes awe.

   b. His infinitude of being, v. 33b.

      "How unsearchable [beyond human discovery] are His judgments [righteous decisions] and unfathomable [beyond human comprehension] are His ways [providential dealings]." The emphasis is not so much upon the unknowableness of God as the fact that what has been divinely made known would never have been understood apart from divine revelation. The whole course of Romans 9-11 has been the unveiling of God's hitherto unknown purposes regarding Gentile and Jew. Having declared that which he received by revelation (Eph. 3:2-3), Paul

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[72] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 560.

[73] So Cranfield, Moo, Morris, Murray. For the broader context of Rom. 1-11, Bruce, Stott.

[74] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 11*, p. 254. He also points out the fallacy of Willam Barclay at this juncture who suggests that Paul, in his struggle and difficulty in understanding what he cannot grasp, simply becomes resigned to the basic truth that God is love, pp. 253-5.

glories in the gospel plan that is God's by design and execution, as well as the impossibility of it having human origination.

2. The praise of God's infinite purposes, v. 34-35.

The sequence of three questions, drawn from the Old Testament, is intended to reinforce the source of the gospel of free grace as being exclusively divine. More recently the Gentile has been exhorted not to boast, vs. 17-20, and here he is being similarly prompted to come to an inevitable conclusion; it is that salvation is wholly of the Lord and exclusive of human distinctions.

a. What human has plumbed His mind? v. 34a.

"For who has known the mind [νοῦς, nous] of the Lord?" The quotation of Isaiah 40:13a reminds us of God's humiliating interrogation of Job, Job 38:1-41:34. The expected negative response is intended to lead to the conclusion that God is known by revelation, not discovery (I Cor. 1:19-21); even the child of God does not assist in the establishment of the divine plan by means of sanctified aptitude. As John Greenleaf Whittier has written:

Who fathoms the eternal thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

Paul is not recommending mindless faith, as the broad preceding context of Romans plainly indicates. However, he does reign in the use of the intellect that either goes beyond or extrapolates from the revealed Word in a manner resulting in conclusions that God never intended.[75] This is especially so with regard to the doctrine of God's sovereignty that calls for submission rather than understanding.

b. What human has plumbed His ways? v. 34b.

"Who became His [fellow] counselor [σύμβουλος, sumboulos]?" The quotation of Isaiah 40:13b is also intended to abase the Christian, and especially the Gentile, who is convinced that his eschatology should be adopted by God. As Nathaniel West has written, "Israel, the created people of God, abides Israel, and the history of Israel is not a mere frame in which to hang pictures of the New Testament church."[76] Even amongst Christians there is often retained an impudence that attempts to bring the Bible into conformity with a precast doctrinal system, and in so doing there is the implicit conformity of God's ways to our own so that we end up being His counselor. Job descended to this level of thinking, that is until he was humbled by God and confessed, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without

[75] By way of illustration, consider the clear biblical truth that faith is a sovereign gift of God (Matt. 16:16-17; Luke 22:32; Acts 16:14; Eph. 2:8-9) and not the ability of autonomous man. Logically speaking then, men ought to be exhorted to seek the gift of faith rather than believe. However the consistent invitation of the Bible is simply for man to believe.

[76] Nathaniel West, *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments*, p. 7.

knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:1-3).

c. What human has plumbed His grace? v. 35.

"Or who has first given to Him so that it might be repaid [as indebtedness]?" This quotation of Job 41:11 is but another means by which Paul excludes human initiative, whether in the realm of mental activity in v. 34 or human exertion here that obligates God. By implication the essential nature of grace, v. 6, 4:4-5; 6:23, is distinguished once again, and in the context of believers needing to be reminded of it as an abiding principle in relating one toward another, whether Gentile or Jew.

3. The praise of God's infinite glory, v. 36.

Paul's theocentricity reaches its apex here as a series of contrasting prepositions is used to describe God as the only independent Being! Everything and everyone else is derived and dependant. The reason that God has exclusive sovereignty that excludes the initiative of Gentile and Jew is that "all things," τὰ πάντα, ta panta, proceeding from Him, through Him, and to Him, are necessarily under his unqualified dominion. Thus the triune Jehovah has absolute sovereignty and the result is unparalleled grace and mercy according to His disposal.

Of course this declaration of praise is not a mere cerebral expression, but also a fervent and heart-throbbing exclamation that is inevitable insofar as the grasp of profound doctrine is concerned. John Stott well writes that:

> It is of great importance to note from Romans 1-11 that theology (our belief about God) and doxology (our worship of God) should never be separated. On the one hand, there can be no doxology without theology. It is not possible to worship an unknown God. . . . On the other hand, there should be no theology without doxology. There is something fundamentally flawed about a purely academic interest in God. God is not an appropriate object for cool, critical, detached, scientific observation and evaluation. No, the true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship, as it did Paul. Our place is on our faces before him in adoration. As I believe Bishop Handley Moule said at the end of the last century, we must 'beware equally of an undevotional theology and of an untheological devotion'.[77]

a. His triune dominion, v. 36a.

Paul, the converted Jew, testifies to the essence of monotheism. The trinitarian formula is at best inferential. What are the "all things"? Morris comments: "It may refer to the universe, the whole of creation, or Paul may be thinking of all things concerning salvation. Either way, the totality belongs to God."[78]

(1) All things are *from Him*, ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ex autou, that is they originate from Him by creation. God is the only underived Being, while everything else is derived from Him.

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[77] John Stott, *Romans*, pp. 311-2.

[78] Morris, *Romans*, p. 429.

(2) All things are *by Him*, δι᾽ αὐτοῦ, di autou, that is they are maintained by Him according to sovereign providence. He upholds the order of things, whether directly or indirectly.

(3) All things are *to Him*, εἰς αὐτόν, eis auton, that is they give acknowledgment to Him through refunded glory. God is the goal of all things.

b. His glorious dominion, v. 36b.

"To Him be the glory [ἡ δόξα, hē doxa], eternally through the ages. Amen [Let the truth stand]." This doxology is a prayer of holy and passionate desire, especially as v. 32 anticipates that time of consummated mercy. "The word of God has not failed," 9:6a, as has been amply demonstrated. He has been fully vindicated, and shall be at the climax of the ages. So Jonathan Edwards summarizes this grand conclusion.

> In the preceding context, the apostle observes the marvelous disposals of divine wisdom, for causing all things to be *to* him, in their final issue and result, as they are *from* him at first, and governed *by* him. His discourse shows how God contrived this and brought it to pass, by setting up the kingdom of Christ in the world; leaving the Jews, and calling the Gentiles; including what he would hereafter do in bringing in the Jews, with the fullness of the Gentiles; with the circumstances of these wonderful works, so as greatly to show his justice and his goodness, to magnify his grace, and manifest the sovereignty and freeness of it, and the absolute dependence of all on him. And then, in the last four verses, he breaks out into a most pathetic exclamation, expressing his great admiration of the *depth* of divine wisdom, in the steps he takes for attaining his end, and causing all things to be *to* him: and finally, he expresses a joyful consent to God's excellent design in all to *glorify himself*, in saying, 'to him be glory forever;' as much as to say, as all things are so wonderfully *ordered for his glory*, so let him *have the glory* of all, for evermore.[79]

[79] Jonathan Edwards *Works* (Banner), I, p. 107.

CHAPTER XIV

ROMANS 12:1-15:33
THE GOSPEL AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

TRUTH and experience, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, ethic and dynamic, are not precisely the same, yet they all suggest the necessary relationship of knowledge with the day-to-day expression of a living soul, in the order expressed, which results in a reactive and fruitful union. In simple terms, what we believe, if rightly believed, should inevitably be productive of a lifestyle that is complementary to that same belief. Put another way, living the Christian life is based upon learning the Christian life. Paul was certainly of this opinion since in his teaching method he repeatedly moves from doctrine to its life application, as is evident in Galatians 1-4, 5-6, Ephesians 1-3, 4-6, Colossians 1-2, 3-4, as well as here at this major juncture in Romans. This principle has already been expressed in doctrinal terms, such as in 6:11 where the Christian is exhorted: "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." But how will this new life manifest itself? Again in 7:6, "we serve in newness of the Spirit." But what are to be the distinguishing characteristics of this service? Further consider 8:3-4 where the impotence of the truth concerning the law is contrasted with the potency of the truth concerning the gospel of Christ that is productive of walking according to the power of the Holy Spirit. But in practical terms, what does this walk, this new manner of living entail? Romans 12- 16 explains.

In an intensely relativistic, subjective, and pragmatic, age, it cannot be too strenuously declared that this new emphasis of Paul presupposes an understanding of the preceding truth, and for this reason it will be helpful to make ongoing and frequent reference to this doctrinal foundation. However, in the eyes of this world, our only justification for this professed truth will be our manifest living of that truth. Francis Schaeffer well describes this vital matter under the heading of "The Practice of Truth":

> [I]n an age of synthesis, men will not take our protestations of truth seriously unless they see by our actions that we seriously *practice* truth and antithesis in the unity we try to establish and in our activities. Without this, in an age of relativity, we cannot expect the evangelical, orthodox Church to mean much to the surrounding culture or even to the Church's own children, for what we try to say in our teaching and evangelism will be understood in the twentieth-century thought-form of synthesis. Both a clear comprehension of the importance of truth and a clear practice of it, even when it is costly to do so, is imperative if our witness and our evangelism are to be significant in our own generation and in the flow of history.[1]

A. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRANSFORMED MIND, 12:1-21.

Our contemporary mind-set could easily lead us to expect that Paul will, having completed his carefully reasoned doctrinal presentation of theocentric gospel sanctification, now resort to practical exhortation that requires less intellectual energy. However nothing could be further from the truth. In vs. 1, 2, 3, 16 there are nine references to the thinking process that lead us to appreciate that the mind is at the heart of "practical Christian living," as

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[1] Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, pp. 168-9.

many designate this matter of concern. John Stott, in warning about "the misery and menace of mindless Christianity," goes on to declare four inseparable consequences of the right embrace of biblical truth. "First, knowledge should lead to worship. . . . Secondly, knowledge should lead to faith. . . . Thirdly, knowledge should lead to holiness. . . . Fourthly, knowledge should lead to love."[2]

1. Consecration of the whole being, vs. 1-2.

Paul has described a degree of dualism in the life of a Christian, that is with regard to the close habitation, in this present life, of "our body of sin" or "the members of your body" or "the body of this death" with the new man who is "alive to God in Christ Jesus," 6:6, 11, 13; 7:24. Nevertheless, through the power of grace this continuing conflict is to evidence emancipation from the dominion of sin directed carnality, 6:6, 14. So this tension is reintroduced, namely between the "you" and the "body," except that grace gifts in the environment of the local church are seen to be of practical significance in the accomplishment of solicited spiritual activity. Once again, soul regeneration is for Paul a fundamental presupposition.

a. Through a sanctified body, v. 1.

"Therefore, brethren at Rome, with the constraint of the mercies of God previously expounded, I urge you according to apostolic authority [1:1] to offer up your bodies as living and holy sacrifices, which is your reasonable and spiritual service of worship." The mercies, compassions of God have, since the beginning, climaxed at chapter1, and ought to impel even as Robert Robinson has penned:

O 1 to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee. C

Thus the physical body is to be delivered over to God, to be presented in consecration, in practical service, aorist of παρίστημι, paristēmi,[3] after the manner of a sacrifice with which both the Hebrew and Roman cultures were familiar. Here is what God desires of church members, namely living, pulsating, active participants in righteousness. For specific examples of desirable activity, probably the following selfless employment of individual spiritual gifts in the life of the body of Christ is in mind, vs. 3-13. Thus such activity is τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν, tēn logikēn latreian humōn, which suggests "your intelligent/true/authentic/spiritual worship." True worship is first moral in the mind, and then expressed in a number of consistent ways.

b. Through a sanctified mind, v. 2.

If the body is the instrument of service, then the mind is the control center, so that it is the spiritual cerebral health of a Christian that determines the right use of our

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[2] John Stott, *Your Mind Matters*, pp. 11, 44-46.

[3] Murray, *Romans*, pp. 110-11, gives good reason for the "physical body" here, as with 6:6, contra Moo, *Romans*, 750-51, who interprets "the whole person," as with 6:6.

bodily members. In other words, practical Christian living is stimulated by focused Christian thinking. Up to this point in Romans the mind has been wonderfully educated concerning the numerous mercies of the gospel, yet there is great danger in halting at this juncture, as many Christians do who have superior mental abilities. Mere intellectualism, sharp reasoning, and astute argumentation can lead to the confusion of apprehension of truth with personal appropriation.

(1) Negatively, do not be conformed to this world.

"Do not be conformed, through the pressures of worldly lifestyles, to this corrupt present age." The word συσχηματίζω, suschēmatizō, being a present passive imperative, describes the coercion of the schema or fashioning and shaping forces in this *present* secular, materialist, humanistic era. The term "age" here, as distinct from "world," has a temporal nuance that implies a different age to come, 8:18-25; 11:26-27. Such worldly constraint would be akin to the ardent solicitations of the citizens of Vanity Fair toward the transient pilgrims, Christian and Faithful, in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, who retained a holy distinctiveness.

(2) Positively, be transformed in your mind.

The strong adversative conjunction here, "*But* be transformed by the renewing of your mind" suggests that a sharp contrast with "being fashioned to this age" is intended. The word μεταμορφόω, metamorphoō, likewise being a present passive imperative, describes an inner transformation, a metamorphosis of nature by and toward the will of God, that is generated through mental renewal, cf. II Cor. 3:18. This "renewal" of the mind, τὴ ἀνακαινώσει, tē anakainōsei, involves personal initiative and not mere passive resignation, cf. II Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:10. Hence the believer is to actively employ his already regenerated mind, 6:11; 7:6, in serious contemplation of "the mercies of God" previously expounded, specifically discovering and giving heartfelt approval to the will of God that is gladly acknowledged to be "the good, and [which is] acceptable and perfect," being revealed in the doctrines of grace.

More specifically, what is this "will of God" which is "good and acceptable and perfect"? Surely it is revealed through earnest study of the Word of God, and Romans in particular; this "will" has been wondrously described in 8:26-28; 9:11; 11:33-36; 15:32, which study is to result in a spiritually refurnished mind that in turn brings about soul metamorphosis and submission. As a consequence, the body that this soul inhabits and directs will be offered in consecrated service to God. The practical specifics of such devotion are now explained.C

It should also be noted that the radical process here introduced is very much progressive as the present tense of μεταμορφόω, metamorphoō indicates. So John Murray comments:

> [T]here is here reflection upon the deep-seated and permanent change wrought by the process of renewal. Sanctification is a process of revolutionary change in that which is the center of consciousness. This sounds a fundamental note in

> the biblical ethic. It is the thought of progression and strikes at the stagnation, complacency, pride of achievement so often characterizing Christians. It is not the beggarly notion of second blessing that the apostle propounds but that of constant renewal, of metamorphosis in the seat of consciousness.[4]

2. Consecration to the body of Christ, vs. 3-16.

It is no mere coincidence that Paul, having called for the consecration of the *bodies* of individual believers to the service of God, should then relate this devotion to individual ministry within the *body* of Christ, the church, v. 5, that which the Son of God purchased with singular devotion to the will of the Father by means of his own sacrificed *body* (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23). Further, the call for self-sacrifice of the believer's body, v. 1., recalls the common practice for such offerings to be made in a temple environment. So the believer is to offer his body in the environment of the local church, which "is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:22). Such growth results from the interaction of spiritual gifts and fruit.

a. Through spiritual *gifts* rightly used, vs. 3-8.

Surprisingly Moo comments that here, "[n]o specific relationship with vs. 1-2 is evident,"[5] whereas the address in v. 1 to "you, brethren" and in v. 3 to "everyone among you" again suggests a flow of thought concerning grace stimulated spiritual service in local church life, that is arousal produced by the mercies of Romans 1-11.

(1) According to sovereign allotment, v. 3.

> "For I say to all, through the [apostolic] grace gift given to me, that you ought not to overestimate [over think] your thinking about yourselves, except with regard to what it is proper to think, using sound [sober] mindedness, concerning the measure of faith that God has allotted to you." The fourfold use of φρονέω, phroneō, here including compounds, along with three uses in v. 16, is a play on words stressing the proper focus of the renewed mind, v. 2.
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> The "allotted measure of faith" describes the sovereignly bestowed grace gifts of I Corinthians 12:7-12, even as vs. 4-7 plainly indicate. Murray puts it this way: "'measure of faith' must reflect on the different respects in which faith is to be exercised in view of the diversity of functions existing in the church of Christ."[6] Hence the Christian is humbly to identify and concentrate on the distinctive spiritual ability that God has granted him and not commonly vaunted natural abilities.

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[4] Ibid., p. 114.

[5] Moo, *Romans*, p. 759.

[6] Murray, *Romans*, p. 118.

(2) According to distinctive function, vs. 4-8.

Here is one of four major descriptions concerning spiritual gifts, along with I Corinthians 12:1-31, Ephesians 4:7-13, and I Peter 4:10-11. Thus the probability that Paul writes this epistle from Corinth should be recalled here; he was concerned that local church life should manifest unity with diversity; diversity without unity results in schism (I Cor. 1:11-13); unity without diversity results in dysfunction (I Cor. 12:17). In healthy family life there is diversity in unity, so likewise in Jesus Christ Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:10-11, 18-21.

(a) The human body has diversity in unity, v. 4.

The natural body is comprised of "many members" that do not have "the same *function*" or πρᾶξις, praxis, I Cor. 12:12, 14, 20, though they have all been created to work harmoniously and productively as a unit, like a smoothly operating clock. The head in particular is responsible for coordination, especially with healthy members. It is disease in the body that causes lack of coordination, so that directions from the head are not heeded.

(b) The body of Christ has diversity in unity, vs. 5-6a

So the spiritual body of Christ, the church, comprised of many interrelated members that are yet different in operation, has an overriding unity. Now this interrelatedness concerns grace gifts, χαρίσματα, charismata, the sovereignly distributed spoils of Christ's victory over death and sin, Eph. 4:7-8, that are to be appropriately and harmoniously exercised. However, it is the lubricating oil of gospel grace that brings about peace and the agreeable rather than conflicting interaction of the differing parts, Eph. 4:16, especially as directed by the Head, Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18.

(c) The body of Christ has diversity in grace gifts, vs. 6b-8.

The other major passages on spiritual gifts also include the following, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, effecting of miracles, distinguishing of spirits, kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, I Cor. 12:8-10; gifted individuals such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, Eph. 4:11; speaking the utterances of God, serving, I Pet. 4:11. Here the named gifts are not merely to be acknowledged, but exercised in local church life.

John Owen explains that while spiritual "gifts are not saving, sanctifying graces, . . . yet they are that without which the church cannot subsist in the world, nor can believers be useful to one another and the rest of mankind, unto the glory of Christ."[7]

[7] John Owen, *Works*, IV, pp. 420-21.

1) In having the gift of prophecy, προφητεία, prophēteia, let it be according to τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως, tēn analogian tēs pisteōs, that is "the analogy [proportion, ratio] of the faith," v. 6b. This is proclamation ministry through revelation from God, sometimes revealing the future, Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-12, that yet was subject to scrutiny,[8] I Cor. 14:29, ranking second to apostolic revelation; further it is regulated by the degree to which "the faith" is comprehended.[9] Hence here the prophetic proclamation focuses on the gospel substance of Romans 1-11.

2) In having the gift of service, διακονία, diakonia, let this deaconing and ministering activity with regard to material needs be operative according to the gospel stimulus of Romans 1-11; this will alleviate others from such responsibilities, Acts 6:1-6; v. 7a.

3) In having the gift of teaching and being recognized as such, διδασκαλία, didaskalia, let the doctrinal substance of Romans 1-11 be communicated to the local church, v. 7b. Morris makes a significant point that during the first century, poor literacy skills as well as the shortage of books, the role of the teacher then was far more vital that we might appreciate today.[10]

4) In having the gift of exhortation, παράκλησις, paraklēsis, that is the ability to counsel and encourage, let the saints be prompted according to Romans 1-11. Luther adds: "The difference between teaching and exhortation is this, that teaching is directed to those who do not know, while exhortation applies to those who do know. The one builds the foundation, the other builds on it . . . [and] stimulates and moves his hearers,"[11] v. 8a.

5) In having the gift of giving, μεταδίδωμι, metadidōmi, let it be demonstrated with generosity, liberality, spontaneity, void of duplicity, according to the constraint of Romans 1-11, cf. Matt. 10:8; v. 8b. First century society knew nothing of today's social programs that originated over centuries through the Christianity.

6) In having the gift of leading, presiding, προίστημι, proistemi, probably with regard to elders and deacons, let it be evident with zealous devotion that is generated by Romans 1-11., v. 8c. Thus various gifts would yet be employed in an orderly fashion.

7) In having the gift of mercy, ἔλεος, eleos, let it be manifest with cheerfulness, not legal duty, according to the stimulus of Romans

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[8] Moo, *Romans*, p. 765.

[9] Murray, *Romans*, pp. 122-3.

[10] Morris, *Romans*, p. 441.

[11] Martin Luther, *Works*, 25, p. 448.

1-11, v. 8d. Again, the physical needs of the first century would have been extreme by today's standards, yet a whole new dynamic of grace overcame much of this wretchedness, John 13:34.

b. Through spiritual *graces* practically evident, vs. 9-16.

It is significant that Paul, in moving from spiritual gifts to spiritual graces in I Corinthians 12-13, follows this same order here. As gifts without graces result in "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal," so that "I am nothing" and "unproductive, I Cor. 13:1-3, so here "love," with its fruit, cf. Gal. 5:22-26, is the holy dynamic that directs the right operation of the gifts previously mentioned. Owen describes four common characteristics of spiritual gifts and spiritual graces (fruit). 1. They are both purchased by Christ. 2. They both originate from the Holy Spirit. 3. They are both for the glory of the church. 4. They are both derived from the grace and bounty of Christ. Nevertheless, gifts

> are indeed *works* and *effects*, but not properly *fruits* of the Spirit, nor are anywhere so called. They are *effects* of his operation *upon* men, not *fruits* of his working *in* them; and, therefore, many receive these gifts who never receive the Spirit as to the principal end for which he is promised. They receive him not to sanctify and make them *temples* unto God.[12]

(1) Love within the church, vs. 9-13.

In Galatians 5:22, "the fruit [singular] of the Spirit is love [singular]," so that "love," being foundational, has a plurality of produce, namely "joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." So here, ἡ ἀγάπη, hē agapē, that is "the love," is also foundational, being reflected in aspects of the life of local church members that are both internal, vs. 9-16, and external, vs. 17-21.

(a) Love that is holy, v. 9.

Literally, "The love [is] without hypocrisy," is followed by a string of participles through to v. 13, thus "[negatively] despising the evil, [positively] clinging to the good." However many translations make this an imperative statement because of the preceding and following context. Thus, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Despise what is evil. Cling to what is good." This active love is surely a result of "the love [ἡ ἀγάπη, hē agapē] of God poured out within our hearts," 5:5, cf. 8:35, 39. Further it is holy love, being pure, literally without hypocrisy, unsullied with devious motives, not self-serving, "does not seek its own," I Cor. 13:5; it is resolutely set apart *from* evil and eagerly set apart *unto* good, cf. Ps. 97:10; it is the evidence of true conversion in the heart.

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[12] Owen, *Works*, IV, p. 425-9.

(b) Love that is selfless, v. 10.

"[Show] brotherly love to one another with devoted, tender affection; give honor to one another by means of preferential treatment." Thus local church life involves a sacrificial family relationship: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important [with regard to the bestowal of honor] than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3; cf. Gal. 6:10). Hence Lenski is correct in rejecting the thought here of,

> 'considering' every other Christian 'better than or superior to oneself,'. . . [so as to] make Paul ask us to consider as true what plainly is not true. Did Paul consider every weak and erring brother better than and superior to himself? No. But he ever bestows all possible and all deserving honor, for instance, on his assistants; he leads other brethren in doing this, and is never greedy of honor for himself.[13]

(c) Love that is fervent before the Lord, v. 11.

Loving, selfless service in local church life is further qualified in the realm of spontaneous energy and animation. Some laborers have a sense of duty according to obligation that knows no delight in the employment of their spiritual gifts, so that there is a tendency to "lag behind in diligence," and thus "drag the feet" so to speak. But the laborer rightly directed by love of the brethren will be "on fire, on the boil," ζέω, zeō, that is fervent in his spirit. However, caution is required insofar as such enthusiasm is involved, for it must only be service that is exclusively offered to "the Lord" and is grounded on solid gospel truth portrayed in Romans 1-11, not subjective sentiment. Religious enthusiasm in general is very deceptive, but enthusiasm in the Lord alone is well reflected by David, Ps. 42:1-2; 63:1-5; 84:1-4, by Paul in his untiring missionary service, I Cor. 9:16-18; II Tim. 4:6-8, and it is gloriously ventilated in good hymnody.

(d) Love that is persevering in trial, v. 12.

Again we have qualification concerning the employment of spiritual gifts. Attitudinally, there is to be "rejoicing in hope," that is exultant anticipation of the consummation of the kingdom of Christ, 5:2; 8:18-25. Temporally, in the face of present tribulation and groaning, 8:23, there is to be "anxious longing, . . . eager waiting," 8:19, 25, perseverance, endurance. Thus: "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself, perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you" (I Pet. 5:10). Devotionally, there is to be prayer that is likewise enduring in steadfastness. As Luther declares, "we must be on our guard that the

[13] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 773-4.

prayers in church in our day do not become more of a hindrance than a help. . . . we must put real work into our praying."[14]

(e) Love that is hospitable, v. 13.

Here is clear indication that Paul continues to be giving direction regarding the interaction of spiritual gifts and fruit in local church life. "Fellowshipping" κοινωνοῦντες, koinōnountes, here concerns the provision of material needs, food, clothing, shelter, medical care, this assistance being elsewhere described as the gifts of "mercy," v, 8, and "helps" (I Cor, 12:28). The related term "hospitality," φιλοξενία, philoxenia, addresses the care of visitors, including itinerant Christian workers, in a harsh society. However Paul stresses that such Christian welfare, totally separate from civil involvement, is to be pursued with unstinting kindness. Nevertheless, the second century *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, offers apostolic guidance due to inevitable abuse.[15]

(2) Love without the church, vs. 14-21.

The focus now on responding to "those who persecute you," v. 14, those who inflict "evil" v. 17a, on displaying "the right" that even "all men" will acknowledge, v. 17b, on being "at peace with all men," v. 18, on rejecting the temptation to seek "vengeance," v. 19, on showing kindness to an "enemy," v. 20," on "overcoming evil with good," indicates a general emphasis on worldly opposition that is external to the Christian, though vs. 15-16 are exceptions in this regard.

Most significant here is the pervasive teaching of Jesus Christ, both explicit and implicit with special reference to the Sermon on the Mount, that appears to continue on through to 14:20, and is well diagrammed by Stott.[16] Refer to 12:14, 17, 18, 20; 13:7, 8, 9, 11; 14:10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20. This may indicate not simply recollection of Gospel accounts, but also the effect of personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:15-16; I Cor. 11:23; II Cor. 12:1; Gal. 1:11-12, 15-17). Hence, the magisterial doctrine of Romans that is grounded upon the atonement of Christ finds its proper expression in those who walk after the ethical mandates of Christ (John 15:14).

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[14] Luther, *Works*, p. 458.

[15] "Let every one that 'cometh in the name of the Lord' be received. . . . If he that cometh be a passer-by, give him all the help ye can; but he shall not stay, except, if there be need, two or three days. If he wish to abide with you, being a craftsman, let him work and eat. If he have no craft, use your common sense to provide that he may live with you as a Christian, without idleness. If he be unwilling so to do, he is a 'Christmonger.' Beware of such. But every true prophet that willeth to abide with you is 'worthy of his food.' In like manner a true teacher is also, like the laborer, 'worthy of his food.'" *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed Henry Bettenson, p. 92.

[16] John Stott, *Romans*, pp. 317-9.

(a) Love that is kindly to enemies, v. 14.

Here are three strong imperatives, the first since v. 9. "Bless," εὐλογέω, eulogeō, means "to speak well of," "to eulogize," and thus "to pray for good to befall a person," rather than "curse, καταράομαι, kataraomai, which means "to pray for evil to befall a person." The object of this prayer is persecutors, or as Luke 6:28 describes them, those who curse, mistreat and abuse the Christian. Thus Matthew 5:43-44 is parallel here: "You have heard that it as said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Jesus' quotation includes the Jewish perversion of the Law, namely hatred of enemies, which led to the charge by Tacitus of the Jews' "hatred to the human race."[17] So for Paul, "when we are reviled, we bless" (I Cor. 4:12), by which evidence we testify of a renewed mind, of the love of God "poured out within our hearts," 5:5, and not mere discharged duty.

(b) Love that is understanding, v. 15.

We ourselves both rejoice and weep, and a self-absorbed frame of mind looks for others to respond sympathetically to our condition. But love is more selfless in being absorbed with the condition of others, the good of his "neighbor," I Cor. 10:24, so that it is "patient, . . . kind; . . . it does not seek its own," I Cor. 13:4-5. In other words, true local church fellowship involves profound spiritual empathy so that, "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it," I Cor. 12:26. More than a performance is envisaged here, such as when we manufacture the appropriate attitude; rather we genuinely enter into the other's joy or grief, in a manner similar to that of the Son of God who could "sympathize with our weaknesses," Heb. 4:15, yet without participation in them.

(c) Love that is mutual, v. 16.

"Be thinking the same thoughts amongst each other [cf. 15:5; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2; 4:2]; [Do] not [be] thinking the high thoughts, but be swept along as by a stream [in fellowship with] the lowly things [tasks and people?]. Do not be wise according to your own estimation." Here the renewed mind is addressed, the φρόνημα, phronēma, particularly the thought that is in the mind rather than the process of thinking. What are the "high thoughts"? Moo comments: Our overly exalted opinion of ourselves, leading us to think that we are always right and others wrong and that our opinions matter more than others, often prevents the church from exhibiting the unity to which God calls her."[18] The "high things" can also be the snare of scholasticism, esoteric forms of worship, and the like of By-ends and company in *The Pilgrim's Progress*

[17] John A. Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew*, p. 121.

[18] Moo, *Romans*, p. 783.

who only associate with those on pilgrimage in "golden slippers, in the sunshine, and with applause." In contrast the "lowly" walk in "rags" and are 'bound in irons."[19]

(d) Love with respect, v. 17.

As with v. 19, the Christian is not to take justice into his own hands. A court may rightly condemn a personal assailant, yet we who have received mercy are to show mercy "To nobody are you to repay evil [bad] for evil [bad. [cf. v. 14; Matt. 5:39, 43-44]. [Rather] show thoughtful regard for [the display of] good before all men." While charity begins at home, in the fellowship of the local church at Rome, yet opportunity should be sought, by means of thoughtful investigation, for the witness of good before the whole of this pagan society. For all of its blindness, the imperial city is able to acknowledge the good which the church is to embody, as well as the bad which has stained history!

(e) Love with peace, v. 18.

"If it is within your power, [be at peace] live peacefully with all men" cf. 14:19; Matthew 5:9; Mark 9:50. There is implicit here the overall expectation of human conflict (Matt. 24:6-7), yet the child of God is to have a "saltiness" (Matt. 5:13) that is rooted in the truth, among others, that God is peaceable in His essential being (15:33; 16:20). Further, He has made peace with such believers (5:1) and consequently established a peaceable disposition in their hearts and minds (8:6; 15:13). Not only is this characteristic to be evident within the local church (14:19), but also universally with regard to "all men." Hence the Christian is "not provoked" (I Cor. 13:5), and neither is he provocative; he is not drawn into contention, and neither does he contend like some "fighting fundamentalist" or "carping Calvinist." Of course right "contending for the faith" (Jude 3) is in no way eliminated here, only a militant nature that loves to fight and conquer such as the world manifests.

(f) Love with deference, v. 19.

Personal vindication according to the law has its place, such as where a Christian leader might wrongly be charged with a crime, so that the usefulness of a servant of God might be preserved.[20] When the plaintiff and the defendant are within a local church, procedure is laid down in the Bible for dealing with such incidents (Matt. 18:15-17). However, settlement with parties outside of the church may require civil due

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[19] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, III, p. 132-4.

[20] John Bunyan found himself in such a situation when, in being pressed by young Agnes Beaumont for a ride on the back of his horse to a church meeting, a scandal developed which required that civil authorities investigate. As a result Bunyan's innocence was vindicated in 1674 so that his fruitful ministry continued until his death in 1688. John Brown, *John Bunyan*, pp. 225-7.

process, and necessary enforcement, 13:3-4. In either situation, the Christian is not to attempt to be his own judge and jury. Therefore, as an extension of v. 17a, "Do not be taking your own revenge, beloved, bur rather give place to [yield to the rule of] the wrath [of God, cf. 5:9; I Thess. 2:16], for it has been written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." Here Paul gives a loose quotation of Deuteronomy 32:35, cf. Ps. 94:1; I Thess. 4:6; Heb. 10:30. If God has saved His elect in justice, 1:16-17; 3:26, and that in pure grace without their contribution, then He is just as capable of vindicating His elect in this present earthly life without their misplaced intervention (Luke 18:1-8).

(g) Love with mercy, v. 20.

But what shall be our attitude toward those who assail us? Shall we do our duty according to v. 19, leaving retribution to God, while we restrain our instincts and inwardly seethe? No! "Rather if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in doing this you shall heap up burning coals on his head" (Prov. 25:21-22; cf. Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35). So the Lord Jesus, "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (I Pet. 2:23). This was exemplified with his cry from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34), as well as that of Stephen while being stoned to death, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:60). Concerning this latter incident, one observer probably experienced this crushing weight of burning shame, even the human author of Romans itself (Acts 7:58). But further, this incident indicates the implicit desire and hope here that the enemy will eventually repent and be converted.

(h) Love with good, v. 21.

"Do not be conquered by [the] evil, but overcome evil with [the] good." This summary of v. 20 suggests that we are not to respond with evil toward evil, as is common in the world, but rather employ that which is good to vanquish evil. This principle applies to both the individual Christian as well as the local church as a whole. For Paul such a perspective results from a gospel rooted focus, not abstract concepts of evil and good that are associated with social morality and vaunted human decency. Thus "the evil" collectively represents that principle of corruption pervading both the whole of "the creation [subject to] its slavery," 8:21, as well as "the flesh" of the human race that is subject to bondage through sin, 7:5; 8:6-8. In stark contrast is "the good" which collectively represents that which is associated with obedience to "the truth [of the gospel]" and "righteousness," 2:8, 10. Of course this "good" is rooted in the essential and admirable righteous character of God as revealed in Scripture, not Plato or Aristotle.

B. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRANSFORMED RELATIONSHIPS, 13:1-14.

Although there are syntactical differences introduced at this point,[21] yet it remains difficult to avoid a connection in thought between the exhortation to "overcome evil with good," 12:21, and the subsequent exhortation concerning the submission of the Christian to divinely appointed human government. Most likely the present relationship between the Christians at Rome and the Imperial Government has come to the Apostle's mind, and this has led to the expression of 12:17-21, namely the commendation of loving non-retaliation. He may well have overheard the proposal by believers of a retaliatory, revolutionary attitude, perhaps stemming from long-standing Judaistic antagonism against Rome, that needs to be addressed. Do worldly kingdoms and legislators arise by means of overcoming evil with good? Should these worldly entities introduce this process and so largely eliminate punitive legal measures? To these arising issues Paul responds.

Furthermore, in the light of the Apostle Paul's call here for "submission to the governing authorities," to what extent did the Apostles as a whole demonstrate compliance with this principle in the light of the history of the early church (Acts 5:29)? So Paul injects a distinct body of thought, probably composed much earlier and proclaimed at a number of locations where this same widespread problem had presented itself, and has remained to the present.

1. Subjection to governing authorities, vs. 1-7.

"Every [living] soul, Ψυχή, psuchē] is to be in subjection to the governing authorities [ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις, exousiais huperechousais]." Paul elsewhere exhorts submission "to rulers, to authorities [exousiais]" (Tit. 3:1; cf. I Tim. 2:1-3), while Peter similarly declares, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority [huperechonti]" (I Pet. 2:13). The word here for "governing" is ὑπερέχω, huperechō, meaning "to have over," hence to be high above, to be exalted, to rule and govern over. In Paul's century, he particularly has in mind "Caesar" (Mark 12:17), "kings" (I Tim. 2:2), "governors" and "heads of every human institution" (I Pet. 2:13-14), many of whom established tyrannical, brutal, and pagan reputations. Certainly the Jews found such a concept difficult to accept, even though the Babylonian captivity was a lesson in this regard worth contemplating (Isa. 44:28; Jer. 29:7).

a. Their source of authority, vs. 1-2.

Basic to Paul's teaching here is the fact that God rules over all of human kind in a most comprehensive sense (Ps. 47:2, 8; 103:19; Dan. 4:17, 25, 32). Furthermore we might call the governance of God a communicable attribute; as He rules absolutely, so He has delegated governance to human kind since He, being a God who delights in order, therefore delights in the maintenance of order on earth; God abhors lawlessness, anarchy and rebellion. However repulsive the present world order may appear, the child of God must continue to acknowledge and revere God's present overall dominion, even in the midst of pagan administration

[21] It is suggested that 12:9-21 has continuity with 13:8-10; further 13:1 has no connecting particles, while 13:1-7 has no mention of "love" and "Christ." Moo, *Romans*, pp. 790-3; Morris, *Romans*, pp. 457-8. However the necessary and abrupt inclusion of this tangenital though related thought may easily account for stylistic variations.

(Acts 4:24-28). So Leon Morris comments: "We should be clear that Paul is writing about the existing state, not some ideal state that he hoped would appear. Every state has its faults, and first-century Rome had many. But it still had to be treated as the ruling authority and as such as the servant of God."[22]

(2) It is established by God, v. 1.

"For there is no authority except that which is by God, and those [authorities] which exist by God have been established [by Him]" (cf. Prov. 8:15-16; *Josephus*, Wars, II, 140, "no ruler attains his office save by the will of God;" also *Apocrypha*, Wisdom of Solomon, 6:1-3).

It is well to remember that Paul, while calling for universal, but particularly Christian submission to pagan authorities, had himself suffered numerous acts of brutality by means of these divinely appointed agencies (Acts 16:22-24; II Cor. 11:23). Hence he is not unmindful of exceptional circumstances that fall outside of the general rule he is here proclaiming (Acts 5:29; 23:1-5). To uphold an absolute principle here is to contemplate impossible situations where it would be incumbent upon the church to be subject to state secularity, while conformity to government religion and immorality would be mandatory. Hence, there is a limit to submission here which the Christian conscience must ultimately determine, though clearly he is to go to the greatest lengths to conform to civil law. As Bruce points out, "Christians will voice their 'No' to Caesar's unauthorized demands the more effectively if they have shown themselves ready to say 'Yes' to all his authorized demands."[23]

In *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, John Bunyan describes how he faced this dilemma. Having recently been imprisoned, under examination by Mr. Cobb, the Clerk of Peace, on April 3, 1661,he declared:

> *Bunyan*: I look upon it as my duty to behave myself under the King's government, both as becomes a man and a Christian. . . . I said, yes, and that I was to submit to the King as supreme, also to the governors, as to them that are sent by him.
> *Cobb*: Well then, . . . the King then commands you, that you should not have any private meetings; because it is against the law, and he is ordained of God, therefore you should not have any.
> *Bunyan*: I told him that Paul did own the powers that were in his day, as to be of God; and yet he was often in prison under them for all that. And also, though Jesus Christ told Pilate, that he had no power against him, but of God, yet he died under the same Pilate; and yet, . . . I hope you will not say, that either Paul, or Christ, was such as did deny magistracy, and so sinned against God in slighting the ordinance. Sir, . . . the law hath provided two ways of obeying: The one to do that which I in my conscience do believe that I am bound to do, actively; and where I cannot obey actively, there I am willing to lie down, and to suffer what they shall do unto me.[24]

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[22] Morris, *Romans*, p. 460.

[23] F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, p. 234.

[24] John Bunyan, *Works*, I, pp. 59-60.

In this regard, Christians are to be "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13), so that they best establish a peaceful and law-abiding society. But further, they are to pray "on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (I Tim. 2:1-2).

(3) It is resisted with consequences, v. 2.

"So that the one who is resisting the [divinely] appointed] authority has been opposing the ordinance of God." Surely Paul has a revolutionary and militant spirit in mind here that has shamefully marked the corridors of church history. This is the emphasis here of ἀντιτάσσω, antitassō, originally meaning "to arrange in battle against," this military usage being sustained through to the New Testament era.[25] Consider the Crusades, a bloody slaughter in the name of Christ against the powers of Islam, the Papal Militia, maintaining European dominance such as by means of the Spanish Armada, the Cromwellian revolution against Royalist tyranny, the Fifth Monarchists, establishing the kingdom of Christ on earth, etc. On the other hand, were the Reformation that opposed the Papacy and the American Revolution that opposed England, wrong?

Also consider the Hebrew midwives refusing to obey Pharaoh (Ex. 1:17), the disobedience of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego toward Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3:6-18), and the refusal of Daniel to worship Darius alone (Dan. 6:6-13). But further, were Peter and John wrong in declaring, "We must obey God rather than men?" (Acts 5:29). Obviously not unless Paul's injunction here is taken in absolute terms that call for passivity in the most evil and conscience offending circumstances. Most likely he has in mind a distinct and circumscribed frame of reference with regard to man's submission to the rule of man, and not that of man to God. Thus government, even in its most pagan form, is sanctioned by God to uphold civil law, the role of the magistrate, that which is derived from "the work of the law written in their hearts," 2:15, though certainly not humanist utopianism. The context here concerning "evil doing," v. 4, "taxes" and "custom duties," vs. 6-7, suggests this focus, without "the governing authorities" being exonerated from accountability.[26] So while the Christian would never bow to the command to confess Caesar as Lord, yet he would scrupulously bow to Caesar's civil demands, including the payment of taxes and in general great respect for law and order

"And those who have been opposing [the magistrate and civil law as ordinances of God] shall receive condemnation upon themselves," that is inevitable, fearful and immediate judgment by the pagan agency itself, God's

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[25] *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, eds. Vine, Unger, White, p. 528; J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 49.

[26] With the similar teaching of Christ in mind (Matthew 22:21), yet the question remains as to whether excessive and extortionate taxation, such as 70% in some socialist systems, is included. Doubtless resistance would be in order provided the means was within the bounds of the legal process.

instrument, as the subsequent context supports, especially v. 4b.[27] I Corinthians 11:29-30 has the same language that warns of judgment in this life. The alternative view of primarily eschatological judgment[28] is at best inferential.

b. Their role in society, vs. 3-4.

It is assumed that Paul has warned about divine judgment coming directly from ruling agencies, such as Rome, due to the fact that some Christians in the Imperial City have suffered on account of their defiance against "the governing authorities." Perhaps they were determined to avoid paying taxes, and as a result of being caught through an audit, have been severely punished and consequently tremble at the mere mention of the Roman authorities. Hence it is to be expected that a fearful attitude toward Rome has developed amongst certain local church members; they are probably smarting over their sore experience; they now receive the healing balm of a new perspective, that which replaces rebellion with reverence.

(2) They dispense praise for good, v. 3.

"For those ruling do not stimulate fear in the person who is known for good behavior, but rather in the one who is known for evil." Aware of perversion and inequity in government administration, yet Paul declares that spiritually blind pagan rulers are able to recognize the individual producing "the good work" as being worthy of peaceful subsistence and recognition.

"Do you wish to lose this fear toward those who exercise judicial authority? Then do that which is [the] good and you will receive praise from the same [judge]." Moo refers to evidence that Rome did openly recognize good citizenship.[29] Then how will the dominance of pagan Rome be overcome? Not by the customary method of uprising, of a *coup d'état*, that is a violent overthrow, but rather spiritual revolution according to Ephesians 6:10-17, as salt and light, that the world "may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16). Thus a Christian is to have a gospel/holiness priority, not a political, right wing, activist agenda.

(3) They dispense blame for evil, v. 4.

"For [the ruler] is a minister of God to you for [the] good," in spite of Caesar's claims to deity. He is an unwitting servant of God, even as were Cyrus the Persian, Herod the Great, and Pontius Pilate who, in spite of his boasted power, "Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" was admonished by Christ, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:10-11). Further, even though identifying with paganism, carnality, and

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[27] So Barrett, Calvin, Cranfield, Godet, Murray.

[28] So Hodge, Lenski, Moo.

[29] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 800-1

brutality, these tyrants are to receive respect with regard to their maintenance of law and order.[30] In this upholding of relative societal peace within a fallen human race, God confers a degree of honor on world leaders and rulers that the Christian above all is to acknowledge. Further, the magistrate awards praise on the good citizen because of his evident, ready compliance, v. 3, with the result that this governance proves to be for his advantage In what way? Perhaps 8:28 may be in mind, but more likely I Timothy 2:2 where prayer is exhorted, "for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." Submission, as far as is possible, results in the believer having a minimum amount of conflict which in turn enables him to better focus on his witness to the truth of the gospel.

"But if you [the professing Christian] do [the] evil, then fear [the magistrate], for he is not carrying the sword without a reason." What "evil" is envisaged here? Probably not common civil lawlessness, but a militant opposition and uprising before the existing administration, supposedly for the purpose of bringing in the kingdom of Christ. So Haldane rightly warns: "This ought to caution Christians against identifying themselves with political associations to opposes or subvert the government of their country. When they do so they are likely to suffer for it."[31] The "sword" or μάχαιρα, machaira, here is the two-edged Roman short sword, commonly used for regular military duty, including the execution of Roman citizens; but here it is representative of the severe, punitive power of law enforcement.

"For he is a minister of God, being a wrathful avenger on whoever is practicing evil." Twice in this verse, "God" has an emphatic position, the intent being to emphasize the subordination of all rulers to divine government and delegated authority. Hence, the one "practicing evil" is subject to the vengeance of God and consequent wrath, all of which is presently mediated through stern human administration. Here, as in other areas of life, the Christian is to perceive human affairs, including politics, according to divine focus. Such perception enables him to respond with the requisite subjection.

c. Their support from Christian society, vs. 5-7.

Up to this point the concern of vs. 1-4 has solely been with regard to the necessity of subjection to government and rulers without consideration of the motivating dynamic. Two people may obey government dictates while their reasons for doing so may be very different. Surely the power of gospel grace in the life of the Christian, previously expounded, ought to be a factor here, even as it appears to be the case in vs. 8-10.

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[30] This divinely given authority in no way invalidates accountability for paganism, carnality and brutality. Concerning Cyrus, "[t]he accounts which have come down to us seem to make it certain that he was killed in battle with some enemy," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, II, p. 775. Concerning Herod the Great, he died of tumors, worms and convulsions, *Josephus, Wars*, I, XXXIII, 5. Similarly his son, Herod Antipas, "was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:23). As for Pilate, on recall to Rome, investigation led to disfavor, at which he "fell into such calamities that he committed suicide." *ISBE*, IV, p. 2397.

[31] Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 590.

(2) With willing subjection, v. 5.

"Therefore" leads to a refinement of the concept of "submission" introduced in v. 1. There are two ways that subjection to civil law can be fulfilled. One is the restraint of penalty; it is "because of [God's] wrath" mediated through the magistrate; it is the persuasion of punishment; it is external pressure that does not change the evil heart, but merely reigns it in. The other way of subjection is through constraint of the conscience, συνείδησις suneidēsis, literally meaning "knowledge within," which surely is more than cognition of God's holy will, but rather affectionate agreement with God's holy will, born of regeneration and new motives. This is glad agreement, even as 9:1 suggests where Paul's "conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit."[32] So Peter exhorts, "Submit yourself for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (I Pet. 2:13). Hence, whether it be the demands of civil or God's moral law, it is the renewed heart that primarily results in acceptable conformity. However, it should be noted that the "not only," οὐ μόνον, ou monon, here does not exclude the external constraint of punishment; rather it becomes a subordinate factor.

(3) With taxation, v. 6.

"For on account of this" relates to the preceding direction that conscience provides, v. 5.[33] Hence it is the regenerate conscience that primarily causes the Christian to "pay taxes," not the threat of a tax audit and penalty! He "conscientiously" looks upon the Internal Revenue Service with respect, not rebellion. As a broad principle, this dynamic of the inward life of God in the believer's soul has had repeated emphasis in the preceding doctrinal presentation (5:5; 6:4, 11; 7:4-6; 8:3-6, 14-16); now it finds most practical expression. Therefore, since "rulers are servants of God [in the administration of an orderly society], constantly attending to necessary compliance in this matter [and thus unconsciously carrying out their divine mandate]," it follows that the Christian's God-directed conscience will actively consent to the tax code, again, because God is administratively in it!

(4) With honor, v. 7.

The matter of civic responsibility for the child of God is now broadened. "Pay back to all [every civic agency and ruler] whatever is owed." Four categories of indebtedness are revealed:

(a) "To the tax-gatherer, you are obliged to pay the levied tax," for he is a minister of God, cf. Mark 12:14-17. This federal type of tax, φόρος, phoros, was "tribute" paid by a conquered nation in subjection.

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[32] While συνείδησις, suneidēsis is used in 2:15 with reference to Gentiles, it is questionable if it has the same Christian orientation as here.

[33] So Cranfield, Moo, Murray.

(b) "To the custom agent, you are obliged to pay the levied duty," for he is a minister of God. This regional duty, τέλος, telos, was paid in Palestine for more local administration.

(c) "To the ruler engendering fear, you are obliged to pay the response of fear," for he is a minister of God. Caesar declared that he would rather be a dog than a son of Herod the Great. Yet reverent fear is his due.

(d) "To the ruler engendering honor, you are obliged to pay the response of honor," for he is a minister of God. Yet the acknowledgment that Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3:1-30) and Caesar are deity must be excluded.

Thus for the Christian, to whom God's "divine power has granted . . . everything pertaining to life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3), his participation in secular life is directed by a focus that perceives God's overarching administration. This is not to deny a contrast between the sacred and the secular, light and darkness, the holy and the unholy. However, God reigns over the "principalities and powers" (Col. 2:10; Eph. 1:20-21), particularly through His Son. Thus the child of God reveres such administration because of the kinship which his renewed heart has with this divine dominion. For this reason the Christian, though an alien in the world, yet is not alientated in his mind from the affairs of this world. For his reverent conformity requires some understanding of what the "principalities and powers" are about.

2. Subjection to the law of love, vs. 8-10.

In Romans 1-11, "love," ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω, agapē/agapaō, is only used with regard to either love from or love toward God, 5:5, 8; 8:28, 35, 37; 9:13, 25. Then in 12:9-10 we have the use of both ἀγάπη, agapē and φιλαδελφία, philadelphia, where their meanings, obviously concerning human relationships, distinguish between "love" and "brotherly love," that is love being deliberate, choice of the will,[34] in contrast with that which is tender affection directed toward a brother; here for the first time in Romans love on a horizontal plain is intended. Then again in 13:8-10 ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω, agapē /agapaō love on this same human level bursts forth being mentioned five times.

For Paul, "love" from God is rooted in the saving righteousness of a righteous God, 3:26, that is "love" grounded upon atonement that satisfies God's holiness, 5:8, which is foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Isa. 45:8; 46:12-13; 51:5-8; 56:1; 59:16-17; 61:10-62:2).[35] As A. H. Strong reminds us: "There can be no proper doctrine of the atonement and no proper doctrine of retribution, so long as Holiness is refused its preeminence. Love must have a norm or a standard, and this norm or standard can be found only in Holiness."[36] Hence, "the love of [from] God [that] has been poured out

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[34] This is particularly true with regard to the love of God. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, eds. Vine, Unger, White Jr., pp. 381-2.

[35] "Paul stands entirely in the line of OT tradition when he speaks of the love of God." *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, II, p. 544.

[36] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. x. Similarly Stott comments: "The truth is that love cannot manage on its own without an objective moral standard." *Romans*, p. 349.

within our hearts through the Holy Spirit," 5:5, will produce like kind in the relationships between believers.

a. Love is proper indebtedness, vs. 8.

"No, not in any way are you to be in debt to anyone [to any other person or institution], except to be indebted to one another in love." Clearly the avoidance of social indebtedness by means of a holy conscience in vs. 5-7 is the stimulus that leads to the extended meaning here. The superior motivation of "for conscience sake" in v. 5 suggests the constraint of love for God (II Cor. 5:14), not merely legal demand by God. Therefore this dynamic of love for God governs all human relationships (Matt. 22:37-38), but especially within local church fellowship; it is at the heart of right affections; it is the only obligation which, happily, is never to be brought to full settlement.

The context re paying taxes and duty indicates that indebtedness is not essentially wrong, even as Jesus taught (Matt. 5:42); the prohibition here concerns a bad attitude towards debts arising from contractual arrangements. In other words, indebtedness is to be promptly dealt with, and with a ready, submissive rather than a neglectful and grudging spirit.

"For whoever loves the other person [his neighbor] has fulfilled [the] law." But is "the other person" here with regard to Christian fellowship or the more inclusive scope of mankind in general, including idolaters and pagans? The letter being addressed to a church leads to the former opinion; on the other hand the preceding context concerning submission to rulers, taxes, duty, etc. would suggest men in general, even as is implicit in 12:14, 17, 19-21.[37]

But how exactly has love for "the other person [his neighbor] fulfilled [the] law"? The law or command of Leviticus 19:18 is in mind here, being in the context of many *imperative*s, whereas Paul is concerned with a basic *inclination* of the heart. Such a radical *tilt of affection* is rooted in the gospel, which finds the old command promulgated under a new administrator (John 13:34-35; I John 2:7-11). In other words, if the *inclination* is present because of the regenerating gospel, then the *imperative* will have inevitable fulfillment. In the same way, if through the gospel there results an *inclination* truly to love God, then the love of neighbour will inevitably follow in various particulars (Matt. 22:37-40). As a result "[the] law" will have been fulfilled, that is its moral essence and design, but not superceded.

b. Love is concern for your neighbor, v. 9.

By way of illustration, Paul makes reference to the 7th, 6th, 8th, and 10th Mosaic commandments with emphasis being placed upon the *imperative* against adultery, murder, stealing, and coveting, rather than the *inclination of the hear*t. These are but representative of other existing laws dealing with neighborly relations, including the 5th and 9th commandments against parental dishonor and perjury. However, the more fundamental *inclination of the heart* is then commended by

[37] So Murray, *Romans*, II, pp. 159-60. Cranfield, Morris, Shedd, are inclusive; Haldane, Lenski, Moo, Moule, are exclusive.

means of Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (cf. Gal. 5:14). The more contemporary understanding of encourage-ment to "self-love" misses the whole point here. Rather, there is assumption that man, by nature, has intense self-love; it is avid concern for health, comfort, food, recognition, tolerance, etc. and certainly not mere formal commitment to these matters. As Luther suggests, "no one wishes to be robbed, harmed, killed, to be the victim of adultery, to be lied to, victimized by perjury, or have his property coveted."[38] Our *inclination* to personal self-love is enthusiastic, therefore our inclination to neighbourly love is to have the same degree of fervency!

c. Love is fulfillment of the law, v. 10.

Consequently: "The love of one's neighbor does not [result] in working evil [against him]." Such an inference is absurd. Rather: "Love is the fulfillment of law." Some would suggest that the abiding moral law of Moses is kept through a willing spirit born of holy affections, not mere outward conformity.[39] We may be certain of one thing at this juncture, namely that the law of Moses was never intended to produce love; rather it "came in so that the transgression might increase," 5:20; "It was added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19). This brings to mind 8:3-4 regarding "what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh" and the remedy concerning what "God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement [righteousness] of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit," cf. Gal. 5:14. Thus love fulfills the essential law of Moses , as distinct from the shell of its Jewish administration, with regard to sexual purity, the sanctity of human life, and property rights. The new administration of this same righteous God is according to "the law of Christ" (John 14:34; I Cor. 9:19-21; Gal. 6:2; I John 2:7-8).

3. Subjection to holy union with Christ, vs. 11-14.

In Romans 12-13, practical exhortation, that anticipates spiritual growth, is based upon five vital elements: 1. *Mind renewal*, 12:1-2, 2. *Spiritual gifts*, 12:3-8, 13, 3. *Spiritual graces*, 12:9-12, 14-21, 13:8-10, 4. *Conscience direction*, 13:1-7, and now *Time perspective*, 13:11-14. The past has been an extended period of darkness; the present is the conclusion of the era of darkness and anticipation of light; the future day of consummated salvation is imminent. Therefore, this time perspective is a stimulant for Christians to presently live as "children of light" (John 12:36; Eph. 5:8; I Thess. 5:4-8).

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[38] Luther, *Works*, 25, p. 475.

[39] The term "moral law" is not to be found in the Bible, though some use it synonymously with regard to the abiding character of the Ten Commandments in contrast with the temporal character of the civil and ceremonial law of Moses. The Decalogue certainly does contain an abiding core that reflects the unchanging righteousness of God. However, we believe that through the New Covenant a better administration of this same unchanging righteousness of God has been forever instituted through Christ (Heb. 7:22; 8:1-6). Hence Paul is perfectly at liberty to use the Decalogue illustratively while at the same time he has emphatically declared that the Christian is no longer subject to this old administration, 6:14; 7:1-4; 8:3-4. Refer also to Moo, *Romans*, pp. 816-7.

a. Put on the armor of light, v. 11-12.

The element of pilgrimage is also present here as we leave the dark past behind, anticipate the glorious future of light, and make preparation for the present transitional journey by way of suitable clothing. So we are to "put on [clothe ourselves with] the armor of light," v. 12, and "the Lord Jesus Christ," v. 14. The original word ἐνδύω, enduō, describes John the Baptist being clothed (Mark 1:6), and the apostles being "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49); here in v. 12 the thought is that of offensive protection.

(1) Awake from sleep to salvation, v. 11.

"[As you are directed by love], be aware of the [significance of the] present time, namely that already the hour for you to arise [from spiritual lethargy] has arisen." Awakening from soul slumber concerns the urgency of avoiding "conformity with the present evil age (cf. 12:2)."[40] In other words, as you work for the Lord, watch the clock of history! (Luke 12:54-6); have eschatological sensitivity and discernment (Tit. 2:11-14).

"For now [the consummation of our] salvation has drawn nearer to us than when we [first savingly] believed." Time perspective requires that we appreciate the *terminus a quo* (starting point), or past tense aspect of salvation when we "first believed"[41] (Eph. 1:13). Paul does equate conversion with a point of time rather than a process. Time perspective also requires that we appreciate the *terminus ad quem* (finishing point), or future tense aspect of salvation when "the day," v. 12, of Christ's appearing and vindication dawns (I Thess. 5:9; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 1:5). So Alford concludes: "On the *certainty of the event*, our faith is grounded: by the *uncertainty of the time* our hope is stimulated, and our watchfulness aroused."[42]

(2) Awake from darkness to light, v. 12.

"The night has reached an advanced stage, and the dawning of the day has drawn near. Therefore discard the works of the darkness and be clothed with the weapons of light." Johannine imagery reminds us of the ultimate triumph of the Light over the darkness (John 1:5; cf. Job 29:1-2; Ps. 112:4; Isa. 9:2; 42:16; Mic. 7:8). If the "[darkness of the] night," representative of the reign of sin, is measured from the Fall, then like the "last days" (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:1-2), the whole New Testament era is perceived as that period when "the night is almost gone."

Thus the child of God is to scrape off the barnacles or attachments of the past, "the works of the darkness," as detailed in v. 13, and "put on [be clothed with] the full armor of God" (Eph. 6:11), Here τὰ ὅπλα, ta hopla, cf. John 18:3; II Cor. 10:4, is derived from the heavily-armed foot-soldiers of ancient Greece known as "hoplites" who were, during the reign of Alexander

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[40] Moo, *Romans*, p. 821.

[41] The ingressive aorist here suggests the "commencement of faith," cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 681n.

[42] Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, II, p. 423.

the Great, the best fighters in the Mediterranean world. The thought here is that fighting in the dark is extremely hazardous; hence only "the weapons of light" are adequate for such combat that is both defensive and offensive.

b. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, vs. 13-14.

Here the Christian foot-soldier, while exhorted to be clothed with "the weapons of the light," is also to be clothed with "the Lord Jesus Christ." What is the connection? The parallel with Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; cf. Romans 6:1-11, would suggest a more encompassing representation of v. 12. "Weapons" are but the accouterments and insignia of the man "clothed with Christ" who is invested with full recruitment rights. But how is a Christian, having been saved by Christ, to "put on Christ"? Is he not already "clothed with Christ"? The same problem arises in Romans 6:6, 11 where "the old man was crucified" and replaced by the new man when the Christian was united to Christ through saving faith, yet in Ephesians 4:22, 24 the Christian is exhorted to "lay aside the old self [man]" and "put on the new self [man]." Lloyd-Jones provides the answer: "[Paul is in effect saying] 'Do not go on behaving as if the old man was still there. Be what you are, do not be what you no longer are.' . . . Ephesians 4:22 is concerned about conduct, behavior [as vs. 24-32 confirm]; Romans 6:6 is concerned about the old man himself, not his conduct or behavior."[43] Ephesians 5:8 describes both "being" Light in the Lord and "walking as children of light." So here, to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" is a behavioral exhortation, as v. 13 confirms, to the Christian who has already become "clothed with Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

(1) Awake from deeds of night to day, v. 13.

Darkness is the common environment for sinning since man, with an intrinsic awareness that he is sinning, yet endeavors to transgress unseen (Job 24:15-16; Ps. 74:20; Prov. 3:13; 7:6-10; Ezek. 8:12). Specific deeds of darkness, as listed by Paul, are "carousing/reveling," "drunkenness," "unlawful sexual intercourse," "debauchery/carnal greed," "strife," and "jealousy/envy." But the child of God "walks in," invests in righteousness and godly wisdom, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), which are in stark contrast with the deeds done in the darkness (Prov. 4:18-19; Eccles. 2:13; Gal. 5:19-21). Such "appropriate behavior" or spiritual deportment by the Christian in the light of day is a witness both easily identified and open to examination by God (Mark 4:22).

(2) Awake from deeds of carnality to Christ, v. 14.

In view of v. 13, being clothed with Christ involves two nuances. First, this garment is to be obvious in the day, that is reflective of a faith and lifestyle that is readily identifiable as Christian. Second, this divine apparel covers the flesh, mortifies the deeds of the flesh in a dominant manner so that carnality does not intrude, 8:13. To use a military analogy, not only do "the weapons

[43] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 6*, pp. 82-3.

of light," v. 12, issued to a soldier by his commander, distinguish him, but particularly. his uniform likewise designed by the same commander (Isa. 59:16-17; 61:10). So the faithful soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, along with his fellow infantrymen, ought to be easily identifiable by means of his issued equipment and uniform. Aurelius Augustine testifies in His *Confessions*, concerning his conversion, to the change that vs. 13-14 here solicit. Refer page 2.

C. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STRONG TOWARD THE WEAK, 14:1-15:13.

Just as a parent is aware of strengths and weaknesses amongst his children, so a pastor is sensitive to degrees of maturity that exist amongst the children of God. John Bunyan portrays this spiritual variable in his classic *The Pilgrim's Progress* when he contrasts the hypochondriac nature of Little-faith with the King's Champion named Great-grace. So Paul now deals with this problem concerning the "weak" and the "strong," though the circumstances surrounding the problem that Paul confronts in Rome have involved considerable conjecture. Cranfield lists six possibilities.[44] Since the role of the Mosaic Law has been such a major concern of Paul, he most likely does address Jewish Christians who flirt with the law, perhaps not as decidedly as the Galatians; but the susceptibility is very real since outward conformity is entrenched, cf. 4:19 re Abraham. However grace will solve the problem, 14:19; 15:1-3, 7, not condemnation on the part of the strong, 14:1, 10, 13.

1. Acceptance of the weak in faith, 14:1-12.

It is significant that the frailty here concerns "the faith," which is that body of essential Christian truth that has the gospel of free grace at its core, cf. 4:19. But how does this truth relate to "being strengthless," ἀσθενέω, astheneō? Morris gets to the heart of the matter in commenting that Paul,

> does not mean a person who trusts Christ but little, the man of feeble faith. Rather, the person he has in mind is the one who does not understand the conduct implied by faith; perhaps he is the person whose faith is ineffective. His faith is weak in that it cannot sustain him in certain kinds of conduct. He does not understand that when the meaning of justification by faith is grasped questions like the use of meat and wine and special days become irrelevant. Paul is not referring to basic trust in Christ. He assumes that that is present, for this weak person is a member of the church, not an outsider who it is hoped will be converted. What is being discussed is the way the believer should live, the actions that are permissible or required.[45]

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[44] Cranfield, *Romans*, II, pp. 690-7; Moo provides six similar categories, *Romans*, pp. 828-9.
1. The "weak" are more legalistic, "Galatian;" the "strong" adhere exclusively to the righteousness of faith.
2. The "weak" are offended by eating meat offered to idols; the "strong" have liberty," I Cor. 8-10.
3. The "weak" are Jewish Christians who fasted; the "strong" are Gentiles having liberty, 15:7-13.
4. The "weak" are deniers of good food for bodily discipline; the "strong" have no such self-imposed rules.
5. The "weak" are akin to vegetarians, disliking the killing of animals; "the "strong" have no such rules.
6. The "weak" are Messianic Jews keeping the ceremonial law, but not legalistically; the "strong" see no necessity in this regard.

[45] Morris, *Romans*, p. 477.

a. The Lord is the judge of the weak and strong, vs. 1-9.

But how is a "weak" believer to be treated by his peers? In a family with a handicapped member, usually the healthy members will be very supportive, not judgmental. But such is not the case in Rome where man's self-righteous and judgmental tendency is erupting. Here are Christians living in liberty who are critical of those who retain certain practices associated with their past. Here liberty takes on a legalistic tone in that some feel it should to be imposed on others. But in certain areas of Christian living God alone, and not even church elders, is the child of God's judge; in biblical Christianity there is liberty to have distinctive habits, diets, clothing styles, provided modesty and moral standards are upheld, and there is not the imposition of certain standards on others.

(1) In matters of eating, vs. 1-3.

Here the matter concerns food, perhaps a kosher or vegetarian diet. By extension, this weak person may be a former Roman Catholic, Mormon, or Seventh Day Adventist, who retains past practices; he may insist on unleavened bread or fermented wine at the Lord's Table; he may feel constrained to tithe; he may only eat fish on Friday; he may always wear a tie or never wear a tie; he may believe that a white rather than a colored shirt is more appropriate for church, etc.

(a) Respect another's opinion, v. 1.

We are to "accept" or "take to one's self," προσλαμβάνω, proslambanō, with loving tolerance, cf. 13:8-10, the believer who has "opinions/reasonings" contrary to our own, even if these peripheral convictions and customs are legalistic remnants that are not mandatory for Christians. When a pastor comes to a new church, he must be nonjudgmental rather than iconoclastic. It is good to visit other faithful local churches when traveling simply for the benefit of seeing how they do things a little differently yet acceptably.

(b) Respect another's diet, v. 2.

"On the one hand a certain person believes he is able to eat anything," including pork, Scottish black pudding, escargot, rabbit, sushi, etc. "But on the other hand another person being weak [only] eats vegetables, λάχανον, lachanon," or "garden herbs" (Luke 11:42), especially organically grown without pesticides or artificial stimulants, not meat or dairy produce or scavengers. Notice that Paul does not consider the arguments, either pro or con, in either instance, or even the basic question of motivation. The real issue is one of attitude toward another authentic Christian.

(c) Respect another's rights, v. 3.

"The person eating [with liberty] is not to regard contemptuously the person not eating certain foods." Such an attitude of spiritual superiority on the part of the strong, that regards his brother as legalistic and immature, does not fulfill 13:8-10. "And the person who eats restrictively is not to be judging the one who eats freely." Such an attitude of spiritual superiority on the part of the weak, that regards his brother as licentious, and lawless, is also neglectful of 13:8-20. Morris is probably correct in stating that, "[n]ot infrequently the weak is the greater tyrant."[46] There is a carnal tendency for believers to be critical of other Christians who do not precisely match up to our expectations (Luke 9:49-56).

But the greater question about the peculiar deportment of Christians who in some ways differ from ourselves concerns whether God has "accepted" or "welcomed" them or not! If God has not "received them to Himself," προσλαμβάνω, proslambanō, then the matter of these behavioral issues is of no consequence. If God has "accepted them," then who are we to judgmentally spurn them? This was the substance of John Bunyan's argument when he confessed that water baptism should not be a prerequisite for church membership; if a person has been savingly accepted by God, then on that basis alone they qualify for church membership. This is a most fundamental point in all of our relations with other Christians.

(2) In matters of holy days, vs. 4-9.

What are the "days" that Paul now writes about in vs. 5-6, presumably from Corinth? Pagan celebrations are improbable since Paul is unlikely to countenance liberty to conform in this realm. However, there is considerable agreement that Jewish festivals, including the Sabbath, are in mind,[47] especially when the significance of the Mosaic Law in Romans is so pervasive, cf. Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16.

Both with regard to food, and now holy days, there is to be mutual respect with regard to the weak and strong. But a vital question remains; while Paul would not dissuade the strong from being strong, v. 14, is he equally content for the weak to be weak? Probably not; then how, in the light of his present exhortation is it possible for the weak to become strong?[48]

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[46] Morris, *Romans*, p. 479.

[47] Moo, *Romans*, p. 842, also Alford, Barrett, Gill, Lenski, whereas Murray limits the meaning to "the ceremonial holy days of the Levitical institution while the Sabbath remains a creation ordinance. *Romans*, I, pp. 257-9, also Hodge, Shedd.

[48] While the "weak" to this point have been understood as "weak Christians," Mark Nanos in *The Mystery of Romans,* pp. 103-165, makes a good case for "weak non-Christian Jews." In this case, Paul would first desire conversion of the "weak" after which the matter of "food" and "days" would find inevitable resolution through the perspective of the gospel.

(a) Respect another's accountability, v. 4.

By way of secular illustration, Paul considers a "house servant" who, to our judgmental way of thinking, is behaving improperly; but accountability concerns not ourselves, but the house servant's "master," κύριος, kurios, who alone has determined the status of his employee. So the "weak," with regard to "food," "days," and other similar matters including distinctive clothing, mannerisms, cultural quirks,[49] is only accountable to his "Lord," κύριος, kurios, that is the Son of God.

C. H. Spurgeon wrote a book titled *Eccentric Preachers* in which he details the unconventional, as distinct from trifling, gospel ministers whose idiosyncrasies he never coveted, yet acknowledged their usefulness and wrote, "to take the edge from the scalping knife of slanderous misrepresentation and carping censure."[50] Spurgeon acknowledged that these men were not accountable to him, but rather their own Lord and Master.

(b) Respect another's conviction, v. 5.

"On the one hand, a person prefers a particular day [a Saturday or Sunday for religious activity] above another day. On the other hand, another person judges all days [to be alike for religious activity]. Let each person be fully convinced in his own mind" This is not a directive for liberality within local church life where all opinions on these matters are suited, rather the admonition is for liberality amongst Christians who discover different lifestyles and religious habits amongst Christian associates. For instance, could not a Gentile Christian, in a non-judgmental manner, accommodate himself to the practice of a Jewish Christian who was in the habit of celebrating Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, according to the Christian understanding of I Corinthians 5:7? In other words, within local church life, under biblical eldership rule, yet there is to be liberty of conscience that is not to be abused. For Paul, this freedom is exclusively under "his own Lord," vs. 4, 6, and none other.

(c) Respect another's conscience, v. 6.

Here more narrow focus is upon right motivation, which is defined as "for the Lord" and "to God," to the exclusion of merit and Moses orientation. In such situations, genuine devotion, whether by the weak or strong, is not to be assaulted; a heart that authentically draws near to his God and Savior, however distorted or straight the way, is not to be judgmentally confronted. Such a God-centered interest is most likely to

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[49] Stott describes Paul as not insisting that, "everybody else agrees with him, as he did in the early chapters of his letter regarding the way of salvation. No, the Roman issues were *dialogismoi*, 'doubtful points' (NEB) or 'disputable matters' (NIV), 'opinions' (RSV) on which it was not necessary for all Christians to agree." *Romans*, p. 358.

[50] C. H. Spurgeon, *Eccentric Preachers*, p. 223.

lead to agreement and unity. The elders may have to establish certain standards even with regard to peripheral matters that introduce discord, vs. 17, 19-20; perhaps the elders will have to counsel both the weak and strong, but the individual believer is not to be his own judge and jury toward others.

(d) Respect personal insignificance, v. 7.

"For not one of us is living for himself, and not one [of us dies] for himself," since a higher principle applies. The judgmental attitude toward others is decidedly self-centered in a self-congratulatory sense. However a change of perspective is required that focuses on personal accountability before God that will have peaceable results on local church life. Both the weak and strong look inwardly with approval and outwardly with disapproval; but should they look heavenward to their Lord, they will then concentrate upon inward disapproval and ready acceptance of others who are different, but certainly no worse than themselves.

(e) Respect divine significance, v. 8.

Here is the classic God-centered focus of Paul that should cause our petty critiques to become insignificant. Our living existence is rooted in the Lord even as is our hope in death; therefore this reign is our supreme concern, especially in terms of accountability and fellowship. So Lenski comments: "See how Paul here lifts all of his readers to the highest level and to a broad, true vision of themselves and of their relation to the Lord. See too how here, as so often, when he would solve some small question he offers the solution that lies in the vast fundamentals. He takes it out of the little ill-lighted room, where one can hardly see it aright, into the full sunlight of Gospel truth, and the little difficulty disappears."[51] Too often the believer is zealous in his concern for the standing of others before the Lord, comparatively speaking, rather than himself. However the more important priority is living "for the Lord" knowing that we "are the Lord's," under his saving dominion, and therefore we mind our own business.

(f) Respect divine lordship over all, v. 9.

The fact of being the Lord's possession is expanded upon, but this context re v. 8, and here, suggests resultant lordship over those redeemed by the Lord, and not in a universal sense. Thus: "Christ died and lived again [for his own] for this purpose, namely that he might be Lord over both [the redeemed who are] the dead and the living." Thus Christ purposely died that the redeemed might focus on him. Hence, the critical brethren, both weak and strong, are to defer to this lordship,

[51] Lenski, *Romans*, p. 828.

especially as v. 10 indicates. They are to concentrate on this loftier and more important matter of personal accountability to Christ.

b. The Lord is the judge of us all, vs. 10-12.

The child of God is often trapped by subjective (internal) rather than objective (external) thinking. As a result "self" becomes our absorbing interest. In Luke 10:17-20 the seventy disciples have become amazed at their supernatural accomplishments, whereas their Lord cautions them to redirect their thinking away from the fact that "the spirits are subject to you" toward the greater truth, "but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." In Matthew 17:1-8 at the transfiguration of Christ this same change of perspective is found necessary. To begin with Peter declares, on behalf of James and John, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," v. 4. This was a wonderful experience they were having. But when the voice of the Father thundered from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to him!" enjoyment was overtaken with reverential fear as they, "fell face down to the ground and were terrified," vs. 5-6. So Paul has here exalted Christ's lordship to accomplish this very end. A change of focus brings a change of attitude.

(1) This includes your brother, vs. 10.

The "weak" is again described as being judgmental toward the "strong" while the "strong" is contemptuous toward the "weak." There are shades of Matthew 7:1 here that draws forth the sober revelation: "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God."[52] The τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ, tō bēmati tou theou, is paralleled by "the judgment seat of Christ," II Cor. 5:10. The allusion is to the raised Roman tribunal seat, where the magistrate sits in judgment, as did Pilate (Matt. 27:19; John 19:13). Here the judgment of believers is described, their secure salvation notwithstanding, I Cor. 3:12-15; cf. Rom. 2:5-16. Such a prospect is intended to sober both the "weak" and "strong." Morris states, "Any judgments that they may pass are irrelevant, and in the light of the assize they all face they should not presume to anticipate the divine judgment."[53]

(2) This includes every knee and every tongue, vs. 11-12.

In the light of 5:1; 8:1, the Apostle Paul is obviously distinguishing between the justification of the unjust and the justification of the justified, between the judgment of the alien and slave to sin outside of God's kingdom and the judgment of the child of God within God's kingdom. Having said this, Paul continues to warn the Christian of his present responsibility and the danger of antinomianism that scoffs at injunctions to personal piety.

(a) God alone requires we give account, v. 11.

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[52] Some manuscripts read, "of Christ."

[53] Morris, *Romans*, p. 483.

The quotation of Isaiah 45:23 establishes the abiding principle that, "As I live, says the Lord, *to me* [emphatic position] every knee shall bend and every tongue shall confess forth [ἐξομολογέω, exomologeō, give homage as Sovereign and Judge[54]] before God." Notice that Paul's addition of "As I live, says the Lord," cf. v. 9, indicates that he has the Lord Jesus in mind, even as is suggested by the gospel invitation of Isaiah 45:22

(b) We must individually give account, v. 12.

Perhaps alluding to Matthew 12:36 Paul makes the thrust even stronger: "Therefore each one of us [believers] shall give a word concerning himself to God." To "give a word" was a common expression for giving account, a reckoning in a commercial sense (Luke 16:2; Acts 19:40; Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 4:5). However God, even Jesus Christ, is to be the book-keeper, and not Christian brethren.

So C. H. Spurgeon comments here:

> The apostle argues strongly against this evil spirit of censoriousness in the Christian Church; and to give a knock-down blow to it he says, 'It is all needless; you need not judge one another, for both your brother and yourself will stand before the judgment seat of God. There is no need of your condemnation, for if any man be worthless the Judge will condemn him: you may not interfere with the business of the great Supreme; he will manage the affairs of men far better than you can.' Yet more, your judgment is unprofitable: you would spend your time much more profitably if you would recollect that you also who can be so exact and severe in pointing out this fault here, and the other fault there, will be yourselves examined by an unerring eye. Your own account books have to be sent in, and to be examined item by item; therefore look well to your own matters. If you were watching your own heart, out of which are the issues of life; if you were watching your own opportunities for usefulness; . . . you would be doing something that would pay you far better than censuring others, something much more to the glory of God, much more to the gain of the church, much more to the comfort of your own soul.[55]

2. Encouragement of the weak in faith, 14:13-23.

While explicit terminology concerning either the "weak" or "strong" is not used, at least not until 15:1, yet the emphasis clearly is with regard to the "strong" in relation to the "weak;" thus it is the "strong" who chiefly is addressed. Hence Paul gets down to the matter of how the "weak" might become "strong" and not become "weaker"! In simple terms the answer here is loving concern, not the imposition of liberty. From another perspective, we are not to argue about such matters as food and clothing; love overlooks these lesser concerns (Prov. 10:12; I Pet. 4:8). Notice that this principle is more broadly annunciated in 15:1-13.

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[54] Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 710.

[55] C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, V. 27, Sermon 1601, pp. 395-6 (Ages pagination).

a. Give priority to the avoidance of obstacles, v. 13-16.

From a Calvinist perspective, it would be easy to conclude that if a person is assuredly one of God's elect then he will eventually respond to our admonition to rise above immature legalism. However Paul indicates that God not only uses positive loving means to accomplish this end, but also the negative withdrawal of impediments, not only watering but also the weeding of the plot in which the weak saint is growing, and some of the weeds that need to be uprooted are in fact our perhaps well intentioned but self-directed righteous impositions.

(1) Consider your brother's stability, v. 13.

In the light of sober reflection on God being our judge, vs. 10-12, "therefore let us stop judging one another [as has been customary]" (Matt. 7:1). This weed seems to spring up everywhere in local churches, and it chokes out life rather than impart it! "But do be more judgmental in this matter, that you do not place an item of stumbling [of tripping over] before a brother that becomes a snare [a cause of spiritual calamity]." In other words we are to turn our penchant for judging upon ourselves and withhold expressions of liberty that may offend; we are to be more concerned about the spiritual health of a brother than our own superior correctness. Thus when I entertain such a weak brother, the menu will suit his convictions; the dress code will match his standards. So a European Christian, used to drinking alcoholic beverages, will not force this standard on others from America who might find it offensive. Similarly an American Christian, who is used to more colorful dress, will not flaunt his liberty in this regard when in the company of European Christians.

(2) Consider your brother's conscience, v. 14.

"And I know and have been persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in and of itself, except that whoever reckons anything to be unclean, to that person it is unclean." Clearly and emphatically Paul identifies with the theology of the strong which is the revealed teaching of the Lord Jesus that was so graphically conveyed to Peter (Acts 10:1-11:18; cf. I Tim. 4:4; Tit. 1:15). Further, the weak person here is wrong in terms of the application of gospel truth to life, yet a confrontational approach is to be rejected. In this regard Moo well states: "What Paul wants the 'strong' to realize is that people differ in their ability to internalize truth. . . . Paul wants the 'strong' in faith to recognize that people cannot always 'existentially' grasp such truth—particularly when it runs so counter to a long and strongly held tradition basic to their own [Jewish] identity as God's people."[56] The same problem arises with regard to an Arminian being confronted with Calvinism or a Paedobaptist being confronted with Baptist beliefs.

More important than truth confrontation, which can be destructive, v. 15, is conscience sensitivity, which concern, it might be added, is Paul's method,

[56] Moo, *Romans*, p. 853.

involving patience, by which the truth is ultimately embraced. Of course Paul is speaking here about individual relationships; he is not in any way calling for restrictive proclamation of apostolic doctrine through local church ministry, as the substance of Romans so well demonstrates. By way of analogy, in healthy family life it is usual for adults to frequently accommodate their lifestyle to the limitations of children concerning their capacity to walk, eat, converse, understand; certain legitimate matters are not spoken about lest they offend and disturb.

(3) Consider your brother's spiritual stability, v. 15.

"For if, on account of pressing liberty in the matter of food, your brother [in Christ] is hurt [wounded in his conscience], you are no longer walking according to love." Here Paul focuses on the Christian who is more concerned about truth than the love of people. After the strong Christian's vigorous defense of liberty which he believes will result in conversion to his superior way of thinking (I Cor. 8:10), the unexpected result is the weak Christian being offended (I Cor, 8:11); then he probably blames the resultant disquiet upon the weak brother, whereas Paul is of the opposite opinion. Thus the strong brother is to exercise discretion, tender and considerate regard, in his lifestyle regulated by gospel liberty. In broader terms, mature Christians are to learn loving tolerance with regard to their immature brethren; sanctification is a cultivated process and not all require identical nutrients even as not all have identical appetites (I Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:11-14; I Pet. 2:1-3).

"Do not ruin with your food that one for whom Christ died" resulting in authentic conversion. The word ἀπόλλυμι, apollumi, conveys loss of well-being rather than being, of spiritual destitution rather than destruction,[57] as in Luke 15:4, 6; I Corinthians 8:11. Gill describes this spiritual downfall as, "the destruction of such a man's peace and comfort, which is signified by grieving, stumbling, offending, and making him weak."[58] One element of ruination would be the hardening of the brother in his weakness, or polarization as we call it today. From another perspective, the Christian with little faith is entrenched in his weak condition and tends to fellowship with those of like belief and immaturity; so his condition is static rather than progressive.

(4) Consider your reputation for what is good, v. 16.

The strong Christian, having been called to consider the weak brother, is now called to consider himself, particularly his spiritual reputation. If contending for the truth of gospel liberty results in contention with and aggravation in the life of a weak brother, then we are the cause of, "a good thing [to] be spoken of as evil" NASB. Literally we read: "Therefore the good is not to be blasphemed [disparaged, deprecated] on account of you

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[57] Vine, Unger, White, Jr., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*. P. 164.

[58] John Gill, "Romans," *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Ages Software, p. 401.

[pl]." Thus a good end may be misrepresented through inappropriate means; thus a good end requires good means, and that is compassion, sympathy, and unselfish understanding; this is especially so in the case of a wise parent who, with a perspective of patient expectations spanning many years, nurtures his children according to their varying ages. A child who is pressed to hard, according to good ends, yet can be ruined even though the parent/child relationship is never jeopardized.

b. Give priority to the fruit of the Spirit, vs. 17-18.

In the realm of spiritual horticulture, there is a tendency to be ignorant of the need to rank matters having lesser and greater priority. Further, there is misunderstanding about the production of spiritual fruit, as if it were solely a sovereign work that is inevitable in the true child of God; as a result the concept of personal cultivation seems almost nonexistent, perhaps because initiative on our part is judged to be carnal effort. In the better establishment of the strong Christian, and as a consequence the establishment of the weak Christian, both of these elements are now addressed.

(1) Prefer that your fellowship be spiritual, v. 17.

The positive response to vs. 15-16 is the need to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. Self-directed focus on non-essentials can manifest itself in various areas of doctrine such as ecclesiology and eschatology; here the concern is with regard to sanctification.

"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking [as distinct from food and drink],"[59] particularly in a religious context, which are elsewhere described as "weak and worthless elemental things" (Gal. 4:9-10; cf. Col. 2:16-17, 20-23) Here non-essentials are contrasted with the lofty, encompassing, and especially sacred concept of God's realm as it has its apex in Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30-31; I Cor. 4:20; 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). This Son of God makes the same contrast in Matthew 6:25, 31-33 between material necessities, food, drink, clothing, and spiritual essentials, "the kingdom of God and His righteousness." This distinction is further defined with regard to tithing and "the weightier provisions of the law; justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23).

Here these weightier matters are described as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," being subjective, experiential manifestations of sanctification, the fruit of the Spirit, rather than objective representations of justification.[60] This has been a dominant emphasis in Romans, 5:2-3, 11; 6:4, 11; 7:4, 6; 8:2-6, 9-17, 23, 26-67, 31-39, in contrast with more carnal, material and formal concerns, 2:27-29; 7:6; 8:4; 9:30-31; 10:1. The context here concerns Christian deportment, the precedence of "hungering and thirsting after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6), which yet is grounded upon the gift of righteousness through faith. Hence what supremely counts for the

[59] Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 193.

[60] Barrett, Haldane, Moo, Morris, Murray, contra Alford, Cranfield, Hodge, Lenski, Moule, Shedd, Stott,

Christian is moral alignment with God (holiness), soul contentment with God (peace), and soul life from God (joy in the Holy Spirit). Food, drink, clothing, material comforts, and hundreds of other barnacles attached to church life, are relatively trivial. So Isaac Watts writes:

> Not different food, or different dress,
> Compose the kingdom of our Lord;
> But peace, and joy, and righteousness,
> Faith, and obedience to his word.
>
> When weaker Christians we despise,
> We do the gospel mighty wrong;
> For God, the gracious and the wise,
> Receives the feeble and the strong.

Consider David who, having sinned with Bathsheba and following the death of Uriah, for many months participated in regular religious worship. Following condemnation by Nathan the prophet, true repentance led the King of Israel to realize what was really important (II Sam. 11:1-12:23): "You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise" (Ps. 51:16-17).

(2) Prefer that Christ be served acceptably, v. 18.

Here is a contradistinction with that bad reputation described in v. 16 where the strong advocate is pushing his agenda: "For with this [right sense of priorities] in serving Christ we are pleasing to God and approved [vindicated/justified in true godliness] by men." The slave of Christ who concentrates upon "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," v. 17, offers discriminating service that first, pleases the Father, and second, in this right order, results in the acknowledgment by men, both believers and unbelievers, that here authentic Christianity is manifest. Also it is in this environment that the weak are strengthened, as v. 19 will intimate.

c. Give priority to peaceable fellowship, vs. 19-23.

Here Paul encourages "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3, 13) amongst the weak and strong in the church at Rome. As in I Corinthians 12-14 where the ministry of individual Spiritual gifts is for the purpose of edifying the Body as a whole rather than personal gratification (I Cor. 12:7, 25; 13:5; 14:1-5, 12, 26, 31), so here this goal of peaceful and united edification must override selfish considerations

(1) You are to build rather than demolish faith, vs. 19-20.

We are now introduced into the spiritual environment whereby the weak do in fact move on to maturity through corporate nourishment and loving involvement in local church life.

(a) To build is to edify, v. 19.

"Consequently, let us pursue the things that contribute toward peace." What are these things? Though not specifically mentioned, surely they encourage the "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" of v. 17 amongst the weak and strong; they are truths agreeably held in common and relate to gospel foundations that are productive of "grace and truth" (II Pet. 3:18). In the face of strife at Ephesus Paul writes: "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. . . . [W]alk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us" (Eph. 4:32-5:1).

"And [consequently, let us also pursue] the things that contribute toward the edification of one another." The word "edification" οἰκοδομή,Œikodomē, literally describes the building of a house, while here it concerns the building up of the edifice of regenerate souls. In Ephesians 4:11-16 this responsibility especially falls on "apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers," who are to be "speaking the truth in love" to the end that, "the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." Note the use here of οἰκοδομή,Œikodomē, in vs. 12, 16.

Thus the leadership of a local church will teach doctrine that is in agreement with the strong rather than the weak, such as Paul writes about in Romans and Galatians. But mature individual members of the fellowship are to minister patience and compassion rather than divisive confrontation toward those who are immature. C

(b) To demolish is to offend, v. 20.

"Do not be demolishing the work of God for the sake of food. On the one hand all things [varieties of food] are clean. But they are bad for those who upon eating are being offended [in conscience]." Here the process opposite to that of v. 19 is contemplated, καταλύω, kataluō, describing spiritual impoverishment, the destruction or overthrow of faith. Note the use of both words in Galatians 2:18. For Paul food is such a trifling matter when compared with the matter of soul stability.

What really counts is "the work of God" whereby the saved soul should not unnecessarily be unsettled by arousal to indignation over such a paltry matter as "sacred" food. Such aggravation, in leading to conviction of sin, does not promote stability in a brother who is more frail in faith. In fact all food is "sacred" (Matt. 15:11), so that the Mosaic code has been abolished and replaced by a new menu of food and drink that Christ supplies (John 6:35; 7:37). As sinners come to the Lord's banqueting table, long-standing guests are to be patient as new arrivals experience a radical change of diet.

(2) You are to refrain from upsetting faith, v. 21.

"It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine or to do anything that leads to your [Christian] brother stumbling." Clearly Paul continues to address the strong Christian who is, like a midwife offering postnatal care, to focus on the spiritual health of others rather than himself. The "meat" and "wine" may have pagan associations, yet the principle would still apply with regard to selfless submission to vegetarianism and alcoholic abstinence. Hence, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). So Christ the Strong Man likewise subjected his own divine prerogatives to the needs of His weak brethren (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:9, 14-18; 4:15). For a believer to "stumble" here is to yield under constraint to what he regards to be a sin, which in fact is sin in subjective terms even if not so in objective terms, as v. 23 explains. For Paul, it is far better to allow a peripheral, formal practice in a stable situation rather than bruise the conscience and introduce instability,

(3) You are to maintain faith at all costs, vs. 22-23.

The foregoing has presupposed eating and drinking by the strong in the presence of the weak, such as at a church fellowship meal or a public restaurant. However, there is no restriction upon the strong Christian who, whether alone or with others of like mind, takes full advantage of his liberty in Jesus Christ. Here, as in this whole matter, discretion is required.

(a) Keep your own conviction before God, v. 22.

"You who are [strong] having faith according to your own convictions, have it as before God. Blessed [at peace in his soul] is he who is not judging [offending/condemning] himself in that which he [with liberty] approves." Surely Paul is here reflecting on that blessedness which he himself has experienced; indeed he commends this preferable, mature condition of the soul and implicitly allows such expressed liberty where the situation is appropriate. However, the constituency of local church life in general does not allow such luxury. As John Bunyan writes:

> Alas! Here's children, here are great with young;
> Here are the sick and weak, as well as strong.
> Here are the cedar, shrub, and bruised reed;
> Yea, here are such who wounded are, and bleed.
> As here are some who in their grammar be,
> So here are others in their A, B, C.
> Some apt to teach, and others hard to learn;
> Some see far off, others can scarce discern.[61]

[61] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, II, p. 583.

(b) Keep your brother from sinful doubting, v. 23.

"But whoever is doubtful concerning whatever he eats [or drinks] is to be condemned because he is not acting on the basis of faith; whatever is not of faith is sin." How does this doubt arise? Through the imposition of the strong. Therefore Paul considers an attempted profession of liberty, by a would-be "strong man" under pressure, who in reality is influenced by sensuality and formalism, is troubled with guilt, and thus is weak in faith.

The meaning of "faith" πίστεως, pisteōs, is to be carefully distinguished in this verse, cf. vs. 1, 22. It is not so much an object in itself as trust in a saving object. Thus the weak Christian looks to Christ with faltering, clouded vision concerning the ramifications of the gospel; this form of unbelief is sin. The strong Christian looks to Christ with firm persuasion concerning the ramifications of the gospel; this faith has lifestyle expression which is the "freedom that [by which] Christ set us free," for which reason we are "not to be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). However the strong are not to coerce the weak into faithless activity. In this situation the weak usually conform because of what the strong Christian requires rather than on account of the clear will of God that illuminates their soul.

Thus the broad principle is established that whatever action we take, if it is doubtful and not born of conviction that it is the right will of God, then that faithlessness is sin, not necessarily the distinctive activity itself. So Haldane rightly sums up: "To obey God acceptably, we must have a conviction that we are doing the thing which He has enjoined."[62] Hence, a conscious awareness of our peaceable walk with God, along with that of our Christian brother, is a vital matter.

3. Support of the weak in faith, 15:1-13.

Continuity with the preceding 14:1-23 is obvious. However, other factors have led to a chapter division at this point. First is the conclusive identification of Paul with the "strong" who are first explicitly identified as such; this seems to be a summing up of the subject at hand that includes a climactic application concerning Christ. Second is the vocabulary change from the "weak" to those now described as being "without strength [impotent]," and thus in need of Christ. Third is the transition into the doctrine of Christ, especially as it relates to the Gentiles. Perhaps v. 7 is a more suitable chapter break.

a. Uphold the weak neighbor for his good, vs. 1-6.

Like a concerned hen that is detached from her chickens, so Paul continues to brood over the weak in particular. Now he seems to allude to the strong as also

[62] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 616.

being spiritual leaders in this fellowship in Rome, especially since he personally identifies with them.

(1) The strong should edify the weak, vs. 1-2.

Here selfless concern for those committed to the under-shepherding of local church leaders is a vital qualification, even as it is to be a characteristic of every local church member (Ezek. 34:1).

(a) Bear his weaknesses, v. 1.

"Now we who are the strong are indebted to bearing the weaknesses of those who are without strength rather than pleasing ourselves." Both Paul and the strong are obliged to be tolerant toward the weak. Such obligation is based upon the toleration of Christ as the Strong Man toward we who were formerly weak, even as vs. 3, 7-9 indicate. The "weak," ἀσθένημα, asthenēma, 13:1, are now described as being "without strength," ἀδύνατος, adunatos, that is lacking the strength of faith to grasp their emancipation from certain old covenant ritual requirements. Often a relatively new convert will continue with some unsavory habits that are inevitably discarded.[63] In the meanwhile, the strong are to be patient with this cocoon shedding.

Such tolerance may require self-restraint with regard to ready judgment, also abstinence from certain innocent lifestyle preferences. Motivation here is not the fulfillment of revealed duty but compassionate concern born of Christ's incomparable compassionate concern for us (I Cor. 10:33; II Cor. 5:14-15; Phil. 2:4).

(b) Build up for his good, v. 2.

"Let each one of us please our neighbor for his good that results in edification." While the "strong" continue to be addressed, yet the principle of selfless concern for the "weak" takes on a more encompassing perspective with the substitution of the term "neighbors" (Matt. 22:34-40; Rom. 13:9-10; Gal. 5:14; Eph. 4:25; Jas. 2:8). However doing "good" is qualified as "edification," οἰκοδομή, oikodomē, the promotion of spiritual growth, the building up of the soul, as in 14:19. I Cor. 14:12, 26. Paul never uses this word of self-edification but always of someone else being edified by another, even God (I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 5:1). In true romance, the dominant attitude is "love for" with the response of "love from." So a true church member,

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[63] Early in his ministry at Aberavon, Wales, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones smoked both cigarettes and a pipe. When preparing a sermon on John 8:32, "[Y]e shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," "the conviction suddenly came to him like a dart, 'You are not free!' He was convinced that his dependence upon smoking was unworthy of a Christian. For two to three weeks he had an 'awful struggle' over the matter, Bethan would say that it was the only time she ever saw him depressed. Then, to prove that as a Christian he was not in bondage, he resolved to smoke only once a day. This he did for about a year, until April 1, 1930, when he gave up smoking entirely." Iain Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The First Forty Years, 1899-1939*, I, p. 264.

while benefiting from spiritual nurture, yet his dominant concern is "for each of us to please his neighbor."

(2) The Christ should be our model, vs. 3-4.

For those not redeemed, Jesus Christ is an impossible and futile model; for those who are redeemed, Jesus Christ is an attainable and familial model (Rom. 8:29; II Pet. 1:4; I John 3:2). Here the modeling concerns the example of Christ's willing humiliation in "the interests of others" (Luke 22:42; II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:4-8; cf. John 13:1-17). As Murray comments: "It is noteworthy how the apostle adduces the example of Christ in his most transcendent accomplishments in order to commend the most practical duties."[64]

(a) The Scripture declares his selfless burden bearing, v. 3.

"For even Christ did not please himself;[65] but just as it has been written, 'The reproaches of those reproaching You have fallen on Me.'" Consider Psalm 69:5-9 as a whole, from where this quotation comes; David, as a sinner, is concerned that he will not stain the reputation of the "Lord GOD of hosts," vs. 5-6. Nevertheless in response to the grace of God he is ready to bear the rebuke of God's enemies, even family members. So great is his zeal for God's holy dwelling that, in thinking little of himself, he will readily deflect the assaults that are directed against Him. So in John 2:17, the selfless concern of Jesus Christ in the cleansing of His Father's Temple was noted by his disciples as they recalled, "Zeal for Your house will consume me" (Ps. 69:9a). So here, with David as the antitype, this same selfless concern of the Son for deflecting the rebuke directed toward his Father (Ps. 69:9b) is a model for true disciples of Christ. Thus how can the strong not lovingly defer to the weak in the light of Christ's infinitely greater deference to the holy reputation of His Father?

(b) The Scripture is designed to give instruction and hope, v. 4.

"For whatever was written beforehand was written for our instruction so that through perseverance [resulting from Scripture study] and [resultant] encouragement we might have hope." Here Paul, by way of excursus, injects a vital Bible study principle that he has just demonstrated. Concerning the Old Testament it may be said that all of it is the exhaled, inerrant Word of God; all of it is profitable, especially in an illustrative and applicatory sense, though all of it is not of equal importance or equally mandatory. Note that "All Scripture" (II Tim. 3:16-17) primarily has the Old Testament in mind. So Moo declares: "The OT, though no longer a source of direct moral imperative (6:14,

[64] Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 198.

[65] According to Morris, the constative aorist of ἀρέσκω, areskō, meaning to please, may suggest the whole of Jesus' earthly life." *Romans*, p. 498. Moo is doubtful concerning this grammatical intent. *Romans*, p. 868.

15; 7:4), continues to play a central role in helping Christians to understand the climax of salvation history and their responsibilities as the New Covenant people of God. Cf. Rom. 4:24; I Cor. 9:10; 10:11; II Tim. 3:16)."[66] Thus the Christian, under the dominion of Christ through the New Covenant, has liberty in discerning what is required of him according to Old Testament precept and principle, and also what in the Old Testament is illustrative of New Testament precept and principle (Jas. 5:9-11).

But how does "perseverance" relate to the "encouragement" and "hope" that result from Scripture instruction? The word ὑπομονή, hupomonē, also meaning "patience/endurance/resolve," or simply "pilgrimage persistence," describes that which is also subjectively derived from Scripture, even as in v. 5 it is "God who gives perseverance and encouragement." Thus Paul is emphatically recommending ongoing study of the Word of God; his own use of it throughout Romans, quoting over 160 passages from 24 books of the Old Testament, certainly generates perseverance, encouragement, and hope.

(3) The glory of God should be our end, vs. 5-6.

Paul now transports us from the realm of responsible selflessness, vs. 1-4, to that of divine enabling which then results in the acknowledgment of divine glory, vs. 5-6. If you stop at vs. 1-4, the praise of human accomplishment will intrude; but Paul deflates such a prospect when he prays, "Now may the God who gives . . . grant you . . ." From another perspective, selfless service reaches its ultimate height when both the strong and weak, as well as Jesus Christ, focus on the glorification of God the Father.

(a) Through like-mindedness in Christ, v. 5.

For Paul, the admonition of vs. 1-3 is not enough; through prayer is the acknowledgment of human insufficiency within the lives of believers and necessary divine bestowal of grace, (Eph. 1:15-17; 3:14-16; II Tim. 1:16, 18). Specifically, while God gives "perseverance and encouragement," Paul's primary concern is that God will enable the matchless example of Christ's selfless service to become a unifying principle, "to be of the same mind" ὁμοθυμαδόν, homothumadon (cf. I Cor. 1:10; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 1:27; 2:2, 5; 4:2), within the church at Rome. The Apostle desires that, "there be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another" (I Cor. 12:25).

(b) Through unity in Christ, v. 6.

The fruit of local church unity, being "of the same mind . . . with one voice [mouth]," is the display of God's excellence, His glory, through vocal expression (using good preaching, witnessing and hymnody), not

[66] Moo, *Romans*, p. 869,

the praise of church administration. The collective purpose of concord is again selfless interest in God's vindication, and specifically that of the Father through the agency of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:24-28; II Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 5:20; Col. 1:3; 3:17). Such united proclamation could include the stanzas of Joseph Swain:

> How sweet, how heavenly is the sight,
> When those who love the Lord
> In one another's peace delight,
> And so fulfill His Word.
>
> When each can feel his brother's sigh
> And with him bear a part;
> When sorrow flows from eye to eye
> And joy from heart to heart.
>
> When free from envy, scorn and pride,
> Our wishes all above,
> Each can his brother's failings hide
> And show a brother's love.

b. Uphold one another for the common good, v. 7-13.

The specificity of 14:1; 15:1 with regard to the weak and the strong seems to now broaden as tension between Jews and Gentiles in local church life, that conflicts with desirable unity, is re-considered; in so doing we are reminded of prior major doctrinal emphases that lead us to the formal conclusion of Romans at v. 33. Moo makes the significant comment that, "the barrier between 'strong' and 'weak' is at root the barrier between Jew and Gentile, a barrier that Christ's ministry dismantled."[67]

(1) Christ has accepted the Jew and Gentile, v. 7-12.

In *A Reason of My Practice in Worship*, John Bunyan comments on Romans 15:1-7 as follows:

> I am bold to hold communion with visible saints as afore [described];[68] because God hath communion with them; whose example in the case we are straitly commanded to follow. . . . Yea, though they be saints of opinions contrary to you; though it goeth against the mind of them that are strong. . . . You say, to have communion with such weak brethren, reproacheth your opinions, and practice. . . . Vain man! . . . Wherefore he that hath communion with God for Christ's sake, is as good and as worthy of the communion of saints as thyself. . . . Now him that God receiveth and holdeth communion with, him you should receive and hold communion with.[69]

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[67] Moo, *Romans*, 875-6.

[68] Bunyan has just qualified the faith of such saints which chiefly comprises, first, the received righteousness of God which comes through faith alone in Jesus Christ, and second, the one baptism of the Holy Spirit. *Works*, II, pp. 609-10.

[69] Bunyan, *Works*, II, p. 610.

(a) Christ has accepted us as a church, v. 7.

"Therefore you are to accept [present tense, receive to oneself with special interest][70] one another, just as Christ also accepted [aorist tense, by means of the atonement] us, to the end that God would be glorified." While 14:1 addresses the strong with regard to his regard for the weak, here the desired acceptance is to be reciprocal so that all the fellowship at Rome are now addressed. Of course if God the Father is glorified through the dying obedience of God the Son that obtained the redemption of the elect, Eph. 1:6, then this mutual acceptance that the elect manifest consequently glorifies God the Father as well, v. 6.

Of course acceptance here amongst a Christian congregation must involve areas of disagreement; however these must be sublimated to the more important cause of the unity of the body of Christ (Ps. 133:1-3; I Cor. 1:10; 12:25). Thus Charles Wesley has written:

Touched by the loadstone of Thy love,
Let all our hearts agree,
And ever toward each other move,
And ever move toward Thee.

(b) Christ has accepted the Jew, v. 8.

"For I say that Christ has become [perfect tense, stressing permanence] a servant of the circumcision [Israel] on behalf of the truth of God for the purpose of confirming the promises that belong to the fathers" (Matt. 15:24). The mention of Israel first confirms the priority of 1:16; 2:9-10. In reiterating the unity through acceptance that v. 7 has exhorted, it is probable that the Gentile in particular is addressed here; he is to be respectful of the Jewish Christian, especially during the present period of Gentile prominence (Luke 21:24; Rom. 11:25). Notice that the distinctive Jewish identity that circumcision indicates is not denied; but whereas Romans 11 in general deals with Israel in unbelief, as enemies, as severed branches, 11:7-10, 17-22, 28, here the concern is for the "remnant according to God's gracious choice," that must be lovingly regarded by the Gentiles as part of the body of Christ. As circumcision was a sign of the covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 17:10-14; Rom. 4:11), so the Christian Jew retains, through Christ, an inheritance in "the promises given to the fathers," 9:5; 11:28-9. Here is a further indication that "it is not as though the word of God has failed," 9:6.

(c) Christ has accepted the Gentile, vs. 9-12.

Not only has the Gentile been admonished, but also the Jewish Christian has been reassured of his covenant security. Moo further explains that, "Paul implicitly reminds the 'weak,' mainly Jewish

[70] *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, eds. Vine, Unger, White, p. 511.

Christians, that the "strong,' mainly Gentile Christians, are full members of the people of God: they, 'wild olive-shoots,' have been 'grafted in,' 11:17. At the same time, however, he reminds the 'strong' that the status they enjoy rests on a Jewish foundation: 'the root supports you,' 11:18."[71]

1) They will glorify God's mercy, v. 9.

"And [Christ has also become a servant] to the Gentiles according to His [God's] mercy to the end that God might be glorified, just as it has been written." Recalling the climactic declaration of praise to God's glory concerning God's distinctive dealing with Jew and Gentile in 11:33-36, here is similar focus, but especially on the God-glorifying incorporation of the Gentile into "the rich root of the olive tree," 1:17. Thus the barrage of Scripture quotations, from the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, is intended to solicit glad acknowledgment from the Jewish Christians of what God has ordained from the beginning and wrought by means of His comprehensive grace.

The quotation of Psalm 18:49; cf. II Samuel 22:50, is part of David's celebration concerning the Lord's provision of deliverance from all his enemies and Saul in particular. Consequently, "the mercies experienced by David were too great for the praise of them to be confined within the narrow bounds of Palestine. He can only have a proper auditory in the nations of the whole earth."[72] The plain implication is that the heathen too can be the objects of this mercy if they will, with true repentance, worship only the Lord.

2) They will fellowship with the Jews, v. 10.

The Son of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:1-43, climaxing the prophet's life just prior to his death, commences, "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth," v. 1. Following the praise of Jehovah's triumphant saving of His people, and that in spite of the fact that Israel "forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation," v. 15, yet "the LORD will vindicate His people, and will have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their strength is gone," v. 36. Therefore, "rejoice, O nations, with His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants," v. 43. Thus God's mercy to Israel should encourage the Gentiles to have hope in this same grace.

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[71] Moo, *Romans*, p. 877.

[72] E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Psalms*, V, p. 322.

3) They will praise the God of Israel, v. 11.

"Praise the LORD, all nations; laud Him, all peoples!" Psalm 117:1, as quoted here, along with Psalm 47:1; 66:8; 98:4, is probably derived from Deuteronomy 32:1, 43. Here the reason for such Gentile participation is the "lovingkindness" and "truth of the LORD," v. 2. In Psalm 47:1-3 the reason is His sovereignty. In Psalm 66:8-12 the reason is His giving of life, His gracious preservation. In Psalm 98:1-4 the reason is His salvation, His "righteousness in the sight of the nations," v. 2, and His lovingkindness and faithfulness before "all the ends of the earth," v. 3. Thus David has a right missionary spirit that would sing the words of Frederick W. Faber:

Souls of men, why will ye scatter
Like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts, why will ye wander
From a love so true and deep?

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice
Which is more than liberty

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

4) They will hope in the root of Jesse, v. 12.

Here, with great specificity, is the promise that the Gentiles will enter into glorious redemptive and millennial blessing. While Isaiah 11:1-5 describes Messiah's redemptive kingdom under construct-ion as a result of his first coming, so Isaiah 11:6-9 reveals the consummation of this same kingdom at his second coming. Thus Isaiah 11:10 describes the substantial role that the redeemed Gentiles will have in that glorious economy when "the root of Jesse . . . arises to rule over the Gentiles." As a result, "in Him shall the Gentiles hope," in contrast with their present vanity. However, the point is that the Gentiles also will share in the large mercy of God, in company with the Jews.

(2) Christ has provided the ground of mutual hope, v. 13.

"So may the God of hope fill you [Jews and Gentiles]with all joy and peace in believing so that you [Jews and Gentiles] will abound in [the same] hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." The major section commencing 14:1 is now brought to an optimistically prayerful conclusion. Even as chapters 9-11 concluded with a harmonious resolution concerning the present tension between Jew and Gentile on a broad scale, so here tension of the same kind

at a local church level ends in rapprochement that unitedly focuses on a common hope. The previous quotation of Isaiah 11:10 in v. 12 defined that hope whereby Jews and Gentiles shall trust both subjectively and objectively in "the root of Jesse." That is, the church at Rome is to have a heart pulsating confidence in the only risen, exalted, interceding, reigning Savior. Such a convergence of faith by both the weak and strong, Jew and Gentile, is to be upon Christ rather than personal distinctions. Thus Moo is to the point in declaring that "Paul's 'bottom line' is the unity of the church. . . . this unity is not to be pursued at any price; but Paul is adamant about not allowing differences between believers about *adiaphora* [indifferent, inconsequential matters, 14:3, 5] to injure the oneness of the body of Christ."[73]

While exhortation has been specific regarding personal responsibility in the promotion of unity, 15:1-2, 7, yet there is ultimate recognition of the uniting power of the Holy Spirit (John 17:20-21; I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:19-22; 4:3-4), which is very different from formal, ecumenical unity. But more than this, Paul's expectation is for such a fullness of this same Spirit to be productive of active and reactive joy and peace; each believer becomes a spiritual catalyst that at the same time generates cohesion. So Henry Moor, revised by John Wesley, has written:

> Father, if justly still we claim
> To us and ours the promise made,
> To us be graciously the same,
> And crown with living fire our head.
>
> Our claim admit, and from above
> Of holiness the Spirit shower,
> Of wise discernment, humble love,
> And zeal, and unity, and power.

D. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PAUL AS A GOSPEL MINISTER, 15:14-33.

Here the formal conclusion of Romans 1:1-15:13 gently commences, and Morris sums up the overall preceding context as follows: "Paul's great treatment of justification has ended. He has shown something of its necessity, of what Christ has done to being it about, of the necessity of trust in him, of what it means in terms of Jew and Gentile, of the importance of living day by day as those who have been justified by faith."[74] We move from the Apostle's confidence that the church at Rome will joyfully "abound in hope by the Holy Spirit," v. 13, in accord with his distinctive Gentile ministry, to his itinerant plans for what is probably a first face-to-face encounter, 1:10-15; 15:24.

1. The proclamation of Christ to the Gentiles, vs. 14-21.

The self-depreciating ministry of John the Baptist (John 1:23; 3:30) has always been a pastoral model, and likewise Paul is of the same temper (I Cor. 3:4-7; I Tim. 1:12-17),

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[73] Moo, *Romans*, p. 883.

[74] Morris, *Romans*, p. 508.

although he never undervalues his distinctive calling through grace as a trail-blazing minister to the Gentiles, even at Rome. Hence, with a sense of responsibility as "a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles," v. 16, according to the following itinerant details, his vocational signature is added in conclusion whereby the authority of his preceding exhortation is upheld and sealed. After all, he has "written very boldly . . . on some points," v. 15, especially with regard to a church he did not found.

a. To Gentiles in Rome, vs. 14-16

Paul's sense of divine calling to apostolic ministry was very strong, that is he was dominated by a distinctly revealed missionary appointment that must be accomplished in accord with the mandate of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:15-16). Thus, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course [δρόμος, dromos, foot race] and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24; cf. Phil. 2:17; II Tim. 4:6-7). This same intense commitment is indicated here as a vocational passion whereby "my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit," v. 16.

While Paul has made numerous references to gospel ministry that incorporates the Gentile as well as the Jew, 1:13-14; 2:8-9, 14-16; 3:29-30; 9:24-26, 30; 11:11-25; 15:9-12, at this point that he is more specific in mentioning his distinctive calling in this respect with regard to it fortifying his forthrightness in communicating the truth to the saints at Rome.

(1) With appreciation of their goodness, v. 14.

"But I also have become persuaded concerning you [according to encouraging reports], my brethren, that yourselves, having become full of goodness and all knowledge, are able to admonish one another." Paul has high esteem for this congregation at Rome, and thus recognizes a spiritual maturity that not only qualifies to receive his substantial teaching, but is also able to "admonish," νουθετέω, noutheteō, cf. Acts 20:31; I Cor. 4:14; Col. 1:28; 3:16; I Thess. 5:12, 14; II Thess. 3:15, itself. Thus with both authority and respectful tact, Paul encourages these saints, as spiritually virtuous and doctrinally mature brethren, to press on without necessary dependency on himself, and yet anticipation of future fellowship.

(2) With appreciation of gospel remembrance, v. 15.

"But I have more boldly/daringly/courageously [τολμηροτέρως, tolmē roteros]Gwritten to you on some matters so as to be reminding you because of the grace that was been given to me from God." What specifically are these "bold matters"? Let us suggest they would fall within:

The doctrine of thorough sinful corruption, 3:9-20.
The doctrine of justification through faith alone. 3:21-4:25.
The doctrine of sovereign grace in contrast with the law, 5:1-7:25.
The doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit, 8:1-39.
The doctrine of God's sovereignty, Jews and Gentiles, 9:1-10:21.

The doctrine of Jewish salvation relative to the Gentiles, 11:1-36.
The doctrine of Spiritual gifts and fruit in church service, 12:1-21.
The doctrine of submission to human government, 13:1-7.
The doctrine of love motivation, 13:8-14.
The doctrine of the weak and the strong in fellowship, 14:1-15:13.

But how has this glorious repository of gospel truth come to the fore? "Because of the grace that was given [aorist tense]to me from God." In other words, this truth came by "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12) to "a chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15) according to being "called [to the apostolic office] through His grace" (Gal. 1:15). Paul had a strong sense of Christian vocation because of the calling of Christ, and so should every Christian.

(3) With appreciation of his mandate, v. 16.

When the people of God receive the Word of God from a man of God, it is important that they identify the personal medium of the message as God's designated representative. In this world, ambassadors are appointed, and such an assignment brings with it authority which validates the proclaimed message. So Paul continues to uphold his authorization to minister to the Gentiles, v. 15, and in so doing upholds his gospel message to the predominantly Gentile church at Rome (II Cor. 2:17; 5:20; Eph. 6:19-20). Note the economic relations of the three Persons of the Trinity with regard to the work pf redemption, which truth will be repeated in vs. 17-19.

This verse is full of Jewish sacrificial language. The message of Romans has come through the medium of Paul, "a minister [λειτουργός, leitourgos] of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles," which service more distinctively refers to an office, especially that of priestly service as subsequently described (cf. Heb. 8:1-2).[75] However this service is to be an offering of the Roman Gentiles to God; Paul perceives his missionary labors as a presentation, an offering of the fruits of his evangelistic toiling (II Cor. 11:2; Col. 1:22, 28; I Thess. 2:19). Thus his Jewish roots are evident as he portrays, in a priestly manner with the instrument of the gospel of God, the Gentile believers in Rome as an acceptable "offering," προσφορά, prosphora (cf. Acts 21:26; Heb. 10:5) to God with the authenticating, consecrating "sweet incense" of the Holy Spirit. For this reason Paul describes himself as "priesting it," ἱερουγεω, hierougeō, present participle; he serves God seeking authentic fruit and His approval, not with his eyes fixed on man's estimate of his ministry (I Cor. 4:2-4]; he has no thought of recognition by man with the title of "priest;" by way of illustration, Paul describes himself as offering the Gentiles to God, not Christ as in the Roman Catholic mass.

John Stott adds: "Although Paul's priestly ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles was unique, the principle he enunciates has a vital contemporary application. All evangelists are priests, because they offer their converts to God."[76]

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[75] R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, pp. 125-7.

[76] Stott, *Romans*, p. 379.

b. To Gentiles from Jerusalem to Illyricum, vs. 17-19.

As a faithful ambassador boasts not in himself or the significance of his office, but rather in his lord and master, so Paul, having expounded upon "the grace that was given me from God," v. 15, is more eager to focus upon the glorious "things" of God the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. As Anne Cousin has written:

The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze are glory,
But on my King of grace,
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.

(1) Boasting in God, v. 17.

"Therefore I have [my] boasting in Christ Jesus [concerning] the things [of my service] before God [the Father]." This is reminiscent of Galatians 6:14. Thus Paul's ministry style, notwithstanding being "a chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15), is defined as being driven by God-centeredness, not utilitarianism; God is not a means to an end, namely the enhancement of Paul's ministry, but rather a glorious end in Himself. There may be here a slight inference concerning evident success with regard to a host of Gentiles turning to Christ, such as at Rome. Nevertheless, Paul will only ascribe praise to God for such fruitfulness (I Cor. 3:5-7).

(2) Boasting in Christ's accomplishments, v. 18.

"For I will not dare to speak of anything except what Christ [God the Son] has accomplished/effectively worked out [CCCCCCCCCCCC, katergazomai] through me resulting in the obedience [of faith, 1:5; 16:25-26] of the Gentiles by [the] word and work [of Paul]." Who would deny the tireless zeal and dogged persistence of Paul for the cause of Christ (II Cor. 11:21-33), yet the Apostle insists it must all subsume under divine enablement. His ministry "by word and work," λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ, logō kai ergō (II Cor. 10:11; Col. 3:17; II Thess. 2:17), both preaching, teaching, and tent-making, traveling, was accomplished only through grace, not human ingenuity, as the preceding and following context suggests. Thus Paul, as a "fellow worker," built upon "Jesus Christ" as the only foundation so that "God's building" resulted, being identifiable as "gold, silver, precious stones" (I Cor. 3:9-12).

Elsewhere in Romans Paul has revealed his fervent concern for the Jew (1:16; 9:1-5; 10:1-2; 11:1); yet here his desire that, according to divine commissioning, the Gentiles might savingly believe is equally a consuming passion, even as his hoped for visit to Rome and Spain indicates, v. 24.

(3) Boasting in the power of the Spirit, v. 19.

"In the power of [miraculous] signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit." The more spectacular features of Paul's apostolic ministry, that was void of spectacular claims, also derived from the power of Christ, are now described, being σημείων καὶ τεράτων, semeiōn kai teratōn. Both are supernatural manifestations, with a sign stressing significance and a wonder stressing astonishing, powerful display. In II Corinthians 12:11-12 Paul indicates to the believers in Corinth that, "in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. The signs [σημεῖα, sēmeia] of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs [σημείοις, sēmeiois] and wonders [τέρασιν, terasin] and miracles [δυνάμεσιν, dunamesin]." As Jesus performed "miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22), so did the apostles (Acts 5:12), and Paul in particular (Acts 13:6-12; 14:3, 8-10; 15:12; 16:16-18; 19:11-12; 20:9-12), whereby their foundational role in church of Jesus Christ was signified (Matt. 16:18-19; Eph. 2:19-22; Heb. 2:3-4). In contrast "the man of lawlessness . . . the son of destruction," will manifest "the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders" (II Thess. 2:3, 9).

The geographic extent of Christ's accomplishment through Paul is described as, "from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum [on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea]." Here are the broad limits, thus far, of his outreach to the Gentiles in which he "fully preached the gospel of Christ," that is completed his aforeplanned itinerary for establishing the gospel in new territory.

c. To Gentiles in unevangelized fields, vs. 20-21.

Paul's understanding of his commission, according to Christ's specification, was that he be a church planter in virgin Gentile regions that excluded the necessity of building on an earlier witness (I Cor. 3:6-10; II Cor. 10:13-16). However, others were certainly expected to build upon what Paul had planted. Thus he was to lay solid foundations that did not require adjustment (I Cor. 3:10-15).

(1) Laying a fresh foundation, v. 20.

It was Paul's custom to first make contact with any Jews he could discover in new Gentile territory, according to 1:16, who would certainly have some Messianic hope (Acts 16:12-13; 17:1-3, 10, 16-17; 18:1-4, 19). However he sought unevangelized regions where the good news of the Lord Jesus as the Christ was not embraced. His attitude was that of "striving with fondness," φιλοτιμέομαι, philotimeomai, to "preach the gospel/evangelize," εὐαγγελίζομαι, euangelizomai, in fresh fields. Knowing he could encounter situations where Christ had been preached "from envy and strife . . . selfish ambition . . . pretense" (Phil. 1:15-18), knowing he would have to deal with "wood, hay, straw" (I Cor. 3:12), Paul preferred to build on a solid foundation, that is the unsullied truth of Christ crucified (I Cor. 3:11); he believed that subsequent builders of the superstructure, that is "waterers" such as Apollos would, with caution, do better this way (I Cor. 3:6, 10).

(2) Laying a fulfilled foundation, v. 21.

As proof of this distinctive ministry, Paul quotes Isaiah 52:15b. Moo gives three reasons for this.

> First, it justifies Paul's decision not 'to build on another's foundations,' v. 20; for the text speaks of bringing a message to those who have not heard. Second, it accords with Paul's sense of calling to the Gentiles, since the ones who have not had it announced to them and have not yet heard are 'kings' and 'nations,' cf. v. 15a. Third, it alludes to the content of Paul's gospel. For Isaiah 52:15 is part of the famous fourth 'servant' passage, and the 'him' concerning whom these Gentiles have not been told is the Servant of the Lord [Messiah].[77]

2. The proclamation of fellowship amongst the Gentiles, vs. 22-29.

While Paul has just declared his priority, "I would not build on another man's foundation," yet this did not restrict him from visiting churches he did not plant, though only when his primary calling allowed. Rome is a case in point, 1:13.

a. Itinerantly in preaching, vs. 22-25.

It is reasonable to assume that the substance of this epistle is that which Paul longs to communicate by means of his personal presence. While v. 20 has described his primary commitment to evangelize the unevangelized Gentiles, we must recall the similar intent of 1:15: "I am eager to preach the gospel [εὐαγγελίζομαιCeuangelizomai] to you also who are in Rome." Thus in Rome Paul will evangelize the evangelized, for the purpose of sanctification.

(1) With delays, v. 22.

Thus the itinerant ministry from Jerusalem to Illyricum has, on many occasions, hindered or "cut in," ἐγκόπτω, enkoptō, to Paul's long term plans for visiting Rome. Thus the spiritual birthing and building process, according to the specific divine job description, must prevail over other personal preferences.

(2) With desires, v. 23.

"But now," νυνὶ δέ, nuni de, cf. 3:21; 6:22; 7:6; 11:30, suggests a strong anticipation of changed circumstances. In most likely writing from Corinth, Paul intimates that since his regional ministry there has now concluded, his longing over many years to visit Rome may now be fulfilled.

(3) With design, v. 24.

"As I go to Spain [Σπανία,Cspania]— " is an anacolutha, the end of an incomplete sentence. Morris gives some evidence, including the comment of

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[77] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 897-8.

Clement of Rome toward the end of the first century, that Paul did eventually visit Spain,[78] though there is no evidence in Scripture.

A sudden change of thought results in a more narrow focus on a resultant passing visit to Rome. Paul first anticipates the enjoyment of Christian fellowship there in transit, and consequent "help," προπέμπω, propempō, meaning material missionary support such as food, clothing, money, etc. cf. vs. 26-27; I Cor. 16:6; II Cor. 1:16; Tit. 3:13.

(4) With dedication, v. 25.

"But now [again νυνὶ δέ, nuni de] I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints." The train of thought in v. 23 is now picked up and modified. For all of his concern for vital doctrine, Paul never lost sight of material and physical needs, and especially with regard to the church at Jerusalem impoverished through persecution (Acts 8:1; 24:17; I Cor. 16:1-3; II Cor. 8:1-9:15). Further he goes "deaconing," διακονῶν, diakonōn, ministering to the believers, not regarding himself as above such menial assistance, on the grounds of Acts 6:1-6.

b. Practically in substance, vs. 26-27.

While it is declared that Paul will deliver material aid to the impoverished saints at Jerusalem, there seems to be an ongoing and dominant interest in the "mother church" located in the city of great David's greater Son.

(1) For the support of Jerusalem, v. 26.

"For Macedonia and Arhaia were well pleased to make/contribute fellowship [κοινωνία, koinōnia] for the poor amongst the saints in Jerusalem." Both Macedonia (northern Greece) and Achaia (southern Greece) are here understood as Gentile regions, even though Paul's ministry at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Athens involved initial contact with Jews; in contrast "the saints in Jerusalem" represent the Jewish mother church, where the apostles remained, Acts 8:1, that is rooted in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Jesus Christ. This "fellowship" was surely material aid (I Cor. 16:1-3; II Cor. 8:1-4; 9:1-15) that resulted from Paul's faithfulness to the apostolic admonition of Galatians 2:9-10.

(2) For the reason of indebtedness, v. 27.

"For [as I have already said] they [the Greek Gentiles] were well pleased [in their sharing], and they are debtors to them [the Jerusalem Christians]; for if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual [blessings/roots], they are also indebted to serve them by means of material [blessings]." The Gentile response has been spontaneous, not reluctant; they have probably been taught by Paul that their roots are found in Jerusalem, the capital of Judaism,

[78] Morris, *Romans*, p. 518n.

1:16; 9:4-5; they have entered into the "spiritual [πνευματικός, pneumatikos] blessings" that are inherited by those belonging to Christ, thus they "are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29). Hence using *a fortiori* reasoning, how much more ought the Gentiles respond with "material [σαρκικός, sarkikos] blessings." Moo rightly comments:

> Paul alludes here to a central theological theme of the letter: that the salvation enjoyed by the Gentiles comes only by way of the Jewish Messiah and the fulfillment of promises made to Israel (1:16; 4:13-16; 11:17-24; 15:7-8). There is a sense in which the spiritual blessings of the new age belong especially to the Jewish Christians; and Gentile Christians should acknowledge and give thanks for their 'sharing' of these blessings with them. And it is by 'serving' the Jewish Christians with 'material things' that the Gentiles can express their sense of indebtedness and thanksgiving.[79]

c. Eventually in Rome, vs. 28-29.

It is significant that Paul believes he must make personal delivery of the combined contributions of the Gentiles, and not by means of a courier, cf. 16:1-2.

(1) Via Spain, v. 28.

The delivery of the Gentile contributions to the saints at Jerusalem seems to have the aura of a personal task for Paul that must be brought to completion. Thus he is making a personal appearance, literally to "seal to them [the Gentiles] this fruit," that is ensure safe delivery, but even more, communicate to Jewish Christians that this offering comes from Gentile Christians via the apostle to the Gentiles. Such a witness would only all the more establish the universal character of the gospel and thus confirm the truth of Acts 15:11; Gal. 2:9-10.

(2) Via the blessing of Christ, v. 29.

"For I know [in a full sense[80]] that coming to you, I will come in [bringing] the fullness of Christ's blessing." Whereas Paul has been restricted in coming to Rome to date, according to divine vocation and circumstances, vs. 22-23, his eventual arrival shall be with divine blessing that can be happily anticipated; in v. 32 this delight is similarly described as "joy by the will of God . . . [and] rest in your company." His expectation concerns what God will do rather than what he will accomplish (I Cor. 15:9-10), and that though he eventually comes as a prisoner (Acts 28:16, 30-31). Possibly after two years in Rome he was able to visit Spain with the same hope of bringing with him "the fullness of Christ's blessing."

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[79] Moo, *Romans*, p. 905.

[80] This is probably the sense of οἶδα, oida here, cf. 7:14, rather than γινώσκω, ginōskō, 7:1; cf. the contrast between these two words in John 8:55. So Shedd, *Romans*, p. 29.

3. The promotion of prayer for his ministry, vs. 30-33.

Romans has now come to its substantial conclusion. Paul still contemplates his announced itinerary, except that he earnestly solicits fellowship in prayer on account of anticipated opposition in Jerusalem at the conclusion of his third missionary journey.

a. He calls for prayer, vs. 30-32.

Paul commonly calls for fellowship in prayer in his epistles (II Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 4:2-3; I Thess. 5:25; II Thess. 3:1), except that here there is a note of urgency and specificity. The journey to Rome is via Jerusalem, and thus expected hostility from opponents of the gospel, based on Paul's former experience, is a matter concerning which the Christians at Rome should intercede with God about.

(1) That is earnest in the Spirit, v. 30.

"So I exhort/urge you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in prayers on my behalf before God." This uncommon invocation of the full name of Paul's Master in prayer reflects his apostolic authority, that is the effectual ground by which Paul prays concerning an important matter; at the same time it is to be the identical ground upon which the prayers of the Roman believers should rest upon. In a similar way "the love of the Spirit" is appealed to which could be the Spirit's love for the saints, or the love of the Saints for the Spirit, or most likely that love which the Spirit generates and is employed in heartfelt concern for Paul's travels. The apostle does not want token interest, but that which unites with him in entreaty before God with loving passion.

(2) That brings deliverance and blessing, v. 31.

What is it that causes Paul to be so concerned about his safety in Judea concerning those who are "disobedient," or "unbelieving/unpersuaded," ἀπειθέω, apeitheō, obviously with regard to the gospel that has been proclaimed? First, there is past experience; following his conversion, by revelation of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, Paul is told, "Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me" (Acts 22:18); at the Council at Jerusalem following his first missionary journey, there was opposition from "the sect of the Pharisees" (Acts 15:5); after the second missionary journey, Paul "went up and greeted the church [at Jerusalem[81]] (Acts 18:22). There is also further divine revelation of prospective "bonds and afflictions" (Acts 20:22-23; 21:4, 11-12), which proves to be all too true (Acts 21:27-36).

Second, Paul reveals his future hope that, "my service [διακονία diakonia] for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints." Thus personal presentation is of vital importance, but especially so that "favorable acceptance," εὐπρόσδεκτος, euprosdektos, cf. v. 16, might result. It is as if

[81] F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 350.

Paul's delivery of material benevolence from the Gentile churches is the QED and signature that upholds his distinctive apostolic vocation, and thus ought to cause conservative legalists to rethink their exclusive ways. Probably Paul's ultimate goal at this juncture is peace and unity in the church at Jerusalem on the grounds of the universal gospel.

(3) That brings direction to Rome, v. 32.

Beyond Jerusalem, Paul fervently prays that, "having come to you in joy through the will of God, I may have refreshing [spiritual] rest with you all." Personal eagerness must yield to the divine plan that hopefully will not include restriction through militant opposition in Jerusalem; yet personal and detailed supplication is in no way negated. Here there is anticipation of blessing in unity, even as the overall thrust of the Epistle to Romans conveys, though in contrast with I Corinthians and Galatians. Haldane well comments:

> From this we may learn that if even on God's errand we have need of prayer for success in our journey, how much more do we have need of prayer for success in our own daily business! So much does God encourage the exercise of prayer, that He wills us to pray for success when we do His own work. The whole passage, also, is the strongest refutation of the theory of those who suppose that prayer is useless, because of the unchangeable purposes of God. The express command of the Spirit of inspiration annihilates all the subtle speculations of men on this subject. We here see that it is not only lawful and proper to pray to the unchangeable God, but that it is our duty to pray to Him to prosper us even in His own work.[82]

b. He concludes with prayer, v. 33.

"May the God of peace be with you all. Amen." While it is correct to declare God to be at peace with Himself, even in the Triune relationships, yet here the emphasis would be upon that peace which comes from God, 14:17; 15:13, through Christ, that establishes our hearts with peace in contrast with conflict due to sin. However, even such peace associated with a Christian needs qualification, as Morris states with relation to the context of this same expression in 16:20.

> The New Testament writers tended to take their idea of peace from the Old Testament, and for the Hebrews peace (*shalom*) was a positive idea [not simply negative as the exclusion of war], the idea of wholeness, of well-roundedness. It was the prosperity of the whole life, a positive and not a negative idea.[83]

Thus the exclamatory "Amen/let it be so," ἀμήν, amēn, defines Paul's ultimate hope, namely the executed will of God in all of these matters through the lives of himself and the fellowship of the saints (Heb. 13:20-21).

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[82] Haldane, *Romans*, pp. 639-40.

[83] Morris, *Romans*, p. 541.

CHAPTER XV

ROMANS 16:1-24 - FAREWELL GREETINGS IN THE GOSPEL

SOME scholars are of the opinion that this chapter is not part of the original epistle of Paul to the saints at Rome. There is further disagreement as to the position and inclusion of the concluding doxology, vs. 25-27. While there are manuscript variances that may suggest the Old Testament antipathy of Marcionism against the five quotations of chapter 15, and perhaps Paul's later addition of chapter 16, and thus the variant positioning of the doxology of vs. 25-27, yet the overwhelming belief is that Romans 15-16 was authored by Paul and that Romans 1-16 as we have it was the epistle that Phoebe most likely delivered.[1] There are nineteen men and nine women who are addressed in Rome while those sending greetings, probably from Corinth, are nine men and one woman, including Phoebe and Paul. Overall they are Latin and Greek, while perhaps six are Jewish;[2] this would add weight to the probability that Paul addresses the church at Rome as being predominantly Gentile. Assuming that Paul has not previously been to Rome, his familiarity here with so many saints suggests his direct meeting with many of them in his missionary travels, or through earlier correspondence. Indeed, it is quite possible that within the hearts of those specified in receiving greetings there resides the core reasons for the doctrinal thrust that the Apostle makes, cf. 1:7, 15.

We commence with an intensely personal catalog of greetings that focuses on real first century Christians in Rome, often menially employed, who are not theologians and academics but rather a tolerated yet threatened minority. Nevertheless, they penetrated "the whole praetorian guard" and "Caesar's household" (Phil. 1:13; 4:22).[3] In a world void of the cable, telephone, and email, imagine the intense interest at the reading of such an epistle; even as we are accustomed today, most likely this signature chapter was read first!

A. THE COMMENDATION OF PHOEBE, VS. 1-2.

In our contemporary world where the Christian church has been influenced by the secular feminist movement, especially with regard to the appointment of women as spiritual leaders in local church life, considerable though exaggerated attention has been given to the role here of Phoebe who was most likely the courier for this epistle.

1. She is a servant of the church, v. 1.

Phoebe, Φοίβη, Phoibē, a name of Greek pagan derivation, herself probably being a Gentile, originated from Cenchrea, a seaport situated eight miles south-east of Corinth. In this region Paul had earlier resided for eighteen months and probably founded the church at that coastal town (Acts 18:1-18). The grounds of commendation are first that

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[1] Moo, *Romans*, pp. 5-9.

[2] The Jews would include Prisca and Aquila, Mary, and kinsmen, Andronicas, Junias, and Herodion.

[3] D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 319. The traditional opinion has remained that Philippians was written in Rome by imprisoned Paul.

she is a "sister", ἀδελφή, adelphē, a spiritual kindred spirit (I Cor. 7:15; 9:5; Jas. 2:15; Philem. 2). Second she is a "servant/deacon", διάκονος, diakonos, of the church. In I Timothy 3: 11, cf. v. 8, there is the likelihood that the office of "deaconess" is intended, and so probably here.[4] Moule explains that Phoebe was,

> very probably a person of substance and influence.—There is good evidence of the existence in the Apostles' time of an organized class of female helpers in sacred work. . . . Just after the apostolic age the famous Letter of Pliny to Trajan indicates that such female helpers (*ministræ*) were known in the Bithynian Churches; and for two centuries from the time of Tertullian (cir. A.D. 210) allusions to them are frequent, and show that they were largely employed both in the relief of temporal distress, chiefly among women, and also in the elementary teaching of female catechumens. They were regularly set apart by imposition of hands. As a rule, they were required to be of mature age, (rarely of less than 40 years,) and in most cases they appear to have been widows and mothers. By the 12th century the Order had been everywhere abolished. . . . We must not *assume* that Phoebe was a deaconess in the full later sense of the word; but that her position was analogous to that of the later deaconesses seems at least most probable.[5]

Of course it is obvious that such appointments would be according to the elders as the spiritual overseers of a local church. All in all, it is abundantly clear that Paul, as here, was tenderly appreciative of those women who supplemented his ministry (Phil. 4:3), even as the following verse confirms.

2. She is to be served by the church, v. 2.

So the "saints" or holy/sanctified ones are to "receive /welcome" Phoebe "in the Lord," (cf. vs. 8, 11, 12, 13, 22, and "in Christ," vs. 3, 7, 9, 10), offering whatever practical help is necessary since "she herself" (emphatic) is a "helper." Here προστάτις, prostatis, describes a "protectress." "It is a word of dignity, evidently chosen instead of others which might have been used, . . . and indicates the high esteem with which she was regarded, as one who had been a protectress of many. *Prostatēs* was the title of a citizen in Athens, who had the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of resident aliens who were without civic rights. Among the Jews it signified a wealthy patron of the community."[6] Thus the biblical order of a hierarchical relationship between Christian men and women (I Cor. 11:3, 7-12; Eph. 5:22-28) in no way diminishes the esteem and respect that is to be lavished upon those in subordinate positions.

B. THE GREETINGS TO THE SAINTS, VS. 3-16.

1. To the household of Prisca and Aquila, vs. 3-5a.

In c. 49-50 A.D, the Roman emperor Claudius issued an edict that evicted all Jews from Rome on account of supposed rioting. Two of the refugees who fled were Aquila,

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[4] Pro are: Alford, Chrysostom, Haldane, Lenski, Luther, Moo, Morris, Moule, Stott; contra are: Hendriksen, Murray.

[5] H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, pp. 245-6.

[6] W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, p. 607. Also Moo, *Romans*, p. 530, who rightly infers that Phoebe traveled with a "retinue of servants."

originally from Pontus in Asia Minor (Acts 2:9; I Pet. 1:1), and his wife Prisca[7] who had, as was common, taken Roman names. Settling in Corinth as profitable tent-makers, there they met another tent-maker, the Apostle Paul, in the midst of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-3). It is likely that on account of this trade association, Paul witnessed to the devoted couple with the result being their conversion.[8] Thus they accompany the Apostle to Ephesus and there evidence spiritual capability in giving necessary instruction to Apollos (Acts 18:26). By the time of Paul's return to Corinth during his third missionary journey, Prisca and Aquila have apparently returned to Rome on account of the former edict being rescinded, though now they are significant members of the church that meets in their home, to which Paul presently writes.

a. Paul's fellow-workers, v. 3.

"Greet" or "convey respectful regards," ἀσπάζομαι, aspazomai, signifies a salutation, a friendly personal acknowledgment, which term is used 16 times in vs. 3-16. That the order of "Aquila and Priscilla" (Acts 18:2; I Cor. 16:19)) is changed to "Priscilla and Aquila" (Acts 18:18, 26; II Tim. 4:19), whether with reference to a dominant personality or social status, is speculative. The primacy here given to this choice couple is intentional and supported by the length of the greeting. As "fellow workers [συνεργούς,Gunergous] in Christ Jesus," they had mediated the truth of the gospel that had been so well imparted to them in Corinth and Ephesus. Perhaps through previous correspondence, they had conveyed much detail about the church in Rome, even with regard to many trophies of grace that Paul now mentions, such as Mary, v. 6. C

b. Paul's fellow-rescuers, v. 4.

"Who, on behalf of my life [soul], offered their own neck as it were in execution [for my deliverance]." Identification of this heroic exploit is difficult to identify, even if it was widely acknowledged. Most likely it is the danger that Paul faced in Ephesus (I Cor. 15:32; Acts 19:23-32; 20:1), which ministry spread through Asia Minor (Acts 19:10). So Paul declares that, "to whom not only do I give thanks, but also the churches of the Gentiles." As Frederick Faber has written:

> Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
> Were still in heart and conscience free;
> And blest would be their children's fate,
> Though they, like them, should die for thee.

Indeed, humanly speaking, if it were not for this courageous couple, then not only Romans, but also Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, I & II Timothy, and Titus would not have been written!

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[7] "Prisca," Πρίσκα (I Cor. 16:19; II Tim. 4:19), according to Paul, is the basic or proper name while "Priscilla," Πρίσκιλλα (Acts 18:2, 18, 26), according to Luke, is a derivative form.

[8] W. J. Connybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul*, p. 337.

c. Paul's fellow-worshipers, v. 5a.-

Perhaps the return of Aquila and Prisca to Rome enabled them to reclaim their property that included a house suitable for church fellowship, as was their custom formerly in Ephesus (Acts 18:26; I Cor. 16:8, 19). Here, implicit material prosperity while perhaps childless, may have enabled not only frequent travel, but also investment in evangelistic ministry that resulted in heavenly consequences (Luke 16:9).

2. To the fellowship in particular, vs. 5b-15.

Here then are the members and adherents of the church at the home of Prisca and Aquila, which house church movement was the norm: "There were no church buildings in the first century (not until the third century on our present information),"[9] though Paul readily employed "the school of Tyrannus" at Ephesus over a two year period for evangelistic meetings (Acts 19:9-10).[10]

a. Beloved, ἀγαπητός, agapētos Epaenetus, Ampliatus, and Stachys v. 5b, 8, 9b.

Epaenetus, originating from Asia (Ephesus?), had probably met Paul and as a consequence become "my beloved," who then joined the winsome couple when they returned to the imperial city. His being "the first fruit [ἀπαρχή, aparchē, cf. 8:23] to Christ from Asia," probably designates him as the first convert of Paul in Ephesus that was followed by a substantial harvest. As such he learned and matured over two years under Paul's tutelage to the point of being significantly used in missionary service. Ampliatus, has been associated with freedmen, also Caesar's household, as with Stachys meaning "wheat ear" (Matt. 12:1).[11]

b. Hardworking, κοπιάω, kopiao, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis, vs. 6, 12. C

While Mary, probably Jewish from Miriam, has personally "toiled much" πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν,Φolla ekopiasen, for Prisca and Aquila, and likewise Persis has "toiled much," so Tryphaena and Tryphosa, perhaps sisters meaning "Delicate and Dainty,"[12] have "toiled,", κοπιάω, kopiao, worked with weariness "in the Lord." What exactly was this hard employment? The word used here elsewhere describes physical (Luke 5:5; Eph. 4:28; I Cor. 4:12) as well as spiritual (Phil. 2:16; Col. 1:28-29; I Tim. 5:17) labor, and most likely both meanings are intended here, but especially in the face of vigorous opposition. C

c. Kinsmen, συγγενής, sungenēs, Andronicus, Junia(s), and Herodion, vs. 7, 11a.

"Kinsmen" suggests these were Jews, cf. 9:3. Most likely Andronicus and Junia (feminine) were husband and wife, though their being called "apostles" has led to

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[9] Morris, *Romans*, p. 532.

[10] One manuscript adds at the end of v. 9, "from 11 A.M. to 4 p.m." F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 356.

[11] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 174.

[12] Moo, *Romans*, p. 925; Morris, *Romans*, p. 536.

controversy since earlier commentators could not accept this as appropriate for a woman. Hence later commentators have preferred Junias (masculine). However more recent agreement that Junia (feminine) is correct has resulted in feminism claiming support here for egalitarian spiritual rule in local church life. However, ἀπόστολος, apostolos is often used in a more general sense of "a sent person" (II Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25 re Epaphroditus; I Thess. 2:6 re Paul, Silvanus, Timothy), rather than the distinctive office of Acts 1:21-26. Thus Andronicus and Junia were "outstanding/splendid" ἐπίστημος, epistēmos, amongst the apostles, that is those such as Phoebe, Prisca and Aquila, who were highly esteemed gospel emissaries, missionaries (from the Latin *missio*, I send). But further, their kinship with Paul included being "fellow prisoners," συναιχμάλωτος, sunaichmalōtos, in the past for the cause of Christ, as were Aristarchus, Col. 4:10, and Epaphras, Philem. 23. Herodion was probably a freedman formerly employed within the household and lineage of King Herod.C

d. Fellow workman, συνεργός, sunergos, Urbanus, v. 9a.

Being "*our* fellow worker" rather than "*my* fellow workers" as were Prisca and Aquila, v. 3, may indicate a lack of personal acquaintance. However a notable reputation has been conveyed through correspondence.

e. Approved, δόκιμον, dokimon, Apelles, v. 10a.

While the use of "approved/tested in Christ" in 14:18 suggests general acceptance, yet approval through persecution cannot be discounted, as the experience of Prisca and Aquila indicates, v. 4, cf. James 1:12.

f. Those of [the households of] Aristobulus and Narcissus, vs. 10b, 11b.

The idiomatic expression here is an encompassing description of those who have worked for the household of Aristobulus, a grandson of Herod the Great. So Narcissus is probably a famous person who has employed a number of Christians, perhaps as Lightfoot suggests, a certain renowned wealthy freedman.[13]

g. Choice, ἐκλεκτός, eklektos, Rufus and his mother, v. 13.

This distinguished, exceptional saint, is traditionally identified as that son of he who was, "pressed into service [as] a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His [Christ's] cross" (Mark 15:21).[14] This association could be supported by Paul's respectful comment that Rufus' mother is also his own, perhaps due to an earlier relationship in Jerusalem.

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[13] Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 175.

[14] Cautious support here comes from Cranfield, Godet, Lightfoot, Moo, Morris.

h. Miscellaneous, vs. 14-15.

While "the church that is in their house [of Prisca and Aquila]," v. 5a, was probably the main assembly point for the Christians in Rome, yet there may have been sub-fellowships within large households, as mentioned in vs. 10-11.

(1) The house fellowship of Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and other brethren, v. 14.

(2) The house fellowship of Philologus, Julia, Nereus and sister, Olympas, and other brethren, v. 15.

3. To the fellowship in general, v. 16.

"Greet one another with a holy kiss," φιλήματι ἁγίω (cf. I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26, "a kiss of love," I Pet. 5:14;). Equivalent to a hug, a warm handshake, the holy kiss was a customary form of greeting (Luke 7:45; 15:20; 22:47-48), usually on the cheek.[15] Moo adds that, "many commentators think that Paul may here be envisaging a worship gathering in which his letter is being read aloud and which is concluded with such a kiss."[16] The modern debasing of the social kiss certainly justifies a more appropriate form of a physical greeting. John Bunyan was aware of this problem when in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* he comments: "[S]ome [good men] indeed have urged the holy kiss; but then I have asked why they made baulks [distinctions by omitting], why they did salute the most handsome, and let the ill-favored go; thus, how laudable soever such things have been in the eyes of others, they have been unseemly in my sight."[17]

"All the churches of Christ greet you." While Paul ministered in various regions, yet he maintained constant communication with the major Gentile fellowships including Antioch, as well as with the Jewish mother church at Jerusalem. The "emissaries/apostles" of vs. 1-2, 3-4, 7 would update the Apostle, convey greetings to him, and thus enable him to channel greetings to the saints at Rome. Thus as Paul writes in Corinth he has associates with him from a variety of church locations (Acts 20:1-4). Hence this inclusive greeting provides the saints at Rome with a sense of unity with the larger body of Christ.

C. THE WARNINGS TO THE SAINTS, VS. 17-20.

In the midst of greetings from Paul, vs. 1-16, and his associates, vs. 21-23, there is injected a vigorous, brief warning, vs. 17-20, that might seem unexpected. Perhaps at this point the Apostle takes the reed pen from Tertius, v. 22, to add a signature paragraph that concludes with v. 20. However, while circumstances in the more troubled region of Corinth might prompt this jealous, affectionate concern, there are other instances of similar concluding epistolary admonition (I Cor. 16:13-14, 22; Colo. 4:17; I Tim. 6:20-21; II Tim. 4:14-18; I

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[15] Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans*, p. 518.

[16] Moo, *Romans*, p. 926.

[17] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, I, § 315, p. 46.

John 5:21). Further, Morris suggests that, "Romans is a long letter and it must have taken quite a while to compose it. It is possible that news was brought to Paul just before he finished it that made him think a warning was in order."[18] The preventative rather than curative emphasis here is probably indicated by the commendation of v. 19. As a parent often farewells a departing child with a string of practical maxims, so Paul, as a spiritual parent (Phil. 2:19-22; I Thess. 1:7, 11), offers similar spiritual counsel.

1. Be alert for contentious teachers, vs. 17-18.

   Identification of the offending schismatics may include two categories. There are the carnal libertarian antinomians of 6:1-23, those claiming a licentious freedom in the light of the sovereignty and freeness of grace, though more likely Paul has in mind the weak in faith who hold on to the crutch of the law, including dietary regulations and appointed days, 14:1-15:5. In the later case, an intolerant Judaizing spirit that ignores the overriding injunction of 13:8-10; 14:10-13, 17-20; 15:2 presents a situation that is ripe for the eruption of partisan conflict. The crux of the peril here lies in the subtlety of these agitators emerging within the fellowship of the saints at Rome.

   a. They oppose apostolic doctrine, v. 17.

      The preceding recommendation of the "holy kiss" may have suggested to Paul the deceitful treachery that such an outward greeting may conceal in local church life, as was illustrated by Judas (Prov. 27:6; Matt. 26:49; Luke 22:47-48). Therefore alertness is called for by all the saints, not just the Elders. "So I exhort/urge you, brethren, to watch out for those causing divisions [carnal dissentions, Gal. 5:20] and stumbling blocks that conflict with the teaching/-doctrine which you learned, and turn away [ἐκκλίνω, ekklinō] from them." Could it be that in this instance the lack of specificity concerning the heresies in mind is intentional since the fruit of disruptiveness is what is to be identified. In other words some people will reveal their spiritual fraudulence by leaving behind fractured relationships wherever they go, while true doctrine will tend to unify according to 13:8-10; 14:1720; 15:2. However it is to be noticed that a body of apostolic doctrine has already been established in Rome which is recognized as a standard against which all such novel teaching is to be measured; it is "that form of teaching to which you were committed," 6:17, or "the word of the faith which we are preaching," 10:8; cf. Jude 3.

   b. They deceive with smooth doctrine, v. 18.

      The beguiling, seductive character of a Pliable, a Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, a Talkative, or a Demas,[19] is now described. "For such men are not serving our Lord Christ but their own belly/appetite [κοιλία, koilia, Phil. 3:18-19], and through smooth and flattering conversation they deceive the hearts of the unwary/naïve/unsuspecting [saints]." Consider Paul's three pilgrims here.

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[18] Morris, *Romans*, p. 538.

[19] All four of these famous characters in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, although counterfeit pilgrims, were able to deceive, for a time, such authentic pilgrims as Christian, Faithful, and Hopeful.

(1) Mr. Smooth-man, χρηστολογία, chrēstologia, that is "plausibility," or "persuasiveness." David describes how, "his speech was smoother than butter, but his heart was war; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords" Ps. 55:21). Bunyan designates him as a citizen of the town of Fair-speech that was inhabited by a whole coterie of sophisticated rogues. His belly craved for the entertainment of brilliant and suave discourse.

(2) Mr. Flatterer, εὐλογία, eulogia, that is "sycophant," or "sweet talker," whose words are, at a surface level, appealing and pleasantly manipulative. According to Peter such false prophets exploit with "false/fabricated words," πλαστοῖς λόγοις, plastois logois (II Pet. 2:3) that lack concrete, objective truth. His belly sought self-advancement through the feel-good, ego-boosting, back-scratching stimulation of others.

(3) Mr. Innocent, ἄκακος, akakos, that is "not bad," or "guileless," being somewhat gullible and not acquainted with all of the machinations of human depravity. Consequently he is hoodwinked by the false charm of a Mr. Smooth-man and Mr. Flatterer. While his belly was under the control of a redeemed soul, yet he lacked doctrinal instruction and testing concerning sin's exceeding sinfulness and the wiles of the devil.

2. Be good before the God of peace and grace, vs. 19-20.

Paul's sense of pastoral balance is indicated by the following encouragements that follow sober warnings. Whereas v. 17 negatively enjoins the Roman saints to "turn away" from factious influences, here they are positively entreated, "to be wise in what is good," v. 19.

a. Let an obedient reputation encourage you, v. 19a.

"For [the renown of] your obedience has reached to all [the whole world, 1:8, Asia Minor? the Roman Empire?]." Perhaps the magisterial character of this epistle is reflective of the admiration that Paul has for the relative maturity of this church, especially since he has not needed to deal with the variety of problems, related to immaturity, that are manifest in Galatia, Corinth, or Colosse. Thus he is, "convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation" (Heb. 6:9). The "obedience" here is probably commitment to the gospel, 1:5; 16:26, which was the very reason that Paul writes to expound in greater depth upon that same sacred message, 1:15. For the Apostle, gospel faithfulness is of paramount importance.

b. Let innocence in evil identify you, v. 19b.

"Therefore I rejoice in you and desire that you be wise in what is good, and innocent/unpolluted in what is bad." In other words, love "does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth" (I Cor. 13:6). The child of God will major on right teaching, not heresy; he will concentrate upon the moral excellency of God that is incumbent upon him rather than the wiles of the devil and infinite variations on the theme of sin. Thus, "be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16), or, "do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be

infants, but in your thinking be mature" (I Cor. 14:20). This attitude is to sharply contrast with the experts in subtle sinning described in v. 18 (Jer. 4:22). As Charles Kingsley wrote: "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever."

c. Let the God of peace defend you, v. 20a.

"The God of peace [15:33] will crush Satan [the Adversary] under your feet with speed [in a short while?, ἐν τάχει, en tachei]." The God of Israel who imparts peace is distinguished here (Is. 26:3; 32:15-18; 66:12), yet the means to this end involves the conquest of Satan. Probably allusion is made here to the *protevangelium* of Genesis 3:15, where, "He [the seed of the woman] shall bruise you [the serpent] on the head, and you [the serpent] shall bruise him [the seed of the woman] on the heel." However we here see the wounded "heel" vindicated; in Genesis the heel is bruised by the serpent, whereas in Romans God causes the feet of Christians, being related to the seed of the woman, to victoriously crush serpentine Satan. Further, the direct address to the church at Rome, as if the saints there would immediately understand the idiomatic use of "Satan," suggests a more immediate rather than a future eschatological prospect.[20] Could it be that, in Christian conversation, the Roman Empire was "the evil empire" of that day, which, as is well known, in the course of history would soon yield to Christianity by the time of the reign of Constantine?

d. Let the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you, v. 20b.

With some degree of variation, this is Paul's usual form of concluding benediction that focuses on "grace" which is sourced in "Christ" (I Cor. 16:23; II Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; I Thess. 5:28; II Thess. 3:18; II Tim. 4:22; Philem, 25). In the remaining epistles, "grace" only is mentioned (Col. 4:18; I Tim. 6:21; Tit. 3:15). This custom is paralleled by Paul's invariable opening benediction, as here in 1:7 and all of his thirteen epistles, in which "grace" that is sourced in "Christ" is always commended. However, a curious feature here is the fact that the "Father" is always included in the opening benedictions and yet only once mentioned in the closing benedictions (II Cor. 13:14). Why is this so? Perhaps Paul the Hebrew felt it necessary to make such a reference at the commencement of every one of his epistles so that agreement with Jewish monotheism might be evident. Further, even today at the commencement of Christian prayer, the Father is first addressed; then in conclusion the mediatoral name of Jesus is invoked. Overall, this relentless and primary emphasis on "grace" in all of Paul's opening and closing benedictions provides strong justification for identifying him as "the Apostle of grace."

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[20] Calvin, Haldane, Morris see more immediate, historic fulfillment, while Cranfield understands eschatological consummation.

D. THE GREETINGS FROM THE SAINTS, VS. 21-24.

Here is a dynamic portrait of Paul's ministry in Corinth seen through the lens of his spiritual entourage. There are eight associates who appear to be known by the saints at Rome. The collective interest here expressed indicates an interdependency amongst first century local churches that does not preclude independency.

1. The *fellow worker*, Timothy, v. 21a.

   "Τιμόθεος, Timotheos," heads the list here being Paul's closest pastoral associate who is similarly mentioned, though at the commencement, of II Corinthians, I and II Thessalonians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. His unmatched loyalty was probably the cause of such recognition (Phil. 2:19-22; II Tim. 3:10-11). In I Corinthians 16:10 he is described as "doing the Lord's work, as I also am." In I Timothy 1:2 the address is to "my true child in the faith," while in II Timothy 1:2 it is to "my beloved son." This father/son relationship probably commenced when they initially became acquainted during Paul's first missionary journey while passing through Lystra and preaching the gospel (Acts 14:6-7). In again visiting Lystra during his second missionary journey, Paul appears to become reacquainted with Timothy, now a "disciple," and his Jewish mother Eunice, now a "believer." Thus Timothy is recruited by the Apostle and then circumcised to facilitate witnessing to Jews (Acts 16:1-3). During Paul's third missionary journey, he moves from his influential ministry at Ephesus to residence in the house of Gaius at Corinth for three months (Act 20:2-3), where Romans is composed. Thus Timothy may have been an editorial contributor. Probably separated from Paul when the Apostle was sent to Rome on trial, he later settled in Ephesus and also experienced imprisonment himself (Heb. 13:23). Timothy's esteem is indicated with great pathos when Paul, in probably writing a short while before his martyrdom in Rome, concludes: "Make every effort to come soon; . . . When you come bring the cloak which I left in Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. . . . Make every effort to come before winter. . . . The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you" (II Tim. 9, 13, 21-22).

2. The three *kinsmen*, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, v. 21b

   "Λούκιος, Loukios," or Lucius, could be "Lucius of Cyrene," a prophet or teacher from Syrian Antioch (Acts 13:1). It is likely that "Ἰάσων, Iasōn," or Jason, bravely provided hospitality for Paul in hostile Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-9). "Σωσίπατρος, Sō sipatros," or Sosipater, is possibly "Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus" (Acts 20:4) who, with six other disciples, leaves Greece and joins Paul at Troas. All are described as "my kinsmen/relatives/fellow nationals [συγγενής, sungenēs]," hence Jews.

3. The *secretary*, Tertius, v. 22.

   "Τέρτιυς, Tertius," was a scribe or amanuensis, "ὁ γράψας, ho graspas," who wrote according to Paul's dictation. "I Tertius greet you, the one having written the epistle in the Lord," is emphatic and may well reflect a sense of devout commitment in transcribing such a significant composition, although "greet you in the Lord" is possible. In either case we have the signature of a faithful Christian worker.

4. The *host*, Gaius, v. 23a.

   "Γάϊος, Gaios," a common (perhaps first personal) name, probably refers to the Gaius of I Corinthians 1:14 who Paul baptized. In providing hospitality for the Apostle and his party, as well as the church, he was likely a man of meansCFor this reason he is thought to be the same as Titius Justus (perhaps a family name) who also accommodated Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:7). Could he also have come from Ephesus (Acts 19:29)?CC

5. The *city treasurer*, Erastus, v. 23b.

   "Ἔραστος," or Erastos, was the "the treasurer/manager [οἰκονόμος oikonomos] of the city," no small position in such a cosmopolitan place as Corinth.[21] Perhaps, subsequent to his conversion, he became an emissary for Paul (Acts 19:21-22; II Tim. 4:20). Haldane comments that: "The notice of the office of Erastus, although in itself may appear trifling, is in reality of great importance. It shows us that Christians may hold offices even under heathen governments, and that to serve Christ we are not to be abstracted from worldly business."[22]

6. The *brother*, Quartus, v. 23c.

   "Κούαρτος, Quartos," is "the [Christian?] brother," and last mentioned in terms of relative significance.

7. The *Apostle*, Paul, v. 24.

   Certainly this is similar to most Pauline benedictions (cf. I Cor. 16:23; II Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; I Thess. 5:28; II Thess. 3:18; II Tim. 4:22; Philem. 25), though exactly identical to none. The repetition after v. 20 is unusual. Being excluded from the oldest manuscripts, nearly all scholars have declared it to be a later addition.[23]

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[21] Some archaeological evidence may further identify this civic official, Morris, *Romans*, p. 544n.

[22] Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 655.

[23] Bruce, Cranfield, Lenski, Moo, Morris, Robertson. Contra are Haldane, Meyer, Murray, Zahn.

CHAPTER XVI

ROMANS 16:25-27 - FAREWELL DOXOLOGY IN THE GOSPEL

THIS is one of Paul's great doxologies (cf. 11:33-36; I Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16), and perhaps it was written by his own hand following the closing greeting of secretary Tertius, v. 22. Nowhere else does the Apostle give such an effusive and specific declaration concerning the glory that is due to God on account of the manifold wonders of the gospel. Surely this is fitting with regard to the most profound and panoramic representation of the gospel in all of the Bible. Indeed it would seem that here is a brief collage of the major gospel elements that have been communicated. The singular desire that solicits a chorus of agreement from his addressees is found in v. 27, namely, "[According to Paul's fervent longing] let the glory be attributed to God." Everything else modifies this priority, though the two principle reasons are His ability to save and His incomparable wisdom.

A. TO GOD BE THE GLORY WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE, V. 25-26.

Concerning the basic doctrinal elements of these verses, perhaps the order we might accept here as normative, would be: 1. The prophets write Scripture. 2. Consequently the gospel is proclaimed. 3. The mystery, formerly silent, is revealed. 4. This proclamation is now universal. 5. The desired response is the obedience of faith. 6. The result of authentic faith is ongoing establishment through the gospel. However, since Paul is addressing believers, according to 1:11 and so here, he commences with point 6 which is his immediate goal, namely the strengthening of the saints leading to stability through their better apprehension of the gospel.

1. His gospel aims at the strengthening of believers, v. 25a.

The accomplishment of salvation is according to God "who is able/sovereignly qualified" and yet uses means including the gospel of Jesus Christ, preaching, Scripture, the prophets. However, for the Christian, these means are intended to result in his "establishment" or firm footing in the faith. As in every other usage by Paul of στηρίζω, stērizō, (1:11; I Thess. 3:3, 13; II Thess. 2:17; 3:3), so here the meaning is that of strengthening the church as a whole and the Christian in particular, making him steadfast through gospel sanctification.[1] This represents the fundamental and encompassing purpose of Romans (1:15). But the obvious implication here is that God will certainly accomplish this purpose of edification and completion, with all of its complexity, and for this reason He is to be glorified.

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[1] Notice how Luke uses the strengthened form, ἐπιστηρίζω, epistērizō, to describe Paul's nurture of churches previously planted in Asia Minor (Acts 14:22:15:41).

2. His gospel is the preaching of Christ, v. 25b.

   According to Paul, at the root of the Christian being established is "my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ." He delights to write of "my gospel" (2:16; II Tim. 2:8), not because of any sense of exclusive ownership, or difference with regard to say James, Peter, and John (Gal. 2:9; cf. I Cor. 15:11). However Paul's gospel does have an element of distinctiveness in that it is one of direct revelation from Christ (Gal. 1:11-12) that included an authoritative charge for delivery to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Thus he is a herald bearing "the proclamation," or τὸ κήρυγμα, to kērugma, the jewel of the gospel (II Cor. 4:7) as a message to be delivered as received and commissioned (Gal. 2:7; Eph. 3:6-7; I Tim. 1:11; II Tim. 1:10-11). Hence, that God should effectively accomplish His saving purposes through this human agency, even the "foremost of sinners" (I Tim. 1:15), is further cause for Him to be glorified.

3. His gospel is a mystery revelation, v. 25c.

   Certainly the gospel proclamation focuses on the person and work of Jesus Christ, yet there is a facet of this revelation that is a present wonderment. It is the aspect of "mystery," μυστήριον mustērion, that newly revealed truth previously hidden from view, "kept secret [silent, σιγάω, sigaō] for long ages past," which is the incorporation of the Gentiles, or "nations," (v. 26b, cf. Eph. 3:6) into the promised blessing of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). Such a truth was very much at the heart of Paul's distinctive ministry, even as he has repeatedly emphasized (1:5, 13; 3:29; 9:23-24, 30; 11:11-32; 15:8-19, 27; 16:3-4). So this weaving together of the saving destiny of Jew and Gentile, neither being totally or utterly forsaken, is to Paul an astonishment here worthy of declaring God's glory, even as he declares his same intent for the same reason in 11:33-36.

4. His gospel is inscripturated, v. 26a.

   "But now," a dormant truth has erupted, has become "manifest," the aorist of φανερόω, phaneroō, indicating an historic intervention (Gal. 4:4). To be sure "the Scriptures of the prophets" have always contained the truth of the gospel and particularly with regard to the Gentiles, 1:1-2; 3:21, as Paul has amply demonstrated, 15:8-19. Even so, only at the coming of Christ has the relative silence been broken; a distinctive and universal aspect has burst forth. Haldane adds: "The Jews were prone to consider the blessings of the Messiah as confined to themselves; but they had no warrant, or even plausible pretext, for this error in their own Scriptures."[2] Even so this timing is according to "the [authoritative] commandment of the eternal God." The neglect of the Jews cannot thwart God's design to save the Gentiles, and this also is a great stimulant to the glorification of God.

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[2] Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 659.

5. His gospel solicits the obedience of faith, v. 26b.

The thrust here does not merely describe a possibility, but a God ordained certainty. Thus Paul assures us that his authorized gospel proclamation will be both fruitful and ecumenical. The "obedience of faith," which phrase is identically used in 1:5, represents the apostolic conviction of an authentic harvest that will be identified by its "readiness to yield to the demands of faith." As Moo points out, this understanding of faith that is qualified by the thought of obedience, is elsewhere described in Romans, 1:8 and 16:9; 10:16a and 10:16b; 11:23 and 11:30-31.[3] Such initial faith results in the life of faith. History has not failed to reflect the Apostle's expectation at this point, that is with regard to the expansion of the gospel in the Gentile world. This effectual global outreach that is productive of authentic faith is certainly cause for God to be glorified.

6. His gospel is universal, v. 26c.

In Ephesians 3:4-11 we have the definitive explanation concerning the revelation of the "mystery," "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I [Paul] was made a minister." So here, this same "mystery . . . has been made known to all the nations [Gentiles]." Again, this is God's "establishment," v. 25a, which conveys the great vista of His saving intent that is far beyond the anticipation of man; and therefore this is something to be acknowledged as sublimely glorious.

B. TO GOD BE THE GLORY WHO ALONE IS WISE THROUGH THE GOSPEL, V. 27.

Surely we have a recollection here of the thought of 11:33-36: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom [σοφία, sophia] and knowledge of God. . . . To Him be the glory forever. Amen," especially in the light of the fact that both doxologies are concerned with the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the purposes of God.

1. Glorify Him as uniquely wise.

In the midst of a world of gods, there is only one God who is wise in His saving ways with mankind, in the same manner that God is the sole and only God (I Tim. 1:17; Jude 25). Stephen Charnock adds: "As Christ saith, 'None is good but God' (Matt. 19:17), so the apostle saith, none wise but God. As all creatures are unclean in regard of his purity, so they are all fools in regard of his wisdom, yea, the glorious angels themselves (Job 4:18). Wisdom is the royalty of God; the proper dialect of all his ways and works. No creature can lay claim to it; he is so wise, that he is wisdom itself."[4] As Haldane comments: "The gods of the heathen are not wise. The god of the Deist is not

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[3] Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 52n.

[4] Stephen Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock*, II, p. 10. This verse is the basis of Charnock's comprehensive study here of the wisdom of God, pp. 3-98.

wise. The god of the Arian is not wise. No view ever given of the Divine character exhibits the infinite wisdom of God in redemption, but what is found in the Gospel."[5]

2. Glorify Him as uniquely wise through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was wisdom in the bosom of the Father in eternity past (Prov. 8:12-31; John 1:1, 18); he has become wisdom incarnate, even from his youth (Luke 2:40), that is "the power of God and the wisdom of God . . . who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (I Cor. 1:24, 30). As Isaac Watts has penned:

> The Lord, descending from above,
> Invites his children near,
> While power, and truth, and boundless love
> Display there glories here.
>
> Here, in thy gospel's wondrous frame,
> Fresh wisdom we pursue;
> A thousand angels learn thy name,
> Beyond whate'er they knew.
>
> Thy name is writ in fairest lines;
> Thy wonders here we trace;
> Wisdom through all the mystery shines,
> And shines in Jesus' face.

3. Glorify Him as uniquely wise forever.

Unlike the temporal character of the Law, that "was added . . . until the seed [Christ] would come" (Gal. 3:19), that was appointed "until the date set by the father" (Gal. 4:2), that "came in so that the transgression would increase" (Rom. 5:20), the gospel was ordained as an "eternal gospel" (Rev. 14:6; cf. Heb. 13:20) so that "grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21; cf. 6:22). Here is cause for God to be glorified forever. Here the saints at Rome are encouraged to offer their "amen" of heartfelt agreement.

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[5] Haldane, *Romans*, p. 660.