

# ROMANS

## WRITER

The Holy Spirit used the apostle Paul to inscribe this brilliant example of literature on the grace of God. Paul was his Greek name, whereas Saul was his Jewish name. Paul was a Jew (At 21:39; 22:3) of the tribe of Benjamin (Ph 3:5). He was born in the city of Tarsus of the Roman province of Cilicia. Some of his kinsmen from the same area are mentioned in the letter (16:7,11,21; see At 23:16). Paul was educated at the feet of the well know Jewish Rabbi Gamaliel (At 22:3; 23:6; 26:5; Ph 3:5). He was educated as a Pharisee. Before his conversion, he was a Jewish authority with a mandate to bind and cast Christians into prison (At 22:4,5). He was well known by chief priests of the Jewish hierarchy (At 26:4) who had given him authority to bind and imprison Christians (At 26:10). However, because of the nature of His personality and zeal for what he believed, he was personally called by Jesus to be a Christ-sent apostle specifically to the Gentiles (At 9:1-15; 22:3-21; 26:12-18).

Paul wrote that he had been “*put into the ministry*” (1 Tm 1:12). He was “*separated unto the gospel*” (1:1) and made a “*prisoner of Jesus*” (Ep 3:1). As an apostle, he was “*born out of due time*” or the time when Christ-sent apostles were chosen by Jesus (1 Co 15:8). He was made an apostle by Jesus because he was trustworthy in character, and thus, he was able to assume the responsibility of being one of the major leaders of the church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century (1 Tm 1:12). Because of his character and bold personality, he was made God’s special apostle to Israel, Gen-

tiles and kings (At 9:15; 22:15). In his work, God intended for him to give special emphasis on opening the door for the gospel into the Gentile world (At 22:21; Gl 2:7). Though his emphasis was on the Gentiles, throughout his ministry he never forgot the Jews. To almost every city he went, he preached in the synagogue of the Jews (9:1-3; 10:1; At 14:1; 17:1,2).

Of all the New Testament characters, we probably know more about Paul than any other personality. For some reason, God chose him to write thirteen of the New Testament letters. Some believe he also wrote also the letter of Hebrews.

Because of the nature of his character, it is easy to understand why God made the choice that Paul have such great influence on the beginnings of the church. Paul was conscientious (1 Tm 1:3), pioneering (15:20), intellectual (At 22:3; Gl 1:14), humble (1 Co 15:9; Ep 3:8; 1 Tm 1:15), honest (1 Tm 1:13), obedient (At 26:19), bold (At 9:27-29), zealous (At 22:3; Gl 1:13,14; Ph 3:6), aggressive (At 9:19,20; 19:30), righteous (Ph 3:6), sacrificial (Ph 3:7,8), determined (At 15:37-39), concerned (9:1-3; 10:1), daring (At 21:13), loving (1 Co 13; Cl 3:12ff), and enduring (2 Co 11:23-28). When considering the life and work of Paul, it is understandable why the Holy Spirit inspired him to write that his life should be an example to others (1 Co 11:1; Ph 3:17). (See "Writer" in the intro. to Gl.)

### **DATE**

Most Bible students believe that the letter of Romans was written from the city of Corinth while Paul was on his third mission journey (Compare 15:25-27 with At 20:1-3). The date of writing would be between A.D. 56 and 59.

### **THEME**

The theme of the letter is expressed in 1:17, a quotation

from Habakkuk 2:4. "*The just will live by faith*" (See Gl 3:11; Hb 10:38). It is not coincidental that Paul quoted this fundamental concept of salvation in the three letters that were written concerning the influence on the disciples by those who were seeking to return to the Sinai law and covenant. In Romans, Galatians and Hebrews there was a concerted effort on the part of some to return to a legal system of justification by meritorious works in reference to the Sinai law. In all three letters, therefore, Paul affirmed that salvation has always been by grace and faith. Before the giving of the Sinai law and covenant that God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai, salvation was by grace and faith. Under the Sinai law, salvation was by grace and faith (Hk 2:4). Nothing has changed unto this day. Paul clearly explains this in this letter. He explains why salvation is by grace on God's part in order to stimulate obedient faith on man's part. Therefore, in the very first chapter of the letter he lays the foundation for the concept of salvation that he will defend throughout the letter. The salvation that he will defend is that we are saved by grace and faith (See intro. to Gl). The theme of the book distinguishes Christianity from all those faiths of the world that find their origin in man.

## PURPOSE

According to the purposes for which Paul wrote, the letter to the Romans can be divided into three sections.

**1. We are justified by grace and faith (1-8).** Because of the Jewish influence on the disciples in Rome, the concept of legal justification was affecting the thinking of the disciples. Judaism proposed that one was justified by meritorious keeping of law in conjunction with atonement for sin by meritorious deeds. This system of justification, commonly referred to by Bible students as legalism, had made significant inroads into the church. This thinking attacked

the grace of God, and thus, Paul wrote in chapters 1-8 a defense of the fundamental principle that men are saved by the grace of God.

**2. National Israel was rejected because of unbelief (9-10).** The gospel came first to the Jews (3:1; 9:4,5; Jn 4:22), but was rejected by the majority of Israel (Jn 1:11). Paul wrote chapters 9-11 in order to explain the problem of unbelief on the part of the Jews in reference to the belief of the Gentiles. Once the fullness of the Gentiles was complete, then God would terminate national Israel according to the prophecies of the prophets.

**3. Faith establishes law (11-16).** Since Christians are justified by God's grace, Paul explains in chapters 11-16 that Christians must maintain an obedient response to the grace of God. Grace sets one free from the necessity of perfect law-keeping in order to be saved. There can never be self-justification before God. However, grace does not set one free from law. In chapters 11-16 he applies the principle of 3:31. "*Do we then make void law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish law.*" Law is established in one's life when he responds to the grace of God. Therefore, obedient faith is a response to the grace of God. It is a response of thanksgiving (2 Co 4:15). It is a response of a son who pleads to the Father for direction in living.

## KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

In order to understand the letter to the Romans, there are some key words that Paul uses that express central concepts in the letter. The following are some of those key words and concepts that introduce us to this letter:

**1. Grace:** Salvation by grace is the theme of the letter to the Romans. In the New Testament, the Greek word *charis* is the common word that is used for grace. In the

Old Testament the Hebrew words *hesed* and *hen* are used. The Old Testament words are translated either “steadfast love,” “mercy,” “lovingkindness,” “goodness,” or “favor.” The New Testament word *charis* was usually used to translate the Hebrew word *hen*. *Charis* in reference to man’s salvational relationship with God refers to one’s justification before God as a result of the loving favor of God that was first unconditionally extended toward man. In other words, God was not obligated to send Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb for the sins of men in response to any meritorious works on the part of man. Nevertheless, though man was lost in sin and undeserving of salvation, God sent forth His Son (Ti 2:11). This message of the gospel was expressed by Paul. “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (5:8). God initiated the action of salvation toward man though man did not earn such. However, though the initiation of God’s plan of salvation was extended without meritorious works on the part of man, conditions exist in order that one accept the free gift. The gift of grace was free, but the acceptance of the gift has conditions. One must obediently respond to the free gift. The response to the free gift is the condition by which the grace of God is activated in our lives. Paul’s argument throughout Romans and Galatians is that this response is not meritorious. One does not continue in the grace of God by meritoriously obligating God to continue in His grace toward man. Paul’s emphasis is on one’s continual response to God’s loving favor. “*We love Him because He first loved us*” (1 Jn 4:19). It is a response of thanksgiving (See comments 2 Co 4:15). Our response to God’s grace is a manifestation of our love of God. This is the point of the New Testament writers concerning the grace of God in our lives. Concerning his own life, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he excelled in obedience through the motivation of grace (See comments 1

Co 15:10). It was grace that motivated Paul into action. His response to grace, therefore, established the law of God in his life (See comments 3:31). His life was not a testimony of meritoriously seeking to earn his salvation. He had received salvation by the grace of God. The remainder of his life after his baptism was in thanksgiving to God for his salvation (2 Co 4:15). He worked because he was saved, not in order to be saved (See Ep 2:10). And so it should be with all who come to a knowledge of and response to the grace of God that was manifested on the sacrificial cross of Jesus.

**2. Faith:** One of the most misunderstood words of the New Testament in reference to salvation is the word “faith.” When approaching a study of Romans, it is crucial to understand what Paul means by the use of this word in the context of his writing on the subject of grace. Several definitions are found throughout the New Testament, some of which are used by Paul in Romans. Faith is the mental acceptance of God’s revealed word as truth that was given to man (See Jn 4:21; Js 2:19). Faith is one’s reliance on God for salvation (See 9:33; Jn 2:23,24; 10:11; 2 Tm 1:12). Faith is a belief in God (Hb 11:6). When we study the epistle of Romans, it is essential to understand each context in which the word “faith” is used.

In Romans, Paul contrasts faith with works. Through meritorious works of law and good deeds one is trusting in himself. However, through responsive faith to the grace of God one is trusting in God. Therefore, “*we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand ...*” (5:2). Paul affirms, therefore, that faith is an obedient response that gives us access to the grace of God. A dead faith is identified by its lack of obedience. Such a faith is unproductive in one’s relationship with God and His grace (Js 2:14-26).

Faith, or trust in God, is the natural reaction of the one

who recognizes the grace of God. Grace is God extending the gift of salvation to man through the cross (Ti 2:11). However, one must accept the gift. Nowhere throughout the entire New Testament is saving faith assumed to be a simple mental belief that God is and that Jesus is His Son. Faith certainly includes these essential and fundamental teachings. However, any recognition of God and Jesus as His Son must motivate one into action.

In John 8:31 John recorded that Jesus addressed the Jewish religious leaders, some of whom believed on Him. However, by the time the conversation between the Jewish religious leaders and Jesus came to the point where Jesus revealed their true character, Jesus said to them, “*You are of your father the devil ...*” (Jn 8:44). These Jews whom Jesus addressed “believed,” however, their belief did not move them to obedience (See Jn 3:36; Hb 3:19). If faith does not move one into action, then one’s appreciation for the grace of God is not sincere. It takes more than an intellectual acceptance of Jesus to bring God’s grace in one’s life. It takes more than a “sinner’s prayer.” Throughout the letter to the Romans, Paul will explain this point. He did not have to go into a lengthy definition of faith because he assumed that everyone understood that faith without works is dead (Js 2:14-26).

**3. Sin:** Paul uses the word “transgression” (*parabasis*) in reference to one’s choice to obey law (4:15; 5:14; 1 Jn 3:4). This Greek word means “to sidestep” or “overstep” the law of God (Compare 2 Jn 9). Paul also uses the Greek word *harmartia* (“sin”) that is the commonly used word in the New Testament, to refer to sin. The meaning of this word is “to miss the mark” or “fail to achieve the mark” for which one is striving.

When we sin against God’s law, we miss the mark of justification before God. We must approach God on the conditions that God determines. We cannot approach God

on our own conditions. No man has a right to determine his own conditions for justification before God. If it were our responsibility to determine our own conditions for justification, then each man would be approaching justification in a different manner.

Justification cannot be attained on the basis of perfectly keeping the conditions of God's law or establishing a system of laws whereby one seeks to justify himself before God. In reference to any law, Paul pronounced that all men sin (3:9,10,23). It is impossible, therefore, for one to reach the mark of justification on the basis of perfect law-keeping. Paul's indictment against all men, therefore, is that all miss the mark. All men are doomed to sin, and thus suffer the consequences of spiritual death. The fact that we cannot keep law perfectly in order to save ourselves, necessitates the grace of God (5:1,2).

Sin is not an entity that exists separate from the existence of man. Satan and his angels certainly sinned against God (2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6). However, when discussing man's relationship with God, Paul affirms that sin is man's specific relational problem that all of us have in reference to God. Sin is the willful transgression of law on the part of free-moral agents who have been given the responsibility to respond positively to their Creator (1 Jn 3:4). Sin is the action on the part of men who do not do biblical principles of good (See comments Js 4:17). Therefore, sin would not exist if men did not exist. In Romans Paul sometimes personifies sin. However, we must not miss his point by misunderstanding his use of the concept of sin. Sin exists because men exist.

The result of sin is separation from God (Is 59:1,2), and thus spiritual death (6:23). Therefore, because men exist, sin exists, and all men are therefore spiritually dead before God. Without the grace of God no man could be saved, for it is impossible for men to perfectly keep law in order to

merit salvation (3:20; Gl 2:16). This brings us to Paul's use of the word "law" in Romans in reference to man's dilemma concerning sin and death.

**4. Law:** Depending on the context, Paul uses the word "law" to refer to several different concepts of law. Because he uses the word in such a diverse manner, it is imperative that Bible students allow the contexts in which the word is used to be the final commentary as to which of the following meanings he has in mind:

**a. Law in general:** Paul often uses the word "law" in a generic sense. When he uses the word as such, he does not use the article "the" with the word. For example, "*Therefore, by the works of law no flesh will be justified in His sight ...*" (3:20). In this statement, as well as many others, Paul does not use the Greek article "the" with the word "law," which some translators have taken the liberty to insert (See comments Gl 2:16). In the contexts where he uses the word "law" in a generic sense, any religious law would be under consideration, including the law of Christ. Some translators have assumed that whenever Paul used the word "law" in these contexts that he was referring to the Sinai law. However, this was not so. It was only the translator's assumptions that led to the addition of the article to the text. With the addition of the article, the force of Paul's argument is somewhat misunderstood, but not weakened. His teaching that one is not justified by perfect keeping of law still stands. However, we must understand that when the article is absent, Paul is warning us that we must not twist the law of Christ into being a legal system by which one would seek to meritoriously justify himself before God.

**b. Law of the ten commandments:** Paul also uses the word "law" in reference to the ten commandments.

He wrote, "*I would not have known sin except through law*" (7:7). In the same verse he refers to one of the ten commandments of the law (See also 13:8-10). Therefore, the ten commandments were a part of the law. When he uses the word "law" in reference to the ten commandments of the Sinai law, he always uses the article "the" with the word "law."

**c. Law of the Old Testament:** In Romans 3:21 Paul wrote, "*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.*" In this and similar passages, Paul used the word "law" according to the Jewish use of the term in reference to the Sinai law that God delivered to Israel through Moses (Gn, Ex, Lv, Nm, Dt). In other contexts he used the phrase "law of Moses" to refer to the same (5:13).

**d. Law of the Spirit of life:** In Romans 8:2 Paul refers to the law of the Spirit of life. "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has freed you from the law of sin and death.*" Reference here is to that which is in contrast to the "law of sin and death." The Sinai law did not bring salvation, for no law in and of itself can accomplish justification before God. The problem is not with the law, but with man. Therefore, law was not given to man to be a means by which he would save himself. The reason this is true is that men cannot keep law perfectly. Therefore, the Sinai law became a law of "sin and death." The Jews could not keep it perfectly, and thus, their sin against law condemned them before God. In contrast to the Sinai law as a means by which one might justify himself before God, the "law" that was revealed through the Holy Spirit, that is the law of Christ, is a law of life. The law of Christ, which is the result of the Spirit's inspiration of men, is a law of life because it is based on grace. It is the law of liberty about which James wrote (Js 1:25).

The law of Christ is a law of liberty in the sense that it

gives the principles that direct the lives of those who have responded to the grace of God. The law of Christ liberates us from perfect law-keeping. It is the “law of the Spirit of life” because one responds by establishing law in his life as a result of his salvation by God’s grace (3:31). It is the law of liberty because we have been set free from the necessity of perfect law-keeping in order to be saved.

**e. Law of sin and death:** In Romans 8:2 Paul refers to the “law of sin and death.” Law used as a meritorious means of justification always results in “sin and death.” Law results in sin in the sense that no one can keep law perfectly in order to be justified before God. With law comes sin, for all have sinned (3:9,10). And with sin comes spiritual death, for sin separates one from God (Is 59:1,2). Therefore, when discussing law, the concept of “sin and death” must always be in one’s definition of law. When we understand this, then we understand that law was never given as a means of salvation. It cannot bring salvation in and of itself because all men sin against law. There is always “sin and death” in reference to law.

The above principle does not mean that law has no place in one’s daily walk of life. When one responds to the loving grace of God, he pleads “Abba, Father.” As a son he seeks to please the Father. The Father has responded with direction (law) for a loving son. Therefore, our obedient response to the work of God establishes law in our lives (See comments 3:31).

**f. Law of the conscience:** Paul refers to the Gentiles as having “*a law unto themselves*” (2:14). This was Paul’s reference to the moral conscience of those Gentiles who kept the principles of the Sinai law, though the law was not given specifically to them. Man has always been under a law of God. Though the Gentiles were not given the Sinai law on Mount Sinai, they continued under the system of law and its principles that God had delivered to

man before the giving of the Sinai law to the Jews. God spoke to the fathers of the families before Sinai, and thus He continued with the principles of this law with the Gentiles until the coming of Christ (Hb 1:1,2). Therefore, the Gentiles were not without law. Though the principles of God's law were not written, as was the case with the Sinai law that was given to the Jews, the law was written on their consciences. The Gentiles were under the law of their conscience.

**g. Law of faith:** In Romans 3:27 Paul refers to the law of faith. *“Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.”* This is the principle that one's faith moves him to respond to the grace of God (2 Co 4:15). Faith is not a simple mental acknowledgment that God exists and that Jesus is the Son of God, or that He is one's personal Savior. It is a faith working in response to the love of God (See Gl 3:10-13; 4:5; 5:6; 6:2; 1 Jn 4:19). Paul does not contradict himself in proposing this concept. In the context, his principle is simple. One is not saved by meritorious works, for one cannot keep law perfectly or do enough good works in order to merit eternal life in heaven. Since this is true, then there is no room for boasting on the part of the individual concerning either his works of law or meritorious deeds. He is saved on the basis of trusting (faith) in God's grace. Nevertheless, this trust in God's grace moves one to maintain an obedient faith (See 4:8ff; 5:1,2; 6:14; 7:4-6; 8:2,3; 10:6-10; compare Gl 3:10,13,21-26; 5:18). If there is room for boasting, it is in one's reliance on God for his salvation, not on one's self in his meritorious performance of deeds. This is the law of faith. It is the principle that one's faith in God's grace moves him to comply with God's life principles of Christian conduct (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

**h. Law of works:** In Romans 3:27 Paul contrasted the law of faith with the law of works. The “law of works”

refers to one's attempt to be justified before God on the merit of one's performance of law and good works (See 3:20; 4:13ff; 7:1-11; 8:2,3; 10:5; compare Gl 3:10,11,17,18,21; 5:4; 2 Tm 1:9). This is Paul's primary purpose for the letter, and thus the primary use of the word "law" in the letter. He affirms that man cannot be saved on the merit of law-keeping simply because no one can keep law perfectly in order to justify himself before God. The Jews codified the Sinai law with their added traditions in order to use it as a means by which they sought to meritoriously save themselves (3:1-8; see intro. to Gl). The Gentiles also came out of a similar legal system of law-keeping in reference to their own religious laws they had constructed in order to save themselves (Cl 2:20-22; see Rm 1:18-20; 2:14,15). Both Jews and Gentiles came out of legalistic systems of law-keeping in reference to the laws they had constructed for themselves that demanded flawless living in order that one be meritoriously justified. The problem with this concept and system of law was that one sin made one a lawbreaker (Gl 3:10,11; Js 2:10). And as a lawbreaker, one was condemned (6:23). Therefore, if one sought legal justification before God on the basis of his performance of law, he stood condemned before God because of his inability to keep law perfectly (3:20; Gl 2:16). This is Paul's definition of the law of works. It is his argument in both Romans and Galatians to prove that the law of grace and faith was necessary in order to bring men to justification before God, because men, by trusting in their own performance of law, could not keep law perfectly in order to save themselves (See Gl 3:21,22).

**5. *Death:*** The word "death" always means separation. In reference to man's spiritual problem, it means separation from God because of sin (Is 59:1,2). In reference to man's physical death problem, spiritual death means sepa-

ration from the tree of life (Gn 3:22-24). In the letter to the Romans Paul uses the word in at least five ways in association with these two great problems that man has in his existence as a living being.

**a.** When Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he personally sinned against God, and subsequently, personally died spiritually (5:12). Sin came between him and God in order to separate him from God (Is 59:1,2). The result of his separation from God, therefore, was his spiritual death (6:21-23). Spiritual death is the result of men not being able to keep law perfectly in order to be saved. Because all men sin, all men suffer the curse of spiritual death as Adam. This is man's greatest problem and the problem that has been solved by the grace of God. Through the cross of Jesus, God offers a solution for the spiritual death problem of men (6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4).

**b.** When Adam was separated from the tree of life, he could not eat of it and live forever (Gn 3:22-24). As a consequence of this separation from the tree, it is appointed unto all men that they should physically die (Hb 9:27). In physical death there is separation of the spirit and body of man (Js 2:26). Physical death, therefore, means the separation of the spirit and body as a result of man's separation from the tree of life (See 5:10; 6:9,10; 7:2-5). Physical death is man's second greatest problem. However, through grace God has offered through the resurrection of Jesus an opportunity for men to have eternal life (6:3-6; see comments 1 Co 15:20-22).

**c.** Paul also makes reference to the Christian's relationship to the Sinai law as a means by which to be saved. *"Therefore, my brethren, you also became dead to the law through the body of Christ ..."* (7:4). In this sense, the Christian is separated from the Sinai law in order to stand in the grace of God. Because the Christian is married to Christ,

he is separated from the requirement of perfect law-keeping in order to be saved. The requirement of law in order to produce justification was perfect law-keeping. Since Christians have been married to Christ, they are thus free from the necessity of perfect law-keeping in order to be justified before God. They are dead to the Sinai law as a means of salvation.

**d.** Paul's theme in chapter 6 is that Christians are dead to sin (6:1,2; 4-7). In other words, Christians are to be separated from the practice of sin because they have become slaves of righteousness. Those who are slaves of righteousness trust in God's grace, and thus, they do not give themselves to the lusts of the flesh, eyes and pride of life. Grace does not free one to sin (Gl 5:13; 1 Pt 2:16). It frees one to obey in response to grace (See 3:21; 2 Co 4:15). It is imperative, therefore, that Christians separate themselves from sin.

**e.** Paul also uses the word "death" in a metonymical sense in reference to one's obedience to the gospel. "*Therefore, we are buried with Him through baptism into death ...*" (6:4). Jesus literally died and was buried outside Jerusalem in Palestine. In repentance and immersion, one comes into union with Jesus through the action of crucifying oneself with Jesus, and subsequently being buried in water. One thus dies with Christ in the sense of dying to the old way of life in order to be raised from the tomb of water to walk in a new life. We are thus "*united together in the likeness of His death*" (6:5).

**6. Justification/Righteousness:** Out of the thirty-nine times the verb "justify" is used in the New Testament it is used twenty-nine times by Paul in his epistles. The noun form (*dikaiosis*) is used in 4:25 and 5:18. Understanding Paul's use of this word in reference to man's state of salvation is crucial in order to understand the message of Romans.

Consider first that the English words “righteousness” and “justification” originate from the same root Greek word. To some extent, therefore, the translators did not do us a favor in using two English words to translate in some text the same Greek word. In Romans, therefore, the words “righteousness” and “justification” in reference to one’s relationship with God cannot be separated. When used in reference to God, Paul says that God is righteous and just (3:5,25,26; 2 Tm 4:8). He is such because He consistently works in harmony with His established laws in order to save the lost (See Gn 18:25). The event of the gospel was a manifestation of the righteousness of God (1:17; see Ti 2:11). The gospel manifested justice in that God offered man a means by which to be saved. The gospel also manifests God’s justice in judging those who reject the gospel (See 2:5; 3:5,6).

No man can be righteous before God on the merit of his own performance of law because no man can keep law perfectly in order to be without sin (3:9,10,23). Man is righteous before God on the basis of being justified before God by His grace (5:1,2). Therefore, we could define the word “righteous” with reference to one’s state of being just before God. The word “justified” would be the legal term that would explain the action of God in reference to man in order to accredit him righteous. In other words, through His grace God takes the action of justification. He forgives men of sin (8:33). As a result of the action, therefore, men stand righteous or justified before God.

There is an inseparable relationship between righteousness and justification in the letters to both the Romans and Galatians. The righteous are justified and the justified are the righteous. Righteousness refers to man’s right relationship to God (4:8,9) that was not accomplished through either meritorious deeds (4:1-5; see Ep 2:8,9; Ti 3:5) or law-keeping (3:20,21; Gl 2:16). One is accounted righteous

before God on the basis of an obedient response of faith to the saving grace of God (1:17; 4:6; 5:1,2).

Paul also speaks of a supposed righteousness that is based on the presumption that one can keep law perfectly and do meritorious works in order to stand righteous in the sight of God (9:30,31; 10:1-3). Reference to righteousness in these texts is a supposed righteousness that men would claim on the merit of their performance of law and works in order to save themselves (10:3,5; Gl 3:10,11; Ph 3:9). However, Paul counters by stating that no man can keep law perfectly in order to save himself (3:10,20; 8:3; Gl 2:16; 3:10,11). No one can do meritorious good deeds in order to atone for sin against law.

The Jews sought God after their own “self-righteousness” (Mt 9:13). Some were seeking to bring this system of law-keeping into the church. It was through the letters of Romans and Galatians that Paul stopped the invasion of this “other gospel” (Gl 1:6-9).

**7. *Flesh*:** In Romans Paul uses the word “flesh” to refer to one’s life before he became a Christian (7:5; see 2 Co 10:2,4). In other words, when one is outside Christ, he is “in the flesh” (7:5; see Gl 3:3). He is living according to the desires of the flesh (Ep 2:1-3). Walking according to the flesh refers to living after the carnal life (Gl 5:19). However, in reference to the religious person who lived according to the flesh, Paul uses the word “flesh” in a different manner. He speaks of his living according to the flesh before he came to the grace of God. In other words, he sought self-justification before God through meritorious performance of law and good works according to the ability of the flesh to perform. His emphasis in his religious life was on himself, and not on God. Living according to the performance of the flesh is in contrast to living by faith. Through faith one is trusting in God for his salvation. The

one who walks according to the flesh, is trusting in himself. And in reference to pleasing the One before whom we will give account of our obedience, there is no possible way for man to live perfectly according to the flesh. The beautiful message of Romans is that the One before whom we will give account offers an abundance of mercy and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Need For Redemption**

**(1:8 – 3:20)**

**Outline:** (1) Appreciation for the disciples (1:8-15), (2) The power of the gospel (1:16,17), (3) Sin and condemnation of the Gentiles (1:18-32), (4) The righteous judgment of God (2:1-16), (5) The Jews and the law (2:17-29), (6) Supposed Jewish objections (3:1-8), (7) There is none righteous (3:9-20)

## **Chapter 1**

### **APPRECIATION FOR THE DISCIPLES**

**1:8 *Thank my God ... for you all:*** Paul here expressed his thanksgiving for the faithfulness of the saints in Rome. The reputation of their faithfulness was manifested to others (See 1 Co 1:4). Their faithfulness in a difficult political environment had encouraged others. It was through Jesus Christ that he thanked God for them (See Jn 14:13,14; 16:23; Ep 5:20; Cl 3:17; Hb 13:15). It was only through Jesus that Paul could have been thankful for them, for it was through Jesus that they existed as part of the one body and he as the Lord's apostle. ***Your faith is spoken of:*** Paul had never met the brethren in Rome. Nevertheless, he wanted to compliment them on their faith that was spoken of throughout the Roman Empire (See comments Lk 2:1,2; see Rm 16:19). Regardless of our environment in which we live, we should live the Christian life in order to encourage others by our faithfulness.

**1:9,10 *God is my witness:*** Paul assured the Roman brethren that they were constantly in his prayers (See 9:1; 2 Co 1:23; Gl 1:20; Ph 1:8). ***By the will of God:*** Paul's ministry was by the will of God. He thus walked according

to the will of God that he might fulfill his ministry (See At 9:15; compare Lk 22:42). He prayed that it would be within the will of God that he go to Rome (15:22-24). This prayer was answered, for in the letter of Acts Paul is found in Rome at the time of the conclusion of Acts (At 23:11).

**1:11,12** *I may impart to you some spiritual gift:* It is certain that Paul here speaks of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit that were given to the early church through the laying on of the Christ-sent apostles' hands (See comments At 18:8). The gifts were given for the purpose of edifying the church in its early beginnings, for there was no written word. It was one of the responsibilities of the Christ-sent apostles to lay hands on baptized believers in order that they receive these gifts. In this context, therefore, Paul was desiring to go to Rome in order to accomplish this ministry of his apostleship. Some of the Roman Christians may have already had these gifts, since some were probably in Jerusalem during one of the Passover/Pentecost feasts when the apostles were in Jerusalem in A.D. 30 and for about fifteen years afterward (See 12:6). Nevertheless, Paul knew that they had grown in numbers, and thus, there were others in the Roman church who needed to have hands laid on them in order to receive the gifts (15:29). Since Paul had to go to them in order to lay hands on them, such is proof that only Christ-sent apostles could impart the miraculous gifts. This the apostles could do only if they were in the presence of the person upon whom they would lay hands. For this reason, no one can claim today to have such miraculous gifts simply because there are no Christ-sent apostles today. Since only the apostles could impart the gifts, then we would assume that not everyone in the 1<sup>st</sup> century received the gifts, for the apostles did not go to every place where the gospel had gone. We would learn from the history of the impartation of the gifts, therefore, that the existence of the church in any region did not de-

pend on the existence of the miraculous gifts. ***Encouraged together with you:*** When Paul would visit Rome, He would be encouraged by the faithfulness of the brethren there who had remained faithful in one of the most hostile environments to Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Rome would be the seat of persecution against the disciples in the years to come. At the time Paul wrote, Nero had not yet begun his persecution of the saints. However, in the early and mid 60s he would do so. In the latter part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Domitian would launch state persecution against Christians. Therefore, Paul commends these Christians in Rome for their faithfulness and encourages them to remain faithful.

**1:13 *Was hindered until the present:*** Paul had in the past made plans to visit Rome. However, for some reason he was hindered from making his desired visit (15:22). He could have been hindered by the work of Satan through evil men (1 Th 2:18). It is certain that the hindrance about which he speaks here was not that which was communicated to him by the Holy Spirit when he wanted to go into Bithynia and Asia (At 16:6,7). We do not know exactly what hindered him from visiting before he wrote this letter. Regardless of past hindrances, he wanted them to know that he desired to come to them in order that he might produce spiritual growth among the disciples through the ministry of teaching that he had to offer.

**1:14 *I am a debtor:*** Because of his appreciation and realization of what God had done in saving him, Paul was obligated to work in thanksgiving to God (1 Co 9:16; 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). Because God had shown love toward him, he had to love others (1 Jn 4:19). He thus felt his destiny to complete the ministry that was given to him by God (1:1; At 9:15; Gl 1:15). He was in debt to God for saving him. He was not working in order to put God in debt to him. His very life, therefore, taught the theme of this epistle that he wrote to the Romans.

**1:15 *As much as is in me:*** There is intensity in these words. There is determination and destiny. With such emotions each evangelist is motivated to preach the gospel to the lost (9:1-3; 10:1; see comments 1 Co 15:10). One characteristic of Paul was his self-initiative to do the work of evangelism. This is a necessary characteristic of any evangelist who seeks to preach the gospel to the world. Men must arise who take it upon themselves to get the job done of preaching the gospel (See 2 Tm 4:2).

### THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

**1:16 *I am not ashamed:*** Paul was not intimidated by the pride of the unbelieving world that scoffed at the cross (Ps 40:9,10; Mk 8:38). He had been where they were and knew that education and philosophy could produce no real world view. Reality was not in the mental inventions of men who focused on their own accomplishments. He had experienced on the Damascus road the fact of the resurrection of the One whom the world had rejected. He walked by fact in reference to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It was not a matter of faith to him, for he had seen Jesus with his own eyes and experienced the power of the supernatural working through his hands in miracles. Men as this were not intimidated by circumstances or fearful for their lives. ***Gospel:*** The Greek word here means “good news.” This is the good news of the historical event of the death of Jesus on the cross to solve man’s sin problem (1 Co 1:23; 2:2; 15:3; see Is 53). It is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead in order to solve man’s problem of physical death (1 Co 15:4,20-22). The word “gospel” (good news) does not refer to the teachings of Jesus or the New Testament. The New Testament is the inspired report of the historical event of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). It is the purpose of the teachings of the New Testament to direct one’s faith unto obedience

to the gospel, and then after obedience, direct one's life according to holy living (See 2 Tm 3:16,17). ***Power of God unto salvation:*** Paul's boldness to proclaim the death of Jesus for our sins and resurrection for our hope came from the fact that all men must obey the gospel in order to be saved (See comments 6:3-6; At 4:12; 1 Co 1:18; 15:1-4; 2 Th 1:7-9; 1 Pt 4:17). Therefore, he had set the course of his life to proclaim the glorious gospel (2 Co 4:4; 1 Pt 1:24) of peace (Ep 6:15) and hope (Cl 1:23). It is this gospel that has unleashed the power of God for the salvation of man. Salvation does not lie in keeping religious traditions, submission to emotional experiences, or accomplishments of meritorious works. Salvation is accomplished through the grace of God that was revealed through the good news of Jesus' death for our sins and resurrection for our hope (Ti 2:11). ***To the Jew first:*** It was the plan of God to originate the gospel from the Jews (See 15:27; Gn 12:1-3; 22:18; Is 2:2-5; Zc 8:22,23; Lk 2:30; 24:47; Jn 4:22; At 3:24,26; 13:46; Gl 4:4; see comments At 13:46; 18:6). But from the Jews, the gospel would go unto every ethnic group of all the world as Israel fulfilled her responsibility of being a priesthood for the world (See comments 1 Pt 2:9; see Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15).

**1:17 *The righteousness of God revealed:*** God created man a free-moral agent and placed him in an environment where he could make choices. However, God knew that men would sin, for no man could keep His laws perfectly in order to save himself (3:20; Gl 2:16). Since this was true of the nature of man, then God could not, without offering salvation from sin, remain just by condemning anyone to hell without Himself being unjust or unrighteous. Through the gospel, therefore, God has offered to humanity the opportunity by which to escape condemnation (3:21). God's righteousness (justice) is revealed through the gospel because it is God's offering of hope to free-moral indi-

viduals who could not escape the dilemma of sin against law (3:9,10,23). ***From faith to faith:*** The text literally reads, “out of faith unto faith.” God has offered His grace through the gospel. Men must respond by obedient faith in order to obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by immersion (6:3-5). This faith response leads to a life of faith in God for saving one through the gospel. The faith response that initiated one’s obedience to the gospel continues to respond to the will of God throughout one’s life. ***The just will live by faith:*** From creation to the culmination of all things this has always been and always will be God’s plan of salvation (See Hk 2:4; Gl 3:11,12; Hb 10:38). Salvation has been by man’s faith response to the grace of God (5:1,2). This must be God’s plan of salvation simply because no man can keep law perfectly in order to save himself. Good works cannot atone for sin. Therefore, man is in a dilemma from which only grace can deliver him. Throughout the letter to the Romans, Paul will define this concept that is here quoted from Habakkuk in one statement that “the just will live by faith.” He will define this principle as the foundation upon which all who would be saved must approach God. Obedient faith is in response to the grace of God. Salvation is by grace and faith (5:1,2).

## **SIN AND CONDEMNATION OF THE GENTILES**

Paul now begins to build his argument concerning the necessity of the grace of God for the salvation of men. He first begins in verses 18-32 of this chapter to convict the Gentiles. They were lost in sin and unable to save themselves. They conducted themselves after a worldly nature that did not deserve the grace of the cross. However, Paul will develop the argument that God poured out His love through Jesus regardless of the spiritual condition of society (5:8). In 2:1-16 he will turn to the Jews. They also were undeserving of the grace of God though they thought

that they were righteous before God because of their own legal system of justification and their heritage relationship with God. However, neither they nor the Gentiles could obligate God to offer Jesus on the cross because of their supposed righteousness. There was no one among the Jews or Gentiles who were found to be worthy (3:9,10,23). Paul will affirm, therefore, that in order for anyone to be saved, God had to pour out His grace through the sacrificial death of the incarnate Son of God (Ti 2:11).

**1:18,19 *The wrath of God is revealed:*** God can stand righteous in revealing wrath upon sinners because He has extended a means by which they can be saved. In this context, Paul explains the problem of man. Beginning with this verse and extending through 3:20, Paul presents the spiritual condition of the Gentile world before Christ. The world was under sin and death. This state of man resulted from man's unwillingness to accept God's law as it was revealed through the fathers (Hb 1:1). The Gentiles refused to approach God through faith, and thus, they created gods after their own imagination and religions after their own desires. Paul explains that the Gentiles were subject to the law of their conscious realization that there was a God to whom they must be obedient according to their conscience (2:14). The Jews were subject to the Sinai law. However, both Jew and Gentile stood condemned in relation to God's laws, for all have sinned (3:9,10,23). ***Suppress the truth in unrighteousness:*** God had revealed His will to the Gentiles (vs 20; At 14:17; Hb 1:1; see Rm 2:12-15). Because they did not have a love of the truth, they invented their own religions, and thus, they rejected the truth (See comments Mk 7:1-9; 2 Th 2:10-12). In their creation of their own religion they suppressed the truth of God in their lives. ***That which is known about God:*** Paul affirms that it is within men to have enough common sense to know that there is a Designer who is greater than this

world (See comments At 17:22-31). Common sense, combined with a humble heart, would lead one to search for God. But such is not the case with arrogant men who are determined to live according to their own lusts.

**1:20 *Invisible things of Him ... clearly seen:*** One must not be confused by thinking that the material world reveals the character of God. That which is revealed about God through the physical world is that He is all-powerful, and thus able to create the world. Paul's emphasis here is not on natural revelation being the dictionary of the character of God, but on the fact that He is there (See Jb 12:7-9; Ps 8:1; 19:1-6; Jr 5:22; At 14:17). Those who emphasize nature to be able to reveal the character of God are often driven to idolize nature as the final definition of God. But we must always contend that God is greater than that which He created (See comments At 17:24,25). Therefore, we would not have known the character of God except through His work among men as revealed in the Old Testament. And finally, we would not have known His true character except through the revelation of Jesus. We can know the true God of heaven today, therefore, only through His written word. ***That they are without excuse:*** God affirms that the evidence of His existence is so clearly manifested through the things that are created, that men should come to the conclusion that He exists. If men do not come to this conclusion, then they are being led astray by their own will to reject God (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). For this reason, all men who reject the one true God of heaven will be without excuse in the day of judgment.

**1:21** When men refuse to accept the authority of God in their lives, their lives digress into wicked behavior (See 2 Kg 17:15; Jr 2:5; Ep 4:17). The one who rejects God becomes arrogant in his thinking and foolish in reference to his feelings and emotions. His arrogant rebellion against having the control of God in his life will eventually lead to

his unjust behavior with his fellow man.

**1:22 *They became fools:*** Such is the denunciation by the Holy Spirit of all those scientists and philosophers who would trust in their own wisdom and knowledge as opposed to being guided by the wisdom and knowledge of God (See Jr 10:14,23; 1 Co 1:20-25). The one who says there is no God is a fool simply because he cannot objectively deduct from that which exists that there is a Creator and Designer behind all things (Ps 14:1).

**1:23 *Made like unto corruptible man:*** It is the spirit of idolatry to create a god after one's own image (See Dt 4:16; Ps 106:20; Is 40:18). When men seek to be religious in a manner that justifies the actions of their lives, they will organize a religion that conforms to their behavior. Their next stage of this apostasy is to create a god that agrees with the performance of their religion. And thus, a new religion is born to be added to the thousands in history that have been the result of men who refuse to seek the truth of God. In this letter to the Romans, Paul's emphasis in his discussion on grace is that men should be driven to God for direction in life. Any supposed "Christian" faith that is not driven by the word of God for God's directions in matters of faith is simply not a faith that is based on a fundamental understanding of what grace should produce in one's life. It is a false religion because it is humanly invented and lived after the desires of men.

**1:24 *God also gave them up:*** When one gives up on God, God will give up on him in the sense that God will not submit him to obedience of His will (vss 26,28; see Ps 81:12; At 7:42; Ep 4:18,19; 2 Th 2:10-12). When any religionist is not driven to God's word, then he leads himself away from God. When one has led himself away from God, then his destination to destruction is certain (See Gn 6:5; see comments 2 Th 1:7-9). ***To dishonor their own bodies:*** When one gives up the moral values of God, he will give

himself over to the lusts of the flesh. In this case they had given themselves over to all sorts of immoral behavior (See 1 Co 6:18; 1 Th 4:4; compare Lv 18:22).

**1:25 *Exchanged the truth of God for a lie:*** Those who seek to follow after the carnal lusts of the flesh will create a religion that conforms to their behavior. They deceive themselves into believing that their behavior is acceptable to the higher power they have created after the lusts of their own flesh. What they think is truth is actually a lie. God will allow one to believe the lies he has manufactured in order to follow after his own desires. However, in the end, God will condemn the man for his unwillingness to love and believe the truth (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). ***Worshiped and served the creature:*** The corrupt mind will turn from that which is beyond and above this world in order to focus on that which is of this world. Men make themselves the final authority for human values. Instead of understanding that the created things should point one toward God, their desire to rule their own lives diverts their attention to establish their own rules and values.

**1:26,27** When men forsake direction by God, and distort the very nature of God by their vile imaginations, God gives them up because they will no longer be influenced by His will (vs 24,28; see comments Mk 3:28,29). ***Changed the natural use of the body:*** Homosexuality and lesbianism are the manifestation of corrupted mentalities that are contrary to human sexual behavior that was ordained by God (See Lv 18:22; Ep 5:12). ***What is indecent:*** In the eyes of God, the Holy Spirit here reveals that in sexual relationships, it is shameful for men to create sexual activity between men and men and between females and females. Homosexuality, lesbianism and sodomy are the manifestation of a society that has given itself over to the fulfillment of the corrupted lusts of the flesh. ***Receiving in themselves the penalty:*** As a result of their unnatural sexual activity,

they reaped the consequences of sexual diseases (See Gl 6:7,8).

**1:28** *A depraved mind:* When one forsakes a knowledge of God, his mind loses a center of reference for establishing moral values. There is thus no standard by which to determine what is either right or wrong. Therefore, society will digress even to self-destruction (See Gn 6:5; compare At 7:42; 2 Th 2:8-12).

**1:29-31** Paul here lists the results of those who are no longer restrained by the fear of God (See comments Gl 5:19-21; 2 Tm 3:1-8). This list could go on. The point is that when one mentally releases himself from conscientiously feeling that he must give account of his behavior before God, he determines what is either right or wrong according to his own selfish desires. When a society does this, that society is doomed to social chaos and destruction. It is not within the power of man to determine his own moral values.

**1:32** *Worthy of death:* Paul's point is to uphold the justice of God. Those who give themselves over to that which harms their fellow man are deserving of the second death (See Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9). Those who consent to the actions of the wicked have lost their restraining influence to control the behavior of the wicked. They are also deserving of the same punishment. Therefore, the justice of God is revealed when punishment is inflicted on the wicked by His pouring out of the consequences of sin on the sinner. His justice will be revealed at the end of time when He pours out His wrath on those who lived in a way that destroyed society (Jd 14-16). Paul's argument is that the sin of man will not escape the justice of God, and thus, when the justice of God is poured out on the wicked in judgment, either in time or at the end of time, they will have no excuse because they had a chance to believe. They had the chance to reason that He existed, and thus, they should have reasoned that they were responsible to obey His will.

## Chapter 2

### THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD

Paul has finished the discussion of 1:18-32 concerning the spiritual situation of the Gentiles in sin. The conclusion is that they were meritoriously undeserving of the grace of God that was revealed through the cross (Ti 2:11). Because they were in sin, they did not merit the atonement of the cross. He now turns to the Jews. In their self-righteousness he proves in the following context the point that they also were undeserving of God's grace. They had deceived themselves into believing that all was well in their relationship with God. The problem with the Jews was that they used the Sinai law as a legal means by which they sought to meritoriously justify themselves before God. By the works of law they assumed that righteousness before God could be attained by a systematic obedience to those laws they thought they could obey in order to be righteous before God. They believed that when one sinned, his sin could be atoned for by the performance of good deeds. Paul will answer this erroneous conclusion by arguing that no one can meritoriously perform law or use good deeds to justify himself before God (3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11,12). He will conclude that atonement for sin comes as a result of the grace of God, not the meritorious works of man.

**2:1 *Whoever you are who judge:*** It was the Jews who were judging the Gentiles. They were considering the Gentiles wicked and themselves righteous before God because they had been specifically called of God as a nation, and thus, they felt that they had special rights before God as a nation (vs 17). But they were not excused, for they too were under sin. Their self-righteous attitude blinded their eyes to their own sin. Such is the curse of those who are religiously self-righteous in their own eyes. They can see the sin of others while they deceive themselves into believing that their ceremonial legal system of religiosity justi-

fies them before God (See comments Mt 7:1-5). ***Do the same things:*** The self-righteous religionist will often condemn those who do not conform to his ceremonial system of religion. But at the same time, he sometimes practices the sins of those he condemns (See 1:21-32). He will often justify sin that lies outside his system of justification because he keeps his prescribed system of religiosity. He has deceived himself into believing that as long as he maintains the outward performance of his system of religion that he is not under the condemnation that is due to all men because all sin (3:9,10,23). In this way the Jews arrogantly condemned the Gentiles in their sin because they were not of the legal system of justification the Jews had constructed after their own traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9; Gl 1:13,14). At the same time, however, they justified their exclusion of the Gentiles.

**2:2** In contrast to the judgment that was pronounced by the self-righteous Jews, God's judgment is just and consistent with truth. He judges with a standard that is above the self-imposed religiosity that men create after their own religious inclinations. Therefore, because God only is righteous (just), He only can be the final standard by which righteous judgment can be made. Because God is the one against whom sin is committed, then it is only God who can forgive.

**2:3** Paul now identifies the self-righteous Jew who has considered himself to be spiritually above the Gentile. It was this self-righteous Jew who considered himself justified before God because of his supposed special privileges in reference to God. He had deceived himself into believing that he had a special salvational relationship with God because of his heritage and the covenant that God had established with Israel on Mount Sinai. He was a descendant of Abraham, and thus, he assumed that because he was a descendant from Abraham he had a special relationship with

God. However, Paul affirms that he will not escape the judgment of God because all men stand condemned because of sin (3:9,10,23). Therefore, one may judge himself righteous before God in his own eyes, but in the eyes of God, no one is righteous according to his performance of law.

**2:4 *Despise the riches of His goodness:*** When one focuses on his own self-righteousness, he despises the grace of God. He despises the grace of God by affirming that his system of religiosity will justify him before God apart from the grace of God. Such is the curse of those religions that have been manufactured after either the traditions or emotions of men, or both. Traditional religions assume that the simplicity of God's revealed will is not sufficient to provide men with that which will guide one in correct behavior (See 2 Tm 3:16,17). Emotionally based religions are humanistic in the sense that the emotional experiences of men are always considered to have more authority in the religion than the word of God. One is thus led astray by his feelings that have taken the place of the authority of the word of God. In either of the above religious situations, the adherents of the religions have denied the goodness of God who has acted both in revealing His grace to man and in supplying man with a revealed word by which man can be directed in righteous behavior. ***The goodness of God leads you to repentance:*** By trusting in their performance of law and good works, the self-righteous Jews denied that one was motivated to repentance by the grace of God. When one depends on his own ceremonial system of religion as the means by which to justify himself before God, then his motivation for repentance is not the loving action of God through the offering of His Son on the cross (See 9:23; 11:33; Is 30:18; 2 Co 8:2; Ep 1:7,18; 2:7; Ph 4:19; Cl 1:27; 2:2; Ti 3:6; 2 Pt 3:9). Legal systems of religion that are constructed by men always proclaim an insufficiency in

the loving acts of God to stimulate repentance. However, God's justification that was revealed on the cross leads one to repentance (See comments 3:31).

**2:5 *Treasuring up for yourself wrath:*** The legal systems of self-righteous religions lead one to believe that he is in good standing with God. But he has deceived himself into believing that all is well, when actually, he has rejected the grace of God in order to stand on his own merit before God. This is the curse of religions that are based on either the traditions of men or the self-righteous emotions of men. The traditionalist trusts in the heritage of the religious traditions that have been handed down to him through the influence and teaching of his father and mother (See comments Mk 7:1-9). Those who focus on their emotional experiences are using the standard of their emotions to prove that they are right before God. Both systems of religion are storing up wrath because both have diverted the worshiper from reliance on God. Both traditionally and emotionally centered religions focus on man. However, faith moves one to focus on God's grace. According to these words of Paul, those who focus on their self-imposed ceremonial religiosity are headed for the doom of judgment (Mt 7:21-23; 11:22-24; Jn 12:48; Cl 2:20-22).

**2:6,7 *Render ... according to his works:*** God will judge according to deeds (Jb 34:11; Ps 62:12; Pv 24:12; Jr 17:10; 2 Co 5:10). However, this statement is made for our benefit. God is not keeping a checklist of deeds by which to determine the eternal reward of an individual. Paul makes this clear in the next statement. ***Patient perseverance in doing good:*** It is not by individual acts of good deeds that the disciples' judgment will be determined, but by the general obedient nature of his life. The grace motivated life is a living sacrifice that is wholly dedicated to God (See comments 12:1,2; 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). But those who have created their own self-imposed religion seek to perform

deeds to atone for sin. They seek to balance out evil deeds with good deeds, and then they hope for the best when they stand in judgment before God. But such will not be the case. What profits is faith working through love (Gl 5:6), not the performance of legal actions in order to justify oneself. What is important is living one's faith as a result of a positive response to God's grace. It is this active faith that moves one to live the life which is acceptable to God (See Gl 5:6; compare Mt 19:17; Ph 2:12,13; Js 2:17; Rv 2:6).

**2:8,9 *Do not obey the truth:*** If we allow Galatians to be the commentary on this passage, then "truth" here refers to the "truth of the gospel" (See comments Gl 2:5,14; 3:1). The truth is the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope. This was the grace that Jesus came to reveal to all men. "*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (Jn 1:17). This was the grace of God that was revealed on the cross through Jesus (Ti 2:11). This is the truth that one obeys through immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See comments 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4). If one does not obey the truth of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, then he will suffer the consequences of eternal condemnation (2 Th 1:7-9; 1 Pt 4:17). ***To the Jew first:*** This judgment will first be executed on those who had the greater opportunity, that is, the Jews. The privileges that God gave them through the revelation of His law and personal guidance through the prophets also gave them greater responsibility in reference to their accountability before God (See Lk 12:47; 1 Pt 4:17). When the Son of God came, their religious heritage should have driven them to the cross. Those who were sons of Abraham by faith, were driven to the cross. However, the hardened Jews nailed Jesus to the cross.

**2:10,11** In contrast to those who do not obey the gospel, there is glory, honor and peace for those who do. This

present reward is also to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. ***No respect of persons with God:*** In order that Paul's readers not misunderstand the justice of God, he here reminds them that God does not look through cultural eyes (Gl 3:26-28). All men are created equal. They will not be judged through partial eyes (See Dt 10:17; Jb 34:19; At 10:34,35; Ep 6:9). All men can find comfort in the fact that judgment will not be based on God being a respecter of persons. In the context here, Paul wants to remind the Jews that they do not have a special privilege before God in reference to their salvation.

**2:12,13** God will not judge the Gentiles who did not have the Sinai law as the standard for living. Those who perish without the Sinai law will do so, not because they violated the Sinai law, but because they violated the law of the conscience. ***Not the hearers ... but the doers:*** It is not enough to simply have a knowledge of the law. What is important is one's response to the law. James wrote, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*" (Js 1:22). Those who respond to God's grace by obedience to His law are the ones who will be justified. However, they will not be justified on the basis of their perfect keeping of the law. They will be justified because of God's grace, for no one can keep the law perfectly in order to save himself. Their keeping of law was the manifestation in their lives that they responded to the grace of God (3:31; 2 Co 4:15) Paul's argument is that law-keeping is necessary to manifest one's obedient faith, but law-keeping in and of itself will not justify one before God.

**2:14** In obedience to their conscience, the Gentiles kept laws that were written in the law of Moses that was given to the Jews. Though they were obedient to these laws, they would not be judged by the law of Moses. ***Law to themselves:*** By being obedient in their conscience to those principles they knew were right, they established the law of

God in their lives. Therefore, by nature they established the principles of the law of God in their lives for themselves. Without the law of Moses, they established the principles of moral law that were based on the revelation of God's law to man before the giving of the Sinai law (Hb 1:1).

**2:15 *Law written in their hearts:*** The Gentiles did not establish moral laws by their own invention. They had originally received the law of God as Abraham and all fathers of the families who received instruction directly from God (See comments Hb 1:1). Their conscience became their guide that kept them submissive to God's law, though they did not use the law of Moses as a guide, for such was given only to the Jews at Mount Sinai.

**2:16** In final judgment, God will judge the world through Jesus (3:6; 14:10; Jn 4:22; At 10:42; 17:31). Therefore, those of this dispensation will not be judged in reference to the law of Moses. Neither will the Gentiles who lived before the cross be judged according to the law of Moses. Everyone after the cross will be judged in reference to whether or not he or she has obeyed the gospel (Compare Jn 5:22; 12:48; At 10:42). Therefore, one who is outside Christ will not be judged concerning his or her violation of a specific law. Judgment will be on the basis of whether one has come into contact with the blood of Jesus by obedience to the gospel. Those who have not will suffer eternal destruction (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9).

## THE JEWS AND THE LAW

In this section Paul deals with the spiritual arrogance of the Jews. They believed that their physical heritage from Abraham gave them a special privilege in their relationship with God. They were somewhat puffed up because they had received the Sinai law.

**2:17-20 *You ... rest in the law:*** While Paul wrote these

words, he knew that a true Jew was not one who was simply a descendant of Abraham. Those about whom he here speaks trusted in the law of Moses that God had specifically given to Israel. The Jews boasted to the Gentiles in this fact. Paul here addresses the self-righteous Jews who looked down on the Gentiles, and thus spiritually exalted themselves above the Gentiles.

**2:21-23** This series of provoking questions were delivered in order to humble the arrogant Jew who boasted of his self-righteousness. Paul's questions were meant to manifest the hypocrisy and dishonesty of those Jews who were eager to condemn the Gentiles, but at the same time they were lawbreakers in reference to the law by which they judged the Gentiles. They were committing the same sins they were judging the Gentiles of committing.

**2:24 *God is blasphemed:*** This is Paul's final blow in this series of thoughts to bring down the arrogance of the Jews. He quoted Isaiah 52:5 to remind the Jews how they shamed the name of God among the nations because of their rebellion against God in past years (Compare Ph 1:27). As a result of their rebellion, they were taken into captivity by the nations of Assyria and Babylonia. Therefore, the Jews had no grounds upon which to boast spiritually before the Gentiles.

**2:25** In this context, the Jews are intimidating the Gentiles in the church to be circumcised (Compare At 15:1; Gl 2:1-5). God instituted circumcision as a sign of the covenant that He had made with Israel. The Jews bound circumcision as an evidence of keeping the law (See comments Gl 5:3,4). Some believed that unless one was circumcised, he could not be saved (At 15:1). However, if one is circumcised as a requirement of the law in order to be justified before God, then he was a debtor to keep all the law perfectly in order to be saved (Js 2:10). But no one can keep the law perfectly in order to justify himself. There-

fore, circumcision will profit nothing in reference to one's salvation.

**2:26** Paul questions the Jews. His answer to the questions is that circumcision is of no value if one is not keeping the righteous requirements of the law. The law's requirements are that men respond to God by faith in being obediently led by the law (3:31). The legal act of circumcision does not make one righteous. Obedient faith in reference to law is what is required by God (Gl 6:5; Js 2:14-26).

**2:27** Paul reverses the role of those who would be judges. In the spirit of obedience, the Gentiles who did not have the law of Moses (vss 12-15) kept the spirit of the law of God. Those who did such could judge those hypocritical Jews who were specifically given circumcision and the law but did not keep the law.

**2:28,29** *He is a Jew who is one inwardly:* This is a profound statement by the Holy Spirit in reference to those God considers to be His children. Throughout the letter to the Romans, Paul will continually reflect on this thought. He was dealing with a Jewish problem in reference to their concept of justification before God, which concept of religion they were seeking to bind on the Gentiles. The outward performance of law, and boasting in reference to one's heritage from Abraham, generated boasting by the Jews against the Gentiles. However, God is not interested in the circumcision of the flesh, but the circumcision of the contrite heart who seeks God by obedient faith. Under the Sinai law, circumcision was important and necessary because it was from God and was a sign of a covenant that God established with the nation of Israel (4:11; Gn 17:10). However, it was worthless to keep circumcision under the Sinai law if one did not keep the conditions for the covenant. But now the old law is past. The Jew must circumcise his heart (See Dt 10:15,16; 30:5,6; Jr 4:4; 9:25ff; Cl 2:11,12). The Jews who were now Christians must not trust

in their circumcision of the flesh in order to be justified before God. They are now under the law of faith. They must understand that they have gone from a physical kingdom relationship with God to a spiritual kingdom relationship (7:6; 14:17; Jn 3:5; 18:36-38; Gl 5:22,23; Ph 3:3; Cl 2:11). In this change in covenant relationship, they must understand that being a physical descendant of Abraham gave one no advantage in one's relationship with God. Under the new covenant, spiritual relationships, not physical relationships, bind disciples together in their covenant with God.

### Chapter 3

## SUPPOSED JEWISH OBJECTIONS

In chapter 1 Paul revealed that the Gentiles were under condemnation because of sin. In chapter 2 he affirmed that the Jews were also under condemnation because of sin. He now answers questions that would be going through the minds of the Jewish Christians concerning their heritage relationship with God. He will also in this context pronounce the divine indictment against all men, that there is no one righteous before God based on one's individual merit (vss 9,10). In order to begin, he emphasizes the righteousness and faithfulness of God in reference to objections that some of the Jewish Christians might be having concerning God who gave law to Israel when Israel could not be justified by the law.

**3:1,2** Some of the Jews may have by now been wondering what point there was in being a Jew. If the Jews were under condemnation because of sin, then they might wonder what was the purpose of the covenant and law that God established with Israel. *To them were committed the oracles of God:* The advantage that the Jews had was that God delivered to them the Old Testament Scriptures (9:4; Dt 4:5-8; Ps 147:19). It was an advantage to have the writ-

ten Sinai law from God as opposed to the law of one's conscience under which the Gentiles lived.

**3:3,4 *The faithfulness of God:*** Paul begins here to answer questions the Jews may have had concerning the fulfillment of the promises of God that were made to them during the Old Testament era. At the time Paul wrote these words, the vast majority of the Jews had not believed the gospel. Some of those among his readers, therefore, would be questioning whether God had truly fulfilled His promises to the Jews. ***Let God be true and every man a liar:*** Paul begins to answer the doubts of the Jewish Christians by affirming the faithfulness of God in fulfilling the messianic promises regardless of the unfaithfulness of men. They must first understand that the fulfillment was based on promise, not on the righteousness of men. Men may doubt God's faithfulness to keep His promises, and subsequently, become unfaithful. However, their doubts are lies if they lead to questioning the desire and ability on the part of God to fulfill His promises (Ps 62:9; Jn 3:33). To begin his point, Paul quotes David who wrote in the context of his own sin (Ps 51:4).

**3:5,6** David's sin resulted in a manifestation of the justice and righteousness of God when He brought judgment on David for his sin. The judgment manifested the righteousness of God. But the Jew would wonder why the judgmental discipline of God would reveal the righteousness of God. The answer is in the fact that God can stand just only if He justly judges free-moral individuals who violate law. If sin is not judged, then God is not just. ***Is God unjust:*** The carnally thinking individual would think that God is unjust to inflict wrath upon those who sin because God created them with the ability to choose, which ability is often used to choose sin. However, God is just because all men will be held accountable for their own sin. The point here is that though the unrighteousness of man (Israel)

worked to bring about the purposes of God, God is not unjust to inflict judgment upon those who sin. God brought about good from their sin, but this did not relieve them of their accountability for their sin. God always uses the work of Satan against himself. And so it is with the eternal purpose God has in reference to the existence of all things. God could use Israel's unfaithfulness to accomplish His own purpose. He has worked in this manner in the past. And though the vast majority of the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, we must not forget that God is still working His purposes through the church. ***How then will God judge the world:*** If God does not inflict judgment upon the unfaithfulness of the Jews in time, then He cannot be consistent in inflicting judgment on the unbelieving world at the end of time. However, the truth is that in order for God to be a just God, He must be consistent in judging without respect of persons those who reject His will. We must also keep in mind that God stands just because He has offered man an escape from sin. If men choose to reject the opportunity, then they are accountable for their own condemnation.

**3:7,8** Paul continues to voice the objections of some Jewish brethren. This may have been the motivation for the writing of this letter. They reasoned that if God's righteousness is increased because of the sin of men, then what is wrong with the sin. They wonder why they are still considered sinners when at the same time the sin magnifies the truth of God. ***We are slanderously reported:*** Paul mentions the behavior of those who fail to understand the concept of God's grace. They have twisted his previous teachings on this matter in order to bring accusation against him. ***"Let us do evil that good may come"***: This would be the absurd conclusion of the argument of those who would question the proposition that Paul here reveals. In 6:1 he will state the reasoning of some, ***"Will we continue in sin that***

*grace may abound?”* (See Jd 4). ***Their condemnation is just:*** This could have been stated in reference to those who slandered him or those who taught the erroneous doctrines that he here refutes. Regardless of the specific group to which the judgment is here directed, both slanderers, and those who teach erroneous doctrines that contradict God’s grace, are under condemnation. Their belief that one should sin in order to bring about the goodness of God was certainly erroneous, and would thus lead to their damnation. Peter may have heard of some of the slanderous brethren who twisted Paul’s inspired writings when he wrote, “... *our beloved brother Paul ... has written to you ...in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction ...*” (2 Pt 3:15,16). It is a serious matter to slander brethren. In this context of Paul’s teaching on grace, one puts himself in a state of condemnation if he slanders those who proclaim the grace of God.

### THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS

**3:9** Paul now continues the thoughts of verses 1,2. ***Are we:*** Paul includes himself with the Jewish brethren. ***Better than they:*** He asks the question in order to receive a negative answer. Because of sin, the Jews are not better than the Gentiles in their relationship with God. Though the Jews had the privileges revealed in verses 1,2, this did not mean that they were spiritually superior to the Gentiles. The reason the Jews were not better was in the fact that all men are sinners (vs 23; Gl 3:22). Sin equalizes all men in reference to their relationship with God. All men sin, thus all men stand equally dead before God because of sin.

**3:10** ***There is none righteous:*** This indictment places all men under condemnation because of sin (See Ps 14:1-3; 53:1,2). There is no one righteous because of law. Law

thus declares one unrighteous because all men transgress law. Therefore, no man can stand before God on the merit of his own obedience to law for no man can keep law perfectly.

**3:11,12** The pronouncement of these Old Testament scriptures is in reference specifically to the Jews. They thus had no right to elevate themselves above the Gentiles as spiritually special in their relationship with God. Even at the time Jesus came, the Jews had gone astray after their own religion. They had rejected the commandment of God that they might keep their own traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9; compare Lk 11:52; 16:15; Gl 1:13,14; see Ez 22:30).

**3:13-18** This vivid metaphorical description of the wickedness of the Jews is an accurate account of their sin against God. Their wickedness was as the stench that comes from an open grave. The deceit of their speech manifested their corrupt hearts (See Ps 5:9; 140:3; Jr 5:16; Mt 3:7). *Full of cursing:* See Ps 10:7. *Swift to shed blood:* See Pv 1:16; Is 59:7,8; see comments Mt 23:37. *No fear of God:* See Ps 36:1.

**3:19** *Whatever things the law says:* The preceding indictment against the Jews came from the Old Testament Scriptures that were given to the Jews. Therefore, they could not accuse Paul of making unjust charges against them. The charges came from God. *All the world may become accountable:* Not only do the Jews fall under the pronouncement that all men are unrighteous, but the Gentiles must also face their sin in reference to law. Every man of the world in all history stands guilty before God because of sin. Therefore, all men stand condemned before God.

**3:20** The Jews thought that they had devised a system of law whereby they could justify themselves before God. But the Holy Spirit says that such cannot be done. *By the works of law no flesh will be justified:* The Greek article

is not in the text here in reference to law. Reference, therefore, is not specifically to the Sinai law, but to the Sinai law and also to the law under which the Gentiles lived (2:15). Reference is to any law of God under which men live. Thus Paul here, as well as in Galatians 2:16, makes an axiomatic statement in reference to law, sin and death. One cannot be justified before God by perfect keeping of law. This truth is so self-evident that it does not need to be proved. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "*But that no one is justified by law in the sight of God is evident ...*" (Gl 3:11). Paul's affirmation is that through meritorious keeping of the Sinai law, the Jews could not save themselves. Neither could the Gentiles establish a meritorious system of law in order to justify themselves (See comments Cl 2:20-22). In view of this self-evident fact, one would conclude that law was not given as a means of salvation (See comments Gl 3:19-25). No one can keep law in a way to save himself solely by keeping law. ***By law is the knowledge of sin:*** Man sees his sin when faced with law. Law reveals to man what is unlawful in reference to what God wills. Instead of bringing one closer to God, law manifests how far away from God one is in his sin (Is 59:1,2). It is not the purpose of law, therefore, to be a means by which one can save himself before God. The reason this is true is because no one can keep law perfectly in order to save himself. All men sin (3:23). Sin brings death (6:23). Therefore, when we think of law we must always think of sin and death.

### The Provision Of Redemption

(3:21 – 5:21)

**Outline:** (1) The Righteousness of God (3:21-31), (2) The faith of Abraham (4:1-12), (3) Justification by faith (4:13-25), (4) The fruits of justification (5:1-11), (5) Death through Adam; life through Christ (5:12-21)

## THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

**3:21** Since law brings sin and death, Paul now changes

the discussion to God's remedy for man's problem with sin and death. He turns from the gloomy picture of the condemnation of the Jews under the law wherein they could not be justified by the keeping of the law. He also turns from discussing the same dilemma the Gentiles had under the law unto themselves, for neither could they keep law unto themselves in order to be saved. He gives hope to both Jew and Gentile by revealing the righteousness of God. ***Righteousness of God ... is manifested:*** This is the justification of God that is revealed in order to save men regardless of their inability to keep law (1:17; At 15:11). It is the righteousness (justification) that is accredited to those who seek God by faith (4:3). The righteousness of God is the justification of those who obediently respond to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11). God is just because He has revealed the means by which men can be made righteous. ***Witnessed by the law:*** God promised that He would send the Savior into the world for the blessing of all nations (Gn 12:3). Through the Sinai law and the prophets the promises were made. Through the faithfulness of God the promises were accomplished. The promises were not fulfilled because of the man's perfect obedience of law, but because of the grace of God to do such regardless of the sinfulness of man (5:8; see comments Gl 3:15-18).

**3:22 *By the faith of Jesus:*** This is sometimes translated "through faith in Jesus." However, emphasis is on the work of Jesus on the cross, not on those who respond to the cross. It was through Jesus' faithfulness to go to the cross that the righteousness of God was accomplished (See Gl 2:16,20; 3:22; Ep 3:12; Ph 3:9). ***To all those who believe:*** Justification was also accomplished because of the faith of those who believed in the cross (1:17; 5:1; Gl 3:11; Hb 10:38; see Ph 3:8,9). Both the faithfulness of Jesus in going to the cross, and man's faith response to the cross, were necessary in order to accomplish God's eternal plan

to reconcile men to Himself through Jesus. The righteousness of God that leads to the justification of man, therefore, was not accomplished through the keeping of the law of Moses (4:5; 10:3; Gl 2:21; Ph 3:9; see comments Gl 3:15-21).

**3:23 *All have sinned:*** All humanity has fallen short of that which is required for one to dwell in the presence of God (11:32; Gl 3:22; see Rm 2:7; 5:2). The result of law is that all are made sinners. The result of sin is separation from God (Is 59:1,2). And the result of separation from God is spiritual death which will eventually lead to a second death (6:23; 2 Th 1:7-9). Since all men sin, then apart from the grace of God, no man can stand justified before God on the basis of law alone.

**3:24 *Freely by His grace:*** This is the loving favor of God that was extended toward man that man could not have earned on the basis of his performance of law or meritorious good works (4:16; Ep 2:8; Ti 3:5,7). This grace was freely given regardless of the spiritual condition of all humanity. It had to be freely given because men could not work in order to earn grace. Sin blocks any efforts to meritoriously earn the gift (5:8). Therefore, grace was given to take care of man's sin problem. Once justified from sin by grace, we are then reconciled again to His presence and glory (2 Co 5:19). All this was made possible by the sacrificial cross of Jesus where God's grace was manifested (Mt 20:28; Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14; 1 Tm 2:6; Ti 2:11; Hb 9:12; 1 Pt 1:19).

**3:25 *An atoning sacrifice ... through faith:*** In His death, Jesus was God's offering to appease His wrath that would eventually have to be poured out on sinners (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10; see Lv 16:12; Rm 1:8; Hb 10:31; 12:29). In order for God to stand just in judgment of free-moral man, there had to be a choice for men to be saved from condemnation. Through the offering of the blood of Jesus, God gave that choice.

Though the offering had to be made at a point in time of human history, the required response to God by faith on the part of man has always been in existence (See comments Gl 3:11). From the beginning of time until the end of time, men have always had to trust in God for their salvation because no man could so work as to earn such from God. **By His blood:** Salvation has come to man by the blood offering of Jesus, not through the meritorious efforts of men (At 20:28; Ep 1:3,7; Cl 1:20; 1 Pt 1:18,19). **Of sins in the past:** The sacrificial blood offering was for the sins of humanity from creation to the consummation of this world. Because the sacrifice had to be made at a point in time in reference to man's confinement to time, this did not mean that its effect could not cover sin that was committed before the event of the cross (See At 17:30; Hb 9:15). Though we are creatures of time, God is not so confined in His knowledge and works. Therefore, God could view all the sins of the world through the cross. He can forgive sins through the cross that were committed before the cross just as He can forgive sins that are committed after the cross. We must not use our understanding that is limited to time to limit or confine the work of God through the cross. Animal sacrifices were given to man before the cross in order to lead men to the sacrifice of the cross. Though animal sacrifices could not forgive sins (Hb 10:1-4), such were given in preparation for the final sacrifice of the cross. Man's lack of knowledge of the event and effect of the cross before it actually happened necessitated the animal sacrifices. However, man's knowledge of the cross after the event occurred did away with the animal sacrifices. Not only were the animal sacrifices terminated because of the sufficiency of the cross sacrifice, our knowledge of the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ is also a reason why the animal sacrifices have been done away. God has now fulfilled His promise. His righteousness has now been re-

vealed as to how He has forgiven sins through the cross. He forgives all men who approach Him through faith that moves one to obey the gospel (1:17; see Jr 31:31-35; 1 Jn 1:6-9).

**3:26 *That He might be just:*** If God condemned to destruction free-moral people who had no opportunity of salvation, then He could not be a just God. In order to be a just judge of free-moral beings, He had to offer them a choice. The response to the choice determines their judgment. ***The justifier of him who believes:*** Since the cross has been revealed, God is now known as the justifier of those who respond to His grace through faith.

**3:27 *It is excluded:*** Because of grace, God initiated the cross. Therefore, no man can boast in order to claim that he earned God's grace (See 2:17,23; 11:6; 1 Co 1:29; Ep 2:9). Neither can one claim the special favor of God because of race. Paul considered all the special privileges he had as a Jew to be rubbish in reference to the grace of God that was revealed to him (Ph 3:4-6). Though he had the privilege of the law and heritage of Abraham and the fathers, such privileges counted as nothing in reference to obtaining salvation. ***Of works:*** The law of works demanded that man live flawlessly in order to gain his acquittal from sin. Through law one cannot be acquitted of sin simply because he has committed sin against law. The Jew reasoned that through law-keeping one could acquit himself of sin that he committed against law. The problem with this system, however, was that one kept committing sin against law. No man could or can keep law perfectly. The law says that one sin makes a sinner (Js 2:10). Therefore, by works of law no man can be justified before God (3:20; Gl 2:16). It was the error of the Jews to construct a law of works whereby they convinced themselves that they could be justified before God by their meritorious keeping of law. Such a system of religiosity led to boasting and to their

self-deception that they were righteous before God. They had created their own righteousness, and by such rejected the righteousness of God (10:3). **The law of faith:** Faith refers to trusting in God's grace. Works emphasize trusting in one's performance of law in order to save himself. There is no room for boasting when one relies on God as opposed to relying on oneself. In contrast to the law of works, the law of faith emphasizes the response of the individual to the work of God on the cross, whereas the law of works emphasizes God's response to man's work in order to justify himself.

**3:28** Paul is not saying that salvation is without obedience. The point is where the emphasis is concerning one's salvation. If emphasis is on works, then men stand alone in order to meritoriously perform law in order to be saved. If emphasis is on faith, then men are trusting in God who has provided the grace. The law of works would demand flawless living in order to be saved. However, the law of faith demands obedient response to what God has provided.

**3:29,30** God is no respecter of persons (At 10:34,35). He has thus been concerned for the salvation of all men (See Gn 12:3; Dt 32:43; Ps 18:49; Is 11:10; 65:1; 2 Pt 3:9). For this reason, before and after the cross, God seeks to justify both Jew and Gentile through obedient faith that responds to the cross. Since both Jew and Gentile stand guilty before God because of sin, both must now respond to the grace that was revealed through the cross (Ti 2:11).

**3:31** **We establish law:** James assures us that Paul is not talking about faith alone (See comments Js 2:14-26). Paul wants us to know that acceptable faith responds to the actions of God to save man. Law, therefore, is not aborted by faith. The fact is that when faith responds to the work of God through the cross, the faithful seek to respond to the directions of God. In this way, therefore, those who are of faith seek God's directions. We love because He first loved

us (1 Jn 4:19). Therefore, Jesus said, “*If you love Me, keep My commandments*” (Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 5:3). In this way law is established. It is established in the heart of those who respond by faith and love because they seek to return the love that was manifested toward them through the cross (5:8; 2 Co 4:15). But those who use law as a meritorious system of statutes to perform in order to justify themselves, are arrogantly trusting in themselves and not the grace of God. By contrast, those who obediently respond to the grace of God, seek to obey God’s directions, and thus law is established in their lives. As one studies through the letters to the Romans and Galatians, it is imperative to understand the principle of how law and grace are connected in reference to one’s response to God.

## Chapter 4

### THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

**4:1,2** If any of the fathers of the faith could have been justified by works of law, then certainly it would have been Abraham. In this context Paul proceeds to affirm that Abraham was not justified by meritorious obedience to law. Abraham was justified by works of faith, but not by meritorious deeds of law and good works (See comments Js 2:21-24). James affirmed that Abraham was justified by works in that he responded to the righteousness of God. Paul here teaches that Abraham was justified by obedient faith. Both Paul and James refer to Genesis 15:6 to prove their point. Paul is saying that Abraham was not justified by meritorious works of law. James is saying that he was justified by works of faith. Therefore, justification by works does not mean that one works in Christ in order to meritoriously earn his salvation. *Not before God:* If Abraham were justified by the meritorious works of law, he could boast of his performance of law before men. However, such would be foolishness if one boasted of his works to

God before whom all men have sinned. If Abraham could have lived flawlessly under law, then he could have boasted before God. He would have received glory because of His flawless living under law. But such can never happen on the part of men for all men have sinned (3:23).

**4:3 *Abraham believed God:*** Contrary to those Jews who trusted in their own performance of law, Abraham, on the other hand, trusted in God. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 and states that Abraham was accredited to be righteous (justified) because he trusted in God through faith (See Gl 3:6). ***Credited:*** The Greek word that is used here can be translated “accredited,” “reckoned,” or “counted.” The meaning is that through the blood of Jesus one is considered righteous (justified) in the eyes of God on the basis of his faith in God’s grace to forgive all sin. One is not so accredited with righteousness because he has put God in debt to forgive him by meritorious works of law. One is accounted righteous or justified on the basis of obedient faith.

**4:4,5** If one seeks to be accounted righteous on the basis of meritorious works of law, then he has put God in debt to justify him. The free gift of God, grace, therefore, would not exist in such a system of salvation (11:6). ***Who does not work:*** The one who seeks God through obedient faith as opposed to meritorious works is accounted justified before God. When one realizes that he cannot put God in debt by meritorious deeds of law, then he is driven to total reliance on the grace of God. Total reliance on God establishes the law of God in one’s life (See comments 3:31). Paul thus contrasts works of merit and works of faith in our approach to serve God. Those who are motivated by works of merit seek to put God in debt to save them. In their work, their relationship toward their brother is influenced by their attitude. Their attitude is one of arrogance and boasting. Those who live by works of faith, however, are looking toward the grace of God and trusting in His grace

to save them. Their attitude toward God is reliance on God for they know that they cannot be saved on the merit of their works. Their relationship with their brother is one of humility for they see the sin in their own lives. Their relationship with their brother is one of mercy for they have realized the great mercy God has shown toward them (See Mt 18:21-35; Js 2:13). Their relationship with their brother is one of love for they realize how much love God has shown toward them through the cross of Christ (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:19).

**4:6-8 *God credits righteousness:*** Paul's quotation of David's statement in Psalm 32:1,2 restates the preceding principles concerning the means by which men have always been saved. God does not account sin to the record of the one who responds to Him through faith. If one turns to his own ability to perform law, and thus seeks to meritoriously stand righteous before God on the basis of his performance of law, then God must take account of the sin. We must remember that it only takes one sin to make a sinner (Js 2:10). The whole law pronounces the individual to be a lawbreaker because of one sin that makes one condemned before God.

**4:9,10** Abraham was a Gentile. He was called as a Gentile and given the promises as a Gentile (Gl 3:15-18). The fact that he received the promises did not mean that he was then a Jew. On the contrary, Christians are sons of Abraham by faith, and thus heirs of the promises made to Abraham (Gl 3:6,7). Paul wants to remind his Jewish audience of this fact, and also the fact that Abraham's justification came to him as a Gentile and before he received the covenant of circumcision.

**4:11 *The father of all those who believe:*** This point was certainly ignored by the Jewish brethren who claimed to have a special relationship with God because they were the physical descendants of Abraham. The judaizing teachers both in Rome and southern Galatia were trying to im-

pose circumcision and Sinai law ceremonies on the Gentile Christians as a requirement for salvation (At 15:1; see intro. to Gl). The sign of circumcision (Gn 17:10) came to Abraham who was a Gentile in order that he might be the father of all those who trust in the grace of God for salvation (vss 12,16; Lk 19:9; see comments Gl 3:6,7,15-18). Therefore, Abraham is the father of faith to the Gentiles.

**4:12** Abraham is the father of the Jews, but also the father of those who were not of the Jewish covenant of circumcision (4:18-22). Abraham is the spiritual father of all those who come to God on the basis of obedient faith in response to the grace of God (Gl 3:26-29).

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

**4:13 *The promise:*** There were physical promises made to Abraham. God promised him that his name would become great and from his seed would come a great nation. The great nation of his seed would be given the land of Canaan (Gn 12:1-3). The last promise that was given to Abraham was spiritual in the sense that from Abraham would come that which would spiritually bless all nations (Gn 12:3). The physical promises were fulfilled in the nation of Israel and their possession of the land of Canaan. However, the spiritual promise that in him all the nations of the world would be blessed, referred to nations beyond the nation of Israel (See At 26:6,7; Hb 11:8-16). ***Heir of the world:*** Through Abraham's seed, the blessing of the promise would come to all men (Gn 17:4-6; 22:17). ***Through the righteousness of faith:*** The Sinai law did not become a condition upon which the promise was to be fulfilled (See comments Gl 3:15-18). Though the law was the contractual condition upon which the covenant with Israel was to remain valid, the giving of the law did not become a contractual condition for the fulfillment of the promise. Neither was the promise fulfilled because of the

establishment of the Jewish nation. The blessing of the promise came through faith in Jesus Christ who revealed the promise to all men (6:14; Jn 1:17). Neither the Sinai law nor the nation of Israel were necessities for God's fulfillment of the promise. The law and the nation, therefore, were only mediums through which God brought the Seed into the world. Once the Seed (Christ) came, then the purpose for the law and the nation of Israel was fulfilled (See comments Gl 3:19-29). Both were terminated.

**4:14** If men are to receive the promise on the basis of flawless keeping of law, then there is no room for dependence on God through faith. Trust in one's performance would supersede one's faith in God's grace. Such a religious system leads to arrogance and boasting between brethren.

**4:15 *The law works wrath:*** Where there is law, there is sin. And sin must receive just judgment. The presence of law apart from faith leads to the wrath of God (3:20). Though law is holy, just and good (7:12), it becomes a law of sin and death for man because men sin against law. ***No law ... no transgression:*** The only way to avoid sin in the human race is to take away law. Without law, there would be no lawbreaking. However, when there is law, all men sin against law (3:23). But if there were no law to direct society, then there would be social chaos. Therefore, it was necessary that the Sinai law be given to the nation of Israel in order to direct them away from giving up God's moral standards (Gl 3:19; see comments 1:18-32). In this way, the law was a headmaster that was given to the Jews to bring them to Christ (Gl 3:23,24).

**4:16,17** The fulfillment of the promise was based on God's grace, for Israel did not earn the fulfillment because of her righteousness. The only way that the promise could be fulfilled would be that it come as a result of God's grace, not man's meritorious work, for Israel and all men were

under sin (3:9,10,23). If the condition for the fulfillment of the promise was the meritorious works of men, then the promise could never have been fulfilled, for no man could so live as to earn the promise. Since the fulfillment came by grace, then the grace of God is magnified because God revealed the blessing of Abraham regardless of the sinful state of man (5:8). ***The father of us all:*** Abraham is the father of all who would be justified by faith (9:6). The Jews presumed that they had a legal right to justification because they were physical descendants from Abraham. However, Paul is here saying that God is interested in those who are the spiritual descendants of Abraham by faith (See 2 Co 1:9; Cl 2:12; Hb 13:20; 1 Pt 1:21). ***Gives life to the dead:*** When the promise of a heritage was made to Abraham and Sarah, they had no children, for at the time Sarah could not bear children. In Sarah's old age when she was past the ability to bear children, God brought her womb to life in order that she bear Isaac. Therefore, in her bearing of Isaac, it was manifested that the heritage and blessing came as a result of God's grace and not the procreation work of Abraham and Sarah alone (See comments Gl 4:21-31).

**4:18 *Believed in hope:*** Though without children, Abraham continued to believe in the work of God to bring about a heritage through his descendants. While he was still childless, he continued to trust in God's promise that he would be the father of many nations. ***The father of many nations:*** God called Abraham the father of many nations before he even had children. Nevertheless, the promise was based on God's work, not Abraham's performance. Therefore, God fulfilled the promise of the heritage of a nation by eventually bringing forth the nation of Israel (See Dt 1:8-11; 10:22; 28:62). The promise concerning the nation was physically fulfilled in the nation of Israel, because Israel grew to be as the stars of heaven in number. However, the secondary fulfillment of the promise is here ex-

plained by Paul. The church is the result of the extended fulfillment of the promise, for by faith men and women throughout the world partake of the promise by faith. The church, therefore, is the assembly of those who have responded to the grace of God through the obedience of faith (1:5; 16:26).

**4:19,20** *Did not consider his own body:* Abraham did not trust in the meritorious performance of his body to bring about the heir, for both he and Sarah were old, she being past the age of bearing children. *He did not waver:* Abraham hoped against all obstacles. Because he maintained faith in the work of God, he eventually realized the fulfillment of the promise through the birth of Isaac (Compare Ps 115:3; Lk 1:37; Hb 11:17-19).

**4:21,22** All should be of the faith of Abraham. He believed that if God made the promise, then it was certain that the promise would be fulfilled. Abraham's justification by faith was recorded for his posterity (Gn 15:6). Those who would be sons of Abraham by faith, therefore, must walk according to the faith of Abraham. Christians are sons of God by faith because they have been immersed into Christ (Gl 3:26,27). They now belong to Christ. "*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*" (Gl 3:29). We are children of promise by faith (Gl 3:18,22; 4:28).

**4:23-25** The record of Abraham's justification by faith was not recorded in Genesis 15:6 simply for his benefit. It was written for our benefit today. If we live after the faith of Abraham, we will reap the effect of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. We also, as Abraham, must rely on the grace of God for our salvation. *For our offenses:* Jesus was sacrificed because of and on behalf of our sins (3:25; 4:6,8; 8:32; Is 53:4,5; Gl 1:4; 2:20; Ep 5:2; Hb 9:28). If there had been no law, then there would have been no need for sacrifice. So why did God give man law if such would

condemn him to sin? The answer lies in the fact that man was created a free moral being with the ability to choose evil. His evil choices would lead him to moral degradation and destruction (Gn 6:5). Thus law was necessary for the direction of society. Law was necessary to direct men's minds toward the necessity of God's grace. Law was necessary in order to develop free-moral characters that would be suitable for eternal dwelling in the presence of God. ***Was raised:*** The text here would best be translated, "was raised to life for our justification" (5:18; 1 Co 15:3,17; 2 Co 5:17; 1 Pt 1:21; see 1 Co 16:17). The fulfillment of the blessing of the promise was the death of Jesus for our sins. However, the death would have meant nothing if there were no resurrection. Therefore, the gospel is the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). Through obedience to the death, burial and resurrection one comes into contact with the blood of Jesus, and thus is justified of sin (6:3-6).

## Chapter 5

### THE FRUITS OF JUSTIFICATION

**5:1 *Peace with God:*** Peace within is only the secondary thought here. Justification by faith has diverted the wrath of God that was due to those who sin against God (See 3:25). Therefore, there is peace between God and man as a result of God's grace, not the work of man. It was man's inability to perform law that brought about the wrath. It was grace that brought the peace. Our knowledge of our reconciliation to God through grace in order to escape wrath brings peace of mind and the assurance of one's salvation (See 15:13; Jn 14:27; 16:33; At 10:36; Ep 2:14; Ph 4:7).

**5:2 *Through whom also we have access by faith:*** We gain entry into the realm of God's grace through Jesus in whom we must have faith (Jn 10:9; Ep 2:18; 3:12; Hb 10:19; 1 Pt 3:18). ***Wherein we stand:*** It is grace that brings assur-

ance, for upon it we base our spiritual and emotional stability (1 Co 15:1). Upon it we base our salvation.

**5:3,4 *Glory in tribulations:*** It is the result of God's saving grace that we are able to endure because we are trusting in God, not in our own ability to meritoriously perform law or do good works (See Mt 5:11; At 5:41; 14:22; 2 Co 12:10; Ph 2:17; Js 1:2,3). ***Hope:*** For the reasons Paul states here, Christians count it all joy when they fall into trials and tribulations (Js 1:2,3). They understand that trials and tribulations produce persevering characters that have hope in the promises of God (8:24,25; Ph 1:20). Tribulations, therefore, become the opportunity for the development of faith and hope (See comments 1 Pt 1:6-9).

**5:5 *The love of God has been poured out:*** The past tense here emphasizes the fact that God's love was poured out in their hearts when they responded to His love that was manifested on the cross (See Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:19). God's love for man through the cross should generate love in the hearts of men to respond to the cross (Compare 2 Co 4:15). It is the work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the cross to generate a love response in the hearts of men (See comments 1 Co 15:1,2). Though men throughout the world have not personally experienced Jesus' sacrificial death, they see Him on the cross through the Spirit-inspired word of God that now communicates the cross to us.

**5:6 *Without strength:*** We were in the bondage of sin and could not deliver ourselves through works of law or meritorious deeds. Since all men were in a situation from which they could not deliver themselves, God sent forth His Son to die on the cross (Gl 4:4). In this way, Christ died for those who were unworthy of His death (Ph 1:20).

**5:7,8 *God demonstrates His love toward us:*** The love of God had to be manifested by the death of the Son for those who were unworthy. If the cross were the result of debt that God had to pay for the merit of those who kept

law and performed meritorious deeds, then there would be no manifestation of love and grace. Love is not manifested in the payment of debt. However, since the cross came regardless of the spiritual condition of the recipients, then love and grace are manifested.

**5:9,10 *Justified by His blood:*** Christians have been acquitted of sin by the sacrificial blood of Jesus (Ep 2:13; 1 Jn 1:7). Now that they are sons of God through the cross, Paul stresses the point that the cleansing continues in order to avert the wrath of God (1 Jn 1:7-9; see Rm 1:18; 1 Th 1:10). ***While we were enemies:*** When Jesus died on the cross, all humanity was the enemy of God because of sin (8:32). All were deserving of death. However, the promise came and reconciliation was offered to all who respond to the gospel (6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4). Now that the obedient are sons of God, Jesus works on their behalf (Hb 7:24,25; 8:1; 1 Jn 2:1).

**5:11 *We have now received the reconciliation:*** It was sin that separated Adam from God. The consequence of the sin of Adam resulted in all humanity being driven from the tree of life (Gn 3:22-24). But now through the cross there is reconciliation to God (See comments 2 Co 5:17-19). Because of the grace of God that was poured out on the cross, Christians have a foundation upon which to rejoice. But when one walks according to the invention of his own religiosity and performance of ceremonies, he is always in doubt. When one trusts in his own emotional experiences, he is in doubt. Doubt does not give one a reason to rejoice. However, when one trusts in the cross, there is reason for rejoicing. The rejoicing is not founded upon one's meritorious performance of law or good deeds. It is based on the grace of God that was revealed through the cross.

## DEATH IN ADAM – LIFE IN CHRIST

Many Bible students have approached the following section of Romans with a misunderstanding concerning the

nature of sin. It has been assumed that sin is an entity that is passed from one generation to another, from father to son throughout history. This passing of sin supposedly started with Adam after he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and continues unto this day. However, the Bible nowhere teaches such a concept simply because all men stand before God as free-moral individuals who will be held accountable for their own sin. It is a fundamental principle concerning sin that each free-moral individual is responsible before God for himself (See Dt 24:16; 2 Ch 25:4; Ez 18:4-20; 2 Co 5:10). A son may inherit the consequences of his father's sin, but he will not inherit the guilt of his father's sin. In this section Paul emphasizes the fact that the result of an individual living after the desires of the flesh, or religiously after the meritorious performance of law and good works, always succumbs to sin (See comments Js 1:14,15). The nature of a life after the flesh is opposed to those who live after the Spirit.

**5:12** In order to understand this verse, one must note that there is a division in the verse in reference to the responsibility of Adam for his personal sin and the responsibility of everyone else for their own personal sin against God. The first part of the verse discusses Adam's sin and its result. The second part of the verse discusses why all men are now sinners. ***Through one man sin entered into the world:*** Sin was introduced into the world through the personal sin of Adam against God (Gn 2:17; 3:6,19). Adam thus suffered the guilt of his own sin. He did not introduce sin into the lives of every man after him. He only introduced sin into the world because he was the first sinner. ***Death passed to all men:*** Spiritual death did not spread to all men from Adam through the medium of physical birth. It was spread to all men because all men free-morally violate law. All men spiritually die because of their own personal sin against God, not because of Adam's personal sin.

The proposition of Paul's argument in chapter 3 is valid because of the fact that individuals are responsible for the guilt of their own sin. Therefore, sin is not handed down from one generation to another through physical birth. Sin exists in the life of an individual when he so chooses to transgress the law of God.

**5:13** In reference to the Jewish situation, sin existed before the giving of the Sinai law. There was law before the Sinai law, and thus, there was sin before the law was given. The law was given in order to manifest the sin of those to whom it was specifically given. In this way, it drove those who were sons of Abraham by faith to seek God for a solution for sin (See comments Gl 3:19). *Sin is not credited when there is no law:* If no law had existed, then there would have been no knowledge of sin. But law did exist, and thus, death reigned because of sin.

**5:14,15** Though men were without the Sinai law before it was given, death still reigned because men sinned against the law unto themselves (See comments 2:12-15). *The type of Him who was to come:* The sin of Adam brought his separation from God because of his personal sin against God's law (Is 59:1,2). Therefore, all those who choose to sin after the example of Adam, spiritually die. Since all men have so chosen to sin, then all men have spiritually died (vs 12). *The gift by grace of the one Man:* As men free-morally and individually have chosen to sin, so men now have the opportunity to free-morally and individually choose to respond to the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus.

**5:16,17** *Not as it was through the one who sinned:* Adam was the first man to sin, and thus, he became the representative of all humanity who would sin after his fashion throughout history. But the gift through Christ came about after sin had occurred among men. Adam's sin preceded the sin of all men, whereas the gift of grace came

after all men had sinned. ***Death reigned:*** The influences of Adam's sin affected posterity. All men spiritually die as Adam spiritually died because all men sin (vs 12). Spiritual death, therefore, ruled in the lives of men until the cross. ***Reign in life through the One:*** When Jesus came, the opportunity was presented to man to reign over death in life through Jesus (See 2 Tm 2:12,13; compare Hb 2:14,15). One's reign in life, therefore, is inseparably connected with the abundance of God's grace through which comes the gift of justification. There is no reign in life outside Christ. One comes into Christ through obedience to the gospel (6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4).

**5:18,19** We must keep in mind that Paul is not teaching that all men were universally and unconditionally condemned through the sin of Adam. Neither is everyone universally and unconditionally saved through the cross. Adam introduced sin and condemnation by personally sinning against God. Condemnation passed to all men because all men have sinned (vs 12). Salvation comes in the same way. Through the obedient action of Jesus on the cross (Is 53:11,12; Ph 2:8; Hb 5:9), those who individually respond to the gospel will be justified.

**5:20 *The law entered:*** The Sinai law was not given to be a remedy for the problem of sin (See Hb 10:1-4). It came in order that sin might be made manifest. The law intensified man's realization of sin in his life (3:10-25; See Gl 3:19-25), and thus, it intensified the desires of those who were sons of Abraham by faith to seek the grace of God. The law was necessary, therefore, in order to make men realize that they were sinners. ***Grace abounded much more:*** When men recognize their sin, they recognize the necessity for grace. The law was good in that it drove men to faith in God's grace (8:2; see comments Gl 2:16-19).

**5:21** When one is spiritually dead, sin is reigning in his life. But when one obediently responds to the grace of

God, he is accounted righteous before God. In this way grace reigns in opposition to sin.

### The Effect Of Redemption

(6:1 – 8:39)

**Outline:** (1) Dying to sin (6:1-11), (2) Servants of righteousness (6:12-14), (3) Slaves of sin or righteousness (6:15-23), (4) Free from law (7:1-6), (5) Law, sin and death (7:7-12), (6) Desires of the flesh (7:13-25), (7) Life in the Spirit (8:1-17), (8) Suffering of the world (8:18-27), (9) More than conquerors in Christ (8:28-39)

## Chapter 6

### DYING TO SIN

In this chapter Paul expands on the righteous condition of the Christian as a result of being justified in Christ. He continues the thoughts of chapter 5, but here he is specific concerning the Christian's death to sin. Grace was manifested through the cross (Jn 1:17; Ti 2:11). The application of grace in one's life came when the Roman Christians obeyed the gospel in order to walk in newness of life. Paul begins by asking questions in the first three verses that he will answer throughout the chapter. Some of his readers would be asking these questions, especially concerning his statements in 5:20.

**6:1 *That grace may abound:*** If sin magnifies the righteousness of God to act through grace, then some erroneously assumed that sin would result in more grace (Compare Jd 4). At least there were some who were assuming that grace would cover their willful violation of law. Others possibly thought that they could be slack in their Christian duties, believing that God's grace would save them in their laziness (See 12:11; see comments 2 Th 3:6-15). Paul counters such false concepts of the freedom we have in grace by affirming that grace is not a license to sin. Christians have been set free from law and sin by God's grace, but they have not been set free to sin against law. On the contrary, law is established by our thankful response to grace (3:31; see 2 Co 4:15; Gl 5:13; Jd 4).

**6:2** Those who died to sin were those who were seeking a solution for sin. The solution they found was the grace of God. It is not reasonable, therefore, that they should go back into that from which they were delivered (vs 17). ***Died to sin:*** The Greek tense here is aorist, thus emphasis is on the onetime occurrence of a past event. At the time of one's new birth, he dies to a life of sin. The time of conversion is a time when one makes a decision to no longer allow sin to reign in his life, and thus, he responds to the cross of Jesus by his immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (vss 16-18).

**6:3** In the following verses Paul explains how one obeys the gospel. The gospel is the death of Jesus for our sins. It is His burial in order that He be raised never to die again (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). In this context Paul clearly explains how one obeys the death, burial and resurrection (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9). ***Baptized into Christ:*** The question here demands a positive answer. In a declarative statement Paul said the same in Galatians 3:27. "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" "Into Christ" is metaphorical in the sense that through immersion one comes into a saved relationship with God. He comes into a covenant relationship with God where he is declared righteous because he has come into contact with the blood of Jesus. Therefore, only through immersion can one come into this relationship wherein he puts on Christ. ***Baptized into His death:*** Though the Romans had not seen or experienced the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, they had participated in such by their immersion into Christ. They were immersed into the atoning results of the death of Jesus on the cross for their sins (1 Co 15:3,4). In this verse Paul asks the question concerning the purpose of their immersion into Christ. In the next two verses he answers the questions by explaining what he means by being "baptized into his death."

**6:4 *Buried with Him through baptism:*** This statement and explanation should forever answer the question concerning the definition of the Greek word *baptizo*. The word *baptizo* was unfortunately transliterated into the word “baptize” in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Many Bible students have since been confused with the definition of the word because of the erroneous theology of sprinkling for baptism that is practiced in many churches. But *baptizo* is a burial, or immersion in water. The Greek word *baptizo* means to “dip,” “plunge,” “immerse” or “overwhelm.” The definition of the word is here explained in the action through which the Romans had gone in order to come into Christ. Paul explained that the Colossians were “... *buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him ...*” (Cl 2:12). ***With Him:*** The preposition here indicates that a union is established between the one being baptized and Jesus. As Jesus went to the tomb in a garden outside Jerusalem, obedient believers throughout the world can go to the tomb with Him. If one is not willing to go to the tomb with Jesus, then certainly that person cannot come into a covenant relationship with Christ. ***Raised up from the dead:*** Unless one goes to the cross and tomb with Jesus, he cannot experience a resurrection with Jesus (8:11; 1 Co 6:14). ***Newness of life:*** The condition for obtaining the newness of life, therefore, is that one go to the cross and tomb with Jesus in order to be raised with Jesus. It is only after the resurrection from the waters of immersion that one comes into a new life with Christ (2 Co 5:17; Gl 6:15; see comments Mk 16:16; At 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pt 3:21).

**6:5** In order to emphasize the seriousness and necessity of the preceding thoughts of verse 4, and to answer again the question of verse 3, Paul here states the same thoughts of verse 4, but in different words. ***United together:*** Again, emphasis is on the union one establishes with Jesus in the action of immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins (At

2:38). A bond is established in immersion wherein the obedient believer comes into a saved relationship with the One who died for his sins. In order for one to be in the likeness of Jesus' resurrection, therefore, he must first be in the likeness of His burial. The grace of God was manifested on the cross. When one recognizes his sin problem, he runs to the atonement of the cross. It is at the cross that his faith must move him to respond as the Romans did through immersion. Their immersion, therefore, was not a meritorious work. It was a response to grace. Those who refuse to respond to the grace of God on the cross by immersion, therefore, have missed the point of the motivation that God intends should come as a result of His love that was poured out on the cross (See Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 4:19). For this reason baptism can never be a meritorious work. One is not meritoriously immersed in order to be saved. Immersion is the natural response of the one whose faith in Jesus has moved him to respond to the grace of God. The point is that if one is not baptized, he does not have the obedient faith about which Paul both introduced and concluded this letter to the Romans (1:5; 16:26). Therefore, in immersion faith is working as an obedient response to the grace of God, not as a meritorious work to put God in debt. By immersion, law is established in our lives because of obedient faith (See comments 3:31).

**6:6 *Our old man was crucified with Him:*** "Crucified" is passive tense, and thus, when Jesus was crucified, He took all "old men" of sin with Him to the cross. But before one can go to the tomb with Jesus, he must also go with Jesus to the cross. Through repentance, the old man who desired to sin is crucified on the cross. To the Galatians Paul said concerning his own journey to the cross, "*I have been crucified with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ...*" (Gl 2:20). It is obedient faith that moves us to the cross where we can obtain a good con-

science toward God (1 Pt 1:21). Through repentance, the old man that desired to sin and was a slave to unrighteousness is crucified, buried and resurrected a new man that desires to be a slave of righteousness (vss 17,18). When the old man is killed on the cross, he is ready for the tomb. However, until he is buried and resurrected, he is dead. It is only when one comes out of the grave of water, that he is made a new man in Christ (2 Co 5:17). One can have a repentant experience, and thus crucify himself with Jesus on the cross. However, he is still dead until he is raised to walk in newness of life after baptism for the remission of sins (At 2:38).

**6:7** The one who has died to sin by determining not to be the slave of sin has been freed from sin once he obeys the gospel (Compare 1 Pt 4:1). He is thus free from the curse of sin and death, for he is now in Christ wherein he has eternal life (1 Jn 5:11) and the continual cleansing of sin (1 Jn 1:6-9).

**6:8 *We will also live with Him:*** Through immersion for the remission of sins, the believer has been buried with Christ. This obedient response of the believer not only brings one in life to reign with Jesus (5:17), but also makes him a candidate to live with Him in eternity (See 2 Tm 2:11-13). When one is baptized, he is raised not only to walk in newness of life in this life, but also, he is raised with eternal life and the hope of continuing such in the presence of Christ in eternity (Ti 1:2; 1 Jn 5:1,2).

**6:9,10 *Death no longer has dominion over Him:*** Jesus was resurrected never to die again. His resurrection gives hope to baptized disciples that they will also be resurrected never to die again (See comments Hb 2:14,15). ***He died to sin once for all:*** When Jesus died on the cross, He broke the bondage of sin. Through Him men can also break out of sin in order to be set free.

**6:11** Because one has crucified himself with Jesus and

obeyed the gospel through immersion, he no longer is the slave of sin. A conscious decision was made not to allow sin to reign in one's life. Once one has done this, he is alive together with Jesus.

### SERVANTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

**6:12-14** Paul encourages the Roman Christians to dedicate their bodies to the Lord for they have been born into Christ. The desires of the flesh should not be given occasion to control their lives (7:5; Ps 19:13; Cl 3:5; Js 4:1-4). They should give their bodies as a living sacrifice to God (12:1; 2 Co 4:14; 1 Pt 2:24; 4:2). ***Not under law but under grace:*** If they were still under a legal system of law that demanded flawless obedience in order to be justified, then their focus would be on the flesh to perform law meritoriously in order to save themselves (Compare Gl 5:4; 1 Tm 1:9). They would still be focusing on meritorious obedience to law instead of rejoicing as a result of God's grace. Paul wants to remind them that they are no longer under such a system of law. They are under grace that motivates a love response to the will of God (1 Jn 4:19). Sin does not reign in the person who has dedicated himself to live the life of thanksgiving to God for saving him through His grace (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15).

### SLAVES OF SIN OR RIGHTEOUSNESS

**6:15** ***Will we sin:*** Paul's question is meant to demand a negative answer. Grace does not liberate one to sin. It gives freedom to obey. It does not become the license to ignore the will of the One who offered grace (See comments Gl 5:13; 1 Pt 2:16; Jd 4). Those who would not respond to the grace of God are those who do not understand that God meant that grace should stir up love and thanksgiving (2 Co 4:15). We are to love because He first loved us (1 Jn 4:19). We are to have mercy because He

first extended mercy to us (Mt 18:24-35; Jn 2:13). We are to work more abundantly because He worked abundantly toward us (1 Co 15:10). If there is no love, mercy and abundant work on the part of one who has been the recipient of the grace, then he has misunderstood grace. God's grace is in vain in the life of the one who manifests no response to God.

**6:16,17** *To whom you present yourselves as bondservants to obey:* Christians have presented themselves as bondservants to God because they have been set free from sin (See Mt 6:24; Jn 8:34; 2 Pt 2:19). Their expression of thanksgiving is seen in their desire to call on their Father to direct their lives. ***You have obeyed from the heart:*** Herein is the difference between one's attempt to justify himself before God on the basis of legal obedience to law and the one who works from a heart of appreciation for the salvation he has received as a result of God's grace. The legalist is concentrating on the outward performance of law and good works in order to change the heart. Those who are sons of Abraham by faith are working because of a grateful and changed heart. The legalist is seeking to get by with as little as possible by obedience to a legal system of laws he has constructed to conform to his conscience. But those who are motivated by grace are seeking to work more abundantly because of the abundant grace that was extended toward them (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). ***Form of teaching that was delivered to you:*** They had obeyed the gospel through immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (6:3-5; 1 Co 15:1-4; 2 Th 1:7-9). In their obedience to the gospel, they were thus entrusted with the gospel. They were delivered from law, sin and death in order to establish the law of God in their hearts through an obedient response to the grace of God (3:31). They were no longer in bondage to the necessity of flawless law-keeping in order to save themselves. They obeyed the death, burial

and resurrection of Jesus, and thus, were entrusted to the gospel of grace.

**6:18,19** When one realizes his deliverance from the bondage of law, and thus set free from sin, he is motivated to present his life a living sacrifice to God (12:1). The Romans' obedience to the gospel set them free (See Jn 8:32; 1 Co 7:22; Gl 5:1; 1 Pt 2:16). With the same zeal, and more, by which they lived in rebellion against God, they must now serve God. Before Paul was touched by the grace of God, he zealously lived according to the legalistic religious system of the Jews (Gl 1:13,14). However, when he was called by the grace of God, he worked more abundantly (1 Co 15:10). Such is what grace should do to one's life regardless of whether he formerly lived after the lusts of the flesh or the misguided legal systems of religiosity. Grace moves one to be more obedient than if one were under a legal system of religion. The more one appreciates the grace of God, the more productive he is for God (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15).

**6:20-22** The result of their former lives was only death (1:32; 7:5). They should be ashamed of the fruit that came forth from a life of rebellion. Now that they have been freed from serving sin (Jn 8:32), they can produce fruit unto righteousness. Every Christian should remember the uselessness of his former life in sin in order to appreciate his present life in the grace of God (See comments Ep 2:1-10)

**6:23** *The wages of sin is death:* The end reward for a life of sin is eternal destruction from the presence of God (Is 59:2; 2 Th 1:7-9). *The gift of God:* Eternal life in Christ is a free gift (2:7; 1 Pt 1:4). It is free because men cannot live enough lifetimes in order to accumulate sufficient good works to trade God for heaven. What we will receive as a result of God's grace is far more than what we can earn with a lifetime of good works. Eternal life is thus the gift of God to imperfect beings who by faith trust in the grace of God for their deliverance from this world.

## Chapter 7

### FREE FROM LAW

Paul now makes an analogy between the marriage law and the Christian's relationship to the Sinai law. The point of the analogy is that the Jewish Christians have been made dead to the Sinai law by the body of Christ. The analogy would apply to the Gentiles in the sense that all men through the cross are dead to the necessity of flawless law-keeping. When one obeys the gospel, he submits himself to the law of Christ. He frees himself from all man-made religious laws, as well as the Sinai law, in order to be liberated by his responsive faith to the grace of God under the law of Christ. He is not set free to be brought again into the bondage of another legal system of law. He is set free to obey his Father in heaven, and not the restrictions of a man-made religion or interpretation of laws (See comments At 15:1,10; Gl 5:1,2).

**7:1** As long as a man lives under the bondage of law, the law has control over his life, and thus brings him into death because of sin. In order that legal obligations to law be cancelled, there must be death. One must become dead to law, and thus dead to sin.

**7:2,3** In order to illustrate the Jewish Christian's freedom from the bondage of the Sinai law, Paul used God's original marriage law of one man for one woman for one life (See Gn 2:23,24; see comments Mt 19:1-9). As long as the husband lives, the woman is bound by law to the husband. However, if the husband dies, the wife is released from her marital contract to the husband. The woman is free to marry again. However, if while the husband is still alive she marries another man, then she has acted against the law in that she has broken her contract with the first husband. She has thus committed adultery against her first husband because she has broken the marriage contract with the first husband. Only if the first husband is dead does

she become dead to the law that bound her to the husband. Only when she is dead to the law that binds her to the first husband is she set free in order to marry another without being an adulteress according to the law.

**7:4 *Dead to the law through the body of Christ:*** When the believer has died with Christ (6:3-5), then he is set free from the law. Jewish believers must understand that when they married Christ they died to a law that God had taken away. Paul's application in this context is in reference to the Jewish believer's relationship to the Sinai law. It is true that the New Testament clearly teaches that the Sinai law and covenant have been taken away. When Jesus came, He took "*away the first that He may establish the second*" (Gl 2:19; Hb 9:16,17; 10:9; see comments Mt 5:17,18). When one comes to Jesus, he becomes dead to the binding obligations of the Sinai law in order to be married to Christ. Those who bind portions of the Sinai law on Christians as legal ordinances of justification are committing the action of spiritual adultery in reference to law. In the context here, the Jewish brethren were seeking to bring into the church Sinai law regulations in order to legally bind Christians to the law. They were seeking to legally bind portions of the law as requirements for salvation (See comments At 15:1). In doing such they were committing adultery against the body of Christ by seeking to be married to two laws (See intro. to Gl). ***Bring forth fruit to God:*** If one seeks to bind regulations of the law on Christians, then he cannot bear fruit to God because he has compromised his obligations to Jesus.

**7:5 *In the flesh:*** Paul here defines this phrase that he commonly uses throughout the contexts of the material of chapters 7 & 8. Before they came to Christ and benefitted from the liberty by which their obedience to the gospel set them free, the Romans were in the flesh. While in the flesh they were seeking justification before God through merito-

rious performance of law (Gl 3:3). Their emphasis of religious belief and behavior, therefore, was on the outward performance of law in an effort to meritoriously make themselves righteous before God. However, their performances under the law were lacking. The Jews could not keep the Sinai law in order to save themselves (See comments Mk 10:17-22). Neither were the Gentiles flawless in their obedience to the law unto themselves. All were sinners, and thus, all stood condemned before God (3:23; 6:23). While they were in the flesh, therefore, they did not stand justified before God. ***The sinful passions:*** This would be the same as the “body of sin” in 6:6 and the “sinful flesh” of 8:3. It was through the instrumentality of the body that they sinned against God by breaking His law. When law was given, these passions were exemplified in their lives. The law demanded flawless living in order for one to stand justified before God. However, the law manifested their spirit of arrogance and rebellion. They discovered that no perfection in behavior could be attained under law. The passions of the body, therefore, resulted in spiritual death (6:21,23; Gl 5:19; Js 1:15).

**7:6 *Delivered from the law:*** All Christians have been set free from the law by the body of Christ (vs 4). They are free from the necessity of perfect law-keeping under the law in order to be justified before God. Paul thus restates the principle that he first set forth in 6:14. ***In newness of spirit:*** When the believer came out of the waters of baptism, he began a walk in newness of life (6:4). Because God has saved him through His grace, he has been regenerated to serve God out of thanksgiving instead of obligation. His focus is on obedience to God because he has been spiritually regenerated. Paul wrote, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works ...*” (Ep 2:10). We have been created in Christ for good works. We are not created in Christ by good works. ***Oldness of the***

**letter:** The law demanded flawless living in order for one to be justified before God. However, no man could so live flawlessly in the presence of God. Therefore, instead of producing life, the law produced death (See comments Gl 3:21). However, under the law of Christ one is justified before God without the necessity of a perfect record of sinless living for he has been justified freely by the blood of Christ (See comments 1 Jn 1:7).

### LAW, SIN AND DEATH

**7:7** *I would not have known sin except through law:* Paul says that he would not have known that sin existed in his life unless the law stated that his behavior was against the law. Therefore, the law “*was added because of transgressions*” (Gl 3:19). It made us realize that we were all sinners (3:23). **Law:** The article before “law” is not present in the Greek text, and thus, Paul is expanding his application beyond the Sinai law. Reference here is to the Sinai law for it was one of the ten commandments that stated one should not covet (Ex 20:17; Dt 5:21; At 20:33). However, reference is beyond just the Sinai law. He builds on this point as he continues.

**7:8,9** When men followed after the lusts of the flesh, the coming of the law exemplified the sinful behavior of the individual. When there was no law, one would not be aware of the intensity of the sin of his life. Where there is no law, there is no violation of law (4:15). Without the presence of the written law, one is deceived into thinking that his life is right with God. Conscience is a good guide, but the problem with conscience is that it is often molded around the desires of the flesh. One thus creates religious behavior that conforms to the passions of the body. However, when law is revealed from God, one can clearly see the sin of his life. Sin is thus revealed and one is knowledgeable of his spiritual death.

**7:10 *Life ... death:*** One's first impression upon receiving the law of God, is that it was given as a means by which one was to save himself. This is how the Jews viewed the Sinai law. However, the law was never given as a means of salvation. Once one begins applying the law to his life, he immediately realizes that he cannot keep law perfectly in order to live righteously before God. He sins. And the sin brings death. Therefore, instead of the law bringing life, it brought death. God knew this when He gave law to man. Therefore, the law was never given to man as a means of salvation (See comments Gl 3:19-25).

**7:11** Paul personified sin by saying that it led him to believe that life was accomplished through meritorious obedience to law. The personified "sin" deceived him into thinking that all was well in his relationship with God. But in reality, he was spiritually dead because of the commandment.

**7:12** The problem of sin and death is not with the commandment. God's Sinai law was holy, just and good. "*For if there had been a law given that could have given life, certainly righteousness would have been by law*" (Gl 3:21). But a law can never be given that will produce justification in the sight of God. The problem is not the law but the man to whom it is given. We must never, therefore, judge the law to be evil because of our desire to do evil (See Ps 19:8; 119:138; 1 Tm 1:8; 1 Jn 5:3). The law is holy, just and good because it drives us to recognize our sinfulness, and thus, we are driven to the grace of God.

## DESIRES OF THE FLESH

**7:13 *That which is good:*** The preceding verse 12 introduces this section. The law was holy, just and good. Simply because the law pointed out sin does not mean that it was evil. It is the sin that is evil, not the law. The law came in order to exemplify the sin.

**7:14** The law was from God. It was thus spiritual in contrast to the flesh which it judges to be evil. In the following statement, Paul uses the first person singular pronoun with a present tense verb in order to illustrate the struggle that morally-minded people have with themselves in reference to law. He is picturing the Jew or Gentile who is religiously seeking to justify himself before God in reference to law. He begins by stating that as carnal men—those in the flesh (vs 5)—we are sold to the bondage of sin that reigns over us simply because the morally-minded person cannot live a perfect life.

**7:15** Herein is the frustration of the morally-minded person who seeks to meritoriously justify himself in reference to law. One struggles to do that which he believes is right. However, though he seeks to do that which is right, he sins. The law thus manifests his inability to accomplish that which is his goal.

**7:16** If one does that which is wrong according to the law, then the law is confirmed as good. The law arouses his conscience, and thus, he is convicted of being a sinner. Therefore, law is good for directing one's behavior. It is good in that it brings awareness of sin (See comments Mt 5:3-10). Therefore, we must not condemn the law because it points out the sin in our lives.

**7:17** Paul's personification of sin here is meant to portray sin using his body contrary to the will of the morally-minded man. One sins, though he knows the law speaks against the sin. One's knowledge of the law concerning what is sinful does not mean that he will not sin.

**7:18** The morally-minded person has a knowledge of the law. He knows what is right. However, since all men sin, one's knowledge of the law does not guarantee that he will not sin. Knowledge and behavior do not always work in agreement with one another. We know to do good, but do not do it (Js 4:17). All men have sinned by either violat-

ing the precepts of law (1 Jn 3:4), or by failing to do biblical principles of good (Js 4:17).

**7:19** Though we desire to do what is right, our performance does not measure up to our desire. We often end up doing that which we know is wrong according to either law or conscience.

**7:20** Though we seek to do that which is good, the nature of our being as free-moral individuals in a world of choice does not have the ability to live flawlessly. Paul's whole argument in this context is that the individual cannot live without committing sin. His argument is against those who would claim that the Holy Spirit subjects the free-moral Christian in order to guard him from sinning. Though the conscience of the Christian is made sensitive by the law of God as revealed through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit does not directly control the behavior of the Christian in reference to law in order to guard him from sin. Therefore, because we know we sin, we are driven to the grace of God. Our arrogance is crushed by realizing that without God's grace we have no hope of deliverance from this life of sin.

**7:21,22** *I find then the law:* The law here refers to the principle of all men living with the inability to perform flawlessly in order to stand righteous before God. It is a simple fact that all men cannot live in order to be justified before God solely on the merit of their behavior. ***The law of God:*** In contrast to the law of our human behavior wherein we cannot live a flawless life, there is the law from God that is meant to direct our behavior (Ps 1:2). It is our moral conscience that desires this law in order that our lives be directed by God. ***The inward man:*** This is the inner moral conscience that seeks to do that which is right (See 2 Co 4:16; Ep 3:16; Cl 3:9,10; 1 Pt 3:4).

**7:23** *Warring against the law of my mind:* It is the law of sin in ourselves that struggles against our desires to do

that which is right. Herein is the principle that because men are free-moral individuals, they have been created with the ability to make choices. Because God did not create us as robots with programmed minds that could not make wrong choices, we often do wrong. The ability of men to make wrong choices wars against the knowledge we have of doing that which is right. The ability to make wrong choices wars against our desire to do right. Thus, we are brought into captivity by this “law of sin” that is present in every individual. Man is thus in a dilemma. He cannot keep law perfectly, though he may desire to do so.

**7:24 *Wretched man that I am:*** One’s honest recognition of his spiritual dilemma leads him to frustration. The morally conscious person who seeks to do right realizes the law of his own natural fallibility to live flawlessly in reference to law. Every man must come to this point of self-recognition. Each person must recognize that his life is a “body of death” because we cannot obey law in a manner to justify ourselves before God. ***Body of this death:*** Sin resulted in man’s separation from the tree of life, and subsequently the consequence of physical death (Gn 3:22-24; 1 Co 15:20-22). Personal sin has also resulted in the individual’s separation from God, and subsequently, brought spiritual death into the lives of every man (5:12). We are thus with the curse of sin and death in a body of death, from which only God can deliver us (See 6:4,5; 8:11; 1 Co 15:51,52; 1 Th 4:14-17).

**7:25** In recognition of our inabilities to perform behaviorally in order to stand just before God, we are driven to thank God for the revelation of His grace through Jesus Christ (Ti 2:11). ***So then with the mind:*** Here is the point why Christians establish law in their lives in response to the grace of God (3:31). Their recognition of their inability to stand just before God on the basis of their own meritorious performance leads to one’s frustration in his efforts

to justify himself before God. However, once one recognizes the grace of God, he is driven to serve God. God's deliverance from sin and death through the cross of Jesus moves one to obedient appreciation of the grace of God. ***I myself serve the law of God:*** It is the law of God to trust in His grace and be motivated to follow His directions for moral behavior. ***The law of sin:*** Though the nature of free-moral behavior lends itself to sin, the Christian can find comfort in the fact of what John wrote: "*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light ... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1 Jn 1:7).

## Chapter 8 LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Paul has discussed in chapters 5-7 the life in the flesh. He now turns to the "life in the Spirit" which is opposed to the life in the flesh. The life that is directed by the Spirit is not under the condemnation of law because the Spirit has freed one from the law of sin and death.

**8:1 *No condemnation to those who are in Christ:*** "In Christ" is a metaphor that refers to one's close spiritual and salvational relationship with Christ. When one has been immersed into Christ (6:3), he comes into a saved covenant relationship with God wherein he is not in a state of condemnation (Mk 16:16; see Rm 3:24,26; 5:1,11,17; 6:11,22). In this state wherein there is no condemnation, one is free from the bondage of sin. In Christ one is not directing his life according to the desires of the flesh, but according to the directions of the Spirit (Gl 5:16). He is not walking according to the pride of meritorious conduct, but according to his submission to the word of God. We must not understand our walk to mean that one is directed by inner nudges of what one would interpret to be a supposed direct intervention by the Spirit. Nor should we misunderstand Paul's meaning to refer to the emotional outburst of mis-

guided religious hysteria. To follow such motives for behavior is to return to the bondage from which the Spirit has set us free by obedience to the gospel (See comments Gl 5:1,2; Cl 2:20-22). In Christ we are no longer guided by our subjective emotions that focus on the emotional performances of the individual apart from a knowledge of God's will. When one is guided by the Spirit, he is directed by the Spirit-inspired word that comes from God (See comments 2 Tm 3:16,17). Therefore, walking according to one's performance of law and meritorious deeds is opposed to one's walking in response to the grace of God.

**8:2 *Freed you from the law of sin and death:*** Paul explains why one is not under the sentence of condemnation when he walks according to the Spirit. The "law of the Spirit of life" is the gospel of God's grace through Jesus that has set us free from the necessity of meritorious obedience to law (6:18,22). The "law of sin and death" is in contrast to the law of the Spirit. In one's effort to obey law flawlessly, he sins (7:24,25). Sin brings death (6:23). Therefore, in reference to one's performance of law in order to be justified before God there is always sin and death (See 1 Co 9:21; Gl 6:2; Js 1:15; 2:8,12). The Christian has been delivered from the law of works. He has been delivered because no one can flawlessly keep either the law of Moses or the law of the conscience in order to escape sin and death (See 3:20; Gl 2:16).

**8:3 *Weak through the flesh:*** The laws by which God expected both Jew and Gentile to live were sufficient for the purpose for which they were given. Concerning the Sinai law which encoded the principles that were given to the Gentiles by word of mouth, Paul wrote that it was holy, just and good (7:12). The problem of sin, therefore, is not with the law of God. The problem is with the flesh (See comments Hb 8:6-8). It is impossible for the flesh to perfectly obey law. Therefore, law always brings us into sin

and death. Law could never free one from sin, and thus, law was never given as a means of salvation. For this reason, God sent forth His Son to free us from law, sin and death (1:3; Ph 2:7; 1 Tm 3:16; Hb 2:17). ***The likeness of sinful flesh:*** Jesus was incarnate into the flesh of men (Jn 1:1,14). “*For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin on behalf of us, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*” (2 Co 5:21; see Gl 3:13).

**8:4** Jesus died in order to make our obedience acceptable to God. Law requires flawless living in order to produce righteousness. But no one can keep law in order to stand righteous before God. However, because of the grace of God revealed through Jesus, the righteousness that is required by law is made perfect through the grace of God that was revealed on the cross. ***Walk according ... to the Spirit:*** Those who behave according to the Spirit-inspired directions of God are not living according to their desires to live after their own wills. Walking in the Spirit is the same as walking in the light. By walking in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn 1:6-9).

**8:5** The person who lives after the Spirit has crucified the old man of sin (6:6; Gl 2:20). He has put to death the desire to allow the lusts of the flesh to direct his life (Compare comments Ep 2:1-3). But the person who lives according to the lusts of the flesh in order to follow his own will is headed for eternal condemnation (See Gl 5:19-21; 6:8).

**8:6 *Carnally minded:*** This is the mind of the one who focuses on his own desires. In a religious context, it is the one who focuses on his own ability to perform law in order to save himself. The carnally minded person is walking in sin, though he may not recognize the fact that he is in sin. ***Spiritually minded:*** This is the person who focuses by faith on the cross and God’s grace. He has life and peace of mind because he is trusting in the grace of God and not

in his abilities in reference to law-keeping.

**8:7 *Not subject to the law of God:*** The individual who persists on remaining “in the flesh,” or is focusing on his own meritorious performance of law, is actually working against the plan of God to have all men trust in Him for direction. Such a person is focusing on himself and not on God’s grace. This is the man who seeks to walk by sight and without the faith that is necessary to please God (Hb 11:6). This person will not subject himself to God’s law for he does not have a desire to do so. He has created his religion after his own desires, and thus, he is focusing on his own performance of religiosity rather than the commandments of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

**8:8** As long as one seeks to approach God on his own terms, he will not allow God to direct his life. In the world of religions there are countless religious people who are seeking to worship God on their own terms. They are walking in the flesh because they are seeking God either by following after the security of their own traditions or the assurance of their own subjective religiosity. Such religions are “after the flesh” because they are not based on direction from God. Those who are victims of such religions will not walk after the Spirit until they seek God’s directions through His word (See comments Mk 7:1-9; Cl 2:20-23).

**8:9** Those to whom Paul is writing have crucified the old man of sin by repentance and immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (6:3-6). They have thus begun in the Spirit. And since they have begun their new life in the Spirit, the Spirit of God is in them because they have given themselves over to the direction of God (Gl 5:24). The sons of God are identified by their obedience to the gospel. By their obedience they have crucified their desire to walk after the flesh. It is for this reason that God claims them as His sons. Paul explains, “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of*

*you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gl 3:26,27).

**8:10 *If Christ is in you:*** The metaphorical meaning here is synonymous with the indwelling of the Spirit of verse 9. The meaning is the same. The Christ-directed life is Spirit-directed, and thus, one is spiritually dead to sin, but alive in Christ (5:17; 6:5; Gl 2:20). Though the body is subject to sin and death because one cannot control himself to live flawlessly according to law, the spiritual side of man is alive because of Christ. The spiritual part of man is alive, not according to flawless living, but because of the grace of God through the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7). It is in this way that Christ, though at the right hand of God, can be in the person who conducts his life according to the will of God.

**8:11** Paul now turns to the physical body of man. God has taken care of the sin problem of man through His grace that was revealed on the cross (1 Co 15:3). But the gospel also includes God's care for the physical body through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (1 Co 15:4). God raised the body of Jesus from the dead through the work of the Holy Spirit (6:4; At 2:24; 1 Co 6:14). Through the work of the Holy Spirit that now dwells in Christians He will bodily raise the Christian from the dead at the final coming (1:4; Jn 5:28,29; 2 Co 5:1-8; 1 Th 4:13-18).

**8:12 *We are debtors:*** Paul now applies to all Christians that which he applied to his own life in 1:14,15. We are debtors to God, for all that He has done for us through the cross He will do through the resurrection. It is thus foolish to think that we can in any way put Him in debt to us. What Paul teaches here manifests the fallacy of any system of religion that binds meritorious works as requirements for salvation. Being created in Christ Jesus for good works does not refer to working meritoriously in order to earn what God will give to us (See comments Ep 2:8-10). It

refers to realizing one's debt for all that God has done for us through the cross (1 Co 15:10). God will give us more than what we could earn. We thus work in gratitude of His grace (2 Co 4:15).

**8:13** If the Roman brethren return to a legal system of justification by perfect law-keeping, they will spiritually die, for their sin against law apart from grace will cause death (3:23; 6:23; Gl 6:8). If they live according to the direction of the Spirit, then they will resort to faith and trust in God (See Gl 5:19-22). They must make a free-moral choice not to live according to the deeds of the flesh (Ep 4:22; Cl 3:5-10).

**8:14 *Led by the Spirit of God:*** Those who have submitted to the will of God are identified as the sons of God (Gl 5:18; see 2 Tm 3:16,17). Keep in mind that this is not a subjective urge supposedly given by the Spirit, else we return to the very thing Paul is refuting in the context. Those who are led by the flesh are following after the inventions of human emotional and traditional religion that lead men away from dependence on God for direction. Those who are led by the Spirit of God seek the will of God in order to determine the direction of their lives (3:31; see Ps 119:105; Pv 6:23; compare Jn 14:15; 15:14).

**8:15 *A spirit of bondage:*** By living according to one's invented religious beliefs, he brings fear into his life. If his religious beliefs are based on the superstitions of the religion that have been handed down from his fathers, he lives in fear of supposedly unexplained spirits and humanly devised fables. The minds of the adherents of such religions are held in bondage by imagined powers that do not exist (See comments At 8:14-25; 19:11-20). If one follows after religion that has been invented after emotional hysteria, then he is in bondage to his own uncertainty. Since the foundation of his faith is based on his own feelings, he is continually uncertain of the validity of his faith. He often

seeks a miracle to confirm his faith. He does this in order to reach outside his own emotions in order to find an external validation for his faith. In doing so, he desires to walk by sight instead of faith because he is in doubt concerning his faith. He walks in the spirit of bondage, fearing that when the emotionalism is gone, his religious convictions will also vanish away. Those who walk after the spirit of traditional religion are also in bondage because they have put their trust in the traditions of their fathers (Mk 7:1-9). Those who devise meritorious religions walk in the spirit of bondage because they never know if they have performed well enough in order to merit the righteousness of God. All such religions manifest the spirit of bondage. *A spirit of adoption:* In contrast to the religions of human imaginations, the Spirit-led man cries unto the Father for direction. He does not trust in the direction of his traditions. He does not trust in the directions of his emotions. He does not trust in the imagined superstitions of false gods he has created after this own imagination. He trusts in God. As a son he cries “Abba, Father” to the One who will direct him through inspired words (Mk 14:36; Gl 4:6). He thus worships his Father in spirit and truth (See comments Jn 4:24). “Abba” is Aramaic and is a Jewish child’s endearing term that he would use to address his father. In such a manner the obedient believer who has responded to the grace of the Father pleads for the direction of the Father. One does not cry “Abba, Father,” and then go off into his own religious inventions. “Abba, Father” implies trust in, reliance upon, and direction from the Father in all aspects of one’s life as a son. It is for this reason that the disciple of Jesus searches the Scriptures in order to find direction from God (2 Tm 3:16,17).

**8:16,17** When we bring our lives into conformity with the inspired instruction of the word of the Spirit, then we have the witness of the Holy Spirit that we are truly the

sons of God (Ep 1:13). **Heirs of God:** The obedient son of God inherits what the Father has promised for His sons (See At 26:28). When we put on Christ in baptism (Gl 3:26,27), Paul explains that we belong to Christ and are Abraham's seed. We are heirs "*heirs according to the promise*" (Gl 3:29; see Gn 12:3; 18:18). **Suffer with Him:** All who would live the committed life after the Spirit will suffer persecution (Mt 5:10-12; At 14:22; Ph 1:29; 2 Tm 2:12; 3:12). They will suffer persecution because they will conduct their behavior contrary to the way of the world. We suffer with Jesus when we live according to the will of Jesus.

### SUFFERING OF THE WORLD

**8:18 *The glory that will be revealed to us:*** Paul wants us to consider the eternal heaven of which the Christian is an heir (2 Co 4:17; 1 Pt 1:6). One would certainly be arrogant if he assumed that he could exchange in a fair deal with God a lifetime of good works for the eternal riches of heavenly glory. In order to put God in debt for eternity in heaven, we would have to live an eternity of doing good works on earth. But such cannot be done. Because it cannot be done, we must depend on God's grace. Since one man's lifetime cannot be exchanged for an eternity of heaven, then there is certainly no possible way by which we can earn heaven. In this verse Paul even says that we could not live a lifetime of suffering for Jesus in order to merit the glories of heaven. Sufferings for the name of Jesus cannot be meritorious in reference to our inheritance of heaven. What we will receive is more than what we can buy with either good works or sufferings.

**8:19 *The earnest expectation of the creation:*** Though there are different views concerning what is referred to in the term "creation," it seems that anything other than a reference to the physically created world has textual prob-

lems. Paul seems to personify the creation as is done in other biblical texts (See Ps 98:8; Is 55:12; Ez 31:15). He does so in an effort to illustrate for Christians that even the physical world was affected by the sin of Adam, and thus, is in expectation of deliverance for the benefit of the sons of God (See Gn 3:17,18; compare 2 Pt 3:13).

**8:20 *Subjected to futility:*** We do not live in the original environment of this world that was in existence before the flood of Noah's day, or before the fall of Adam. Before the ground was cursed after Adam sinned, the garden of Eden environment was possibly destined not only to support Adam, but all humanity in a garden of Eden environment. But that environment was changed when Adam sinned. It was the Creator, God, who cursed the ground and all creation because of the sin of Adam (Gn 3:17-19).

**8:21 *The creation itself also will be delivered:*** Paul seems to indicate in his personification of creation that there will be a time of rejuvenation. It will be a rejuvenation of the world for the benefit of the sons of God as they move into a heavenly environment that is meant for the dwelling of a resurrected spiritual body (See comments 2 Pt 3:10-14). Some commentators have affirmed that "the creation" which is introduced in verse 19 refers to the creation of the unbelieving world. The word "creation" is so used in Mark 16:15 and Colossians 1:23. There is some validity to this interpretation. However, there seems to be a problem with this understanding because Paul affirms that "all creation" will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The meaning may be, therefore, that when Adam was driven from the tree of life, he brought on humanity the curse of physical death in a cursed environment. All men will be delivered from such by the resurrection of all the dead at the end of time (Jn 5:28,29). However, the unrighteous will be delivered to condemnation, not life or the environment that is prepared for the righteous (2 Th 1:6-9; 2 Pt 3:13). The

promise of resurrection to life is only for those who are in Christ (2 Co 5:10).

**8:22** It is true that the morally sensible of humanity groan for a better life than what this world offers. However, if they do not obey the gospel, their hope for a better world beyond this world will be dashed when Jesus comes with His angels to condemn the disobedient to destruction (2 Th 1:7-9). Therefore, reference in this context is probably to the personified physical world that Paul refers to as groaning from present existence for that new heavens and earth to which the saints will be delivered (See Jr 12:4,11; 2 Pt 3:13).

**8:23** *The firstfruits of the Spirit:* The early Christians received the first blessings of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that occurred in Acts 2:1-4 (See comments At 2:38,39). From the miraculous baptism of the Holy Spirit, the apostles received and transmitted the miraculous gifts to all believers with whom they had personal contact (See comments Mk 16:14-20; At 8:18). Therefore, all the early Christians participated indirectly in the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles (See comments Hb 6:4,5). *The redemption of our body:* It is the glorious hope of the Christian, not to be delivered from the body in order to be naked in embodiment, but to be embodied with the new habitation that is from God (See comments 1 Co 15; 2 Co 5:1-8). Christians seek to be as Jesus (1 Jn 3:2) in a spiritual body that is suitable for eternal dwelling (Ph 3:21; see Ep 1:14; 4:30; 1 Jn 3:2).

**8:24,25** Hope is the foundation upon which we continue our response to the grace of God. His grace has delivered us from sin and death, and consequently, will deliver us unto the new heavens and earth that are to come (2 Pt 3:13). For this reason, Christians obediently walk by faith in order not to give up their eternal possession that they have as heirs of God (4:18; 2 Co 5:7; Hb 1:1,6; 6:18,19).

If the Christian's hope is strong for that which God will give, then he will have inner strength to persevere through the struggles of this life. It is the hope of heaven that gives Christians the strength to remain faithful and strong through the trials and persecutions of this world.

**8:26,27 *The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses:*** Some have affirmed that there is such a separation between the Holy Spirit and the Father that there is the necessity of the Spirit to act as an interpreter of our inner feelings in our prayers to the Father. It is affirmed that the Christian cannot adequately express his inner thoughts in a way that a supposed distant Father can understand. It is assumed, therefore, that the Father needs the intercession of the Spirit in order for the Father to understand the inner feelings the Christians would like to express in words of prayer. Such a belief brings into question the omniscience of the Father, and possibly, pushes the Father away from His close fellowship with the Christian, as well as be an attack against the oneness of the Godhead. But the Father is not so distant from the Christian that He cannot know our most inner feelings, for in Him we live and move and have our being (At 17:27,28). What Paul expresses here is the problem of the Christian, not the difficulty of the Father to know the Christian's inner feelings. God does not need a verbal translator in order to know our feelings. He does not need an interpreter to convey our feelings to Him. He knew the inner feelings of King David as He knows the inner feelings of the Christian. ***We do not know how to pray:*** During His ministry, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1). These godly Jews had been with Jesus long enough to understand that they needed direction in their prayers. They needed teaching on how to pray in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. This request of the disciples for instruction concerning prayer is a possible key to understanding what Paul is saying here con-

cerning the prayers of the early disciples. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the gospel went into ungodly areas of pagan beliefs. These formerly idolatrous people who were converted were certainly less prepared to utter correct prayers to the Father than the Jewish disciples that followed Jesus. Therefore, one of the miraculous gifts of the firstfruits of the Spirit was the gift of prophecy. Such included inspired preaching, teaching, singing and prayer. Seated in the context of a discussion on the miraculous gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul spoke of the gifts of inspired singing and prayer (See comments 1 Co 14:15). Because the first Christians in idolatrous cultures did not know the word of God, they needed the direction of the Holy Spirit to pray according to the will of God (1 Jn 5:14). They thus prayed in the Spirit, that is, by the direction of the Spirit (Jd 20). ***According to the will of God:*** The Holy Spirit worked on behalf of the new disciples who had no New Testaments to direct their prayers according to the will of God. Wherever new disciples existed, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were left by the Christ-sent apostles to direct the preaching, teaching, singing and prayers among them. This was one reason why Paul wanted to go to Rome (1:11). After the disciples had grown in a knowledge of the word of God, then the miraculous gifts were no longer needed (See comments 1 Co 13:8-10). But until that time, they needed direct help from the Spirit in order that they conduct their lives after the Spirit.

### **MORE THAN CONQUERORS IN CHRIST**

**8:28** *All things work together for good:* We often cannot see the good that comes from immediate trials and sufferings. Therefore, we must assume that the good that God brings is within our lifetime. God views things from His eternal perspective. The final good of God will come with the reward of eternal heaven. In this context, Paul is ask-

ing us to view the final results of our sufferings from the eternal perspective of God. Though there is good that comes from God in suffering in our lifetime, there is the final good of glory that will come after the end of this world. ***Called according to His purpose:*** The final “calling” of God of Christians out of the world will occur at the end of time. The finality of all things, therefore, will end for good for the Christian when he is called out of this world into eternal glory. Through the preaching of the gospel, men are also called out of the world of sin through their obedience to the gospel (2 Th 2:14; 2 Tm 1:9; see Rm 6:3-6). It is the eternal purpose of God to bring obedient free-moral individuals into the realm of heavenly and eternal dwelling in His presence (See 16:25; 1 Co 2:7; Ep 3:5,10,11; Cl 1:26). Therefore, we are called into the plan of God’s purpose which is good. We do not call God into our purpose. He calls us into His.

**8:29,30** We must not assume that the foreknowledge of God presupposes the individual predestination of individuals to either heaven or hell. In the context here, reference is to those who will be glorified (vs 21; Jn 17:22). Before the creation of the world, God foreknew the body of believers He would glorify in eternal heaven (See comments Ep 1:7-14). He foreknew the body because He predestined the existence of the church. Therefore, those who would free-morally choose to be a part of this group (the church) by voluntary obedience to the gospel in order to conform to the image of the Son (2 Co 3:18), would also be destined to glorification in eternal heaven. It is the group of believers, the church, that God before the creation of the world predestined to be glorified. It is the responsibility of individuals to free-morally choose to become a part of this predestined group. Therefore, the group of believers that God predestined to be glorified, were first justified by the pre-determined plan of the cross (Rv 13:8). Those who were

justified, He called through the gospel (2 Th 2:14). At the end of time, He will call these out of the world for eternal glory. These who will be called out of the world are now predestined because they are a part of the predestined group of believers who will in the end be called out of the world for eternal glory. God foreknew this plan because He foreplanned redemption in Christ before the creation of the world (See comments Ep 3:8-13). ***Firstborn among many brethren:*** When people conform to the image of the Son, then they make the Son the firstborn among those who have conformed to His image. When we seek to conform to our own religion, whether emotional or traditional, we are denying the right Jesus has to be the firstborn. As the firstborn among those who have conformed to His image, Jesus was the first to be resurrected never to die again. He was the firstborn who has legal rights to the heritage of the Father. Since He partook of humanity in the likeness of men (Jn 1:14; Ph 2:5-7; Hb 2:11,12,18; 4:14-16), He has the right to lead the saved into eternal glory (See comments Rv 5).

**8:31** Paul now leads to the conclusion of his arguments of chapters 1:1 – 8:30. The conclusion is, “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” When one understands all that God did through His grace, the answer to the question is obvious. No one or anything can stand against God to bring His sons into eternal glory.

**8:32** When we comprehend the extent to which God went to bring us into eternal glory, then we begin to understand the love of God. When we understand how far Jesus had to come to get us, then we can appreciate the extent to which God had to go to save us. If the magnitude of God’s love does not motivate us into action, then certainly, we will not be lost because we failed to do a required agenda of good works or because we failed to live flawlessly in reference to law. We will be lost because we are loveless and unresponsive to the grace of God. We are loveless

when we do not respond to God's love on the cross. We are ungrateful if we do not respond to His grace (2 Co 4:15). Loveless and ungrateful characters have no place in eternal glory (See comments Mt 18:21-35; 1 Jn 3:10-23; see Js 2:13; 1 Jn 4:19).

**8:33,34** Paul's rhetorical question here demands a negative answer. No one can bring a charge against the children of God except the One to whom the body of Christ belongs. No one has a right to condemn the members of the body except the One who saved them. However, since God loved His children by offering His own Son, then it is not logical to believe that He would charge His blood-bought children with sin. If Jesus gave Himself on the cross to save the church, then it is not logical to believe that He would turn and condemn those for whom He died. ***Makes intercession for us:*** Jesus is at the right hand of God (Cl 3:1; Hb 1:3; 8:1). However, He is not there for the purpose of condemnation, but for the work of intercession on behalf of the saints (Hb 7:25; 9:24; 1 Jn 2:1). His continued intercession means that the Christian has the continual cleansing of sin by His sacrificial blood (1 Jn 1:7). It is through His blood and intercession, therefore, that we stand justified before God.

**8:35,36** Paul asks another rhetorical question. The answer again is obvious. No one can separate the sons of God from their Father, for He is God of all things. All the hardships that Satan would unleash upon Christians cannot separate the sons of God from their Father if they remain faithful unto death (Rv 2:10). ***Killed all the day long:*** Paul's quotation from Psalm 44:22 is indicative of the life of persecuted Christians. As saints of God, Christians endure the onslaught of the wicked world that seeks to kill them (See At 14:22; 20:24; 1 Co 4:9; 15:30; 2 Co 1:9; 4:10; 6:9; 11:23). Through these words, the Holy Spirit is possibly preparing the Roman Christians for the horrific persecution that is

about to be unleashed on them through the personal vendetta of Caesar Nero (See comments in intro. to Rv). If Paul does not have this in mind, then certainly he is preparing them for the decades of persecution that the Roman Empire will eventually launch against Christians. This persecution would continue on and off until the Edict of Toleration (A.D. 311) and Edict of Milan (A.D. 313) that would eventually be issued by Rome to relieve Christians of state persecution. When Nero died at his own suicidal hand in A.D. 68, there was a period of peace for Christians. However, under the reign of Domitian at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, persecution by the Roman state was revived.

**8:37 *More than conquerors:*** Christians have not only conquered sin and death, they have also conquered the world because nothing of this world can separate them from the love of God (See Jn 16:33; 1 Co 15:57; 2 Co 2:14; 1 Jn 5:4).

**8:38,39** Paul here goes beyond the physical sufferings that are launched against the Christian by forces of evil in an effort to separate him from the love of God. Paul moves into the spiritual realm. He affirms that Satan has no subjective power over the Christian. Satan cannot of his will snatch the Christian from the love of God (See comments Jn 10:27-30). He may go about in the world as a roaring lion (1 Pt 5:8), but his power of deception is not effective in reference to those who know and love the truth (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). He does not have the power to subject any Christian against his will who has given himself to God. Those who believe this can have confidence, not arrogance, for they trust in the power of the gospel, not in the flesh. Because they stand in the grace of God, they have confidence to stand against all that Satan would launch against them. Arrogance stems from those who have confidence in the flesh, or their ability to perform law and works in order to save themselves. Such arrogance leads to boasting. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he reminded those

who are of such a religious behavior that we are saved by grace and not by perfect performance of law and good works (Ep 2:8,9). Grace is the source of confidence of all Christians. We stand justified by what God has done and is doing for us, not by what we are doing for Him.

### **The Totality Of Redemption**

(9:1 – 11:36)

**Outline:** (1) Election of national Israel (9:1-13), (2) The righteousness of God (9:14-29), (3) Why national Israel fell (9:30 – 10:13), (4) Israel rejected opportunity (10:14-21), (5) God foreknew the spiritual remnant (11:1-10), (6) Salvation to the Gentiles (11:11-36)

## **Chapter 9**

### **ELECTION OF NATIONAL ISRAEL**

Paul has concluded the first section of his argument concerning salvation by grace and faith. Through this plan of salvation, the Gentiles were accepted. However, because national Israel sought justification by works, the majority of the Jews rejected Jesus. They rejected Jesus because they were not sons of Abraham by faith. In chapters 9-11 Paul answers the Jews' questions concerning why Israel stumbled over Jesus. Because the vast majority of Israel rejected the fulfillment of the promise, he answers questions as to whether God has fulfilled His promises to the Jews. His answer concerning why the majority of Israel did not accept the fulfillment of the promise is in 9:6. The answer lies in the fact that at the time Jesus came, the majority of the Israelites were not the true Israel of God by faith. God had raised up the Prophet, but they had constructed a religion of works that drove them to reject the Prophet (See Dt 18:15ff; At 3:21ff; see comments Mk 7:1-9). They had created a false religion as their forefathers who were rejected and condemned to Assyrian and Babylonian captivity (See comment Hs 4:6).

**9:1-3 *I do not lie:*** Paul begins this section by revealing to the Roman disciples how sincere he is concerning the

hope of Israel and his concern for the present situation of national Israel. He grieved over those of Israel who rejected the promise that God had fulfilled in Jesus. **Accursed from Christ:** Like Moses before him (Ex 32:30-32), Paul was willing to sacrifice himself in order that His fellow Jews be saved (10:1). The Greek word “accursed” (*anathema*) was used to translate the Hebrew word *herem* which referred to that which was devoted to God (Lv 27:28ff; Nm 21:3). When something was devoted to God it was doomed to destruction. It is here certainly possible that Paul is offering himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of national Israel.

**9:4** National Israel was adopted or chosen by God for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world for the salvation of man (Ex 4:22,23; 19:5ff; Dt 14:1,2; Am 3:2). Israel was glorified before God as His adopted son (Ex 24:16,17; 1 Sm 4:21; 1 Kg 8:10,11). God established a covenant with the nation (Gn 17:2-21; Dt 4:13,23; 4:2,3; 29:14; Lk 1:72; At 3:25; see Jr 31:31-34). With the covenant God made with Israel, He gave the Sinai law (Dt 4:13; Ps 147:19). Therefore, in conjunction with both the law and covenant, God affirmed that through Israel He would bring about the promises that He had already made to the fathers (At 2:39; 13:32; Ep 2:12; compare Hb 8:4; 9:1; 13:10). From Israel, therefore, came service to God (Hb 9:1,6). Israel was to serve as the medium through which the Savior would come into the world. National Israel, therefore, was only the medium through which God worked in order to bring about the eternal plan of redemption of the cross.

**9:5** The great fathers of faith came from Israel (Dt 10:15). And finally, from Israel came the Messiah who was the blessing of all humanity (Lk 1:34,35; 3:23; Gl 4:4; Hb 7:14). **Who is over all:** Jesus is presently reigning over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). He is King of kings and

Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). ***God blessed forever:*** As the Son of God, Jesus was the manifestation on earth of the Godhead who dwells beyond the physical world. Because God manifested Himself through Jesus does not mean that there is a plurality of the one true and living God. God is not separated into pieces, but maintains the unity of God regardless of the manifestations of Himself through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Since Jesus was the manifestation of God on earth, the Scriptures refer to Him as God. This is one of those many passages in the New Testament where Jesus is referred to as God (See Jn 1:1; 20:28; At 20:28; Ph 2:6; Cl 2:9; Ti 2:13; Hb 1:8; 2 Pt 1:1; 1 Jn 5:20).

**9:6** Some in Paul's audience were certainly questioning whether God had fulfilled His promise. Since the majority of national Israel rejected Jesus, the reasoning was that the promise had not been fulfilled. However, Paul answers these concerns by stating that God is not concerned with national Israel, but with those who are the Israel by faith. National Israel was only the vehicle by which the eternal plan of salvation was to be revealed to man. Once national Israel had completed her purpose, she was no longer needed. ***They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel:*** Paul's argument in this section is based on the fact that the true descendants of Abraham and heirs of the promises are those who are descendants of Abraham's faith (See Jn 8:39; Gl 6:16). This included both Jews and Gentiles, for Abraham was a Gentile. God's emphasis was on the faithful of national Israel, not all those who were of the physical nation. The true Israel by faith did accept Jesus as the prophet and savior. This Israel accepted Him through faith and obedience. The receiving of the blessings of the promises, therefore, was conditioned on faith, not physical lineage from Abraham. Paul's point is that all true Israel by faith did accept the Messiah. At the time he was writing, they were accepting Jesus as the Messiah by obedience to the gospel.

True Israel, therefore, identified herself by obedience to the gospel.

**9:7 *In Isaac your seed will be called:*** It took more than being one of Abraham's seed to be an heir of the promise. There were physical descendants of Abraham through the other children of Abraham. Those who were descendants of Abraham, but not descendants through Isaac, were Gentiles. However, the promise through the physical lineage would continue through Isaac (Gn 21:12).

**9:8 *The children of the flesh:*** Paul makes it quite clear here that the fulfillment of the promise was not dependent on national Israel. God's work with national Israel was that the nation be a vehicle that would sustain the spiritual Israel of faith. It was the spiritual Israel through whom He brought forth the Messiah. ***The children of the promise:*** These are those who were sons of Abraham by faith (At 3:25; Gl 4:28). Though all the children of promise were of Israel by physical lineage from Abraham, only those who were of the spiritual descendants of Abraham's faith were considered to be the true Israel of God, and thus the children of the promise. These were the true seed of Abraham through whom God fulfilled the promise of the seed, who is Christ. "*Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham*" (Gl 3:7). "*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ*" (Gl 3:16). It was through the spiritual seedline of Abraham that the Seed (Christ) came into the world (Gl 3:16). When He came, the spiritual seed of Abraham accepted Him. Therefore, the promises of God to spiritual Israel by faith were fulfilled in Christ.

**9:9 *The word of promise:*** Isaac came forth as the result of God's grace, not by the parental planning work of Abraham and Sarah (Gn 18:10). The conception of Isaac was miraculous in the sense that Abraham and Sarah were past

the age of child bearing. Therefore, the promise was the result of grace. The fulfillment of the promise was on the same basis. It was not fulfilled by meritorious works, but by the grace of God. National Israel, at the time of Jesus, sought the fulfillment of the promise by works. But acceptance of the fulfillment of the promise was by faith. Jesus, therefore, was accepted by spiritual Israel because those of spiritual Israel accepted Him on the basis of faith. Men of faith as Andrew, Peter, John, and a host of other Jews, were drawn to Jesus as the hope of Israel (See Jn 1:29-51; see comments Gl 5:15,16). Their faith led them to Jesus. Those who were not of Israel by faith rejected Jesus, and thus, they did not receive the promise.

**9:10,11** Paul continues the preceding argument with reference to God's work through Jacob and Esau. God made His choice of Jacob over Esau before either was born. His choice was made before either could manifest in their lives whether they were either good or evil. God's choice, therefore, was not based on the merit of their lives, but on His predetermined plan to continue the seedline of Abraham through Jacob (See Gn 25:21-23). Therefore, the continuation of the seedline, and thus the fulfillment of the promise, was not based on the work of men, but on the work of God.

**9:12,13** *Serve the younger*: Jacob was the younger who was served by Esau the older (Gn 25:23). In other words, Jacob was the one through whom the promise of the blessing would come to all mankind. *Jacob I have loved*: This is not an expression of emotion in reference to God's respecting the nature of Jacob over Esau because God considered Jacob a better person. Paul is not referring to God's rewarding of Jacob with the seedline because He respected him over Esau. What is in view is God's choosing a nation over another nation. The nation that came from Jacob was chosen over the nation that came from Esau (Ml 1:2,3).

Jacob is used as the father of the nation of Israel, and Esau is used as the father of the nation that came from his seed-line, the Edomites. Thus God chose Israel over the nation that came from Esau.

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

**9:14,15** Paul is here assuming that some are questioning the fairness of God in choosing Jacob over Esau. In the context of verse 6, some may be questioning the fairness of God in choosing those He knew were Israel by faith over those who were Israel after the flesh. In Exodus 33:19 God reminded Moses that He had chosen Israel, though Israel was a stiffnecked people. In this discussion, therefore, Paul reminds his audience that God has the sovereign right to make these choices regardless of the thinking of men.

**9:16** *Him who wills:* God does not work according to what we think He should do. *Him who is running:* As a participant in God's plan, it is not our choice to determine what God should do. *Of God who shows mercy:* Our decisions are often prejudiced. In reference to Paul's audience of Jews, they would be prejudiced toward Israel after the flesh. But God did not owe the promise to those who were descendants of Jacob through the flesh. The salvation of the promise does not come as a result of being a descendant of the flesh, nor by the works of the flesh. It is according to the mercy of God.

**9:17,18** *For this same purpose:* God foreknew the defiant attitude that would be maintained by Pharaoh when He confronted him with His work. Therefore, God raised up Pharaoh and used his defiant disposition as the occasion to manifest His power over him in His work to deliver the nation of Israel (See Ex 9:16). *He hardens:* God does not harden the heart of a righteous man for a righteous man has submitted his heart to God. Pharaoh's heart was not of such a nature. Therefore, his heart was hardened by the

occasion of his confrontation with the will of God (See Ex 8:15,32; 9:34). God hardens those who have set their rebellious minds against His work. God's word hardens evil hearts, but melts righteous hearts. His word only presents the occasion or obstacle against which disobedient minds continue to harden. The will of God offers the obstinate the opportunity to manifest the nature of their hardened hearts.

**9:19** Paul supposes that some in his audience might question God's justice in presenting the occasion to harden individuals of His work to carry out His plans. They may possibly think that it is wrong for God to find fault by presenting an occasion for men as Pharaoh to rise up in rebellion against the work of God. Paul's answer is that God can use the free-moral choice of rebellious men to accomplish His plan. God can use the work of Satan through deceived men in order to accomplish His purposes. We must also conclude that God's work is not regulated or determined by the hardness of men's hearts. Jesus came to the Jews. But the Jews rejected Him (Jn 1:11). God foreknew their hardness. However, their hardness would not deter His plans to bring the cross to humanity. In the case of national Israel, God used their stubbornness and hardened hearts in order to take the incarnate Son of God to the cross.

**9:20** *Who are you:* There were evidently some among the Roman disciples who were arrogantly questioning the work of God to fulfill His promises in the cross. They had questions in view of the fact that the majority of national Israel had rejected Jesus. Paul asked a question here to deliver a just rebuke of such thinking. He indirectly identifies such thinking as unrighteous. It would be unrighteous thinking to suppose that God was unjust by using the rebellious attitude of the wicked against themselves, but for His work (See Is 45:9). One cannot blame God for his

own stumbling over the work of God. Man was created a free-moral individual to live in the best of all environments for the dwelling of a free-moral person. In order to be truly free, one must have the ability and freedom to choose good or evil. When one chooses evil, God is not to be blamed for such choices. Neither is He to be blamed for the consequences of evil choices. God, therefore, is not to be blamed for the rejection of the majority of national Israel to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

**9:21** God has the right to bless those who have yielded to His work and will. He also has the right to condemn those who have refused His work and will. He is God, the Creator of all that exists. Our questions must not attack His sovereignty over all things and work to carry out His eternal purposes. We must not be so arrogant that we bring God's work down to the level of human reasoning.

**9:22** *With much longsuffering:* The fact that God is patient in allowing opportunity for repentance exemplifies the justice of God. Men would rain down immediate judgment upon the wicked. However, God is not willing that any should perish, and thus, He gave Israel time for repentance (See 2 Pt 3:9). He has offered the Jews of national Israel every opportunity to repent (See Mt 23:37; Jn 5:40). Because He offered them every opportunity, they have no reason to blame God for their judgment, which judgment was coming upon national Israel in A.D. 70. **Prepared for destruction:** It is apparent that here the Holy Spirit is reminding the Roman Jews of the impending in-time judgment that was soon to come upon the nation of Israel. Jesus had prophesied the destruction of the Jewish State, and such was coming in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). We would do injustice to the interpretation of these thoughts of Paul concerning the situation and destiny of national Israel if we ignored the prophecy of Jesus that national Israel was coming to a close by the will of God. Therefore, verse 22

speaks of God's wrath that will be unleashed upon those who have been prepared for destruction. They have been prepared for judgment by their rejection of the Son of God. Therefore, it is superfluous to imagine that Paul here speaks of a special blessing that God would supposedly have in store for national Israel in view of the fact that national Israel is headed for its destruction by the Roman State about a little over decade from the time of the writing of these words.

**9:23,24 *Make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy:*** The disciples of Christ would come forth from the ashes of the destruction of national Israel as the glorified people of God (See comments Mt 21:33-46). However, Paul's thought is beyond the manifestation of the church of the true sons of God after the destruction of national Israel. He views the glory of the vessels of mercy as the finality of the work of God through the church, which church was composed not only of Jews by faith, but also of the Gentiles.

**9:25,26** Paul concludes the preceding questions and proceeds to quote Old Testament prophecies that prove that God always intended to call the Gentiles into a covenant relationship with Him (See 3:29). The prophecies of Hosea 2:23 (vs 25) and Hosea 1:10 (vs 26) clearly state that the Gentiles would be included in the fulfillment of God's promise. They would be included, not because they were physical descendants of Abraham, but because they were by faith the spiritual descendants of Abraham. In fact, one of Israel's works as a whole, which work they refused to do, was to be a priesthood nation to the Gentiles (See comments 1 Pt 2:9). They were to evangelize the ancient world with their belief of the one true and living God, which mission they failed to do.

**9:27-29 *A remnant will be saved:*** The Jews to whom Paul was writing in Rome understood the remnant concept. National Israel had gone into Assyrian and Babylonian cap-

tivities in their historical past. However, a physical remnant of all twelve tribes returned from the lands of their captors in order to resettle the land (See Is 1:9; 10:22,23). But in the context of Paul's argument here, reference is not to a remnant of physical Israel. His focus is on the spiritual Israel by faith who believed on Jesus. They were the spiritual remnant that came out of national Israel at the time Jesus came. This was the "election" that came out of national Israel (vs 6; 11:5,7,28). ***Left us a seed:*** In reference to the fulfillment of the promise, the seed was not a specific reference to national Israel. It was to spiritual Israel, the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith (See comments Gl 3:7-9). The spiritual seed was the remnant that remained when national Israel rejected Jesus (Jn 1:11).

### WHY NATIONAL ISRAEL FELL

**9:30,31** Paul now comes to a conclusion. The Gentiles who did not have the privilege of the Sinai law, or the privileges that were given to national Israel (3:1ff), were able to attain righteousness by faith, but not by works of the Sinai law. However, national Israel failed to attain righteousness because they sought such through meritorious law-keeping.

**9:32,33** ***Because they did not seek it by faith:*** Paul gives the reason why national Israel stumbled over the fulfillment of the promise. They used that which was only a means to the end (the Sinai law) as the end in itself. Through a meritorious system of law-keeping that they had constructed after the traditions of the fathers, they were unable to accept the grace of God through faith (See comments Mk 7:1-9; Gl 1:13,14). ***They stumbled:*** Jesus was the One over whom they stumbled because He did not fit into their theology of justification by works, nor did He conform to their idea of who the Messiah would be (See Is 8:14; Lk 2:34; 1 Co 1:23). Therefore, because He did not conform

to either their theology or expectations, He was rejected (Jn 1:11). Jesus thus became the occasion that manifested the hardness of their hearts in reference to the work of God. ***Stumbling stone:*** When God sent Jesus to the Jews, because of their hardness of heart they treated Him the same way they had treated the prophets before Him. They persecuted Him, and eventually, they nailed Him to the cross (See comments Mt 23:29-32; see Ps 118:22; Is 8:14; 28:16; Mt 21:42; 1 Pt 2:3-8). Because of their hardness of heart, national Israel stumbled over Jesus. They rejected Him as the Messiah of Israel, and thus, did not receive Him as the Son of God (Jn 1:11). Since He was not the Messiah they thought He should be, they rejected Him. However, those who were sons of Abraham by faith received Him. The sons of Abraham by faith received Jesus as both the Messiah and Son of God (Jn 1:12,13). The Gentiles also accepted Him by faith. Jesus, therefore, became the cornerstone upon which the sons of Abraham by faith (the church) were built (1 Co 1:23,24; 3:11; see comments Mt 16:13-19). He was the cornerstone because He fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. He was proved to be the Son of God by the miraculous works He did (Jn 3:2). Jesus remains the cornerstone of the church because of the faith of those who believe that He is the Christ and Son of God. He is the cornerstone for all those who build their faith upon Him.

## Chapter 10

**10:1,2** Paul again manifests his inward emotions concerning the lost condition of national Israel, which at the time of his writing, was still outside Christ (See 9:1-3). ***Not according to knowledge:*** The religious state of national Israel is typical of all people who have not allowed themselves to be directed by the word of God. One may be religiously zealous, however, his religious zeal must be di-

rected by the word of God (See At 21:20; Gl 1:14; see comments Mk 7:1-9; Gl 4:17,18). If one could be saved on the basis of meritorious zeal, then certainly Israel could have been saved without believing in Jesus. But God gives no provisions for salvation on the merit of good works, or religious zeal. Only in Christ is there salvation (See comments At 4:12). In their zeal to be righteous before God after their own meritorious system of righteousness, the religious Jews of national Israel did not attain unto the righteousness of God by faith (9:31,32). They thus stumbled over the “stone of stumbling” (9:32).

**10:3 *Seeking to establish their own righteousness:*** Those religions of the world as Judaism that are ignorant of or reject God’s plan for righteousness (justification), will always create their own meritorious system of religion (See comments Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9). However, one cannot establish his own righteousness in order to justify himself before God. If one attempts such, then he is not submitting to the righteousness of God. And such is what the religious leaders of Israel did. *“All too well you reject the commandment of God, so that you may keep your tradition”* (Mk 7:9). On the background of this statement of Jesus, a profound truth is here revealed through Paul by the Holy Spirit. At the time Jesus came, the religious leaders of Israel had established their own righteousness, that is, their own system of self-justification. It was a religion that was constructed after the traditions of men (Mk 7:1-9). They sought to be justified before God on the merit of keeping their religious traditions. The world is full of similar religions today. But religion that is formulated after the *“commandments and doctrines of men”* is not acceptable to God (See comments Cl 2:20-23). Such religions are erroneous simply because God must be the standard upon which our beliefs are to be based. When men leave the word of God, their only source of authority is themselves. Throughout

the history of the world there have been thousands of religions that have been imposed on men that go to the extreme of manifesting the base desires of carnal thinking. There have been and are religions that justify murder and fornication. Such religions have given up a knowledge of the God of love and have sought to construct a system of religiosity that is after the desires of carnally minded men. We should be repulsed at such religions. However, the beginning of the formulation of such religions starts first with a rejection of the final authority of what should be the foundation of all belief, the word of God (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). When one rejects the word of the one true God, then there is no end to the religious systems he will develop in order to please his own desires.

**10:4** Israel sought righteousness after a legal system of meritorious obedience to the Sinai law and their religious traditions that they had added to the law. However, when grace and truth came through Jesus (Jn 1:17), men were justified by faith in response to God's will (See comments Mt 5:17; see Rm 6:14; 7:1-4,6; Gl 3:24; 4:5). It was the purpose of the law to bring Israel to the righteousness that was revealed through Jesus (Ph 3:9). Once Israel was brought to Jesus, the purpose of the law was fulfilled (See comments Gl 3:19-25). Therefore, everyone who has come to Jesus by obedient faith is no longer under the necessity of justification by perfect law-keeping.

**10:5 *Will live by them:*** When Moses originally delivered the Sinai law to Israel, he stated in Deuteronomy 27:25,26 the curse of law. It is the curse of law that no man can keep it perfectly in order to save himself (See comments Gl 3:10). Law cannot save because no one can keep it perfectly (See comments Js 2:10). The man who rejects the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus has condemned himself to the law of sin and death. Under law he must flawlessly obey in order to attain unto righteousness.

However, all men sin (3:23). And the consequence of sin is spiritual death (6:23). The law which was believed to bring life, therefore, became that which condemned one to death. The religiously zealous of Israel were in this spiritual state of sin at the time Paul wrote this letter.

**10:6,7** Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in reference to the new relationship that we now have with God. No one has to go to heaven and personally bring Jesus down from His exalted state in order to be justified before God. Neither does one have to ascend to Jesus in order to be justified. That which is necessary for salvation is faith. And obedient faith in response to the grace of God can exist anywhere in the world.

**10:8 *The word is near you:*** From the time of the giving of the Sinai law on Mount Sinai, God conveyed to Israel that the just will live by faith (Hk 2:4; see Dt 30:12-14). God did not make this principle difficult to understand in the Sinai law. If Israel had sought the righteousness of God through faith, then they would not have constructed a legal system of works in order to justify themselves. They would also have readily accepted Jesus when He came. Those who were sons of Abraham by faith, did accept Jesus. But the majority of Israel had by the time Jesus came, constructed their own legal system of justification, and thus, they rejected faith.

**10:9 *Confess with your mouth:*** In the context of Paul's argument, this statement is understood. The confession of Jesus as Lord was the manifestation of making Jesus the Lord of one's life wherever he is in the world (See comments At 2:36,37). Paul is not talking about a mere salvational statement of words from the mouth that "Jesus is Lord." He is talking about obediently giving oneself over to faith in Jesus as opposed to meritorious works (See comments Mt 7:21,22; compare Mt 10:32; Lk 12:8). Once one makes Jesus his Lord, then his life is brought into subjec-

tion to the will of Jesus, for one cannot claim Jesus as his Lord if he does not submit to the word of Jesus (Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 5:3).

**10:10 *With the heart ... with the mouth:*** Herein is the motivation for justification by faith. Faith motivates the heart and mouth. The parallelism of Paul's statement emphasizes that the law of faith motivates one to obedience. As opposed to motivation that is generated after meritorious desires to justify oneself by law-keeping, inward faith generates obedience in response to the grace of God (See 1 Co 15:10). Once one has given himself to the lordship of Jesus, then it is his desire to follow after the directions of God's word and not the religious instructions that have been established by man. One cannot accept the lordship of Jesus and then remain in his own legal system of meritorious righteousness. Jesus said, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (Jn 14:15). One cannot love Jesus and at the same time keep his own religious commandments that were given to him through the traditions of the fathers (Mk 7:1-9). When one comes to grace and faith, he must come out of those systems of religion that are constructed after the traditions and emotions of men. Paul stated this clearly to the Colossians. They too had been delivered from religious traditions by their obedience to the gospel (See comments Cl 2:20-22). He encourages all disciples to come out from among practices that formerly led them astray (2 Co 6:17; see Nm 33:51-56).

**10:11 *Whoever believes:*** The invitation of the gospel is to all men (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Jn 3:16). It is both to the Jew and the Gentile (At 10:36; 1 Tm 2:5). Paul's quotation of Isaiah 28:16 emphasizes that salvation by faith has always been God's plan of salvation (See 1:17; 9:33; Is 49:23; Jr 17:7). Those who believe will put their trust in God, and thus, God will credit them righteous before Him. They will not fall short of salvation.

**10:12** *There is no difference:* Even before the coming of Jesus, there was no distinction between Jew and Gentile in reference to salvation and spiritual matters. If such were true before the cross, then certainly it would be true after the cross (See 3:22,29; At 15:9; Gl 3:28). One's connection with national Israel before the cross did not give one an advantage in reference to salvation. Salvation has been offered to all men since the beginning of time, for "*the just will live by faith*" (1:17; Hk 2:4; Gl 3:11; Hb 10:38). Therefore, it was not the purpose of God in establishing the nation of Israel to establish a system of salvation that was based on physical heritage as a Jew (See comments Gl 3:15-18).

**10:13** Salvation is to all those who realize the curse of living after a system of justification through meritorious works. In order to come to the cross, one must first come to the realization that there is no salvation through meritorious religiosity. When one is frustrated with such religiosity, then he is driven to the grace of God (See Gl 2:16). Once one reaches this point, then he will humble himself before God who will lift him up (See 1 Pt 5:6,7). Until one comes to this point in his faith, however, he will not call on the Lord for direction in his life (See Jl 2:32; At 2:21). In order to trust in God's grace one must become frustrated with trusting in himself.

### ISRAEL REJECTED OPPORTUNITY

**10:14** *How then will they hear without a preacher:* The medium through which God worked in order to proclaim the gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel was through the ministry of preaching (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:14). God did not send angels to proclaim the gospel to national Israel. Neither did He send the Holy Spirit (See comments At 8:26,29). The gospel went into all the world, therefore, because preachers were sent to preach the gospel (See 1 Co 1:21).

**10:15 *Unless they are sent:*** Since salvation is through obedience to the gospel (At 4:12; 2 Th 1:7-9), then it is imperative that the proclaimers of the gospel be sent forth into all the world. Those who do not understand the nature of salvation through the gospel, will not be motivated to carry out this great commission of Jesus. Those who believe that men can be saved on the merit of their own self-imposed religions will be indifferent about the plea of Paul that preachers be sent forth to all the world. Churches who covet preachers for themselves will not send their preachers out to preach the gospel to the lost (See comments Lk 4:42-44). ***The feet of those who bring glad tidings:*** Before the coming of Jesus, the Holy Spirit commended the bearers of good news during the days when He inspired Isaiah to inscribe these words Paul here quotes (Is 52:7; Nh 1:15). The work of preaching the gospel to the lost today is the work of the evangelists. Preaching the gospel to the lost is here commended by God because of the purpose of preaching. Souls are saved by obedience to the gospel when the gospel is preached. Unless preachers are sent into all the world, the world cannot be informed concerning the cross and resurrection of Jesus (See comments Ph 4:10-20; 3 Jn 5-8). The greatest work any man or woman can do on earth is to take the news of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope to the ears of those who have not yet heard. We must affirm that no one has a right to hear the gospel twice when there is another who has not yet heard it once. For this reason, disciples must be stirred into action to preach the gospel to the entire world in every generation.

**10:16 *Obeyed the gospel:*** The gospel is the good news of the historical event of the atoning death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection to give us hope of resurrection (See comments 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4; 2 Th 1:7-9; 1 Pt 4:17). Those who respond to the report of the grace of God as it is

revealed through the cross, obey the gospel by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Paul affirms that the gospel was reported to national Israel. However, most of national Israel did not believe. If they had believed, then they would have obeyed the gospel. The lost state of Israel, therefore, was not the fault of God who sent out the preachers. It was the fault of unbelieving Israel (See Is 53:1; Jn 12:38). They did not believe the message of the preachers, and thus, they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. And because they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, they did not obey the gospel. Their unbelief in the preachers' report of the gospel event resulted in their disobedience (See 1:5; 16:26).

**10:17 *Faith comes by hearing:*** It is the word of God that produces faith, and faith produces obedience to the gospel (See Js 2:14-26). Most of national Israel did not listen to the preaching of the gospel. Therefore, national Israel refused to hear the report of the gospel, and thus, the unbelieving Israelites did not have faith in the gospel (See Hb 11:6). The system of legal justification that was practiced by the Jews led them to religious arrogance. They were religiously arrogant because they assumed that they had a special blessing of God's righteousness as a result of their physical heritage with Abraham. Their religious arrogance, therefore, hindered them from hearing and believing the report of the gospel event.

**10:18 *Their sound went into all the earth:*** From the time of the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 to the time Paul wrote these words, the report of the gospel had gone out to the far extremities of the Diaspora of national Israel throughout the Roman Empire (Ps 19:4; see Mt 24:14; Mk 16:15; Cl 1:6,23). It went to all Israel because those Jews who visited Jerusalem during the Passover/Pentecost feast each year saw the miracles of the apostles and heard their teaching. They returned to synagogues throughout the world

and reported what they heard (Is 2:1-4; see comments At 2). National Israel, therefore, could offer no excuse for not having the opportunity to hear and obey the gospel.

**10:19** God prophesied that He would use the saving of the Gentiles as a means to provoke the Jews to jealousy. He wanted to provoke them to jealousy in order that they accept Jesus (11:11; Dt 32:21). However, those who were self-righteous after their own legal system of justification, stumbled over the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. The Gentiles' conversion from idolatrous religions did not move the arrogant legalistic religious leaders of national Israel to obedience of the gospel.

**10:20** The gospel was preached to the Gentiles whom the Jews thought had no special consideration from God. However, when the gospel was preached to the Gentiles, they gladly accepted and obeyed it (Is 65:1; see At 13:46-48). They rejoiced that they could be accepted by God on the basis of faith, and not their keeping of the Sinai law.

**10:21** Though God had exercised great patience with the Jews, they were without excuse in their lack of obedience to the gospel (Is 65:1,2; 2 Pt 3:9). However, the arrogance of their self-righteousness led them to scoff at Jesus as the King of Israel and Lord of their lives (See Mt 21:38; 22:5). Their rejection of Jesus, therefore, was in a few years going to lead them into the destruction of national Israel (See comments Mt 24). Before introducing His proclamation of the doom of national Israel, Jesus bewailed Jerusalem for her rejection of the prophets (See comments Mt 23:37). Paul's words in Romans in reference to national Israel must be understood in the historical context that in only a few years, God was going to bring judgment on national Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Since Israel had brought the Savior of the world into the world, then there was no more need for the nation of Israel.

## Chapter 11

Paul concludes chapter 10 with the fact of national Israel's rejection of the gospel. In this chapter it is Paul's affirmation that God did not cast off His people without first giving them an opportunity to obey the gospel. His promises were fulfilled by the sending forth of the gospel to the Jews during the forty years between the time of the establishment of the church in A.D. 30 and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Paul affirms also that God has not postponed the fulfillment of His promises until a later date. When we come to the discussion of the contents of this chapter, it is necessary to restate Paul's definition of the two Israels. First, there is the national Israel that as a whole was hardened against Jesus as the Christ (See 9:6-9). It was this Israel that rejected the cross and stood in disobedience at the time he wrote. Second, there is the true Israel by faith. As sons of Abraham by faith, this Israel accepted Jesus as the Christ, and subsequently, obeyed the gospel. It is with this Israel that God has fulfilled His promises to the fathers. It was this second Israel that God always considered to be the heirs of His promises. This was the Israel that was redeemed in Christ at the time Paul wrote these final words in reference to their salvation.

### **GOD FOREKNEW THE SPIRITUAL REMNANT**

**11:1** Paul was an Israelite by faith. He was not only an Israelite by faith, but an Israelite by physical heritage (8:29; 2 Co 11:22; Ph 3:5; compare Jn 1:47). He and many other Jews stood righteous before God because of faith (See comments Gl 2:14-16). Therefore, God had not cast off the Israel by faith because Paul and other Jews, who had obeyed the gospel, were a testimony to the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises.

**11:2-4** *Whom He foreknew:* God foreknew the Israel by faith who would obey the foreplanned gospel, and thus

be the church of God by faith (See comments 8:28-30; Ep 1:9-12; 3:8-12). It is the community of God, the church, that God foreknew in this context. Reference is not to national Israel. ***Elijah:*** As God had seven thousand faithful Jews by faith in Elijah's day (1 Kg 19:10-18), so He had a remnant by faith in the days of the early evangelists. This remnant had not been forsaken by God for they had not forsaken Him. This was the true Israel by faith that accepted Jesus as the Christ and Son of God (9:6,7). This was the remnant by faith that had not created a religion after their own desires (See comments Mk 7:1-9). Therefore, when the Messiah came they accepted Him with eagerness (See Jn 1:32-51).

**11:5 *A remnant according to the election of grace:*** This is the remnant of Jews who were the true Israel. They believed the report of the gospel. This is the Israel that God foreknew would obey the gospel (9:27). It was with this remnant that God established His new covenant on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (See Jr 31:31-34; Hb 8:7ff; 10:15-17). Those of this remnant were elected by grace. The grace of God was manifested on the cross and they accepted such through faith (Ti 2:11). They were thus elected as a result of their choice to respond by faith to God's grace (Compare 2 Co 4:15). Therefore, their election was by grace, not by the works of law or meritorious deeds.

**11:6 *No more by works:*** Since the election was by the grace of God, then it was not a result of their meritorious works of law. If God had saved the faithful remnant because of their meritorious works of law, then there would have been no grace (4:4). If their salvation was by works, then God would have been in debt to save them. Paul's argument here is that national Israel sought the fulfillment of God's promises through meritorious works of law. But Israel by faith (the remnant) sought grace through faith (5:2). The Israel by works was rejected and the Israel by faith was justified.

**11:7** National Israelites by the flesh sought to obtain the promises by establishing their own righteousness (10:3). They thus missed that for which they sought by works because of the nature of the promise, that it was of grace and not by works. But the Israelites by faith received the promises and the righteousness of God because they sought it through faith. Fleshly Israel was blinded by their system of works (9:18; 10:16; 11:25; Mk 6:52; 2 Co 3:14), but Israel by faith could see through faith the fulfillment of the promises.

**11:8** *God has given them the spirit of stupor:* God did not predestine the Israelites by works to be hardened. He did not make them hardened against their will. As with Pharaoh, God presented the opportunity by which they would manifest their hardness of heart and blindness in reference to faith (Dt 29:4; Ps 69:22,23; Is 6:9; 29:10; Jr 5:21; Ez 12:2; Mt 13:14; Jn 12:40; At 28:26). God will provide an opportunity for the hardened to believe error (9:14-18; 2 Th 2:9-12). It is not that He manufactures the error. He only allows Satan to deceive those who are willing to be deceived. But because He allows Satan to deceive, God is willing to accept the final responsibility. One might question why God would do such. The answer lies in the fact that God created the best of all possible environments in which a free-moral individual could live. Within this environment there had to be the opportunity for choices of good and evil. For one to be truly free, he had to be allowed by God to make choices. And so God worked in Israel in a manner to allow those who were of the flesh to make their own choice concerning Jesus. Since they have been allowed to make their own choice, they must be held accountable for their choice. Therefore, in judgment God stands just because He created man a true free-moral individual with the freedom to choose. Unbelieving Israel must bear the responsibility of their rejection of Jesus.

**11:9,10** *Let their table become a snare and a trap:* God will let those who do not love the truth to carry on with their self-deceptive religious beliefs (Ps 69:22,23; see 2 Th 2:10-12). The gospel that was reported to Israel could have given them hope and a foundation upon which to build a spiritual house. However, because of their hardness of heart, that which was to give hope became a stumbling block over which they religiously fell. Their hardness of heart blinded them to the truth of God. Therefore, the gospel became the occasion by which they manifested their rebellion against God. They judged themselves because they rejected that which God meant to draw them unto Himself. Such is the case with everyone who rejects the gospel. One judges himself to have a hardened heart when he rejects the gospel.

### SALVATION TO THE GENTILES

**11:11** It was not God's desire that the hardened Jews (fleshly Israel) be lost because of their hardening. He did not predestine them to be hardened, neither did He cause them to be hardened. Thus God did not cause them to stumble so that they might fall. Their hardening did not endanger the salvation of the spiritual Israel, for the spiritual remnant accepted Jesus and continued on. In fact, those who were the spiritual remnant of Israel were also Jews by heritage. It was this remnant that proclaimed the gospel to national Israel. The good that came out of the hardening of fleshly Israel was that the gospel was speedily preached to the Gentiles (See At 13:46-48; 18:6). *Provoke them to jealousy:* The Gentiles were trapped in idolatrous worship. However, when the message of the grace of God came to them to deliver them from their own imagined fears and ceremonial religions, they eagerly accepted the freedom of the gospel. Their conversion sparked jealousy in the minds of those who thought they were more righteous than the Gentiles (10:19; Dt 32:21; At 13:46).

**11:12** Paul argues that if the fall of the Israel who sought righteousness through works, accomplished the evangelization of the Gentiles, then their fullness or acceptance of Jesus would work toward greater things. They had lost the blessing of the promises because of their unbelief. In order to regain the blessing, they must believe. **Fullness:** Paul is not here discussing a supposed number of Jews who might be obedient to the gospel in the future. Emphasis is on evidence of faith and the blessedness of those who would turn to God by faith. Their evidence of faith would be identified by their obedience to the gospel. Paul assumes that there are still more in national Israel who will become obedient to the gospel. The Gentiles, therefore, must not reject those Jews of Israel who were still misled by legal religiosity. They must continue to plead with them until all who would believe and obey the gospel had a chance to do so. The fullness would come only when the last Jew who was disposed to obey the gospel had done so in response to the preaching of the gospel of grace.

**11:13,14** Paul has been directing these statements to the Gentiles lest they become puffed up and indifferent toward the Jews. The Gentiles should be rejoicing for any possibility that there are others among national Israel who might yet be obedient. **Apostle to the Gentiles:** Paul was called specifically for the reason of taking the gospel to the Gentiles (See At 9:15; Gl 1:16; Ep 3:2,3,8; 1 Tm 2:7). **Magnify my ministry:** Paul witnessed before the Jews that Jesus had personally called Him into apostleship and given him the ministry to the Gentiles (At 9:1-16; 22:6-11; 26:12-18). The divine sanction and commissioning of his ministry proved that God wanted the blessing of the promises to go to the Gentiles. He gave testimony to his personal calling by Jesus for the purpose of provoking some to obedience (1 Co 9:22; 1 Tm 4:16; Js 5:20).

**11:15** *Life from the dead:* Jews were cast off because

they had rejected the gospel (see vs 12). Nevertheless, they could still obey the gospel in order to be resurrected to newness of life (6:3-6). Once they obeyed the gospel they would transition out of spiritual death and into spiritual life (See Is 26:16-19). It is Paul's desire here that the Gentiles in Rome not become puffed up over the "casting off" of the Jews who were hardened. The belief and obedience of those who had and would obey the gospel should be an occasion for rejoicing.

**11:16 *The firstfruit:*** See Lv 23:10; Nm 16:17-21. National Israel was holy because she was separated from the nations of the world. The firstfruits were the patriarchs of national Israel. They were holy because of faith. The holiness of the descendants, therefore, was based on the holiness of the patriarchs. The descendants were blessed because of the establishment of Israel as a nation in the land of Canaan in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gn 12:1-3). In conjunction with this, the spiritual descendants of national Israel were blessed because of the obedience of the patriarchs who believed God.

**11:17 *Broken off:*** These were Jews who were cast off because of unbelief (Mt 8:11,12). ***A wild olive tree:*** By faith the Gentiles were grafted into the fatness of the olive tree of spiritual Israel (See At 2:39; Ep 2:11-22). ***Partaker of the root:*** The spiritual Israel was founded upon the faith of patriarchs as Abraham. When the Gentiles were grafted in by faith, they partook of the blessings of the promises to the fathers (See comments Gl 3:6-9,26-29).

**11:18 *Do not boast:*** The Gentile brethren must not become arrogant against those Jews who were broken off because of unbelief (1 Co 10:12; see Is 2:2ff; Jn 4:22). They too could be cut off if their arrogance led them to trust in themselves. ***You do not support the root:*** The Gentiles were grafted in because of the fulfillment of the promises that were made to the fathers of Israel. Therefore, because

of the faithfulness of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the root was strong by faith in order to bring about the olive tree of Israel. From Israel came the Messiah and fulfillment of the promises. By their faith in the Messiah, the Gentiles were grafted into the olive tree.

**11:19,20** Paul here assumes what the Gentiles might be thinking concerning the unbelief of Israel. They might assume that God planned the unbelief of Israel in order that the Gentiles be grafted in. God did not cause the Jews to stumble over the fulfillment of the promises. Jesus was a stumbling block to them because they were trapped in their own legal system of righteousness (See comments Mk 7:1-9). They were blinded to truth because of the hardness of their hearts. Therefore, they were lost because of their own choice to reject Jesus. Since the Gentiles were grafted in because of their faith, they must not boast lest they be broken off if they fall into unbelief. They were not once saved, always saved. They were grafted in, but they stood by faith in the grace of God, not by their meritorious works. There is thus no room for a haughty spirit on the part of the Gentiles whose relationship with God was based on grace, not their meritorious works.

**11:21** But if God did not spare those of Israel who had a knowledge of the one true God, but sought justification according to their own righteousness, then He will not spare the wild branches (the Gentiles) if they fall into unbelief by trusting in their own meritorious deeds. It was by faith that the Gentiles reaped the blessings of God's goodness. It was by unbelief that the natural branches were cut off (See Jn 15:2).

**11:22** *If you continue:* The security of the believer is conditional. It is conditioned on the fact that he continue in obedient faith (See comments 1 Co 15:1,2; Hb 3:6,14). Because of unbelief, national Israel was going to reap the severe judgment of God. Their judgment in time would be

the destruction of national Israel (See comments Mt 24). On the other hand, the Gentiles reaped the goodness of God by obedient faith.

**11:23 *If they do not continue in unbelief:*** The Gentiles were grafted in by obedient faith to the gospel (6:3-6). If there are those of Israel who come to their senses that Jesus is the Messiah, then they can be grafted in again to the spiritual Israel of God. God will graft them in if they will only believe in Jesus and obey the gospel.

**11:24** The believing Gentiles came out of the idolatrous religions that they had created after their own desires. They were once of those who did not have a knowledge of the true and living God. The conversion of the Gentiles was as the conversion of the Thessalonians. It was reported how they “*turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ...*” (1 Th 1:9). The Gentiles had previously “*walked according to the ways of this world ...*” (Ep 2:2). They were not, therefore, of the spiritual heritage of Israel who had a knowledge of the true God. They were truly wild olive branches. Nevertheless, God grafted them into the heritage of spiritual Israel because of their faith in Jesus and obedience to His death, burial and resurrection (6:3-6). ***How much more:*** If the wild olive branches of the Gentiles were grafted into the spiritual community of God by faith, then surely God would graft in those of national Israel who through faith respond to the gospel.

**11:25 *This mystery:*** Paul now concludes the argument against those who feel that God has not fulfilled his promises in reference to Israel. He also wants to correct those Gentiles who may have become somewhat spiritually arrogant because of the casting off of the Israel that did not believe and obey. It was true that the majority of national Israel did not believe. They rejected Jesus. However, the spiritual remnant (vss 5,7), about which God has always been concerned, eagerly received Jesus. They, with the

Gentiles who also believed, are now the true Israel of God. ***Blindness in part has happened to Israel:*** There was that part of national Israel that was blinded because of the gospel (2 Co 3:14). They fell because of unbelief in Jesus. ***Until:*** This word must not be understood in the sense of something that is terminated, and then from the time of termination something else started. Emphasis is on the continuation of something that is parallel with the occurrence of another process or happening (See the use of the word in 5:13; 8:22; Gn 8:5; 46:34; Jn 5:17). In this case the process that is continuing is the conversion of the Gentiles as a result of the preaching of the gospel. This process was happening even as Paul wrote. However, in conjunction with this, there were also Jews being converted as a result of the preaching of the gospel. Both Jews and Gentiles were being simultaneously evangelized and grafted in by the preaching of the gospel. ***Fullness of the Gentiles:*** This would be the grafting in of all those who were disposed unto obedience to the gospel (See vs 12). Reference is not to a specific number of Gentiles. Emphasis is on the conversion of all those who would obey if they had the opportunity to hear the gospel (See comments At 18:8,9). We cannot dispel the thought that Paul had in mind the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as a sign of God's judgment on national Israel. In view of the fact that this event was to happen in about a decade from the time of writing this epistle, Paul knew the event was drawing near. His last trip to Jerusalem in Acts 21 was an effort to reach out to national Israel because he knew that national tragedy was coming (See 9:1-3; 10:1). Once the destruction occurred, everyone could see that God had rejected national Israel in order to focus on the spiritual Israel of God (See comments Mt 13:36-46; 21:33-46).

**11:26 *And so all Israel will be saved:*** If this statement is understood in its historical context, then there is no diffi-

culty in understanding what Paul is saying. Consider the historical work of the early evangelists in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. We must keep in mind this time of ministry and the destruction of Jerusalem as we understand what Paul is writing here in reference to Israel. When Jesus began His ministry, there also began the hardening of Israel. The Jewish religious leaders hardened themselves against Jesus being their Messiah, and thus being the Savior of the world. Their hardening was at its peak at the time of the cross, for it was the Jewish religious leaders who put Jesus on the cross. Beginning from the conversion of those who were Israel by faith in Acts 2, the gospel went out to all the Roman Empire (At 8:4). The early evangelists went to the synagogues, but were rejected by those Jews who were trapped in the legal religion of national Israel (See comments Mk 7:1-9; Gl 1:13,14). The evangelists, therefore, turned to the Gentiles, though they did not forget their ministry to Israel (See At 13:46; 18:6). The Jews' rejection of the gospel, therefore, motivated the evangelists to go to receptive Gentiles. However, in the mind of every evangelist was the prophecy of Jesus that national Israel was headed for consummation (See comments Mt 21:33-44; 24). Throughout the writings of the New Testament this warning is in the thinking of the inspired writers (See comments Js 5:7,8; 2 Pt 3; Jd 14,15). The consummation of national Israel would be God's last sign to Israel that they turn to Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, from the time of the establishment of the church in A.D. 30, until the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70, preaching was continuing throughout the Gentile world. When the destruction of Jerusalem came, many Jews throughout the Roman Empire were shocked into realizing that God had brought down judgment on national Israel (See comments Mt 24:30). As a result, all those who were of the spiritual Israel, and thus inclined to obedience to the

gospel, were grafted into the community of God through their obedience to the gospel. Therefore, Paul uses the phrase “and so” as a reference, not to a national conversion of national Israel. He refers to a conversion of Jews in the same manner that the Gentiles were converted, that is, through obedience of the gospel. He proceeds to explain this in his closing arguments of this point. ***The Deliverer:*** At the time Paul wrote to the Romans, the Deliverer had already come (Ps 14:7; Is 59:20,21). Jesus, as the Deliverer of Israel, came out of Israel. He came to deliver men from their sin problem and physical death problem (6:3-6).

**11:27** God established a new covenant with those who were delivered out of sin and death (See Is 27:9; Jr 31:31-34). This is the New Testament covenant that is established with those who obey the gospel (Hb 8:6; 9:16,17). These things had already taken place by the time Paul wrote this letter to the Romans. Those who would desire to come into a covenant relationship with God must obey the gospel. Only in this way will any of physical Israel be saved.

**11:28 *Enemies for your sake:*** The Jews who were hardened against Jesus, put Him on the cross. However, what they did not know at the time was that they worked in a way to bring about the fulfillment of the promises. Their rejection of the gospel encouraged the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles (At 13:46; 18:6). ***The elect:*** The obedient remnant is beloved because of God’s promise to the fathers. The promise was that through the fathers’ seed the Redeemer would be brought into the world (See vss 5,7; 9:10-13).

**11:29,30 *Irrevocable:*** What God had promised would come to pass. All the promises that God made to the fathers concerning the Deliverer came to pass in Jesus (See comments 2 Co 1:20). Before the coming of Jesus, the Gentiles had a spirit of disobedience (See Ep 2:2; Cl 3:7). The spiritual remnant of Israel was obedient. However, after the cross

this has reversed. The Gentiles became obedient to the gospel and the Jews generally became disobedient.

**11:31** *They may also obtain mercy:* In this verse Paul refers us back to the good that came from Israel's disobedience that he explained in verses 11-15. If the once disobedient Gentiles received God's mercy as a result of the Jews' rejection of the gospel, then Paul is affirming that the present disobedient Jews will receive God's mercy as a result of the mercy that the Gentiles are now enjoying.

**11:32** *Committed ... to disobedience:* It is not that God had predestined them to disobedience. God has pronounced that all men are disobedient simply because all men sin (3:9,10,23). Those Jews who rejected the gospel are committed to disobedience because they are a part of all those who have sinned against God. However, the fact that all have sinned presents the occasion for God to show mercy on all those who would obey the gospel of grace that He has revealed through Jesus (Ep 2:4-9; Ti 2:11).

**11:33** Paul concludes this marvelous section of inspired Scripture concerning the grace of God with a praise to God (See Ps 36:6; 92:5; Jb 11:7; 15:8; 35:7; 36:22; Is 40:13; Jr 23:18). God's grace to save both Jew and Gentile through grace is beyond the invention of men to create such a theology. The concept that God so loved the world that He gave His Son as a love offering for the salvation of all is not of the nature of religions that are created after the fleshly desires of men (See Jn 3:16). Evidence of the divine origin of Christianity is in the fact that the very nature of Christianity—mercy and grace—is contrary to the nature of those who are motivated by religious systems of meritorious performances and ceremonies. God's ways are unsearchable by man because He does not deal with men after the nature of the flesh. He does not deal with man after the nature by which men often deal unmercifully with one another in man-made religions.

**11:34,35** Paul's affirmation is that no man can know the mind of God. No finite mind of this world can comprehend the infinite mind of God. Concerning the mystery of God that He has revealed in the previous discussions, such could not be known by the imaginative minds of religious men who are controlled by the flesh. If Paul, Peter, John and the other apostles could have worked out the plan of God according to the religious mental powers of men alone, then there would be no need for the work of God in these matters nor the writing of this book. Paul's claim here is that men could not work out this plan of God to save both Jew and Gentile by grace. The religious leaders had not accomplished the reconciliation of all men into one body since the establishment of the nation of Israel. They would have never worked it out by their own religious invention. Only by the work of God could such have been accomplished (See comments Ep 2:11-18). In fact, men would not have known the significance of the cross unless God had revealed that Jesus' death was for the atonement of the sins of all men (See comments 1 Co 2:10-13). The gospel was the revelation of grace of God through which He sought to save those whom He created.

**11:36** All things that exist originated from God (Cl 1:16; see 1 Co 8:6; 11:12; Hb 2:10). Nothing that now exists is indigenous of itself in existence (Hb 1:3). Nothing is eternal in existence separate from God. All things that now exist are for His purpose. They remain in existence because of His power. The totality of our existence and the purpose of all things is being directed toward God's ends. It is to Him, therefore, that all glory must go.

### **The Result Of Redemption**

**(12:1 – 15:13)**

**Outline:** (1) Grace promotes the new life (12:1-21), (2) The Christian and the state (13:1-7), (3) Love in action (13:8-14), (4) Considering one another in love (14:1-13), (5) Considering your brother (14:14-23), (6) Considering others (15:1-13)

## Chapter 12

### GRACE PROMOTES THE NEW LIFE

**12:1 *I urge you:*** In view of the fact that God's grace was poured out for our salvation, our natural response is to obediently comply with the directions of the One who has offered the grace. Therefore, Paul pleads with the Roman Christians to now be motivated to respond to all that God has done (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15; 10:1). His plea is that they give themselves totally to the One who gave His only begotten Son to them (Mt 22:37). ***Present your bodies a living sacrifice:*** Such is the natural response of the spiritually-minded individual who has come to know and appreciate the grace of God. As the Levitical law called for the total consumption of the burnt offering for sin upon the altar of sacrifice, so must Christians give their lives totally to God (See Mk 12:30; Lk 9:23; 14:25-35; see comments Rm 6:3-6; Gl 2:20). Sacrifice refers to offering. The disciple of Jesus has given his body as an offering to God because of what God has done for him. ***Your reasonable service:*** Some translations read "reasonable worship." It is only reasonable to respond with worship to God for His grace that was manifested through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. We should offer our lives in sacrificial worship and service to Him (See 1 Pt 2:5,9). Those who have not given their lives totally to God have not appreciated the grace of God by which He totally gave His Son for them. If because of His grace God was willing to offer His Son, who was eternal in heaven, then certainly it is not unreasonable that we give to Him the totality of our short life on earth. It is the mind of the flesh to believe that one can work in order to earn heaven on the merit of our performance of law or good works. It is also the mind of the flesh to reason that one can give anything less than the totality of his life and still believe that God's grace will reward him for his lukewarm commitment (See Mt 6:24; Rv 3:15,16).

**12:2 *Be transformed by the renewing of your mind:*** The committed mind is directed by purposes that are higher than the material world and the ambitions of the selfishly driven individual (Ep 4:23; Cl 3:1-3). The thinking of the Christian is to be on those things that will last beyond the existence of this world. Therefore, he is not to engage his thinking in those things that would divert his life from the eternal purposes of God (See Mt 6:24; 13:22; Gl 1:4; Js 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15). The disciples must not center his thoughts and actions around those things that pertain to the desires of the world (Ep 4:23; Ti 3:5). The mind of the sacrificed individual is different from the mind of the one who is consumed by the things of this world.

**12:3** Beginning with this verse, Paul describes the behavioral characteristics of the transformed life that has been sacrificed to God. He explains the identity of the Christian who has truly allowed the grace of God to work in his life in order to motivate him to present his body a living worship to God. ***Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think:*** Disciples must not be conceited or puffed up (11:20; Pv 25:27). ***Think soberly:*** Disciples must be mature in their thinking and behavior (1 Co 10:12). They must conduct themselves in a sober manner in life and worship. ***Measure of faith:*** Reference is not to faith in God, but to the ministries he is about to present. God has dealt to every person abilities they must activate in order to minister to God through the ministry of others.

**12:4 *All members do not have the same function:*** It is contrary to the nature of God's gift of ministries to conform every member to the same ministry. Not everyone has the same natural abilities. Wise leadership encourages members to discover their abilities in order to use them in service to others as members of the body of Christ (See 1 Co 12:12-14; Ep 4:4-16). In our examination of the gifts and ministries, we discover that all refer to the identity of

the organic function of the body. The church is not identified by her assemblies, but by the relational activity of the members. In the context of the ministries he herein defines, Paul defines the church as an active organism that participates in the lives of one another (See comments Ep 4:1-16).

**12:5 *We ... are one body in Christ:*** Note that Paul uses the pronoun “we” in this and other contexts when discussing the global body of Christ. He was personally in Macedonia or Achaia when he wrote this letter to disciples who were in Rome. Nevertheless, all disciples, regardless of where they are in the world, are the one body of Christ. The body is not denominated into separate autonomous assemblies that have nothing to do with one another. The body is one. The members of the body throughout the world are all members of the one organism of Christ. The unity of the members, therefore, is assumed because of the submission of every member to the one Lord (See 1 Co 10:17; 12:12-27; Ep 4:16). Though members have different abilities, or live in different places, the abilities of all members work in a worldwide unity as the functioning body of Christ. The members not only work in unity within their local communities, but also globally. What is assumed in this context concerning membership of the church is that membership is not with a local assembly. Membership is with the global body of Christ with Jesus as the universal head. When the members thus concentrate on their membership in the universal body of Christ, then they enjoy the blessing of fellowship that they have with all the members of the body throughout the world.

**12:6** Since all the gifts originated from God, whether miraculous or not, then they must be used according to the will of God. ***Prophecy:*** In the 1<sup>st</sup> century this miraculous gift referred specifically to inspired preaching, teaching, singing and prayer (See At 13:1; 21:10; 1 Co 14:3). There

were those among the Roman disciples who spoke by the direction of the Holy Spirit. These would have received this miraculous gift by the laying on of the apostles' hands when some of them visited Jerusalem during one or more of the Passover/Pentecost feasts after A.D. 30. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem for several years after the establishment of the church in Acts 2 in order to teach and impart gifts to those who traveled to Jerusalem for the annual Passover/Pentecost feast (See comments At 8:18). It was Paul's desire to travel to Rome in order that he might impart to them more miraculous gifts (1:11). We must assume, therefore, that the Roman disciples, as well as all other disciples of the 1<sup>st</sup> century who had come into contact with a Christ-sent apostle, also had the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. It was the content of the prophecy that was inspired by the Spirit. One might have the natural gift to teach, but he would not know what to teach unless directed by the Spirit.

**12:7 Ministry:** There are those who have the special gift of ministry to the needs of others. A compassionate and patient heart is needed for the work of gently caring for the needs of others (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16). **Teaching:** There are those who have the ability to clearly explain the word of God to others. Though all Christians can teach in some capacity, there are those who have a special gift of conveying thoughts of God's revelation to others (See 1 Co 12:28; Ep 4:11-16). In the 1<sup>st</sup> century context, the teacher was given, through the laying on of the apostles' hands, that which was to be taught.

**12:8 Exhortation:** This is the gift of being able to build up the body through by speaking God's word (At 15:32). **He who gives:** There are those who have the ability to earn and give money for the work of the church in benevolence and evangelism (See 3 Jn 1-8). **Leads:** There are those Christians who have the ability to direct men according to what God would have the disciples do. One would have

the natural gift to lead, but the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands, would direct what to do in leading.

**Mercy:** There are special people who have the emotional disposition and personality skills to minister to those who are suffering heartache. These special disciples of understanding bring comfort to those who are in times of physical or emotional need.

**12:9 Love:** Disciples that give the pretense of love are only hypocritical in their legal actions of performing their duties. However, sincere love of the heart should be the motivation for the exercising of our ministries to one another (See 1 Co 13; Ph 2:2,3; Cl 3:12-14; Hb 13:1; 1 Jn 4:19).

**Abhor what is evil:** Christians should not allow the evil of the culture in which they live to desensitize their view of that which is evil (2 Co 6:6; 1 Tm 1:5). They should not allow evil to become commonplace. If evil becomes accepted in their thinking, they will not abhor it as evil (Ps 34:14). **Cling to what is good:** When it comes to determining what to do, Christians should do right according to the directions of God's word. Regardless of the cost, one must do that which is right in the eyes of God.

**12:10 Kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love:** Brethren must deal gently with one another. Harsh words or actions have no place in the fellowship of brothers and sisters in their interpersonal relationships as the family of God (See Jn 13:34; Cl 3:12-17; 1 Th 4:9; Hb 13:1; 2 Pt 1:7). **Preferring one another:** It is the nature of the spirit of Christianity to exalt one's brother above himself (See 13:7; Ph 2:3; 1 Pt 2:17). Christians are not to harbor a spirit of selfish ambition in order to compete with one another. They should seek to encourage their brothers by putting them first.

**12:11 Not lagging behind in diligence:** There should be no such thing as a lazy Christian (See comments 2 Th 3:6-12). Throughout these instructions that Paul gives, he

is setting forth behavioral patterns of life that should characterize every disciple. In reference to this particular personality characteristic, Paul seeks to direct Christians never to lack in zeal in their work for others on behalf of the Lord (See comments Ep 2:10; 6:5-9). ***Fervent in spirit:*** The disciples of Jesus must be known for being diligent workers. When one has a zealous spirit within, he will manifest active service for the Lord. But we must not limit this character of spirit to those things we would call service to the Lord. Christians must be characterized by a working spirit. Inactive Christians have not discovered the responsibility of the child of God to be a productive citizen of society (2 Co 4:15). It is the Holy Spirit's purpose in these direct words of Paul to remind all who would call themselves after Christ that they have a responsibility to maintain an active life insofar as they are physically capable (Ti 3:8).

**12:12 *Rejoicing in hope:*** Because of their hope, disciples have every reason to rejoice (Lk 10:20; Ph 4:4; Hb 6:19; Js 1:2,3). Pessimistic and fatalistic attitudes should not be characteristic of the disciples of Jesus. The transformed mind must change from such negative attitudes of life. ***Persevering in tribulation:*** In times of trial, Christians are not to be pessimistic or fatalistic. They endure trials because they know that all things are working together for good (8:28; Lk 21:19). ***Steadfastly in prayer:*** It is the nature of the spiritual life to maintain communication with God (Lk 18:1; 1 Th 5:17). Christians should not allow themselves to be trapped in circumstances or mental attitudes that would hinder their communication with God (See Ph 4:9).

**12:13 *Contributing to the needs of the saints:*** Christians must be diligent in helping those of the brotherhood who are in need (Gl 6:10; see At 2:44,45; 4:32-37; 1 Co 16:1,2; Hb 13:16; 1 Pt 4:9). It is the responsibility of every Christian to work in order to provide for his own necessi-

ties (2 Th 3:6-15). However, there are times when circumstances take away the opportunity for brethren to supply their own needs. In these times brethren work together in order to make sure everyone's needs are filled. **Given to hospitality:** Christians take care of one another. They are diligent to welcome the brothers into their homes for mutual fellowship and spiritual growth (Mt 25:35; 1 Tm 3:2; see comments 3 Jn 1-8).

**12:14,15 Bless and do not curse:** It is not the business of Christians to retaliate against those who either wrong them or persecute them (Mt 5:10-12,44; Lk 6:28; 1 Co 4:12). It is not in the nature of the God-loving disciple to speak against his fellow disciple. **Rejoice ... weep:** Christians maintain brotherhood in times of rejoicing and sorrow. When a brother rejoices, others rejoice with him. However, when a brother mourns, the rest of the saints are there for his comfort (1 Co 12:26).

**12:16 Of the same mind:** The saints are to live in harmony with one another (15:5; 1 Co 1:10; 2 Co 13:11; Ph 2:2; 4:2; 1 Pt 3:8). They are to work to maintain peace among themselves as the community of God (See comments Ti 3:9-11). **Do not set your mind on high things:** The goals of the Christian should not be the possession of the things of the world lest the things of the world possess them (See Jr 45:5; 1 Tm 6:17-19). It should not be the disciples' goal to fulfill the pride of life by seeking recognition. A Christian should never think himself to be too good to be with those who are poor in the things of this world. Neither should he think that he is in any social status above the most humble in society. God is no respecter of persons. Those who would be godly must not assume a character of arrogance that would separate them from any person. **Be not wise in your own opinion:** A disciple should not be conceited (See 11:25; Pv 3:7; 1 Co 10:12). Those who exalt themselves in their own minds have deceived them-

selves into believing that they are something which they are not. Such attitudes always lead to one's inability to relate with other people.

**12:17-19 *Repay to no one evil for evil:*** No Christian should seek to get even with someone who has wronged him. It is not the place of any Christian to seek revenge (See Mt 5:39; 1 Pt 3:9). ***Provide things honest:*** The Christian should always do that which is right in his dealings with all men. He should conduct all aspects of his life in an honorable and honest manner (See 2 Co 4:2; 8:21; 1 Tm 3:7). ***Live peaceably with all men:*** In times of strife, the Christian should be the one who is working for peace (Mt 5:9; Hb 12:14; Js 3:17). Paul instructs that if it is at all possible, Christians should make every effort to be at peace with all men, though some unbelievers will not always allow this to be done. ***Do not take revenge:*** Revenge is not the work or behavior of the Christian. Revenge of those who have wronged the innocent is the work of God (See Lv 19:18; Dt 32:35; Ps 94:1; 1 Th 4:6; Hb 10:30).

**12:20,21 *Heap coals of fire on his head:*** Paul is not here speaking of revenge. He is talking about returning good for evil (Pv 25:21,22). Paul's illustration comes from one giving hot coals to his neighbor in order that his neighbor start his cooking fire. The practice was to do a good deed to one's neighbor though the neighbor might be unloving. What we are tempted to do is the opposite. In the world, people are taught to seek revenge. But Christians are to behave differently. When they are wronged by their enemies, they repay with good (See 1 Pt 4:12-16). The good they do is not determined by the evil behavior of others toward them. Such a reaction to evil will surely stir remorse in the heart of the evil, or at least embarrassment on the part of the enemies of the Christian. If Christians seek to retaliate, they will only engender more strife (See comments Gl 5:22-26).

## Chapter 13

### THE CHRISTIAN AND THE STATE

Paul knew that the disciples in Rome were in what would become the seat of persecution against the church. He wrote this letter between A.D. 56 and 59. He knew that the persecution of the Roman state was not far in the future. During the early 60s, Nero launched a personal vendetta against Christians. At the end of the century, the Roman state rose up against the saints of God with an effort to try them for treason, and subsequently, send many to their death (See intro. to Rv). It is not without purpose, therefore, that Paul wrote these words to the Romans concerning the Christian's relationship with civil government.

**13:1 *Be subject to the governing authorities:*** Every individual, including the Christian, must submit to civil government, insofar as government does not demand obedience to laws that contradict the laws of God (See Dn 2:21; At 5:29). When a civil government works against the principles of God, then the Christian is not obligated to submit to that which will cause him to lose his soul. However, the Christian must submit to civil government, for it is God who has ordained that civil government exist among men in order to prevent anarchy (See Ti 3:1; 1 Pt 3:13-17). God has instituted that civil government exist. He is not to be blamed for the evil actions of any one specific government. Governments often go wrong because they are sometimes controlled by wicked men who have no concern for God or the people. In this context, Paul certainly has in mind those governments that are of the moral structure that recognize and uphold good, and at the same time, condemn evil.

**13:2 *Whoever resists:*** Those who would resist civil government are actually resisting God who instituted government to exist in order to maintain order in society. The fact that rulers of civil government become corrupt and wicked does not invalidate the necessity of civil govern-

ment and one's obedience to the laws of the land. Civil government exists for the purpose of keeping wicked men under control. Civil government is good for the Christian because it maintains order and control of society. The Christian is protected from having to live in a society of anarchy. In an ordered society, Christians can carry on with their work of evangelism.

**13:3,4 *Do what is good:*** The Christian's responsibility as a citizen is to do that which is good in society and right in reference to the law of the government (See Gl 6:10; Ep 2:10). Christians should never be known for willingly violating law that does not conflict with the principles of God. Christians should be known for being model citizens. ***He is the minister of God to you for good:*** Paul personifies government as the one who exercises order by punishment of those who disobey the law of the land. In such environments of order, Christians are able to go about doing their work of influencing others for good and God. Therefore, in reference to good government, the wicked should be in fear and the righteous thankful for the control the government exercises over the wicked.

**13:5-7** Fear of punishment is a motive for stimulating obedience to civil government (Ec 8:2). Knowing that one is doing God's will is another reason for submission (1 Pt 2:13). Those who submit to government are doing the will of God (See At 24:16; 1 Pt 2:13,19). ***Render to all their dues:*** Civil government serves the purpose of preventing anarchy in society. Therefore, when Christians pay their taxes they are benefitting from a governed society that suppresses the evil of wicked men (Mt 22:21; Lk 20:25). We might assume that some of the Jewish brethren were having difficulty in paying taxes to what they considered a foreign government. All the laws of the Sinai law were given in reference to Israel being an independent theocratic nation in its own land. But now they were an occupied nation

in the land of Palestine. They were subject to paying taxes in the land that God had given them to be an independent nation. This certainly did not set well with some of the more conservative Jews. Nevertheless, since the days of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. to the Babylonians, the Israelites never again enjoyed freedom in their own land as they did before their apostasy and final captivity in 586 B.C. From the time of the Babylonians to the time Paul wrote these words, Palestine had been an occupied land by foreign powers. **Render ... tax:** Paul is saying here that Christians should be good citizens. They should fulfill their civic duties in order to reap the benefit of government.

### LOVE IN ACTION

**13:8** Verses 8-10 discuss the foundation upon which Christian behavior rests. All interpersonal relationships and actions that have been discussed in chapters 12 and 13 to this point find their source of motivation in the principle, *"You will love your neighbor as yourself"* (vs 9; see comments Gl 5:14,22-26). One loves his neighbor as himself because God first loved him (1 Jn 4:19). Love is the motivation of Christian behavior, and thus, it is the glue that binds the fellowship of the disciples (See Mt 7:12; 22:39; Jn 13:34; 1 Tm 1:5; Js 2:8). **Owe no man anything, except to love one another:** The Christian should pay for the things he receives. He should not expect a handout, but should give due payment to those who render either things or service to him (Compare Pl 17,18). The Christian should not put himself in the position of not being able to repay what he owes another person. **He who loves ... has fulfilled the law:** The one who loves does not view the law as a legal set of rules one accomplishes in order to relieve himself from further obligations. The one who loves his neighbor as himself will go far beyond what is stated by the requirements of law. Therefore, in carrying out the principle of

loving one's neighbor as himself, he will do what the law requires, but go beyond the requirements of law. Jesus said, "*And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two*" (Mt 5:41). A Roman soldier could compel a citizen to carry his armor for one mile. The citizen was obligated according to law to do such. However, love compels the citizen to go beyond the requirement of law. James stated that pure religion is "*take care of orphans and widows in their affliction ...*" (Js 1:27). The principle of law is to care for orphans and widows. However, James does not specify how we are to take care of orphans and widows. He knows that "loving one's neighbor as himself" will take care of the specifics. Love fulfills law in that it takes one beyond law (See comments 1 Tm 1:9).

**13:9** In reference to the revealed law of God, Paul here states those statutes of the ten commandments that give principles that have always been in existence since the creation of the first two people (Ex 20:13-17; Dt 5:17-21; Mt 19:18). One should keep these laws in reference to our interpersonal relationships with one another. However, love will carry one beyond the limitations of law. ***Any other commandment:*** Paul could have listed an infinite number of commandments that would regulate our behavior with one another. We could keep all the commandments, but still be limited in our relational behavior with our neighbor. Love always goes beyond a list of commandments. Commandments limit; love expands. Commandments restrict; love frees. Commandments lead us to believe how little we can do; love opens the door to unlimited possibilities. For this reason Paul said, "*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, 'You will love your neighbor as yourself'*" (Gl 5:14). Love of God is the first commandment because if we love God we will keep His commandments (Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 5:3). The second commandment is to love one's neighbor as himself (See comments Mt 22:37-

40; Mk 12:29-32). Therefore, our vertical relationship with God is established on the foundation of love. Our horizontal relationship with our fellow man is established on love. The principle of love permeates and identifies the very nature of Christianity (See comments 1 Co 13). This principle separates Christianity from a host of false religions that have been developed throughout history. It is in this way that we identify the truth among men. John wrote, "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*" (1 Jn 4:7,8). This is the principle by which one can determine both the true God and those who serve Him. This is the new commandment of Jesus by which His disciples are identified (See comments Jn 13:34,35). Any faith that does not maintain this principle cannot be the true faith that has originated from a God who is love. The Sinai law affirmed that we love others as we love ourselves. However, Jesus gave an example of unconditional love. We are to love the unlovely as He loved us when we were unlovely (5:8).

**13:10 *Love works no harm toward his neighbor:*** A code of laws could never list all the restrictions that one should not do in reference to harming his neighbor. If one were restricted by a list of laws that prevented him from harming his neighbor, then the Bible would be an encyclopedia of rules and regulations that we should not do in order not to harm our neighbor. If one guided his relationship with his neighbor on the basis of a list of preventative laws, then one might reason that he could harm his neighbor in those areas where no preventative law is mentioned. But the principles with which God deals in law with man are not according to such a system of legal statutes. The principle of loving one's neighbor as himself takes care of all that is necessary for one to behave in order not to harm his neighbor. The principle to love as Jesus loved us takes

care of all those things we should do for our neighbor even though he does not respond to our love. Therefore, when one behaves in a loving manner toward his neighbor, at least he does the requirements of law. But he does more. Love always takes one beyond the requirements of law.

**13:11 *Our salvation is nearer:*** It is not probable that Paul is here speaking of an imminent return of Jesus in His final coming in the lifetime of the Romans. The Holy Spirit did not deceive the first readers of the inspired documents of the New Testament to believe that Jesus was coming in His final coming in their lifetime. However, there are several statements in New Testament Scripture concerning the coming of Jesus in time in judgment on those who persecuted the saints of God (See comments Mt 24; Lk 21; Js 5:7,8; Jd 14,15; intro. to Rv). When God comes in judgment on the wicked, it is deliverance for the righteous. And thus, in this text, Paul was probably referring to an in-time deliverance of the saints. There are two possibilities of interpretation concerning their salvation from persecution that was in the near future. The first referred to the persecution of Nero, Caesar of Rome, who had launched a personal assault against the Christian community in Rome. Nero would eventually commit suicide in A.D. 68, and thus, his persecution of the disciples in the area of Rome would be terminated. The second coming in judgment would be relief from Jewish persecution that would come with the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70. Nero had unleashed persecution against Christians about thirty years after the establishment of the church. However, the Jewish religious leaders had done such since the establishment of the church. Both the death of Nero and destruction of national Israel would happen within two years of one another and about a decade after the writing of the letter to the Roman Christians.

**13:12 *The day is at hand:*** “At hand” refers to that

which is near (See comments Js 5:7,8). The night of persecution was about to dawn to a new day of relief from persecution. Once the day had come, the church would have a great opportunity for world evangelism in the social atmosphere of peace. It would be a time to take every opportunity to bring more into the fold of hope. ***Cast off the works of darkness:*** Disciples must lay aside any sin that hinders their efforts to live a godly life (See comments Hb 12:1). It is sin that hinders our Christian witness to the world (2 Co 6:7; 10:4; Ep 6:11,13; 1 Th 4:8). Not only is the light of our Christian behavior darkened by sin, but also our outreach to others through preaching and teaching the gospel (Ep 5:11). The Roman Christians must awake in their Christian responsibilities to the opportunity that is before them (Mk 13:37; 1 Co 15:34; 2 Co 6:1,2; Ep 5:14; 1 Th 5:6). ***Armor of light:*** They must put on the whole armor of God in order to launch their battle against the forces of darkness (See comments Ep 6:13-17).

**13:13 *Let us walk honestly:*** The Christian should conduct his life in a manner that would not bring shame to the name of Jesus if everyone knew all his dealings (Ph 1:27; Ti 2:1). For this reason, Christians must conduct themselves honestly in all things (Ph 4:8). Those who walk properly will not involve themselves in revelry, drunkenness, lewdness, lust, strife, envy and a host of other sins that are after the flesh and harmful in society when practiced (See 1 Co 6:9; Gl 5:19-21).

**13:14 *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ:*** When one is baptized he puts on Christ (Gl 3:26,27; see Jb 29:14; Ep 4:24; Cl 3:10,12). He puts on Christ who is the Christian's Savior through His blood. Paul urges them not to allow their clothing of Jesus to slip off. Christians should continually keep on the righteous clothing of Jesus lest they be drawn away by the lusts of the flesh. When one is concentrating on being continually clothed with Christ, his mind is not

on the gratification of the flesh (Gl 6:16; 1 Pt 2:11). When one's mind is set on those things that are above, his mind is kept off those things that are on this earth (Cl 3:1,2). In keeping our minds on those things that are above, we keep our focus of life on Jesus.

## Chapter 14

### CONSIDERING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

In the discussion of this chapter Paul reveals how Christians are to interrelate with one another in matters of opinion. The "strong" in the context are those Christians who have spiritually grown to understand areas of liberty wherein they can act. They understand that they have liberty in those areas they formerly considered wrong because of past religious beliefs. In this context, the "strong" were probably those who had been Christians for four to six years. As the "strong" Corinthians, they were not encumbered with mental or emotional relics of past religious restrictions. The "weak" in the context are those who have been Christians for only a short time. These would not be those who had been Christians for many years. It is the weak whose conscience is troubled by participation in religious actions of their past out of which they had recently come in their conversion. Their past religious beliefs still controlled their consciences in regard to eating meat sacrificed to idols. Also, some of the Jewish brethren were possibly keeping certain Jewish feasts which the Gentile brethren would consider being an indication of returning to the Sinai law. It is in the context of these matters of opinion that Paul encourages the strong not to be inconsiderate of the weak. These were areas of nonessential beliefs that did not have reference to salvation, and thus, these were not areas over which division should ever exist. The stronger brethren must not despise the weak for their beliefs. At the same time, Paul charges the weak not to judge the strong of being liberal in

those areas where Christians have freedom. All must receive one another in a spirit of love.

**14:1** Keep in mind that in the following discussion, it is the weak brother who would be doctrinally wrong if he binds on the church his vegetarianism that is not a biblical issue. He is still growing out of past religious behavior that he practiced in an idolatrous religion. He has not grown to the point of understanding that eating meat is a freedom that Christians can enjoy. However, in the historical context here, eating of meat was connected with idolatrous sacrifices. Therefore, the weak brother could not eat meat without thinking of the idolatrous sacrifices out of which he had recently come. Nevertheless, in his mind he was binding where God had not bound. But in the context of the situation, his conscience must be nurtured until such a time that he grows out of the mental association of meats with idol worship. The context assumes, therefore, that there will be a time when he spiritually grows out of the restrictions of his past religious beliefs. All that is said in the context here, therefore, assumes this growth. **Receive:** It is the responsibility of the strong brother to accept the weak brother who is dealing with a problem concerning the eating of meat. In areas of opinion, brethren must receive one another. It is the specific responsibility of the strong brother to seek fellowship with those new converts who may still be emotionally and intellectually sensitive to the religious practices of their former life. In receiving the weak brother, however, Paul does not say that the vegetarian beliefs and practices of the weak brother are to be bound on the disciples. Paul is simply saying that the emotional and intellectual opinions of the weak brother must be respected (Compare Mk 7:19; At 10:14; 1 Co 8:8,9; 10:25,26; 1 Tm 4:1-5). In respecting the opinions of the weak brother in reference to the eating of meat, the stronger brethren must not create an environment in which the weak brother

is intimidated to act against his conscience. We must remind ourselves that the weak brother here is not one who had been a Christian for several years. The weak brother is the new convert. Older Christians who behave as weak Christians in binding those things that are not bound are contentious brethren who are warped and sinning (See comments Ti 3:9-11). **Disputable thoughts:** That over which there is dispute in this context does not refer to those things that are required for salvation. These are matters of opinion. And in such matters, the principle of loving one's brother as himself must be the foundation upon which decisions are made and fellowship is maintained.

**14:2 Eat all things:** It is the strong brother who believes that he can eat all meats. He has this freedom in Christ (See comments Gl 5:1,2). **Who is weak:** It is the new convert who has not yet been set free from the mental bondage of his past religious beliefs and practices. As a new Christian, he is in the process of growing out of past beliefs that kept him in bondage to religious beliefs that were created after the desires of men. As a new Christian, he is in a growing process. It is the responsibility of the stronger brother to lovingly nurture him to grow in order to disconnect his religious conscience from those things that have no religious significance.

**14:3** The strong brother who understands that there is no religious significance in meat, must not look down on the vegetarian brother who is still struggling with his religious past. On the other hand, the weak brother must not judge as liberal the strong brother because he is eating meat. In other words, the weak brother must not make vegetarianism a doctrine by which he judges others. One judges another only when something has been bound either by God or man. In this context, it is man who is binding, for the weak brother is trying to bind his vegetarianism on the strong brother. The weak brother must remember that God

has received the strong brother. When one is received by God, therefore, those who receive God must receive those whom God has received. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the strong brother to receive the weak brother. It is the responsibility of the weak brother to receive the strong brother. Because God has received both, there is no reason for either to reject fellowship with the other. God is the one who has determined the fellowship between the two brothers. It is only God who can break that fellowship. When brethren break fellowship with one another over areas that are matters of opinion, they are transgressing against the fellowship that God has established between the members of the one body (See comments Ti 3:9-11). Therefore, it is a serious matter to bind on the brethren nonessential beliefs that God has not bound, and to do so in a manner that destroys fellowship between brethren. In this context, the weak brother is binding something in the area of freedom where God has not bound. It is he who is in error if he would so bind his vegetarianism on the disciples in order to continue to judge and divide from the strong brother who has freedom in this area.

**14:4 *Who are you:*** The question is to the weak brother. It is he who is judging the strong brother in the area where the strong brother has freedom to eat. ***To his own master he stands or falls:*** The master of the strong brother is the Lord. He is accountable only to the Lord in reference to those things that deal with salvational matters. The strong brother, therefore, must not be intimidated into allowing nonessential matters of opinion to be bound on the disciples. He is to respect and consider the weak brother by not intimidating him to do that which is against his own conscience. However, Paul is not restricting the strong brother from eating meat. He can eat meat, but not in a manner or environment in which the weak brother is intimidated to eat. Paul's instructions in this context, therefore, are not

for the purpose of binding vegetarianism on the church. His instructions deal with guarding the liberty of the strong brother and the conscience of the weak brother. This is accomplished by both brethren regarding the rights of the other, especially the strong brother considering the situation of the weak brother who is only a new Christian. ***God is able to make him stand:*** The strong brother has the backing of God. When one refuses to bind where God has not bound, he is walking in the fear of the Lord. He is fearful of stealing away the lordship of Jesus by bringing people into subjection to his opinions. Those who bind where God has not bound are stealing the sheep from God, for they are bringing brethren into the bondage of their opinions. One stands before God by knowing what God has spoken in His word. Therefore, the strong stand on the fact that God has not bound vegetarianism on the church.

**14:5** The Jews became disciples with a cultural heritage of many feast days that had originally been instituted by God in the Sinai law (See Gl 3:8-11; Cl 2:16-19). We would also assume that there were possibly some Gentiles who honored various days of the year with religious significance. The feast days of both Jews and Gentiles were a part of their culture and past religious beliefs and heritage. ***Fully convinced in his own mind:*** Paul's emphasis here is not to violate one's conscience in the matter of feast days or the eating of meats. He is not stating that the honoring of one day over another was a requirement for salvation. It is thus not morally or religiously wrong for a Christian to honor a particular day of the year. This would even involve the honoring of a particular day in a religious context. Simply because one brother honors a particular day does not mean that he is binding such on any other brother. Paul emphasizes the principle of Christian liberty in these matters. The fact that brethren have the right to honor certain days above others throughout the year emphasizes the freedom all Chris-

tians have in Christ (Gl 5:1,2).

**14:6 *Observes it to the Lord:*** If a Jewish brother honors a particular feast day, he is free to do so “to the Lord.” If a Gentile brother does not want to honor the same day for the purpose that the Jewish brother does, then he has the freedom not to honor the day. If one brother eats meat, then to the Lord he can do such without the restrictions of the vegetarian brother. And if the vegetarian brother does not eat because eating meat troubles his conscience as a result of past religious beliefs that were attached to meat, then to the Lord he does not have to eat. One brother does not have the right to bind on another brother those things that are in the area of freedom. However, no brother has a right to intimidate another brother into doing that which is against his conscience.

**14:7 *None of us lives to himself:*** Though Christians are set free, they must control their freedom when it comes to doing those things that already affect their brothers. Christians live in community with one another, and thus they must be considerate of one another’s beliefs. In all these matters, Paul states a principle of consideration that must be honored. Because of the nature of the fellowship of the body, every member must be aware of the consciences of one another, and especially, the consciences of the weak (See comments Gl 6:1,2).

**14:8 *We are the Lord’s:*** Since we have been crucified with Christ, we are no longer our own (6:6; Gl 2:20). We are the Lord’s. Therefore, when dealing with matters of opinion, we must behave according to how the Lord would have us behave. We must submit our opinions to what the Lord would have us do in order to nurture and edify the flock of God.

**14:9 *That He might be Lord:*** Those who would divide the brethren in areas of their own opinions as here defined by Paul. They are stealing the right of Jesus to be the lord

over the sheep. When one enforces his opinion on the brethren, then he is subjecting the flock to his beliefs. He steals away the lordship of Jesus. He forgets that Jesus paid the price by sacrificing himself in order to bring all men together in one body under His headship (See comments Ep 2:11-18). Jesus' sacrifice gave Him the authority to be the judge of both those who are living in Christ and those who are dead in Christ (2 Co 5:15; see Mt 22:32; At 10:36). No man has a right to infringe on the authority of Jesus by setting himself up as a judge and lawgiver of the body that Jesus purchased with His own blood (At 20:28).

**14:10,11 *Do you judge your brother:*** Paul directs this question toward the weak brother who is judging the strong brother. The fact of his judging affirms that he believes the strong brother is not following the will of God. In his conversion to Christ, the weak brother had forsaken idolatry and anything associated with it. He viewed the strong brother to be conforming to the religions from which he fled. The weak brother was thus allowing the beliefs of the idolatrous religions around him to influence his behavior and thinking as a Christian. ***Show contempt to your brother:*** This question is directed to the strong brother who was manifesting a lack of consideration for the beliefs and consciences of the newly converted weak brother. He showed contempt because he assumed that the weak brother should understand that there is nothing in meat or a particular feast day. ***We will all stand before the judgment seat of God:*** Those brethren who would seek to judge or show contempt for their fellow brethren must remember that Jesus is the Lord of all before whom we will give account (Mt 25:31; At 17:31; 2 Co 5:10; Ph 2:10,11). We are not the judge of one another in areas of opinions. Christ is the judge and it is before Him that all will stand in judgment.

**14:12** Since each man stands accountable before Jesus

on the basis of his own behavior in reference to the lordship of Jesus (Mt 12:36; 16:27; Gl 6:5; 1 Pt 4:5), then it is not the business of one brother to either despise or judge another brother in reference to “disputes over doubtful things” (vs 1).

**14:13** In view of our certain accountability before the Lord of all, brethren must cease judging one another. No Christian should exalt himself to the position of being the judge of his brother in areas of opinion. *No man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way:* In all matters, Christians should refrain from discouraging one another (1 Co 8:9). Their behavior with one another should be for the purpose of edifying and provoking one another unto love and good works (Hb 10:24,25).

### CONSIDERING YOUR BROTHER

**14:14,15** *There is nothing unclean of itself:* That which determines whether a food is either clean or unclean is not the food itself. It is whether the one who eats it has consciously determined whether it is clean or unclean in his mind. If a man eats and violates his conscience by thinking he is sinning against God, then it is wrong for him eat (See 1 Co 10:25). *No longer walking according to love:* It is a lack of love to encourage a weak brother to eat that which he has determined is unclean for him to eat (1 Co 8:11,12). Christians are responsible for the influence that their actions have on others if their actions encourage someone to violate his own conscience.

**14:16,17** If one eats in order to intimidate another brother to eat against his conscience, then one’s liberty to eat meat would be used for the wrong (12:17). Christians have been set free, but they have not been set free in order to walk without consideration of others. God’s kingdom does not exist in order for men to fulfill the lusts of the flesh through eating and drinking. The kingdom reign of Jesus in the hearts of men exists in order that the will of the Father be

done on earth as it is done in heaven (See comments Mt 6:9,10). In this way, the kingdom reign of Jesus promotes doing right, social peace and joy among men (See Jn 17:20,21).

**14:18 *He who ... serves Christ:*** It is the concern of the Christian to serve Christ and work in order to edify the body of Christ. If one is self-willed, he serves himself and does not consider his brother. The one who behaves out of brotherly love is acceptable to God because his behavior is after the nature of God. He is approved by men because he has put others before his own rights.

**14:19 *Follow ... peace:*** In all things Christians should work for peace among men, especially among brothers (12:18; Ps 34:14; 1 Co 7:15; 2 Tm 2:22; Hb 12:14). ***Edify another:*** It is the work of Christians to build one another up in the Lord (1 Co 14:12; 1 Th 5:11; Hb 10:24,25). If a brother behaves in a manner that does not promote these responsibilities toward his brother, then he is not walking in love. If he is walking in order to please himself, then he will sacrifice peace in order to get his own way. If he is concerned about his own way in all things, then he will not walk in order to edify his brother.

**14:20 *Do not destroy the work of God:*** One may have the freedom to eat all things. However, if eating meat encourages the weak brother to eat against his conscience, then the one who encourages the brother to act against his conscience has become a stumbling block to the work of God. It is the work of God to build up the weak. But if the weak are discouraged by a group that is not at peace among themselves, then those who are serving their own self-interests are working against God (See 1 Co 8:9-12).

**14:21** Though things in the area of opinion are right within themselves, it is wrong to do such things if the weak brother is encouraged to violate his own conscience (1 Co 8:13). Anything that leads a Christian brother to compro-

mise his conscience must be sacrificed in order that the weak brother grow. Since such things as eating meat are in the area of opinion, then neither the position of the strong brother nor weak brother are matters of doctrine. In these areas, therefore, love is the primary concern that must be maintained. It is assumed that the weak brother will grow in his knowledge that there is nothing in meat. Until that time, the strong brother must forego his rights in order not to discourage the weak brother (vss 14,15; 1 Co 10:27-29).

**14:22 *Have it to yourself before God:*** In the area of liberty, if one's conscience is not troubled by something that is a matter of opinion, then he must keep the practice of such between himself and God. Happy is the brother who considers his brother first before doing that which would cause his weak brother's conscience to be troubled.

**14:23** The weak brothers who still associate idol worship with the eating of meat, should not be intimidated to eat meat against their conscience. If they eat, then they sin. If they ignore their consciences, then they sin because they have compromised their faith by doing something they believe is wrong. To "eat from faith" is to eat without one's conscience being troubled. The strong brother must encourage the weak brother not to eat in a manner by which he would trouble his own conscience. He also has the responsibility to aid the weak brother in his growth in the knowledge of what the will of God is concerning such things (See comments 1 Tm 4:3,4).

## Chapter 15

### CONSIDERING OTHERS

**15:1 *Bear the weaknesses of the weak:*** "Scruples" of the King James Version refers to "weaknesses" or "failings." It is the responsibility of those who are mature in the Christian faith to be patient with those who are growing up in the Lord. These exhortations, as well as those

mentioned in the preceding chapter, assume that the weak brother is growing. A weak brother who does not grow in those areas that are matters of opinion becomes cantankerous and opinionated, seeking to have his own way. However, in the growth process, the stronger brothers are not to seek their own way at the expense of the conscience of new converts.

**15:2 *Please his neighbor:*** Strong brethren should do those things that will encourage and edify the new converts (1 Co 9:11; 10:24,33; 2 Co 13:9; Ph 2:4; see comments Gl 6:1,2). ***Edification:*** Edification refers to building up one's brother (14:19). Such is the responsibility of the stronger brothers in their relationship with the weaker brothers who are growing up in the knowledge of the word of God. The strong disciples have the responsibility of nurturing the weak disciples in love. The weak disciples have the responsibility of growing in order to be strong disciples.

**15:3 *For even Christ:*** Jesus had every right to exalt His rights over those whom He had created (Mk 10:45; Cl 1:16). However, He lowered Himself to be the servant of man (Mt 26:28; Mk 10:45; see Ps 69:9). In the same manner, the stronger brethren should seek to be the servants of the new converts in order that they grow up in the Lord.

**15:4 *Written for our learning:*** The Old Testament Scriptures were written for our instruction (Jn 5:39; 1 Co 10:11). Though the Sinai law is not binding on Christians today (7:4). Except for the Sabbath laws, the moral principles of the law continue through the principles that Christ taught. The examples of behavior in the Old Testament are to be studied by Christians in order to gain direction and application of God's moral values (See 4:23,24; 2 Tm 3:16,17). ***Patience and encouragement of the Scriptures:*** Old Testament events encourage us to have patience concerning the work of God in the lives of brethren. They give us

encouragement by revealing that God is faithful in His promises and work.

**15:5 *The God of patience and encouragement:*** As God worked with His people in the Old Testament, so He works today with Christians. He is the God who is patient with the growth of those who seek to serve Him. He is patient with brethren who are learning to relate with one another in a spirit of love. As God worked patiently in the Old Testament, so Christians must behave patiently with one another in their fellowship with one another (Cl 3:12-16).

**15:6 *One mind and one mouth:*** The purpose of these instructions of Paul is to maintain the unity of the universal body (At 4:24; 1 Co 1:10; Ph 1:27). When brethren are considerate of one another in love, unity is maintained. When unity is maintained, then there is an atmosphere for spiritual growth within the hearts of members. When an atmosphere of unity and spiritual growth exists, then members will give praise to God.

**15:7 *Accept one another:*** In view of what Paul states here, Christians are under obligation to accept one another. Paul reasons that if the Son of God received sinful men into His fellowship, then certainly sinful men can receive one another (5:2,8; 14:1,3). The Christian who refuses to receive his brother when there is a difference of opinion is exalting himself above Jesus who received us even though we were sinners (5:8). Christians should be willing to overlook one another's differences in order to maintain unity in fellowship with one another.

**15:8,9 *To confirm the promises:*** Jesus became the *diakonos* (servant) for the Jews in order that He might accomplish the plan of God's redemption for Israel. He was a servant to die on the cross for the salvation of the Jews (Mt 15:24; Mk 10:45; At 3:26). Jesus became the servant of the Jews in order to fulfill the promises that God made

to the Jewish fathers (4:16; see Gn 12:1-3; Lk 24:44; 2 Co 1:20). ***That the Gentiles might glorify God:*** The fulfillment of the promises to the Jewish fathers would include the gospel going to the Gentiles (Ps 18:49). The Gentiles now have reason to rejoice because God's promises and covenant were not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles (See Jr 31:31-34; Hb 10:15ff). Because the promises were made also to the Gentiles, the proclamation of the gospel went forth to the Gentiles (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15). ***Sing to Your name:*** The reception of the gospel would generate inner praise of God that would come forth in songs of praise to God (Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16). Such is what happened when the evangelists went to the Gentiles (See At 13:46-48).

**15:10-12** Paul quotes the Old Testament to affirm that God had always intended that the fulfillment of the promises include the Gentiles. The fulfillment of the promises that were made to the Jews would cause the Gentiles to give praise to God (Dt 32:43), singing praise to His name (Ps 117:1), and have hope for the future (8:24,25; Is 11:1,10). Since the fulfillment of the promises included both Jews and Gentiles, then there was no reason for the Jews to believe that they had exclusive rights to the fulfillment of the promises. When a Gentile became a Christian, it was no longer like it was when a Gentile became a proselyte to Judaism under the Sinai law. When a Gentile became a proselyte under the Sinai law, he had to accept the Jewish religious beliefs as well as the Sinai law. In doing such, he was always considered a second class Jew (Compare comments At 6:1). But such thinking had no place in reference to the Gentiles who became Christians. There are no second class citizens in the kingdom of God (See At 10:34,35; Gl 3:28).

**15:13** ***Fill you with all joy and peace:*** Through the process of the Holy Spirit inspiring Paul to write these

words, God was filling the hearts of both Jew and Gentile with joy (Lk 2:10) and peace (12:12; 14:17; Lk 1:78,79). **Abound in hope:** When brethren have peace among themselves, they can rejoice. It is necessary to have peace among brethren in order that hope be encouraged.

### Final Greetings

(15:14 – 16:27)

**Outline:** (1) The ministry of Paul (15:14-29), (2) An appeal for prayer (15:30-33), (3) Paul's personal closing (16:1-16), (4) Exhortation concerning division (16:17-20), (5) Final words (16:21-27)

## THE MINISTRY OF PAUL

**15:14** Paul turns to complementing the disciples in order to reassure them that they can carry out their own responsibilities to one another. **Filled with all knowledge:** They had all the necessary knowledge to be able to deal with the problems among the disciples in Rome (12:6; 2 Pt 1:3). They now had the Spirit-inspired letter that he has just written. They simply needed to put into practice that which they knew. We could also assume here that they had the miraculous gift of inspired teaching. They just needed to put to work the teaching that they now knew. **Admonish one another:** Instead of thinking either selfishly or considering one's race superior to another, they must consider their spiritual responsibilities to one another as individuals. They must relate to one another culturally as one man in Christ, not as Jews or Gentiles (1 Co 1:5; 8:1,7,10; see comments Gl 3:26-29).

**15:15 Remind you:** The brethren already knew the things about which he wrote. However, in case there were some among them who were despising the teaching of the word of God, the Holy Spirit knew that they needed an inspired document from the Holy Spirit in order to bring their behavior into conformity to the will of God (12:6). **Because of the grace:** The grace of God to which Paul

here refers is to his call to be a Christ-sent apostle. It was only by the grace of God that he was privileged to write Sacred Scripture (1:5; 12:3). From the point of view of men, such would be true. However, God deals with men through grace. He must deal with men in such a manner because all men are unworthy as a result of sin. Paul did not deserve to be called of God in order to be a Christ-sent apostle. However, it was through God's grace that he was called.

**15:16 *Minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles:*** By the grace of God, Paul had been personally commissioned by Jesus to minister the gospel of God's grace to the Gentiles (11:13; At 9:15). By the grace of God, Paul was given his apostleship to the Gentiles (1:5). ***Offering up of the Gentiles:*** Paul preached the gospel of God's grace to the Gentiles in order that the worship the Gentiles offered to God might be made acceptable by being directed by God's word. Therefore, only when one is sanctified is his worship and service of God acceptable (See Jn 17:17; At 26:18; Ep 5:26; Hb 10:29; 13:12).

**15:17 *I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus:*** When one has come into a covenant relationship with Jesus through baptism into His death, burial and resurrection, he has reason to glory. He can glory, not because of the merit of his own performance of law or good works, but because of the grace of God that made his labor beneficial in the Lord (See comments 1 Co 15:58; 2 Co 4:15). The offering of our service to God is acceptable to God only because of the grace of God that brought us into Christ.

**15:18** Because the conversion of the Gentiles through his ministry was by the grace of God, Paul would not glory in what was accomplished through him to bring the Gentiles to God. The result of his work was not in his power or ability to perform, but in the drawing power of the gospel (1:16). Therefore, bringing people to Christ does not rest

in our ability to be effective in our evangelistic outreach. The power is in the gospel. When one is timid about presenting the gospel to others, he is ashamed of the gospel because he is focusing on his own inadequacies and not on the power of the gospel. It is the gospel of the grace of God that brings people to God, not the abilities of those who present it (Compare comments 1 Co 1:18-31).

**15:19 *Powerful signs and wonders:*** Paul here gives credit to God alone for the impact the gospel had on the lives of those to whom he preached. God worked with the early evangelists by the confirmation of miraculous works (Mk 16:17-20; At 19:11; 2 Co 12:12; 1 Th 1:5; Hb 2:3,4).

**15:20,21 *Preach the gospel, not where Christ was named:*** The focus of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was to go where the gospel had not been preached. Such is a worthy goal of evangelists who seek to evangelize the world after the nature of the commission of Jesus to go into all the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). There must be those who take ownership of the goal of Paul to rise up and continue to preach the gospel in those areas where it has not been preached. The gospel of God's grace must go to every ethnic group of the world (See comments Mt 28:19). Paul here quotes Isaiah 52:15 to prove that God had this mission in mind for evangelists even before the event of the gospel was revealed.

**15:22-24** Paul would have gone to Rome by the time this letter was written. However, he had been hindered from doing such because there were other places that demanded his presence for the preaching of the gospel (See 1:10,11,13-15; At 19:21; 23:11; 1 Th 2:17). But now he feels that he can go to Rome, for he has plans to travel far beyond Rome to the country of Spain (See At 28:30,31). ***Supported on my way there by you:*** The Greek word (*propempo*) that is used here refers to being financially helped by another (See At 15:3; 20:37,38; 1 Co 16:16; 2

Co 1:16; see comments 3 Jn 5-8). In this case, Paul is raising funds from the Roman brethren in order to accomplish a mission trip to Spain to preach the gospel where it had not yet been preached.

**15:25,26 *Going to Jerusalem:*** It is believed that Paul wrote this letter from Achaia. One of the reasons he was in Achaia was to receive the contribution the Achaia disciples had collected for the famine stricken victims in Judea (See 1 Co 16:1-3; 2 Co 8:1; see comments 2 Co 8,9). ***A certain contribution for the poor saints:*** The Gentile brethren in Macedonia and Achaia had purposed to minister physical things to the Jewish brethren in Judea who had originally ministered to them spiritual things (2 Co 8:1-15).

**15:27 *They are debtors:*** The Gentile brethren felt obligated to give to the poor Jewish saints in Judea because it was originally from the Jewish disciples that the gospel went forth into all the world. Paul is here reaffirming a principle of support for those who preach the gospel (See comments 1 Co 9:11-14; Gl 6:6). Churches or individuals that do not support those who preach and teach the gospel are not fulfilling their responsibilities in the kingdom. They do not realize their debt to God and the ones who first gave of themselves to preach the gospel to them. They have freely received the gospel, but they have not made it possible to be freely preached to others. They have selfishly received the free gift of the gospel, but have not freely given to those who preach the gospel. God rewards those who support the gospel being preached to others (See comments 2 Co 12:14 – 13:6; Ph 4:10-18).

**15:28** Paul thus ends his fund raising appeal to these disciples that had now received the spiritual blessing of his inspired letter. They had reaped by the grace of God what was given to Paul who freely gave to them. Now the burden of appreciation was on their shoulders. It is the nature of the free gift of grace, that it generates within the hearts

of men the willingness to freely give to others.

**15:29** *I am sure that when I come to you:* Paul's confidence here in his coming was probably seated in the fact that by the time he wrote this letter, God had possibly already revealed to him that he was going to Rome (See At 23:11). And for this reason, he appealed to appear before Caesar's court in Acts 25:11. ***Fullness of the blessing of Christ:*** Paul was confident that the Roman Christians sensed their obligation to support the preaching of the gospel in Spain. He knew that they would allow him to live of the gospel in order to preach the gospel (1 Co 9:14). In this way they would have fellowship with the truth of the gospel (See comments 3 Jn 5-8). Any disciple, therefore, who wishes to have fellowship with evangelists in preaching the gospel to the world will support those who preach the gospel to the lost. This is God's means by which evangelists are able to go into all the world (Ph 4:16,17). Those who support evangelists who personally go into all the world are going with the evangelists through their financial support (Ph 4:16,17).

### AN APPEAL FOR PRAYER

**15:30-32** *Strive together with me in prayers:* Paul pleaded for the prayers of the saints (See 2 Co 1:11; Cl 4:12). If there was no power in prayer, then certainly these would have been vain words. But the very fact that the Holy Spirit inspired him to write this request is evidence that God wants His children to ask of Him. God, therefore, answers our prayers in a non-miraculous manner. Paul asked that they mention three things in their prayers. (1) ***That I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe:*** Paul was on his last trip to Jerusalem. He knew the hostility of the rebellious Jews there. This prayer on his behalf was answered because Paul survived the hostility of the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem (See comments At

21 – 23:22). (2) ***My service to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints:*** Paul was going to the disciples in Jerusalem in order to carry out his work as a Christ-sent apostle. He asked the Roman brethren to pray that God work in order to make his ministry on the trip beneficial to the saints. By the time he made it to Jerusalem, all the Christ-sent apostles had left the area. Paul possibly wanted to minister miraculous gifts to the visiting saints to Jerusalem (See 1:11). (3) ***That I may come to you with joy:*** Paul asks that his desire to come to them be fulfilled. He asks that they pray that his coming be by the will of God in order that he might have some fruit in them.

**15:33 *The God of peace:*** The blessing of having obeyed the gospel and come into a covenant relationship with God is peace of mind because of our peace with God (See 16:20; 1 Co 14:33; 2 Co 13:11; Ph 4:9; 1 Th 5:23; Hb 13:20). Peace of mind with God is the serendipity of obedience to the gospel. There is no peace if there is no obedience. This is a natural mental attitude of obedience. One does not feel right in his or her relationship with God unless there is obedience to God. We feel assured with God when we do what God says.

## Chapter 16

### PAUL'S PERSONAL CLOSING

**16:1,2** Phoebe is here referred to as a servant (*diakonon*) of the church. She was one who had given her life in service to the needs of others (See 1 Co 16:15,16). Though in some translations this word is transliterated “deaconess,” we must not assume that there is a special designation in the church for women to be deacons. There are no qualifications mentioned for such a designated ministry as there are for men who serve as special menservants (See 1 Tm 3:8-13). In its generic definition, the word *diakonon* is correctly translated servant in this context, though the word

could also be translated “minister.” It is possible that she carried this letter of Romans to the disciples in Rome, and thus, she is referred to as a servant of the global body for this special work. **Church:** This was an assembly (*ekklēsia*) of disciples who met in Cenchrea. **Cenchrea:** This city was about ten kilometers east of Corinth. It was the seaport city for Corinth and the region (At 18:18). **Receive her:** The disciples in Rome were to accept Phoebe on behalf of Paul. To receive her meant that they must take care of her in all her physical needs (Compare Ph 1:27; 2:29).

**16:3,4 Priscilla and Aquila:** When Paul first encountered this evangelistic couple, it was in Corinth where they had fled as refugees when Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome (See At 18:1-3,18,26; 19:1ff; 1 Co 16:19; 2 Tm 4:19). **Risked:** We are not told, but on some occasion both Aquila and Priscilla put their lives in danger for the sake of Paul. Since the pronoun “their” is used, we are informed that both Aquila and Priscilla risked their lives for Paul. **Churches of the Gentiles:** As Jews, Priscilla and Aquila accepted the task of evangelizing the Gentiles. And thus, they received the recommendation of the Gentile disciples.

**16:5 The church that meets in their house:** The early disciples met in the houses of the members. The church, therefore, is not the building in which members meet. The word “church” refers to the people of God. The common place for the members to meet on Sundays in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was in the homes of the members (1 Co 16:19; Cl 4:15; Pl 2). This practice continued for over two hundred years. The first known buildings that were purposely built for the assembly of the saints was in the early part of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Until that time when Constantine built buildings for the church, the early disciple met in the homes of the members. **Epaenetus:** With the household of Stephanas, Epaenetus was one of the first converts Paul made when he

visited Achaia (See 1 Co 16:15).

**16:6,7** *My kinsmen and my fellow prisoners:* Andronicus and Junia were from Cilicia and were converted before Paul was converted. Many translations refer to these two as Paul's "kinsmen" or "relatives." The Greek word can be so translated. He does not identify how they were related to him. If they were Christians before Paul, then they may have had a tremendous influence on Paul before his conversion. They also suffered imprisonment for their commitment to Jesus. As a result of their labors, they were well-known among the apostles who had gone out to preach the gospel.

**16:8-15** *Greet:* These tender salutations of Paul in an inspired letter concerning specific persons certainly credit them with having been special fellow-workers with him in his ministry of the Lord to preach the gospel to the world. *Greet Rufus:* In some translations, the mother of Rufus is spoken of as also being the mother of Paul. This could possibly be true. However, the meaning is probably that Rufus' mother cared for Paul as a mother. *All the saints who are with them:* The references in this context to the saints in households would be a reference to groups of disciples meeting in the homes of various households. The disciples that Paul mentions were meeting throughout the suburbs of the city of Rome. They were meeting in homes since there was no such thing as church buildings in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. We would assume that it would have been quite dangerous for the disciples to meet in large public meetings since Nero had set himself against Christians.

**16:16** *Greet one another with a holy kiss:* Paul commands them here to accept one another with the "holy kiss" that was a common cultural greeting of the day (1 Co 16:20; 2 Co 13:12; 1 Th 5:26; 1 Pt 5:14). We do not know exactly how this greeting was carried out. It was obviously a most tender and affectionate greeting that was practiced by the

early Christians. *The churches of Christ*: This is not given as a title or name for the disciples. Emphasis is on the assemblies of the members of the universal body of the Lord that existed throughout the world. Through this statement, all the churches with whom Paul was associated, sent their greetings to the assemblies of the disciples in Rome. Paul's emphasis is on the universal fellowship of the disciples. Every group of Christians who assemble in any one location anywhere in the world is a part of the church of Christ throughout the world.

### EXHORTATION CONCERNING DIVISION

Peter would at least have had the two letters of Romans and Galatians in mind when he said of these letters, and the other letters of Paul, that in them there "*are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable distort to their own destruction, as they do also the other Scriptures*" (2 Pt 3:16). If one is legal oriented in this theology, then certainly it would be difficult of such a person to understand the message of grace of both Romans and Galatians. If one comes to these letters in an effort to defend legal religiosity, then he would do so to his own destruction. In Galatians Paul was very stern about this point. "*You have been severed from Christ,*" he proclaimed, "*you who seek to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace*" (Gl 5:4). This is the focus of the following two verses in reference to those who would legally bind that which God has not bound. These two verses are probably the most twisted verses in the Bible in reference to the unity of the organic body of Christ. They are twisted by legal theologians in a manner that argues against the very theme Paul defended in the book of Romans. Paul argues that law-keeping, that is either constructed after the ordinances of law, or the religious traditions of men, minimizes the grace of God, and thus, offers to man a false hope of self-

justification. Keeping the legal traditions of a particular faith cannot atone for sin. Arrogance is generated in the heart of those who feel that they can atone for their violations of law through meritorious deeds. The identity by which some would identify the heritage of their faith, is the very thing that Paul declares to be against our justification by the grace of God. What often happens is that the legal religionist seeks to twist the meaning of these two verses in order to intimidate the free into conformity to their judgments. The free are thus accused of dividing the church by seeking to be free. What the accusers have done is twist the meaning of what Paul means in these statements. It is the one who seeks to impose legally the traditions of men who is actually the church divider. Because he does not understand the freedom that we have in Christ (Gl 5:1), he assumes that any failure to keep the traditions of the fathers is a violation of law. In doing so, he manifests the fact that his faith is legal oriented. He often assumes that obedience to the religious heritage of his fathers is necessary in order to be saved. Jesus confronted such traditionalist in His supposed violation of the Sabbath (See comments Mt 12:1-14). He did not violate the Sabbath, but only those traditional laws that the religious leaders had imposed on the people in order that the Sabbath be kept. The problem with the one who uses the following verses to accuse the free of dividing the church is the same problem that faced Jesus during His ministry. Because the religious leaders could not separate the Sabbath law from their laws concerning the Sabbath, they assumed that anyone who violated their laws of the Sabbath were sinning against God (Compare comments Mk 7:1-9). The free must understand that since religious leaders did such to Jesus, they will do the same today. Because many leaders have little knowledge of the word of God, it is difficult for them to determine what has Bible authority and what is simply religious

tradition. The validation for the faith of some often digresses to keeping the religious traditions of their fathers.

**16:17 *Mark those who cause division:*** It is necessary here to understand the actual person who was causing the division. The one who was causing the division was the person who was adding to the teaching that the Roman disciples had already learned. Emphasis is on the person who, with the motives identified in verse 18, is behaving in a dictatorial manner over the disciples in order to bind his opinions on the church. These disciples, as well as all the early disciples, had been delivered the truth of the gospel (Jd 3). However, there were those who sought to add circumcision, ceremonies and a host of other teachings to the body of truth that was delivered to the disciples (See comments At 15:1; Gl 1:6-9; 2 Jn 9,10). The one who causes the division is the brother who is adding his opinions to the will of God. The brother who refuses to allow someone to bind where God has not bound is not the one who is causing the division. Those brethren who stand against those who would add their opinions or traditions in order to restrict the freedom that Christians have in Christ, are to be commended for their stand. They have understood that unity is not conformity to the traditions and doctrines of men. Unity is based on freedom to obey the will of God, while at the same time, allow freedom in matters of opinion. ***Mark:*** Paul here says that those who would divide the disciples by binding where God has not bound, must be identified as such. They are to be identified in order to be watched so that they are not allowed to go among the members to cause division by binding traditions on the minds of the people. They are thus identified, but not disfellowshipped. ***Turn away from them:*** Once the individual has been identified by the disciples as one who seeks to bind where God has not bound, then the rest of the disciples are to guard themselves from his influence. This would certainly assume

that such a one not be allowed to influence others in a divisive manner (See comments Ti 3:9-11). He or she would not be allowed to teach since he seeks to enforce his opinions on the minds of others.

**16:18 *Serve ... their own belly:*** These graphic words of Paul identify the true motive of those who are seeking to regiment the disciples into conformity to their own beliefs. They seek to steal the lordship of Jesus over the sheep by intimidating the flock into submitting to their opinions. Those who are of such a nature, are not calling men to the cross, but to their desire to lord over the disciples through the enforcement of their opinions (See comments At 20:30; 3 Jn 9,10). ***Appealing words and flattering speech:*** By eloquent speeches, those who would lord over the flock of God lead astray those who do not know their Bible well enough to determine the difference between Bible and that which is after the nature of Baal. Disciples who have grown ignorant of the word of God are fertile soil for the leadership of demagogues (Hs 4:6). When the people of God are ignorant of the word of God, they are easily led astray by the opinions and personalities of men. When disciples stop studying the Bible, they are laying the groundwork for Satan to do his work through men who seek to use the church as an opportunity for exalting themselves over their fellow man (Compare comments Mk 10:35-45; Ep 4:11-16). Those who have the ability to speak with flattering lips will always have a following of those who do not know the word of God.

**16:19 *Known to all:*** As the Thessalonians in the regions of Macedonia, the obedience to the gospel by the Roman disciples had been proclaimed throughout the Roman world (1:8; see comments 1 Th 1:6-10). ***Wise to what is good:*** Paul wants the Roman brethren to be wise in areas of doing and knowing that which is good (Jr 4:22; Mt 10:16; 1 Co 14:20; Gl 6:10). ***Innocent to what is evil:***

Paul wants them to be innocent concerning those things that are evil. They should stay away from evil in order that their Christian nature not be desensitized by the wicked world.

**16:20** *The God of peace will crush Satan:* They had already crushed Satan under their feet in the spiritual realm, for they had already obeyed the gospel (See comments 6:1-6). But reference here is to a continuing work of Satan against God's people. By their individual obedience to the gospel, Satan was crushed in reference to his power over them through spiritual death. Nevertheless, Satan continued to war against the saints of God through persecution. But in persecution, God would work in order to provide ways of escape. Paul possibly refers here to Satan's working against the Christians through the persecution of Nero who as Caesar of Rome would persecute the church. Nero's personal attack against Christians in Rome had not yet begun. However, in a short time Nero would launch his vendetta against the Christians in order to persecute them. The Holy Spirit's final comfort to these particular saints, therefore, was to reveal to them that Satan's use of Nero would be crushed (See comments in intro. to Rv). It was in A.D. 68 when Nero committed suicide. *Grace ... be with you:* The theme of this epistle is grace. With reference to grace, Paul concluded this monumental document of the Holy Spirit to the church. It would be and is this grace that has brought comfort to millions throughout history. When one realizes that it is by grace that we have been saved (Ep 2:8), then it is comforting to know that we have peace with God through Jesus (5:1,2).

### FINAL WORDS

**16:21-24** Paul concluded his writing in verse 20. It seems that Tertius began his final farewell in verse 21. *Timothy:* Timothy was a young man when he began his labors with

Paul (See intro. to 1 Tm). Lucius (At 13:1), Jason (At 17:5) and Sosipater were possibly relatives of Paul. **Tertius:** Tertius wrote the letter as Paul dictated the message to him. **Gaius:** In considering the great commendation and work of the Gaius of 3 John, this could possibly be the same Gaius here. However, if 3 John was written at a much later date than Romans, then this could have been another Gaius. Nevertheless, the nature of the two men was the same. John commended the Gaius of 3 John for his great fellowship of receiving and sending out evangelists (1 Co 1:14; see comments 3 Jn 1-8). **Erastus:** See At 19:22; 2 Tm 4:20.

**16:25** These final words are a glorious praise of God who has now revealed the eternal plan of salvation to all men through Jesus. Through the grace of the gospel that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11), God is able to establish our hearts in Christ Jesus. Therefore, it is upon the foundation of the event of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope that we spiritually stand justified before God (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). Upon the foundation of the fact of the gospel event we are emotionally assured that we will be raised in the end to walk with Jesus in a heavenly environment. **Kept secret since ages past:** Before the world was created, God had planned the events of the cross and resurrection (Ep 1:9; 3:3-5,8-13; Cl 1:26; 2:2; see comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). The mystery of the gospel, however, was not revealed to man until the coming of Jesus. Neither was it revealed to Satan. If the gospel event had been revealed to Satan, then he surely would not have moved the people against Jesus to have Him crucified. The fact that Jesus was crucified is evidence that Satan had no idea that the cross was indeed the plan of God to make Jesus the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. In reference to our salvation through grace of God, the mystery no longer exists. It has been revealed through the cross. And because our study through this document of the Holy

Spirit, we have a clear explanation of the revealed mystery of God's grace.

**16:26** The Lamb who was slain before the creation of the world has been manifested to man (Rv 13:8). It was no accident that Jesus was crucified. Knowing that man would sin, God planned the way of escape from sin before He created man. *Has been made known to all nations:* It was the commission of Jesus to the apostles that they preach the gospel to every ethnic group of all nations (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47). And since all disciples of the world have obeyed the gospel, they have accepted the commission of Jesus to fulfill His mission to all the world. *Obedience of faith:* It was the gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus that was preached to all the nations (Mk 16:15). This was the historical event that was the central message of the early evangelists, for it was through obedience to the gospel that one would come into a covenant relationship with God. Through immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, one obeys the gospel, and thus, comes into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4; 2 Th 1:7-9). Thus "obedience of faith" in this context refers to one's faith moving him to obedience of the good news of Jesus' death for our sins and resurrection for our hope (See 1:5; At 6:7). The Roman Christians had obeyed the gospel by immersion into Christ. The word "faith" here does not refer to a body of doctrine, but to the event of the gospel wherein God's grace was poured out on a cross outside the city of Jerusalem almost two thousand years ago. One's faith must move him to obey the gospel by immersion into Christ (6:3-6; Mk 16:16; At 2:38; 22:16). Coming into a covenant relationship with Jesus is more than believing in Jesus. One's belief must move him to obedience of that which Jesus instructed one to do in order to come into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

(See comments Mt 28:19,20).

**16:27** Because of the manifestation of God's grace on the cross, to Him alone must go all praise and glory for our salvation through Jesus Christ (Jd 25). To God must go all glory simply because there is no other way we could possibly be saved other than through the saving grace of God that was revealed on the cross. If men seek to establish their own systems of salvation, they are at the same time seeking glory for themselves. If one is saved by meritorious deeds or works of law, then all glory cannot be given to God for our salvation. The fact that salvation is by the grace of God assumes that all glory must be given to Him for our salvation. No greater statement could have been made by the inspired writer to conclude such a letter as Romans. Grace gives glory to God. Disciples of Jesus must always remember that it is not about them, but all about Jesus.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pf**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**