

Romans Chapter 1

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

The letters that the Apostle Paul wrote are arranged much like a letter that would be written by most people today. They begin with who is writing and by what authority they are writing. Next, they tell us whom the letter is addressing. Subsequently you have the body of the letter. Finally, you have the close of the letter.

Paul is the one that wrote the letter to the Church at Rome. It is important that we know who wrote the letter for by knowing the person who wrote the letter we can relate to his background and experience. The name, Paul, was his Roman name and meant "small." His Hebrew name was Saul, which meant great. At first, he was known as Saul and was considered great in the eyes of the Jews religious leaders. However, after God struck him down on the road to Damascus, he became known as Paul and he thus became "small" in his own eyes. Similarly, we should not seek for greatness for ourselves, but be content to be small in order that we might magnify our great God.

Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ. The word, "servant," comes from the Greek word "doulos" meaning bond slave. Thus, Paul was declaring himself a bond-slave of Jesus Christ. Paul taught us elsewhere that we are not our own, that we are bought with a price, and that price is the precious blood of Christ. Thus, we should view ourselves as being the love bought slaves of Christ and should dedicate ourselves to His service.

Paul also declared that he was called to be an apostle. Obviously, Paul did not call himself to be an apostle. In 1 Corinthians Paul declares this calling to be from God: 1 Cor 1:1 "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God." A minister of the gospel is called of God to be a minister of the gospel. No man takes this honor upon himself although many think they can, but they are not true ministers of God. The word, "apostle," means "one sent forth." God is the one who sends forth his ministers. The church does not send forth ministers, but the sending forth of ministers is reserved by God to himself.

The calling to be a minister involves a separation. When one is called to be a minister God separates him to that ministry. Paul declared himself to be separated by God unto the gospel of God. If we are separated to a work, then we should be busy about that work and so Paul was busy about the work that God had separated him unto.

In this first verse of the letter to the Romans, Paul, thus identified who was writing the letter and the authority by which he was writing the letter. It is good that we know that Paul was not writing by his own authority, but rather that he was writing the letter by God's authority.

v. 2 "(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)" Paul affirms that this gospel that he was writing about and of which he had preached was according to the Old Testament promises. There are many prophets and scriptures that we could quote that identify these promises, but none show this better than Is. 40:1 "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." In addition, this promise is associated with the phrase, "In that day," as found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Yes this promised gospel of Jesus Christ was promised afore by God's prophets in the holy scriptures.

v. 3, 4 "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:" The gospel is all about the Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Each of the words used to describe Jesus has significance. As the Son of God, he is the second person in the Godhead. He is verily God. The word, Jesus, means Savior. Jesus came into the world to save his people from their sins. He is the one and only savior of sinners. The word, Christ, means anointed one. There were generally two groups of people that were anointed in the Old Testament: Kings and Priests. Christ is the anointed King of the Kingdom of God. He is also our anointed High Priest after the order of Melchisedec who ever liveth and maketh intercession for us. Furthermore, He is our "Lord" or master and we are thus his servants having a duty to serve him.

According to the flesh, Jesus was made of the seed of David. God had promised David in 2 Sam. Chapter 12, that he would raise up of David's seed one to set upon the throne of David. This king of the seed of David was to be an everlasting king in an everlasting kingdom. In the virgin birth, Jesus was made of the seed of David. Jesus was not made to be the Son of God with power. He has always been the Son of God with power. His being the Son of God far preceded his being made the seed of David. When Jesus was resurrected from the dead by the Holy Spirit, he was declared to be the Son of God with power. His resurrection by the Holy Spirit declared him to be what he always has been, the Son of God with power.

v.5 "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:" Paul declares that he first received grace and then he received apostleship from Jesus Christ. This is somewhat akin to Noah having found grace in the eyes of the Lord and then being instructed of God to build an ark. Grace first precedes any action on our part. Grace is the unmerited favor of God. We do not deserve grace in any way. It is something that God bestows upon us even though we are totally undeserving of it. Paul could not have been an apostle of Jesus Christ unless Jesus had first bestowed grace upon him. Paul recognized that he **received** grace and then apostleship from the Lord Jesus Christ. These were gifts bestowed upon Paul. Likewise, we should recognize that we have received grace and any spiritual gifts as gifts that God has bestowed upon us that we don't deserve, but it pleased Him to give them to us.

God is a God of purpose. He bestows grace upon us that we be his children and that we be born of the spirit of God. Furthermore, he gives spiritual gifts with a purpose. Paul received apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations. This apostleship was bestowed upon Paul, not just for Paul to be obedient to the faith, but rather that through his ministry as an apostle of Jesus Christ, God's people in all nations might also be obedient to the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Likewise, we who have been called to preach the gospel should reckon likewise, that this gift of a gospel minister is for the purpose of leading God's people to be obedient to the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

v.6 "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:" Before anyone can be obedient to the faith, he must first have been called of Jesus Christ. The new or spiritual birth is a calling from God. According to John 5:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Jesus spoke to us with his voice when we were dead in trespasses and sins and caused us to be born of the Spirit of God. Because of this spiritual birth, we have the capability to seek after God and to be obedient to the faith. Without this spiritual birth, we did not have the ability to seek after God or be obedient to the faith.

v.7 "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." When Paul says that he is addressing the letter "to all that be in Rome" he is not saying every single individual in Rome without exception. He further clarifies who he is writing to as those who are "beloved of God" and those who are "called to be saints." God loved a people before the foundation of the world, but he did not love all people. Furthermore, those that God loved before the foundation of the world, he calls them to be saints. This calling of God results in them being born of the Spirit of God. The word, "saints," comes from the Greek word, "hagios," meaning "holy." The new or spiritual birth makes us holy. It separates us (makes us holy) unto the service of God. Thus, Paul is addressing the letter to God's born again people in Rome.

One of the signature markings of Paul's letters is that he mentions God's grace both in the opening of his letters and in the close of his letters, with the exception of the book of Hebrews in which he mentions God's grace only in the close of the letter. Thus, Paul completely surrounds what he writes with the mention of God's grace. Grace is the unmerited favor of God. In Chapter 11 Paul will tell us that you cannot mix grace with works. If any work of any kind is involved, then it ceases to be grace. It is solely and purely by God's grace that we were chosen in Christ before the world began and it is solely and purely by God's grace that we are born of the Spirit. In addition, it is solely and purely by God's grace that we are justified by the blood of Jesus. In addition, we receive spiritual gifts, solely and purely by God's grace. Even Paul's writings were solely and purely by the grace of God. God's grace is far more extensive than anyone of us can fully understand. Paul declares that grace to come from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul also mentions the peace of God. Peace is the opposite of warfare. It is also the end of warfare. This is not talking about peace between nations that maybe have been fighting one another, but rather it is peace between God and his people who were before under the condemnatory, wrathful judgment of God. In addition, it is peace from the inward warfare that takes place in the hearts of God's people when they judge themselves to be sinners in the sight of God and began to make an effort to get right with God. When we realize that Jesus died for our sins, then our inward warfare ceases. This peace also comes from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

v.8 "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." The evidence of faith is works. James said in James 2:18 "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." Paul is saying to the church at Rome that people throughout the whole world (Roman Empire) were witnessing the works of the church of Rome and therefore were speaking of their faith. This should encourage us to be careful to always maintain good works. These good works can be an example to others of God's children to also, walk by faith and not by sight, and to perform the good works God has given us to do.

Likewise, when we see the good works of others, rather than praising them, we should first thank God for his unspeakable gift and for his grace that has enabled them to perform the good works and also for the leadership of the Spirit of God that has led them to desire to do the good works.

v.9 "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; 10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be

established; 12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." In life oftentimes, we hear people who make up fair and flattering speeches just to please the hearer. Paul wanted it to be understood that he was not flattering the readers of the letter, but that God was his witness to the things that he was about to write. How serious was this to Paul that Paul called God as his witness?

Paul first testified that he served God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son. God placed the spirit within Paul. God gave him the ability to serve Him and who gave him the gospel of Jesus Christ. The same is true for us. We certainly have nothing to boast about as all that we have spiritually come from God. We should ever be mindful that we are the servants of God and that we are to serve Him with our spirit in the gospel of his Son.

Paul prayed for those of God's people that were in Rome and he prayed without ceasing. This doesn't mean that he was praying 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It means that in his regular schedule of praying that he remembered to pray for them. Likewise, we should remember to pray for one another in our regular daily prayers.

Paul also demonstrates to us that in praying we should pray for specific things. Often times we pray in generalities and not specifics. We should learn to be specific in the things that we pray for. Paul was very specific when he said, "Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; 12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." I want to notice several things about Paul's prayer:

1. First, he made request. He did not demand that God do something. Likewise, we should understand that when we ask God for something, we are simply making a request. We have no right to demand anything from God.

2. Furthermore, Paul prayed by the will of God. Our prayer request should likewise be such that we ask that God's will be done and not our will.

3. Paul prayed that he might have a prosperous journey. Only God can make our journey prosperous. If we undertake a journey without the will of God, then we should expect that we would not be spiritually prospered in our journey.

4. Paul was not desiring to make just a social visit to the children of God in Rome, but he desired that he might impart some spiritual gift unto them. In other words, he desired to preach the gospel unto them that they might be edified and built up in the most holy faith.

5. Paul was praying for their benefit, that they might be established in the faith.

6. Paul was not trying to give them faith, but rather recognized that they already had faith and prayed that they might be comforted together with him by the mutual faith that he possessed and that they possessed.

7. Paul's prayer was unselfish. He was not seeking a gain for himself, but rather was seeking for the spiritual welfare of those he was praying.

v.13 "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. 14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise." The gospel drives away ignorance. It gives knowledge of salvation to the people of God. It delivers from false teachings, false worship, false religious exercises, and false practices of the people. Paul did not want the people to be ignorant. He told them that he oftentimes had purposed to come to them but had been hindered from coming. He told them that he desired to

have fruit among them as he had among other Gentiles. The fruit that he was interested in having was to see the fruit or works of the Spirit of God in their lives and to witness the effects of the gospel as it transformed the lives of God's people. Paul declared himself a debtor to both the Greeks and the Barbarians and to both the wise and the unwise. This debt did not accrue because of the actions of the Greeks or the Barbarians or of the actions of the wise and the unwise. Rather this debt had accrued in the mind of Paul that he owed his all to the Lord Jesus Christ. And as a result of God's grace he owed a debt of gratitude and service to God and that he was indebted to God to both serve the Greeks and the Barbarians and to serve the wise and the unwise. Do we owe any less debt than Paul did? Of course, we are just as indebted to God as Paul was. We also owe a debt of gratitude to God for his grace bestowed upon undeserving creatures, as we know ourselves to be. We should have the same mind as Paul to be willing to serve God's people as he was.

v.15 "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith." We cannot do more than what is in us. God is the one who has bestowed his grace and his spiritual gifts upon us. He never asks us to do anymore than we are capable of doing. Yet we should be willing to do everything that God has made us able to do. This was Paul's attitude and it should be our attitude. Paul was ready to preach the gospel to those that were at Rome according to the ability that God had given him and according to the grace that God had bestowed upon him.

There is no reason to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. If Christ had failed to save his people from their sins as was declared in Matt. 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins," then there would have been room for shame. On the other hand, if the gospel failed to do what God set it up to do, there would be room for shame. However, Christ did exactly what he came to do and the gospel accomplishes exactly what God intends for it to accomplish, therefore, there is no room for shame and Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. Likewise, there is no room for us to be ashamed of the gospel.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It is not the power of God unto eternal salvation, for Christ himself has given us eternal salvation from sin by his own works. It, however, is the power of God unto salvation from ignorance and from trying to establish our own righteousness under the law. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God from faith to faith. It reveals the righteousness of God from one person who has faith to another person who has faith. Notice that in this revelation the righteousness of God is revealed from one child of God to another child of God. Anyone who has faith has already been born of the Spirit of God and Christ died for him to redeem him from his sins. The gospel reveals to us that God died to take away our sins and to make us righteous before God. This is the righteousness of God that is revealed from faith to faith.

According to God's order of things, the gospel was first preached to the Jews, and then it was preached to the Greeks. For seven years the gospel went to the Jews only (3 and ½ years during Christ's earthly ministry, then 3 and ½ years after Christ's resurrection the gospel went to the Jews only.) At the house of Cornelius, the gospel began to be directed to the Gentiles.

Paul did not say that the unjust would be justified by faith, but he said that the just shall live by faith. The gospel is directed to those who are already made just before God. It is directed to God's children only. The gospel points us, the just, to live our lives by faith in God.

It calls upon us to serve the Lord in his kingdom and to present our bodies a living sacrifice to the honor and glory of God.

v.18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." There seems to be a big controversy over this passage of scripture as to whether those who are spoken about are of the elect or not of the elect. When people do not bear the fruit of the Spirit then we do not have any evidence that they are the elect of God. I see nothing above to indicate the ones that are being spoken of are bearing any fruit of the Spirit. Therefore, I do not have evidence that they are of the elect.

First, we note that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. The word, "hold," comes from the Greek word, "katecho," which means to hold down or repress. Thus, in their ungodly and unrighteous actions, they are holding back or repressing the truth by their unrighteousness. This does not sound like the actions of a child of God who is born of the Spirit of God.

Second, "that which may be known of God is manifest in them." It does not say that it was made manifest to them, but rather that it was made manifest in them. That which may be known of God is referring to what may be known of God in nature. There are things that may be known of God in nature that are made manifest even in those who hate God. That which may be known of God in nature is set forth for us in v.20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are God's eternal power and Godhead." While God's eternal power and Godhead cannot be seen with man's eye, yet God had made them manifest in the things which God has made.

God's eternal power is manifest in nature as even the smallest particle of nature has so much energy stored up in it that when released it is impossible to control. An atomic bomb is made from the splitting of an atom. When the energy is released from the very building block of nature (atom, the smallest particle in nature), this energy is so great that man is powerless to control it. A few years ago, some were saying that we were running out of energy on earth. What a joke, this earth and this universe and every particle of it is made up of vast sums of energy. God's eternal power is manifest in this material world in which we live.

The Godhead is manifest in God's design of nature. The Godhead is set forth in 1 John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." This pattern of three, yet one is manifest in all that God has made. (See the articles on the association of numbers and bible subjects).

21 "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Natural man can see the evidence of God in nature, yet still rejects the existence of God and ends up worshipping God's creation rather than God.

24 "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." Much wickedness of man is set forth in the above passage of scripture. This wickedness results from the sin-cursed nature of fallen man to which man fell in Adam in the Garden of Eden. His very nature is opposite and opposed to God.

32 "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." In chapter 3 we are told that man in nature has no fear of God before his eyes. He mocks at God and mocks at God's judgment. Yet, God's judgment is true and will be meted out on the non-elect at the end of time.

Rom. 2:1, 2

Rom. 2:1 "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. 2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things."

In Romans chapter 2, Paul begins to deal with the false and prevailing teachings of the religious system now known as Judaism. This is the teaching that man through the keeping of a

set of laws or rules can attain to eternal life. Further, if man does not keep those rules then he will be condemned to eternal damnation. This is the tenet of almost every religion in the world today, except for the one true religion of Jesus Christ. This false religious system has also infected most who call themselves Christian today. Almost all religions, including most Christian denominations believe that man must keep a set of rules or laws if he will attain to eternal life. They also believe that if man does not keep these rules or laws that he will be eternally damned.

Judaism leads one to declare himself justified by knowledge of the deeds of the law and to condemn others for failing to keep the law. Thus, a man may judge himself righteous by the knowledge of the law and declare others, who either do not know the law or do not keep it, to be condemned by the law.

The Jews of Paul's time, under Judaism, reveled in their knowledge of the law. By the law they condemned others as being worthy of and headed for eternal condemnation. They thought that by their knowledge of the law and their upholding of the law as a system of getting eternal life, that they were justified by the law. The Lord told these same Jews, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." The law made nothing perfect, but rather pointed us to the fact that we are sinners and that we were in need of a redeemer.

The problem with the law being a system of getting eternal life is that we are all breakers of the law. According to James, it only takes one sin to condemn us as being a breaker of the whole law: James 2:10 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." In Galatians 3:10 we read, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The fact is that when we measure ourselves against the perfection of the law, we find that we are all transgressors and therefore under the curse of the law.

The Lord said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." This is not teaching that we should not judge actions to be wrong or even to judge that other people's actions are wrong. Rather it is teaching that we should not judge others to eternal condemnation and that we are judged by the same standard by which we judge others. Paul said that the man who would judge others to condemnation when he himself is guilty of breaking the same laws was inexcusable. There just simply is no excuse to think that we are better than others under the law. The law condemns all men.

The Judaizing Jews had judged others to condemnation, when they themselves were doing the same things. They believed themselves better because they had knowledge of the law and upheld the law as a standard of religion. The same is true of most religious systems today.

God is the judge of all the earth. He will and does judge all actions. According to the scriptures, "every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward." To judge others by the law as being worthy of eternal condemnation is also to judge ourselves as being worthy of eternal condemnation: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."

"But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things." God has a perfect standard by which all actions are judged. They are

judged against his perfect standard of truth. Since the wages of sin is death, the judgment of sin is a simple principle: it requires death. Knowledge of the law does not exempt someone from judgment. Furthermore, it is impossible to escape the judgment of God. Of course, the elect had the penalty of their sins judged in Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary. The non-elect have the penalty of their sins judged beginning at the end of this time world. There is no escape from the judgment of God and God's judgment is according to truth.

Rom. 2:3

Rom. 2:3 "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

Can man under the law escape the judgment of God? Yet this is the premise of those who believe that they are justified by the works of the law. Somehow, they think that they can escape the judgment of the law by keeping a set of rules or commandments. As we have already observed the law cannot be kept in part and the person be righteous. Breaking of any part of the law renders one guilty of the law and under its condemnatory judgment.

God is the judge of all the earth. The scriptures teach us that all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. We cannot escape the omniscience of God. He knows our thoughts even before we think them. One of the most prevalent principles taught in the scriptures is that God is just. As a just God, he brings **all** sins and disobedience to judgment. There is no way of escaping the judgment of God. To condemn others for being breakers of the law and then to think that we can be justified even though we also have broken the law is nonsensical.

Several verses show us that no one is justified by the works of the law:

1. Gal. 3:10 "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith."

2. Rom. 2:12 "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;"

3. Rom. 3:20 "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

4. Rom. 7:5 "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."

5. Gal. 2:21 "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

6. Gal. 5:4 "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

Rom. 2:4

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

Those who follow the precepts or teachings of Judaism, and therefore seek to be justified by the works of the law, actually are despising the riches of God's goodness and his forbearance and longsuffering. They also show that they do not understand that it is not the terror of God, but the goodness of God that leads us to repentance.

By seeking to justify oneself by the works of the law, we deny the works of Christ. So long as we feel that we can be justified by keeping a set of rules or commandments in the sight of God, we do not believe that we are justified by the blood of Christ. What need would there be of the blood of Christ, if we could become righteous by keeping a set of rules or commandments?

The truth is that we are completely incapable of being justified by the works of the law. True justification from sin is the sole work of God. We being dead in trespasses and sins are completely incapable of delivering ourselves from the condemnatory wrathful judgment of God. It is only through the riches of God's goodness that the elect are justified by the blood of Jesus. To seek to be justified by the law is to despise the goodness, longsuffering, and forbearance of God.

True repentance does not come because of our terror of eternal judgment. Yet this is how those who seek to be justified by the law think. We hear statements such as "you better repent before it is eternally too late" and "you only have so many chances and then it is too late and you will spend an eternity in hell." True repentance comes because of the goodness of God. When a person is convicted in their own heart of sin and then understands that Christ died to redeem him from sin, then he desires because of the love of God to turn and follow the Lord. This is true repentance and comes because of the goodness of God and not the terror of eternal judgment.

Rom. 2:5-11

Rom. 2:5 "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11 For there is no respect of persons with God."

The following verses speak to us about the "day of wrath:"

1. Job 21:30 "That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath."
2. Prov 11:4 "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death."
3. Zep 1:15 "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

Including our subject passage, there are four verses that specifically use the phrase, "day of wrath." Three of the four verses are speaking about the eternal wrathful judgment of God against sin. The following verses also address the day of the wrath of God's judgment against sin:

1. John 3:36 "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

2. Rom 1:18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;"
3. Eph 5:6 "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."
4. Col 3:6 "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:"
5. Rev 14:10 "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:"
6. Rev 14:19 "And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God."

When Rom. 2:5-11 is compared to Rev. 20:11-15 we find two groups of people. We find those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life and those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. Those whose names are not in the Lamb's book of life are judged according to their works under the law: Rev. 20: 11 "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

When we compare ourselves according to the works of the law, we see ourselves among the group that are described as those that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness. The result is that they suffer eternal indignation and wrath. In contrast, when we see ourselves as having the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, then we see ourselves among the group that are described as those "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality." To these are rendered eternal life.

"For there is no respect of persons with God." The teachings of Judaism began with the Jews, who thought that God respected them because they are Jews. However, the scriptures plainly teach us that God is no respecter of person. God's judgments are not based on a person's nationality. What God respects is his covenant. God loved Jacob and hated Esau. This is a respect based on the covenant of redemption, not based on the person of Jacob or Esau. The deeds and actions of the individual do not bring that individual into eternal favor with God. In contrast, the deeds and actions of Jesus Christ are what bring us (the elect) into eternal favor with God.

Rom. 2:12, 16

Rom. 2:12 "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

I have left out the parenthetical material in verses 13, 14, and 15. We will cover that in our next essay.

Paul plainly sets forth the principle in the above that the lack of knowledge of the law is no excuse to sin: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law." Furthermore, the penalty of the law is in full force even for those who do not have knowledge of the law, i.e., they shall perish. A person who does not know the law and yet violates the law is still guilty of breaking the law and comes under the full wrathful judgment of God for breaking the law.

Under Judaism, the belief is commonly held that those ignorant of the law have no chance, but those who know the law are therefore saved by their knowledge and acknowledgment of the law. Some, however, believe that those who are ignorant of the law are saved by their ignorance. Both of the above beliefs are faulty. Ignorance of God's laws does not save us from the penalty of breaking God's laws. Sin is the transgression of the law and it is still sin even if we do not have knowledge of what the law says.

Likewise, we are not saved because we have knowledge of the law. Sin is still the transgression of the law and we are still judged based on the transgression of the law not based on our knowledge of the law. Truly, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Salvation from sin is by grace alone.

Rom. 2:13-15

Rom. 2:13 "(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)"

The Jews who espoused Judaism thought they were just because they had knowledge of the law and believed the law to be a standard for getting eternal life. They also thought that the Gentiles who had not the law were condemned because God had not given them the law. One of the problems with this way of thinking is that many of the Gentiles were living more upright lives than many of the Jews. Paul points out to these Jews that according to the law, that it was not the hearers of the law that were just before God, but the doers of the law that were justified.

The Jews were speculating about what goes on in the courtroom of glory. In their minds, God viewed them as being just because they had been given the law, they had heard the law, and they believed in the law. Likewise, in their minds, they believed that God viewed the Gentiles as being unrighteous because they had not been given the law and did not have knowledge of the law.

Paul, however, pointed out another courtroom that explained why many of the Gentiles often lived more upright lives than did many of the Jews. This is the courtroom of the heart and mind. God sets up the courtroom of the heart and mind when he causes someone to be born of the Spirit of God. In the above passage, most of the elements of a courtroom are put forth:

1. The law is written in their hearts.
2. The conscience acts as the courtroom witness.
3. The thoughts of the born-again child of God serve as both the prosecuting attorney in this courtroom and the defense attorney.

According to 1 John 3:20 "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." The heart of the born-again child of God serves as the judge in this courtroom of the heart and mind. In this courtroom of the heart and mind, we are convicted and condemned for wicked actions measured against the law written in our heart. Also, we are excused for right actions as measured against the law written in our heart. This courtroom serves to guide our actions. Thus, we show the works of the law written in our hearts and minds and do by nature the things contained in the law. Therefore, those Gentiles that had not the knowledge of the law of Moses, did by nature the things contained in the law, and therefore, were a law unto themselves.

Rom. 2:17-24

Rom. 2:17 "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, 18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; 19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, 20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. 21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."

Paul wrote to Timothy and warned him of some that "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Does a great knowledge of the letter of the law and how to perform the ordinances therein and having the ability to teach others make you righteous before God? There are many today who can quote many scriptures, who can cite believer's creeds, who have written books, who have taught classes in colleges, universities, and Sunday schools, who can show forth the forms of religion and yet are not justified by the works of the law.

The Jews rested in the law. They thought that through keeping the law they were righteous. The Jew made their boast of God. They boasted of a belief in God and boasted that they had the true God. They believed they knew the will of God and they thought they approved the things that are more excellent. They, themselves, had been instructed out of the law and had become teachers of the law and confident that they could lead the blind and lead the ignorant people out of darkness. They had quite a form of godliness.

However, for all their form of godliness, they had not the spirit of the law. While they taught that man should not commit adultery, many of them were committing adultery. When they taught that man should abhor idols, they themselves were worshipping and serving idols. When they taught that a man should not steal, they themselves were defrauding the people. Thus when they made their boast of the law, through breaking the law they dishonored God. Furthermore, because of their actions they encouraged the Gentiles to blasphemy the name of their God.

So many today think that religion is just in the form. They have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. Their religion is all show and no substance. James said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27) The religions of the world are a head, and form, and

show religion, whereas the true religion of Jesus Christ is to show forth the work of the law in ones heart and manifest the love of God through our actions.

Those who have a form of godliness and make a show of religion often have great costly ornamented buildings. They have many ceremonies, most of which are not scriptural. They wear many robes in order to appear righteous. They hand out many titles in order to make people feel important. They have many degrees in order to exalt their positions to which they have attained. They have many unscriptural auxiliaries. They make a great show of their religious exercises. Even with all this, they have not established their own righteousness before God. While they are going about trying to establish their own righteousness they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Furthermore, they have a form of godliness in the letter of the law, but they have not the spirit of the law.

Rom. 2:25-27

Rom. 2:25 "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. 26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?"

Natural circumcision was given to Abraham by God as a sign of the covenant that God had made with Abraham: Gen. 17:10 "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

Circumcision was not the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants, but was a token or sign of that covenant. It identified those who were circumcised with the covenant that God had established. Later God enjoined circumcision upon the nation of Israel: Lev. 12:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. 3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised." Circumcision identified the children of Israel with the covenant that God had made with them at Mount Sinai.

God had given the law to the children of Israel and they were by covenant to keep the law. Circumcision was a token or identifying mark that God had made the covenant with them and that they were enjoined to keep the law. Neither the law nor circumcision was given to the Gentiles. God had not made a covenant of worship with the Gentiles.

"For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." The covenant was for the children of Israel to keep the law. If they failed to keep the law they broke the covenant and this was the same as being uncircumcised, thus their circumcision was as though they were uncircumcised because they had broken the law.

"Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" Those Gentiles which were by nature uncircumcised who kept the

righteousness of the law (not the letter) were in far better condition than those who were circumcised and yet did not keep the righteousness of the law. Their uncircumcision was counted by God for circumcision.

"And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?" The Jews thought themselves to be the judge of the Gentiles and were condemning them because they had not the letter of the law nor had been made a covenant people at Mount Sinai. Yet through the actions of those Gentiles who kept the spirit of the law, the Jews were actually being condemned by the actions of the Gentiles because the Jews had failed to keep the righteousness of the law.

Rom. 2:28, 29

Rom. 2:28 "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

With this passage Paul brings us to a great fundamental truth taught in the scriptures: there are two types of Jews. There is the natural Jew who has natural circumcision and there is the spiritual Jew who has been circumcised in the heart, though he naturally be either a Jew or a Gentile.

Natural circumcision identified one as being a natural Jew. Spiritual circumcision of the heart identifies one as being a spiritual Jew. The true Jew in the eyes of God is not the natural Jew who has been circumcised naturally in the flesh. The true Jew is the individual who has been circumcised spiritually in the heart. This spiritual circumcision of the heart is described to us in Col. 2:11, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

This spiritual circumcision is performed by Jesus Christ and it is made without hands. Natural circumcision is made with hands and involves the cutting away of the foreskin of the flesh. Natural circumcision identified one with the covenant God made with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. Spiritual circumcision occurs when we are born of the Spirit and it involves the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, which Christ did when he suffered and died for us at the cross. This is a covenant putting away of sins for the elect.

Spiritual circumcision of the heart involves also the writing of God's laws in our heart and setting up the courtroom of the heart and mind. Spiritual circumcision of the heart identifies us with the Covenant of Redemption stated for us in Rom. 8:29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." When we bear the fruit of the Spirit we are showing forth the evidence that we have been circumcised with the circumcision made without hands: Gal. 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Thus those who are bearing the fruit of the Spirit have this evidence that God foreknew them, predestinated them, called them, justified them, and glorified them according to this covenant he made before the foundation of the world.

Rom. 3:1-4

Rom. 3:1 "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. 3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

During the Old Testament economy, did the Jews have an advantage over the Gentiles when it came to the true worship of God? Absolutely, God had given the nation of Israel his words. He had made a covenant with them and then he sent his prophets to declare and to write his words unto them. They were to speak of them when they arose in the morning and they were to be as frontlets to their eyes. Unto Israel was committed the oracles (words) of God. Furthermore, for hundreds of years they had been carrying forth many of the ordinances and services that God had commanded.

The Gentiles did not have the words of God and their attempts at worship were done in ignorance and involved idolatry: Acts 17:24 "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" It is a commonly held principle even today that if a person does not believe then it makes the sacrificial atonement of Christ without effect for that person. Those who hold to this false principle put more on the belief of man than they do to the faithfulness of Christ. God is faithful. He will perform what he said he would do. He promised eternal life before the world began: Tit. 1:2 "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." God in covenant promised eternal life to the elect before the world began. God is faithful to his promises. Whether we believe or not is not going to make the faith of God without effect. All for whom Christ died for will live in heaven's glory world.

"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." The reference is to Ps. 51:4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." The truth is that God is true even though every man is a liar. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. God is justified in his sayings and is clear in his judgments. The fact that God cannot lie and that he cannot fail, gives rise to our hope of eternal life and that God is true to his promises.

Rom. 3:5-8

Rom. 3:5 "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) 6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? 7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his

glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? 8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just."

There are two great false doctrines concerning sin in the religious world. Some say that God predestinates men to sin. Others say that sin gives glory to the righteousness of God. Both of these ideas are blasphemous to a Holy God.

God does not predestinate man to sin. God is not the cause of sin. Sin is the disobedience to the commandment. God does not cause man to disobey his commandments:

1. Jer. 7:31 "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart."

2. Jer. 19:5 "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:"

3. Jer. 32:35 "And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin."

The above verses teach plainly that it came neither into God's heart or mind nor did he command the children of Israel to commit the wicked abominations they were doing. Plainly, God does not cause man to sin.

Furthermore, our unrighteousness does not commend the righteousness of God. God is righteous and deserves all our praise, yet our sin does not bring praise to God. Some claim that because our salvation is by grace alone and not by our works or faith, that we can continue to sin and this will abound to the praise and glory of God, because he will simply forgive our sins.

"Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) 6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" If God caused men to sin as some claim, then man could not keep himself from sinning and therefore, it would be unjust for God to take vengeance on sin. However, God does not cause men to sin, therefore, it is not unrighteous for God to take vengeance on sin. God forbid for man to accuse God of making men to sin and then unrighteously taking vengeance on sin. God has every right to judge the world for sin as he is not the author of confusion and every sin and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward.

"For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" My lies and my sins do not cause the truth of God to more abound unto his glory. God's truth does indeed abound unto his glory, but our sins do not cause it to more abound, but rather our lies and our sins more abounds to our shame. It is shameful for us to continue to sin knowing that God has saved us by his grace.

"And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just." I have heard men say, "If I believed as you do that salvation is by grace alone, then I would go out and get my fill of sin, for it wouldn't matter because I am saved by grace." What they are saying is that the grace of God is a license for men to sin. They are slanderously reporting that we are saying, "Let us do evil, that good may come." This is just a slander and those who truly believe that salvation is by grace alone, do not promote a sinful lifestyle, but rather that we ought to serve God and worship him because of his grace towards us.

Paul said that those who slanderously reported that we say, "Let us do evil, that good may come?" that their damnation is just. That is God is just to condemn them that report such slanders about those who believe in salvation by grace and that slander a proper belief in grace.

Rom. 3:9-20

Rom. 3:9 "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes. 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

In the above passage of scripture Paul is describing all men under the law of sin and death and describing their total depraved state before being born of the Spirit.

The law of sin and death was given to Adam by God in the garden of Eden: Gen. 2:16 "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." God told Adam that if he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil he would surely die. The depraved state to which Adam plunged himself and subsequently all mankind is described in Rom. 3:9-20. Eph. 2:1 describes this state to which man fell as being dead in trespasses and sins: Eph. 2:1 "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Verse 9 of Romans chapter 3 tells us of the universal state to which man is under the law of sin and death: "for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." Thus, all Jews and all Gentiles are under the law of sin and death. There are no exceptions. Some have proposed that young children are innocent until a certain age of accountability. However, there is no age of accountability taught in the scriptures and the above verse teaches us that even infants are under the law of sin and death. David said in Ps. 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Thus, David is saying that he and us are sinners from conception. Furthermore, David said in Ps. 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Therefore, even new born infants speak lies as soon as they are born. They are sinners by nature and soon become sinners by practice.

Verse 10 above teaches us of the universal condemnation of sin: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." Without exception all of mankind were condemned in Adam and brought to a state of being condemned or unrighteous before God and therefore worthy of God's wrathful judgment of sin. One can be made righteous only by the atoning blood of Jesus.

Verse 11 above teaches us of mankind's total inability to understand the things of God or to seek after God: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." The false teachers tell men that if they will just understand and believe the gospel and seek after God,

then they will be born again and be saved from sin. The problem is that men under the law of sin and death cannot understand the gospel and cannot seek after God:

1. 1 Cor. 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

2. Ps. 10:4 "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."

Certainly, the gospel is of the Spirit of God, therefore, the natural man cannot receive it, neither can he know it. We read in 1 Cor. 1:18 "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." To those who have not been born of the Spirit the preaching of the cross is foolishness. To those who have been born of the Spirit of God the preaching of the cross is the power of God. Thus, preaching cannot be the cause of one being born of the Spirit. One must be born of the Spirit in order to be able to understand the preaching of the gospel.

Verse 12 above teaches us of our universal fall in Adam together and of our total inability to do anything good: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The word, "together," carries with it a connotation of unity in time and space. To do something together then we must be at the same location at the same time. For all of mankind to become unprofitable together, then all mankind must have been at the same location at the same time when they became unprofitable. As we will see in Romans chapter 5 we were together in Adam when Adam transgressed the law of sin and death and we at that time together became unprofitable before a just and holy God.

Furthermore, our death in trespasses and sins rendered us incapable of doing good. To tell a person who is dead in trespasses and sins to do good is to tell him to do something he is not capable of doing. Only those who have been born of the Spirit of God are capable of doing good. The Lord spoke of man's condition in Matt. 7:18, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Man in his natural state is a corrupt tree incapable of bringing forth good fruit. When man is born of the Spirit, the inner man becomes a good tree that cannot bring forth evil fruit.

In Galatians chapter 5 Paul compares the fruit of the natural man with the fruit of the Spirit: Gal. 5:19 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Man before he is born of the Spirit cannot do good.

Verses 13 and 14 above teach us of the universal fountain of corruption of man's speech: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Speech originates in the throat and Paul affirms that man's throat in its natural state is an open sepulcher. A sepulcher is a grave. Thus, man's speech is an open grave. A grave contains dead and rotting things. Furthermore, depraved man uses his tongue to deceive. Deception is the way of wicked man. In addition, Paul affirms that the poison of asps is under the lips of fallen man. Asps are a venomous serpent and their poison can kill. Finally, the mouth of man is full of cursing and bitterness. This is indeed a poisonous and bitter stream that proceeds from carnal fallen man.

Verses 15 and 16 teach us of the murderous and destructive ways of man: "Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways." This murderous way of man was manifest when Cain slew Abel because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. Every man in his natural state is capable of murder and destruction.

Verse 17 teaches us that man does not know the way of peace: "And the way of peace have they not known." Man in his natural state does not know the way of peace with God or the way of peace in his own heart and actions.

Verse 18 sums up the reason for the incapability of depraved man: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Without the fear of God, man has no desire to do good, to seek after God or to understand the things of God. Furthermore, without the fear of God man does not desire to change his destructive and murderous ways and to cease from the pathway of sin.

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Again, the universal nature and condemnation of fallen men is stated. There is no exception; the law condemns all of mankind. We are all guilty under the law in the eyes of a just and holy God. Our mouths are stopped. We have nothing to plead. Under the law of sin and death we are all guilty before God.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." All who would take the law and make it a means by which man can be justified in the sight of God, do not understand the nature of the law. The law was not given as a means by which one may get life. It was given to give us the knowledge of sin and of our condition under sin.

Rom. 3:21-28

Rom. 3:21 "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." Paul had previously established that we are not justified by the deeds of the law. Therefore, for someone to be righteous, then it had to happen in some way other than by the works of the law. The righteousness of God is referring to the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ bestowed upon undeserving creatures. Paul says that this righteousness is manifested. The way that it is manifested is that the law and the prophets witness it. Thus, the law and the prophets are witnesses of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ bestowed upon the elect.

The "law and the prophets" is a phrase that refers to the Old Testament scriptures. The first 22 books of the Old Testament comprise what is known as the law and the last 17 books of

the Old Testament comprise what is known as the prophets. The Lord said to some unbelieving Jews, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." The scriptures the Lord referred to were the Old Testament scriptures for at that time the New Testament had not been written. The Jews thought that they could work the law to be justified, but the Lord said the scriptures were a testimony of him. We cannot work the law to become justified, but the scriptures testify to us that we are justified through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." The first thing we want to note about this verse is that the righteousness of God comes through the faith of Jesus Christ and not by the believers' faith. Jesus' covenant faithfulness makes the elect righteous in the eyes of a just and holy God. According to the covenant of redemption God foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified a people. According to the covenant will of God, Jesus calls the elect to spiritual life, justifies them by his blood on the cross, and glorifies them in the resurrection. Jesus is faithful to accomplish all of this as he said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Thus, by his covenant faithfulness Jesus imputes his righteousness unto all that believe and upon all that believe for there is no difference.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If righteousness came by our keeping the law, then there would be none that ever could be righteous for we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God." One sin is enough to make us completely and forever unrighteous. Therefore, righteousness must come by some means other than by the law.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Our eternal justification from sin is by the grace of God through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. We are righteous because of what Christ has done for us and because of the unmerited favor of God. If we had done anything to bring about our righteous state then it would not be by the grace of God. However, we could do nothing to make ourselves righteous, but God made us righteous despite ourselves.

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Propitiation means an atoning victim. God made Christ an atoning victim or sacrifice for us to atone for our sins. The faith in the above verse is God's faith and not our faith. God had faith in the blood of Christ. God had faith in the blood of Christ before Christ's blood was ever shed: "to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Before Christ ever died, God had been remitting the sins of the elect who lived before the coming of Christ. God had faith that Christ would fulfill the covenant of redemption and therefore God remitted the sins of those who lived before Christ even though Christ had not yet died.

"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." God cannot just gloss over sin. Sin must be punished. Without the wrathful judgment of sin, none could be made righteous. God would be unjust not to punish sin. Yet God forbearance of the punishment of sin is possible because God trusted in the covenant work of Jesus. Even though multitudes of the elect lived before Christ died, yet God is still just because he had faith that Christ would die to redeem them from their sins and God remitted their sins.

God is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Our belief does not justify us. Our belief, however, is an evidence that we are of the elect and Christ is our justifier.

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." We have absolutely nothing in which we can boast. We can do nothing and we did nothing to bring about our justification from sin. Our works under the law or our works under any religious system or our faith cannot make us righteous. We must conclude that we are justified by the covenant faith of Jesus Christ and by God's faith in his covenant work.

Rom. 3:29-31

Rom. 3:29 "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

The word, "justify," means "to make or declare righteous."

"Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." The vast majority of the Jews of that day believed that God was the God of the Jews only. Furthermore, many Gentiles believed that the God of the Jews was not their God. Yet Paul has proven in Chapters 2 and 3 that God's covenant people consists of both Jews and Gentiles. In Romans chapter 2, Paul had shown that God's judgment rested upon both the Jews and the Gentiles. He also showed that circumcision did not mean anything unless you keep the law. If an uncircumcised person kept the law then his uncircumcision was counted as circumcision.

Paul also showed that true circumcision was not of the flesh, but of the heart and by the Spirit. He also showed that among the Gentiles, there were those who did by nature the things contained in the law and thus they showed that they had the law of God written in their hearts and minds. Thus, Paul had proved that God is the God of both the Jews and the Gentiles.

"Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." In verse 24, Paul used the phrase, "being justified," and in verse 28, Paul used the phrase, "is justified." The phrases, "being justified" and "is justified," indicate a justification that has already taken place. Whereas, the phrase, "shall justify," indicates a justification to take place in the future. Clearly, these are not the same justifications.

The justification in verses 24 and 28 is by the grace of God through the faithfulness of Christ to shed his atoning blood for the sins of those justified. This justification is complete and is effectual through eternity. The courtroom where this justification took place is the courtroom of glory where God sits as judge over his people.

The justification in verse 30 is and will be brought about by God's people, both among the Jews and the Gentiles, who trust in the covenant justification that took place in the courtroom of glory. When we trust in the complete covenant work of Christ, we are justified in the courtroom of our heart and mind. This trust **does not make us righteous**, but **it declares to our heart that we are righteous** through the atoning blood of Christ and brings to us comfort and peace. This justification by faith will be more fully developed in Romans chapter 4.

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Verse 27 spoke of two laws: the law of works, and the law of faith. The law that we establish through faith is the "law of faith."

Rom. 4:1-8

Rom. 4:1 "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

The scriptures teach three justifications: justification before God; justification in our heart and mind, and justification before men. Justification before God is by grace through the atoning blood of Christ: Rom. 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Justification in the heart and mind is by faith: Rom. 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification before men is by works: James 2:21 "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"

The problem that so many people have with the subject of justification is that they do not recognize there are three justifications taught in the scriptures. The scriptures also teach three courtrooms. The first courtroom is the courtroom of glory where God sits as judge. In this courtroom, we are justified by the blood of Jesus and this justification is by grace. The second courtroom is the courtroom of our heart and mind that was described to us in the 2nd chapter of Romans. In this courtroom, we are justified by faith in the covenant work of Jesus Christ. The third courtroom is the courtroom of men's opinions. In this courtroom, men view us as being truly the children of God by the works that they see.

Our works and our faith do not affect the outcome of the courtroom of glory. We are not justified by our works or by our faith in the courtroom of glory. The covenant blood of Jesus is what justified us in the courtroom of glory.

The fourth chapter of Romans is dealing with the subject of justification by faith and the courtroom affected is the courtroom of our heart and mind.

"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?" Notice that it is dealing with what Abraham has found and not what God has found. The courtroom is the courtroom of the heart and mind (pertaining to the flesh).

The courtroom of the heart and mind is set up in the new or spiritual birth. In the new or spiritual birth, God writes his laws in our heart and mind:

1. Rom. 2:14 "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)"

2. 2 Cor. 3:3 "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."

3. Heb. 8:10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

4. Heb. 10:16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

5. Jer. 31:33 "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

One of the first things that happens after that a person is born of the Spirit is not justification, but conviction or condemnation. Isaiah tells us of his experience in Is. 6:1 "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Isaiah, being born of the Spirit, was convicted of the fact that he was a sinner and condemned before God.

The Lord spoke of the publican who came to the temple to pray that he was in a blessed state when he felt the condemnation of sin: Lk. 18:13 "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Likewise, a person must mourn over his sins before he is comforted: Matt. 5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

There are two streams of thought about how a man is justified before God. Most follow the false teachings of Judaism that man is justified by his works or actions before God. The other true stream of thought is that justification before God is by the covenant work of Jesus Christ through his atoning blood and is all by grace. Paul was refuting the false idea of justification before God by works and establishing that justification before God is by grace. Paul uses the example of Abraham to show how that Abraham was justified by the covenant work of God and how that Abraham received that covenant work of God into the courtroom of his heart and mind by faith and it brought forth peace into his heart.

"For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God." Paul is setting forth the proposition that if Abraham believed that he was justified by his works, then he would have whereof to glory. Abraham would be able to glory in his works that he believed made him just before God. This is exactly what those who believe that their works or their activity of faith makes them just before God do. They glory in their actions of obedience believing that it is their obedience that finally makes them righteous before God. Today, they make such statements as: "I accepted Jesus as my savior and that saved me from sin; or "I believed on the Lord and was baptized and this saved me;" or "I have lived a good life and I have believed on the Lord and this will save me from sins." Notice the glory or boasting that man makes when he believes his works save him.

However, works do not save us before God. Only the atoning blood of Christ, which was shed according to God's eternal covenant, saves us from our sins. There is no room for boasting before God.

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This statement carries us back to the Old Testament scriptures concerning the

interaction between God and Abraham. The direct quote is from Gen. 15:3 "And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." This was not the first time that God had made a promise to Abraham nor was it the first time that Abraham had faithfully followed the Lord.

Actually, several times God had made promises to Abraham concerning Abraham and his seed. God had promised to Abraham that he would multiply the seed of Abraham as the stars of heaven, as the sand upon the seashore, and as the dust of the earth. Also, God had promised Abraham that in his seed should all nations be blessed, and all kindreds or families would be blessed, and that his seed should possess the gates of his enemies. God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of a multitude and the father of nations. Yet in the text above, Abraham was 85 years old and he had no children, when God promised him that one would come forth from his own bowel and from this one would his seed be multiplied. Here Abraham believed in the promise of God and God counted this to Abraham for righteousness. Notice Abraham's belief in the covenant promise of God was counted to Abraham for righteousness. We make the following observations:

1. God's promises were not dependent upon Abraham's obedience or upon Abraham's faith. God was going to fulfill his promises even if Abraham did not obey or did not believe. The promises were not conditional. Rom. 3:3 "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Man's unbelief does not alter the covenant promises of God so as to make them ineffectual. Yet we constantly hear from the erroneous teachers that Christ's atoning blood is not effectual unless the sinner believes and accepts the Lord as his personal Savior. God will fulfill his promises whether any men believe or not.

2. Abraham's believing in the covenant promise of God had a great effect upon Abraham. Abraham was sorely concerned that he had no child and that Sarah was past childbearing age. However, when Abraham believed his fears were assuaged and he had peace and comfort that God would fulfill his promises.

3. Abraham's faith brought him to identify himself with those covenant promises of God, thus in his heart and mind he saw himself justified or righteous before God based on those covenant promises.

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." If Abraham's works justified him before God, then the reward would be of debt. That is God would owe it to him because he did what God told him to do. Grace is not involved when we can earn something from God by works. Grace and works cannot be mixed. If we do anything to merit it, then it is not by grace, but by works. If we do nothing to merit it, then it is by grace and no works are involved.

Abraham did no works to justify himself before God, but rather believed on God who justifieth the ungodly. It is God and God alone who justifies the ungodly. God justifies the ungodly according to the covenant he made before the world began. It is through God's covenant work that the ungodly are justified. Abraham believed on God and his covenant work and this belief was imputed into Abraham's heart and mind for righteousness. That is Abraham saw himself as being made righteous by the covenant work of God.

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." We are indeed in a blessed state to have our iniquities forgiven, and our sins covered by the grace of God through the covenant blood of Christ. Later Paul will ask the question in Rom. 8:33 "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." There is no sin that can now be laid to the charge of God's elect. We are justified by the blood of Christ.

Rom. 4:9-15

Rom. 4:9 "Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. 13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression."

In the early church there arose false teachers who taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved: Acts 15:24 "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment." This not only troubled the church at Antioch, but it also troubled the churches of Galatia, as Paul deals with this error in his letter to the Galatian churches. While most Gentile professors today do not teach that you must be circumcised, they do teach that you must keep a set of laws or rules in order to be saved.

In the above, Paul deals with both the false teaching that one must be circumcised in order to be justified and that one must keep the law in order to be justified.

"Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." Is the blessedness of justification by the atoning blood of Christ and the blessing of having one's faith imputed for righteousness reserved to the circumcised (Jews) only? Or does it come to the Gentiles also (uncircumcised)? Abraham's case answers the above questions. Abraham believed in the Lord and his faith was imputed to him for righteousness at age 85. Abraham was not circumcised until he was 99.

"And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." Circumcision was therefore a sign and a seal of the righteousness of the faith that Abraham had when he was yet uncircumcised. Natural circumcision does not cause one to be saved or to be justified. It is not

necessary that one undergo natural circumcision in order to be saved or to be justified. Circumcision was given as an identifying mark or seal of what was already in the heart and mind of Abraham. Likewise, we are sealed with the holy spirit of promise (not natural circumcision) when we believe the gospel of the covenant work of Christ: Eph. 1:13 "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." This sealing of the Holy Spirit does not make us children of God and it does not justify us before God and it does not save us from our sins, but it identifies to our hearts that we are a part of the elect children of God and a part of Christ's covenant work.

"And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised." Abraham is a father by example to both the believing Jews (circumcised) and the believing Gentiles (uncircumcised). When we believe by faith in the covenant work of God that we are justified by the atoning blood of Christ, then we are walking after the example that Abraham, the father of the faithful, set for us.

"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." There is some question as to which world the above references. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his natural seed. He also promised an eternal inheritance to Abraham and the multiplied seed of Abraham. The seed of Abraham is Christ. The multiplied seed of Abraham is the elect family of God. Regardless of which world is being referenced, Canaan or the glory world, the promised is received by the individual through faith and not through the works of the law. The promises God made to Abraham are unconditional. They are not conditioned on the works of the law or the works of the individual. We receive the promises not because we keep a set of rules or ordinances, but because God promised them unto us. We identify with these promises in our heart and mind because of the faith that God gave to us in the new or Spiritual birth.

"For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." If salvation or justification from sin is by the law, then there is no need for either the promises of God nor would there be such a thing as faith. If justification were by the works of the law, then one would either keep the law or fail to keep it and either be justified or condemned. The fact is no one but Christ has ever kept the law to perfection, therefore, all mankind would be condemned by the works of the law.

Rom. 4:16

Rom. 4:16 "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all."

Gal. 3:16, 17 tells us who the promised "seed" is: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to **thy seed, which is Christ**. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Christ is the promised seed and he was promised by a covenant that

was confirmed before of God in Christ. This is the covenant of redemption stated in Rom. 8:29, 30.

Gal. 4:28 identifies who the multiplied seed are: "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the **children of promise.**" Just like Isaac was promised beforehand, born contrary to nature and born at God's appointed time, so all the elect were promised beforehand (before the foundation of the world), born of the Spirit contrary to nature, and born of the Spirit at God's appointed time.

Faith in the covenant promise of God does not make us a part of the elect family of God, nor does it justify us before God, nor does it cause us to be born of the Spirit. Faith in God's covenant promise does, however, assure us that we are a part of God's covenant promise. Faith is an evidence of our spiritual birth. It is through faith in God's covenant promise that the elect, found both among the Jews and the Gentiles, can assure their hearts that they are a part of the covenant promise.

This activity of faith in the elect, both among the Jews and the Gentiles, is patterned after the activity of faith manifested by Abraham. In this manner, he is the father (by example) of us all.

Rom. 4:17-22

Rom. 4:17 "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. 18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

When God told Abraham, "I have made thee a father of many nations," Abraham was 99 years old and had a child by the Egyptian handmaid named Ishmael. God told Abraham that Ishmael would not be his heir. Yet God promised to Abraham that he was a father of many nations through a child that was not yet conceived and would be born of Sarah. God called Abraham a father of many nations when he was not yet a father of any nations. Only God can call things that be not as though they were. For only God has the power and wisdom and ability to guarantee that his promises will be fulfilled perfectly.

"Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be." At the time this promise was made, Abraham had no ability to beget a child and Sarah was long past having the ability to have children. Neither Abraham nor Sarah could produce children according to nature. If Abraham and Sarah had to fulfill this promise through their ability they would have been totally unable to do so. God had promised Abraham that Sarah would bear him a son in this set time in the next year and that the son's name would be called Isaac. It was through Isaac that Abraham would become a father of many nations. There was no hope in the natural ability of Abraham that Abraham could father a child. However, Abraham's hope did not rest in his own ability, but it rested in the promise of God. It is in this manner that Abraham, "who against hope, believed in hope."

"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." If Abraham had considered his own body whose reproductive ability was dead, or had considered Sarah's womb, which was dead, as far as its reproductive ability, he would have had no hope. Abraham's faith did not rest in his or Sarah's ability. Abraham's faith rested in the promise of God and that God would fulfill his promise.

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Abraham was fully persuaded that what God had promised, God would also perform. He was, therefore, strong in faith and he gave all the glory to God. God did indeed restore Abraham and Sarah to the time of life and they bore a son according to God's promise. This promise was fulfilled not because of what Abraham and Sarah were able to accomplish, but rather because of what God did according to God's promise.

"And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Abraham's faith, which was given unto him through the miracle of the new birth, connected him to the promise of God and God counted this unto him in his heart and mind for righteousness.

Rom. 4:23-25

Rom. 4:23 "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

The testimony of the scriptures, which witness of Abraham's experiences, is given to us for an example, that we might understand what God has done for us and is doing for us. Recall that earlier in this chapter we were told, "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Just as Abraham believed in the covenant promises of God and God counted this into the heart and mind of Abraham for righteousness, so should we also believe in the covenant promises of God. We read of God's covenant promise made unto us before the world began in Rom. 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

When we by faith believe God's covenant promise stated above, then we believe that Christ was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. Thus, we believe that justification is not by any thing that we do, but rather because of God's covenant promise and that by the grace of God. We believe that Jesus Christ died for us to redeem us from our sins according to the covenant of redemption. This is the righteousness of faith whereby we are brought to understand that we were justified by the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ alone. Therefore, as the righteousness of faith was imputed unto Abraham, so the righteousness of faith is imputed unto us also.

Rom. 5:1, 2

Rom. 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

In the above passage, Paul details to us several benefits that we, who have been born of the Spirit of God, have heard the gospel, and that have believed the truth, have:

1. The word, "therefore," points us back to what God showed us in the previous chapter. We are justified before God by his grace through the covenant sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We become knowledgeable of this justification through the preaching of the gospel and believe it by the faith that God imparted to us in the New Birth. Thus, by faith in the covenant sacrifice of Jesus, we declare that he has made us righteous. This is justification by faith.

2. We have peace with God through the covenant sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's sacrifice satisfied God's just demands of executed justice because of our sins. Furthermore, we have peace in our hearts knowing that Christ died for us. This peace comes through hearing and believing the truth.

3. By this faith imparted to us in the new birth, we believe in the finished work of Christ and enter into his church kingdom to serve him through his grace. By faith, we stand in that service knowing that he who redeemed us from our sins also will be with us in our service to him.

4. Furthermore, by faith, we can look to the end of God's covenant, knowing he is faithful to execute his covenant. Thus, by faith, we see ourselves glorified in the resurrection. Thus, by faith, we hope for that resurrection and rejoice in the glory of God.

Rom. 5:3-5

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

To glory in tribulations goes completely contrary to our old fleshly nature. We try to do everything to avoid tribulations. However, tribulations definitely work for our spiritual well being as a child of God. James said, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:2, 3). Peter, also said, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:6, 7).

Tribulations can take many forms. Tribulations include temptations, trials, persecutions, afflictions, and troubles. Tribulations exercise our faith, which God gave to us in the new birth. When tribulations come our way, we often try to solve the tribulation through our own fleshly means. This usually results in things getting worse. At first, when we are faced with tribulations and have tried to solve them by our fleshly means and fleshly wisdom and things get worse, then we turn to the Lord and through faith cry out unto him to help us.

Patience is simply waiting upon the Lord and trusting his promises. When tribulations exercise our faith, we learn to wait upon the Lord and trust his promises. Thus, tribulations exercise our faith to bring forth patience.

When we through faith patiently wait upon the Lord and trust his promises, the result is that we see the Lord's deliverances. Thus, we experience the Lord's deliverances in our lives.

The more tribulations we have in life, the more we learn to patiently wait upon the Lord. The more that we patiently wait upon the Lord, the more we experience the Lord's deliverances in our lives. The more that we experience the Lord's deliverances in our lives, then the more that we hope for further deliverances when we face tribulations. Thus, tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience, hope. Faith is the key to all of this.

A person that has not faith will not trust in the deliverance of the Lord. Because he will not trust in the deliverance of the Lord, he will not experience the Lord's deliverances in his life, and because he does not experience the Lord's deliverances, he has not hope in future deliverances. He simply relies upon the fleshly nature and fleshly wisdom when he is faced with tribulations.

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." When we are born of the Spirit of God, God writes his laws in our hearts and minds. These laws are the laws of love. This love of God written in our hearts manifests itself in several ways. One of the ways it manifests itself is to give us hope in the promises of God. Since, when we trust in the promises of God, we find that he is faithful to fulfill his promises, we are never made ashamed of trusting in those promises.

Rom. 5:6-11

Rom. 5:6 "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

In chapter 3, Paul had described all men under the law of sin and death (Rom. 3:9-17). He described how that all mankind was condemned and how there was none that did understand and that there was none that did seek after God and how that there was none that did any good. He concluded that there was no fear of God before their eyes. In the above passage, Paul tells somewhat of the condition of the redeemed before they were redeemed. In describing the redeemed, before they were redeemed Paul uses four words or phrases: without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God. Thus, before we were redeemed we were without strength, ungodly, sinners and enemies of God. This was true of all the redeemed.

Before we were redeemed we were without strength. That is we had no ability whatsoever to recover ourselves from our condemned state. We were as dead men. Paul described us in Eph.2:1-3, thusly: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." We were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Being spiritually dead, we had no

ability to recover ourselves from our spiritually dead state or to bring about redemption. It is completely foolish to ask a dead man to do anything. A dead person has no strength, thus he cannot do anything. While we are alive naturally, we were dead spiritually and completely unable to perform any spiritual works or actions. To ask a spiritually dead person to believe and to accept Christ is to give a spiritually dead person an impossible task. He cannot believe and he cannot accept Christ. He is without strength.

Next, we were ungodly. The word, ungodly, describes our nature as being the complete opposite of the nature of God. A person cannot change his nature. The prophet Jeremiah asked the question in Jer. 13:23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." It is easier for an Ethiopian to change his skin and a leopard to change his spots than for us to start doing good who were before ungodly. Only God can change someone's nature or give someone a new nature.

Third, we were condemned sinners. Since God is perfectly just, if someone is condemned under his laws, then the punishment of that sin must take place. There is no such thing as a sin going unpunished before God. God judges all sins. We, being condemned sinners, stood under the condemnatory wrathful judgment of God and we could do nothing to change that judgment.

Fourth, we were the enemies of God. It was not as though we were going about trying to get right with God, for we were not. Paul wrote in the Ephesian letter that we were walking after the course of this world and the spirit working in us was the spirit of Satan. Truly, we were warring against God as the very enemies of God. Our every thought and action was contrary to God.

It was in contrast to these four things (without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God) that God manifested his love and grace towards us. First, Christ died for us: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What no one else would even willingly think of doing, Christ died for us when we were without strength, ungodly sinners, and enemies of God. What amazing love that God loved us and Christ died for us when we were in such a state. Truly, we were justified by his grace.

But, we are not just justified by the blood of Christ, but we have the promise that we will not have to face an eternal judgment because of sin: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." We can face the death of these mortal bodies without the fear of waking to an eternal punishment. Surely, God's love is amazing.

Furthermore, because of Christ's dying for us and now interceding for us, we can face the trials of this life knowing he will be with us: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Our joy is truly in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Rom. 5:12-21

Rom. 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: 13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses,

even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. 15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. 20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The above passage of scripture sets forth what is often referred to as the "doctrine of federal headship." A "federal head" is someone who is the representative of all that he is the head over and whose actions and subsequent consequences are imputed to the whole of those he represents. Throughout history, there have been only two true federal heads. These two federal heads are Adam and Christ. Adam was the head of all mankind when he stood before God in the Garden of Eden. All of mankind descended from Adam and were from the seed of Adam. Christ is the head of all the elect which were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. This doctrine is also stated in 1 Cor. 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It was through the one man Adam that sin entered into the world of Adam multiplied. God made a covenant or law with Adam in the Garden of Eden in which God said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This is commonly known as the "law of sin and death." Sin is the disobedience of the commandment and death is the consequence of sin. When Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he sinned and he died. However, the effect of Adam's sin was not just upon Adam but upon the world of Adam multiplied. Furthermore, this verse teaches us that we sinned in Adam. Even though we were not bodily present in our own bodies, we were just as guilty of sin as Adam was as Adam acted as our federal head before God.

Next, we see that sin did not pass from Eve to all of mankind. Chronologically, Eve took of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil before Adam did. However, Eve's sin was not passed upon all of mankind even though she is said to be the mother of all living. We conclude that sin passes from father to child and not from mother to child. Since all of us, both men and women, have natural fathers, therefore, sin passes to all of mankind, except to Jesus Christ who had no biological natural father as he was born of a virgin and was conceived of the Holy Ghost.

"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law." The "law" in the above sentence has reference to the law given by Moses. The ten commandments and the other laws given to the nation of Israel and depicted the moral laws of God had not been given until over 3,000 years into man's existence upon earth. Therefore, all those who lived from Adam to Moses had not had sin imputed to them for the transgression of those things set forth in the law of Moses. Sin is a function of law and if there is no law then there is no sin imputed.

However, sin was still in the world from Adam to Moses. The sin, in the world, was the sin of Adam. The effects of sin were the same over those who lived from Adam to Moses even though they had not sinned either by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil or by breaking the commandments given to Moses. The fact is we were all guilty in Adam and the sinfulness and the consequences of sin were passed upon all generations of mankind.

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." After Adam sinned, God drove the man out of the Garden of Eden and then fixed it so that man could not return to the Garden. It would be over 3,000 years before God gave another law to men at the hands of Moses. Yet we see a trail of death from Adam all the way down to Moses. Thus, the sin of Adam had passed with each subsequent generation upon man and the effects of sin brought forth both natural death, but also condemnation, and the corrupt fallen state upon all of mankind.

"Who is the figure of him that was to come." This teaches us that Adam was a figure of Christ. Now Adam was a figure of Christ in a very limited sense. He was a figure of Christ as a federal head only. The effects of Adam's transgression upon his posterity are compared to the effects of Christ's righteousness upon his elect in the next several verses of scripture.

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift." The subsequent comparison is between the effects of the offense of Adam and the effects of the free gift of righteousness by Jesus Christ.

"For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." The offence of one is the offence of Adam. Through Adam's offence many be dead (that is all of Adam's posterity). Through the free gift of righteousness by grace of Jesus Christ, the gift of righteousness hath abounded unto many (all of the elect).

"And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." The judgment unto condemnation of all of mankind was brought about by the one sin of Adam. All of mankind was condemned by the one sin of Adam whether any of Adam's posterity sinned or not after this one sin of Adam. Yet the free gift of righteousness given to the elect by Jesus Christ did not just cover the sin of Adam, but it covered all of the offences of the elect and brought about their justification before God.

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." By one man's (Adam) offence death reigned by that one offence over all of mankind. To reign is to rule over. Death had its rule over all of mankind because of the offence of Adam. We were in total bondage and dead under the law of sin and death and had no ability to deliver ourselves out of that bondage or death. Just as death had reigned over all of Adam multiplied, yet now we see life reigning over the elect through the abundance of grace and the gift of life by Jesus Christ. Life now reigns over the inner man of those who have been born of the Spirit of God and life will reign over the mortal bodies of the elect when those bodies are changed in the resurrection of the dead.

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Adam through his one offence brought judgment upon all men to condemnation. Simply put, we are and were condemned in Adam for his offence in eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We were under the full condemnatory wrathful judgment of God because of that

transgression. Except for the redemptive work of Jesus Christ we would all have been cast into the lake of fire of God's eternal judgment because of the one offence of Adam. Now we all have our sins that we are guilty of, yet we were condemned in Adam's transgression and had no ability to overcome that condemnation or the condemnation of our own sins.

Thanks unto God that by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ the free gift of righteousness has come upon all the elect unto justification of life.

Please note that the "all men" in Adam are not identical to the "all men" in Christ. The all men in Adam are all of Adam multiplied, whereas the all men in Christ are all that were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." One of the consequences of Adam's disobedience is that his nature changed from a state of innocence to a fallen state of sin. This fallen nature is described in Rom. 3:9-17 as well as several other places. Unlike the teaching of many, we do not become sinners when we first sin. David taught that we become sinners at conception: Ps. 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." We, therefore, are conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, and go astray as soon as we are born speaking lies (Ps. 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.")

Some teach an age of accountability. It usually goes somewhat like this: a man is not a sinner until he reaches a certain age of accountability (usually 12 years). However, there teaching is not scriptural. We are sinners at conception and we begin sinning very early in life. We did not make ourselves sinners, but we are made sinners by Adam's transgression.

In contrast, by the obedience of one, Jesus Christ, many (the elect) are made righteous. If it took the obedience of the preacher to preach the gospel and the obedience of the sinner to believe and accept and the obedience of Christ to die to give us a chance then the above should say by the obedience of three many are made righteous. The fact is only the obedience of Christ was necessary to make the elect righteous. While it is good for us in this life to believe the gospel and to believe on Jesus Christ and to obey the commandments of God, yet the effect of this is in this life, and not in eternity. Through the obedience of Jesus Christ and his obedience alone we are made righteous. All praise and glory belong to God.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The law was not given in order that there be more offences, but rather the law entered that we might see the exceeding sinfulness of sin and to recognize our own sinfulness and the subsequent condemnation of sin. To the elect, where sin abounded grace did much more abound. We were not just delivered from the condemnation of sin by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were delivered to a far better state through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, through the miraculous work of the new birth, and through the promise of eternal inheritance through the resurrection of the body.

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." The effects of the second federal head (Jesus Christ) have far exceeded the effects of the first federal head (Adam) on the elect. The end result is eternal life for the elect to which we who are the elect should give all praise honor and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 6:1, 2

Rom. 6:1 "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

One of the objections that people who believe in a works system raise to salvation by grace and grace alone is that this doctrine (they say) leads to licentious living by those who believe it. The truth is that it leads to just the opposite. That does not stop the believers in a works system of salvation from accusing those of us who believe in salvation by grace of promoting wicked living because of our doctrine of salvation by grace.

In the conclusion to the 5th chapter of Romans, Paul stated, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." In Adam as our federal head, we had been condemned before a just and holy God by his disobedience to the law of sin and death, and we died in trespasses and sins. This death in trespasses and sins had rendered us incapable of seeking after God or desiring the things of God or even of doing any good thing. We were completely corrupted by sin. Yet, despite our condition brought about through the sin of Adam, the federal head of the elect, Jesus Christ, had by grace delivered us from the condemnation of sin through his atoning death on the cross. He also delivered us from the bondage of sin through the miracle of the new birth. Furthermore, we have the promise of deliverance from the corruption of sin by the resurrection from the dead. This action of our federal head Jesus Christ did not just restore us to a state of innocence, which we had with Adam before the sin of Adam, but rather placed us in a far better state than that. It gave us eternal life, and a promise of a life in which we are incapable of sinning, as well as delivering us to an inheritance far greater than the Garden of Eden. This brings us to the conclusion that where sin had abounded because of the fall of Adam; grace had much more abounded to us in the work of Christ through the grace of God.

Those who hold to a works system of salvation believe that salvation from sin is a reward for their good works. The view is that God holds out a carrot to the sinner, that if he will seek after it he will be rewarded. Their motive for doing good is the reward that they will receive for their works. Subsequently, they believe that they will receive honor from God for the works that they do. Furthermore, they believe if salvation is by grace alone, then they have no motive for doing good. Thus, they see the doctrines of grace as leading to wicked living after the flesh. What they fail to realize is that there is a greater motive for godly living. The motive is to give honor and glory to the one who has saved you from sin by his grace.

Sometimes we hear people make the statement that if I believed like you Old Baptists, then I would just go fill the lust of the flesh, because if I am one of the elect, then it will not matter, because I will still be saved by grace. This leads to Paul's question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Will my continuing a lifestyle of sin result in more honor to the grace of God? Paul's answer is "God forbid." Sin does not bring any honor and praise to God. Whereas it is to God's praise, honor, and glory that though we were sinners, we are made righteous by the atoning blood of Christ by the grace of God, yet sin and a continuation in sin does not praise God.

"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" We, obviously are not dead to sinning, but we are dead to the condemning effects of sin by the covenant work of our federal head, Jesus Christ. The question is raised and answered in Rom. 8:33: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." There is no charge that can be laid to the account of God's elect. We are dead to the condemning effects of sin. Does our being dead to the condemning effects of sin lead us into wicked living or into becoming the servants of Christ? Do we dishonor Christ by

walking in a pathway of sin, or do we honor him by walking in the path of righteousness. Grace and the work of God in the new or spiritual birth lead us into a greater and attainable motive for serving God than those have who believe that salvation from sin is by their works.

Rom. 6:3-11

Rom. 6:3 "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God's covenant love for his people should be the basis or motivation for their service to him. According to 1 John 4:9, "We love him, because he first loved us." In the covenant of redemption, God chose a people before the foundation of the world to be his people (Eph. 1:4); he predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29); he predestinated them unto the adoption of children unto himself (Eph. 1:9); he predestinated them unto an inheritance (Eph. 1:11); he called or quickened them into spiritual life (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 2:1); he redeemed or justified them by his blood (Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:7); and he glorifies them in the resurrection (Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. ch. 15). God's covenant love manifest through His work in the covenant of redemption is the basis and ability and motivation for the elect to serve Him. The above passage of scripture shows forth that covenant love as the greatest motivating factor for the Lord's people to serve Him.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Some have argued that the above passage of scripture speaks to us of water baptism, but it does not. While water baptism is important and is an answer of a good conscience towards God, there are several other baptisms taught in the scriptures. Baptism is defined as "dipping" or "immersion." Water baptism involves an immersion of the one being baptized into *water*. Water baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Water baptism is necessary for entry into the Lord's visible church here on earth. It is not necessary for redemption, or the new birth, or to enter into the glory world. Just as water baptism immerses us into water, so the above baptism immersed us into Jesus Christ and is the equivalent of immersing us into death. This baptism is the covenant baptism whereby we were chosen "in Christ" before the foundation of the world and because we were in Him when he died to redeem his people from their sins, we were in him in his death upon the cross thus satisfying God's wrathful judgment because of our sins.

What a great motivation it is to us to serve the Lord knowing that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and subsequently suffered and died on the cross to redeem us from our sins.

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The logical extension of being in Christ and being immersed in his death is that we also were in Christ when he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Just as Christ died and now is alive again by the power of God, so also should we reckon ourselves to have been dead with Christ and now alive again (through the new birth) to walk in newness of life. According to Eph. 2:10 we were created in the New or Spiritual birth to walk in the good works that God has given us: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

" For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The word together indicates a unity in time and location, thus the planting of the elect had to be a covenant planting beginning with our being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. While our physical bodies did not actually die when Christ died on the cross, yet in covenant we were in the likeness of his death. There comes a point in time when our physical bodies also die as the Lord's body died.

Similarly, when Christ arose from the dead, we in covenant were with him and there will come a time when, even though our physical bodies lie in the dust of the earth, we will arise at God's appointed time by the power of God.

When Christ died on the cross, our old man was in covenant crucified with him and in his death, the body of sin was destroyed. This action of Jesus Christ justified us before a just and holy God. Knowing that Christ died for us, suffering the awful agony of God's judgment on our behalf, and knowing that because of this we shall one day live in heaven's glory world, we have a great motivation of responding love to serve the Lord and not to serve sin.

"For he that is dead is freed from sin." There are at least two ways that we can look at this statement. First, he whose body is dead in the grave has no ability to sin any more. Certainly, the mortal death of the body will completely stop our sinful actions. Second, he that is dead to the condemning effects of sin is freed from the eternal consequences of sin.

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." We are dead with Christ, in that when Christ died on the cross we were in him by covenant arrangement even before the world began. The consequences of being dead with Christ and being in him when he died on the cross are that we shall also live with him in glory. When the covenant work of the covenant of redemption is finally manifestly completed in the morning of the resurrection, we shall live with Christ in glory. This hope of the resurrection is a great motivation to us to serve the Lord here in time.

"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ having died on the cross and having arose the third day, shall never die again, and shall forever live unto God. When we take inventory of what Christ did for us, we should reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This will lead us to not desire to serve sin, but to serve God.

Rom. 6:12-16

Rom. 6:12 "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. 15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. 16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

After having described to us the great motivation that God's elect should have to serve God as a result of God's covenant love manifest unto them, Paul now exhorts the people of God to yield themselves as instruments of righteousness unto God.

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Please remember that Paul addressed this epistle to the people of God at Rome and that all the epistles and scriptures are given to the people of God. It is therefore possible that sin can reign in the mortal body of a child of God and that they can obey sin in the lusts thereof. Otherwise, there is no reason for Paul to exhort the people of God to not let sin reign in their mortal body or to obey it in the lusts thereof. It completely destroys the notion that God predestinates all of our actions and that we are like puppets on a string. The above statement also destroys the idea that all of God's people will persevere in good works unto glory. It is possible that an elect child of God having been born of the Spirit of God can still serve sin and that sin can reign in his mortal body.

We, the elect born again people of God, do have a choice as to whether we will serve sin or serve God in this life. While there are consequences to our actions here in this life, it does not alter the surety that all the elect will live in heaven's glory world. The covenant of redemption will be completely fulfilled just as God made it. In addition, it is that covenant love of God that motivates us to serve the Lord and not to serve sin. The word "therefore" points us to the motivation and reason we should not let sin reign in our mortal body. That motivation and reason being God's covenant love. Because of God's covenant love we should make the effort not to serve sin but to serve the Lord.

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The opposite of "yielding" is "to stand against."

The members of our body are compared to instruments of service. We can either yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin or we can yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. In yielding, we will either serve sin or serve God. We are exhorted to yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. In doing this we have to stand against using our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. The word "yield" indicates there is pressure being exerted against us. On the one hand Satan is exerting pressure on us to serve sin. On the other hand God is exerting pressure on us to serve righteousness. The main pressure that God exerts on us is the motivating covenant love of God. The main pressure Satan exerts upon us is the lustful nature of the flesh and the enticements of the world.

An instrument is something that someone uses to accomplish a purpose. If we yield our members unto the enticements of Satan and the lusts of the flesh we will serve sin. If we yield

our members unto the motivating covenant love of God, we will serve God unto doing the righteous works of God.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." We have been delivered from the law of sin and death by the grace of God through his covenant works. We are no longer under the law of sin and death. We have been delivered from the curse of the law of sin and death through the atoning blood of Christ. Furthermore, we have been delivered from the bondage of the law of sin and death through the miracle of the New Birth. In addition, we shall be delivered from the corruption of the law of sin and death through the power of God in the resurrection. Christ death on the cross, the new or spiritual birth, and the resurrection are all actions of God accomplished according to the covenant of redemption.

"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Is the fact that we are no longer under the law of sin and death an excuse for us to live sinful lives? Paul answers with, "God forbid." What a God dishonoring thought for a child of God to make the excuse that it is all right to live a sinful life because he is not under the law but under grace. To serve sin, which had brought forth condemnation, bondage and corruption in our lives is to dishonor the God who has delivered us from the condemnation, bondage, and corruption of sin. If we yield ourselves unto sin, we become the servants of sin, if we yield ourselves unto obeying God we become the servants of righteousness. If we yield ourselves unto sin, we dishonor God. If we yield ourselves unto righteousness, we honor God.

Rom. 6:17, 18

Rom. 6:17 "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

There is something in the above for which God is to be thanked. We thank God for the things that He has done. God did not make us the servants of sin, but God did deliver to us something in the heart that caused us to desire to become the servants of righteousness.

There are two hearts described to us in the scripture:

1. The heart of the flesh is described thusly: Jer. 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"
2. The heart of the spirit is described in Heb. 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

When we were born of the Spirit, God wrote his laws in our heart (the true heart sprinkled from an evil conscience) and put them in our mind:

1. Heb. 8:10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

2. Heb. 10:16, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

3. 2 Cor. 3:3, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."

4. Rom. 2:15, "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

Before we were born of the Spirit of God we were the servants of sin: Eph. 2:1 "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

However, once we were born of the Spirit of God we had the laws of God written in our heart and these laws of God were the laws of God's love. These laws were delivered to us in the new birth. Having these laws in our heart and mind, we began to obey from our heart that form of doctrine, which was delivered us (the laws of love). As the elect born-again Gentiles did by nature the things contained in the law as Paul pointed out in chapter 2, so we also began to do by nature the things contained in God's laws of love. In this manner, we became the servants of righteousness.

Rom. 6:19-23

Rom. 6:19 "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. 20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. 21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. 22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh." Paul affirms that those who are born of the Spirit of God have a two fold nature. The nature of the Old Man or man of the flesh and the nature of the new or inner man or spiritual inner man. In the new birth our fleshly nature is not changed. It is still totally depraved. Having two natures sets up an internal warfare within every born again child of God. Paul speaks of this warfare in Gal. 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Because of this dual competed natures of the child of God he is capable of following the flesh or following the Spirit. Those who have not been born of the Spirit are only capable of following the flesh.

The infirmity of the flesh is set forth for us in Rom. 3:9-19. Furthermore, the works of the flesh are detailed to us in Gal. 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." All of the works of the flesh are evil works of sin. Thus, to follow or walk after the flesh is to serve sin.

"For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." Before we were born of the Spirit of God we completely yielded our members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity. This is also confirmed to us in Eph. 2:1-3: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." We had no desire or choice but to yield ourselves at that time unto sin.

Once we were born of the Spirit of God we then had the capability to yield our members as servants to righteousness unto holiness. The covenant love of God greatly motivates us to yield our members as servants to righteousness unto holiness.

The end of the fleshly lusts is death. In Adam, we were condemned to an eternal death before a just and holy God. Furthermore, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Because of the covenant love of God, we were redeemed from the condemnation of an eternal death through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Also by the covenant love of God we are delivered from the bondage of the law of sin and death through the new birth. Today, if we walk after the flesh we still suffer another death: the death of fellowship with God and the people of God who walk after the Spirit. Furthermore, we are dead to the joys and blessings of a Spirit-led life when we walk after the flesh.

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." We are free from the eternal condemnation of sin through the covenant work of Jesus Christ and in the inner man we have become servants to God through the covenant work of the Spirit in the new birth. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. When we serve the Lord this is the fruit that we yield. The end result of God's covenant love towards us that has made it possible for us to serve him is everlasting life. Thanks be to God for his unsearchable gift.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Wages is something we work for and earn. In the walk of the flesh we earn death. It is something that we deserve. Thanks unto God, however, that he has given us something we did not earn and that is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. From this, we conclude that it is far better to be the servants of God than the servants of sin. The covenant love of God teaches us this principle and does not lead us into ungodly living.

Rom. 7:1-6

Rom. 7:1 "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even

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

There are multitudes of religious people among all nations that believe that they can keep a set of rules or commandments and through obedience to those rules or commandments they can attain salvation from sin and eternal life. In addition, there are many that go back under the Old Testament law and try to bring elements of the Old Testament law into their worship service and require people to observe those elements in order to attain salvation from sin and eternal life.

Paul states a fact that "the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth." Paul will show how this principle is applied so as to negate the principle set forth by the legalists that you must keep elements of the law in order to attain salvation from sin and to get eternal life. The key word above is "liveth." The law hath dominion over those who live under it. A dead person is not under either the Old Testament law to observe it or under the laws of men.

"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." Marriage is "unto death do ye part." The marriage law ends with the death of one of the spouses. Once the spouse is dead, the law of marriage no longer applies to the spouse who remains. The living spouse is no longer under the law to the dead spouse to be faithful unto the dead spouse. The law of marriage between a husband and a wife, therefore, ceases with the death of one of the spouses.

"So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress." Under the law of marriage the woman is to remain married to her husband so long as the husband liveth. If she marries another man while her husband liveth then she is called an adulteress. She has broken the law of marriage and committed adultery with another man. She is a violator of the law of marriage.

"But if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." If, however, her husband is dead, she is no longer under the law of marriage to that man. She is free from the law of marriage to that first husband. Now she is free to be married to another man. Marrying another man no longer makes her an adulteress, since she is dead to the law of marriage to her first husband through his death.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Culminating with the death of Jesus Christ under the law, the law has been fulfilled to a jot and a tittle. With Christ's death, the need for the law as a means of worship became dead. With the covenant death of Jesus Christ, the elect became dead to the law by the body of Christ. We are freed from the law so as to serve the law any longer. Being dead to the law, we should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, Jesus Christ. Thus, we should reckon ourselves to be married unto Jesus Christ and not unto the law. As the bride of Christ, we should bring forth fruit unto our husband and God, Jesus Christ. We are no longer under the law to serve the law, but we are under Jesus Christ to serve him and to bring forth fruit unto God.

"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Under the law of sin and death, the motions of sins, by the law brought forth fruit in our members unto death. Under the law of sin and death we were dead in trespasses and sins. According to Eph. 2:1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of

this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." The fruit of our lives was the dead works of the flesh through the working of sin in our flesh. These works are listed for us in Gal. 5:19: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Through the atoning blood of Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Birth we have been delivered from the law of sin and death, wherein we were held. Now we should serve our new husband, Jesus Christ in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. When we serve the Lord in newness of spirit, we will bring forth the fruit of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Rom. 7:7-13

Rom. 7:7 "What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. 12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

"What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid." While the law condemns us because of sin, the law itself should not be thought of as being sinful. Paul gives an emphatic, "God forbid," to the idea that the law is sin and even to the idea that someone would look upon the law as being sinful. The law is not sin. God gave the law. Sin is the disobedience of the commandment.

"Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The law gives knowledge of sin and without the law we do not have knowledge of sin. In Chapter 5, Paul had said, "Sin is not imputed when there is no law." Sin, by its very definition is the "disobedience of the commandment. If no commandment is given then we can have no disobedience to the commandment. Likewise, when we have no knowledge of the commandment, we are not aware that we have disobeyed the commandment. Knowledge of the law brings us to know that we have broken the law. Paul said, that the reason he knew lust was that the law had said, "Thou shalt not covet."

"But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Concupiscence means "inordinate desire or lust." Because of the sinful nature of the flesh, sin, taking occasion by the commandment which said, "thou shalt not covet," had

wrought in Paul all manner of inordinate desire or lust. The sinful nature of the flesh uses the commandment to bring forth all manner of concupiscence by the flesh.

"For without the law sin was dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." While sin resides in our flesh, we go back to the definition of sin, which is disobedience of the commandment and note that without the commandment sin is dead. You cannot have sin without a commandment. Therefore, Paul said, "I was alive without the law once." Till the commandment came, sin was dead and Paul was alive. While this was true of Paul, it was also true of us. When we consider the commandment, we should remember that there are two types of laws. There is the outward letter of the law, such as the Ten Commandments. In addition, there is the law written in the heart in the new birth. Without the law written in our heart, we have no conviction of sin. Without this law written in our heart, we do not view ourselves as being sinners and we have no conviction of sin. In essence, we are alive without the law. Once, the law is written in our heart because of the new birth, and then we begin to have conviction of sin in the courtroom of our heart and mind. Then when we read and learn of the outward letter of the law, we see how sin has worked in our members, sin revives, and we die in the convictions of our mind and heart.

"And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." God gave the commandments that we should live by them. They were ordained (appointed by God) that we should live by them (keep them) which is certainly good for us. Yet, because sin resides in our flesh, we disobey the commandments and that brings forth a conviction to condemnation in our heart and mind (death).

"For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." Notice, the commandment did not deceive Paul, but sin deceived Paul. The same is true with us. The commandment does not deceive us, but sin in our flesh deceives us into thinking that it is okay and good to break the commandment. By deceiving us, sin slays us. It brings forth death in us.

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Again, Paul affirms that the law is holy, and just, and good, and that sin in the flesh works death in us by that which is good. The law gives knowledge of sin and the commandment brings forth to us the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Rom. 7:14-25

Rom. 7:14 "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24

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

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." The law is spiritual because it was given by the Spirit of God. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Spirit of God." "All scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Even the ten commandments when written on two tables of stone were written there by the finger (Spirit) of God. The problem with keeping the law is not that the law is spiritual, the problem is that I am carnal. Paul did not say that in times past I was carnal, but rather said, that "I am carnal." What we have is a carnal man under the bondage of sin trying to keep a spiritual law. The fact that Paul had been born of the Spirit did not change the nature of the flesh. The flesh is still carnal. Trying to keep a spiritual law through the works of the flesh is an impossible task. Our flesh is under the bondage of sin. Sin has reign over the flesh.

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." When someone is born of the Spirit, there is a desire to do good. We have a will or desire because of the new birth to serve the Lord and to keep his commandments. That desire is in our mind. However, to use a works system based on the obedience of the flesh to carry it out, creates an impossible task. Paul is addressing this issue of trying to use the flesh to carry out the law to perfection. The results of our efforts in the flesh are just the opposite of what we in our mind want to do: "for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I." In the experiences of God's children, how many times have each of us resolved to keep the commandments of God only to find that we end up breaking those commandments.

In the United States, there is a tradition that most of the citizens of the country make resolutions on New Year's day. The result of their efforts is that before the end of January almost all who made resolutions have broken those resolutions. If the flesh cannot keep carnal resolutions, then how would we hope to be able to keep spiritual laws through the works of the flesh?

"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good." My desire to keep the law proves that I believe the law is good. This is true even though I break the law through the efforts of my flesh. I have consented that the law is good even though my flesh is not.

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." What Paul is teaching us is that it is not our desire to break the law. Actually, we desire to keep the law. The reason we do not keep the law is that sin is dwelling in us and controlling our flesh. Indwelling sin has ruined the efforts of many sincere people who resolve and try to keep the law to perfection. This is why the law as a tool to get eternal life is impossible. For if those who have already been given eternal life and born of the Spirit cannot keep the law to perfection, then how could one possibly believe that a person who has not been born of the Spirit and is dead in trespasses and sins can keep the law to perfection?

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Paul sets forth the principle of the complete and total depravity of the flesh when he says that in his flesh "dwelleth no good thing." While there is a desire in our mind as a result of the Spiritual birth to do good, yet there is no ability in the flesh to carry out that desire. To perform that which is good through the efforts of

the flesh cannot be found. With no good dwelling in the flesh and sin controlling the flesh, we cannot do good through the efforts of the flesh.

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Once again Paul carries us back to the principle that we through the works of the flesh do the opposite of what we want to do. The reason he says that we do the opposite of that which we want to do through the flesh is the indwelling of sin in the flesh. As an aside, we cannot change or control the flesh, we must **mortify** the deeds of the flesh through the Spirit of God that dwelleth in us in the inner man in order to worship and serve God in Spirit and in truth. This is made plain in the 8th chapter of Romans.

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." The law to which Paul is referring is the law of the flesh that sin dwells in the flesh and nothing good dwells in the flesh. As a result, though we have the desire to do good in our minds, we end up doing evil through the flesh because of sin dwelling in the flesh.

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." When a man is born of the Spirit of God, God writes his laws in the heart and mind of the new inner man. It is through the inner man, which the word of God informs us, cannot sin, that we are able to mortify the deeds of the flesh and to keep the spirit of the law. We all should delight in the law of God after the inward man.

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." The law of my mind is to do good and to keep the law. The law of sin in my members is to follow after evil. The law in my members brings me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Thus, I cannot do good and keep the law of my mind through the works of the flesh. No wonder Paul said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Our experiences of trying to regulate the flesh to keep the law brings us into great frustration and finally to the conclusion that in the flesh we are indeed "wretched men." We would remain in this condition except for one thing which Paul also states: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Lord Jesus Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law through his substitutionary death on the cross for all the elect. In addition, we are delivered from the bondage of the law of sin and death through the New Birth. This new birth comes about as a result of the quickening power of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the Son of God. This is all by the grace of God. The works of the law have nothing to do in bringing this about.

"So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Roman's chapters 6, 7, 8 have three key words that predominate and are a key to us to understand the subject matter. These three key words are "law," "sin," and "death." Each of these words appears between thirty and forty times in these three chapters. In the eight chapter which we will begin in our next essays, changes the key word. The key word in Roman's chapter 8 is "spirit." In verse two of the eight chapter we read, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." In the first seven chapters, Paul has strongly addressed the issue of those who promote the erroneous idea that we are saved from sin by the keeping of a set of laws or rules. Chapter 8 will outline to us the great doctrine of the covenant of redemption.

Rom. 8:1

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

There are two types of condemnation taught in the scriptures: eternal condemnation and timely condemnation. To be eternally condemned means to end up being cast into the lake of fire of God's eternal judgment at the end of this time world because of sin.

Timely condemnation means a conviction of heart or mind due to ungodly actions. Examples of timely condemnation are set forth in the following verses of scripture:

1. Mark 16:16 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

2. Rom 14:23 "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

3. James 5:9 "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door."

4. 1 John 3:20 "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

Paul is speaking about those that are in Christ Jesus. In the book of Ephesians he points out to us how the elect got to be in Christ Jesus and numerous blessings that come upon them because they are in Christ Jesus:

1. Eph. 1:4 "According as he hath **chosen us in him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath **made us accepted in the beloved.** 7 **In whom we have redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

2. Eph. 1:11 "**In whom also we have obtained an inheritance**, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

3. Eph. 2:4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and **made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.**"

4. Eph. 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus** unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

5. Eph. 2: 13 "But now **in Christ Jesus** ye who sometimes were far off are **made nigh by the blood of Christ.**"

6. Eph. 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 **In whom** all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 **In whom** ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

7. Eph. 3:11 "According to the eternal purpose which he **purposed in Christ Jesus** our Lord: 12 **In whom** we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

A born-again elect child of God can walk in two different ways. He can walk after the flesh or he can walk after the Spirit. In the scriptures, "to walk," means "to live your life." To walk after the flesh is to live your life after the desires of the flesh. To walk after the Spirit is to

live your life after the leadership of the Spirit. We are told to "walk by faith and not by sight." To walk by faith is to live your life by faith in the word of God and the leadership of the Spirit. To walk by sight is to live your life by following after the fleshly desires.

There is no eternal condemnation to any of the elect, who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Paul writes and asks the question in Rom. 8:33 "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Christ died that all the elect would be justified before the eyes of a just and holy God. There is no charge that can be levied against them before God. Christ has satisfied all the demands of divine justice. There is nothing that the elect can do that will change their position of being justified before God eternally.

The born-again child of God has two natures. Outwardly, he has the nature of the flesh and inwardly, he has the nature of the Spirit. Paul spoke of a warfare that each born-again child of God must endure: Gal. 5:16 "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." When a person walks in the Spirit, he does not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Therefore, he is not condemned with timely condemnation. If, however, he walks in the flesh his heart will condemn him in the courtroom of his heart and mind. He will be convicted of his sins committed while walking in the flesh. The timely release for him then is to repent and ask God to forgive him and cleanse his heart from sin guiltiness, which he has promised that he will do.

Rom. 8:2

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

Two laws are set forth in the above scripture: the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and the law of sin and death. Furthermore, Paul said that the first law had set him free from the second law. In order to understand how the first law set him free (and also set us free) from the second law we need to understand what the second law is and how that we were in bondage to the second law.

The law of sin and death is the name given to the commandment God gave to Adam in the Garden of Eden: Gen. 2:16 "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." What God told Adam is that if you sin you die. Thus, it is the law of sin and death. When Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he brought himself under the penalty (or curse) of the law of sin and death. Furthermore, he brought all of his posterity under the same penalty as we examined in Rom. 5:12-21.

Through Adam's transgression, he and all his posterity were brought under the effects of the law of sin and death. Because of that sin, we were brought under the condemnatory wrathful judgment of God. In addition, the nature of man changed from a state of innocence to a state of total depravity, such as we examined in Rom. 3:9-20. We were under the bondage of the law of sin and death. This bondage included not being able to seek after God, not being able to understand the things of the Spirit of God, and not being able to worship God in Spirit and in

truth. It also included not being able to fear God, not being able to do any good, not being able to fellowship with God, and not being able to cease from sin.

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus delivered us from the bondage of the law of sin and death. First, let us see what the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus flows from the covenant of redemption: Rom. 8:29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." In the covenant of redemption, all that God chose before the world began are **called** into Spiritual life. This calling into Spiritual life is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This calling into Spiritual life is only to those who are chosen in Christ before the world began (Eph. 1:4).

The calling of God in the New Birth gives us spiritual life and with this spiritual life we are able to understand the things of the Spirit of God, we are able to seek after God, we have the fear of God, we are now able to worship God in Spirit and in truth, and we are able to bear the fruit of the Spirit. We are also able to mortify the deeds of the flesh and we are able to fellowship with God. It is in this manner that we are made free from the law of sin and death. We still possess the nature of the flesh, yet we are given a new nature in the spiritual birth, that has freed us from the bondage of the old nature.

Rom. 8:3, 4

Rom. 8:3 "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." The law under consideration in this verse of scripture is the law given at the hand of Moses. The law could not make anyone righteous or give spiritual life. The reason that the law could not make anyone righteous or give spiritual life is the depravity of man's flesh. Man was condemned because of sin under the law. The law required perfection. Anything less than perfection rendered those under the law unrighteous: Gal. 3:10 "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The truth is that all of Adam's fallen race have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Christ came under the law: Gal. 4:4 "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." He came for the express purpose of redeeming his people from their sins: Matt. 1:20 "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Christ did not come in sinful flesh, but he came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was conceived in the womb of a virgin of the Holy Ghost. His flesh was like our flesh except for the sin. He had no sin. He was that Holy One.

God for (because of) sin condemned sin in the flesh. Christ who knew no sin was made to be sin for us: 2 Cor. 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Christ who had no sin and lived without sin and kept the law to perfection was made by God to be sin for us on the tree of the cross. It was there that God poured out his wrath, condemning our sins in the flesh of Christ. God executed his complete judgment upon our sins and Jesus suffered all that God's wrath demanded because of our sins.

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." There is a letter of the law and there is a spirit of the law: Rom. 7:6 "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Love is the fulfilling of the law: Rom. 13:9 "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." The righteousness of the law is to "love thy neighbour as thyself."

We, who have been justified by the blood of Jesus and born of the Spirit, fulfill the law by walking after the Spirit and not after the letter. Love is a fruit of the Spirit and when we walk after the Spirit we are manifesting love and loving our neighbour as ourself. This fulfills the righteousness of the law. While we can never work the law to perfection because of the weakness of the flesh, yet when we walk after the Spirit we can fulfill the righteousness of the law by loving our neighbour as ourself.

Rom. 8:5-9

Rom. 8:5 "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." Once again, Paul is setting forth the two natures of man. One nature, the flesh, is in all men. The other nature, the spirit, is in only those that have been born of the Spirit.

They that are after the flesh, which includes all men, do mind the things of the flesh. In Jer. 13:23 the question is asked, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Paul stated previously, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." The works of the flesh are set forth in Gal. 5:19-21, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." When we walk after the flesh, our mind will be on the things of the flesh and will lead us to wicked actions.

They that are after the Spirit, which includes only those born of the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit. The spiritual inner man is said to be incapable of sinning: 1 John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The fruit of the Spirit is set forth for us in Gal. 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." When we walk after the Spirit our mind will be on the things of the Spirit which will lead us to living uprightly.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Jesus set forth the mind and actions of the two natures as two types of trees: Matt. 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree

cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." The carnal mind is incapable of even a good thought. It is altogether wicked and "every imagination of the thoughts of carnal man's heart is only evil continually." Man is by his fleshly nature, "dead in trespasses and sins:" Eph. 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

To dwell in the carnal mind is to dwell in death (separation from God).

The Spiritual mind is like the good tree. It cannot bring forth evil thoughts or evil deeds. When we dwell in the Spiritual mind, we are dwelling in life and peace (fellowship with God and the things of the Spirit).

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." By this, we know that a person who has not been born of the Spirit is dwelling in a state of intense hatred (enmity) against God. He has no desire for the things of God and in his heart; he has said, "There is no God." Furthermore, he despises even the knowledge of God.

The above does not teach that the carnal mind is not subject to the moral laws of God, for he is judged against those moral laws. The law that he is not subject to is the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Thus, having not the Spirit, the spirit has no direction over his actions or desires. He is incapable of following the Spirit or of producing the fruit of the Spirit. The gospel means nothing to him and the service of God is just foolishness to him, "so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." A person who has not been born of the Spirit cannot do anything to please God. He is totally incapable of pleasing God.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Here the terms, "in the flesh," and "in the Spirit," are defined for us. A person is said to be "in the flesh" if he has not been born of the Spirit. In contrast, a person is said to be "in the Spirit" if he has been born of the Spirit and thus the Spirit of God in dwelling in him. We need to be careful that we do not confuse being "**in the flesh**" with "**walking after the flesh.**" A person who is "**in the Spirit**" can **walk after the flesh**, but he is not by definition "**in the flesh.**"

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Sometime during the life of every elect child of God, he will be born of the Spirit of Christ. Someone who has not been born of the Spirit of Christ, nor never will be born of the Spirit of Christ has no part with Christ. He is none of His.

Rom. 8:10

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

The above verse speaks of Christ being in you. This is the Spirit of Christ being in you as a direct result of the spiritual birth. Through the miracle of the New Birth, we have the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in us. Being born of the Spirit of God gives us two natures. We have the nature of the flesh through the natural birth. We have the nature of the Spirit through the spiritual birth.

"The body is dead because of sin." Obviously, this is not talking about the natural death of the body, but it is speaking of the body being dead to the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Sin has rendered our flesh incapable of seeking after God or understanding the things of the Spirit of God or of doing good. It has also rendered our flesh incapable of fellowship with God and being comforted by the gospel. Thus the body is dead in trespasses and sins.

"But the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Through the righteousness of Jesus Christ in fulfilling the law to a jot and a tittle and subsequently through his atoning sacrifice for us we have been made legally righteous. Through the righteousness of Jesus Christ in executing the covenant of redemption and imparting spiritual life into us through the miracle of the New Birth we are made vitally righteous. This spiritual life that we now have renders us capable of understanding the things of the Spirit of God. It makes us capable of seeking after God. It makes us capable of doing good and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. It makes us capable of fellowshiping with God. It places us in a position whereby we can receive comfort, peace, and hope through the gospel of Jesus Christ. It makes us capable of pressing into the church kingdom of heaven here on earth.

Rom. 8:11

Rom. 8:11 "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

There are four great workings of the Spirit of God that are either directly mentioned or alluded to by this verse of scripture:

1. The Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead. There are recorded eight other raisings of natural bodies from the dead in the scriptures. These eight people that were raised from the dead were raised back to a natural life such as they had prior to dying in the first place. They were raised back to life and then a little later they died again. Jesus' raising from the dead was different. When the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead, he was raised to a glorified body. This glorified body of Jesus will never die again.

2. The word "also" in verse 11 alludes to a previous raising of the elect from a dead state. When the elect were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, they were quickened into Spiritual life (Eph. 2:1). Jesus said in John 5:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." This quickening of the Holy Spirit into spiritual life gives us a life and abilities that we did not possess before. Due to this quickening into spiritual life, we can seek after God and we can understand the things of the Spirit of God. We can also do well, and we can see and enter the church kingdom of God here on earth. In addition, we can worship God in Spirit and in truth and we can fear God. This is just a small sampling of things that we can now do because we have been quickened into spiritual life.

3. Once we were quickened into spiritual life, the Holy Spirit now dwells in us. He has taken his abode in our hearts. There are many blessings to us because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We have received through the indwelling of the Spirit of God, the spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba Father." The Spirit makes intercessions for us with groaning that cannot be uttered. The Spirit leads us and teaches us. The Spirit comforts us and

causes us to hope. The indwelling Spirit gives us spiritual gifts. Again, these are just a few of the blessings that we have through the indwelling of the Spirit of God in our hearts.

4. Finally, there is the promise that we who have the indwelling Spirit shall also have our mortal bodies quickened into glorified bodies. This will take place at the resurrection of the dead in the last day when Christ shall return again to take his people home. This is our precious hope and will be the final fulfillment of the covenant of redemption.

Rom. 8:12, 13

Rom. 8:12 "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

It is to the brethren that Paul addresses these remarks. Thus they are addressed to born again children of God who are members of the church at Rome. Since these statements are to spiritually born children of God, the death Paul writes about is not eternal death, but rather a death to fellowship and a death to the blessings of the church and the blessings of a close walk with God and his obedient children while we sojourn in this life.

Throughout the previous verses in chapter 8, Paul has shown forth numerous reasons why we are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. The flesh and its deeds has brought nothing but sin and death unto us and all the subsequent maladies associated with sin.

Contrary to walking after the flesh, we should walk after the Spirit and through the indwelling Spirit we should mortify the deeds of the body. The word, "mortify," means to put to death. We are not to mortify the body, but the deeds of the body. Through walking in the Spirit and following the teachings of the word of God we put to death the works of the flesh that are set forth in Gal. 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

When we walk in the Spirit we live that spiritual life in the kingdom of heaven and enjoy the blessings of fellowship with God, the approval of God, and the felt presence of the Lord in our daily lives.

Rom. 8:14-17

Rom. 8:14 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

In this passage Paul sets the principle of how that we can be assured that we are of the elect of God and have been born of the Spirit and what we can look forward to as a result of being children of God.

Having evidences of being a child of God means that we can be assured of our salvation and that heaven will be our home after this world is over. We have all the assurance of all the

blessings promised in the covenant of redemption. Being led by the Spirit of God is one of the strongest assurances that we are a child of God. Paul said, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Thus, anyone who has experienced the leadership of the Spirit of God is a son of God. While there are many other evidences of being a child of God, such as belief, chastisement, bearing the fruits of the Spirit, the leadership of the Spirit of God is one of the strongest evidences that we have of being one that was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Another assurance of being a child of God is found when a person cries out to God for help. This cry of "Abba, Father" is a result of having received the Spirit of adoption. A person will not cry out to God until he has been born of the Spirit and thus received the Spirit of adoption. Having the Spirit of adoption causes us to realize that we have a heavenly Father and to cry out unto him for our needs and help. The Spirit of Adoption will not make us to feel that God is a terror (spirit of fear) unto us, but rather that as a Father he has our best interest at heart.

Once we have the evidences of being a child of God, we are brought to the knowledge that we have an inheritance awaiting us. We are heirs of God. We are not separate heirs, but we are joint heirs with Christ. There is a difference between being a separate heir and being a joint heir. Please consider the following examples to show the difference between being a separate heir and a joint heir:

1. A man has 40 acres of land and four children. In his will, he makes the four children separate and equal heirs. This means that at his death the four children will each inherit 10 acres of land.

2. Another man has 40 acres of land and four children. In his will, he makes the four children joint heirs. This means that at his death the four children will together jointly own the entire 40 acres of land.

God has made us joint heirs with Jesus Christ. This means that everything that is Jesus Christ's each of us will have in joint ownership with him!! I find this to be one of the most remarkable statements in the entire scriptures. I cannot begin to imagine what a great inheritance each of God's children shall share with our elder brother, Jesus Christ.

"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." This does not mean our personal sufferings here in time, but rather it means that in covenant we were in Christ when he suffered on the cross for us, thus we suffered with him. Likewise, as Christ was glorified, we in covenant, are glorified with him and in the resurrection we will bear glorified bodies just as Christ bore after his resurrection

Rom. 8:18-25

Rom. 8:18 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man

seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." We read in Job: 14:1 "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." We are born into this world and tribulations, trials, troubles, and sufferings are our lot until we lay down our lives in death. Some people seem to suffer much more than others, but all suffer. Regardless of the amount of suffering that we may undergo in this life, Paul says that it is unworthy of even being compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. Sometimes we get so caught up in our present circumstances that we fail to look forward to that which awaits us in glory.

Our most glorious and blessed state is yet to come and we should rejoice in the remembrance of what awaits us in heaven's glory world. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15:19 "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Our hope goes beyond the grave into the glory world itself. That is why we can rejoice and not be miserable. If all we could see is this life and what awaits us at the end of this life-the grave, then we would be miserable indeed.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Here, the creature is referring to the whole body, soul, and spirit of a spirit-born child of God. What we will be in body is not yet revealed unto us, but we wait with an earnest expectation of that final manifestation of the sons of God. That is we wait for the resurrection of our bodies. The term, "earnest expectation," can be defined as hope. Our hope is an earnest expectation. With all the sufferings that we undergo in this life, we patiently wait for the morning of the resurrection when our bodies will be changed and fashioned like the glorious body of Christ.

"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope," A person who is born of the Spirit does not want to have to carry around a corrupt sinful body. It is not our desire (will) to do so. Yet, God in his infinite mercy has taken care of our concerns about the outcome of this sinful flesh in which we dwell. He has subjected the same in hope. We have a hope that one day our change will come and we will no longer have to deal with the sin problem in our flesh that so readily plagues us in this life. The hope that we have is a covenant promise which Paul states for us in Rom. 8:28-30.

"Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The sin corruption of this body keeps us in bondage to its sinful desires so long as we live in this life. We only now see through a glass darkly, but one day we will see Him face to face. In the morning of the resurrection, we shall be changed and fashioned like the glorious body of Christ and at that time we will never again be troubled with sin. We shall never have any more suffering, trials, tribulations or anguish. We will not be troubled with health problems or mental problems. We will not have conflicts with other people, but all shall be joy, and peace, and comfort, and fellowship, and love manifest for an eternity. At that time we will be completely delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The whole creation is referring to both the outer man and the inner man. In Gal. 5:17 Paul wrote, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The constant warfare that takes place in this life causes us to groan and travail in pain within. Having these two contrary and

warring natures brings us into daily conflict within and we have to constantly be on the alert to mortify the deeds of the flesh. This groaning and travailing continues unto death of the body. Yet with the death of the body, this is not the end of the body.

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." The first fruit of the Spirit is the spiritual inner man that we have because of having been born of the Spirit of God. Having a first fruit causes us to look for a second fruit. Having this first fruit, the new birth, causes us to come into conflict with the works of the flesh which causes us to groan within ourselves. Once we realize that we have been born of the Spirit of God we begin to wait for the adoption of our body into the family of God. That adoption process will be completed in the morning of the resurrection when Christ shall come again and claim that which he has purchased with his blood. The body shall be changed and fashioned like the glorious body of Christ at that time and we shall be taken to our eternal home in heaven as the adopted children of God. For this, we now wait with hope for the final redemption (taking home) of our body.

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." There is a lot of misunderstanding about what hope is. Hope is not a wish or a dream. It is something that is sure but that will not take place till sometime in the future. Our hope is based on the covenant promise of God. Our hope saves us, not into heaven's glory world, but it saves us from despondency and overmuch sorrow in this life. Once a desire is accomplished, it can no longer be a hope. We hope for that which we do not yet see. We hope for the resurrection. We know that we will have part in the resurrection due to the promise of God and the evidences that he has given us that we are the children of God. The resurrection has not yet come, so we hope for it. Once the resurrection comes we will no longer hope for it, but it will be then a present reality for us.

For now we hope for the resurrection and this saves us from being overly despondent or concerned over the sufferings, trials, tribulations, afflictions, and persecutions of this life. We know there is something better awaiting us further on.

Rom. 8:26, 27

Rom. 8:26 "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

We have previously noted that the Spirit quickened us into spiritual life when we were dead in trespasses and sins. Furthermore, we noted that the Spirit will also, according to God's covenant promise, quicken our vile bodies into spiritual bodies on the morning of the resurrection. The statement was made, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Even though the things that await us in heaven's glory world pale any sufferings that we may have in this time world, yet God cares for our sufferings here in time: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Regardless of what condition or infirmity we might find ourselves in here in this time world, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. It is a great comfort to God's people to know that we have help from God in all of our infirmities and troubles of life. Often times we do not even know what it is that we stand in need of, but: "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Even when we are at a total loss as to what we need or even what we should pray for, we can rest with the sweet assurance that the Spirit knows what we need and will intercede on our behalf with groanings which cannot be uttered. What a merciful God that we have that even when we cannot find words to speak or knowledge to know what to ask, then he intercedes for us for our timely benefit and blessing.

"And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." It is Christ that searches our hearts. He being God, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, who is God. While we may not be able to communicate with God or even with others very effectively, yet God has perfect communication in the Godhead. Christ, the Son of God, hears the groanings of the Spirit of God on our behalf, and he intercedes on behalf of the saints with the Father according to the will of God. In all of this we see God's amazing love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace towards his elect people.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 1

Rom. 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

This passage is often referred to as God's covenant of redemption. This covenant shows forth the redemption of God's elect people. Due to the great significance of this covenant we will go into some detail about this covenant. We will look at all five parts of this covenant in succeeding essays.

God makes two types of covenants - conditional and unconditional covenants. We also noted that the covenant of redemption as stated in Rom. 8:28-30 is an unconditional covenant, i.e., there are no conditions placed on man, but God is responsible for carrying out all the actions in that covenant.

Before we study each of the actions in the covenant of redemption listed in Rom. 8:28-30, let us look at an old testament passage that teaches us about the covenant of redemption. This passage is found in II Sam. 23:1-7. This passage begins by telling us that the words that follow are the last words of David. Then it tells us that though the words were spoken by David as his last words, that he was just a mouth-piece for the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was in my tongue." In other words the words spoken were actually the words of the Holy Spirit with David being used as a mouth-piece!

Next, in verse 3 we are told that the Holy Spirit is relating to us a conversation between the "God of Israel" and the "Rock of Israel:" "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me..." Thus in this conversation the Rock of Israel spake to the God of Israel and what followed were the words which the "Rock of Israel" spake to the "God of Israel." I Cor. 10:4 tells us that

the "Rock of Israel" is "Christ:" "...for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Therefore the words that followed in II Sam. 23:3-7 were the words of Christ, the Rock of Israel, to God, the Father, the God of Israel.

In verses 3 and 4 Christ set forth his own requirements to rule as King. Then beginning with verse 5 He relates to us provision of the covenant of redemption. First He says, "Although my house be not so with God..." The Lord's house was composed of sinners. They stood before God condemned by sin. They were not righteous or worthy of eternal glory. Next Christ said "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant..." Now we see that this covenant was between Christ and God the Father. The covenant was not made with man. While the family of God is embraced by this covenant, they are not parties to this covenant.

The Lord went further and said "ordered in all things and sure..." This covenant between God the Father and God the Son covered all the details. There was nothing left to chance. This covenant is SURE. All the provisions will be carried out just as God ordained them. In addition, the Lord went on: "for this is all my salvation..." This salvation is a salvation that the Lord performs as stated in Matt. 1:21, "he shall save his people from their sins." Notice that when Christ said "all my salvation" that this statement excludes the works of men in bringing it about. It is "all" of the Lord. The Lord went on to say "and all my desire..." God always accomplishes his will: he is never frustrated or disappointed with anything he sets out to do.

Again the Lord said further, "Although he make it not to grow." This covenant neither increases nor decreases in scope or coverage. It results in all its provisions being carried out to its fulfillment and embraces in the end all those who were embraced in the beginning. It neither grows nor diminishes.

Next in v.6 the Lord said, "But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands." The sons of Belial are representative of our sins. The fact that they cannot be taken with hands illustrates our helplessness in attempting to do any thing to save ourselves from sin. All of our works are as filthy rags before God. Finally, the Lord said, "But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." Who was it that was "fenced with iron and the staff of a spear?" It was Jesus who was nailed to the cross with iron nails thru his hands and his feet and who at the end had a spear driven thru his side. It was he and he alone that could deliver and did deliver us from our sins. Fire is a figure of God's judgment found often in the scriptures. In the same place where Christ was crucified were our sins utterly burned with the fire of God's judgment. They were completely burned with "fire in the same place." Since our sins were utterly burned, then there is nothing left for the sinner to do to be made righteous before God's bar of justice. According to this everlasting covenant of redemption Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He has delivered us from our sins. Praise be to his Holy name.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 2

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) Rom. 8:28-30 is commonly called the "Covenant of Redemption." In our next essay we will consider the "all things" that "work

together for good." In this essay we will look at the "purpose" of God. Verse 28 above speaks of those who "love God" "who are the called according to his purpose."

Chronologically, God purposed to call a people, then he called those he purposed to call, and then as a consequence of this calling they love God. No man loves God before he is called of God. According to 1 John 4:7, "everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." God's calling is the "cause," the new birth is the "effect," and love of God is the "consequence."

God is a God of purpose. He does not work his will based on chance or happenstance. He purposes to do something, then he does according to his purpose. The scriptures speak of the purpose of God thusly:

A. Isa. 46:11 - "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."

B. Eph. 3:11 - "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

C. Eph. 1:9 - "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

D. Eph. 1:11 - "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will."

E. II Tim. 1:9 - "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

F. Rom. 9:11 - "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth..."

From the above we make the following observations about God's purpose:

A. What God purposes to do, he does. According to Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 4:35, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" No force in heaven and earth can stop or hinder God from doing what he has purposed to do. Once God purposes to do something, it WILL be done.

B. God had an eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus. Mortal time bound man has a difficult time understanding something that is eternal, i.e., has no beginning or no end. Yet what God has purposed in Christ Jesus has no beginning and has no end. It is infinitely old

and will last an eternity. The Covenant of Redemption expresses God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus.

C. God's purpose is his good pleasure. It pleased God to choose, save, call and glorify a people to be his.

D. God purposed our eternal inheritance.

E. In God's purpose, he councils only with himself, he does not council with anyone else. Of course, when you have all wisdom and all knowledge there is no reason to council with anyone else!

F. God works all things after the council of his own will. God does not have to alter anything according to changed circumstances. The God who has all power and all knowledge can and does purpose according to his will and then executes his purpose without change or need of change.

G. Our salvation from sin and our holy calling is according to that which God purposed in Christ before the world began. God purposed to save us and God purposed to call us. Now, here in time he executes his purpose. He saves us and he calls us. Thus our salvation and calling are not by chance or happenstance, but by God's eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

H. God purposed to choose a people to be his and according to Eph. 1:4 he chose them before the world began. His choice was not based on works but was by grace.

To be able to purpose something, then bring it about exactly as he purposed it, speaks of God's wisdom, power, knowledge, and character. As one old testament verse states "I am God, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." God purposes and never changes from that he purposes. He does according to his purpose and it comes to pass just exactly as He purposed it.

In the Covenant of Redemption God purposed to foreknow, predestinate, call, justify, and glorify a people. The end result is that they are chosen, predestinated, called justified, and glorified just as God purposed.

As a side note, we love God because he called us. The fact that we love God is evidence we are embraced in this Covenant of Redemption.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 3

Rom. 8:28-30 is commonly known as the "Covenant of Redemption." It is an unconditional covenant that God made with himself to procure the salvation, new birth, and glorification of those he foreknew.

The statement at the beginning of this passage has been a subject of much discussion and controversy in religious circles thru the ages. This statement causing controversy is "All things work together for good to them that love God." The controversy revolves around the meaning of the word "all." Is the "all" in this passage a universal "all" or a contextual "all?" All can be universal, i.e., embracing everything without exception or it can be contextual, i.e., embracing only those things within the context. If the "all" is universal, then the statement would teach that everything that ever happens whether good or bad ultimately works together for good to them that love God. If, however, the "all" is contextual then the statement would be referring

only to the things within the context, i.e., God's foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Using the contextual "all" would teach only that "all" refers to the above five things and these five things are working together for good to them that love God.

Sometimes, I hear people make the statement after something good has happened to someone that "all things work together for good to them that love God." I, personally, have never heard anyone say that after something bad had happened to someone!

Now, if the "all" in "all things" is universal then all sins, evil, the devil, his angels, and every catastrophe as well as everything else that happens in the universe would work together for good to them that love God. For the all to be universal there could be no exceptions. Since the above listed things such as sin, evil, the devil, his ministry, and catastrophes don't on the surface appear to be working together for our good, God is assigned the responsibility of controlling those things in such a way that ultimately they work together for good for those who love God. Usually the passage where Joseph told his brethren, who sold him into Egyptian slavery, is quoted, "ye meant it for evil, but God meant it for good," to attempt to substantiate a universal "all" things.

When in doubt about the meaning of God's word, our best course of action is to let the scriptures speak as to the meaning. Rom. 3:7, 8 reads, "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just." Paul said it was a slander for anyone to report that he or those with him said "Let us do evil that good may come." Now if my or anyone else's evil deeds result in good to them that love God, then why did Paul say it was a slander? Thus it would appear that the universal "all" theory does not stand up under the scrutiny of God's word.

Now all this is not to say that sometimes God providentially intervenes in our lives and turns "lemons into lemonade." This has happened, no doubt, many times in the lives of his people, but this doesn't justify saying that God will take every evil and every sin that is ever committed and make each of them work for our good.

My conclusion is that the "all" in Rom. 8:28 is a contextual "all" and that everything about God's foreknowing a people, predestinating them to be conformed to the image of Christ, calling them, justifying them and glorifying them works together for our good. Paul concludes in v. 31, "What shall we then say to "these" things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" The "these things" are the "five things" in v. 29 and 30 which are the "all things" in v. 28.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 4

Before proceeding to notice how and why the five things in Rom. 8:29, 30 in the covenant of redemption work together for good to them that love God, let us notice that the five things listed in those verses are all listed in the past tense - foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, glorified. Now we know that from a timely standpoint we were not all called at the time this was written, nor are we yet conformed to the image of Christ as we will be, nor are we completely glorified in the sense that we will be according to this covenant. How then can we explain how the past tense verbs can be used? The answer is found for us in Rom. 4:17, "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickened the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were." God can call

things that be not as though they were because what God purposes to do must be done! Since the covenant of redemption shows us God's eternal purpose, He is justified in using the past tense though to us some of those things are yet future. Remember, what God purposes to do is as good as done.

Next, we want to consider the good that those five things work together. The end result of those five things are all eternal good for those whom God foreknew. Now there is much timely good that comes to us during our lifetime, such as providential blessings, growth in spiritual knowledge, fellowship with God and his people, true worship of God, etc. These and many more are timely blessings and certainly can be classified as good to us and for us. However, the good in the covenant of redemption transcends timely blessings and speaks to us of eternal good. First, we will be conformed to the image of Christ and that conformation is for an eternity. Second, the result of God's calling is that we are born again, and that spiritual birth gives us eternal life in the spirit. Third, our justification from sins places us in a righteous position with God that can never be altered. Fourth, our glorification in body, soul, and spirit is eternal.

Now let us proceed to consider how those five things - foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, glorified - work together for that eternal good to those that love God. Please note the unity of effect that those five things have. This is noted thru the use of the pronouns, whom and them. For when the scripture says "whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate...and whom he did predestinate, them he also called..." we note the absolute unity of action and effect upon the ones being acted upon. In other words, the same ones that God foreknew are the exact same ones that he predestinated, and the exact same ones that he called, and the exact same ones that he justified, and the exact same ones that he glorified. There are not more or less that he foreknew than he predestinated or more or less that he predestinated than he called, etc. Thus he foreknew the same number of people that he also predestinated, called, justified and glorified. The effect upon us individually is that once he foreknew us, he also predestinates us, calls us, justifies us, and glorifies us. Thus if I am the beneficiary of one of the actions of God in this covenant then I am a beneficiary of all five of the actions in this covenant. Thus they all work together for our eternal good.

But why is it that they all work together? The answer is because the action is all of God. None of the things listed in this covenant requires any action on man's part. The covenant speaks of whom God foreknew and of whom God predestinated, and of whom God called, and of whom God justified, and of whom God glorified. This is the reason why those five things work together. It is all in keeping with God's eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is why there can be no failure in this covenant. It is an unconditional covenant, that is, there is no conditions placed on man to perform in order for the provisions of this covenant to be carried out. All of the provisions will be carried out by God. No wonder the writer could say in verse 31, "what shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" One might be tempted to say, "Well the devil and all the fallen angels are against us, as well as the messengers of Satan, and a wicked world." But it doesn't matter who might attempt to oppose us, for God is for us and he has all power in heaven and in earth and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou. God is greater than all the combined forces of all creation and God will bring to pass what he purposes to do. God cannot fail or be discouraged. We can rejoice in the knowledge that those five things in his covenant of redemption work together for our eternal good, because God is the one who is working the covenant.

In our next essay we will begin looking at what the scriptures have to say about each of the five things listed in the covenant of redemption beginning with those whom God foreknew.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 5

The covenant of redemption reads in Rom. 8:28-30, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

In this essay we will look at a limited specific aspect of God's foreknowledge, i.e., "whom he did foreknow." The scriptures tell us that God knows all things, therefore he knows all things past, present, and future. Thus, he knows about all people who ever have or ever will live on the face of the earth. However, the "foreknow" in the covenant of redemption is not speaking about God knowing about all people, but is speaking about a very specific portion of those who have or will live on the earth.

We read what Jesus said in Matt. 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The Lord told these who were claiming to prophesy in his name, cast out devils, in his name, and to do many wonderful works in his name that he never knew them. This certainly isn't to say that he never had knowledge of them or that he never knew about what they had claimed to have done. But, it is teaching us that he never appointed them to do the works they were claiming they had done. Thus, the Lord said, "I never knew you."

The Lord knows about all people and all things, though he has not appointed all people and everything that comes to pass. As pertaining to things, the scriptures say that "God is not the author of confusion." Certainly, he knows about confusion and sin, but he is not the cause of confusion and sin.

Our understanding of how God foreknew a people is illustrated for us in Jer. 1:5 when the Lord said unto Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." As we have pointed out before God knows about all people but he has only appointed some. God knew Jeremiah before he ever formed him in the belly. God knew him in a special way in that God had appointed him to be a "prophet unto the nations." This appointment took place before Jeremiah had any existence except in the mind and purpose of God. Those that God foreknew in the covenant of redemption are those that God appointed before the world began to be his! Eph. 1:4 reads, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Thus, God made choice of a people before the world began to be his. In future essays we will study on what basis God appointed a people to be his, i.e., works, faith, or grace. We will also consider that God gave these he foreknew to Christ to redeem and wrote their names in the Lamb's book of life and that they were placed "in Christ" to fulfill God's covenant and look at the consequences of these actions of God.

We close this essay with a quote from I Peter 1:1, 2, "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be multiplied."

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 6

In this essay we will consider on what basis God foreknew or chose a people to be his covenant people.

One idea is that God looked down through the annals of time and saw who would do good or who would accept him or seek after him and thus chose them on that basis. God did indeed look down from heaven, but what he saw is recorded for us in Ps. 14:2, 3 and Ps. 53:2, 3 as follows: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Ps. 14:2, 3) The fact is that because of the total depravity of man there is none that had the capability of doing good or of seeking after God until God imparts a new spiritual nature within in the new birth. Thus we see that of all mankind there was none that understood, or that sought after God or that did good. Thus God's choice of a people could not be on the basis of their understanding and seeking God or of their doing something good.

Furthermore, that God's choice of a people is not of works is further illustrated for us in Rom. 9:9-13, "For this is the word of promise, At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Based on this passage we make the following observations:

1. God's choice of Jacob over Esau was according to God's purpose of election.
2. God's election is not based on works, either good or evil.
3. God's choice was made before the children were capable of doing any works.

Again in Rom. 11:5, 6 we are told that God's choosing of a people is not based on works as follows: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Thus we are told that God's choice of a people is by grace and not works. Furthermore, we see the impossibility of mixing grace and work in this choice. It is not part grace and part work. It is either all grace or all works and he tells us plainly that it is all grace. Now grace is defined as the "unmerited favor of God." Thus those chosen have done nothing to merit God's choosing them!

Finally we are told in Rom. 9:14-16 that God's choice of a people is not based on man's will (choice) or man's efforts: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." From this passage we draw the following conclusions:

1. God's choice of a people manifests God's sovereignty.
2. God's choice of a people is pure and simply mercy and compassion toward them.
3. God's choice of a people is not based on their will or choice.
4. God's choice of a people is not based on their efforts (running).
5. It is not unrighteous for God to make a choice based on his sovereign will.

In conclusion, God's choice of a people is by grace (unmerited favor) alone. God was under no obligation to choose any one, but he did and we should be extremely thankful that he did.

In our next essay we will look at how the elect were given to Christ and when and for what purpose they were given to Christ.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 7

In this essay we will look at how the elect were given to Christ and when and for what purpose they were given to Christ.

First that the Father gave the elect to his Son is evidenced by the following verses of scripture:

A. Matt. 1:21 - "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

B. John 6:37-39 - "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

C. John 10:28, 29 - "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

D. John 17:1, 2 - "...Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

E. Heb. 2:13 - "And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me." These verses of scripture are sufficient to prove that the Father gave to the Son a people.

Now let us look to when this gift was made. In Eph. 1:4 we read, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." This verse teaches us that God made choice of a people to be his before the foundation of the world and gave them to Christ in covenant at that time. These then are the ones that God foreknew in Rom. 8:29.

Next, let us consider for what purposes were the elect given to Christ in covenant before the world began. In looking back at the scriptures we have already quoted we can make the following observations:

A. The elect were given to Christ that "he may save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21)

B. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all will come to him. (John 6:37)

C. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that none of them be "cast out." (John 6:37)

D. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that none of them be lost. (John 6:39)

E. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all be raised up again at the last day. (John 6:39)

F. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all be preserved in Christ Jesus. (John 10:29)

G. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that he give eternal life to all the elect. (John 17:2)

H. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that all the elect should be holy and without blame before God in love. (Eph. 1:4).

In addition, the elect were given to Christ by the Father that:

I. The elect be adopted into the family of God. (Eph. 1:5)

J. The elect be made accepted by God in Christ. (Eph. 1:6)

K. The elect have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace. (Eph. 1:7)

L. The elect obtain an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. (Eph. 1:11)

M. The elect should be created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10)

In all of the above we see where the Father gave the elect to Christ in covenant for the work that Christ would do on their behalf and thus procure all the blessings reserved for them in the covenant of redemption.

In our next essay we will consider the Lamb's book of life as it relates to the elect.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 8

We read of a time in the 10th chapter of Luke when the Lord sent out seventy disciples beside the twelve apostles to teach and preach in the cities of Judea. When they returned they were rejoicing because the devils were subject unto them through the Lord's name. Among the things the Lord told them after their return was, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

Among the lessons this teaches us are:

A. There are those whose names are written in heaven.

B. To have ones name written in heaven is a cause of great rejoicing.

Next, we may ask ourselves when were those names written in heaven? The answer to this question is found in Rev. 13:8 and Rev. 17:8 as follows:

A. Rev. 13:8 - "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

B. Rev. 17:8 - "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not;...and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world..." Thus, we may conclude that there are those whose names were not written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world, which in turn, infers there are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world. Since the Lord (Lamb of God) in covenant stood slain from the foundation of the world, then those who were chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4) had their names in covenant written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world.

Furthermore, we now consider some of the blessings that are specifically tied to the Lamb's book of life:

A. Luke 10:20 teaches us it is a cause to rejoice.

B. Since the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29), then having ones name written in the Lamb's book of life is tantamount to having ones sins taken away.

C. According to Rev. 20:15 having ones name written in the Lamb's book of life exempts one from being cast into the lake of fire ("And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire").

D. According to Rev. 21:27 having ones name written in the Lamb's book of life enables one to enter into the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God.

E. We read in Heb. 9:15-17, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." The Lamb's book of life is the Lord's testament. The Lord is both the testator and the mediator. Those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are the heirs. When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross as the "Lamb of God" then the testament came of force and those whose names were written therein became the legal heirs of the testator (Jesus Christ). Just as a person on earth may leave a "last will and testament" once that person dies his testament comes of force. It should be remembered names cannot be written into a testament AFTER it comes in force. In addition, once the testament is in force names cannot be stricken from the testament.

All whose names are there at the time the testament comes in force are the legal heirs and that inheritance becomes sure to them.

Certainly the above are powerful blessings to having ones name written in the Lamb's book of life. How can you or I be assured that our names are written therein? Paul wrote in Phil. 4:3, "And I entreat thee also, true yoke fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life." Now was Paul given an opportunity to look into the Lamb's book of life and see that those he mentioned were written in the book? Of course not! Paul knew their names were written therein because of the evidence. He could see by the evidences of their labors that they were children of God and therefore had their names written in heaven. When God grants us to see the evidence in our own labors that we are children of God then we can have the same assurance and confidence that our names are written in heaven.

Finally, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are the same ones whom God foreknew in the covenant of redemption because the ones he foreknew are the ones that are ultimately the heirs of glory. Next, we will consider God's elect in light of the bible teaching of the "seed of Abraham."

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 9

The word, foreknow, as used in Rom. 8:29, means to know or appoint beforehand. As we have previously studied, according to Eph. 1:4 God appointed or chose a people in Christ before the foundation of the world. God's foreknowing a people is the first of five things

(foreknow, predestinate, call, justify, glorify) God is said to do in the covenant of redemption (Rom. 8:28-30). This principle of God's foreknowing a people is taught in the "seed of Abraham."

When God appeared unto Abram in Gen. chapter 12 he began to make promises to the patriarch. One of the promises God made to Abram was in Gen. 12:3: "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This is further expounded to us in Acts 3:25, "And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blest." Thus the blessing that would come to all families of the earth was thru the "seed of Abraham."

God further promised Abram in Gen. 13:16 a multiplication of his seed as follows: "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." Of course, the number of the dust of the earth is innumerable. This principle is further taught in Gen. 15:5 as God told Abram, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." We now know that the stars cannot be numbered for multitude. Once again this promise of a multiplied seed is further elaborated in Gen. 22:17 as God promised Abraham, "and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore..." One thing that the dust, the stars, and the sand have in common is that they cannot be numbered for multitude!

As God had previously promised Abraham that in his seed all families of the earth would be blessed so he promised again in Gen. 22:18, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..." Therefore, the promise of the blessing of the seed extends to all nations and to all families. If one family or one nation should not be blessed by the seed, then God cannot be believed, but of course, God cannot lie, and the promise is sure to all families, and to all nations.

An additional promise to Abraham concerning his seed was made in Gen. 22:18, "and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." To possess the gate of ones enemies is equivalent to victoriously triumphing over those enemies. In comparison, Christ has victoriously triumphed over our enemies: death, hell, sin, devil, and the grave.

Now, we ask ourselves, who is the seed of Abraham to whom these great and glorious promises were made? The answer is found in Gal. 3:16, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to thy seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ." Thus it is settled forever that the seed of Abraham to whom God made the

glorious promises is Jesus Christ!

Next, we want to consider just how Christ (the seed of Abraham) is multiplied to be a great innumerable multitude such as the sand, dust, and stars so as to be innumerable. (Obviously this multiplication of the seed is not thru natural generation, but thru regeneration (new birth)). This we are told in Gal. 4:28, "Now, we brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise." All I have to do is figure out how Isaac was a child of promise and I learn how all the innumerable host are children of promise! Isaac was a child of promise in the following ways:

A. He was promised to be born before his parents ever conceived at God's set time (Gen. 17:6, 21).

B. Isaac's birth was contrary to nature as neither of his parents according to nature were able to produce a child: Rom. 4:19-21, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Please note it was God who promised, and it was God who performed according to the promise.

Isaac's birth was not according to the choice of Abraham, or Sarah, or Isaac, but was according to the promise of God. Isaac's birth was at God's appointed time and was completely contrary to nature. We, as the multiplied seed of Christ are promised beforehand in the covenant of redemption (Rom. 8:29) and that before the world began (Eph. 1:4). Our spiritual birth is at God's appointed time (John 3:8) and is contrary to nature (Eph. 2:1-3).

In Rom. 9:7-9 the seed of Abraham is tied to the doctrine of election as follows: Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son." Thus, we conclude that the children of promise (God's elect) are the children of God.

The multiplied seed is shown to us in Rev. 7:9, 10 as follows: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." This great multitude which no man could number is the multiplied seed of Abraham. The end result is that all praise, honor, and glory is given to God and the Lamb for their salvation from sin.

In our next essay, we will consider God's predestination of a people to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 10

In our study of the "covenant of redemption" which is set forth in Rom. 8:28-30, the second action of God listed in verse 29 is "predestinate." The five actions of God listed in v. 29 and 30 are foreknow, predestinate, called, justified, and glorified. According to

Vines the Greek word "proorizo," which is translated four times into "predestinate," once "ordained before," and once "determined before," means to "mark out or determine beforehand." Thus the English word predestinate means to determine the final destiny beforehand. The four times predestinate is used in the scriptures it is used to denote the final destiny of those that God "foreknew" (Rom. 8:29) or "chose before the world began" (Eph. 1:4). It is never used in connection with anyone other than those whom God foreknew or chose!

We will begin our discussion of God's predestination of the "elect" by considering to what God predestinated them. That is what do the scriptures say is the final destiny of the elect? Rom. 8:29 reads, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Now when the verse says we will be "conformed to the image of His Son" it is not saying we will be "clones" of Christ. When Adam brought forth a son he was born in Adams image as Gen. 5:3 reads, "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Now Seth was in the image of Adam but was not a clone of Adam. He possessed the same characteristics, qualities, and nature of Adam (a fallen nature) and thus was in the image of Adam.

By nature we are all in the fallen image of Adam. Part of the final destiny of the elect is to be in the image of Christ. To understand what that image is we need to look at the characteristics, qualities, and nature of Christ that is different from our characteristics, qualities, and nature. In Heb. 7:26 we read, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners..." In contrast by nature we are unholy, harmful, defiled, and sinners. Also the scriptures describe God to be "love" (I John 4:8), "a spirit" (John 4:24), and "light" (John 1:4) and this light is defined as eternal life. By nature we are completely selfish, having not the spirit of God, and absent of eternal life. In addition, the Lord is incorruptible, immortal, powerful, and glorious (I Cor. 15). Again, by contrast our natural being is corruptible, mortal, weak and dishonorable.

In contrast to what we are now, our final destiny will see us conformed to the image of Christ. At that time in body, soul, and spirit we will be holy, harmless, undefiled, righteous, love, spiritual, possessed of eternal life, incorruptible, immortal, powerful and glorious. It is in keeping with God's predestination that our final destiny will be conformity with the image of His Son.

Next, we read in Eph. 1:4, 5 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will..." Now we are according to birth right in the family of Adam as we are all the off spring of Adam. However, God has declared that those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world will have as a final destiny membership in the family of God. To accomplish this God has predestinated to adopt us into his family by Jesus Christ to himself. Adoption involves taking a person out of one family and placing that person in another family. We will discuss the mechanics of adoption in a later issue. At this point we note that God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children, thus it is our final destiny to be children of God not only in spirit, but also in body.

This brings us to the third thing God has predestinated the elect unto. In Eph. 1:11 we read, "In whom also we (the elect-VJ) have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Thus being the legal heirs of God by spiritual birth, adoption, marriage, and will we have an inheritance from God. In nature, the only lasting inheritance we have is a grave. Yet according to God's predestination we have an eternal inheritance. According to Rom. 8:16, 17 we read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." Thus our final destiny is to be a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. Therefore, we will have by inheritance all that our elder brother has. This is absolutely amazing to consider that we won't be possessors of just a little corner of the glory world, but will be possessors of all that Jesus Christ is a possessor of!

In our next issue we will consider those things about God that imminently qualify him as the only one who can predestinate.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 11

The fact that God purposes, counsels, or wills to do something and then does it is readily apparent from a review of the scriptures:

A. Isa. 46:10, 11 - "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."

B. Dan. 4:25 - "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none shall stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Now this is not to say that we don't sometimes purpose, counsel or will to do something and then try to do according to what we purposed, counseled or willed. The differences between God and us is that God has the nature and abilities to always bring to pass what he has purposed, counseled, or willed, whereas we lack both the nature and the abilities to ensure what we have purposed, counseled, or willed will come to pass. When God determined the final destiny of those he foreknew beforehand (predestinated) because of his nature and abilities he ensured the elect will reach that final destiny. In this essay we want to consider those things about God that imminently qualify him as the only one who can predestinate.

Many times we attempt to do something but simply lack the power or ability to do it. This is never a problem with God for he has all power in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). This power is demonstrated in the creation of the universe by God simply speaking it into existence. Christ manifested that power by raising the dead, healing all manner of sicknesses, performing all manner of miracles, and manifesting his power over the elements. No force can stand against God or in opposition to God and prevail. By his power God can and will overcome all obstacles that could or would conceivably stand in his way of accomplishing his will.

Other times we make plans, but due to our limited knowledge fail to anticipate obstacles that derail or alter our plans. Since God knows all things past, present, and future there is nothing that can surprise him. The scriptures say that he knows our thoughts afar off and our down sittings and our uprisings. The hairs of our head are all numbered and a sparrow does not fall without his knowing it. All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Therefore God's purpose, counsel, or will cannot be derailed or altered by unknown past, present, or future happenings.

We as finite creatures are limited in space. We cannot be at more than one place at a time. We may make plans and while we are attending to one problem another may arise at a different place that we are unable to attend to. God has no such limitations. He is everywhere present and no where absent. He is omnipresent and thus able to overcome and perform everything needed to accomplish his purpose at all places and at all times.

Again as finite creatures, we are not only limited in space but also in time. Our stay on earth is at best only a very short time and we pass from the scene of this life. Many plans of men have failed to come to fruition because they died before they were finished. God has no such limitations for he is eternal. He has neither beginning or ending. Thus, what he purposed, counseled, or willed before the world began, he will still be around to accomplish even until time shall be no more on earth.

Thus based on God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and eternal existence God is able to accomplish what he purposed, counseled or willed to do. As we will see, based on some things that God is unable to do, his purpose, counsel, and will are definitively assured to God's elect.

The first thing that God cannot do is lie. Titus 1:2 reads, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Likewise, Heb. 6:18 reads, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Thus God's covenant promises stand on the fact that God cannot lie!

The second thing God cannot do is change. Mal. 3:6 says, "For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Similarly James 1:17 reads, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Thus, since it is impossible for God to change, he cannot change his mind. Those things which he has purposed, counseled, or willed to do will not be altered because God changed his mind. God cannot change!

The third and fourth things God cannot do is fail or be discouraged. This we read about in Isa. 42:4, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth..." Since God cannot fail, we are assured that what God purposes, counsels, or wills to do will be accomplished without failure. If God should ever try to do something and fail, then he would cease being God! Remember, it is impossible for God to fail. Likewise, since God cannot be discouraged, he will never give up or faint at the task. No task is too hard for the Lord. All that he purposes, counsels, or wills will come to pass without failure or discouragement.

The fifth thing God cannot do is deny himself. Paul wrote in II Tim. 2:13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." For God to abandon his promises would be to deny himself. God, however, is faithful to his work and to his promises. He cannot deny himself regardless of what man may do.

The sixth thing God cannot do is be tempted with evil. This is proven by James 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." If a person can be tempted to evil, then he can succumb to evil. Since the man who executes God's counsel from a far country is Jesus Christ, he had to be perfect and keep the law perfectly to redeem his people. Thus, God's purpose, counsel, and will were never in danger of failure because Christ could not be tempted with evil. Likewise, the seventh thing God cannot do is sin (I John 3:9). It was impossible for Christ to sin. Therefore our salvation is sure.

The final destiny of God's elect began with God's covenant promises, purposes, counsels, and will before the world began. Because of the nature of God and because of those things God cannot do, that destiny is sure. God has predestinated the elect to it.

In our next issue, we will begin to look at the works of God that are essential in order that the elect reach that final destiny. These works are listed for us in Rom. 8:30 as "called, justified, and glorified."

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 12

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This passage of scripture is commonly referred to as the "covenant of redemption." In our previous essays, we have considered God's foreknowing a people, predestinating those he foreknew, and calling those he foreknew and predestinated. In this essay, we will begin a study on God's justifying the people he foreknew.

The word justify means to make or declare righteous or just. It implies legal status. It is a court room term and is the result of a court room judgment. It means the opposite of the word condemn. In order to see how that we are justified it is helpful to go into "heaven's court room" and view the judgment of God.

There would be no judgment nor even a court room without law. Law is the basis for judgment. According to Rom. 5:13, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law." Without law, there can be no transgression of the law. For instance, if there were no speed limit then we could drive 100 mph on the freeway and could not be arrested for speeding.

Law derives from authority. Since God is the creator of all things, ultimate authority rests with God and He is the ultimate lawgiver. According to Isa. 33:22, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." Also James 4:12 reads, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgeth another?" God, as the only lawgiver, gave commandment to man in the garden of Eden, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In giving this law, God also set the penalty for transgressing the law. The penalty for transgression is death. Also, according to Rom. 6:23, "The wages of sin is death..." Sin is defined for us in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth

also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The penalty of death for breaking God's laws is more than just death of the body but is set forth in the following passages of scripture:

1. Rev. 20:11-14 - "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

2. II Thes. 1:7-9 - "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power..."

3. Matt. 25:41, 46 - "then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

The penalty for breaking the law is meted out for every sin. We read in Heb. 2:2, "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward..." Thus, every transgression and disobedience comes before God for judgment. Every sin is judged by God and his wrath is executed upon every sin. There is no such thing as anyone ever getting away with anything before God. Furthermore sin is more than the outward commission of sin, but also includes our inward thoughts:

1. Gen. 6:5 - "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

2. Prov. 15:26 - "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord..."

3. Prov. 24:9 - "The thought of foolishness is sin..."

4. Matt. 5:27, 28 - "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

In our next essay we will consider the origin and extensiveness of sin and consider God as the one who apprehends us and our sins to bring us to judgment.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 13

In this essay, we want to consider the origin and extensiveness of sin and consider God as the apprehender of sin to bring us to judgment.

In Rom. 5:12 we read, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." God gave the law to Adam. Adam transgressed the law and died as the result of sin. However, this sentence of death was more than just upon Adam, but it was upon all his posterity as

well. The sentence of death passed upon all men, for all men were in Adam when he sinned. According to Rom. 5:14 Adam as the head and representative of his race was a figure of Christ who is the head and representative of his elect people. In verses 15 thru 19 of this chapter we read of those things that happened to Adam's race as a result of the sin of Adam. We read that we are dead as a result of Adam's offence, and that we were judged to condemnation because of Adam's offense, and that death reigned over us because of Adam's offense, and that we were made sinners because of Adam's offense. Thus we see that sin in man originated with Adam and this sin nature and condemnation of sin passed upon all of Adam's race.

David said in Ps. 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." David pinpointed his being a sinner as starting at conception. Furthermore, in Ps. 58:3 David affirmed that we bear the fruit of that sin nature as soon as we be born. Paul said in Rom. 7:18 that there is no good thing dwelling in the flesh. Thus sin is pervasive. It extends into the innermost thoughts of our heart. We are altogether filthy with sin.

Unlike in man's legal systems which are very imperfect, God's legal system is perfect. It has no flaws and results in perfect judgment and justice. In man's legal system most transgressions of the law are never apprehended. There are not near enough officers of the law to identify and bring every transgression of man's laws to justice. How many times, for instance, has the reader broken the speed limit for driving and never been apprehended for doing so because there was no traffic officer present to witness the transgression and ticket you? God has no such limitations. He is everywhere present and no where absent and has all knowledge. He is the perfect apprehender of His laws broken by fallen man.

According to Heb. 4:12, 13 God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart and every creature is manifest in his sight for all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. According to Job 26:6, "Hell is naked before him and destruction hath no covering." Job also said in 42:2, "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." This is in harmony with Ps. 94:11, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." Also Prov. 15:26 testifies to the wickedness of our thoughts and that God knows them, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." Lest we think we are not among the wicked 1 Cor. 3:20 says, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

David lamented in Ps. 69:5, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee." Jeremiah recorded the words of the Lord in 16:17, "For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes." The Lord said in Matt. 10:26, "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known." That nothing can be hid from God is manifest in Prov. 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good."

Thus, we are made to conclude that God knows our every thought and our every action and thus our every sin. Not one of his laws are ever broken without his knowing it and without the sin being brought to the bar of justice for judgment.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 14

Justified is the fourth of the five covenant things that work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. The five things are foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. In previous essays, we have considered God as the "lawgiver" and the "apprehender" of sin. In this essay we will consider God as the "Judge of all the earth."

Abraham in pleading for Lot before the Lord asked in Gen. 18:25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Now let us consider the extensiveness of God's judicial reign:

1. He is said, as above, to be the judge of all the earth. The following verses also teach this lesson:

a. Ps. 94:8 - "And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness."

b. Ps. 94:2 - "Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud."

c. Ps. 96:13 - "Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

d. Ps. 82:8 - "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."

2. The following verses show that he judges nations and between nations:

a. Gen. 15:14, "And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge..."

b. Judg. 11:27, "Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon."

3. Ps. 10:18 says that God judges the fatherless and the oppressed: "To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress."

4. God judges the righteous and the wicked according to Eccl. 3:17, "I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work."

5. God judges those that are high. Job. 21:22, "Shall any teach God knowledge? Seeing he judges those that are high."

6. God judges gods. Ps. 82:1, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods."

7. God judges the quick and the dead as shown below:

a. II Tim. 4:1 - "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom."

b. I Pet. 4:5 - "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Unfortunately among men who judge among men there are those who pervert judgment, who judge for reward, who judge for political gain, who judge unrighteous judgment. However, our God is not so. According to Deut. 32:4, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." God judges righteous judgment. God never perverts judgment. In

judgment God does not favor one class of people over another. In judgment no one has an advantage over another due to social position, political position, nationality, gender, age, language, or skin pigmentation. God is perfectly just and perfectly right. That God judges righteous judgment is declared by the following verses:

1. Ps. 50:6 - "And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah."
2. Ps. 9:8 - "And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness."
3. Ps. 67:4 - "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth."
4. Ps. 96:13 - "...for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."
5. Isa. 11:3-5 - "And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: for he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

Now this may seem scary to consider that a God who knows all things, sees all things, and judges righteous judgment should judge me personally, especially, as I know that I am a sinner. It is only when we factor in the representative of His people (Jesus Christ) that we can see deliverance from the execution of God's wrath upon us. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

In our next essay we will consider the "basis of judgment" in God's court room of justice.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 15

In our previous essays, we have considered God as the law-giver, God as the apprehender of his broken law, and God as the judge of all the earth judging righteously. In this essay, we will consider the basis of God's judgment in His court room of justice.

Jer. 32:19 reads, "Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Coupled with the above we read in Rev. 20:11-13, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." Now it is very plain that the basis of God's judgment is according to man's works. Now there are two types of works of men. There are good works and there are evil works. Even in man's system of judgment we are not

brought to judgment for our good works. We are brought to judgment based on our evil works (sin).

God's system of justice is an all or none system. By this I mean if you break even one of God's laws you are guilty of transgression of the entire law! James 2:10, 11 verifies this principle, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." Thus if I had only broken just one small item in the law one time and had kept the rest of the law perfectly for all of my life then I am still guilty of the entire law!

As concerning the universal guiltiness of man under the law based on man's evil works we read in Rom. 3:19, 20, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Likewise Gal. 3:10 reads, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Based on our works we have nothing to plead before God that would justify us. Some have thought, "Aren't my good works weighed in the balance with my evil works and if the scale of justice tips toward the good, then will I be justified?" The answer is a resounding NO! Even in man's justice we can't argue that since I kept the law most of the time that I should be found not-guilty for the times I broke the law. We are judged for breaking the law, not for keeping the law. The scriptures are clear that our good works do not save us from our sins: II Tim. 1:9, "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Likewise, we are not chosen of God to be his people based on our works:

A. Rom. 11:5, 6 - "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

B. Rom. 9:11 - "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Additionally, we are not born of the Spirit based on good works:

A. Tit. 3:4, 5 - "But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

B. Eph. 2:8-10 - "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

When it comes to God's justice and our standing before him based on performing works of righteousness Isa. 64:6 sums it up with these words, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities as the wind, have taken us away."

In our next essay we will look at the case for our defense - Jesus

Christ.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 16

In our previous essays on this subject, we have considered God as the lawgiver, apprehender of sin, and judge of all the earth. We have also considered the basis on which man is judged according to his works. In this essay, we will consider Christ as the representative of his people at the court room of glory.

In Matt. 1:21 the angel declared unto Joseph, when he was considering what action he should take against his espoused wife, Mary, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Thus we see Jesus was to come and save "his people" from their sins.

Numerous verses of scripture show us that Jesus came as the representative of his people. The following is a small sample of these verses:

1. Gal. 3:13 - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." As we were under the curse of the law, Christ as our representative was made a curse "for us" to redeem us from the curse of the law.

2. II Cor. 5:21 - "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." According to this verse, Christ, who knew no sin, became sin "for us" that we be made righteous in him.

3. Heb. 1:3 - "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins..." Here we see Jesus, as our representative, purged our sins by himself.

4. Heb. 9:11, 12 - "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." It was "for us" that Jesus obtained eternal redemption by the sacrifice of himself.

5. Heb. 9:24 - "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Christ ascended into heaven to appear in the presence of God "for us." Thus at the court room of glory he appeared "for us." According to Heb. 9:26, "but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Thus we see, as our representative, Christ thru the sacrifice of himself appeared before God to put away our sin!

6. Heb. 9:28 - "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." It was for "the many" that Christ was offered to bear their sins.

7. Heb. 10:10 - "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Jesus Christ was offered for "all he foreknew." He was their representative and as their representative he sanctified all of them through the offering of his body.

8. Heb. 10:12-14 - "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Thus Jesus by the one offering of himself perfected for ever them that he represented.

9. Rom. 5:15-19 - "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded to many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

The above passage of scripture gives us a comparison of Adam as the representative of his people (the Adamic race) and Christ as the representative of his people (the elect of God - those he foreknew). Just as Adam, by himself, brought condemnation upon the entire Adamic race, so Christ, by himself, brought justification upon his whole elect family.

Shouldn't we all be thankful that Christ represented us at the court room of glory?

In our next essay we will consider Christ as the perfect representative of his people.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 17

In our previous essay, we considered Christ as the representative of his people, as one who stood in their place before the court room of God's justice. In this essay, we will consider Christ as the "perfect" representative.

God requires perfection. Anything less than perfection before a just and holy God is unacceptable.

God's requirement of perfection was demonstrated in the characteristics of the animal sacrifices that were offered to him under the law. Lev. 22:17-22, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the Lord for a burnt offering; ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the Lord."

Likewise, the principle of perfection was required for those who would serve as high priest: Lev. 21:16-23, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron,

saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, or a man that is broken footed, or broken handed, or crook backed, or a dwarf, or he that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the Lord do sanctify them." Thus from the above examples we can see that God requires perfection both of the offering and of the high priest who offered it.

God's requirements of perfection goes beyond the physical attributes described above. The perfect representative of God's people had to be without sin. To this end Christ was born of a virgin (according to Rom. 5:12 sin passes from father to child). Having no earthly father his conception was perfect without sin. Concerning Christ's high priesthood, Heb. 7:26-28 states: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." Thus we must conclude that Jesus had no infirmities, i.e., sin and was separate from sinners.

That Jesus kept the law perfectly throughout his life on earth is proven by Matt. 5:17, 18, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Thus, we see that Jesus came to fulfill the law to its minutest detail and that he did.

Finally we see that Jesus because he was sinless was able to become sin for us that we might be delivered from God's wrathful judgment and be made the righteousness of God in him: II Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

In our next essay we will consider God's wrathful judgment upon sin and what Christ suffered for us on the cross.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 18

In this essay, we will consider God's wrathful judgment of sin and what Christ suffered for us on the cross.

According to the scriptures, "every sin and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward." There is no such thing as a sin going unpunished. God is just. Being just he "must" bring to judgment and to the execution of judgment every sin; otherwise God would not be just. Now we may ask ourselves, "What is the penalty for sin? Several verses of scripture speak to this question:

- a. Rom. 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death..."

b. II Thes. 1:8, 9 - "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power..."

c. Matt. 25:41 - "Then shall he say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

d. II Pet. 2:17 - "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest: to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."

e. Jude 13 - "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

f. Rev. 20:10, 14, 15 - "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever...And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

g. Lk. 16:23, 24 - "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

From the above verses we make the following observations:

a. Eternal death is the consequence of sin.

b. The punishment of sin includes everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

c. The punishment of sin includes being cast into the blackness of darkness forever.

d. The punishment of sin includes eternal torments and being cast into the lake of fire, for ever.

Next, we may ask ourselves, Did Jesus suffer all that the punishment of our sins required to satisfy God's wrathful and righteous judgment? In the garden when Jesus was looking forward to the things that he would suffer said in Matt. 26:38, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Also in Lk. 22:44 it was written of Jesus that he was "in an agony" and it was said of him that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." These things were written of Jesus when he looked forward to the horrible scene of God's wrathful judgment of sin at the cross. According to the scriptures beginning at the sixth hour of the day when Jesus was crucified there was darkness over all the earth for three hours and it was said that the "sun was darkened." God had turned out the lights for the punishment of sin.

Abraham was given a glimpse of this scene as we read in Gen. 15:12, "and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." Likewise one of the ten judgments that fell upon Egypt was darkness as described in Ex. 10:21, 22, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over all the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days." I am convinced that the darkness of God's judgment of sin is more than just natural darkness, but actually a darkness on the very soul of the one who is being punished.

Next, we see Jesus separated from the glory of the Father as he cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Isaiah prophesied of the sufferings of Jesus at the cross when he wrote in Isa 53:4, 5, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

It is abundantly clear that the sufferings of Jesus far exceeded the things man placed upon him in nailing him to the cross, beating him, ridiculing him and spitting upon him, mocking him, and plaiting a crown of thorns on his head. These things didn't redeem us from our sins. It is the sufferings of Jesus under the wrathful judgment of God during the three hours of darkness that satisfied God's wrathful judgment because of our sins. I am convinced that none of us for whom Christ died will ever fully comprehend the depth, nor width, nor breadth, nor height of the sufferings Jesus suffered on our account. He suffered and died that we wouldn't have to suffer an eternal punishment of sin and that we would be made fit subjects for heavens glory world!

In our next essay, we will consider the consequences of Christ's sufferings on the behalf of the elect.

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 19

In this essay, we will consider the consequences of Christ's sufferings on the behalf of the elect.

There are numerous verses of scripture that speak to us about the effects of Christ's sufferings, shed blood and death. A sampling of these verses follow:

a. Heb. 1:3 - "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty of high."

b. Heb. 9:26 - "...but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

c. Heb. 10:10 - "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

d. Heb. 10:12-14 - "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

e. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19 - "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

f. 1 Pet. 2:24 - "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

g. 1 Pet. 3:18 - "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

h. II Cor. 5:23 - "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

i. Rom. 3:24, 25 - "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his

blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

j. Rom. 6:6 - "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

k. Rom. 8:33, 34 - "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justified. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

l. Gal. 3:13 - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

m. Eph. 1:7 - "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

n. Eph. 2:13-16 - "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

o. Eph. 5:2 - "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

p. Eph. 5:25-27 - "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

From the above passages of scripture we may clearly draw the following conclusions about the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus:

- a. He purged our sins by himself.
- b. He hath put our sins away by the sacrifice of himself.
- c. He hath sanctified us through the offering of his body.
- d. He hath perfect for ever them that are sanctified.
- e. We were redeemed from our sins by the blood of Jesus.
- f. We are dead to the condemning effects of sins by the sacrifice of Jesus.
- g. Through the offering of the sacrifice of Jesus we are brought to God.
- h. Because Jesus was made to be sin for us, we are made righteous in him.
- i. We are redeemed, justified, and declared righteous through the redemption of Christ and the grace of God.
- j. The body of our sins was destroyed in the crucifixion of Christ.
- k. No charge can be laid against the elect of God because God through Jesus has justified us.

l. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us on the tree of the cross.

m. Through the redemptive blood of Jesus we have been forgiven of our sins.

n. We have peace with God because of the shed blood of Christ.

o. The offering of Christ is a sweet smelling savour to God.

p. Through the redemptive work of Christ the church is sanctified, cleansed, glorious, spotless, and wrinkle less.

As a final concluding summation on the subject of "justified," God has justified the elect through the redemptive work of Christ.

In our next essay we will consider the fifth of the five works of God in the covenant of redemption which is "glorified."

Rom. 8:28-30 Part 20

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." In previous essays we have considered God's action of foreknowing a people, predestinating those he foreknew, calling those he foreknew and predestinated, and justifying those he foreknew, predestinated, and called. In this essay we will consider God's glorifying those that he foreknew, predestinated, called and justified.

In Rom. 4:17 we read where God "called those things which be not as though they were." God can do this because he is God and because his promises will come to pass just as He promised. Throughout the description of the covenant God has used the past tense to describe his actions. While we are not yet fully glorified in the way we will be glorified, yet in the mind and purpose of God it is as though it were already done.

When we were born of the Spirit we were given a perfect, glorified spiritual nature as we read in the following verses:

a. 1 Pet. 1:23 - "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever."

b. 1 John 3:9 - "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Though we are glorified in spirit having the incorruptible seed within us, yet in body we are not yet glorified to the extent that we will be in the resurrection of our bodies.

A comparison is made in 1 Cor. 15 between our unchanged earthly body and what it will be like after the resurrection when our change comes. First (v.42) it is sown in corruption and raised in incorruption. That which is corrupted is brought into a worse condition. When sin entered into the world, man was brought into a worse (fallen) condition. In the resurrection we will be raised incorruptible. Our state or condition will be perfect and it cannot be corrupted. Thus we will be in a perpetual perfect condition.

Second (v.43) we are sown in dishonor and raised in glory. Sin brought only dishonor or disgrace to ourselves. It rendered us unfit for God's glory world, yet by the grace of God we shall be raised into a state of being without sin and without capability of sinning.

Third (v.43) "it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." Sin has rendered us so weak that we cannot keep ourselves from dying though we try ever so hard. Furthermore, once we die, we don't even have the power to bury ourselves as someone else must do that for us. Yet in the resurrection we will be raised up to die no more. Just how much power we will have, I know not, but it will be sufficient for our every need.

Fourth (v.44) "it is sown a natural body and it is raised a spiritual body." According to v.49 "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the

heavenly." As we live in this life we bear Adam's fallen image. When we are raised in the resurrection we will bear the image of Jesus Christ. As Jesus was/is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, so shall we be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. As Jesus is in his essential nature, so shall we be in our nature in the resurrection.

Fifth (v.54) mortality shall put on immortality. We currently live in timely bodies with every event marked by the passage of time. We are mortal having a beginning and an end. Yet in the resurrection these mortal bodies shall be changed into immortal bodies having no end. Because of the actions of God and his promise of glorification, we can say as Paul stated: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

How we should praise God for his covenant of redemption in which he chose us before the world began to be his and then by the terms of that covenant predestinated our final glorious outcome, calling us into spiritual life and justifying us from our sins that in the morning of the resurrection we might stand before him glorified and become possessors of that glorious inheritance that awaits us! May God add to your understanding of this wonderful covenant he made with himself before the world began.

Rom. 8:31-39

Rom. 8:31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Having set forth the covenant of redemption in verses 28-30, Paul begins to ask seven questions pertaining to the covenant of redemption. The first question is: "What shall we then say to these things?" Shall we give God all the praise, honor, and glory for redeeming us from our sins, for quickening us into spiritual life, and for giving us the hope of the resurrection? He certainly deserves all the praise, honor, and glory based on the things set forth in the covenant of redemption. Or shall we withhold praise from God and think of somehow given partial credit to man and his works or his actions for our new birth, or our redemption or of the hope of heaven's glory world? Based on the things set forth in the covenant of redemption man deserves no praise. We should say as the Psalmist in Psalms 115:1 "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

The second question is: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Obviously, the covenant of redemption teaches us that God is on our side and he is completely for us. Considering that he is the Creator of the Universe and has all power in heaven and earth and that he cannot fail, it really does not matter who may try to be against us. No one; not the wicked or the devil or all the false prophets and false teachers combined and the combined powers of the entire world can unite and stand against our God. We should rejoice because our God is for us.

The third question is: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" This question sets forth the great love that God has for his covenant people in that he spared not his own Son. He delivered him up for us all. This being the case we should be fully confident that God would not withhold any good thing from us. How much more can God give us than that which he has already given us? With the fact that God has already given us Christ and his atoning sacrifice, God will not withhold the new birth and the resurrection from his elect people. He will freely give us all things and for this, we should be forever grateful.

The fourth question is: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." At one time, Satan disputed about the body of Moses: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Satan is said to be the accuser of the brethren: Rev. 12:10, "for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Satan, however, and all his false angels can no longer bring a charge against any of the elect of God. For Christ has justified them before our God. There is no charge that can be laid to the elect. The price of their redemption has been paid in full and now they are legally righteous before a Just and Holy God.

The fifth question is: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The only one who has ever been able to condemn us is God. It was his laws that we broke. It is he that is judge of all the earth. Yet, even God no longer condemns us because Christ died for us and is risen again. Furthermore, he is now at the right hand of God and maketh intercession for us. Eternal condemnation has been done away with by the blood atonement of Jesus Christ on behalf of the elect.

The sixth question is: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The answer is strongly implied that no one shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ. While many would try and Satan would try, yet none can succeed in separating us from the love of Christ. It is impossible that anyone can separate us from the love of Christ. For someone to separate us from the love of Christ they would have to destroy the Godhead and that just can not be done.

The seventh question is like the sixth, but instead of **who** it ask **what**: "shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul's list of things that some might consider as being possible of separating

someone from the love of Christ includes things, events, and people. His conclusion is that it is impossible for one of God's elect to be separated from the love of Christ. This covenant love is set forth in the covenant of redemption and it is set forth in such a way that it makes it impossible that one of the elect not be redeemed, or given spiritual life, or glorified in the resurrection. These things are sure because God is sure and God cannot lie and we cannot be separated from the love of God.

Rom. 9:1-5

Rom. 9:1 "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

Paul had a great heaviness in his heart and he continually sorrowed for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Paul was an Israelite and he knew the customs and backgrounds of the Israelites. By his actions that we read about in the book of Acts, Paul was continually trying to convince the Jews of the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul at one time had been where many of the Jews were at this time. He had been a non-believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord struck him down on the road to Damascus and revealed himself to Paul. This heaviness and continual sorrow that Paul had in his heart was not for all that were the natural descendents of the nation of Israel, but was rather for the elect among the natural descendents of the nation of Israel. We will see this truth when we get to verse 6.

During the Old Testament economy, God had adopted the nation of Israel to be a peculiar nation unto him. He was to them a God and they were to him a people. Beginning when the children of Israel were in Egyptian bondage the Lord manifest his glory to them. He appeared to them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Likewise, he manifest his glory at Mount Sinai when he gave the ten commandments and made a covenant of worship and service with them. Many other times he manifest his glory unto them.

The Lord made covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, telling them he would multiply their seed as the stars of heaven, as the sand upon the seashore, and as the dust of the earth. In addition, he made the covenant of the law with the nation of Israel. Later he made other covenants with Israel also.

At Mount Sinai, God gave the covenant of the law and service to the children of Israel at the hand of his servant Moses, who went up into the mount for forty days and forty nights. God wrote upon two tables of stone the ten commandments and these were given to the nation of Israel and God made a covenant of service with the children of Israel using the ten commandments as a foundation for that service. Furthermore, God gave the ordinances of the tabernacle and priesthood and the worship of God unto Moses and the children of Israel. He gave to them all the sacrifices and ordinances and feasts that they were to keep at the appointed times and manners in which God appointed.

There were many promises that God made unto Israel based on the covenants that God had made with them. As long as they kept the commandments God promised them multitudes of blessings and also if they failed to keep the commandments then God promised them many curses would come upon them. These promises included delivering the inhabitants of the land of Canaan into their hands and the possession of the land of Canaan and that God would be with them in their battles and would bless their labors, etc.

The coming of the Messiah was after the promises of God. He was the promised seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God also promised that he would be the Lion of the tribe of Judah. God also promised David that he would be of his seed. He was also promised to be the seed of a woman. Christ fulfilled all of these promises according to the flesh.

Despite all of this, most of the Jews of Paul's day had rejected Christ and sought for righteousness under the keeping of the law. This, of course, was the cause of Paul's great heaviness and continual sorrow. Paul sorrowed even to the extent that he felt he could desire to be separated from Christ if it would bring his brethren into a relationship with Christ. This, however, could not be that Paul be accursed from Christ.

Rom. 9:6-13

Rom. 9:6 "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Is. 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." God's word that goes forth from his mouth cannot be of none effect. It will accomplish that which God intends for it to accomplish. We should never assume that God intended to do something, but was unable to bring it to pass. When it comes to the salvation of God's people, he will not fail even unto the loss of a single one.

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Among other things, this teaches that there are two Israels taught in the scriptures. There is a natural Israel and there is a spiritual Israel. These two Israels are not identical. We can take the above statement and show that there are two applications that are both true:

1. For they are not all natural Israel, which are of spiritual Israel.
2. For they are not all spiritual Israel, which are of natural Israel.

Both of these statements are true. God has a large number of spiritual Israelites, which are not natural Israelites. Similarly, there are some natural Israelites, which are not spiritual Israelites.

"Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Many of the Jews of Paul's day rested in the fact that they were the natural descendents of Abraham and subsequently they believed they were children of God because of their lineage from Abraham. Paul refuted that idea by showing that while God had promised great blessings to the seed of Abraham, he promised that in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Abraham had eight sons. He had a son by the bondwoman Hagar named Ishmael. He had a son by Sarah named Isaac. He had six sons by the concubine Keturah. Yet only one of those sons was by promise of God. That son was Isaac. This teaches us that God's children are children of promise not children by natural descent.

"That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Therefore, a Jew could not make the claim that he was a child of God based on his descent from Abraham. Likewise, a Gentile, who had no natural descent from Abraham could rejoice in being a child of God if he was a child of promise from God. The key to being a child of God is to be a child of promise. The children of promise are the children of God.

"For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son." In addition in Gal. 4:28 we read, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Isaac's birth was by promise from God. God promised Isaac before Sarah ever conceived. God promised that Isaac would be born at God's set time in the next year. Further, Isaac was born of parents who were unable to have children according to nature. The children of promise are promised beforehand in the covenant of redemption. Their spiritual birth is at God's appointed time. They are born of the Spirit when they were dead in trespasses and sins. Thus, they are born contrary to nature.

"And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac." Jacob and Esau had the same natural father-Isaac and natural mother-Rebecca. Yet as we will see, God chose one and did not choose the other. This destroys the belief that one is a child of God based on natural descendancy.

"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." From this verse of scripture, it is plain that God chose Jacob and did not choose Esau. What is also clear is that this choice was not based on works. The children had not been born, neither had done any good or evil. God's choice of a people is not based on their works, furthermore, it is not based on good or evil done by the individual. God chose Jacob and did not choose Esau before they were born. God loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were born. God is sovereign and maintains his sovereignty at all times. This choice of a people is based on the sovereignty of God and according to the purpose of God. God purposed to choose and save Jacob and he did not purpose to choose and save Esau. According to the covenant of redemption, this purpose and choice was made before the world began. Man had no voice or choice in this purpose of God.

Rom. 9:14-18

Rom. 9:14 "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. 17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

The answer most people give when you quote to them the scripture, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," is "that's not fair." The assumption is that God has to be fair and that everyone deserves an equal and fair chance to be saved. To them, to love one and hate another, is unfair. Further, they believe that God loves everyone, until they reject him or fail to choose him. Thus, they accuse God of being unrighteous if he loves Jacob and hates Esau.

First, God is sovereign. That is, he acts independent of all others and he answers to no one. He is under no obligation to act as we may want him to act. This sovereignty is manifest in the statement, "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." As the above plainly teaches, it is God who chooses to have mercy and it is God who chooses to have mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy. Man has no right to demand that God have mercy on him. If God chooses to have mercy on one and not on another, then that is God's sovereign choice and he is just to do so. While God is merciful and compassionate to some, he is not merciful and compassionate to others.

Almost all men are to varying degrees merciful to some and compassionate to some and not merciful to others or compassionate to others. Yet they believe it okay for them to be this way, and then accuse God of being unjust if he is this way. Yet God has more right than man as God is sovereign.

Second, do we really want God to be fair? Is it fair for the just to die for the unjust? No, it is not fair for the just to die for the unjust. Yet, this is the only way that anyone will see heaven's glory world, that the just (Jesus) die for the unjust (his elect). I would rather look for the mercy and compassion of God toward his elect than to see a fair God who always must act in a fair way.

"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The vast majority of religious people today believe that salvation from sin is based on the choice and the actions of the sinner to get right with God.

First, the new birth or salvation from sin is not by the will of man: John 1:11-13, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Thus this new birth and salvation from sin is not by the "will of man" but by the sovereign actions of a sovereign God.

Second, the new birth or salvation from sin is not by the actions of man:

1. Titus 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

2. Eph. 2:8 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."

3. 2 Tim. 1:9 "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

In conclusion, the salvation and new birth is not by the choice or actions of men but by the mercy of a sovereign God.

"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." The very God of glory hardened the heart of proud Pharaoh that he would not let the children of Israel go until God had showed forth the ten judgments on the land of Egypt and thus show His might power and that His name might be declared throughout all the earth. God in his sovereignty chose to harden Pharaoh's heart.

"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." As can be seen, the main theme of chapter 9 is the sovereignty of God in election and salvation. God has mercy on whom he chooses and he hardens whom he chooses. God is sovereign.

Rom. 9:19-24

Rom. 9:19 "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

One of the objections to the sovereignty of God in salvation and election is that if God is sovereign then we are just puppets on a string and cannot help what we are. Therefore, why does God find fault with us for who hath resisted his will? God is indeed sovereign. He has chosen whom he will and we cannot change his choice by our actions or will. We are not however puppets on a string following the actions of the puppet master. However, we cannot act different from our nature to act. Elephants cannot fly no matter how much they may want to fly. Our nature is fixed and we act according to that nature. The elect, who have been born of the Spirit, have two natures. They have the nature of the outer man and the nature of the inner man. Those who have not been born of the Spirit have only one nature.

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" God did not make anyone a sinner. Sin entered into the world through Adam's transgression. From the time of Adam till now, men have been conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. We are sinners by nature, but God did not make us sinners by nature. We are that way because of the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. But, what right do we have to reply against God? We have no right. He is the creator we are his creation though fallen by sin. Hasn't the creator the

right to form man as he pleases? Surely the creator of all the universe is the one who is sovereign and has the right to act sovereignly. The created have no right to reply against the creator.

"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" The potter takes a lump of clay and makes what he wants to make out of it. The thing formed shows the workmanship of the one who formed it. The potter can make anything he wants to make. The clay has no power to insist that the potter make something out of it. If that potter chooses to make of the same lump of clay a vessel unto honour and another vessel unto dishonour, then he has the sovereign right to do so. The clay has no choice in the matter. How much more so the Creator of the universe. He has the right to take of the lump of clay from which he created Adam and to make vessels unto honor and unto dishonor. The clay has no choice in this matter.

"What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:" Those whom the Lord did not choose before the foundation of the world are indeed vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. The result of these vessels is that they will endure God's everlasting wrath in a state of destruction in the lake of fire. God did not fit these vessels unto destruction, they fitted themselves unto destruction by their sins. They will be judged according to their works and it will be a righteous judgment. God will make his power known upon them in the eternal judgment of their sins. Now, however, God is longsuffering toward them until he brings home the vessels of mercy.

"And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" The vessels of mercy are the elect whom God chose before the foundation of the world. God's mercy is manifest upon them and they are saved by his mercy. God afore prepared the vessels of mercy unto glory. This preparation was by the covenant of redemption set forth in Rom. 8:28-30. This covenant was made before the foundation of the world and there he prepared those he chose unto glory. As we live here in time God makes known through the true gospel the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy. Though many of the elect never hear the gospel, yet they will know the riches of his glory in its fullness beginning in the morning of the resurrection.

The vessels of mercy are found both among the Jews and among the Gentiles. According to the covenant of redemption, they are all called to spiritual life by the effectual calling of God. It is through the evidences of this calling that we can identify ourselves with the covenant of redemption and know that all that was entailed in the covenant of redemption works for our eternal good.

Rom. 9:25-29

Rom. 9:25 "As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. 26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. 27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the

number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: 28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha."

Paul continues on with the theme of God's sovereignty in election. Here he shows that God has a people both among the Gentiles and among the children of Israel. In the Old Testament economy, the Israelites did not think that the Gentiles were a part of the people of God. The Israelites referred to them as dogs. In the eyes of the children of Israel, the Gentiles were not beloved of God as they viewed themselves as being the beloved of God. However, Paul refers to Hosea's prophecy set forth in Hos. 1:9 "Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." Clearly this had reference to the Gentiles who before were not considered by the Israelites to be a part of the people of God but now it is revealed that they are a part of the people of God.

Paul also refers to Isaiah's prophecy: Is. 10:22 "For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness." A remnant is a portion. Sometimes a remnant is a small portion, but it can also be a large portion. It literally means a portion of the whole. God has a remnant of the Israelites and a remnant of the Gentiles that he has chosen to be his people by covenant promise. These were prophesied to be saved by God.

"For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." The Lord did indeed finish the work of redeeming his people from their sins. The Lord alone did this work and it is a complete work. It needs nothing added to it. The use of the term, "cut it short," indicates that the work of redeeming the elect from their sins and imputing the righteousness of Christ unto them was a work that was completed with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and that it being a completed work needs nothing added to it. There is no continuing need for anything to be added to the Lord's work. Nothing can be added to the Lord's work. Those for whom Christ died are perfected forever. Nothing that they can say or do will ever change or alter the work that Christ has done. Their works can neither make it effective or ineffective. It is finished forever.

"And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha." The seed we have is Christ: Gal. 3:16, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Christ, our seed, is multiplied in election before the foundation of the world so as to be a great multitude of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue. It is expressed as being as the stars of heaven, as the sand upon the sea shore, and as the dust of the earth. Every one of the elect are God's people by covenant promise. This promise was the work of a sovereign God who chose his people before the foundation of the world. Those who are not among the ones chose of God before the foundation of the world are as Sodom and Gomorrah. Their eternal condemnation based on their sins awaits them and they will be like the children of

Sodom and Gomorrah who suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. All of this manifests God's sovereignty in the election of a people to be his.

Rom. 9:30-33

Rom. 9:30 "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

When studying any passage of scripture it is important that we remember that we are to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth." This is especially true when we look at important bible subjects. The subject of righteousness needs to be rightly divided. There is an imputed righteousness that we have as a result of the sacrificial atonement of Christ when he "was made to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him," (2 Cor. 5:21). This righteousness is a right standing before God brought about through the covenant work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there is an attempted righteousness that many try to attain to a righteous state before God by the keeping of the law of Moses. Today, many try to keep a set of rules or actions that they believe will make them righteous before God. None of this, however, can truly make a person righteous before God. Those who try to get right with God are ignorant of the fact that Christ has already made his people right with God through his sacrificial atonement on their behalf.

Next, there is the righteousness of faith as set forth in Romans chapter 4. This is living right through a walk of faith believing in the finished work of Jesus Christ and following the teachings of his word. Abraham was a great example of the righteousness of faith. Only those who have the imputed righteousness of Christ can ever hope to follow the righteousness of faith. A person who has not been born of God cannot walk by faith for he does not have the fruit of the Spirit. Not all of God's elect, however, walk by faith. Many try to attain to righteousness by keeping a set of rules or actions. This is a walk of flesh and not of faith.

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." The Gentiles, to which Paul had reference, never had the law of Moses and therefore could not nor would not use the law in an effort to get right with God. However, they, by faith, had believed in the gospel report that Christ had died for them and had made them righteous before God. Thus, they attained to a belief in the imputed righteousness of God and rested in the finished work of Christ.

"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Israel had attempted to make the law something that the law was never designed to do. They attempted to make the law a recipe for getting right with God

through the keeping or observing of a set of rules or commandments. The children of Israel had attempted to get right with God through the keeping of the law. As the scriptures say:

1. Gal 2:16 "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

2. Gal 3:10 "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The children of Israel sought not the imputed righteousness of God by faith, but they sought to be right before God by the keeping of the law. It is, however, impossible to become righteous through the keeping of the law. The law shines a light on sin and shows us that we are sinners before God and that we are in need of a redeemer. No matter how hard a man may try to perfectly keep the law, he will still find that he has sinned and come short of the glory of God. Perfection cannot be attained through the keeping of the law. We, however, are made perfect through the atoning blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Jews, along with a great majority of God's people in our day have failed to understand this. Because of the desire and effort to attempt to get right with God through the keeping of a set of rules or commandments or ordinances, Jesus becomes a stumblingstone. Where can Jesus and his atoning sacrifice fit into such a system. The truth is that he is not part of their system of attempting to get right with God.

The work of saving the elect from their sins, is a work completed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the work is all of the Lord, no works of man can ever bring him into a right state with God.

"As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." To the Jews of that day and to the works system adherents of our day, the true Jesus of the bible is a stumblingstone and rock of offence who does not fit into their system. But to us who believe the word of God, we are not ashamed of the finished work of Christ, but rather give glory to him for accomplishing what we know we could not do.

Rom. 10:1-4

Rom. 10:1 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Paul said he was praying for Israel that they might be saved. In Rom. Chapter 9 Paul had declared, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Thus, there are two Israel's taught in the scriptures. There is natural Israel, and there is spiritual Israel. Not all of natural Israel was a part of spiritual Israel. In the eighth chapter, Paul taught the covenant work of God that God chose a people before the world began to be his and then he predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His son. Next, he called, justified,

and glorified those that he chose before the world began. It makes no sense that Paul would be praying for those who were not a part of God's elect. Thus, Paul was praying for that part of natural Israel, which was a part of spiritual Israel.

Paul was praying that they "might be saved." What was it that Paul desired that they be saved from? Most people today would say that he desired that they be saved from the condemnation of sin. The problem with this belief is that God's elect are already saved from sin and justified by the blood of Christ. Paul set forth this principle when he asked, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He then answered the question with, "It is God that justifieth." The elect have been already justified by the blood of Jesus. They do not need any further saving from the condemnation of sin. It is a finished work. Therefore, the prayer of Paul on behalf of spiritual Israel is that they might be saved from something else other than the condemnation of sin.

We do not have to speculate what Paul desired they be saved from. It is given to us in verse three: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness." Paul desired that they be saved from their ignorance and from their efforts to try to establish their own righteousness. Most of those among the Israelite nation who were a part of spiritual Israel were ignorant of the righteousness of God. They were going about to establish their own righteousness through the works of the Mosaic Law. They thought that through keeping the law and all its ordinances and commandments that they could become righteous before God. However, the Mosaic Law was not designed to make anyone righteous, but rather to reveal to those under it that they are sinners and in need of a redeemer:

1. Gal. 2:16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

2. Rom. 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

3. Acts 13:37-39, "But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

4. Rom 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

These for whom Paul prayed and desired they be saved from their ignorance and from going about to establish their own righteousness had a "zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Their zeal was a zeal of God. Some people have a zeal for different causes. This zeal can arise for different reasons. It may be a desire to feel like one belongs. Or it may be a zeal to be popular. It may be a zeal to keep long standing traditions. All of this can arise from the works of carnal flesh. However, the zeal spiritual Israel among the nation of Israel had did not arise from carnal flesh. Rather it was a zeal of God. It was a zeal that God gave them. However, their use of the zeal God gave them was misguided. It was not according to knowledge. Their zeal was being used out of ignorance. They were attempting to do something that God had already done. They were attempting to get right with God when God had already made them right with him.

They were going about to establish their own righteousness by the works of the Mosaic Law. However, God had already made them righteous through the covenant blood of Christ. Christ is the "end of the law for righteousness." The word, "end," indicates completion. Thus, it can be said, "Christ is the "completion" of the law for righteousness. Christ completed the law and all its demands perfectly and then by shedding his blood for us made us righteous before God. There is nothing that can be added to this to make us righteous. This work of Christ is complete and we are completely righteous before a just and holy God.

Christ said in Matt. 5:17, 18, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Christ fulfilled the law to a jot and a tittle. The law having been fulfilled, there is now no longer a need for the Mosaic Law.

Heb. Chapter 10 sets forth plainly the principle that Christ is the completion of the law for righteousness: 10:1 "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. 3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. 8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

That portion of the Israelite nation which was a part of spiritual Israel was going about trying to establish their own righteousness through the works of the law and therefore had not submitted themselves to the truth, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. So long as they were trying to establish their own righteousness they were in opposition to the plain truth that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

Paul also had a zeal of God after his Damascus road experience. A part of his zeal of God caused him to have a heart's desire for that portion of natural Israel that was a part of spiritual Israel. He desired that they be delivered from trying to establish their own righteousness and that they submit themselves to the truth that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. He desired they be delivered from their ignorance. That zeal he had also led him to fervently pray for those people. He knew that it would take the grace of God and the Spirit of the Almighty if these people were to be delivered from their ignorance and believe the truth.

What is the situation among most of God's people among the Gentiles today? Most would tell you that they are not under the Mosaic Law and are not trying to keep the Mosaic Law to get righteous. However, the same principle exists with them today. They are trying to establish their own righteousness through the keeping of a set of rules or commandments. Their rules may seem simple in comparison to the Mosaic Law, yet the keeping of those rules cannot make you righteous before God. The problem is that they ask people who are spiritually dead to keep a set of commandments in order to get spiritual life. Paul said, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." Thus, we conclude that no law has been given that gives life.

Righteousness does not come through the keeping of a set of rules. Righteousness comes as a result of the atoning sacrifice of Christ: 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This righteousness is imputed to the elect chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

To those who believe that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, we should have the same zeal that Paul had for that portion of the nation of Israel who are a part of spiritual Israel. It should be our heart's desire and prayer to God for those Gentiles who are a part of spiritual Israel that they might be saved. They, having the zeal of God, but not according to knowledge are going about to establish their own righteousness. They are attempting to establish their own righteousness through the keeping of a set of rules or commandments. Because of their ignorance, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. It should be our heart's desire and prayer to God that they be saved from their ignorance and from their false works system.

Rom. 10:5-10

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

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." The text to which Paul points is Lev 18:5, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD." There is a difference between right living and a right standing before God. There is also a difference between getting life and living. One must first have life before he can live. We do not live in order to get life.

To have a right standing before God, we must be perfect. We cannot point to the law and say that we got perfect by keeping the law. The fact is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. As Gal. 3:10 teaches, "For as many as are of the works

of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Thus, by the works of the law all men are cursed before God. Further, Paul teaches in Gal. 3:11, 12, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." Righteous living under the law cannot lead us to a righteous standing before God. While it is good to live right, yet this living right will not justify us before God. Thus, no man is justified by the law in the sight of God.

The righteousness, which is of the law, then was to do right by keeping the law, but this never made us righteous with God.

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)" Paul begins his discussion of the righteousness of faith by telling us what faith does not do. This is very pertinent to today's false belief systems. Often we hear false teachers say, "We through our preaching bring Christ down to present him to a dying world in order that they may have a chance to be saved." The truth, however, is that Christ came down from heaven according to the covenant of God and to perform the work of God. His coming into the world and his resurrection from the dead was all by the work and power of God alone. The works of men do not aid what he accomplished in his life and in his death, burial and resurrection.

Some say that Christ died for all men, but it is not effective unless the gospel is preached to them and they are given a chance to repent and believe and accept the Lord as their personal savior. In this way of thinking, Christ is brought down before men by the preachers and the sinners accept Christ in order to make his death and resurrection effective. Paul says that the righteousness of faith speaks not on this wise. The righteousness of faith does not bring Christ down from above or raise Christ from the dead. Thus faith is not a tool for getting right with God.

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." Here, Paul sets forth the idea that the same word of faith, which we preach is already in the believers mouth and heart. Thus there is a two-fold testimony. How did that word of faith get in our mouth and heart? The answer is found in the following verses of scripture:

1. 2 Cor. 3:3 "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."

2. Rom. 2:14 "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)"

3. Heb. 8:10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the

Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

4. Heb. 10:16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

In the New Birth, God writes his laws in the minds and the hearts of the elect. When the gospel is preached in power and demonstration of Spirit, it is testifying to the same thing that is already in the minds and hearts of the elect. To those not born of the Spirit, it could not be said, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." The preached gospel does not resonate in the mind and heart of the non-elect. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 1:18, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." The gospel cannot be a means of getting someone born of the Spirit. The gospel only resonates in the heart of someone who is already born of the Spirit.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Once more we ask ourselves, "Saved from what?" The answer is the same as Paul had prayed for in verse 1. That is to be saved from ignorantly trying to establish our own righteousness through the keeping of a set of rules. When we believe in our heart that Jesus died for our sins and the third day was raised from the dead and when we confess him as our Lord and Savior, we are saved from going about to try to establish our own righteousness and to submitting ourselves to the fact that Christ is the end (completion) of the law for our righteous standing before God.

You cannot truly confess to something unless it is already a fact. Thus, to confess that Jesus is Lord and Savior does not make him Lord and Savior. He is already our Lord and Savior and we are simply confessing to a fact.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." It is in the heart and mind of the elect that God has written his laws. In the heart and mind quickened by the Spirit of God we believe that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. In addition, we confess with our mouths that salvation from sin is through the finished covenant work of Jesus Christ. Now all of this is to God's name's praise, honor, and glory.

Rom. 10:11-15

Rom. 10:11 "For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." If my salvation was dependent upon anything that I did, then I would end up being

ashamed. I, like everyone else, have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Yet my salvation from sin is not dependant upon what I have done, but rather is totally dependent upon what the Lord has done. Since the Lord cannot fail or be discouraged, then I have no reason to be ashamed of what the Lord has done. When I believe God's word that tells me that Jesus has saved me from my sins by his shed blood, I am not ashamed of what Christ has done.

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." God has a people in every nation, kindred, people and tongue. These people were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. When it pleases God they are quickened into spiritual life by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. God writes his laws upon the hearts and minds of all the elect, whether Jew or Greek. In this gospel age in which we live, the true worship of God is the same regardless of nationality, gender, age, or station in life.

The only ones that can call upon the Lord are those who have been born of the Spirit. Furthermore, when they call upon him he is rich toward them. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" All of the spirit born elect are capable of calling upon the name of the Lord, but many are ignorant of the fact that he is the end of the law for righteousness.

There are many who call upon someone called Jesus who is not the Jesus Christ of the bible. Some call upon a weak and helpless Jesus who is not able to save from sin unless the sinner cooperates with him. Others call upon a Jesus who they say is not the eternal Son of God. There are many anti-Christ's that have gone out into the world and have many believing that they are the true Christ.

The Jesus Christ who of the bible is the "end of the law for righteousness." He is the eternal Son of God.

The true gospel of Jesus Christ reveals to us the true Jesus Christ taught in the scriptures. According to 2 Tim. 1:10, life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel: "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Paul affirmed in Rom. 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Christ, the righteousness of God is revealed through the gospel. Without the preaching of the gospel, the true Christ is not revealed. Through the preaching of the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. It is revealed from one person who has faith to another person who has faith. It is revealed from born again children of God to born again children of God.

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" From the above we know that God must send the preacher. A man cannot truly take this upon himself to be a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While many attempt to do so, yet only those who God calls are truly preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Until a man is sent of God, he cannot preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. He may preach a false perverted gospel and Paul said of some: Gal. 1:8 "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." A man who preaches the gospel must be called of God and sent of God and then preach what the Lord has given him to preach.

A person will not hear and believe that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness until he has heard the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Believing that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness comes through the teaching and preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Once a person hears and believes the gospel of Jesus Christ, he begins to call upon the name of Jesus Christ. He has in his heart and mind believed that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness and begins to call upon that holy name. He is saved from his ignorance and from going about trying to establish his own righteousness.

Rom. 10:16-21

Rom. 10:16 "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. 19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. 20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

"But they have not all obeyed the gospel." Some seem to believe that all the elect will hear the gospel, believe it, and obey it. However, this is not the case. Not all of God's elect children hear the gospel. Furthermore, many, who do hear the gospel, do not believe it. In addition, there are some who hear and believe the gospel but do not obey it. Thus it is plain that some who hear and believe the gospel do not obey it. The Lord spoke the parable of the sower and told how that some of the seed fell on stony ground, and some fell among thorns. Both of these categories of people heard and believed the gospel, but neither brought forth fruit to perfection.

"For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" As we said before, some do not believe the gospel report. They are so convinced, through false teaching or through long established traditions, that their righteousness is dependant upon what they do, that they cannot see that righteousness comes through the covenant work of Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice upon the cross. This was the case with the majority of the Jews during Paul's day and it is true of the vast majority of Christian professing people today. They still think that it is what they do that ultimately makes them righteous before God. There is a saying among most of denominational religion today: "Get right with God." The fact is that depraved man cannot get right with God. If Christ had not made us right with him, there would be none of Adam's race that would be righteous.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Any subject in the bible must be rightly divided. There is a faith that one has as a result of having been born of the Spirit. This faith is said to be the fruit of the Spirit. Without this seed faith there can be no activity of faith. Next, there is the "faith which was once delivered to the saints." This faith envelopes the ordinances, doctrines, and practices of the New Testament Church. This is the faith that comes by hearing the word of God. No one will believe and embrace the ordinances, doctrines, and practices of the New Testament Church who has not heard the preached gospel of Jesus Christ.

It must be emphasized, that only those who have been born of the Spirit can hear the gospel in power and demonstration of Spirit. A person must be born of the living word (the Lord Jesus Christ) in order to be able to hear the preached word.

"But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." The Lord told the apostles in Mark 16:15, 16, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:20 tells us: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." Also we read in Acts 8:4, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

"But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Paul calls out some Old Testament prophecies to show the stubborn rebellion of natural Israel to the gospel of Jesus Christ. While the Jews for the most part did not understand, or believe, or obey the gospel, the Gentiles who were not seeking after the God of Israel found the God of Israel through the preaching of the gospel. To the natural Israelites, God had stretched forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Today, most of denominational religions are just as disobedient and gainsaying concerning the true gospel of Jesus Christ as the Jews were in that day.

The Elijah Example

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (Romans 11:1-5)

Sadly too many Bible students race through the historical books of the Old Testament (specifically the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles) and focus on a few extraordinary events, but wholly fail to grasp the significant historical events that appear in these records. Notice in Paul's words above that he correctly describes Elijah's conversation with God as

“...intercession to God against Israel.” Elijah was not praying for Israel, but rather against them. Only as we understand the spiritual state of the Northern Kingdom (Israel after the kingdom divided with the ascent of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son) can we understand Paul’s logical strategy in introducing this Old Testament lesson at this point in his personal confrontation of the problem within the Roman church. Because Rehoboam acted on foolish counsel, Jeroboam led a successful revolt that resulted in most of the ten northern tribes forming their own separate nation in the region north of Jerusalem. Not only did they form a separate civil government, they also formed their own false religion. By the time of Elijah, the false religion that began under Jeroboam had disintegrated into a pagan religion with Baal worship as its dreadful primary characteristic.

Despite this amazing failure, for several generations God sent a number of faithful prophets to call the Northern Kingdom back to Him and to His way of life and worship. In the end their efforts utterly failed, and the Northern Kingdom was integrated into the culture of its captors.(1)

Elijah is one of the more notable prophets whom God sent to call the Northern Kingdom to repentance and return. As you study the various prophetic books of the Old Testament, you should make a point at the beginning of your study to uncover whether this particular prophet was sent by God to the Northern Kingdom, commonly referred to in the subsequent Old Testament record as “Israel,” or the Southern Kingdom, commonly referred to in the subsequent Old Testament record as “Judah.”

Elijah’s claim to be the only voice left who was faithful to God in the Northern Kingdom proves to be patently false. It is almost certain that Elijah was fully aware of the hundred prophets whom Obadiah hid by fifties in two caves (1 Kings 18:4 and context). Further God responds to Elijah that He has reserved an additional seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee in the worship of Baal. Notice that neither God in First Kings the nineteenth chapter nor Paul in the eleventh chapter of Romans imply that these seven thousand men were fully informed and faithful to God in the specific details of divinely appointed worship. The point is that God in His providence gave these seven thousand men sufficient wisdom to understand the utter abomination of Baal worship so that they refused to participate in that religion. It is rather puzzling that we find no record anywhere in First Kings that Elijah later sought out these seven thousand men or that he in any way sought to further teach them the way of true worship. The record regarding these seven thousand men opens and closes with no other details in the inspired record regarding their identity or subsequent conduct.

It is wholly unjustified and a clear extension beyond the inspired record to equate these seven thousand men with the informed and faithful remnant of true worshippers in the New Testament Church.

God preserved them from participation in Baal worship, but we cannot describe them further because the Biblical record does not describe them further. The inspired historical Old Testament books clearly document that no true worship existed in the Northern Kingdom from Jeroboam’s rebellion till the Northern Kingdom fell.(2) God alone knew the hearts of these seven thousand men and gave His personal testimony to Elijah as a rebuke of the prophet’s self-centered presumption that he was God’s one and only man left in the Northern Kingdom. While Elijah in arrogant self-pity claims to be God’s last and only hope in the Northern Kingdom, God knows about both the hundred prophets under Obadiah’s safe hiding as well as the mysterious and otherwise unnamed seven thousand. What did those seven thousand believe about God? How much did they know about their decadent history? How much did they know about God’s true worship in Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom? The Biblical record simply doesn’t tell us, so we have no basis on which to offer any form of unsanctified conjecture. Scripture tells us only that they refused to worship Baal. Not worshipping Baal was a courageous and right thing to do, but it is a far cry from actively worshipping God in Spirit and in truth. If we could identify any group during Elijah’s time that represented God’s faithful worshippers, it would be those who worshipped God in Jerusalem, not any group in the Northern Kingdom. There is no record in any of the inspired historical books of any true worship continuing in the Northern Kingdom subsequent to Jeroboam’s rebellion. The inspired record documents one abominable form of

false worship after another in the Northern Kingdom, eventually leading to God's abandoning them to their captors and their disappearance from the inspired record as a part of God's preserved people who maintained His way of worship and who worshipped Him through subsequent generations till the coming of God Incarnate in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's sending one prophet after another into the Northern Kingdom after Jeroboam's rebellion serves as a remarkable example of God's incredible patience and goodness. No doubt advocates of contemporary "lordship perseverance" would have engaged in a strong warning to the people in the Northern Kingdom that questioned whether they were "...really a child of God at all..." However, God's message to the Northern Kingdom through His inspired prophets didn't employ such tactics. God repeatedly called on the people of the Northern Kingdom as His beloved, though clearly rebellious, people to repent and return to Him and to His appointed way of true worship under the Levitical priests in Jerusalem.(3) We should carefully avoid passing judgment against people whom we consider as being in religious error. Perhaps they are similar to God's rebellious people in the Northern Kingdom; perhaps they are not. The simple reality of the matter is that we cannot judge them righteously. Thus in keeping with Jesus' clear message in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, as well as elsewhere in the New Testament record, we should avoid personal judgments regarding the eternal state of other people and leave that matter in the hands of God who alone has both the ability and the right to pass such judgment.

The mysterious appearance of these seven thousand in Elijah's life, as well as their introduction in Paul's teachings at this particular point is highly instructive. Since the Northern Kingdom had consciously isolated its people from both the Mosaic Law and worship in Jerusalem, the refusal of these seven thousand men to worship Baal would present Paul's critics with a near inexplicable challenge. How did they know to refuse Baal worship? They no longer had Moses' Law. Apparently they were separate from the prophet, so they didn't even have Elijah to lead and teach them. Where did they gain the knowledge and the spiritual courage to refuse to worship Baal? Paul's explanation of the "righteousness of faith" speaking to God's regenerate children offers a comfortable explanation of the seven thousand, but a blind reliance on the Law that his critics held would be wholly incapable of explaining the presence and conduct of these seven thousand men.

What logical purpose does the Elijah example serve in Paul's argument with his detractors at Rome? Given the question with which Paul opens this chapter, "Hath God cast away his people?" Paul clearly challenges his critics with the difficult task to explain how God eventually forsook the whole Northern Kingdom some seven hundred years earlier, though not before God sent generations of prophets to call the rebellious Northern Kingdom people to repent and return to the true worship of God at Jerusalem. This obvious and undeniable example of a majority of the nation falling away from God's blessings and falling under divine judgment becomes a parallel in Paul's argumentation against his detractors who apparently defended some form of racial or cultural sanctity apart from the righteousness of faith and her noble and true speaking to their conscience.

Paul comfortably defends God's faithfulness to His covenant promise to preserve His people, "...whom he foreknew..." at the same time faithfully passing righteous judgment against those who refused the divine testimony "against" them. As in Elijah's time, for several years after the crucifixion, God sent godly men to the Jewish people, calling them to believe in Jesus, their true Messiah and God Incarnate. As in Elijah's time, these people stubbornly refused the testimony of those godly men who brought them the divine testimony. Nevertheless, according to Paul, God in no way failed to preserve His "...people which he foreknew." Those whom God chose as His own special people, be they "Northern Kingdom" rebels, Southern Kingdom worshippers, or first century legalistic Jews, were not, and could not be, separated from His love for them in Christ Jesus. God was altogether righteous in His severe judgment against His own people who refused His prophets and their testimony, at the same time never compromising in any way His faithfulness to preserve His beloved elect in His love for them in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Paul affirms, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace," he affirms that God has an elect people among those Jews who refused to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah just as He had an elect people in the Northern Kingdom in Elijah's time. When we think no one will believe our message and embrace the truth of the

gospel, we need to go back to the eleventh chapter of Romans and the nineteenth chapter of First Kings, recalling God's rebuke of Elijah. God preserves a people that are His, but our self-indulgent focus that fosters a presumptuous belief that we occupy a favored position with God will blind us to those who might otherwise hear and believe our message. As we remain faithful to God in being His witnesses despite living in a hostile world, He promises that our testimony will find receptive ears and hearts. Whether people believe our witness or not, God calls on us to be faithful in our testimony, not "fruit inspectors" of the results of our testimony or judges of the eternal state of any and all who may not believe our testimony. **"Be thou faithful unto death..."** God reminds us repeatedly in Scripture.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
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Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder Pastor

Dear Friends,

New Testament writers refer to Old Testament passages approximately two hundred times throughout the New Testament. In these instances we gain both the historical and contextual insight of the Old Testament passage, but we also gain the clearer insight of the passage by examining the interpretation—and application—the New Testament writer makes of the passage. Indeed we benefit from the insight of the divine Author as the Holy Spirit guides the New Testament writer to his use of the passage. In our study passage Paul cites a memorable event from the—admittedly at times difficult—Old Testament historical books. From a somewhat obscure event in the historical narrative, we gain a clear insight into its significance by Paul's use of it in the eleventh chapter of Romans.

Our challenge in studying, interpreting, and applying (each a distinct and unique step in gaining knowledge of a passage) a passage is to seek information from it, not add information of our own preferences to it. God directs us to learn from Scripture, not to instruct His inspired revelation. If we adopt an errant interpretation of this Elijah experience and God's rebuke of his attitude, we will find ourselves needing to add information to the passage that never appears in Scripture. The very need to take such a step should put us on notice that we have embraced an errant view of the passage and need to rethink its teaching—as well as our own beliefs.

The fact of Scripture regarding this episode from Elijah's life leaves us with many unanswered questions. However, do not forget that God is the ultimate Author of Scripture, and He gives us all the information that we need to draw the correct understanding of the lesson for our own lives.

Our self-absorbed and fallen nature often nudges us to view others in a highly critical manner. Because Elijah hadn't seen the results of his work in the north that he thought he should see, he fell into a dreadful mood of self-pity. If the prophet were right in his assessment, we must conclude not only "Poor Elijah," but, more importantly, "Poor God." Are we so callous toward God that we ever seriously think that we are God's only and indispensable voice? That was Elijah's attitude when God confronted him on this occasion. God specifically used His personal knowledge of the seven thousand to rebuke Elijah's self-pity.

At its heart our form of Christianity may take on our own personal dimensions, become the servant of our own ego-driven desires, or it may overshadow us with dimensions far greater than we and thus shape us rather than we thinking that we can—or should—shape it. Regardless of our theological ideas, at the heart of the matter, how do we view our faith? Do we feel

responsible for shaping it? Or do we realize our own smallness and gladly accept that God in His power has told us what is true and right, a truth that transcends us and that, when truly embraced, reshapes us.

Throughout the eleventh chapter of Romans Paul will build on this lesson. He will describe the most religious people of his day among Judaism, only to conclude that they in prideful Elijah-like “God, I’m your only hope” arrogance had walked away from their God, from their faith, and from the rich blessings that they by position and history should have enjoyed. At the same time Paul will fill in many of the blanks that he has introduced through the ninth and tenth chapters of Romans by fully unpacking the amazing truth that God in His rich providence is not dependent on first century Jews to complete His work and mission. Even as the Jews so provoke God as to bring divine judgment against them and their nation, God opens the blessings of the gospel to Gentiles who readily embrace it and step into the “fatness” of the heritage that the Jews had so recently spurned.

Before he ends this chapter, and with it this section of the Roman letter, Paul will sum up his three-chapter lesson to us in a few brief, but surprising conclusions. When God reveals Himself to His people and changes their hearts in regeneration, He plants His Law in their hearts. To the extent that we follow the leading of that divine Law within, we realize an overflowing divine goodness in our lives, and to the extent that we reject God’s instructions to us, we shall surely realize divine, but altogether just and right severity. As a wise and loving parent, God holds Himself out to us as altogether consistent and transparent in His teachings and in His nature. We choose the consequences when we choose the path. The path of obedience leads inevitably to the path of goodness, and the path of rebellion and sin leads just as inevitably to the path of severity. God never leaves the consequences of our conduct to us—never! He does not give us the liberty to create the rules that we wish to follow. We only get to choose the path, but once we choose it, we shall surely realize the consequences.

Which pathway shall we choose today?

Joe Holder

Divine Goodness or Divine Severity—We Choose

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. (Romans 11:5-10)

While we cannot—and should not—reject God’s providential involvement in human history, we also should not blame God for everything that occurs. Divine providence is quite focused and selective. God steps into the human experience with specific purpose. In our study passage He preserves a remnant of His people from Baal worship. Paul applies the Elijah passage to a remnant of Jews in his day who, like the Northern Kingdom in Elijah’s time, failed to follow God’s clearly prescribed directions regarding how and where to worship Him. In Elijah’s time true worship occurred in Jerusalem where the Ark of the Covenant was housed in Solomon’s temple, and where the ordinances of divine worship were administered by His appointed priests, the Levites. When Jeroboam divided the Northern Kingdom from the south, many faithful people from the northern tribes migrated to the south so that they could remain faithful to their God and to His prescribed place and manner of worship. However, God sent Elijah and many other prophets to the people in the north for several generations, always warning them of the certainty

of God's judgment should they continue in their sinful ways and urging them to return to His appointed way of worship in the south.

God clearly affirmed to Elijah that, despite the prevalence of Baal worship in the north and the public wickedness that prevailed there, He still had a people in the north who, though they did not migrate to the south, also refused to participate in Baal worship. Paul compares these people to the Jews with whom he reasons in the Roman letter (also in Galatians). They did not embrace Jesus when He came, but they also refused to follow the Greek and Roman paganism that prevailed in the first century culture. As in Elijah's day, according to God's word to Elijah, Paul affirms his belief that these people are God's children, comparable to the seven thousand.

We are humanly "wired" to polarize our perception of other people. If they agree with us and act like we act, we view them as wonderful people, the "salt of the earth." If they disagree with us, albeit they refrain from the evil excesses of the wicked world around them, we tack horns on their heads and characterize them as children of the devil. Paul's analogy of the seven thousand and his comparison of them with the first century Jews with whom he reasons here defies this polarized view. As in Elijah's time with the seven thousand, God preserves "a remnant" of His chosen people from the excesses of sin that surround them, even though they may not take the necessary steps to find and devote their lives to God's true way of worship.

In this case God's providence likely takes on a subtle hue, not an overt earth-shattering fire-from-heaven epiphany that consumes the altar, water, and offerings in the dramatic public setting that we see when Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal. God's law written in the hearts of every one of His regenerate children bears on their conscience and urges them to despise the overt evils of the day. According to Paul, this divine preservation of a remnant is altogether in logical harmony with God's eternal election.

I reject the interpretation of this passage that alleges a second divine election of certain regenerate elect to be brought to the knowledge of the truth while other regenerate elect are left in darkness to the truth. "...according to..." in this passage simply means that divine providential preservation is in keeping with God's eternal purpose of election. If all of God's elect shall praise Him perfectly in heaven for eternity, it is logical that God would so reveal Himself to some of His regenerate children in their lifetimes that they would intuitively (spiritual intuition) be repulsed by the overt sins of their culture and would in some way follow God's moral code that He wrote in their hearts at regeneration.

So what do we do with these mysterious seven thousand men or with Paul's application of them to people in his day? Here are some basic points to consider.

1. First of all, we cannot indulge in unsanctified creative imagination and add any number of details that we think they might have done that Scripture does not report. Such an action in any case is a blatant rejection of the accuracy, inspiration, and thoroughness of God's inspired record. It represents the arrogant height of conscious unbelief.
2. They did not migrate to the south to become active participants in God's only form of true worship in that era, a form of worship that centered on the Ark of the Covenant and was administered by Levites according to the pattern that God revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai.
3. They did not seek Elijah out and become ardent followers of his teaching.
4. Elijah didn't seek them out and become their ardent teacher.
5. Notwithstanding the clear absence of any of these actions, God declares to Elijah that He has reserved them so that they did not bow to Baal. He didn't say that Elijah had reserved them without knowing about it. He said that He had reserved them.

I suggest that such a people existed in Paul's time, the only reasonable explanation of his insertion of the Elijah example in our study passage and its context. By logical parallel we may apply all the unknowns listed in the above five points to Paul and to his time. God charges us to be vocal and faithful witnesses, but He never allows us to think that we have any sense of the true scope of His amazing, merciful, electing, and saving grace. When we think we know all the external evidences of grace and can accurately predict the spiritual condition of everyone we briefly encounter, God reminds us of Elijah's "God, I'm your only hope in the north," and of His rebuke of the prophet's self-absorption, "I have reserved..." Praise God for grace that transcends our finite assessments and limitations. We should avoid the sinful attitude of ancient

Israel. Let us never limit the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41) to the measure of our finite and often inaccurate perceptions and judgments.

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded...unto this day. The parenthetical passage that follows this statement explains Paul's intended meaning in these words. Notice what he writes.

(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear)

Paul further explains his point after the parenthesis closes.

And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

Why would, or did, God give people sleepy minds that, despite having eyes, they would not discern what they saw? Why would God turn what is a place of safety and nutrition, a table, into a snare or trap? I suggest that in each of these Old Testament lessons God imposes these conditions on people because of their own stubborn and unrepentant attitudes toward Him. In a verse later in this chapter Paul will warn the Romans, and us, of both God's goodness and severity (Romans 11:22). He qualifies both divine actions. We experience God's goodness as we continue in His goodness, and as we turn from God into error He promises severity. By his use of personal pronouns Paul clarifies that he applies this warning to God's children, not to unregenerates. His warnings and his use of personal pronouns is applicable to the Roman Christians to whom he wrote this letter. He described these people in the introduction of the Roman letter.

To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7)

It is regenerate children of God, "...beloved of God, called to be saints..." kind of people to whom Paul addresses this two-pronged warning in the eleventh chapter.

What is the precise nature of God's moral reaction to His own children when they walk into sin and refuse to repent and turn back to Him? We read a rather precise description of divine chastening in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. Let me give you a Bible analogy of the same truth.

Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin. Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be. The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water. Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early. (Hosea 5:8-15)

Ah, that amazing Old Testament book of the prophet and the prostitute! Hosea was God's man for Israel—yes, the Northern Kingdom—in his day, but he was not fully prepared to deliver God's message to the rebellious northern people till he personally experienced the same intimate heartbreak that God had experienced by the conduct of His people in the north.

God first announces His anger and intent to judge His rebellious people in the north. In fact Hosea warns both the north and the south of certain divine judgment against their sins. In

the closing verses of this lesson we see one of the most informative analogies of God's judgment against His people to be found in all the Bible.

1. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. God's first warning to His rebellious, sinful people may at times appear as minor irritants to their sinful intent—like a moth darting toward a flame. God calls our attention—to be sure, an irritating, annoying kind of interference—to our sinful designs. The simple knowledge that God is irritated with our ways, enough so that He irritates us, should prompt immediate repentance, but it doesn't always do so.

2. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. If we refuse to repent when God irritates our sinful ways, and calls our attention to our sins, the next step is a frightening sense of divine judgment. Hosea does not describe a tired, toothless old lion. He describes a young lion in his pride. The hungry lion is relentless in his pursuit of prey. The roar of a prowling, hungry lion has been recorded five miles away. At times the very noise of the lion's roar paralyzes its prey with fear. When we refuse to listen to God's annoying reminders of His rejection of our sins, the next step is a more ominous sense of impending divine judgment. We fully expect God to step in and judge us, and we know that we deserve anything He may send upon us. Surely such a foreboding sense of divine disapproval would prompt us to repent and turn from our rebellious ways. Yes, it should do so, and often it does, but not always. It didn't motivate the Northern Kingdom to turn from their sins, did it?

3. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early. By far the most frightening divine response of the three! If God annoys us like a moth around a flame, repeatedly and annoyingly calling our attention to our sins—and we refuse to repent—and if God appears to us as ferocious as a young lion on the prowl, and we refuse to repent—what can we expect next? What is God's third step of chastening? He steps back, leaves us to ourselves, and becomes deafeningly silent toward us. Simon and Garfunkel popularized a song in their time entitled "The Sound of Silence." Ah, my friends, God's "Sound of Silence" is deafening! It is by far the most frightening of the three steps in the divine program of chastening that aims at each point to jolt us into our spiritual senses and motivate us to turn from our sins and return to Him.

The major point we should draw from Paul's teaching in this lesson is this. God never reacts capriciously or without provocation in His loving but fearful chastening to urge us away from our sins and back to Him. When divine judgment turns our breakfast table into a snare, it is not because of some mystical divine plan. There is a reason, and we find the reason in our own sins, not in divine duplicity! God depicts Himself in Scripture as a loving, gracious, and caring Father to His children. While earthly parents may at times take out their personal frustrations at life on their defenseless children, God never does so. If He chastens, it is because of our sins. If He annoys us like a moth, it is because we have refused to follow what He has already taught us about what is right and just. If He roars at us like a young, hungry lion, our own stubborn sins are the cause. Ah, and if He retreats and leaves us with a foreboding sense of divine silence, silence that shouts at us as if broadcast on a public address system with the volume turned to the maximum, it is because we have refused to listen to His clear testimony in our conscience, confirmed by His testimony in Scripture.

Indeed we face two crucial choices in our walk as His children. He is always consistent and always righteous. If we choose to walk in His goodness, we shall encounter one experience of divine goodness after another. But if we fall away from His goodness and stubbornly pursue our own pride and sins, we may fully expect to face divine severity.

After generations of rebellion and refusal to follow the repeated pleas of one prophet after another, divinely sent to call them back to Him, God finally—and I do mean finally—judged the Northern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom eventually lost its identity—its very existence—as its captors forced them into its culture. The nation that was once God's precious people became the despised Samaritans of the first century.

After receiving a personal visitation from God Incarnate, after several years of repeated warnings from Jesus' apostles, first century Jews, many of them God's regenerate children whom

both Jesus and His apostles repeatedly called on to repent and turn to Him, faced the deafening “sound of silence” in the summer of 70 AD when the Roman army besieged the city of Jerusalem and eventually sacked the city and turned their beautiful temple into ruins.

We live today in the light of multiple examples from Scripture. We cannot claim ignorance of God’s righteous commandments to us. We cannot plead any excuse that justifies our refusal to follow God’s commandments. Will we listen to the divine instructions? Will we repent and follow God’s way instead of our own? We, fully like the people whom Paul passionately warned, face only two options. We may experience God’s goodness, or we may suffer His severity. We choose the course, but He predicts the certain consequences of both choices. How shall we live the rest of our lives—in anticipation of divine goodness or divine severity?

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
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Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder Pastor

Dear Friends,

While addressing a first century issue in this chapter (Romans 11), Paul covers truths that are indeed timeless and quite relevant to us in our time. Does God in His spiritual administration deal only with nations and whole groups of people? Or does He deal with individuals? Of course, depending on the occasion, He may do either. However, in the matter of spiritual government over His chosen people, God deals with us individually. Occasionally the idea surfaces that God shall restore “the Jews” to the blessings of the gospel before the Second Coming. Based on Paul’s writings in this chapter, I wouldn’t categorically reject that possibility. However, I would not draw such a broad and non-descriptive assertion. When Jesus pronounced His judgment against the Jews (Matthew 23:39), He made a personal application (“Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”) of His sentence and of the single avenue of escape from that judgment. Only people who turn to Jesus and bless Him shall enjoy God’s blessings and avoid His judgments. Paul advanced this truth in Ephesians 2:14 and context with his reference to the dividing wall in the first century temple between Jewish worshippers and Gentiles. Proselyte Gentiles were permitted to worship, but they were restricted to a given area of the public portions of the temple. Paul asserts that Jesus broke down that racial/cultural segregation in God’s worship. I find no hint in Scripture that Jesus has any intent of rebuilding such a superficial barrier in His New Testament Church. If in fact a growing number of Jews come to the gospel near the end, they will have no special privilege, and they will in no way alter the blessings enjoyed by Gentiles during that time.

To be honest I find the idea a bit superficial. Consider the intense record keeping and documentation the Jews practiced to preserve their family identity in the temple. Contrast with that fact the utter lack of such records since the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 AD, and with it, the destruction of those family archives. No doubt by family name and limited ancestral research an individual can affirm some relationship to the ancient Jewish people, but he/she cannot affirm a pure blood line by any remote stretch of realistic research and documentation. Thus the highly pertinent question to this whole idea of Jewish restoration at the end is confounded by the lack of confirming documentation. Who is a Bible Jew today? How does such a person prove that identity? Like the ancient rebellious Northern Kingdom whose identity was for ever lost by their intermarriage with non-Jews, the pure Jewish bloodline that finds its place in Biblical prophecy is utterly lost and has been lost for centuries.

Based on Paul’s consistent teaching through the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters, and based on his distinct definition of a “Jew” in Romans 2:28-29, I rather suspect that the notion of a Jewish restoration near the time of the Second Coming is far likely more a case of “Much-ado-about-

nothing.” If someone believes the idea and does not make it an essential component of New Testament truth, and if they do not so emphasize or embellish it as to compromise essential truth, God bless them. However, the greater point of Paul’s teaching in this lesson deals with something that he considered far more relevant to his age and to both Jews and Gentiles in his day than to any idea of an exclusive eschatological prophecy that focused on Jews versus Gentiles. By his point that God was using first century Gentiles to provoke first century Jews to jealousy and hopefully to draw them back to the truth, it is far more likely that Paul’s definition of “Jews” in this context remains faithful to his original definition in the second chapter than to a new and revised definition that focused only on the national/cultural identity of these people.

The Roman letter is a highly structured argumentation for the truth of the gospel and against the errors of racial superiority. Paul directly confronted the depravity of both Jews (second chapter of Romans) and Gentiles (first chapter of Romans) and then concluded that both Jews and Gentiles “...are all under sin...” (Romans 3:9) Thus according to the major truth of Paul’s Romans teachings, Jews need a Savior fully as much as Gentiles. Neither race/cultural group holds—or shall hold—a superior position over the other.

Grace rules, and race failed!
Joe Holder

How Far Can They Fall?

I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. (Romans 11:11-14)

In this chapter Paul will go to great length to affirm two major truths. First he affirms God’s severe judgment against first century Jews who rejected their Messiah. Secondly he equally affirms God’s dealings with individuals, Jew or Gentile—he makes no difference—who turn to God and honor Jesus as God’s appointed Savior of sinners. This distinction marks a rather significant distinction between God’s dealings with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and His dealings with His children in the New Testament. To maintain a reasonable balance in our study we should consider several key points in the general teachings of Scripture.

1. During the Old Testament era, God did not restrict His saving grace to Jews alone. He had a chosen people in other nations, but He showed special favor to the Jews in terms of their maintaining His appointed form of public, collective worship, as well as preserving them to be the ancestral family of the predicted Messiah who would come at the appointed time. For example, there is no indication that Job was a Jew. It is possible, even likely, that he lived before Moses and was not associated with the ancestors of the Jewish people of his time.
2. In Romans 3:1-4 Paul clarifies the specific advantage that Old Testament Jews had. It related to their possession of the sacred writings, what we now refer to as the Old Testament. What a rebuke to believers in our time! We have the inspired writings of both the Old and New Testaments, but we often take them for granted and seldom study them and treasure them as the divine message that they in fact are to us. It is sadly common, even among professing strong believers, to devalue and dilute the significance of Scripture. Some devalue Scripture by misrepresenting the translation process and effectively give each individual the choice of personal preference as to which family of manuscripts and which family of translations to follow. Within this school of thought you commonly will hear the strong claim, “We believe that Scripture is God’s inspired and infallible word—in the original manuscripts.” However, they well know that we do not have a single copy of any of the original autographs. When confronted with this deficiency in their claim, these same people will point out all the differences in the various manuscript

families and claim that one is as good as the other, but we cannot know which manuscript family best preserves the original message. Effectively they affirm a divine origin of Scripture, but they deny a divine preservation of those same Scriptures. What is the value of Scripture—what is the logic—if God carefully and intimately inspired the original, but then allowed that message from heaven to be corrupted and confused beyond present recognition? If God had no intention of preserving Scripture as He gave it, why bother to give it in the first place? Does God in fact promise to preserve Scripture? Indeed He does. Consider Psalm 12:6-7. Do not overlook that David refers to the “words” of the Lord, not to the generic or “big picture” “word” of the Lord. David affirms God’s intent to preserve His “words” for ever. In Galatians 3:16 Paul builds a primary argument for his theology on the preservation of the singular form of one word from Genesis (at least in two different passages; Genesis 12:7, 17:7). Moses wrote Genesis around fifteen hundred years prior to Paul’s writing of the Galatian letter. First century Jews did not have Moses’ “original autographs,” but Paul clearly believed that God had preserved every part of the original writings of Moses, even down to a minor mark that distinguished singular from plural word forms. Further Jesus affirmed the divine preservation of Scripture. Notice his explicit statement, “...and the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

3. Are we to believe from Paul’s writings in this chapter—or in other Scriptures—that God saved (in the specific sense of eternal salvation) all Jews in the Old Testament? The answer must be an emphatic no. We cannot make such a claim regarding Jews in the Old Testament any more than we could make the claim from the eleventh chapter of Romans that Paul affirmed that God would save all non-Jews, all Gentiles, in the New Testament era.

4. When Paul refers to the Jews, or to Israel, in this context, who are the people to whom he refers? Is he referring to all people who claimed familial relationship with the twelve tribes? Is he referring to all, Jews and Gentile proselytes, who embraced Judaism in his day? Or does he remain consistent and refer to a specific category of Jew that he clearly defined in Romans 2:28-29? Our understanding of Paul’s definition of the terms will impose significant theological weight onto our interpretation of this chapter. It is my belief that Paul wrote the Roman letter as a formal argumentation (not in terms of an emotional disagreement, but in terms of a formal confrontation of error and a concerted effort to refute the error so as to win those who held to that error) in the ancient dialectical form of dialogue. As such, Paul would consciously seek to define his terms early in his letter, and he would then remain consistently faithful to those definitions throughout the whole letter. If this be the case, throughout the eleventh chapter (actually, throughout the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters that form a logical and literary unit in the Roman letter) Paul uses these terms to refer to regenerate Jews who failed to fully embrace Jesus as their Messiah and follow Him in the walk of faith.

5. When Paul refers to the falling away of the Jews, is he referring to all Jews or to a certain class of Jews? By his occasional reference to himself, a Jew with documented familial pedigree, he specifically refutes the notion that he intends to indict all Jews with his teachings in this context.

6. Does Paul intend to imply that Jews, individual Jews, who were in fact God’s elect have so fallen as to lose their eternal relationship with God? This point is at least a significant part of Paul’s question in Verse eleven, “...Have they stumbled that they should fall?” Linguistic scholars/commentaries suggest that the form of words that Paul uses in this question raise this specific point. Did they so fall as to impose eternal consequences onto themselves? To this question Paul answers in the most emphatic way available to him in the language of the day, “God forbid!”

7. Does Paul in this chapter predict a future restoration of special position or favor to the Jews? This question surfaces with regularity among Bible students. I offer one simple point to the question. In Ephesians 2:14 and context Paul categorically affirmed that God broke down the racial/cultural barrier that existed in the Old Testament form of worship between Jews and non-Jews, Gentiles. Now, in the New Testament era, Scripture consistently affirms this truth. I find no passage anywhere in the Bible that distinctly—or remotely for that matter—predicts that God shall ever restore that dividing wall. Rather Scripture consistently affirms that God regards His chosen and regenerate children alike, with no partiality or distinction based on their race or the culture in which they live. Absent any remote hint at the restoration of the dividing barrier, I suggest that every individual among God’s elect in the New Testament era, regardless of race or culture,

either receives blessings or severity from God in the here and now based on their faithfulness to God or their lack of faithfulness (Romans 11:22). I find no New Testament passage that remotely indicates that God has any future intent of altering this rule. God's present—and future temporal—blessings upon His obedient children shall remain as New Testament writers affirm it to be; contingent on our response to grace, not on the coincidence of our race. And God's reservation of eternal blessings is wholly related to divine grace—first to last—all of grace.

...to provoke them to jealousy.... Paul here tells us that God's design with His special blessings to Gentiles, regenerate, elect Gentiles, is to provoke regenerate Jews to jealousy, to nudge them to belief in Jesus and to the blessings that God associates uniquely with our present faith in Christ. If God intends to use obedient Gentiles to motivate disobedient Jews to faith, the convicting question stares us in the face. Do we live so close to God and in such intimate and joyful fellowship with Him as to have such an effect on others, including those who might in some way be related to the ancient Jews? What does our example tell them about our Savior?

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Joseph R. Holder

Pastor

Dear Friends,

Due to a visit to San Antonio, Texas and Bethany Primitive Baptist Church, pastor Elder Mike Rodgers, last weekend, this edition of Gospel Gleanings is late. The church there is active, warm, and spiritual. It was a truly edifying experience for me.

God bless,
Joe Holder

Of Wild and Tame Olive Trees

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. (Romans 11:15-18)

Scripture often uses analogies of things in nature to illustrate spiritual principles. In this case Paul found no natural example, so he illustrated his point by contrast with a natural occurrence, one that was common in first century Judah. Olive trees grew in abundance in the region.

In this analogy Paul equates the Jews with the natural olive branches and Gentiles with a grafted branch. The trunk and root structure of the tree are the same, but in one case the branch is the natural branch, and in the other case the branch was grafted into the trunk of the tree. I grew up on a small farm that included a small orchard. One of the apple trees illustrated the principle of grafting. Over half of the tree produced June apples, quite large and very tart. One major branch that had been grafted into the stock of the tree produced a domesticated form of crab apples. The natural principle of grafting is that the grafted branch produces the fruit of its native tree, not the fruit of the present stock tree. Notice in Verse twenty-four that Paul refers to the present analogy as being "...contrary to nature." It is contrary to nature to graft wild stock into a tame or hybrid tree. It is also contrary to nature for the wild grafted branch to produce tame fruit. The fruit that God expects from His believing children is the work of faith, be they Jew or

Gentile. It would have been natural to expect that first century Jews, well versed in their holy writings, our Old Testament, would have readily recognized Jesus as their Messiah, God Incarnate, but pride blinded their minds. Logically one would not have expected first century Gentiles to recognize Jesus and believe in Him. However, a majority of first century Jews rejected Jesus as the prophesied Messiah, and significant numbers of Gentiles embraced Him upon hearing the gospel.

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? What is the significance of the word “world” in this sentence? Does Paul intend to teach us that the Jews’ rejection of Jesus prompted God to implement universal salvation of all non-Jews? Clearly the consistent testimony of Scripture rejects such a notion. Strong’s electronic dictionary of New Testament words provides eight basic definitions of the Greek word here translated “world.”

...8A the Gentiles as contrasted to the Jews (Rom. 11:12 etc). 8A of believers only....(1)

Rather than referring to all Gentiles, Paul’s intent more logically appears to be to some Gentiles “...as contrasted to the Jews....” It is likely in this context that Paul specifically used the term “world” to refer to believing Gentiles as contrasted to unbelieving Jews.

Paul does not predict the certain restoration of the Jews to gospel blessings in this sentence. Instead he reasons along two parallel lines. If God cast them away because of their unbelief, what might happen if they turned in large numbers to faithful belief in Christ? It would be as if the dead Jewish culture was in fact resurrected.

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. In this sentence Paul first draws an analogy from the firstfruit law of Israel. A sample of the crop was gathered and offered to God long before the final harvest was ready. If God accepted the firstfruit offering, the farmer had assurance that He would also bless the final harvest. Paul then applies this principle to the root and branch analogy that he is using to compare Jewish believers and Gentile believers. We should first acknowledge that both branches have a relationship with the root. And only by a firm attachment to the root through the trunk of the tree can either natural or wild branch hope to be fruitful. We are holy through our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, but we may be either fruitful or unfruitful based on our active faith in Him. If we hold—as I firmly do—that no elect of God can or shall ever lose his/her eternal salvation, then we should not take Paul’s pruning and grafting analogy so far as to create a contradiction in Scripture between Paul’s teaching here and his teaching on eternal security in other places. To preserve balance and Biblical harmony, we should distinguish life from fruitfulness. We have life in Christ and only through His finished work—nothing added by us before or after, mental or physical, to further secure what Jesus fully secured for all His elect through His substitutionary sacrifice. However, we may become fruitless suckers, branches that draw sap and life from the root, but produce little or no fruit. Because of their failure to produce fruit, the Jews were “cut off” from the blessings of the gospel. As Gentile believers, we need to be ever mindful of our source of life—Christ and Him alone—but we need also to apply that life to activities that produce fruit that glorifies our God, the true trunk and root of our life.

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. This thought perfectly agrees with the state of the Christian faith of the first century. Many Jews in fact did believe in Jesus and followed Him faithfully, not the least of whom was Paul himself. However, at the time of Paul’s writing to the Romans many Gentiles also had embraced the faith and were enjoying the same blessings as believing Jews. God’s blessings on his children as they walk the walk of faith shows no partiality based on race or culture. It is based exclusively on the walk of faith. The major problem in the Roman church, a primary reason for Paul’s letter to them, appears to have been a major schism between Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles, both members of the same church. First, in the earlier chapters, Paul levels the playing field and reminds the whole church, Jew and Gentile alike, that one of them needs a Savior fully as much as the other. The shadow cast by the work of the cross holds no partiality for Jews over Gentiles—or for that matter for Gentiles over Jews. The same Lord is over both and is rich

toward all who call upon His name, regardless of their race or culture (Romans 10:12). Paul deals with the underlying problem of our human inclination to compare ourselves with other people. We strongly lean toward comparing ourselves with specific individuals who, in our minds at least, are inferior to us. Thus we selfishly attempt to boost our personal position over them by such a comparison. Notice Paul's emphatic rejection of such a foolish and prideful comparison.

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. (2 Corinthians 10:12)

Categorically Paul affirms that such a comparison is not wise. Paul prohibits this prideful comparison. Boast not against the branches. Both Jewish "branches" and Gentile "branches" live and bear fruit solely through their connection to the same stock, the same plant. It is the plant, not other individual branches, that accounts for fruit.

But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Each branch should maintain focus on its connection to the root of the tree, not draw superficial comparisons between itself and other branches, or between its fruit and the fruit of other branches.

The practical lesson for us should be quite clear. As we live our Christian life, do we measure or personal obedience against the conduct of other believers in our church or in our circle of acquaintances? Do we seek merely to excel over them and their "performance"? If this is the case, does it not become obvious to us that "performance," not faithful obedience to God, becomes the measure of our conduct? Have we forgotten Jesus' grave warnings in the Sermon on the Mount? How often in that message (Matthew chapters five through seven) did Jesus criticize the attitude of conduct that is engaged "...to be seen of men..."? The words in our King James Bible, "to be seen," were translated from the Greek root for our English word "theatrical." Jesus specifically condemned performance-based obedience. Notice the rather cryptic response that Jesus gives after each "to be seen" comment. "...they have their reward...." In other words if we obey God with the motive of giving a performance before other people and of gaining their applause, Jesus assures us that we shall indeed succeed. Others will see our theatrical deeds and clap their hands. However, according to Jesus in that context, human applause is the only reward forthcoming from such an attitude. God will not reward such conduct!

You know Lord how I serve You
With great emotional fervor
In the limelight.
You know how eagerly I speak for You
At a women's club.
You know how I effervesce when I promote
A fellowship group.
You know my genuine enthusiasm
At a Bible study.
But how would I react, I wonder,
If you pointed to a basin of water
And asked me to wash the calloused feet
Of a bent and wrinkled old woman
Day after day, month after month
In a room where nobody saw
And nobody knew.
Ruth Harms Calkin

How much are we willing to invest in our Christian service outside the limelight of human applause? How much are we willing to serve Christ sacrificially and wholly when there is no one around to see or to commend our sacrifice? The answer to this question, my friend, is the true litmus test of our authentic Christian conduct.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church

16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor

Dear Friends,

What are the theological implications of Paul's development of the olive tree analogy in Romans the eleventh chapter? Of what significance are the two branches, the natural branches that were cut off and the wild branches that were grafted into the tree? Whether we are studying literal letters in Scripture, such as Paul's letter to the Romans, in which analogies are introduced to teach spiritual truths, or we are studying primarily symbolic books (such as Revelation), proper hermeneutics requires us to anchor our beliefs in the literal teachings and interpret the analogies and symbolic teachings in harmony with the literal. Paul's discussion of these two branches is not at all disjointed from his firm conviction, a conviction affirmed by the Holy Spirit who directed him to include the point in inspired Scripture, that nothing can possibly separate one of God's chosen vessels of mercy from God's victorious and eternal love. Nothing! Thus whatever significance we give to the cut-off-branches must not contradict Paul's teaching earlier in Romans that nothing can separate God's elect from His love and their eternal Surety—and security.

What lessons might we learn for our own time and for our personal Christian walk from Paul in this chapter? Scripture is not merely an inspired history lesson that holds no relevance or instruction for us in our own time and conduct.

May we learn the lesson of Scripture well,
Joe Holder

Olive Branches: Theological Implications

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. (Romans 11:15-19)

Often Bible students, ever so sincerely, form interpretations of symbolic passages and then force the literal passages in the Bible to harmonize with their view of the symbolic verses. This appears particularly in the contemporary view of eschatology (the doctrine of final or last things) and the modern view of dispensational teaching, LaHaye's Left Behind series of novels or Scofield's Study Bible notes as just two examples. Both of these teachings borrowed their ideas from J. N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren; Darby published his new view of dispensationalism in 1827, the first time in the history of Christian doctrine that the idea ever appeared. The hopeless confusion of forming views of the symbolic passages and using those ideas to force an interpretation onto the literal passages creates confusion. For example, ask ten different people what they believe about a particular part of contemporary dispensational teachings, and you will typically get ten different answers! They may start with a few points of basic agreement, but they will soon drift off in multiple directions. Consider the confusion within contemporary dispensational belief as to when the "rapture" will occur. Will it occur before, during, or after the "great tribulation"? And all of these beliefs in a "ruptured rapture" miss the obvious point of Jesus' simple, straightforward teaching that the Second Coming will be a single day in which all humanity shall be raised simultaneously.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the

resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28, 29)

Notice Jesus' words carefully. There is only one epochal "hour" in which both righteous and wicked shall "hear his voice...come forth...." Jesus' teaching is that the whole of humanity, saved and unsaved, shall be resurrected at the same moment, not that some shall be secretly "raptured" while others remain behind.

Proper Biblical interpretation requires the mirror opposite approach. We should firmly anchor our understanding of Biblical doctrine in the literal passages, especially the very clear passages, and then form our interpretations of the symbolic portions of Scripture in harmony with the literal.

In our study chapter, Romans the eleventh chapter, Paul uses the analogy of an olive tree and the pruning of "tame" branches and the grafting into the trunk of "wild" branches to teach a central truth regarding God's judgment against first century Jews and the simultaneous enlargement of gospel blessings to non-Jews, to Gentiles.

What is the "big picture" point that Paul intends to teach with this analogy? Does he intend that all Jews are rejected from God, including eternal salvation? Does he intend that all Gentiles are included in God's eternal saving work? Or does he refer to certain Jews of a particular category and certain Gentiles of a different particular category? If so, what are these two categories?

Based on the clear teaching of Scripture (Romans 8:38-39 as just one prime example), nothing can separate those whom God has chosen to eternal life from Him and His all-conquering love. Nothing! Therefore if we interpret the pruning of the "tame" or natural olive branches, the Jews, in the eleventh chapter as being equivalent to their being once embraced in God's election, but now cut off, we impose a hopeless contradiction onto Paul and Scripture. If we accept the supernatural origin and harmony of all Scripture, then we must look for an interpretation of the olive tree and its branches that harmonize with this central truth of God's undefeatable love.

Given the dialectical form of the whole Roman letter, we should view Paul's reasoning throughout the letter in much the same way an attorney would look at a legal contract or a legal brief that he might present to a court. It is common in such formal documents that the author carefully define key terms early in the document and that he consistently use that single definition throughout the brief. In Romans 2:28-29 Paul concisely defined his intended meaning for the term "Jew." Whether we examine the third chapter or the eleventh chapter, we should accept that definition unless Paul specifically redefines the term in a different context, something that nowhere appears subsequently in the Roman letter. We should then conclude that the Jews of whom Paul writes in the eleventh chapter are in fact regenerate elect Jews, but Jews whose unbelief in Jesus as their Messiah brought God's rejection upon them in some form that stops distinctly and categorically short of eternal separation. By the same logical direction we should interpret "Gentiles" in this context in a similar manner.

From what did God "cut off" these unbelieving Jews? To what did God give to the Gentiles under consideration in this chapter? Given Paul's description of the Jews whom God cut off (Romans 11:28, enemies to the gospel, but beloved for the sake of God's promises to the ancient Jewish fathers), I believe that the Jews under consideration were in fact numbered in God's election, but they did not believe that Jesus was their promised Messiah, the specific reason for their being cut off from the blessings of the gospel. And given the fact that Gentiles were to replace the "cut off" Jewish unbelieving branches, I further suggest that these Gentiles were those who embraced the truth of the gospel and directed their lives according to the "righteousness of faith." This interpretation is consistent with Paul's statement that the branch is holy because the root is holy, a conclusion that applies in Paul's analogy to both branches, not just one.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Underlying this Gentile claim we see a certain deterministic mystical explanation. It is as if the Gentiles whom Paul here represents believed that God could not possibly bless both Jews and Gentiles equally, so they claim that God arbitrarily cut off the Jews so that He might graft in the Gentiles. In the verses following Paul will categorically reject this deterministic and arbitrary explanation. Further he will specifically attribute the reason for the cutting off of the Jews in question to their

unbelief, not to a mystical divine decree. The cause of their being cut off was in them, not in God.

We occasionally so focus our thoughts on the eleventh chapter of Romans on unbelieving Jews that we overlook this point. In this verse and in his answer following Paul rebukes the arrogance of Gentiles as categorically as he rebuked the prideful unbelief of Jews in earlier verses.

It appears that the primary distinguishing factor between the two olive branches in this context lies in the belief or the unbelief of the individuals involved. The Jews in question were quite religious. We should not overlook that they believed in the God of the Old Testament and in the teachings of the Old Testament. They “stumbled at that stumblingblock” of Jesus, God Incarnate, being born of humble parents as well as His humiliating death on a Roman cross. Albert Barnes, in his Notes on the Bible, explains the difficulty that many Jews struggled to understand regarding their own prophetic writings regarding the Messiah.

There is the fullest evidence that the passage was applied by the early Jews, both before and after the birth of Jesus, to the Messiah, until they were pressed by its application to Jesus of Nazareth, and were compelled ill self-defense to adopt some other mode of interpretation; and even after that, it is evident, also, that not a few of the better and more pious portion of the Jewish nation still continued to regard it as descriptive of the Messiah. So obvious is the application to the Messiah, so clear and full is the description, that many of them have adopted the opinion that there would be two Messiahs, one a suffering Messiah, and the other a glorious and triumphant prince and conqueror. The Old Testament plainly foretold that the Messiah would be 'God and man; exalted and debased; master and servant; priest and victim; prince and subject; involved in death, and yet a victor over death; rich and poor; a king, a conqueror, glorious; a man of griefs, exposed to infirmities, unknown, and in a state of abjection and humiliation.' (Calmet.) All these apparently contradictory qualities had their fulfillment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; but they were the source of great difficulty to the Jews, and have led to the great variety of opinions which have prevailed among them in regard to him.(1)

Notice that the Jews' struggle with both a conquering and a suffering Messiah was so intense that many of them concluded that their Old Testament holy writings must in fact be predicting two distinct Messiahs, one who would suffer and one who would conquer. As Barnes rightly observes, only in the Lord Jesus Christ do both aspects of Old Testament prophecies find their fulfillment.

These unbelieving Jews were not pagans or depraved people. They were in all likelihood very religious and very dedicated to their faith and their sincere understanding of their holy writings. It is a grievous error for us to send folks to hell—literally in our own esteem of them—simply because they embrace a different view of God than we believe. No doubt we shall all encounter some major “conversions” from our own unbelief and errors when we arrive in glory. If our sincere misunderstanding doesn't prevent us from entering heaven, why should we impose eternal ruin onto others who have failed in other points to understand the gospel correctly?

Paul clearly identifies the terrible consequences of unbelief. These Jews who rejected Christ were cut off by God from the mercies and blessings reserved for those who worship Christ as their Savior. He also predicted the same consequence for Gentiles who having once believed might turn away from the truth. Paul is clear that the reason anyone, Jew or Gentile, might be denied God's temporal blessings in the gospel is because of their own choice to reject Christ. Their eternal salvation remains secure. However, the assurance of faith, conditioned on believing in Christ Jesus, is withheld. From the eternal perspective, they are beloved but they are nevertheless rejected from the blessings of temporal salvations in the gospel because of their willful failure to embrace Christ.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor

(1) This quote appears in Barnes' comments on Isaiah 52:13; copied from SwordSearcher Bible study software.

Dear Friends,

A major challenge to proper and effective Biblical hermeneutics, the correct interpretation, of Scripture deals with the various aspects of time and culture that distinguish the setting of the passage from the reader. New Testament letters were written in the first century in various locations of the "Fertile Crescent," the Mediterranean region. Thus we are reading letters that originated approximately two thousand years ago. Do you think the ordinary citizen of that era lived as you and I live today? The Roman empire governed the area, and Greek philosophy continued to control education and intellectual thought. Do you think technology, language, and all of the other factors in some way impacted the way people thought and wrote?

Our challenge in studying the Bible is not to ignore these differences and pretend that the text of the Bible was written last week with only you and me in mind. We must investigate both the text of Scripture and the culture and language of the time so as to understand the passage we study in its original setting so far as possible. Once we begin to understand what the original writer meant and how his message would have likely been understood, interpreted, and applied by his original readers we are only then ready to begin a wise and correct application of the passage to our own world and lives.

So what did Paul have in mind when he compared the growth and fruitfulness of the gospel to an olive tree? And what was his purpose in his discussion of branches being cut off and other branches being grafted into the tree? And why would he defy common agricultural practice of his day and develop his analogy around tame branches being cut out of the tree while wild branches were grafted into the tree? We need not study long in this chapter to understand that human pride was a major factor in his lesson. Not only did he describe the cutting off of the tame branches as a past tense event, caused by their prideful unbelief, but he equally warns contemporary Gentile believers—and us—of the danger we face if we allow our pride to control our minds and attitudes as we attempt to walk the walk of faith. These questions open the passage up to extensive practical applications to our twenty-first century world. It is possible that sinful pride may well be more rampant in our time than at any time in the history of Christianity. If so, there was never a time when this lesson was more needful for sincere believers than in our own time and culture.

Be not highminded but fear... warns us no less than it warned the Romans when they first read Paul's words to them. Take the time as you read this chapter to visit Philippians 2:1-11. Notice especially the depth of Paul's expectation—and exhortation—that we look to the Lord Jesus Christ as our example. When during His Incarnation do we find Him even once demanding preferential treatment? We rather find Him filling the role of servant than of Master. He even made the point, "...I am among you as one that serveth...."

Think ahead. Imagine the day of your own funeral. No, you will not "be there" in terms of your conscious presence, but the people who do attend that event will spend some time reflecting on you and on your impact on their lives. Will they reflect on a person who served and honored them above self? Will they think of one who consistently placed others and their needs above his/her own? Will they honor one who, in their minds, actually regarding their ideas as better than his/her own? We need to begin today to live the memories that we would like for people to think on the day of our funeral! Let the transformation begin!

God bless,
Joe Holder

Olive Branches: Practical Implications

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. (Romans 11:19-21)

Practical implications of Paul's olive tree analogy appear prominently in these verses. Paul deals with errant attitudes relative to both man's conduct and God's. First let's deal with the errant view of God's role in the cutting off of the Jews from gospel blessings.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. This attitude reveals a certain fatalistic determinism in it. It implies that God had a mysterious purpose that prompted Him arbitrarily to cut off the Jews simply to justify the inclusion of Gentiles. Advocates of extreme predestination, the view of predestination that imputes to God the various implications of human sin, typically dismiss such passages as referring to a divine decree that originates in the alleged "secret will of God." I always wonder; if the divine will that caused these events is "secret," how do advocates of this view know about it?

In the case of our present lesson advocates of a similar errant view of an excessive and errant view of predestination focus their belief on a mistaken notion that God arbitrarily chose to cut off Jews simply so that He could justify extending gospel blessings to Gentiles. Is God so weak that He cannot bless Jews and Gentiles alike as they embrace Christ and the truth of the gospel? Clearly Paul and other New Testament apostles held to no such finite view of God. They preached and labored among churches that were made up of both Jews and Gentiles!

The practical implications of this attitude reveal an inexcusable arrogance in the minds of those who proposed such a preposterous view. Paul spent much of the earlier portions of Romans rebuking Jewish arrogance. Now he turns equal rejection against Gentile arrogance.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. According to Paul, it was not a secret divine decree but the personal unbelief of rejected Jews that caused their removal from the blessings of God. "...because of unbelief..." specifically identifies the condition on which God rejected the Jews in question.

Earlier Paul affirmed a common basis for grace in the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles.

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.... (Romans 3:9)

Now in terms of gospel blessings Paul affirms the same truth. God no longer shows preference toward anyone based on their race or culture. Our temporal blessings—as well as our temporal judgments—from God grow out of the walk of faith, not out of an arbitrary and secret divine decree. If we accept the term "decree" as referring to a principle by which God governs His moral universe, the specific decree related to this passage is a conditional decree. God "decreed" that those of His regenerate children who believe the gospel and embrace His Son in faith shall receive the blessings of which Paul writes. He equally "decreed" that those of His regenerate children who do not believe the gospel when they hear it shall experience the rejection, the "cutting off" from the olive tree, of which Paul writes in this chapter.

Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Why did God refuse to spare the "natural branches"? On what basis does Paul affirm that the Romans, Jew or Gentile alike, presently "stand"? It is faith, not a secret and mysterious decree, by which Paul affirms that the Roman Christians, Jew and Gentile alike, stand. Further, based on our earlier examination of Paul's definition of "Jew" and his revelation of the "righteousness of faith" that he affirms is resident in these Jews and Gentiles, speaking the

same message to both alike (Romans 10:6-12 as just one such example from Scripture), we may also conclude that unbelief in these particular Jews was the basis for the divine judgment that fell upon them. Contemporary Christianity with its obsessive focus on the superficial and the external, refuses to accept the Biblical concept that a regenerate person can do anything other than believe. Often you will hear advocates of this view of Christianity (It judges a person's eternal state on the basis of what another human can observe from external conduct) warn their hearers, "If you have any doubt at all, you need to go back to the beginning and do the first work all over again. It is likely that you are not really saved at all if you have any unbelief." Sadly similar emphasis on the external increasingly invades the thinking of those who profess to believe the doctrines of grace. They stop short of telling the individual that he/she must redo the steps they took to gain their salvation, but they morph the same errant view with assertions such as "If I can't see evidence of your belief, I can't give you any assurance that you were ever saved at all." In this attitude that focuses on external and observable indicators only, these folks utterly fail to grasp that neither Scripture nor God gives them the divine insight into men's souls that would legitimately qualify them to judge another person's eternal state or destiny. They equally fail to understand the teaching of Scripture that affirms the role of the Holy Spirit, not another human being, even a preacher, in giving assurance of salvation to people. Thus they usurp the Biblical role of the Holy Spirit in this pretentious claim of unholy judgment.

Advocates of either errant view are strained to understand the complexity of belief that appears in Scripture. Consider this simple verse.

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. (Mark 9:24)

Help me understand this verse. Was the man saved or unsaved? Was he regenerated or not? If you say he was not regenerated, born again, you must reconcile your conclusion with the simple—and divinely inspired—narration of his response to Jesus, "Lord, I believe...." John affirms that the believer is in fact already born of God (1 John 5:1). If you claim that this man was regenerated, you must deal with the fact that a regenerated person actually did not believe! The man confessed, "...help thou mine unbelief."

Much of the contemporary confusion and error grows out of the failure to distinguish faith from belief. Scripture identifies faith as the divinely bestowed attribute or ability to believe. Belief is the act of exercising that faith and taking God at His word, especially acting on the belief that God is true and faithful to His word. While faith either is present or not present in an individual, belief falls somewhere along a continuum, a gradient scale that includes both belief and unbelief to some extent or another. This hurting father confessed his place on the continuum, and begged Jesus to help him move toward a stronger belief than he presently possessed.

We may well avoid a racial or cultural bias in the exercise of our Christianity that appears in Paul's Roman letter. However, we should confront the fact that each of us struggles daily with our own limitations and our own form of unbelief. We shall never arrive at the point of spiritual maturity that requires no more growth, no more confrontation of our own unbelief and, accordingly no more need for greater belief in God and the truthfulness of His promises.

If we interpret Paul's teaching in this chapter harmoniously with his teaching in the closing verses of the eighth chapter (no possible separation from the love of God in Christ), we must conclude that the cutting off of these unbelieving Jews refers to something different from—and less than—eternal separation. They were clearly connected to something unique and blessed, but their own sinful unbelief "cut them off" from the temporal blessings of that blessed former state. Paul asserts that unbelief in a regenerate elect person not only exists, but that it can cause one who is in fact born again to become cold and unfruitful in his/her discipleship. (Peter affirms the same truth in Second Peter 1:8-9) The cause of blessings or judgments, of our experiencing either divine goodness or divine severity, according to Paul (Romans 11:22), is not to be found in a mystical divine decree, but in our reacting to faith's testimony to and in us. If we believe and obey the "...hearing of faith," we shall be blessed. If we disbelieve and disobey faith's testimony, we shall face divine judgment and a temporal "cutting off" of ourselves from God's temporal, not eternal, blessings.

Be not highminded, but fear.... Paul rejects the arrogance of the Gentile claim in our study passage that effectively claimed, “God cut them off just so He could graft us into the olive tree of gospel blessings.” He is no less fierce against Gentile pride than he was earlier against Jewish pride. Perhaps our generation, as much as any generation since the first century, needs to confront this warning against the high mindedness that grows out of errant views of God and inflated views of self. It was not a divine decree that broke off the Jews in the eleventh chapter of Romans; it was their own unbelief. Given Paul’s contextual description of them, it is likely that they were in fact regenerate people, but they allowed their sinful pride to stand in the way of acknowledging the Galilean as their Messiah, as God Incarnate. Many lessons appear in the gospels that reveal this sinful pride. Paul simply reminds us of the sad harvest—or no harvest at all—that inevitably comes when we actively sow pride in the field of our lives. When we face the disappointing harvest of our own sins, we cannot point the finger at God and blame Him for “orchestrating” our harvest. We must blame ourselves alone. Each day we face both a planting season and a harvest season. What seeds will we plant? What harvest will we face from seeds that we sowed in times past? The joys of a good harvest grow out of the seeds that we chose to plant along our past pathways. The agony of a bleak harvest equally grows out of our past plantings. God graciously gives greater increase to our plantings of good seed than we have any right to expect, but He will not contradict His own law of sowing and reaping. Nor can we in any way blame arbitrary divine decrees for our harvest. What seeds did you plant today?

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder Pastor

Dear Friends,

Due to my attending a fellowship meeting in Holtville, California, this week’s Gospel Gleanings is a few days late. The meeting was a very special, spiritual meeting. Elders David Montgomery and Mike Rodgers, both of the San Antonio, Texas area, were our guest ministers. Both were blessed with unusual preaching liberty each time they spoke. They covered both insightful doctrinal or theological topics and practical discipleship topics with grace and clarity.

In our study verses this week Paul presents us with two choices, two options. We have no other options in our life choices. However we complicate our decisions, Scripture reduces them to simple, straightforward issues, always coupled with the consequences that God has imposed on each choice.

At times Bible students choose to reject or ignore the Bible’s language regarding God’s governance of the universe in which we live, substituting their words for Biblical words. Whereas Scripture reveals that God “...endures with much longsuffering...” the sinful actions of sinful man (Romans 9:22), those who reject the moral principles of Biblical teaching will use such words as God “manipulates, orchestrates, or controls” the conduct of man. Each of these terms conveys a certain moral link between the “manipulator,” the “orchestrator,” or the “controller” and the events that unfold because of his actions. That being is morally responsible for the conduct that he/she “manipulates, orchestrates, or controls.” Several decades ago in our country a sitting president was implicated in a burglary of the opposing political party’s offices. His “orchestration” was viewed with disdain by members of his own party and by our country. His moral responsibility resulted in his resignation from the office of president in shame. This episode serves to illustrate the truth that I here assert. If a person “manipulates, orchestrates, or controls” the outcome of certain actions, he is directly and morally responsible for those actions. If God “manipulates, orchestrates, or controls” man’s sinful choices, to the extent of that divine control, God, not sinful

man, is morally responsible. This notion is morally reprehensible to the moral teachings of Scripture and to the moral conscience of God-fearing people. And well it should be.

Contrary to this deterministic view of the universe, Paul in our study passage presents us with two moral choices and with the certain moral consequences of our choices. If we choose God's way, the morally correct way, God promises that we shall experience the incredible blessings of divine goodness. Conversely, if we choose the rebel's way and reject God's way, Scripture promises that we shall experience the frightening consequences of God's severity against sin. In no way does Paul imply that God manipulates or orchestrates our choices of either goodness or severity.

May we choose God's way, the moral way, and realize the incredible depths of divine goodness.
May we equally reject the sinful way that rejects God's commandments and thereby avoid the dreadful experience of God's severity.

God bless,
Joe Holder

Divine Goodness or Divine Severity: "If..."

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (Romans 11:22-24)

As active Christians and for obvious reasons, we prefer to emphasize God's goodness over His severity. To be sure, Scripture affirms that emphasis, but Scripture does not ignore the "other side of the coin," God's severity. Throughout Scripture God affirms the absolute principles of His moral character and His equally moral law to humanity, particularly to His people. He equally affirms that He has chosen to govern the world in which we live as a "moral government," not as a robotic universe in which divine decrees absolutely control and manipulate or orchestrate every event that occurs. According to the search feature of my Bible software, our King James Bible uses the word "if" one thousand five hundred ninety five times. Perhaps on occasion the meaning of the word is "Since" or "Because," a logical "If-Then" point, but by far the majority of times the word introduces a moral condition that is followed by the consequences of human moral choices. God thus leaves us with His full instruction and affirmed moral principles to know right from wrong and to know what He directs us to do. He further informs us fully in advance of the consequences of our moral choices. "If" we choose an immoral course that contradicts His specific moral teachings, He makes sure we understand the consequences of our immoral decision and action. If we choose the right—the moral—course of action, He equally makes sure that we understand the blessings that shall attend our righteous actions.

In no way does this concept diminish God's sovereignty. He is God! He chose the rules, the moral rules, by which He would govern the universe that He created. Beginning with Adam in the Garden of Eden, He consistently reveals His will, and He consistently reveals the consequences of our actions. Whether we are dealing with Isaiah's warnings at the beginning of his prophecy or with New Testament instructions to believers and churches, God always reveals both the moral right and wrong of the matter, and He always commands the righteous course, fully warning us in advance of the consequences of our choices. Consider these two examples.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (Isaiah 1:19-20)

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (Galatians 6:7-8)

In both passages God informs His people of the consequences of their choices and actions. Neither eating the "...good of the land" or being "...devoured by the sword" are presented as divinely orchestrated events, but rather they are presented as God's certain promise/warning in either approval and blessing or disapproval and judgment to our choices and actions.

I grew up on a farm. In the Galatians passage Paul equates the consequences of our actions to the sprouting and growing of seeds sown. When you plant a particular kind of seed, you know exactly what kind of plant will sprout and grow from it. If you want to grow vegetables, you don't plant weed seeds!

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.... Paul did not in any way indicate that divine severity is inappropriate or unfair. Quite the contrary, he affirmed the righteousness and appropriateness of both.

...on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. What forms the basis for God's response? How may we predict whether to expect divine goodness or divine severity? Paul makes the point with clarity. Divine severity was served against "...them which fell..." Divine goodness is available to us on the stated condition, "...if thou continue in his goodness." Even as the recipients of goodness enjoy that blessing, Paul warns them to continue faithfully in their course. *...otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

In a robotic universe the "master robot" would control, manipulate, and orchestrate every finite detail of unfolding events. There would be no right or wrong; only the will of the "master robot" matters, and he dictates every event. However, the universe in which we live, the universe described in the Bible that God created, is not such a place. It is preeminently a moral universe. The God who created it is a moral God, and He has declared His moral Law to all intelligent, moral creatures in that universe. That moral declaration appears in nature and more fully in Scripture.

When God created the universe, He indeed created the immaterial components of that universe with certain specific characteristics and qualities. Those immaterial elements respond with robotic predictability. Put two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen together in the right setting and with the right catalyst, and you can predict that you will always see water formed from those two gases. Drop a solid object and you can universally predict that it will fall based on the laws of gravity. It will not slip from your hand and move upward or sideways. Based on its density and mass, you can predict its reaction to your releasing it from your grip. It will fall based on the consistent laws of gravity.

Did God create humans and angels, the two "moral" creatures in His universe, under similar natural laws and with similar programmed and predictable unthinking, unintelligent, and amoral qualities? Or did He impose His moral code on them and give them a moral commandment that they were commanded and expected to obey? The concept of a moral universe necessarily requires that the subjects within such a moral universe have intelligent discernment, a sense of the right and the wrong of the matter covered in the moral commandments, and are given the ability to either comply or not to comply. Based on the presence of God's moral law and His specific commandment, these intelligent moral beings then may reason through the consequences of their choices and subsequent actions. If they choose to obey the divine commandment, they rationally anticipate the blessed consequences of their choice. If they choose to ignore and disregard God's commandment, they should rationally anticipate God's righteous judgment, precisely what He reveals in Scripture.

It is this moral foundation that Paul accepts as he presents us with the two options in our study verses. We may not recreate the passage and add our own third option. Nor may we make our own choices and expect to avoid the revealed consequences that God sets forth in the passage. Make the choice and you choose the consequences that Paul presents—the consequences that God has declared in His righteous judgment and associated with the two options set forth.

Neither Paul nor any other inspired writer of Scripture leaves our conduct open for private personal—and often relativistic—determination. God has fully declared in Scripture what He commands, what He has decided is right and what is wrong. Further Scripture distinctly and consistently affirms that God has commanded the right and never the wrong.

While belief in the Bible doctrines of grace rightly reject man's "free moral agency," a term that historically has been used to refer to the broad (and errant) concept that fallen man retained the ability to reverse the consequences of his fall and return to God, thus accomplishing his own salvation, but the doctrines of grace should never be so interpreted as to reject the Biblical truth of man's free will. Man's free will means that man exists as a moral being under God's moral government. He may choose to do right, or he may choose to sin. He is not robotically or machine-like orchestrated to do a certain thing, moral or immoral. He weighs the information he has, applies his discernment to that information, and decides which course to take. The point of Scripture, including Paul's teaching in our study passage, is that man's choice is never independent of God's moral Law. We do not create our own moral code. We are subject to God's Law, including both the blessings of obedience and the "severity" of disobedience.

Do you prefer divine goodness to divine severity? Have you not at times experienced some of both? Talk about a "no-brainer" question! When you make the decision and take action on it, you are fully informed by God in Scripture of what you should expect. He never surprises anyone regarding moral issues! He always consistently declares what is right and what is wrong. He also consistently declares the consequences of our choices and actions.

And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? There is no indication of cultural or racial preference here. Jew or Gentile alike; both live under the same divine Law. A Jewish believer and a Gentile believer receive the same divine response of insurmountable and unexpected goodness from a gracious—and moral—God. Jewish and Gentile children of God who refuse to believe and obey God also receive the same divine response. The divine severity that they receive is divinely measured and appropriate to their unbelief and their rejection of God's declared moral truth.

Do you want to experience God's goodness? God makes it rather simple. Order your life within the clear framework of His moral teachings in Scripture. Goodness is sure to follow.

Nothing in Paul's teaching, or in the thoughts here considered, ignores or rejects God's intervening providence. At times God may—and does—step into the human experience and works His will. However, He never manifests His intervention in any way contrary to the moral principles presented in Scripture and consistently affirmed as His personal moral character. God is not double-minded. He is not moral today and immoral tomorrow. He does not "orchestrate, manipulate, or control" human sin and then punish the very thing He caused. If He in fact were to so control human sin, He, not the sinner, would be the guilty criminal who should face divine punishment, divine severity! Thank God for occasions of gracious providence. Thank God for the assurance in Scripture that providence consistently appears in perfect harmony with His holy moral character. Which "If" course will you choose today? Will you choose the way of willing, voluntary obedience? If so, Isaiah assures you that you shall "...eat the good of the land." If you choose the way of sin, Isaiah equally assures you that you shall experience the frowning face of divine severity. In the words of Moses:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. (Deuteronomy 30:19-20, KJV)

In order to "...love the LORD...to...obey his voice...to...cleave unto him...to...dwell in the land...Moses requires that we choose the way of life.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
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Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder Pastor

Dear Friends,

There can be no serious doubt in the minds of Bible students that God judged the first century Jewish people because of their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, as God Incarnate. However, there are multiple ideas regarding the nature and extent of that judgment. It is my belief, as outlined in this week's study, that the judgment was on that specific generation. Admittedly that single generational judgment set the stage for centuries of consequences. We should distinguish the consequences of human behavior from the results of divine judgment. In this case I believe the conduct of one generation, coupled with God's severe judgment against them for their rejection of Christ, cast the die for all subsequent generations of Jewish people.

Will there be a return in large numbers of Jews to Christianity near the Second Coming? I don't know, and, at best, any prediction of such a return involves an uncomfortable degree of speculation. My primary objection to the form of teaching that emphasizes this idea has more to do with a lack of balance than with the core issue in question. When advocates of an en masse Jewish embracing of true Christianity so emphasize Jewish restoration that they leave the question of Gentile believers in doubt, they lose what I believe is a true Biblical balance on their idea. Be they Jew or Gentile, New Testament teaching consistently affirms that every regenerate elect person who embraces the truth of Christ and His finished work shall be blessed alike in the gospel. Jew or Gentile, cultural status from slave to emperor, New Testament teaching consistently affirms that one thing—and one thing only—should be regarded in our consideration of the blessings of the gospel. That one thing is a person's standing in the Lord Jesus Christ, along with that person's cognitive embracing of the truth of the gospel. If a person embraces the truth of the gospel regarding Jesus, His full deity, His life, death, resurrection, and victorious ascension, affirming His finished work, Scripture affirms that the gospel's rich blessings flow to such believers with no secondary consideration regarding their race, culture, or other past and now irrelevant factors in their lives. God has not—and shall not—rebuild the "middle wall of partition" that once separated Jews and Gentiles in public worship (Ephesians 2:14 and context).

May we celebrate our oneness in Christ,
Joe Holder

Blindness in Part

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (Romans 11:25)

God never excuses human pride and arrogance, particularly in the revelation of His gospel. The mystery of Biblical truth is so profound that anyone who claims to have all the answers and to know all the mystery exemplifies incredible self-deceit. It has been my personal observation over some fifty years that the more a person claims to have such infinite knowledge in the gospel the more he manifests his superficial ignorance of Biblical truth. The men I've

known who demonstrated in their lives their spiritual depth in Biblical teaching stood in genuine humility before God's amazing Book and its equally amazing revelation.

How would you describe "...blindness in part..."? We might reasonably interpret the term in one of at least two ways.

1. Blindness fell on most of the Jewish people living in the first century, but not on all of them. After all, Paul and the other apostles were Jews, as were many of the early believers in that first generation of New Testament churches. Those Jews who refused to acknowledge Jesus as God Incarnate and as their promised Messiah and Savior fell under judicial blindness. The blindness which fell on them was not arbitrary, but it was the result of God's righteous judgment against their "willing ignorance" of the truth, the living, breathing truth (John 14:6) that lived among them and taught in their synagogues. Among them were some unbelieving elect; Paul refers to this fact in Romans 11:28.
2. Blindness fell on first century Jews in judgment of their rejection of Christ, and remains, but at some future time many Jews, many of God's elect among Jews living at that future time, will turn from their blindness and embrace Jesus and the truth of the gospel. Although modern dispensational teaching generally embraces this idea, it is a very "young" error,(1) the idea of a large number of Jews embracing Christianity in the last days of time is one of several historically affirmed beliefs in the Christian community from early in the history of the faith. The general theme of this teaching is that near the end of time a large number of Jews will embrace the truth of the gospel, indicating that this era of judicial blindness has ended and that the Second Coming is near. Advocates of this view rely heavily on our study passage for their belief.

While I do not embrace the second view presented here, I do not object to it on any significant theological grounds. I believe it is rather speculative, but not theologically alarming. It tends to ignore Paul's concise definition of a Jew as he used the term in the Roman letter (Romans 2:28-29). It also tends to ignore the clear Biblical truth that Jesus asserted to unbelieving Jews in Matthew 23:39.

For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Matthew 23:39)

Whatever racial or cultural makeup the future end-time church of believers may contain that church will never exclude believing Gentiles (non-Jews as the term appears in the New Testament). Nor will it demote them to an insignificant role. Advocates of the second view often become too enthused about Jewish restoration and logically ignore any Gentile presence in the future imaginary restored Jewish era of the New Testament age. Thus they effectively reinstate the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, something that inspired New Testament writers fiercely reject (Ephesians 2:14). If advocates of this view presented a balanced cultural concept of believing Jews and Gentiles worshipping God together in that era, they would present a more balanced view of Scripture. Jew or Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, New Testament teaching renders both ideas irrelevant to the culture of the Lord's New Testament church, so why should we attempt to recreate a different church culture for a hypothetical end-times era?

Another fallacy of the Jewish restoration concept appears in our consideration of the character of God's judgment. On occasion in the Old Testament God imposed multi-generational curses. The sins of the fathers were indeed visited on their children for up to ten generations. However, the Old Testament examples of this curse typically involved specific roles as with Judah's tribe being judged for Judah's sin (Genesis 38) so that God would allow no member of Judah's tribe, his offspring, to serve as king in Israel for ten generations (Ruth 4:17-22).

This limited judgment against Judah should be considered along with God's final and irrevocable temporal judgment against those who knowingly turned from Him and His ways never to be restored to the place of blessing. Lot and his offspring serve as just one of many similar examples. In 2 Peter 2:7-9 Peter clearly defines Lot as a "just" man, but his sinful course terminates any Biblical record of his subsequent family, a pattern that appears more than once in

the Genesis record of families. If I read the Genesis account of Lot's life, particularly his last moments recorded in Scripture, I do not like the man or consider him to be a righteous man. However, the Holy Spirit directed Peter to give us another insight into Lot, despite his utter failure to maintain that righteous walk. We could hardly say that Lot "persevered" in holiness!

It is my belief that Paul's language here finds stronger support in the first of the two explanations above than in the second. At the very time Paul wrote his letters the Jews of whom he wrote were under divine judgment, the blindness of which he wrote. From that generation forward God's blessings in the gospel fell, and continue to fall, individually on those who believe the gospel and walk the walk of faith, regardless of their past race or culture. In the New Testament era race or past culture are wholly irrelevant. All are one in Christ. All equally stand in need of a Savior. And God blesses all of His regenerate elect children alike, race or culture notwithstanding, on the condition of their belief in His Son and the related truth of the gospel. For God to revert to racial preference in gospel blessings would be for Him to take a step backward into the Old Testament form of worship and administration, something God never does.

I believe history will prove that the "fullness" of Gentile acceptance of the gospel was more dramatic in the first century than it has ever been since that time. How many times since then have three thousand people embraced the gospel truth from a single sermon? How many times have preachers and future believers received divine revelations from God that brought them together so that a rigid Jew preached to a Roman Gentile soldier and he, along with his family, immediately embraced the gospel (as in the tenth chapter of Acts with Cornelius)?

This point raises a notable observation. While the New Testament book of Acts is the only divinely inspired history text of the New Testament era, and it thus reports all the pertinent historical facts accurately, the book of Acts is not in all points to be viewed as the norm for subsequent New Testament church practice. Acts records a unique era of transition and of rich Providence establishing and affirming the truth of the gospel for all future generations till the Second Coming. New Testament believers today should look to the subsequent epistles for authoritative instructions regarding their beliefs, expectations, and practices of Biblical Christianity. For example, God does not perpetuate the phenomenon of tongues as that "gift" was practiced in Acts. Contrary to the belief of contemporary believers in "tongues," the spiritual gift of tongues in the book of Acts had to do with God providing immediate translation of one known human dialect into another (Acts 2:7-11). A literal reading of this passage affirms that God miraculously provided direct and immediate translation from one known dialect into other known dialects so that the apostles spoke in their native Galilean dialect, but people from some seventeen different dialects all heard in their native tongue. New Testament speaking in "tongues" is not uttering nonsensical and admittedly mystical gibberish.

The first generation of unbelieving Jews who brought divine judgment in the form of blindness onto themselves doomed their offspring to the consequences of that blindness. From that era forward till the Second Coming, the blessings of the gospel flow freely to any and all regenerate elect who embrace it and walk by faith, regardless of their race or cultural origin.

Jesus' warning to the unbelieving leaders in Matthew 23:39 not only reveals God's rejection of unbelieving Jews in the first century, it also reveals the basis of God's gospel blessings to His children of all races and cultures for all future times till the Second Coming. In recent years I have been blessed to baptize people into the faith of the gospel from the Orient, from India, as well as a man who was born and raised in a Jewish home. They all embraced the gospel alike. They all enjoy the blessings of the gospel as one. God did not manifest any form of preference to one over the other. This, I believe, is the point that Scripture consistently makes regarding the spread of the gospel in the New Testament era, a dynamic that I believe Scripture affirms shall continue without material alteration till the Second Coming. Regardless of your racial or cultural past, regardless of your past conduct, what is your present view of the Lord Jesus Christ? In the gospel He gives His children the same promises and blessings. Claim your blessing!

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Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor

(1) Dispensational eschatology was first taught by J. N. Darby in 1827. It has no relationship to historical premillennialism that was believed early in the history of Christianity. Both on historical and Biblical grounds, this late arrival makes dispensationalism too late to be an authentic Bible truth.

Romans 12:1

Rom. 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

"To beseech" means to call near, to exhort, to entreat, or to desire. Paul is exhorting, entreating, desiring, and calling the brethren to do something that is very important. Furthermore, he tells them that what he wants them to do is reasonable. They are not being asked to do something that is not reasonable.

Next, Paul is writing to the "brethren." He is not writing to someone who has not been born of the Spirit of God and trying to get them to do something that they are not capable of doing. Rather he is writing to the born-again children of God who are members of the church at Rome. He is encouraging them to do something that is perfectly reasonable for them to do.

He is calling upon them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. The basis for them doing this is the mercies of God. Most of the religious world thinks that we should serve God in order to gain God's favor and to gain his love and acceptance of us. However, Paul states that our reason for service is just the opposite. It is because of God's love for us and because of his mercies towards us that we should serve God. Elsewhere we read, "we love him because he first loved us." The reason we love God is because of his love for us. We do not love him in order to get him to love us. Likewise, the reason for our service to him, is because of his mercies to us.

Included in God's mercies are his covenant choice of us to be his people and his quickening of us into spiritual life when we were dead in trespasses and sins. In addition, his mercies include his covenant promise to us of eternal glory, his freely giving to us of our spiritual gifts, and his establishment of this church kingdom to which we can enter and worship him in Spirit and in truth. Moreover, his mercies embrace his giving to us the scriptures, his presence with us in the midst of our trials and tribulations, and his leadership in our attempts to walk by faith. Furthermore, among his mercies towards us are his redemption of our sins, his establishment of a courtroom in our hearts and minds, by which we are convicted of our sins, and the gospel he has freely given us.

Because of the mercies of God, we should present our bodies a living sacrifice. This does not mean that we should kill our bodies in sacrifice to God, but rather that we should bring our bodies into subjection and mortify the deeds of the flesh. We do this as we live our lives to the honor and glory of God. We do this when we walk by faith and not by sight. We do this when we keep the Lord's commandments and live our lives to glorify him and not to satisfy the lust of the flesh. We do this by producing the fruit of

the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.

We present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. We present our bodies as a sacrifice to God by serving his children. The Lord said, "in that ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. We are not presenting our bodies because it is popular with men to do so, or that it will bring joy to our parents or children or spouse, or that it will give us a better reputation among men, but rather, we present our bodies because it is reasonable to do so. God has so manifest his love, grace, and mercy to us that we desire to show our gratitude to God for all his blessings to us and therefore we present our bodies in service to God.

The presentation of our bodies as a reasonable sacrifice is to be holy and acceptable unto God. To be holy means to be separate. We are to live lives that are separate from the way we would live them if we were following after the world and after the fleshly lusts. We are to reckon ourselves to be separated into the true worship and service of God and not to the dictates of man. Most of the rest of the book of Romans tells us how that we are to be holy or separate in our walk and actions.

Furthermore, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice in a way that is acceptable unto God. II Tim. 3:16, 17 tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The way that we present our bodies a living sacrifice that is acceptable unto God is to live our lives according to the teachings of God's word. By living our lives according to God's word and by worshipping God in Spirit and in truth and by ordering all aspects of our lives by his word, we know that we are presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice that is acceptable unto God.

Romans 12:2

Rom. 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The comparison made above is between being conformed verses being transformed. To be conformed to the world is to be in form like the world. To be transformed means to change our form from being like the world to being like God in our walk and behavior.

If we do nothing we will be in form like the world. It takes a conscience effort to change our form from being like the world to being like God in our walk and behavior.

There are several verses of scripture that warn us against following after the course of this world:

1. Mat 13:22 "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

2. John 15:18 "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

3. 1 Cor 3:19 "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."

4. Eph 2:2 "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"

5. James 4:4 "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

6. 1 John 2:15-17 "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

7. 1 John 5:19 "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

The world under consideration is the world system in which we live and operate amongst other people. The general course of humankind is to live in conformity with the rules, styles and customs held by the general population or by the population of our peers. As can be seen by the verses above the course of this world is generally in opposition to the things of God. Our lives are not to be patterned after the general course of this world. If we did nothing, however, our lives would be in conformity with the course of this world. If we simply lived according to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, then we would be in conformity with this world. However, we are not to love the world nor the things in the world.

As we stated before to be transformed is to change form. If our normal fleshly course is to be conformed to the world, then we must do something in order to change our form or course. This changing course or form begins with the mind. Before we will permanently change our actions we must first change our minds. The accusation of the pre-flood world was: Gen 6:5 "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Their evil actions began with the evil imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts. The scriptures state: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Likewise, repentance (change of ones mind) must precede conversion (change of ones action). In order for us to transform our minds must be changed. The only ones who can change their minds, so as not be conformed to this world, are those who have been born of the Spirit of God. We read of some who have not been born of the Spirit that they, "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." While our flesh is not changed in the new birth, yet God has imparted into us a new nature in the inner man.

Since we have a fleshly nature and a spiritual nature, we can choose to follow either nature. If this were not so, then why did Paul say, "be not conformed to the world" but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind..." Obviously, we can be conformed to the world by following our fleshly nature. We can only be transformed by following our spiritual nature.

When our spiritual mind is renewed by the word of God (scriptures), then we can be transformed from a walk after the world to a walk after the things of God. This brings

to us the importance of what we feed our mind. If we occupy our mind in the things of the world, then we are going to be conformed to the world. If, however, we occupy our mind in the things of God, then we will be transformed to a walk after the ways of God. Certainly, this testifies to us of the importance of spending much time reading the scriptures, studying the scriptures, meditating on the scriptures, and praying that God will give us knowledge, understanding, and wisdom of the scriptures.

It is only through this transforming of our ourselves through the renewing of the mind that we can prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Obviously, we do not need to prove to God what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. But we need to prove to ourselves that God's way is that good way and that our walk is acceptable to God and according to his will. We do this by renewing our minds and transforming our walk to a walk of righteousness before God.

Romans 12:3

Rom. 12:3 "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

One of the first things that we must do in order to transform our walk before God is to get the right opinion of ourselves in our own mind. If we are filled with pride in our mind, then we will not transform ourselves into a proper walk with God.

There was a time when the disciples argued among themselves who should be the greatest in the kingdom of God: Matt.18:1 "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The Lord told us that if we have the wrong opinion of ourselves and sought greatness for ourselves then we could not enter the kingdom of heaven (church).

Paul's attitude about himself is one that we should all follow:

1. 1 Tim 1:15 "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

2. 1 Cor 15:9 "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

3. Eph 3:8 "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Thus, Paul considered himself the chief of sinners. He considered himself the least of the apostles. He considered himself less than the least of all saints. Likewise, should we also reckon ourselves the least.

Paul wrote in Phil. 2:5 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly

exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." We see the great humility of Christ even though he is the God of heaven and created all things, yet he humbled himself by making himself of no reputation, and taking upon himself the form of a servant. Further, he humbled himself and became obedient unto the death of the cross. We need the same mind concerning ourselves that we not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

Through the measure of faith that God has dealt unto us, we should humble ourselves and see that we were condemned ruined, hell deserving sinners, saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We were not worthy of God's grace, but he bestowed it upon us anyway. Thus, we have no right to exalt ourselves above anyone. When we have this attitude in our mind we can began to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God.

Romans 12:4, 5

Rom. 12:4 "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

One of the recurring themes in the scriptures is that the church is the body of Christ. In addition, Christ is the head of the church:

1. Mat 5:29 "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

2. 1 Cor. 12:12 "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?"

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether

one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

3. Eph. 1:22 "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

4. Eph. 4:12 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

5. Eph 5:23 "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."

6. Eph 5:30 "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

7. Col 1:18 "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

8. Col 2:19 "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

9. Heb 13:3 "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

The use of the body as a symbol of the church and the head to represent Christ as the head of the church has many lessons for us:

1. First, it shows us that we have a vital relationship with the Lord and that he is the ultimate authority, control, and governor of our actions. This is true of both individual members and the body or church as a whole.

2. Second, Christ is to have the preeminence in all things.

3. Third, the Head nourishes the body even as Christ nourishes the Church.

4. Christ as the head is the savior of the body. He gave his life for the church.

5. Christ as the head loves the body, the church.

6. The body has a great dependence upon the head to provide for its needs and its instructions, yet the members themselves also have a relationship with one another.

7. For a body to properly function, each member has a responsibility to accomplish its designed purpose.

8. Each member has its own gifts and responsibilities.

9. Each member is to function in harmony with the other members.

10. If one member is in pain, then all the members of the body feel the pain of the member that is hurting.

11. Not one of the members can say that it does not need the other members to have a fully functional body.

12. All of the members are important to the body.

Romans 12:6-8

Rom. 12:6 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Previously Paul taught us that each member of the church is a member of the body of Christ. Also, each member is an individual with different qualities and functions in the body, but all are to work together for the good of the body and to work in harmony. Now Paul tells us that we all have different gifts as members of the body of Christ.

The gifts we have are by the grace of God. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 12:11: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The Spirit gives us our spiritual gifts and we each have more than one gift that the Spirit has given us. We did not earn these gifts. They were freely given to us by the grace of God. Since we did not earn them, there is no need for us to be jealous of other people's gifts.

The Lord gave us a parable concerning talents that teaches us that it is not the value of the gift that is important, but what we do with what we are given that is important: Matt. 25:14 "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful

servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed:
27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.
29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

The ones who had the five and the two talents received the same reward for their faithful use of the talents they were given. The one who had the one talent would have had the same reward if he had faithfully used the talent he was given. Instead, he lost the talent he was given and was chastened for failing to use his talent.

There were seven gifts that are listed in the above subject verse. The first talent was the gift of prophecy. Having the gift of prophecy is not the same as being a prophet. Certainly, the prophet has the gift of prophecy. However, others who are not prophets also have the gift of prophecy. The word prophecy comes from the Greek word meaning to predict the future. The prophets were given the revealed word of God and also were given prophecies of future events. In the church there are individuals who have wisdom to analyze the circumstances of a problem or events and make valid predictions of what will happen if the actions or events are not changed. This is having the gift of prophecy. This is valuable to the whole body as we each are often faced with problems or faced with circumstances that need to be changed in our lives and these people can help us by showing us what will happen if we make the needed changes and what will happen if we do not make the needed changes.

The second gift is the gift of ministry. Most of the members of the church will have the gift of ministering to the needs of others. Certainly, we all are familiar with the gospel ministry. The gift of the gospel ministry is limited, however, to a very few of the membership of the church. But there are many examples given to us in the church where both men and women in the church had the gift of ministering to the needs of others. A couple examples are listed below:

1. Acts 9:36 "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive."

2. Rom. 16:1 "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. 3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."

In the above examples, Tabitha, Phebe, Priscilla, and Aquila all had the gift of ministry and were ministering to the needs of others. None of the above, however, were gospel ministers or preachers. The admonition that Paul told those who had the gift of ministry was that we should wait upon our ministering. Having a gift and using it are two different matters. We should be using and exhorting others to use their gifts to the honor and glory of God and to the benefit of the Lord's people.

The third gift is the gift of teaching. The gospel ministry has the gift of teaching as that is one of the qualifications of a bishop or elder. However, others in the church also have the gift of teaching as well. Their teaching is not a public teaching of the word, but rather a private teaching of others. Some examples of the use of this gift are given below:

1. Acts 18:24 "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

2. Tit. 2:3 "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

Aquila and Priscilla privately taught Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly. The aged women in the congregation are to teach the younger women several things as listed above. Thus, the aged teach from their own experience and broad knowledge that they have gained to the benefit of those who have not had the experience and knowledge due to their young age. These aged women are sometimes called mothers in the church. While they may not be the younger women's actual mothers, yet they serve to give advice and counsel to the younger women as spiritual leaders in the church much as a mother would do to their children.

Likewise, we have men who have been in the church for some time who often teach the younger men giving them advice and counsel in spiritual matters and matters concerning the church.

The fourth gift is that of exhortation. Again the gospel preacher is to exhort the congregation. However, there are others in the congregation as well who have the gift of exhortation. Often we observe that deacons usually have the gift of exhortation. The word, exhortation, is defined as follows: "parakaleo, par-ak-al-eh'-o; from G3844 and G2564; to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation):-- beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort (-ation), intreat, pray." Often times we know of things that we should do or that we should not do. A big problem that each of us is faced with is finding the courage to either do the things we should or not do the things we should not do. Exhortations from others helps us to find the courage to do what is right and not do what is wrong. There are many applications where exhortation is a very valuable gift to the church. Those who have the gift of exhortation should be using that gift to the honor and glory of God and to the benefit of the members of the church.

The fifth gift is the gift of giving. Most of the congregation will have the gift of giving. The scriptures teach us that we are to give to the needs of others:

1. James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

2. Mat 5:42 "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

3. Rom 12:20 "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

4. 2 Cor 9:7 "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

5. Eph 4:28 "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

6. James 2:15 "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

7. 1 Tim. 6:17 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Giving is to be done in simplicity. Simplicity is defined as follows: "572. haplotēs, hap-lot'-ace; from G573; singleness, i.e. (subj.) sincerity (without dissimulation or self-seeking), or (obj.) generosity (copious bestowal):--bountifulness, liberal (-ity), simplicity, singleness." Thus giving is to be done in singleness of heart. It is to be the sincere desire of the heart. We are to give generously or bountifully. We are not to seek praise for ourselves in giving, but to give praise and honor and glory to God for his bountiful hand upon us.

The sixth gift is ruling. The word rule is defined as follows: "4291. proistemi, pro-is'-tay-mee; from G4253 and G2476; to stand before, i.e. (in rank) to preside, or (by impl.) to practise:--maintain, be over, rule." The elders are to rule well. That is they are to lead the congregation by example and precept. Likewise, the deacons of the church are to lead in the serving of the tables of the church. Deacons should have the gift of ruling. The gift of ruling, however, is not limited to the elders and deacons of the church. Others may also lead in the activities of the church. Often I see sisters who will organize and lead the other sisters in preparing for the meals that are sometimes served in the general gatherings of the congregation. Likewise, to relieve the needs and sufferings of others, members of the congregation will sometimes organize and lead in this activity.

Phebe was an example of a sister that was a ruler or leader: Rom. 16:1 "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

The seventh gift is that of showing mercy. There are two general words and two meanings of the word mercy. There is God's mercy that he bestows upon us judicially when he forgives us of our sin. Next, there is the definition of the word mercy that means compassion. This is the definition used in this seventh gift given to the church. It is showing compassion to others. When we visit the sick and the afflicted in hospitals, homes, and in nursing facilities and encourage and pray for them, we are showing mercy unto them. Sometimes there are members of the congregation who seem to have a special ability to encourage the sick, feeble, afflicted, distressed, persecuted, downtrodden. This is the gift of mercy. There is both natural sickness and there is spiritual sickness. Visiting the sick and encouraging them is a gift of showing mercy. Those who have this gift are to do it with cheerfulness and not out of a sense of duty and as something I have to do, but would rather be doing something else.

All seven of the above listed spiritual gifts are a great blessing from God that he by his grace has given to the membership of the church and is for our benefit as well as to praise, honor, and glorify his great and holy name.

Romans 12:9

Rom. 12:9 "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."

The first part of this chapter exhorted us because of the mercies of God to present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God. The next part told us to not be conformed to the world, but to transform ourselves by the renewing of our mind. The third part told us that we are members of the body of Christ. The fourth part spoke to us of the spiritual gifts that God has given to the church and how that we are to use those spiritual gifts. The remainder of the chapter tells us about the characteristics and qualities that we as members of the body of Christ are to seek to develop in our lives, so that we may be transformed and present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God.

Love is a verb. Verbs indicate action. Love is more than a feeling that we have in us for others. Rather love is manifest by actions that we manifest toward God and toward his people. 1 Cor. chapter 13 is all about charity (love in action). It tells us of the characteristics of love. I encourage the readers to read and reread 1 Cor. chapter 13.

Love is to be manifest without dissimulation. Dissimulation means feigned or hypocrisy. Love is to be unfeigned or without hypocrisy. Sometimes people will tell us they love us and even feign love toward us, but their actions eventually show that they were only doing it for what they perceived they could gain from us. Judas feigned a love to Jesus: Luke 22:47 "And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

Jesus spoke of others in Matt. 15:8, 9 who he said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Their love was feigned. Our love to each other and toward God is not to be feigned.

"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." At first, this part of the verse may seem like it does not go along with the first part of the verse. However, it is

very closely tied with the first part. If we follow evil or even allow evil to be a part of our lives are we not feigning a love toward our Lord? This is the very thing that Jesus said about those who honored him with their lips, but their heart was far from him. We need to not only put evil away from us, but the scripture uses the word, abhor. Abhor means to utterly attest. Our feelings towards evil is to utterly attest it.

Furthermore, we are to cleave to that which is good. The word, cleave, means join together like glue. The scriptures teach us what is good. We should be well acquainted with that which is good and then join together like glue our lives, thoughts, and actions to that which is good.

Romans 12:10

Rom. 12:10 "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."

Nearly all of us have an aunt or uncle or cousin or someone that we feel very close to and have a very high regard for with great affection. Paul tells us that we are to have such an affection for each of the members of the church. Our affections should be manifest one to another with brotherly love. This is in keeping with the commandment that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Rom. 13:9 "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

We who have been born of the Spirit of God do not have to be taught to love one another: 1 Th 4:9 "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Our responsibility to one another is set forth in Heb. 13:1 "Let brotherly love continue."

Our affections towards one another should include a willingness to help one another, to see to one another's needs, to encourage one another, to exhort one another, to pray for one another, to admonish one another, and to do good to one another.

"In honour preferring one another." The word honor indicates that we consider it of great value. We are to consider one another's friendship and companionship and discipleship in the church to be of great value to us. Furthermore, we should prefer one another's company and friendship above the company and friendship of others outside the church.

Romans 12:11

Rom. 12:11 "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

One of the question we should ask ourselves is what business is under consideration? The Lord's business or our personal business? The truth is that if we are slothful in our personal business we will probably be slothful in the Lord's business. However, the context is about the church and presenting our bodies a living sacrifice unto God, therefore, the business under consideration must be the Lord's business.

The word, slothful, means to be tardy or lazy. The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about slothfulness:

1. Prov 12:24 "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute."
2. Prov 12:27 "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious."
3. Prov 15:19 "The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain."
4. Prov 18:9 "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster."
5. Prov 21:25 "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour."
6. Prov 22:13 "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets."
7. Prov 26:14 "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed."

The scriptures have nothing good to say about slothfulness. We should be diligent to perform both our earthly business as well as the Lord's business. However, there is a priority set for us in the scriptures:

1. Mat 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
2. Matt. 8:21 "And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."
3. Luke 9:61 "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
4. Luke 14:16 "Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. 22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

The above examples all show the priority that God has placed upon his servants and his service in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God and our service in that

kingdom is to be first in our lives. If we fail to make it first, we risk being as those that were bidden, not allowed to taste of the King's supper.

Not only are we to be up and about the Lord's service, but we are to be fervent in spirit in that service. We read of a man named Apollos who was fervent in spirit in his service to the Lord: Acts 18:25 "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." It was through the godly zeal that God had given Apollos that he was fervent in Spirit. He was as boiling water in his zeal toward the service of God. Likewise, we should have such a zeal toward the service of God. Not only should we put the service of God first in our lives, but we also should be zealous to perform that service.

Romans 12:12

Rom. 12:12 "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."

There are three key words in this verse of scripture: hope, tribulation, and prayer. Our hope enables us to bear up under tribulation. Tribulation leads us to seek God in prayer.

Hope is based on the promises of God: Titus 1:2 "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." The hope that we have of eternal life rest upon the covenant promise of eternal life that God made before the world began. Also, Hebrews 6:17-20 teaches us of hope resting in God's immutable promise: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

While we rejoice in the hope of eternal life, yet we also hope in all the promises of God, knowing that it is impossible for God to lie. Included in these promises are:

1. Heb 13:5 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

2. Isa 43:2 "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

3. Mat 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

4. Mat 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

5. John 16:13 "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."

6. Psa 46:1 "To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

7. Heb 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

These are just a few of the many promises that God has made to his children in which we have hope and are made to rejoice. We rejoice knowing that God has promised and that his promises cannot fail.

Furthermore, the hope that we have encourages us in times of tribulation that comes in our lives. Tribulations teach us to trust in the Lord for our help and deliverances. Patience can be defined as waiting upon the Lord. When we are faced with trials and troubles in our lives, we learn that we need to wait upon the Lord to fulfill his promises to us to deliver us and be with us in the midst of those trials and tribulations. Thus, thru the trials and tribulations our patience is exercised and made to increase. The more that we see the Lord's deliverances in the midst of trials and tribulations, the more we learn to wait upon him when we are faced with future trials and tribulations.

In the midst of our trials and tribulations, we learn to cast all our care upon the Lord for he careth for us. Thus, trials and troubles lead us to have an active prayer life. We are told that we should not wait till we are overwhelmed with the problems of life, but that we should learn to be instant in prayer. Why should we wait until we are overwhelmed with our problems before we seek the lord? We should be continually in prayer that God will guide us and help us. Likewise we should be thankful in our prayers to God for what he has done for us, and what he is doing for us, and what he will continue to do for us.

Romans 12:13

Rom. 12:13 "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality."

There are some preachers in the religious world that continually ask money from their congregations, not because they have needs, but because they have wants. The verse teaches us that we are to distribute to the necessity of saints, not to the wants of saints. Sometimes, people ask for financial assistance for things that are not really needs, but are their personal wants.

Nevertheless, there are needs that arise in the lives of God's people (saints). Paul set an example for us: Acts 20:32 "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Paul also commended the church at Philippi: Phil. 4:15 "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."

James exhorts us to show our love to our brethren by giving to their necessities: James 2:15 "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

One of the reasons that the office of deacon was established was so that the church could organizationally care for the needs of the poor widows in the congregation: Acts 6:1 "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

The early church at Jerusalem set a great example of willingness to share their good to communicate to the needs of the needy: Acts 4:32 "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

John taught that to fail to respond to the need of others when we are able calls in question our love of God: 1 John 3:17 "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

In addition, to distributing to the needs of saints, we are to be given to hospitality. That is we are to be ready to entertain strangers. Sometimes the strangers come to us asking us about the things we believe and practice. Paul tells us in Hebrews that some through entertaining strangers have entertained angels unaware: Heb. 13:2 "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." The kingdom of God and the gospel are not private affairs for the individual children of God. The kingdom and the gospel are to be made known to others. We should have a willingness to share the good news wherever the Lord will open a door of utterance for us. Peter tells us in 1 Pet. 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

Thus, we should not only have a willingness to share of our natural goods with the needs of others, but we should also have a willingness to share of our spiritual blessings and knowledge with the enquiring minds of God's children.

Romans 12:14

Rom. 12:14 "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."

The Greek word for bless means to "invoke a benediction upon." In other words it means that we should pray for them that persecute us. This is consistent with what the Lord taught in Matt. 5:38=48 "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

While there are others who hate our beliefs and hate our practices and hate the fact that our beliefs and practices conflict with their religious or governmental systems, yet we are not to curse those who curse us nor are we to persecute those who persecute us. The Lord set an example for us. When he was persecuted and beaten at the cross, he prayed for his persecutors. When false accusations were laid against him, he opened not his mouth.

Similarly, we are to pray for our persecutors and return not evil for evil. We are to overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:15, 16

Rom. 12:15 "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." As children of God we have mixtures of joy and sorrow as we pass through the realm of this life. This is true of all of us. As a natural brother cares for the conditions of his natural family, rejoices with them during their seasons of joy, and sorrows with them during their seasons of sorrow, so it should be in the church family of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. Especially is this true as they are members of the same body. When a member of our natural body hurts, the whole body feels the pain. Likewise, when a member of the church body hurts, so all the church body should feel the pain. Similarly, when a member of the church body rejoices, the whole body can rejoice with that member.

"Be of the same mind one toward another." To be of a same mind indicates a unity. Unity comes to us through the leadership of the Spirit of God and through the teachings of God's word. We are not to be unified in an error. We are to be unified with the truth. Having a mind towards another also indicates having a feeling toward that individual. Love is the feeling that we should have towards the children of God and

especially towards the children of God in our local church. This feeling and care for one another should also be expressed "toward" one another by our actions and words. To tell someone we love them is good, but to show that love by our actions is even better. This unity of Spirit, truth, and love should be manifest by all of the members of the body towards all the members of the body.

"Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." The phrase "high things" comes from the Greek word, "hupselos." This word means to be exalted, lofty, eminent, distinguished. The lesson is that we are not to set our mind to seek to be exalted, lofty, eminent, etc. The word, condescend, comes from the Greek word, "sunapago." Sunapago means to take off together with. The lessons is that we should take off together with the humble and meek in companionship and fellowship.

"Be not wise in your own conceits." We can have an exalted view of ourselves for many reasons. One of the more common reasons that people exalt themselves is that they think themselves to be more knowledgeable and wise than other people. True wisdom comes from God. We should seek to increase in the knowledge of God's word. This is to our benefit to do so. But we should not be exalted in ourselves and think ourselves more knowledgeable and wiser than others. The scriptures teach that God resist the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Romans 12:17-21

Rom. 12:17 "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

In Lev. 24 we read, 19 "And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; 20 Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again. 21 And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death." Some have taken this and similar passages of scripture as giving them license to get even for the wrongs that are done to them. However, the context in which this passage is given indicates that it applies to the national government of Israel. Furthermore, we read where God is the judge of all the earth. Also, several times the scriptures teach us that God is just.

God takes care of the judgment of individuals for their trespasses. He has not left this in our hands. We are not the judge of all the earth. We are not the lawgiver and we are not the executioner of justice.

The mentality of getting even is fostered in most cultures and tribes of people. However, this is not the way for a child of God in God's kingdom. We are not to bear grudges. We are to forgive one another their trespasses as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. We are not to render evil for evil.

There are many who will persecute us when we stand for what is truth and walk uprightly before God and man. There are many who will do evil towards us. But how is this different than the evil we did and expressed towards God in the former walks of our lives? Did God show us mercy or did he exact revenge upon us? He showed us mercy. Likewise, we are to be merciful to others who do us evil.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men." The word, honest, comes from the Greek word, kalos, which means good, honest, worthy, or well. While we may have people be evil towards us and we have people who are dishonest in their dealings with us or will cheat us or speak evil against us, yet we are not to respond in kind. We are to live our lives as though we are living them for the Lord and presenting our bodies a living sacrifice unto God. We are to do good and be honest in our dealings with others. We are to do good to others, regardless of how they treat us. Furthermore, this is to be the case in the "sight of all men." Sometimes people will behave one way before the preacher and then behave another way when the preacher is not around. Or they may be diligent in their work when the boss is around, yet be lazy and slothful when the boss is not around. We, as the disciples of Christ, are to behave ourselves in the same manner regardless of who is around.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Sometimes some people will not allow us to live peaceably with them. Yet we are to behave ourselves in such a way, but we are to strive with all of our ability to live peaceably with them. Then when they will not allow us to be peaceable with them, it is not our fault for we have done everything that we can honestly do to live peaceably with them.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." This is written in the Old Testament:

1. Deu 32:35 "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

2. Psa 94:1 "O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself."

Furthermore, we read in the Old Testament that we are not to avenge ourselves: Lev 19:18 "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."

David is a good example of someone who refused to avenge himself. Saul had sought to kill David even though David had only done good to Saul and the kingdom. When David had the opportunity to kill Saul, yet he refused to do so for he knew that God would avenge the wrong that Saul had done unto him. Likewise, we should leave vengeance in the hands of the Lord.

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." The way the Lord has established that we may overcome evil is to overcome evil with good. Rather than seeking vengeance or repaying evil, we should take every opportunity to good for our enemies. We read this same principle in Prov. 25:21, 22, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall

reward thee." Coals of fire are very hot. The lessons seems to be that in doing good to our enemy that we will strongly convict the conscience of that person to see that his course of action is wrong.

Romans 13:1

Rom. 13:1 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

There are two Greek words that are translated "power" in the New Testament. One is "dunamis" and it means strength. The other is "exousia" and it means authority. In this passage in the thirteenth chapter of Romans the Greek word is "exousia" meaning authority. Thus, Rom. 13:1 could be rendered "Let every soul be subject unto the higher authorities. For there is no authority but of God: the authorities that be are ordained of God."

One of the lessons taught in verse 1 is that all authority comes from God. God is the creator of all things. He created and made all things for his pleasure. Paul had previously asked the question, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Thus, as God is the former of all things, we are subject to Him in all things. There is no true authority outside of God and that which to gives. Any so-called authority that did not derive from God is a false authority.

The authority that I have as a husband and a father derives from God. Likewise, the authority that my wife has as a wife and a mother derives from God. The authority that I have as a man derives from God.

There are many authorities that derive from God. Societal authorities to govern societies derive from God. The Church has authority to govern its members and its functions according to that authority that God has given to her in His word.

All authority that God has given to others is limited. God sets the limitation on individual authority, on societal governmental authority, on church authority, on parental authority, on marital authority, on master/servant relationships. We have no authority to go beyond the limits of the authority that God has given to us. Any effort to go beyond the authority that God has given is rebellion against God and his authority. God set the limits on Adam's authority in the Garden of Eden. Of every tree of the Garden Adam was free to eat, except of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam had no authority to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When Adam ate of that tree he was in direct rebellion against the authority of God.

Likewise, the authority of rulers to govern a nation does not include the authority to order others to commit murder, or to steal, or to bear false witness, etc. Similarly, parents do not have the authority to command their children to commit sins in the eyes of God.

God has appointed every authority that is needful for the well-being of man. God is perfect and complete in all that he does. There is no need for additional authorities beyond what God has appointed.

Furthermore, societies may allow some things to be done, yet that does not grant an individual the authority to do it even if a society allows it. An example of this is abortion. While a nation may allow for abortions of unborn children, yet God has not

given anyone the authority to murder unborn children. Therefore, any mother who purposely causes an abortion (other than when her own life is threatened by the unborn baby) is guilty of rebellion against God and of murder. Likewise, the person who performs the abortion is also guilty of assisting in murder. (We are not talking about abortions that happen by nature and not caused by the individual. This is not murder.)

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." Since God has appointed the true authorities that are over us, we are to be subject to those authorities. Failure to submit ourselves to those authorities is also rebellion against God. If the authority of the nation, or state, or community says that you are not to spit on a sidewalk and you spit on a sidewalk, then you are guilty of breaking a lawful authority of God. Likewise, if the speed limit is 60 mph and we go 70 mph then we are violating the law and come under the penalty of the speed limit law. We are to be subject to the laws of the nation, state, and community in which we live so long as those laws do not violate the laws of God.

An example of lawful resistance to a unlawful governmental law is set forth for us in Acts 5:27-29: "And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." The high priest and the Sanhedrin council had no authority to command the apostles not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. Thus, the apostles had every right to resist the false authority of the Sanhedrin council.

Romans 13:2-5

Rom. 13:2 "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

"Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." The "power" is not identified for us but is used in a generic way. The principle applies to all lawful powers. If a child resists the authority of its parents, it will receive condemnation for its actions of resistance. Punishment will be meted out to the child. The worker at a factory who resists the orders of his supervisor will receive reprimand from the supervisor and if he continues to resist, then he may lose his job. A person who violates a traffic law and is cited by a police officer will have to pay the fine for his violation.

Likewise, a soldier who disobeys a direct order will pay a heavy penalty for his disobedience. A church member who is guilty of one of the six things listed in 1 Cor. chapter 5: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" will find himself out of fellowship with the church.

Moreover, when we resist the teachings of God's word, we will receive chastisement from the Lord. The scriptures plainly teach that whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.

"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." Those in authority are not a terror to good works. A parent should not scold a child who does what he is told to do. A police officer should not cite a person for obeying the traffic laws. A supervisor should not warn an employee who is doing his job correctly. The church will not withdraw fellowship from a member who is living uprightly. Likewise, the Lord blesses those who are living godly lives.

Correction, condemnation, chastisement, punishment is applied to the purveyor of evil works not to the doers of good.

"Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:" There is no reason for us to be afraid of a lawful authority when we do good. The lawful authorities will praise us when we do good. The Lord praises his children when they do good: Matt. 25:20 "And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Good parents praise their children when they do good. Likewise, good supervisors praise their employees when they do good.

"But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." This statement is true whether it be a child being punished by its parents, a man being punished by the civil authorities, a church member losing fellowship with the church, a child of God being punished by the Lord. The authorities established by God do not bear the sword in vain. They are ministers of God, revengers to execute wrath upon them that do evil. We should fear the powers that are ordained of God and do what is right and not evil.

"Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." Our motivation to do good should not just be fear of the wrath that will come upon us if we do evil. We should also do good because our conscience convicts us out of love to do good.

Romans 13:6, 7

Rom. 13:6 "For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

As we look at these two verses we first notice the definitions of the terms:

1. "tribute" – a tax or assessment on persons or property.
2. "dues" – indebtedness or a sum owed.
3. "custom" – a paid levy

4. "fear" – alarm or fright or terror
5. "honor" – high esteem

The Lord said in Matt. 10:10 "Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat." Again we read in 1 Cor. 9:7 "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope."

There is a labor involved in authority. The person in authority is responsible for that which he is authorized. Often there is much labor and time involved in exercising that authority. As the Lord said, "the workman is worthy of his meat." While 1 Cor. chapter 9 is dealing primarily with the gospel ministers, yet a general principle is set forth for us that others must help bear the cost of those in authority.

In order that we may have civil government that is essential to a civilized society, there is a need for tribute. We as citizens of that civil government are responsible for paying our share of that tribute that we may have a civilized society of laws and rules that protect us and make our lives more bearable.

Also, we must pay a levy to have good teachers to teach our children or to train us as adults to the work that we dedicate ourselves. Likewise, we pay a levy for policemen and others who protect us in society or who go to war to preserve our freedoms.

We should fear those who are the leaders of our nation and who judge us in society that we behave ourselves as good citizens.

We as children should give honor to our fathers and mothers. Likewise, the church members should honor those who labor among them in the gospel field.

There are many more applications we could properly make, but we see that we are duty bound to render to the dues of those in authority.

Romans 13:8-10

Rom. 13:8 "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

The use of the word, "owe," does not mean that we are never to have any financial debt to anyone. It means that morally indebted to anyone except to owe them love. Our love to our fellow man is based on the debt of love we owe the Lord. We love the Lord because he first loved us. Because of the Lord's love for us, we owe a debt of gratitude to our Lord. Yet, we pay this debt by manifesting love one to another. The Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The Lord has also given us the proper avenue of our love. We are to love our neighbor. We are to love the brethren. We are to love our family members. We are to love our enemies. Above all, we are to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind.

Not only are we paying that debt of gratitude to the Lord by loving one another, we also are fulfilling God's moral laws by loving one another: "for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

God's moral law gives us what we are not to do: "Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Love by its very nature fulfills the moral law of God: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." If we love our neighbor we will not commit adultery against him, we will not kill him, we will not steal from him, we will not bear false witness against him, and we will not covet what he has. Therefore, love fulfills the moral law of God.

Romans 13:11-14

Rom. 13:11 "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. 14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

This section of scripture began with the beginning of Romans chapter 12 where Paul exhorted us to "present our bodies a living sacrifice." Throughout the first 11 chapters, Paul had warned us several times about the false teachings of a works system of salvation. We need to be aware of our surrounding circumstances and not be asleep to the things going on around us. We should know the time and subsequently the circumstances in which we dwell. Not to know the time or circumstances is like being asleep to what is going on and to our duties and responsibilities.

"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep." Sleep may be good for rest, but when danger is about us, we need to be awake and conscience of what is going on and be prepared to act. 1 Cor 15:34 "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." Eph 5:14 "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." We need to awake to righteousness and live uprightly among this sinful world. We also need to awake to the light that Christ gives us that we may be able to stand up and oppose the dangers about us.

"For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The salvation under consideration is a timely salvation. The use of the word, "now," causes us to realize that it is not eternal salvation, but salvation from an untoward generation that we are to awake to. We have a timely salvation from the trying circumstances and dangers of false religion and false practices and ungodly living. It is a now salvation. We do not have to

wait for this salvation. We will have to wait to the resurrection to see the fullness of our eternal salvation. However, our timely salvation is ever before us.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." The night is the time we dwelt in darkness without the true gospel of Jesus Christ. We need no longer dwell in the darkness as we have the light of the gospel and the light of the leadership of the Holy Spirit to guide us. The day of knowledge and understand of the precious truths of God's word is at hand. Because of this we need to cast off the works of darkness. The works of darkness are our fleshly works.

All of the works of the flesh are sinful which are recorded for us in Gal. 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." We are told to mortify the works of the flesh and to cast off the works of darkness. False doctrines, false practices, and false religious systems are also works of darkness that we are to cast off.

We are to put on the armour of light. In Ephesians chapter six, Paul exhorts us to put on the whole armour of God. He lists this armour as having our loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, having on the helmet of salvation, taking the shield of faith, and having the sword of the Spirit, and praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. This is the armour of light of the knowledge of God's word that we are to put on.

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." Our walk is the way that we live our lives. We are to live our lives in an honest or decent manner. We are to walk according to the knowledge or light of God's word. This is walking in the day. Rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife and envying are things that are often associated with the night. Those are works of the flesh. We no longer as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are to fulfill the fleshly lusts, but are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. We are to put away or mortify the deeds of the flesh and bring our bodies into subjection. We are to transform our lives to a godly walk.

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." To put on the Lord Jesus Christ is to become Christ like in our walk of discipleship. We should ever be striving to gain the knowledge of God's word that we may be more Christ like in our actions of living. We should also cease to make provisions to fulfill the fleshly lusts. In this way we give praise, honor and glory to God for his amazing grace towards us.

Romans 14:1-6

Rom. 14:1 "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. 2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. 3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth

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

Sometimes brethren will disagree over things that do not really effect our adherence to the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Also, it does not effect our belief in salvation from sin by the grace of God. It doesn't effect our belief in a time salvation. It does not effect our belief in the order and government and ordinances of the church. We can be agreed on all these things and yet there will be some things that we differ on and those things should not affect our fellowship one with another.

Paul says that we should receive those who are weak in the faith. However, we should not engage them in doubtful disputes over non-essential beliefs. Next, Paul gives us examples of non-essential beliefs that sometimes people do not agree on. The first example is that of what a person will accept as acceptable natural food to eat. Under the Old Testament, certain foods were prohibited in the diets of the children of Israel. It was not that there was inherently anything wrong in the prohibited foods, but rather it was to teach the children of Israel the difference between clean and unclean things. When Peter was sent to the house of Cornelius, the Lord showed Peter that the examples of the animals as a part of the diet was to distinguish between clean and unclean and that whereas the Jews had thought of the Gentiles as being unclean, yet God had cleansed them.

Today, some people will not eat pork or catfish because of the Old Testament teaching, thinking that there is something naturally unclean in pork and catfish. Others of us do not think that there is something naturally unclean in pork and catfish and heartily partake of these tasty foods. Yet this is not something for us to be disputing about and causing a fuss in the church.

Yet others believe that eating any meat is bad for you and will eat an all vegetable diet. Again, if someone chooses to do this, that is okay, yet this is not something to dispute about in the church.

Sometimes people will disagree over the practice of fasting. Some observe a fast saying that it is good for your health and that it helps you to focus your mind on spiritual things. Others do not agree with either premise. However, Paul points out, "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." The important thing is that we give God thanks. To dispute over disagreements on the practice of fasting only brings forth hard feelings to no practical purpose.

The third example Paul gives us is the disagreements that people have over the observance of holy days. Some people think of the first day of the week as being a Sabbath day and that it replaces the old seventh day Sabbath that was observed in the Old Testament. Others, however, in the church think of the first day of the week as the day set aside to worship God, but do not view it as a Sabbath. These may engage in certain works after the worship service is over. Again, people may personally disagree over the first day of the week, whether it is a Sabbath day, yet they should not bring it into the

church as a point of dispute. Paul said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."

In the midst of these non-essential disagreements Paul said, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." For us to condemn someone because they disagree with us over a non-essential belief, Paul equates to judging another man's servant. Truly we are all the Lord's servant, and the Lord is quite capable of judging the rightness or wrongness of these actions. We stand or fall to the Lord on these non-essential matters. We are not to judge one another to condemnation over these matters.

Romans 14:7-9

Rom. 14:7 "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

Sometimes we may feel like we are alone in our thoughts and feelings or circumstances, yet we are not alone. We do not live to our self. We interact with other people all the days of our lives. When we die, we are not alone either. Other people feel the effects of our death. Thus, neither in life nor in death are we truly alone. Further, we, who are children of God and especially we who are members of the Lord's church, should reckon ourselves to live unto the Lord and to die unto the Lord. The Lord is there with us in our life and the Lord is with us in our death.

We should so reckon ourselves to live unto the Lord and to die unto the Lord, because the Lord came down from heaven to redeem us from our sins. In redeeming us he died for our sins, then he arose the third day, because we are justified in the sight of God. Thus, he is our Lord (master) whether we are alive or whether we are dead. While our body dies, yet our soul and spirit lives on in heaven's glory world, awaiting the resurrection of the body. Jesus is truly Lord of both the dead and the living. We have no other Lord like Jesus. When we die, the masters in this life lose all authority or control over us.

It is important in life that we recognize who is our ultimate and greater master. When we realize this, we began to behave as one who has an ultimate master, Jesus Christ and quit fearing what man will do to us. Also, we behave as knowing that our brother also has an ultimate master and quit trying to lord it over him.

Romans 14:10-13

Rom. 14:10 "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Let us not

therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

Peter asked the Lord about John on one occasion: John 21:20 "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

The context of the Lord's judgment seat used in chapter 14 is the judgment seat of a master judging his servants. As his servants, the Lord judges all of us. The Lord gave us an example of this in the 25th chapter of Matthew: Matt. 25:14 "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

The Lord judged the three servants in the above passage. The first two were judge and rewarded as faithful servants. The lost servant was judge and chastened as an unprofitable and wicked servant. All three stood before the judgment seat of Christ. Likewise we stand before the Lord's judgment seat to be judged as to our service to the Lord. No one else had the right to judge these servants in this way as we are the Lord's servants.

Now the scriptures do speak of times that we are to judge, especially as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to judge when members bring a reproach on the church

and ultimately a reproach on the name of Christ (1 Cor. chapter 5). But this is not the same judgment as the Lord is teaching us in Romans chapter 14.

Paul concludes his admonition by saying, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." When we start engaging in doubtful disputations, we are putting a stumbling block in our brother's way or we are giving our brother an occasion to fall. This we are admonished not to do.

Romans 14:14-18

Rom. 14:14 "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. 16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of: 17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. 18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men."

Paul said that it is a truth that there is nothing unclean of itself. So whether we eat meat, or whether we eat pork and catfish, these things are not unclean of itself. But Paul points out that if a person esteems something to be unclean, then in his mind and belief system it is unclean. Even though it is not really unclean, yet he believes it to be unclean and therefore to him it is unclean. Paul is setting the stage to show us that we need to walk charitably towards those who hold such ideas.

He said that if my brother is grieved with the fact that I eat meat, or he is grieved with the fact that I eat pork and catfish, then I should be charitable. I shouldn't destroy my brother just to eat some pork or catfish before him. Christ died for him and I have no right to destroy him from the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

"Let not your good be evil spoken of." While it may be good for me to eat meat, yet if I eat meat or do that which will offend my brother, then I am letting my good to be evil spoken of.

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The kingdom of God does not stand in the things that we eat and drink. It does not stand on ritual or the observance of a holy day. Rather the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The Old Testament service had much ritual and eat and drink associated with it. The New Testament worship and service in the Kingdom of God does not have such associated with it. There are only two ordinances in the church and they both show forth the death and resurrection of Christ.

"For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." To serve Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost is acceptable to God and approved of men. Even of those who observe meat and drink, serving Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost is approved of them.

Romans 14:19-23

Rom. 14:19 "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. 20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. 21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. 22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. 23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Bickering over whether or not we should eat meat or not does not make for peace. Bickering over whether we should eat pork and catfish or not does not make for peace. Bickering over whether we should observe Sunday as a holy day does not make for peace. In contrast, preaching and believing the gospel of Jesus Christ does make for peace. Living upright and holy lives does make for peace. Following the biblical pattern for worshipping God in Spirit and in truth does make for peace. Praying for one another does make for peace. Admonishing and encouraging one another does make for peace. Contending for the faith that was once delivered to the saints does make for peace.

"For meat destroy not the work of God." Whether I eat meat or not has no effect on the work of God. God's elect will live in the glory world. God's elect will be born of the Spirit of God at God's appointed time. All of God's elect are justified by the blood of Christ. A diet including meat or a diet of all vegetables and fruit will not change these precious truths. A diet including or not including pork and catfish will not destroy the work of God. Observing or not observing a first day of the week Sabbath will not destroy the work of God.

"All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Armed with the knowledge that meat or pork and catfish are not unclean does not make it right for me to offend a weak brother. It is evil for me to take advantage of my knowledge to offend a weak brother. Paul says that "it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Thus, I should consider the condition of my brother and not purposely do anything to offend him or wound his weak conscience. It is evil in the sight of God for me to eat and offend my brother in so doing.

"Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." One of the meanings of the word, faith, is conviction. We should have conviction of what we believe in our own minds before God. If I believe in my own mind that eating pork is wrong and yet I indulge in eating pork, then I condemn myself in what I have done. This is true even if there is nothing wrong with eating pork. But, if I believe it is wrong to eat pork and I do not eat pork, then I am happy because I am doing what I believe is right.

"And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." What if I do not know whether it is right to eat pork or not? Can I go ahead and eat pork and hope that it is okay to do so? Paul says that this is sin. To do something in ignorance hoping that it will be okay, but not knowing that it is okay is sin.

Romans 15:1-3

Rom. 15:1 "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. 3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." There is both a natural application and a spiritual application to the above statement. First, we look at the natural application. Some people in the church will have more natural strength or financial ability than other members of the church. Notice the admonition in the following verses of scripture:

1. James 2:15 "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

2. 1 John 3:17 "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

3. James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

4. Acts 2:44 "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

5. 1 Tim. 6:17 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

6. Matt. 25:34 "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

7. Acts 20:34 "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Next, we look at the spiritual application. Some people in the church are stronger spiritually than other people in the church. The following verses show this principle:

1. Rom. 14:1 "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. 2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs."

2. 1 Cor. 8:7 "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

3. 1 Cor. 11:29 "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

Thus, those who are strong both in natural ability and strong spiritually are to support the weak naturally and the weak spiritually. May God help us to do so.

"and not to please ourselves." What we do in supporting others is not for our honor or glory. We are not to seek praise for what we do. The Lord taught that in giving alms we are to do it in secret: Matt. 6:1 "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." While all that we may do for others will not always be unknown to those that we support, yet we are not to sound an alarm before us that we may receive praise from men.

"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." Our motive for supporting our weak brother is for his good and for his edification. Our motive should be purely unselfish. It should be borne out of the love that we have towards Christ and towards his people.

"For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." The greatest examples of unselfishness in bearing the infirmities of others is found in the Lord himself. While there are many examples of his unselfish help towards others, such as healing the sick, blind, dumb, lame, deaf, leprous, and those with withered limbs, and in raising the dead, yet, the greatest example of all is that Jesus died for sinners. He bore the reproaches (sins) of those who had sinned against God. He did this willingly and unselfishly. He did it out of the great love that he had for his covenant people.

When we consider that Christ bore our infirmities, we should count it a privilege to be able to help the weak, unselfishly and without the praise of men.

Romans 15:4-7

Rom. 15:4 "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. 5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: 6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

Those things, which were written aforetime, are the Old Testament scriptures. Below are other scriptures, which show forth the significance of the Old Testament scriptures for us:

1. 1 Cor. 10:6 "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

2. John 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

3. 2 Tim. 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

From the above we can conclude that the Old Testament scriptures teach us patience, gives us comfort, enables us to hope, testifies to us of Christ, are our examples, and along with the New Testament scriptures teaches us doctrine, reproves us, corrects us, and instructs us in righteousness in order that we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

In the Old, Testament, we have many examples of where people prayed for God's deliverances according to his promises, waiting for those deliverances (patience) and then experienced those deliverances at God's appointed time. A few examples are listed below:

1. Gen 20:17 "So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children."

2. 1 Sam 1:27 "For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:"

3. 2 Ki 6:17 "And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

4. 2 Ki 6:18 "And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha."

5. 2 Chr. 20:18 "For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the

passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one 19 That prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. 20 And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people."

In addition, the Old Testament scriptures comfort us because of our sins according to that which God has promised:

1. Is. 40:1 "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

2. Gen. 3:15 "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

3. 2 Sam. 23:5 "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. 6 But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands: 7 But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place."

4. Is. 53:1 "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

5. Is. 9:6 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

6. Is. 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

7. Isa 25:9 "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Moreover, we find hope in the covenant promise of the resurrection in the Old Testament:

1. Job 19:25 "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

2. Ps. 16:9 "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

3. Dan. 12:1 "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:" Plainly, this teaches us that patience and comfort comes from God. We would not have patience and we would not be comforted unless God give us patience and comfort. Since he is the God of patience and comfort and he has given patience and comfort to each of his children, therefore, we should be likeminded one toward another. That is we should have the same earnest desire and love for the well-being of one another as Christ Jesus has had toward us. We should seek one another's well-being and their growth unselfishly as Christ Jesus gave himself for us unselfishly.

"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The members of the church are admonished to be of one mind and with one mouth. They can only be of one mind and speak the same thing if they are agreed. Amos asked the question: Amos 3:3 "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The only way that we can truly have agreement and be walking together in the faith is that we are agreed on the teachings of the fundamentals of God's word. Through the leadership of the Spirit, we pray that God will guide each of us into an understanding of those fundamental principles taught in His word.

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." We are to receive one another in love and in fellowship of the truth of God's word. We are not to exalt ourselves as being above another, but we are to be of the same mind and of the same mouth, speaking the same thing. The brother that is weak in the faith we receive and encourage his growth in the knowledge and understanding of God's word. We receive one another in humility.

Romans 15:8-12

Rom. 15:8 "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: 9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. 10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. 11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. 12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust."

In this passage, Paul sets forth the relationship of the ministry of Christ both towards the Jews and towards the Gentiles. He begins with the Jews, telling us that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. Time and again, we read in the gospels where Jesus would say, "it is written." Also, the gospels declare concerning the works of Christ: "this was done, that it might be fulfilled..." Jesus said in Matt. 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the

law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Jesus came and fulfilled the promises God made unto the fathers and ministered this to the Jews.

Furthermore, Jesus came to minister to the Gentiles that his mercy to them might be glorified according to that which was promised in the Old Testament: "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust." While this precious truth concerning the Gentiles was not understood until after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, nevertheless, we greatly rejoice because of it.

Romans 15:13, 14

Rom. 15:13 "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. 14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."

Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and believing his word should bring great joy and peace unto us. If what we believe does not give us joy and does not give us peace, then we have probably been deluded into believing a lie. When we believe the truth, we receive from the God of hope, joy and peace in our heart and mind. In addition, when we believe the truth and grow in our knowledge of God's word, we also abound in hope. This hope is the result of believing the promises of God and knowing that by the power of the Holy Spirit these promises will be fulfilled.

"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." We usually are persuaded of something because we have the evidence. Paul was persuaded of the brethren at Rome that they were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another. He was persuaded of these things because he had the evidence that it was so. This teaches us that we are to be full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another. Furthermore, these things should be so much a part of our lives that others may see them and be persuaded these things are true of us also.

Romans 15:15-21

Rom. 15:15 "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, 16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. 17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things

which pertain to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. 20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: 21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand."

Our boldness or confidence in preaching the gospel comes from the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. If it were not for the grace of God, then we could not speak of God's grace and of the wonderful works that he has done for us and to us according to his covenant of redemption. Because of the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can have boldness in the things that we speak or write as we are led of the Spirit. One of the purposes of preaching the gospel is to put the Lord's people in mind of the wonderful works of God and of our need to present our bodies a living sacrifice, which is holy and acceptable unto God.

Paul tells us that he was the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. This ministry came as a result of the grace of God and the working of the Holy Spirit. God called him to this ministry and then directed him in his labors, giving him understanding of what he was to do and say. One of the purposes of Paul's ministry and subsequently of our ministry is "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." The Lord said that they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth. Without the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and without the leadership of the Spirit in the preaching and receiving of the word of God, then there can be no true worship. Likewise, without the truth we cannot worship God acceptably. Therefore, for the spiritual offerings of the Gentiles to be acceptable unto God, they must be according to the leadership of the Spirit and they must be according to the truth.

We preach that the children of God might be instructed in the truth and that they may worship and serve God acceptably.

"I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God." Paul had no desire to glory or boast in the things that he had done. He did, however, feel confident in boasting in the works of God and what God has done for his people. It is okay to boast in what God has done. We can glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. Two more verses that substantiate this statement are:

1. 1 Cor 1:31 "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

2. 2 Cor 10:17 "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

"For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me." Another way of saying this is, "I will only speak of those things which Christ hath wrought by me." Paul uses the negative to show us the folly in boasting of another man's works, even if those works seem to be led of the Spirit. The problem in boasting of another man's works is that man will let you down and will disappoint you at times. God will never let you down or disappoint you.

"To make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." Paul could speak with authority of the Lord's dealing with him and with the Lord's working in him. He could speak with the

Spirit working in him to make the Gentiles obedient to the word of God and the true worship and service of God by word and by deed. He could also speak of the manifestation of the power of the Spirit of God in the mighty signs and wonders wrought by the Spirit through Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

"So that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. 20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: 21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand." Paul was an apostle and was laying the foundation of the gospel as he was directed of the Spirit of God. One of the lessons taught to us in this passage is that God will direct our labors and each man's labor will be his own. As far as directing the labors of the gospel ministry the passage in Acts chapter 16 is very instructive: 6 "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."

Our field of labor is where the Holy Spirit directs us. This is true of the evangelist and it is true of pastors and teachers: Acts 20:28 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." It is the Holy Ghost who makes someone an overseer of a local congregation, just as it is the Holy Ghost who directs the labors of the evangelist.

Romans 15:22-24

Rom. 15:22 "For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company."

The cause to which Paul refers is the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the edifying and building up of the Gentiles. The church at Rome consisted primarily of Gentiles.

Some people take hindrances as a sign they are not directed of the Holy Spirit. Paul did not teach this. He had been hindered from going to Rome, yet he did not believe the Holy Spirit had hindered him. There are going to be hindrances in our service to God and to his people. Paul spoke of adversarial hindrances at Ephesus: 1 Cor. 16:8 "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. 9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." To the church at Thessalonica Paul wrote of Satan's hindrances: 1 Thes. 2:18 "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us."

"But now having no more place in these parts." Paul was saying that his labor was finished where he had been residing and that he was being directed to go elsewhere.

"Having a great desire these many years to come unto you," This desire, no doubt, had been wrought in Paul by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had given Paul a great desire to go to the brethren at Rome for many years, but he had been hindered from going there for some time. We are not told of the nature of those hindrances.

"Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company." Paul had been burdened by the Spirit to go and labor in Spain. Along the journey to Spain, Paul would come by the church in Rome and promised to spend time with them preaching the gospel to them.

Romans 15:25-29

Rom. 15:25 "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. 29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

The disciples of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia had determined to contribute money for the poor saints at Jerusalem. The details of this are recorded for us in the book of Acts: Acts 11:27 "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

There are many lessons that we can learn from this. First, it is probably likely that most of the members of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia did not know the members of the church at Jerusalem. Even though they did not personally know the ones in need, they still by the love in their hearts gave to the needs of the saints at Jerusalem. Second, the church at Jerusalem consisted mostly of Jews and the churches at Macedonia and Achaia consisted mostly of Gentiles. Ethnicity was not a factor in the saints of Macedonia and Achaia giving to the saints at Jerusalem. Third, the saints at Macedonia and Achaia could not boast of what they had done, because they had been blessed by the giving of the saints of Jerusalem to them at an earlier date.

The saints at Jerusalem had freely shared the gospel and its message with the saints at Macedonia and Achaia. Their ministers had gone and preached to the Gentiles at Macedonia and Achaia. What a great spiritual blessing this was to the saints at Macedonia and Achaia. The saints at Macedonia and Achaia owed a debt of gratitude to the saints at Jerusalem. They had a love for the saints at Jerusalem and a duty to help them in time of their carnal need. By the love of God, they determined to do this very

thing. They gave according to each man's ability. They collected the contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem and entrusted them in the hands of Paul and Barnabas.

With these contributions in hand, Paul was going first to Jerusalem and then determined to go to Rome on his way to Spain. While Paul had some very important tasks to accomplish both at Jerusalem and later in Spain, yet, going to Rome and preaching to the saints at Rome was also important. It was not just a convenient stopover in Rome, but a meeting by the direction of the Holy Spirit and Paul was determined that the saints at Rome would not be shortchanged.

"And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." We are to declare the whole counsel of God. Certainly, we declare the good news of the sovereignty of God in the new birth and in salvation from sin and that heaven will be our home because of the covenant of redemption. We also declare the government and orderly arrangement of the church and how we are to conduct ourselves as disciples of the Lord and how we are to live lives to the honor and glory of God. We also are to preach how that we are to conduct ourselves as family members and how we are to conduct ourselves in the workplace. We are also to warn about false doctrines, false teachers, false worship, and false practices in the church. Paul said he was coming in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. We also should preach the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Romans 15:30-33

Rom. 15:30 "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; 31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; 32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

The word, "beseech," means "to strongly encourage." Paul was strongly encouraging the saints at Rome to strive in prayer with him. The phrase, "strive together with," means "to struggle together with." Paul wanted the brethren at Rome to be prayer partners striving together with him for something that he deemed to be very important. To show us the importance, Paul said that this, which he was praying for, was "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit." This is a very strong admonition or encouragement for prayer. To ask someone to pray for Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit is about as strong a request for prayer that can be made. What was it that Paul wanted the saints at Rome to pray for?

First, he wanted them to pray that he (Paul) might "be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea." To the religious world, this must seem like a very strange request. Most of the religious world would want you to pray that they might be delivered to unbelievers. Most of the religious world thinks that if they can get the gospel to unbelievers they may be able to convert them to believers and thus cause them to obtain eternal life. The bible does not teach this. The bible teaches that "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."

If the preaching of the gospel was God's means to get unbelievers to become believers and thus get eternal life, then why did Paul pray and ask the saints at Rome to pray that he might be delivered from unbelievers? Because Paul knew and taught that God must first cause a person to be born of the Spirit before that person would be able to believe the gospel. Paul knew that preaching the gospel to an unregenerate (not born again) would not be received by the unregenerate. Rather, often times, the unregenerate will persecute the preachers of righteousness and those who hold to the truth. Paul knew that the unbelievers could be a great obstacle or hindrance in his service to the saints. For this reason he asked the saints at Rome to pray with him that he might be delivered from unbelievers.

Second, Paul asked the saints at Rome to pray that his service which he had for Jerusalem might be accepted of the saints. Certainly Paul had a service in delivering the contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem because of the dearth over the land. Yet, Paul is praying for more than the receipt of the natural contributions by the poor saints at Jerusalem. A very hungry person will almost always accept food when it is offered to him. The service that Paul was referring to was the preaching of the gospel to the saints at Jerusalem. God must first prepare the hearts of his people to receive the truth before they can receive the truth. An example of this is found in Acts 16:14: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

Thus, Paul requested the saints at Rome to pray with him that he might be delivered from unbelievers and that God would prepare the hearts of the saints to receive the gospel truth of salvation from sin by the grace of God alone.

The third thing that Paul requested the saints at Rome to pray for was "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." The saints at Rome had already heard and believed the truth of salvation from sin by the grace of God alone. Yet Paul desired by the leadership of the Spirit to preach the whole counsel of God to the saints at Rome. He knew that in his coming to Rome he was dependent upon the providence of God so that he might arrive there and arrive there with joy. He asked the saints to pray for that intended end that his trip to meet with them might be prospered by the Lord and that both he and them be blessed and refreshed by the upcoming meetings.

All three things that Paul requested the saints at Rome to pray for are important to us today as well. We need to be delivered from unbelievers who would hinder the preaching of the gospel to God's elect children. Likewise, we need for God to open the door of utterance to his elect children and to prepare their hearts that they might receive and believe the truth of salvation from sin by the grace of God alone. Likewise, we need to pray that God would prosper our journey's for his name's sake and that our meetings with the saints might be a blessing to them and to us.

Romans 16:1-5

Rom. 16:1 "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and

that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. 3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ."

The sixteenth chapter of Romans is mostly salutations both to the church at Rome and from the church at Antioch. However, in each of these salutations there is at least one lesson for us today.

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." There are several lessons we can learn from the above account of Phebe:

1. First, Paul calls Phebe "our sister." This teaches us that we should think of the men and women who make up the church as brothers and sisters. They truly are our spiritual brothers and sisters. The members of the church are a church family. We should think of one another as brothers and sisters and the church as a family.

2. Phebe is said to be a servant of the church. We should reckon ourselves also to be servants of the church. We are to serve the members of the local church to which we belong.

3. Phebe was transferring her membership from the church at Cenchrea to the church at Rome. This transfer of membership is done by letter from the granting church to the receiving church. This is the decent and orderly way to transfer membership. From the above it appears that Phebe had moved from Cenchrea to Rome and thus was placing her membership in the church closest to where she would be living.

4. Phebe had a ministry in the local church. Each member of the church has a ministry. The word, minister, means some one who serves. We are all to be servants of others. However, we do not all serve in the same things or manner or have the same gifts.

5. Paul instructs the church at Rome that they should assist Phebe in her ministry. Likewise, we should assist where we can the members of our local church in their ministry as well.

6. Phebe's ministry involved being a succourer or helper of others. We are not told just exactly how or what she did as this is not important that we know that. However, almost all ministry's of the members of the church involves helping others. We should be ready and prepared to help others.

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house." Just like with Phebe there several lessons taught us in the scriptures concerning Priscilla and Aquila:

1. First, Paul says that Priscilla and Aquila were his helpers in Christ Jesus. Aquila and Priscilla were of the same occupation as Paul. They were tentmakers and while at Corinth Paul had abode with Aquila and Priscilla and had worked with them in the tentmaking business. Later, Paul and Aquila and Priscilla had traveled together in one of Paul's journeys. Paul tells us that they were helpers with him in gospel labors in Christ Jesus. This is not to say that they were preachers of the gospel, for they were not.

They, however, helped Paul so as to free him to be able to spend more time preaching the gospel.

2. Priscilla and Aquila show us how that we can be teachers even if we have not been called to publicly preach the gospel. They came across a disciple named Apollos who had spoke boldly in the synagogue, knowing only the baptism of John. They took Apollos aside "and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Thus, they taught Apollos privately the way of the God more perfectly.

3. We know that the all the apostles except for John were martyred for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, there were others besides the apostles such as Stephen who gave their lives for the truth. Priscilla and Aquila had hazarded their lives for the cause of Jesus Christ. We should be thankful for such that count not their lives to be above the cause of Jesus Christ.

4. Rome was a very large city and certainly there was room for more than one local church. There was such a local church that met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. In the earlier days of the United States, there were churches which had their beginning meeting in the homes of one or more of the members. We should realize that we do not have to have a public building in which to meet as a local church. We should be willing to sacrifice for the cause of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ." Paul spoke of Epaenetus as being well beloved. There is a reason that he was wellbeloved. It was because he lived in such a way as to be "wellbeloved." I would to God that all of us would live in such a way that we would be referred to as "wellbeloved." Furthermore, Paul referred to Epaenetus as being the "firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ." Epaenetus was one of the first believers that responded to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ in that region of the world known as "Achaia." Thus, he was a firstfruit or a first believer of the gospel.

Romans 16:6-15

Rom. 16:6 "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. 7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. 9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. 11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. 12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. 13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. 14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. 15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them."

"Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us." As a minister of the gospel, I have stayed in families houses where the wife cooked my meals, washed my dirty clothes, and provided for me a place to sleep, and wash room supplies. These precious sisters have willingly given of their labour so that I could use my time preparing for preaching the gospel. The Lord promised this would be so: Mk. 10:29 "And Jesus

answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." While I have found this to be so, I still thank the Lord for faithful servants who bestow much labour on the gospel ministers.

"Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." We make the following observations about Andronicus and Junia:

1. Andronicus and Junia were members of the church at Rome which was comprised mostly of Gentile disciples. However, these brethren were Paul's natural kinsmen in the flesh and therefore were Jews by nature. Again we see that in the Lord's church there is to be no discrimination based on nationality or any other things that people discriminate against in the world.

2. Paul calls Andronicus and Junia, fellow prisoners. Paul declared himself to be the prisoner of the Lord: Eph. 4:1 "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Being a prisoner means that we are not free to do our own will, but are bound to do our master's will. We are not our own, we are bought with a price. We should reckon ourselves to be the Lord's prisoners. As a prisoner we are to go where the Lord directs us and do what the Lord directs us to do. We are His servants. No doubt, this is what Paul meant when he called Andronicus and Junia, fellow prisoners.

3. Andronicus and Junia were of note among the apostles. This is not teaching that Andronicus and Junia were apostles, but rather that the apostles took notice of them because of their righteous living. This is a good lesson for us that we should let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

4. Andronicus and Junia were in Christ before Paul. Now we are all in Christ by covenant election at the same time, before the world began. However, what we are being told is that Andronicus and Junia became disciples of Christ before Paul did. This is significant because Paul was the church's worst persecutor before Christ struck him down on the Damascus road. Thus, Andronicus and Junia hazarded their lives against the wrath of their kinsman, Saul of Tarsus, and believed the gospel and became the disciples of the Lord despite the danger to their own lives.

"Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord." We know that someone is beloved in the Lord because of the evidence. When a person's actions shows that he loves the Lord and loves his people, we have evidence that the Lord loves them. We love him because he first loved us.

"Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved." There have been many people that I could say that they have helped me in my service to the Lord's people. I like to think that maybe I have also helped some in their service to the Lord's people. We all need to be helper's together in serving the Lord and his people.

"Salute Apelles approved in Christ." The Greek word for approved means to be approved through trial. When we face the trials of life and remain faithful as the disciples of Christ and grow in faith in the midst of those trials and remain faithful to the

cause of Christ we show that we are approved in Christ. May we all prove ourselves to be approved in Christ.

"Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household." Many times a faithful disciple will have an effect on those who are closest to him. In this case Aristobulus had been faithful as a disciple and his household were also disciples of Christ. May the Lord grant each of us that we may live lives so that those who are closest to us may also want to follow the Lord.

"Salute Herodion my kinsman." While we are seeking to serve others and helping them in becoming disciples of Christ, we need not overlook our kinsman in that service. Herodion was Paul's kinsman and he also had become a disciple of Christ. Thus he had become a spiritual kinsman as well as a natural kinsman.

"Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord." Just as Aristobulus household were all disciples of Christ so was the household of Narcissus. The faithfulness of these men is noted and the effect of their faithfulness to their own household is also noted.

"Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord." It is good to have faithful brethren who are willing to labour in the Lord. Their labours do not go unnoticed by the Lord. He told the church at Ephesus in Rev. 2:2 "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." Not all brethren are blessed to labour to the same degree. Persis laboured much in the Lord.

"Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." By carefully studying Rufus in the scriptures we discover that he was a dark-skinned man dwelling primarily among people of lighter skin. Yet he is held with the same high regard by his brethren in the church. This is as it should be. The actions of Rufus showed that he was one of God's children and thus was chosen in Christ before the world began in the covenant of redemption. Paul also speaks of Rufus mother as being "his mother and mine." Frequently in the church we find elder women who serve in a motherly capacity to members of the church, even though they are not the members natural mother. This woman was Rufus' natural mother, but she was also a spiritual mother to Paul, though not Paul's natural mother.

"Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. 15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them." We are not told much about these disciples, yet they are mentioned and therefore they were disciples of the church at Rome. Frequently, there are people who for various reasons do not stand out from the others. These brethren are very much needed in the church. While their gifts or actions may not receive a special note, yet their faithfulness to the cause and their prayers often serve as the backbone of a local church.

Romans 16:16

Rom. 16:16 "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you." The holy kiss is mentioned three other times in the scriptures:

1. 1 Cor 16:20 "All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss."

2. 2 Cor 13:12 "Greet one another with an holy kiss."

3. 1 Th 5:26 "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."

The word, "holy," comes from the Greek word, "hagios," and means separate. The holy kiss is not the naturally intimate kiss that a husband might give to his wife. Rather it is a separate show of love and affection for the brethren and sisters in the Lord's church. We are to have love for the brethren and a spiritual affection for them.

Paul tells us to greet one another with a holy kiss. We are to show our love and affection for the brethren and for our shared joy in serving the Lord by means of an embrace, hug, or handshake. In this manner when we greet one another we are telling the members of the church that we have a brotherly love for them and that this love we have for them is for Christ's sake.

Romans 16:17, 18

Rom. 16:17 "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

Satan is a deceiver. He deceives people into believing that a lie is the truth. He deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden into believing that if she ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that she would become as God knowing good and evil. God had told Adam not to eat of the tree and that in the day he ate thereof he would surely die. Satan practices the deception that evil is good and that good is evil.

Paul warned in Acts 20:29 "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." These men are cunning and want to make merchandise of the flock and to get a following by drawing away disciples after themselves. These men come from both outside of the flock to within the flock and some come from within the flock to cause divisions. That is some may come to the Old Baptists from other orders of people and some may have been raised up in the Old Baptists. The motivation is the same. They either want to make merchandise of the flock or they through pride want to be somebody in the flock.

It is therefore important that we have a good understanding of the doctrines and practices taught in the word of God that we may be able to discern when someone comes along preaching things they ought not for filthy lucre's sake.

The true doctrines and practices of the New Testament Church do not appeal to the carnal desires of the flesh. The world rejects these doctrines and practices. When men come among the Old Baptists and want to make merchandise of the disciples or want a following, they will invariably want to change something. They will begin to espouse a false doctrine or introduce new practices not taught in the word of God.

Paul told the church at Rome to mark such as cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine they had been taught. The doctrine Paul and the true gospel ministry had taught were the doctrines of grace. Throughout the book of Romans Paul warned against those who had taught a works system of eternal salvation. When someone begins to place a condition on the works or deeds of men in order to be saved from sin, then he is causing a division or offence contrary to the doctrine taught in the word of God. We are to mark or identify them and then have nothing to

do with them. We are to avoid them. If they come to our meeting places, then they are not to be used in any way.

Paul said concerning these who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine of the scriptures: "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

To serve their own belly is to be totally selfish in what they are doing. Furthermore, the manner in which they deceive people is also very subtle. They used good words. Much of what they say is true. They introduce their poison a little at a time. They use fair speeches. Often these people are very entertaining in their ability to speak. They make the members believe that they truly care for the flock. They espouse a lot of love, when what they are doing is just the opposite. They boost the ego of the members of the congregation and in this manner they deceive the hearts of the simple.

If left alone, these men will steal away the joy of the salvation of the disciples for their own personal gain. No wonder Paul said, "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

Romans 16:19, 20

Rom. 16:19 "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. 20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

"For your obedience is come abroad unto all men." The obedience to the faith of the disciples at Rome had become known to the disciples that were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. We should all have the desire that we would be known for our obedience to the faith and that obedience would be an example throughout the churches throughout the earth. Paul had said in Rom. 1:5 "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name." Paul's labors had been for the purpose that those who he labored among would be obedient to the faith. It should be our sincerest desire that we may be obedient to the faith.

"I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." Being wise is to have knowledge and act accordingly. We need to have knowledge of that which is good and act accordingly. Simple means to be innocent or harmless. We should not seek to know evil or to act on evil. We should be innocent of seeking or acting on evil and be harmless in our actions.

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." This teaches us that we are not alone in our struggles against the wiles of the devil. Certainly, we are taught to resist Satan and all of his devices. Yet the very God of peace is with us in our struggles and when we resist Satan, the Lord bruises Satan under our feet. To have our enemy under our feet indicates that we have a victory over him. We get victories as we walk by faith and not by sight and as we resist Satan. We will continue to have warfare against him so long as we live in the flesh. The key to having victories in our battles with Satan is to walk by faith, resist Satan and be obedient to the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." Grace is the unmerited favor of God. It took the grace of God to redeem us from our sins. It also took the grace

of God to quicken us into spiritual life. It took the grace of God to give us the kingdom of God. It took the grace of God to give us the scriptures. It took the grace of God to send forth the preaching gifts. It took the grace of God to give to each of us the spiritual gifts that we possess. In addition, the grace of God is with us in our daily struggles of life. Thank God for his grace.

Romans 16:21-24

Rom. 16:21 "Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. 22 I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. 23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. 24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Paul mentions in this passage those who had labored with them and sent their salutation to the church at Rome. This passage shows the brotherly love that local church bodies have toward other local church bodies. Also this passage shows that when we undertake a labor in the Lord that often times others also are engaged in this labor. We rarely act completely alone in our labors. It is important that we thank the Lord for our fellow laborers. It is also important that we express to our fellow laborers our appreciation for their labors.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." This is Paul's closing statement that is consistent in all the writings of his. It is safe to say that the theme of Paul's writings was the grace of God. Paul had been a recipient of God's grace and he wanted to tell others about God's grace. Likewise, we are the recipients of God's grace and it should be our sincerest desire to tell others about the grace of God.

Romans 16:25-27

Rom. 16:25 "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: 27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

In this passage, Paul is giving praise and glory to the God of glory for his wonderful works. He begins by citing his power to establish the elect in the faith through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This shows us that, while we may preach the gospel, it is not effective without the working of the Spirit of God. The Spirit first quickens or born an elect of the Spirit. The Spirit then calls and enables the preacher to preach. The Spirit leads the preacher to an understanding of the scriptures. The Spirit then gives the appropriate message to the preacher at the appropriate time. The Spirit enables the preacher to preach in power and demonstration of Spirit. The Spirit prepares the heart of the believer to receive the message. The Spirit convicts the believer to act upon the message. All glory and praise thus belongs to God.

Next, God gave us the mystery of the kingdom of God in his word and then revealed it to us through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This happened at God's appointed time. This mystery had been hid from the foundation of the world. Even though it was set forth in the scriptures of the Old Testament, it wasn't revealed to man until God intended it to be revealed. We are a blessed people to have this revelation.

The children of God were under the Old Testament schoolmaster until the time of Christ. The Old Testament brings us to Christ. Now through the commandment of God we know the wonderful works of Jesus Christ in redeeming his people from their sins and how that he now sits as King and reigns in the Kingdom of God here on earth. This knowledge of God's word is no longer restricted to just the nation of Israel, but is now revealed to God's people among all nations.

This knowledge of salvation also encourages God's people to be obedient to the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Since the scriptures are a thorough furnisher unto all good works, we should be striving to be obedient to the faith. Much of our preaching is designed to teach people how to be obedient to the faith. May God be glorified in our efforts to be obedient to the faith.