

NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

Paul's Epistle to the

Romans

Gene Cunningham

As Jesus Christ prepared to send the disciples for the first time throughout Israel with His message, He included in their instructions this admonition: *“Freely you have received, freely give”* (Matthew 10:8). This six-word summary of grace explains the financial policy of the publications and audio ministries of Basic Training. All audio materials and publications are provided **without charge** to anyone who requests them. For a list of available material, visit our website.



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“Endure hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”
(2 Timothy 2:3)

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Preface

While I was teaching in Myanmar/Burma in March 2019, some of my long-term, advanced students suggested that I go through the New Testament and provide basic notes, which they could then be able print as a study Bible. They specifically asked that I focus on issues that are a major area of confusion in the churches where they work. Therefore, the following commentary will focus on these five primary areas:

1. What is the nature of God's grace and how is it received?
2. What is God's plan of salvation and the clear message of the Gospel?
3. What is the Bible's teaching on the security and assurance of the believer?
4. How is the believer to live the Christian life and be effective in witness/service?
5. What does prophecy say about the last days and the order of end-times events?

Practical Suggestions

These notes are purposely brief in nature. This work is not intended to be a complete commentary. All through the work I have kept in mind those who live in remote areas of our world, who labor to both understand and to teach others the Word of God. They do not have access to Bible school or seminary training. Neither are they able to afford the vast array of books available to pastors and teachers who live in more advanced countries.

I encourage all who utilize these notes to study them with an open Bible. Pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21) as you study. Read the context of the passage carefully. Look up and compare the references that are provided. Above all, let the Word of God, and not these notes, guide your insight into God's Word. As I always tell my students: "Never take my word for anything; search the Scriptures and prove what is true" (Acts 17:10–12; 1 John 4:1).

Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled by means of the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

1. *We must be believers in Jesus Christ* (John 3:16).
It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that apart from spiritual birth man is blind to the things of God. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again*" (John 3:6).
2. *We must be filled by means of the Spirit* (1 Corinthians 2:12).
Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When "*we confess our sins,*" God is always "*faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn.
3. *We must approach in faith* (Hebrews 11:6).
Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).

DEDICATION

*“This will be written for the generation to come,
that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.”*

Psalm 102:18

While it is my hope and prayer that these notes will be helpful to all current students of the Word of God, I send them forth with a special dedication to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are yet to come on the scene of world history (Rev. 7:1–8). They will be the heroes of the faith in the coming time of Tribulation following the soon coming Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

To these brothers and sisters of the future, I want you to know you have been thought of, prayed for, and loved—before you even knew your mission. We of the Church Age salute you for the sufferings you will endure and the victories you will win. We bid you to be strong in the Lord, for your victory is sure in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the labor put into these notes by many hands and through many prayers, be a help to you as you boldly proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in a dark and dangerous time!

INTRODUCTION

Paul's epistle to the Roman church is considered by many to be one of his most difficult works, particularly because of the arguments in chapters 9–11. Other scholars consider this to be the greatest of all his letters. In reality, this book holds the most systematic and complete record of Paul's theology, covering the broadest scope of the doctrines of redemption and eternal salvation proclaimed by the gospel message. When the scope of the whole book is kept in mind as we progress through it, and the broad outline is followed, many of the questions and problems found in those "difficult chapters" (9–11) seem to resolve themselves as a very necessary and essential part of the overall goal of Paul's teaching. We simply cannot present the New Covenant plan of God for the Church without answering the questions which are first brought up in chapter three, "has God forsaken Israel?" and, "If not, what does the future hold for Israel?" These questions are answered clearly and simply in chapters 9–11 if we do not attempt to impose later theological systems upon them. The great over-arching theme of the book is introduced in Romans 1:16–17, being the revelation of the righteousness and justice of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by the universal offer of the gift of eternal life to all who will receive it by faith. May God grant that these notes, imperfect though they may be, help students gain a greater love and appreciation for what many consider "passages too difficult to understand."

Romans Outline A

"The Gospel of God ..." Romans 1:1b

1. The Gospel—good news for the world (Rom. 1:1–17)
2. Condemnation—God's wrath against sin (Rom. 1:18–3:20)
3. Justification—Salvation by grace through faith (Rom. 3:21–5:21)
4. Sanctification—The power and the path of spiritual growth (Rom. 6:1–8:39)
5. Dispensation—The past, present, and future of Israel (Rom. 9:1–11:36)
6. Transformation—being conformed to Christ's likeness (Rom. 12:1–15:13)
7. Conclusion and greetings—Paul's plans and friends (Rom. 15:14–16:27)

Romans Outline B

"For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed..." Romans 1:17

1. God's righteousness in the condemnation of sin (Rom. 1:1–3:20)
2. God's righteousness imputed to believers through salvation (Rom. 3:21–5:21)
3. God's righteousness imparted to believers through sanctification (Rom. 6:1–8:39)
4. God's righteousness in dealing with unbelieving Israel (Romans 9–11)
5. God's righteousness demonstrated in conformity to Christ (Romans 12–16)

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

The gospel message offers hope to the whole world. Rejection of the Gospel results in the wrath of God.

The Message and Ministry of the Gospel

Romans 1:1–17

1:1 *“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ.”* The word *“bondservant”* speaks of one who belongs to another either through purchase or by being born into slavery (Exod. 21:1–6). For Paul, this was a service of love. *“Called ... an apostle.”* The apostles had to be specifically chosen by Jesus Christ (John 15:16). Paul was chosen last of all, to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:11). *“Separated to the gospel of God.”* The apostles were given the task of spreading the gospel message throughout the world (Matt. 28:18–20). This was God’s plan for Paul before he was born (Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15).

1:2 *“Which He promised ... in the Holy Scriptures.”* The Gospel he preached did not originate with him (Gal. 1:11–12). It was foretold by all the Old Testament prophets (Luke 24:27, 44–45; Gal. 3:8).

1:3 *“Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”* *“Jesus”* was His human name, *“Christ”* was His title as Messiah/Savior, and *“Lord”* designates His deity. Jesus Christ, in His Person and work, is the central focus of the gospel message. *“Born of the seed of David.”* It was declared in prophecy that the Messiah/Christ would be from the lineage of David (2 Sam. 7:12–13, 17; Isa. 9:6–7; Matt. 1:1; Mark 12:35–37; Rev. 22:16). This human lineage, however, was *“According to the flesh.”* His deity was eternal (John 1:1–4, 14).

1:4 *“Declared to be the Son of God ... by the resurrection from the dead.”* The resurrection was the undeniable evidence of His deity (Psalm 2:7; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Acts 2:24–36). The *“Spirit of holiness”* refers to the Holy Spirit, who raised Jesus from the dead.

1:5 *“We have received grace and apostleship.”* Paul, here, speaks of the apostolic band, of which he was the last (1 Cor. 15:3–11). *“For obedience to the faith among all nations.”* The gospel message is for all mankind (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:1–6; 1 John 2:2). To be obedient to the Gospel means to have faith in the Gospel (Acts 6:7; Rom. 16:19, 26).

1:6–7 *“Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.”* Paul makes it clear that the *“called”* refers to those who respond to the gospel invitation (Matt. 22:2–14). When we hear the gospel message, and receive it by faith, we are then sealed by the Holy Spirit as God’s personal possession (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 1:13–14) and are designated as *“saints,”* those who are set apart to God. *“Grace to you and peace.”* God’s greeting to all believers begins with the offer of His grace, which, when received, always results in peace (Rom. 5:1–2).

1:8–9 *“I thank my God ... for you all ... I make mention of you always in my prayers.”* Paul prayed for these Roman believers, not only for their needs, but because *“your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”* Paul did not plant the church in Rome. Perhaps those returning from Pentecost (Acts 2:10) had spread the gospel message on their return to Rome. Their faith was a great witness to the whole world.

1:10 *“Making request if ... I may find a way ... to come to you.”* Paul not only prayed for the Roman believers, but also for God to permit him to visit them. This was his great desire (Acts 19:21).

1:11–12 *“That I may impart ... some spiritual gift ... that I may be encouraged.”* Paul recognized that his ministry would be a gift to these believers, just as their ministry would be to him. The Body of Christ is composed by God for mutual benefit (1 Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 4:11–16).

1:13 *“I often planned to come to you ... that I might have some fruit ... as among the other Gentiles.”* Even though he did not plant this church, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, they were part of his field (Acts 9:15; 21:21; Gal. 1:15–16; 2:7–8; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11).

1:14–15 *“I am debtor ... I am ready to preach the gospel.”* As the slave of Jesus Christ (v. 1), Paul was in debt to all men for whom Christ died—to preach the gospel message to them.

1:16 *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”* To preach a message of a crucified Savior in the Roman Empire, was a difficult task. But in that simple message is found *“the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”* The one and only requirement is faith in Jesus Christ. The word *“salvation”* simply means “deliverance,” and is actually used three ways in Romans:

1. our initial salvation from the penalty of sin (justification),
2. our ongoing salvation from the power of sin (sanctification), and
3. our ultimate salvation from the presence of sin (glorification).

“For the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Since both the written Word and the Living Word (Jesus Christ) came through the Jewish nation, it was only right that the Gospel should go to them first (Acts 13:46; Rom. 9:1–5).

1:17 *“In it the righteousness of God is revealed.”* The gospel message reveals the righteousness of God in saving believing sinners, and in judging unbelieving sinners (Rom. 3:22–26). The essential righteousness of God, which is the core of His nature, also demands the expression of the justice of God (Psalm 89:14; 97:2), which is His wrath (Rom. 1:18–3:20). *“From faith to faith.”* God’s righteousness is imputed to all who believe (Rom. 4:3, 5, 22–25), and is demonstrated by those believers who *“live by faith.”* From the moment of faith in Christ, and throughout a life of faith, God’s righteousness is revealed. *“The just shall live by faith”* is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4, and appears to be the bottom line of Paul’s theology (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

Summary Principles of the Gospel

In the Summaries that follow, some of the basic principles dealing with the main topic will be given as an additional help to students, and especially for those teaching others.

1. The gospel message was committed to the apostles, to lay the foundation of the Church (v. 1; 1 Cor. 3: 9–11; Eph. 2:19–21; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 6:1; Rev. 21:14).
2. The gospel message is all about Jesus Christ, beginning with His incarnation as the Seed of David, and ending with His resurrection from the dead (vv. 2–4; Mark 1:1–3; John 1:1–4, 14, 18; 1 Cor. 15:1–4; 2 Cor. 4:3–4; Phil. 2:5–11; 2 Tim. 2:8).
3. The gospel message is for all mankind because Jesus Christ died for all (vv. 5–7; Rom. 5:6–10, 18; 2 Cor. 5:15, 19; 1 John 2:2). The Gospel was foretold to Abraham, that in *“his Seed”* all nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:3b; 22:18; Gal. 3:8, 16).
4. All those who receive the Gospel ought to pray for and minister to one another (vv. 8–13; Rom. 15:30–32; Eph. 1:15–21; 3:14–21; 6:18–20; Phil. 1:3–7; 1 Thess. 5:17, 25; Heb. 13:18–19).
5. Every believer should feel a sense of indebtedness to both live and speak so as to share the Gospel with those who do not know Christ (vv. 14–15; Rom. 8:12–17; 15:27; 2 Cor. 5:14–21; 1 Thess. 1:5–10; see also Luke 17:10).

6. The salvation provided in the gospel message provides the righteousness of Christ to those who believe and leads to righteous living as those believers live by faith (vv. 16–17; Rom. 4:3–8, 23–25; 6:1–5; 8:1–4; 12:1–2; 14:17–19; Gal. 2:20; 1 Tim. 6:11–14; Titus 2:11–14).

The Wrath of God Against Sin Romans 1:18–32

1:18 *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.”* Because God is righteous, He must judge sin. The gospel message includes the warning of the wrath of God, for only those who know they are lost will see their need of salvation/deliverance from sin. *“Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.”* This includes everything that falls short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23). *“Who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”* Mankind is condemned because the truth is made known to them and they seek to ignore or deny what is true (John 1:5, 9–11; 3:16–19). The truth of God is revealed to men through creation (v. 20), by their conscience (Rom. 2:14–16), and through Scripture (Rom. 3:21–23; Psalm 19:7–11).

1:19–20 *“What may be known of God is manifest.”* This means that all men have sufficient evidence of God’s existence and nature. This truth is *“manifest in them,”* by their conscience (Eccl. 3:11; Rom. 2:15). It is *“manifest to them,”* by the witness of creation (Rom. 1:20; Psalm 19:1–6). This witness is *“clearly seen”* and *“understood”* so that all mankind is *“without excuse”* (Rom. 2:1). The goodness of God to men is sufficient to bring men to repentance, which leads to faith upon hearing the Gospel (Acts 14:15–17; Rom. 2:4; 10:17–18).

1:21 *“They knew God.”* That is, their conscience and creation witnessed to them of the existence of God. *“They did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful.”* The first response of the soul to an awareness of God is to acknowledge His glory and to be thankful for His many gifts. *“Their foolish hearts were darkened.”* Rejection of the light, however faint it may be, results in the hardening and darkening of the soul (John 3:19; Eph. 4:17–19).

1:22 *“Professing to be wise, they became fools.”* Sinful mankind always declares atheism or false religion as “enlightenment.” They claim to be far more wise than those who simply trust the word of God (2 Cor. 11:3). It is the fool who says, *“There is no God.”* (Psalm 10:4; 14:1; 53:1; Rom. 3:18).

1:23 *“Changed the glory of ... God into an image.”* The very fact that idolatry exists proves that men know there is a God, and that they have rejected Him, in order to worship an image of their own choosing.

1:24 *“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness.”* We find the phrases, *“God gave them up”* in vv. 24, 26, and *“God gave them over”* in v. 28. This shows an increasing alienation from God to the point that He removes His restraining grace from them—to let them go in the way they have chosen (Acts 7:39–43). This phrase explains how the wrath of God is at work in the lives of men. His wrath releases them to a continuous cycle of self-destruction. God judges men in this life by allowing them to suffer the consequences of their own decisions!

1:25 *“Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie.”* This “lie” began in the garden when Satan told Adam and Eve that they could be as God (Gen. 3:1–5). *“And worshipped ... the creature rather than the Creator.”* Unsaved mankind always seeks to honor the creation (i.e., “global warming”) and the created things more than the creator *“Who is blessed forever.”* Of His glory, honor, and blessedness, there is no end (1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 24–25)!

1:26–27 *“God gave them up to vile passions.”* Spiritual deception leads to moral darkness, which ends in sexual depravity. Gradually, the conscience is seared as with a branding iron (1 Tim. 4:2), to the point that nothing is forbidden. These verses show us that lesbianism and homosexuality are the inevitable result of rejecting the true God. The only solution for those enslaved by these perversions is to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Otherwise, they

will receive, both in time and eternity, ***“the penalty of their error which was due.”*** In the case of a believer who has fallen into these sins, repentance, confession, and correction are called for (1 John 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:16–17).

1:28 *“God gave them over to a debased mind.”* This is the penalty suffered in time, which results in a self-destructive lifestyle, devoid of all hope and happiness. The souls of such individuals become like leaky buckets—no matter how much you try to fill them, they always run empty. Like the people of Jeremiah’s day, they forsook the ever-flowing fountain of life to attempt to dig *“broken cisterns, that can hold no water”* (Jer. 2:13).

1:29–31 *“Being filled with all unrighteousness.”* The words *“filled,”* and *“all”* reveal the desperation of such a soul in their search for love, joy, meaning, and lasting relationships, which they will never find. This is the life of *“greediness”* spoken of by Paul in Ephesians 4:19. It describes a frantic search for happiness, which can never be found. The list of sins mentioned here is one of the most extensive found in Scripture.

1:32 *“Knowing the righteous judgment of God.”* Although they have hardened their hearts against the grace of God, they cannot escape the powerful reality of God’s certain judgment (Heb. 10:31). Such people live a haunted existence, pursuing every vice in order to get as much gratification as possible before the judgment of God strikes.

Summary Principles: The Wrath of God

1. The wrath of God is the natural and necessary reaction of God’s righteousness to sin. Both are *“revealed”* together (vv. 17–18). God reveals His righteousness to those who believe the Gospel and reveals His wrath to those who reject the Gospel (John 3:16–19, 36).
2. Just as righteousness is fundamental to the nature of God, so is justice (Psalm 89:14; 97:2). Where justice meets with sin, wrath is the result (Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6).
3. The wrath of God is directed toward men who reject the knowledge of Him, which is known through creation and conscience (vv. 18–20; Rom. 2:15; 10:16–18; Psalm 19:1–7; Hosea 4:6).
4. Once men reject the Creator (John 1:1–5; Col. 1:16–18), they also begin to pervert the natural creation and fall ever deeper into depravity (vv. 22–32).
5. God’s wrath is revealed in the removal of His restraining grace, abandoning men to their pursuit of ungodliness (vv. 24, 26, 28, *“God gave them up/over”*).
6. The coming Tribulation Period is referred to as the *“time of God’s wrath”* (Psalm 2:5, 12; Ezek. 7:19; Zeph. 1:15, 18; 1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 6:16–17; 11:18; 15:1; 16:1; 19:15).
7. Believers escape the eternal wrath of God by faith in Jesus Christ and are delivered from His wrath in time by faithful obedience (Rom. 5:9; 13:4).
8. All believers will be delivered from the Tribulation Period (the time of wrath) by the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13–18; 5:8–10).

ROMANS CHAPTER 2

Paul turns from the degenerate sinner to the sophisticated sinner. He is now moving from dealing with sinful Gentiles to the question of sinful Jews. Here, he shows that the wrath of God is also just in judging the moral and the religious man.

The Self-Righteous Man Condemned

Romans 2:1–16

2:1 *“Therefore you are inexcusable.”* The same guilt of the Gentile who disregards the witness to God in nature (Rom. 1:20), applies to those who set aside the truth contained in God’s Word. *“Whoever you are who judge ... you condemn yourself.”* Those who judge others show that they know God’s judgment on sin is just (Rom. 1:32). They condemn themselves because all men are sinners (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12).

2:2 *“We know that the judgment of God is according to truth.”* Only God has all the facts about our sins. Men who judge others do so from a partial and limited knowledge.

2:3 *“Do you think ... that you will escape the judgment of God?”* Many so-called “good” men think that by judging others, they justify themselves. In reality, by their judging, they increase judgment on themselves (Matt. 7:1–5).

2:4 *“Do you despise the riches of His goodness ... not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”* This is the only time Paul uses “repentance” in this sense in Romans. The idea is to change one’s mind regarding judging others and, instead, to turn to God in humility and faith. God gives grace to all men (Matt. 5:45; Acts 10:38; Titus 2:11). The gifts of God are designed to bring us to repentance, humility, and faith (Acts 14:17). To reject the grace of God is the same as to suppress the truth in the unrighteousness of unbelief (Rom. 1:18).

2:5–6 *“You are treasuring up ... wrath in the day of wrath.”* This unbelieving person who judges others is adding to the judgment they will receive when they stand before God at the final judgment (Great White Throne). *“Who will render to each one according to his deeds.”* God is absolutely just (Rom. 3:26). He is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11). All who reject Jesus Christ are judged on the basis of their own works, which fall short of God’s righteous standard (Rom. 3:23; Rev. 20:11–14). For those who believe, their works will be judged at the Bema Seat to determine their eternal rewards (Isa. 3:10; 1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10–11; Heb. 6:9–12).

2:7 *“Eternal life to those who ... in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.”* No human being is good in God’s sight (Rom. 3:10–18). No one goes to Heaven because they do good deeds. The “good” Paul speaks of here is to “obey the truth” (v. 8). This means to obey the gospel message by placing our faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Those who truly seek the things of God (“glory, honor, immortality,” and “eternal life”) without fail, will be guided by the Spirit of God to come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Prov. 8:17; Jer. 29:13; John 6:28–29; Heb. 11:6).

2:8 *“To those who are self-seeking.”* This includes the person who indulges in gross immorality (Rom. 1:18–32), or the self-righteous who indulge in judging others (Rom. 2:1–6; 2 Cor. 10:12). *“Do not obey the truth.”* Whether one rejects the witness of creation (Rom. 1:18–21), or conscience (Rom. 2:14–15), or Scripture (Rom. 3:21; 4:3), the result is the same. The heart is darkened, hardened, and blinded (Rom. 2:5; 11:10, 25; Eph. 4:17–19).

2:9 *“Tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil.”* Evil conduct, as illustrated in Romans 1:18–32, brings its own misery. It is impossible to pursue evil without suffering the consequences of our actions. The ultimate form of evil is to reject the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. The result is eternal misery.

2:10 *“Glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good.”* The “good” in both v. 7 and here refers to those who “Obey the truth” (Rom. 1:5; 2:10) of the Gospel (John 5:29; 6:29). *“To the Jew first and also to the Greek.”* Greater privilege demands greater accountability (Luke 12:48; Rom. 2:16; 9:3–5, 30–33).

2:11 *“For there is no partiality with God.”* The fairness and justice of God is upheld throughout the Scriptures (Gen. 18:25; Deut. 10:17).

2:12 *“Perish without law ... judged by the law.”* All unbelievers will suffer eternal condemnation, but the judgment will not be equal. Those who never heard the Law will suffer less than those who had the Law and rejected it. Paul’s point is that the more light that is given, the greater the responsibility before God (see Matt. 11:21–24; Luke 10:14; John 3:19).

2:13 *“Not the hearers of the law ... but the doers of the law.”* Since no man keeps the whole law (Rom. 3:10–18; James 2:10–11), we all stand condemned. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ, who kept the whole Law, can we be *“justified”* (Rom. 3:21–26; 4:5; 8:1–4).

2:14–15 *“Gentiles ... are a law unto themselves.”* The fact that Gentiles know that murder, lying, stealing, and adultery are wrong, shows that the conscience acts as a law to all mankind. *“Their conscience ... bearing witness.”* Conscience is a witness to the existence of right and wrong, which is fully revealed in the Law of God. *“The work of the law ... accusing or ... excusing.”* Any act of judging others, or excusing oneself, shows the work of the Law, in condemning sinful behavior. God will judge every unbeliever based on their own *“words”* in judging others or excusing themselves (Matt. 12:37).

2:16 *“In the day when God will judge.”* This refers to the final Day of Judgment (Rev. 20:11–14). *“The secrets of men ... according to my gospel.”* The gospel message concerning Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:3–5) is the ultimate dividing line in the Judgment. All who trust in Christ will be eternally saved. All who reject Him will be eternally lost. Only God can see what is in the secret place of each heart (Jer. 17:10).

Summary Principles: Judging Others

1. Those who judge others condemn themselves (v. 1; Matt. 7:1–5).
2. Only God is able to give true judgment, because He knows all the facts (v. 2; James 4:12).
3. Those who judge others and do the same things, are rejecting God’s grace and increasing their own guilt (vv. 3–6; Rom. 14:4, 10, 12–13; James 2:8–13; 4:11–12).
4. Those who seek truth and obey it by faith will find eternal life. Those who reject the truth will receive eternal condemnation (vv. 7–10; Jer. 29:13; Psalm 27:8; 34:14; Prov. 8:17; Isa. 55:6–7; Zeph. 2:3; John 6:28–29; Acts 17:27; 2 Tim. 4:3–4; 1 Pet. 3:10–12; 4:1–5).
5. God will judge all men according to the light they have and based on the work of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel (vv. 11–16; Deut. 10:17; Acts 10:34–35, 42–43; 1 Tim. 1:9–11; James 1:22, 25).

God’s Judgment of Unbelieving Jews

Romans 2:17–29

2:17–20 *“Indeed you are called a Jew.”* Paul now brings his focus on the Jewish arrogance and sense of superiority over the Gentiles. The title *“Jew”* is the shortened form of *“Judah,”* which means *“praise”* (Gen. 29:35). Instead of bringing praise to God, the Jews had come to praise themselves. Paul lists several reasons why they saw themselves as being superior to Gentiles. Everything in this list can be seen in the debates between Jesus and the religious leaders contained in the Gospels. We can summarize their sense of superiority in three points:

1. Superiority based on the mere possession of the Law (v. 17),
2. Superiority based on having been instructed in the Law (v. 18), and
3. Superiority in their ability to guide and teach other men (vv. 19–20).

This is why the message of John the Baptist was so shocking to the Jews. To call them to repent meant that they were sinners—just like the Gentiles. Their whole religious training convinced them that this could not be so.

2:21–23 *“You ... who teach another, do you not teach yourself?”* Here, Paul strikes a death blow to the arrogance of the religious Jew. He proves them to be, as James also says, *“hearers”* of the Law, but not *“doers”* (James 1:22). Those who teach and preach against stealing, adultery, or idolatry but do the same things, only judge themselves (Rom. 2:1–4).

2:24 *“For ‘the name of God is blasphemed ... because of you.’”* The hypocrisy for which the Jews were famous (Matt. 9:2–3; 23:13–31; 26:63–65) caused even the Gentiles to blaspheme (speak evil of) God. The fact that this charge came from their own Scriptures (Isa. 52:5; Ezek. 5:6; 36:22) made it all the more convincing.

2:25 *“Circumcision is ... profitable ... if you keep the law.”* The rite of circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:9–13). It was intended to point to the faith by which Abraham was justified (Rom. 4:11), and the circumcised heart of faith (Deut. 10:16–21; 30:6; Jer. 4:3–4; 9:25–26; Rom. 4:9–12). All of the Law is fulfilled when we believe in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:22–25; Rom. 8:1–4).

2:26–27 *“If an uncircumcised man keeps ... the law.”* Two great examples of this truth are found in the Roman Centurion who came to Jesus (Matt. 8:5–10; Luke 7:1–10), and in the Centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10:24–43). *“If he fulfills the law.”* Those whose sins are forgiven (Acts 10:43) and who are given the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 4:3), have fulfilled the Law through Christ (Rom. 8:1–4).

2:28 *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly.”* This is what Paul means when he says in Romans 9:6, *“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”* Like the name “Jew,” which means “praise,” the name “Israel,” means “to have power with God” or “a prince of God” (Gen. 32:28), it is not enough to simply bear the name (John 8:44). One must make the name a reality by trusting in Jesus Christ, who is the true praise, power, and Prince of God.

2:29 *“He is a Jew who is one inwardly ... whose praise is ... from God.”* The religious Jews loved the *“praise from men”* (Matt. 23:5–7; Luke 11:43; John 12:43). But the only *“praise”* that matters is that which comes *“from God”* to those who honor His Son by believing in Him. The Spirit of God performs this inner circumcision by uniting us with Christ and giving us His new life (Rom. 6:3–5; 7:6).

Summary Principles: Jewish Superiority Denied

1. The typical Jewish attitude was one of superiority to all Gentiles, based on their possession and knowledge of the Law (**vv. 17–20**; Acts 10:28, 11:1–3; 15:1–5; Gal. 2:11–16).
2. However, their conduct revealed their hypocrisy (**vv. 21–23**; Matt. 7:5; 23:13–33; Luke 12:1; 13:15–16).
3. The Jewish attitude of superiority, combined with their hypocrisy, caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the God of Israel (**v. 24**; Isa. 52:4–5; Ezek. 36:22–23).
4. The sign of circumcision, of which the Jews were so proud, was intended to point every Jew to faith in and obedience to God’s Word (**v. 25**; Gen. 17:1–11; Rom. 4:9–12). Without faith and new birth, obedience is impossible (Heb. 11:6).
5. The *“righteous requirements of the law”* (**v. 26**) are fulfilled only in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:16; 3:13–14, 24–26).

6. The word “Jew” comes from “Judah,” which means “*praise*” (Gen. 29:35). Therefore, the true spiritual Jew, is one who is born again, indwelt by the Spirit, and imputed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ (vv. 28–29; Rom. 4:3–5, 11–12, 16, 23–25).

ROMANS CHAPTER 3

Paul demonstrates that all men are condemned in sin and that only by faith in Jesus Christ are we justified before God.

Three False Teachings Refuted

Romans 3:1–8

3:1 “*What advantage then has the Jew.*” In vv. 1–8, Paul addresses objections Jews would have to his arguments in Romans 2. There are three main questions, which Paul refutes:

1. If all men are condemned, is there no advantage to being a Jew (vv. 1–2)?
2. If Jews rejected Jesus Christ, doesn’t this invalidate God’s faithfulness (vv. 3–4)?
3. If Jewish failure brings glory to God, isn’t it unjust for God to judge them (vv. 5–8)?

We will look at Paul’s response to each objection. It is worth noting that these three questions form the basis for Paul’s extended treatment on Israel in Romans 9–11.

3:2 “*Much in every way! ... To them were committed the oracles of God.*” The question in v.1 implies that if Jews are not superior to Gentiles, then there is no advantage to being a Jew. Paul says, but rather the Jews had many advantages because they were possessors of the inspired and revealed Word of God (Rom. 9:3–5). They possessed divine revelation that the Gentiles lacked, yet they rejected it. This question is answered extensively in Romans 9.

3:3 “*Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?*” Since God called Israel to be His special possession, doesn’t their unbelief show a failure in the promises of God? However, man’s unbelief is never the fault of God. In 2 Timothy 2:13, Paul declares, “*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*” All guilt for unbelief rests on men for failing to respond in humility to God’s Word (John 5:39–40, 46; Rom. 10:16–21; Heb. 4:2; 2 Pet. 2:21). Yet God will still fulfill all His promises (Psalm 89:30–37). Romans 10 will deal with this question in greater detail.

3:4 “*Let God be true but every man a liar.*” Paul declares God’s faithfulness stands sure in the face of the unfaithfulness of every man. “*That You may be justified ... and may overcome when You are judged.*” Here, Paul quotes from Psalm 51:4, where David confessed his sin with Bathsheba. David takes full responsibility for his own sin and says that God is just in judging him. The last phrase anticipates the final judgment, where men will seek to blame their sins on God. We know that, in the end, “*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*” (Phil. 2:10–11).

3:5 “*Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?*” This third question suggests that, since God is glorified by man’s sinfulness, it is wrong for God to judge sin. When Paul says, “*I speak as a man,*” he means that this question is based on faulty human reasoning.

3:6 “*For then how will God judge the world.*” The Jews wanted to argue that they should not be judged, but that God should judge the Gentiles. Paul’s response is that for God to be just, He must judge the entire world by the same standards.

3:7 *“Why am I also still judged as a sinner?”* This is simply another way of posing the same question from v. 5. The idea is that if God’s truth is magnified and He is glorified by my unbelief, how can I be judged as a sinner? It appears that the questions from vv. 5–7 are presented in anticipation of Paul’s teaching in Romans 11: that because of Jewish rejection of the Gospel, the salvation of the Gentiles would be made possible (Rom. 11:25–32). To this the Jew would respond, “If this is true, how can God judge us for furthering His plan?”

3:8 *“Let us do evil that good may come.”* Later, in Romans 5:20, Paul says, *“But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.”* So, some would argue, *“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”* (Rom. 6:1). In other words, if God can work all things together for good (Rom. 8:28), why not do evil to demonstrate His power? Though some appear to have accused Paul of this very reasoning, he says, *“Their condemnation is just.”*

Summary Principles: The Jewish Dilemma

1. While many Jews believed in Jesus Christ, the majority rejected the gospel message. This condition caused many Jewish believers to ask, “How then can God fulfill His promises to Israel?”
2. In vv. 1–7, Paul answers three questions that he probably heard often:
 - a. If most of the Jews rejected their Messiah/Christ, what is the advantage of being Jewish (vv. 1–2)? His answer is that the Jews possessed the Word of God, which is a great advantage (Rom. 9:3–5). This question is answered more fully in Romans 9.
 - b. Does the unbelief of a majority in Israel nullify the faithfulness of God (vv. 3–4)? Paul’s answer is that God is always true and faithful, and in the end, He will be shown to be just and fair. This sets the stage for Romans 10.
 - c. How can God judge Israel if their unbelief actually helps fulfill His plan (vv. 5–7)? Since God will use Israel’s rejection to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles, isn’t it unfair for God to judge Israel? In Romans 11, Paul will show that God truly does work all things together for good (Rom. 8:28), but we are still accountable for our decisions: either to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, or to reject Him and suffer judgment.
3. The general belief in first century Judaism was that when Messiah came, He would set up the kingdom for Israel (Acts 1:6). When Jesus did not do this, believing Jews were confused, and the majority rejected His claims.
4. Paul will explain in Romans 9–11 that Israel has been spiritually blinded for a time, while the Church Age unfolds. After the Church Age and the Tribulation Period, Jesus will return and establish His kingdom (Rom. 11:25–29; 2 Thess. 2:1–12; Rev. 19:11–16).
5. Future history will unfold with the Rapture of the Church (1 Cor. 15:50–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–5:11; Rev. 4:1–2), the seven-year Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:9–28; Revelation 6–19), and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Earth (Matt. 24:29–35; Rev. 19:11–16). Then Jesus will set up His kingdom on Earth for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1–6).

All Mankind Stands Condemned

Romans 3:9–20

3:9 *“Are we better than they?”* Are Jewish sinners better than Gentile sinners? Absolutely not. *“They are all under sin.”* This anticipates Paul’s conclusion coming up in v. 23.

3:10 *“There is none righteous.”* This is the bottom line of Paul’s argument (Psalm 14:1–3; 53:1–3; Eccl. 7:20; Gal. 3:22). All men are under the curse of sin (Rom. 3:23; 5:12; 6:23). The sins in vv. 10–18 fall into three categories:

1. sins of the mind (mental attitude),
2. sins of the tongue (verbal), and
3. outward acts of sin (overt), sins of the body.

3:12 *“They have all turned aside.”* The “*none*” in v. 10 is amplified by the “*all*” here. See the same idea in Isaiah 53:6. *“There is none who does good.”* Paul is speaking here in the sense of absolute good—equal to God. Even the “good deeds” of men are tainted with evil motive such as pride and desire for recognition.

3:13–14 *“Their throat is an open tomb ... Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”* David speaks of the power of the tongue to deal out death (Psalm 5:9; 140:3), much the same as James does (James 3:1–10).

3:15 *“Their feet are swift to shed blood.”* In contrast to the second great commandment that we are to love our neighbor (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31), men are prone to hatred and violence, even to the point of murder (Prov. 1:10–16; Isa. 59:7–8).

3:18 *“There is no fear of God.”* When the truth is suppressed (Rom. 1:18), the fear of God vanishes. To fear God is the beginning of true wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).

3:19 *“Whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law.”* The law, parts of which are quoted in vv. 10–18, condemns both Jew and Gentile as sinners. *“That ... all the world may become guilty before God.”* No man can come to faith in Jesus Christ for deliverance from eternal condemnation until he sees that he is condemned. When presenting the Gospel, we often have to begin with the bad news—that all men are sinners before God.

3:20 *“By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified.”* This was the point Paul had to constantly make clear to his Jewish audience (Acts 13:39; Gal. 2:16; 3:10–13; 1 Tim. 1:9–10).

Summary Principles: All Men Are Condemned

1. Paul is building up to the conclusion that all men stand condemned before God (Rom. 3:23).
2. The list of sins given in **vv. 10–18** is perhaps the most extensive in all the Bible. No one can read it and not see their own sins listed. These sins fall into three categories: sins of the mind (thoughts), sins of the tongue, and sins of the body.
3. The purpose of the Law of Moses was to convict men of their sinfulness, to point them to faith in Christ (**v. 19**; Gal. 2:16; 3:10–14, 21–24).
4. The Law was never designed to bring salvation, as only faith can do that. Abraham, who lived 430 years before the Law was given, is the example of how we are justified (declared righteous) before God (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6).
5. God has placed all men under condemnation so that all men might be saved through faith in Jesus Christ, who died for all (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23; 11:32).

The Way to Righteousness Is Through the Cross Romans 3:21–31

3:21 *“The righteousness of God”* Paul is not speaking of righteousness as part of God’s character, but the righteousness He freely gives to those who believe, *“being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.”* The

provision of righteousness for men came through Jesus Christ, as anticipated in the Old Testament (Luke 24:25–27; 44–47).

3:22 “The righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ.” Faith is the acknowledgement of personal helplessness. To trust “*in Jesus Christ*” means I have absolutely nothing to offer for my salvation (Matt. 5:3; Heb. 11:1). Faith gives all the glory to God for what He has done through Christ (Heb. 11:6). “**To all and on all who believe.**” The offer of God’s gift of righteousness is given to all men, for all are sinners. But the gift is applied only upon those who believe (2 Cor. 5:21).

3:23 “For all have sinned.” The reason given for the offer to all men is that all men are sinners in need of salvation (Gal. 3:22).

3:24 “Being justified freely by His grace.” Paul often emphasizes that to be justified before God is a free gift (Rom. 5:6–10, 15–17; 6:23). Man can offer absolutely nothing to gain it. Only by the humble response of faith can His promise of eternal life be received (John 1:12; 3:36; 5:24). “**Redemption.**” This word means “the full payment of a debt.” Only the death of Christ on the cross could pay the debt that we owe to God (John 19:30; Col. 2:14).

3:25 “A propitiation by His blood.” The word “*propitiation*” pictures the satisfaction of God with the work of His Son (1 John 2:2). The word is a picture of the mercy seat (Heb. 2:17; 9:5) where, in Old Testament times, the blood of the lamb was poured out on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:15–19; 23:26–32). This is a picture of the finished work of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36; 19:30). “**God passed over.**” God was merciful in dealing with men’s sins before the cross, because they all would be paid for by the work of Christ on the cross (Col. 2:14). The cross proved that God is righteous in judging all sin (Acts 14:16; 17:30–31).

3:26 “That He might be just and the justifier.” The judgment of Jesus Christ on behalf of all men proves that God is both just in judging all who do not believe, and He is just for forgiving and saving all who believe in Him (Luke 7:29–30; Rom. 1:16–17; 2 Cor. 5:21).

3:27 “Where is boasting then? It is excluded.” No man has any basis for boasting, either by what he has done before his salvation, or by whatever he may do afterwards. The only basis for boasting is in Jesus Christ (Jer. 9:23–24; 1 Cor. 1:29–31). “**By the law of faith.**” The very nature of faith leaves no room for boasting (Rom. 4:16; 11:6; Eph. 2:8–9).

3:28 “Man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” This is the foundation of all of Paul’s theology. There is no mixture of works in the free offer of God’s grace, received by faith alone (Rom. 4:3–5; Gal. 2:16).

3:30 “There is one God” This was the foundation of all Jewish theology (Deut. 6:4; James 2:19). “**Who will justify the circumcised ... the uncircumcised through faith.**” The only path of justification, whether for Jew or Gentile, is by faith in Jesus Christ. Many Jews claimed that Gentiles could not be saved unless they were first circumcised (Acts 15:1–11). Paul vigorously opposed this false teaching.

3:31 “Do we then make void the law through faith?” To the Jew it would seem that Paul was declaring the Law of no value. This Paul strongly denies, because the purpose of the Law is to convict men of sin (Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:10–14, 21–25).

Principles of the Righteousness of God

1. Righteousness is an essential quality of the character or essence of God (Psalm 89:14; 97:2; Ezra 9:15).

2. Because of His essential righteousness, all of God's works are right and just (Judg. 5:11; Neh. 9:33; Isa. 45:21).
3. An essential function of righteousness is the necessity of judging all sin/unrighteousness (Gen. 18:25; Psalm 9:4, 8; 1 Sam. 2:10; Rom. 1:17–18; 2:5; Heb. 10:20).
4. Righteousness is the free gift of God to all who receive Jesus Christ in faith (Rom. 1:17; 3:21–26; 4:3–5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:6).
5. Because the righteousness of Christ has been given to us, we ought to grow in godly conduct that reflects and is worthy of Him (Rom. 12:1–2; Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 4:1; 5:1–2, 8–10; Phil. 1:9–11; Titus 2:11–13; 1 John 2:29).

ROMANS CHAPTER 4

Paul continues his argument that justification comes by faith alone in Christ alone. His goal is to prove this from the Old Testament Scriptures.

Abraham—The Biblical Standard of Justification

Romans 4:1–12

4:1 *“According to the flesh.”* This phrase would be understood by any Jew to mean, “by his works.” This also would immediately cause them to think of the act of circumcision, which Paul will deal with in vv. 9–12. Paul has introduced the truth that justification comes only by faith (Rom. 3:21–31). Now he uses Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, as his scriptural example that faith, not works, is the key to being justified before God (Gal. 3:6; Eph. 2:8–9).

4:2 *“For if Abraham was justified by works.”* Paul had no doubt read the book of James (see James 2:21–24), which had been written about ten years earlier. There was no dispute between James and Paul on the subject. James was dealing with Abraham's justification before men, and so wrote of his offering of Isaac, some 20–25 years later (Gen. 22:1–19). Paul is writing of Abraham's justification before God, through faith alone. *“He has something to boast about, but not before God.”* Paul has just shown that faith excludes all boasting (Rom. 3:27).

4:3 *“For what does the Scripture say?”* Here, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6. *“Abraham believed God ... it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* Long before the coming of the Law, Abraham was justified by faith alone. The word *“accounted”* is a banking or bookkeeping term that means “to place into someone's account.” If God's righteousness is placed into our eternal account, that means all our sins have also been totally forgiven. Genesis 15:6 is the first occurrence of the word *“believed”* in the Bible. Acts 7:1–4 and Hebrews 11:8 tell us that Abraham's faith began in Ur of Chaldea (Gen. 12:1–3).

4:4 *“Wages are not counted as grace.”* The word *“grace”* (Rom. 1:5; 3:24) speaks of a free gift. When one receives wages for work done, it is not a gift, but rather a debt. No man can put God into his debt by doing good works.

4:5 *“Him who does not work.”* All works must be excluded if justification is to be a gift. We are *“justified freely by His grace”* (Rom. 3:24), apart from any work on our part. *“But believes on Him who justifies the ungodly.”* The inclusion of the word *“ungodly”* again stresses that justification involves two sides: first, the forgiveness of all sins and, second, the placing of God's own righteousness into our account.

4:6–8 *“Just as David also describes.”* Paul calls on David as a witness to the point he is making by quoting Psalm 32:1–2. This Psalm records David's confession after his sin with Bathsheba. David confirms that part of the

blessedness of the believer is the forgiveness of all sins—past, present, and future. According to Jewish law, every fact had to be confirmed by two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). **“Blessedness”** is used here, in the aftermath of David’s sin, to describe the unchanging status of the believer before God. **“Imputes righteousness ... the LORD shall not impute sin.”** Here, David clearly shows both sides of justification: the non-imputation of sin, and the imputation of righteousness. It is as if sins are erased from our account (Psalm 103:12; Jer. 31:34b; Heb. 10:17), and righteousness is then recorded in their place.

4:9 “Does this blessedness come upon the circumcised only?” Most Jews of Paul’s day assumed God’s blessings could only be given after one was circumcised (Acts 15:1–5). Paul shows, from the Scriptures, that Abraham was uncircumcised when God justified him. The only reasonable conclusion then is that circumcision plays no part whatsoever in our justification (salvation). **“Faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.”** Paul restates this truth from verses 3 and 5 to make his point.

4:11 “He received the sign of circumcision.” This ritual was given to Israel through Abraham to point them to the truth—that we are justified by faith alone. Circumcision was the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:10–11), just as the Sabbath was the sign of the covenant of the Law of Moses (Exod. 31:13). **“That he might be the father of all those who believe.”** Abraham is the father of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles (Gal. 3:6–9).

4:12 “Who also walk in the steps of the faith.” Paul has already proved that circumcision, without faith, means nothing (Rom. 2:25–29). To “walk in the steps” of Abraham means to follow him in believing God. To the Jew, circumcision was meant to be an outward sign of inward faith. In much the same way, Christian baptism is an outward symbol of what has already occurred within (Rom. 6:1–6).

Summary Principles: Justification

1. The meaning of the biblical word “justify/justification” is “to declare righteous.” God is able to declare all who believe in Christ to be righteous because He forgives all their sins, which were paid for at the cross (Col. 2:13–14), and then imputes the righteousness of Christ to them (2 Cor. 5:21).
2. Abraham is the standard given in the Bible for how one is justified. Abraham believed the promise of his future “Seed,” who we know as the Lord Jesus Christ, and he was justified by that faith alone (Gen. 12:2–3; 15:1–6; 21:12; 22:18; Gal. 3:16).
3. Abraham was absolutely not justified before God by works (Rom. 4:1–5). When James speaks of Abraham being justified by works (James 2:20–24), he is speaking of being justified before men, proving the genuineness of his faith. The event of offering Isaac was many years after Abraham first became a believer.
4. Not only does God impute (place into our account) the righteousness of Christ, but He also does not impute any of our sins against us, because Christ paid for them all (**vv. 6–8**). All our sins were imputed to Jesus Christ on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21), so that His righteousness could be imputed to those who believe.

God’s Grace Is Received by Faith Alone Romans 4:13–25

4:13 “The promise ... was not ... through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” The “promise” referred to here is first stated in Genesis 12:1–3. There are two things included in this promise. First, that Abraham would be heir of the world, as mentioned by Paul in this verse. Second, that all the world would be blessed.

Note: In Genesis 12:2, the word “blessed” is in the *niphal* stem and, in Genesis 22:18, it is in the *hithpael* (reflexive stem), meaning “they shall bless themselves” (*Old Testament Parsing Guide*, Todd Beall and William Banks, pp. 8, 17). This implies the necessity of faith in the recipients. And not just faith alone, but also the righteousness, which is imputed to those who believe.

4:14 “*If those who are of the law are heirs.*” The Jewish teaching was that obedience to the law is essential to eternal inheritance/salvation (Acts 15:1–5). Paul argues that if this were true, faith is nullified and the promise is ineffective (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10–12, 16–18).

4:15 “*The law brings about wrath.*” The reason is that the law shines a bright light on all our sins (Rom. 3:19–20; Gal. 2:16; 3:10). “*No transgression.*” Without the law, sin still exists, but the penalty of the law is not enforced (Rom. 5:13–14). Therefore, those without the law are judged, not by the law, but by their own conscience (John 16:8; Rom. 2:11–16).

4:16 “*It is of faith.*” The word “it” here and in vv. 22–23 speaks of imputed righteousness, resulting in eternal inheritance/salvation. “*That it might be according to grace.*” God’s grace is only compatible with man’s faith. The law is not compatible with grace, and works are not compatible with faith (Rom. 11:6). Only after we are saved by faith, have become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), possess all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9–11), are we enabled to produce good works (Eph. 2:8–10; James 1:22, 25; 2:14–24). We must always remember that any good works produced apart from faith and love are worthless and unacceptable to God (Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 13:1–3; see Gen. 4:2–7). “*That the promise might be sure to all the seed.*” That is, to those who are in Christ by faith (Gal. 3:16, 29). “*Abraham, who is the father of us all.*” Abraham is the father of those who believe (Rom. 3:22–24; Gal. 3:22, 26, 29).

4:17 “*I have made you a father of many nations.*” This promise was made before Isaac was born (Gen. 17:5). “*God, who gives life to the dead.*” The immediate thought here is the reproductive deadness of Abraham and Sarah (v. 19); only the God who can raise the dead and bring something new into existence could fulfill that promise. And Abraham believed Him.

4:18 “*Who, contrary to hope, in hope believed.*” Abraham saw the human impossibility of having children. Humanly speaking, there was no hope. Yet, he hoped in the God who made the promise, “*So shall your descendants be.*” This is a reference to Genesis 15:5–6.

4:19–20 “*Not being weak in faith ... he did not waver ... through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith.*” These phrases show the main point of Paul’s argument. From the time Abraham initially believed, up to the time of Isaac’s birth, Abraham was growing stronger in faith. This illustrates one of the main ideas of the book of Romans—that we are to go “*from faith to faith,*” because “*the just shall live by faith*” (Rom. 1:17). In Romans, Paul is not just concerned with bringing men to eternal life by faith in Christ, he is also concerned that believers grow in grace and truth so as to live the abundant life (John 10:10).

4:22 “*It was accounted to him for righteousness.*” The reference here to “it” is speaking of Abraham’s faith (v. 3). However, since Abraham’s spiritual growth is mentioned in vv. 17–21, “it” could also refer to his ongoing faith being accounted as a righteous life. In this way, Paul could be speaking both of imputed righteousness (v. 3), and also of imparted righteousness, that is, the empowering and enablement of the believer to live out the righteousness of Christ. This would refer back to v. 12, “*Who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had.*” If we look at it like this, Paul may be preparing the way for Romans chapters 6 through 8, and the doctrine of sanctification by faith.

4:24 “*It shall be imputed to us who believe.*” The righteousness of God will “be imputed to” all who believe in Jesus Christ. This imputation is permanent and eternal; once given it is never lost or forfeited (Rom. 11:29). All believers fail, but all our sins, past, present, and future, were laid on Him and paid forever at the cross (Col. 2:14).

This is what Jesus meant when He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). The word translated *“finished”* is a legal term meaning “paid in full!” ***“In Him who raised up Jesus.”*** The Lord Jesus made it clear that to believe in Him was to believe in the Father, for They are one in essence and Spirit (Deut. 6:4; John 8:19; 10:30; James 2:19).

4:25 *“Who was delivered up ... and was raised.”* The work of Christ on our behalf was death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1–4). All our sins were paid for on the cross, but without the resurrection, we would have no assurance of the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death (1 Cor. 15:12–22; Col. 2:13–15). Christ did not die just to forgive our sins, but also to give us new life (Rom. 6:4; 7:6; 8:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

Summary Principles: The Promise of God

1. God promised Abraham that he would inherit the world before the rite of circumcision, or the Law, were given (Rom. 4:10–11; Gal. 3:17).
2. When a promise is given, one does not need to work for it, or seek to earn it. All that one can do is to trust in the one who gave the promise.
3. To make the promise depend on works is to nullify the promise (**v. 14**; Gal. 3:18). If God offers eternal life as a free gift (Rom. 6:23) and we say, “Let me pay for it by works,” the promise is now turned into a debt (Rom. 4:4).
4. All of God’s promises in His Word are given freely and can only be received by simple childlike faith (**v. 16**, Matt. 18:3; John 1:12).
5. Abraham not only believed in God for righteousness (v. 3), but he lived in the faith that God would give him a child (**vv. 17–20**). This is the idea Paul introduced in Romans 1:17 when he wrote *“from faith to faith.”* Faith is like the tiny *“mustard seed”* that, once planted, grows and grows (Matt. 13:31–32).
6. Abraham’s faith gave him hope, even when things looked hopeless (**v. 18**). This was because he knew that the One who had promised was faithful (Heb. 11:11, 19).
7. What is true of Abraham can also be true of us—if we grow in grace and live by faith (**vv. 23–25**; 2 Pet. 3:18). When we live by faith, we are following in the footsteps of our father Abraham (v. 12).

Summary Principles: The Power of Faith

1. From Romans 3:21 through 4:25, the words *“faith”* and *“believe”* occur at least 25 times. It is clear—God wants us to understand that faith is all that is required of us for salvation.
2. In order for faith at the moment of salvation to be genuine, it cannot be mixed or mingled with works of any kind (**vv. 2–4, 9–11, 13**; John 6:28–29; Acts 16:31; Titus 3:5).
3. Faith is the only human response that is honoring to the grace of God and available to all mankind (**v. 16**; Rom. 11:6). This is because faith is an admission of total, spiritual poverty (Matt. 5:3; Heb. 11:6).
4. Any attempt to include works in receiving salvation is an attempt to turn grace into debt (**v. 4**; Acts 15:1–5; Gal. 2:11–16; 3:10–14).

5. Faith is powerful because it lays hold of the power of God (vv. 17–22; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 1:18, 23–24; 2 Cor. 4:5–7; Eph. 3:20–21; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:3–4).
6. Faith is not stagnant; it does not stand still. Faith grows in grace, truth, and power as we learn and obey God’s Word (vv. 18–22; Eph. 4:11–16; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

ROMANS CHAPTER 5

The benefits and blessings of our justification.

Note: Romans 5 is considered by many theologians throughout history to be one of the most critical passages in the Bible to understanding right theology and teaching right doctrine. It is also a “hinge” in the book, as Paul moves from the issue of justification by faith, to the topic of how we are to live the Christian way of life (sanctification). Paul uses the phrase “*much more*” five times (vv. 9, 10, 15, 17, 20) to show that God’s grace not only provides for eternal life but, beyond that, supplies all we need for the “abundant life” (John 10:10; Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3, 5–8).

Faith Reaps the Blessings of the Cross

Romans 5:1–11

5:1 “*Having been justified by faith.*” At the moment we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are justified—declared righteous by God (2 Cor. 5:21). “*We have peace with God.*” The word “*reconciled/reconciliation*” (vv. 10–11; 2 Cor. 5:18) means that all grounds for guilt, shame, or judgment, have been removed. Where we were formerly the enemies of God, we have now entered into a relationship of “*peace*” (Eph. 2:13–14; 4:18; Col. 1:21). “*Through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” As vv. 6–11 will show, our standing before God is due only to the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5:2 “*We have access ... into this grace in which we stand.*” Not only do we stand firmly in God’s grace, but by prayer we can enter His very Throne Room (Heb. 4:14–16). “*And rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*” The word “*rejoice*” means “to boast,” and the word “*hope*” means “certain expectation.” Our rejoicing is based on the eternal security of our salvation. We are absolutely certain, having trusted in Jesus Christ, that we will share His glory.

5:3 “*We ... glory in tribulations.*” Those who believe in Christ have the capacity to boast in the midst of afflictions, because we know how God uses them to bring purity and maturity into our lives (Matt. 5:10–12; James 1:2–3, 12; 2 Tim. 2:11–13; 1 Pet. 4:12–14) “*Tribulation produces perseverance.*” When suffering meets faith, the result is that faith endures to the point of victory (Rom. 8:37; 1 Pet. 1:6–9).

5:4 “*Character ... and ... hope.*” Trials met with faith produce in us the proven “*character*” of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:16–18). As we grow, we move from the “*hope*” (assurance) of our security in Christ (v. 2), to the “*hope*” (assurance) of victorious Christian living (Heb. 6:19; 10:22–24; 1 Pet. 3:15). Spiritual maturity gives us the confidence that we can face whatever God allows to come into our lives (Phil. 4:13).

5:5 “*Hope does not disappoint.*” Genuine “*hope*” rests not in false expectations, but in the assurance that our heavenly Father is in control of our lives. “*The love of God has been poured out in our hearts.*” The coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives (Acts 1:5; Rom. 8:9–11; 1 Cor. 12:13), and His fellowship (Phil. 2:1), is a constant reminder of the depth of the love of God (vv. 6–10; Eph. 3:17–19).

5:6 “*Without strength ... the ungodly*” We had no power to save ourselves, being totally separated from God. “*In due time Christ died.*” The cross of Christ occurred at the precise time in history ordained by God (Gal. 4:4).

5:7 “For a righteous man ... for a good man.” By a “righteous man,” Paul means one who will do what is right but no more. But the “good man” will go beyond what is required to the point of sacrificial service to another. For this kind of man, one might dare to die.

5:8 “While we were still sinners, Christ died.” Jesus Christ shows the love of God to be so much greater than any human love, in that Christ died for sinners. Note that Paul uses four terms to describe mankind: “without strength” and “ungodly” (v. 6), “sinners” (v. 8), and “enemies” (v. 10). The vastness of the love of God embraces all of humanity!

5:9 “Much more.” Paul uses this phrase five times (vv. 9, 10, 15, 17, 20), to show that the plan of God goes far beyond simply saving our souls from eternal condemnation. His purpose is for us to utilize His grace to “reign in life” (v. 17), that is, to live a victorious life of faith. **“We shall be saved from wrath.”** The “wrath” that God inflicts on those who rebel against His truth (Rom. 1:18–32) is never intended to be the portion of the believer. It is critical to understand that the word “saved” means simply “to be delivered,” whether from eternal or from temporal, daily, consequences of sin.

5:10 “For if ... we were reconciled.” The death of Christ on the cross made it possible for us to escape the eternal condemnation of sin. **“Much more ... we shall be saved by His life.”** The believer who lives by faith in obedience to God’s Word will be delivered from sin and the wrath that it brings (Eph. 1:7; 1 Thess. 1:10). By the indwelling of the Spirit, we are able to experience the very life of Christ living in and through us (John 14:6, 12–21; Rom. 6:3–4; 8:37; Gal. 2:20).

5:11 “And not only that.” As if eternal salvation and victory in time were not enough blessing, God also gives us the ability face life and its trials as **“We ... rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** The One who died for the ungodly—who has reconciled us to God—also becomes our daily rejoicing as we live in His power and presence.

Summary Principles: The Blessings of Justification

1. When we are justified by faith, we have **peace with God**, (v. 1; John 14:27; 16:33; Eph. 2:14; 6:15). This peace is not a feeling, but a fact. God the Father accepts us as He does His own beloved Son, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:6). God Himself expresses this peace to us in every greeting of Paul, “*grace to you and peace.*” (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; Phi. 3).
2. We experience this peace as we “*abide in Him*” and permit the Spirit of God to produce His fruit in us (John 15:4–10; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15; James 3:18).
3. Next, we have a **standing in grace** (v. 2a), which is our spiritual home—the grace of God that will never be taken from us (2 Cor. 12:9; Eph. 3:17, 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:1; Titus 2:11; Heb. 4:16).
4. Then we have **hope** (v. 2b), which means the “assurance” of our eternal presence with God in His glory. “*Hope*” is one of the three great spiritual virtues: faith, hope, and love (vv. 1, 3, 5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Col. 1:4–5; 1 Thess. 1:3, 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:21–22).
5. We can also live in the expectation of **spiritual growth** (vv. 3–4), because we know that God uses our trials to produce in us the character of His Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:5–7).
6. Finally, we have **the love of God** (v. 5), which the Holy Spirit has brought to us and constantly reminds us of (John 16:8; Rom. 8:35; 15:30; 2 Cor. 5:14; 13:14; Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 3:19; 1 John 4:19).

Death and Slavery through Adam; Life and Victory through Christ

Romans 5:12–21

5:12 *“Through one man sin entered the world.”* The sin of Adam introduced sin into the world (Gen. 3:1–19). *“Death spread to all men, because all sinned.”* Death is the consequence of sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23). All men are born with Adam’s sinful nature, which is proved by the fact that *“all [men] have sinned”* (Rom. 3:10–18, 23; 1 Cor. 15:21–22).

5:13–14 *“Sin is not imputed when there is no law.”* The Law was given to reveal the sinfulness of mankind (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:10, 21–24; 1 Tim. 1:9–10). Before the Law came, God dealt with men with great longsuffering and patience (Acts 14:16; 17:26–30). However, even without the law, men are judged by their own conscience (Rom. 2:13–16; 1 Tim. 1:19). *“Death reigned from Adam to Moses.”* Even before the law, mankind still suffered the curse of death—the result of sin—even though their sins were not in disobedience to a known command, like Adam’s (Gen. 2:17). *“A type of Him who was to come.”* Just as Adam became the head of a fallen race of sinful men, even so Jesus Christ, by His death and resurrection, became the Head of a redeemed race of men.

5:15 *“The free gift is not like the offense.”* In the rest of chapter five, Paul gives a series of contrasts between the effects of Adam’s sin and the work of Christ on the cross. He uses the phrase *“much more”* to show that the work of Christ brought greater blessings than what Adam had lost. *“The grace of God and the gift ... abounded to many.”* The grace of God brought not only the gift of eternal life, but also the power *for* abundant life through the power of His indwelling Spirit (John 10:10).

5:16 *“From one offense ... from many offenses.”* A further contrast between Adam and Christ is that, by one sin, Adam condemned all men to condemnation before God, but the Lord Jesus, on the cross, paid the debt of the many offenses of mankind (John 1:29; Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21). All sins were laid on Him at the cross (Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet. 2:25), so that by faith, we can be justified before God. Paul’s point is that Jesus did not just pay for the sin of Adam, which brought sin into the world, He died for all the sins of all men throughout all history (1 John 2:2)!

5:17 *“Much more those who receive ... the gift of righteousness ... will reign in life.”* The sin of Adam brought the rule of sin into the world. All mankind became slaves to sin and death. But because of the finished work of Jesus Christ (John 19:30), those who receive the gift of righteousness by faith, can now reign in life. When we live by the power of the Holy Spirit, we allow the Lord to *“rule in the midst of Your enemies”* through us (Psalm 110:2b).

5:18 *“Judgment came to all men ... even so ... the free gift came to all men.”* Just as the sin of Adam brought condemnation to all men, even so, the work of Christ brought the free gift of justification and life to all men. The work of Christ on the cross was universal. However, while all men enter into the bondage of Adam by physical birth, one can only enter into the life of Jesus Christ by spiritual birth (John 3:3; 14:6; 1 Cor. 15:22). The free gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23) must be received by faith in Christ (Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 5:17–21; Eph. 2:8).

5:19 *“By one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”* The obedience of Jesus Christ to the will of the Father (Matt. 26:36–42; Mark 14:34–39; Luke 22:41–42; Phil. 2:5–8) brought righteousness to all who believe (Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21–26; 4:3–5).

5:20 *“Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.”* This verse is a summary of the contrast Paul has been making between Adam and Christ. The sin of Adam made all men slaves to sin. The cross of Christ makes all who trust in Him to be kings and priests (Rev. 5:10; 20:6). However great the disastrous effects of sin, the grace of God is always greater.

5:21 *“Even so grace might reign ... to eternal life.”* Jesus Christ did not die just to save us from the condemnation of Adam. He died to give us His life, which we can experience by the filling of the Holy Spirit here

and now (Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18). By His control, we are enabled to live righteously, so that our lives bring glory to Him throughout all eternity. The thought of “reigning” (vv. 17, 21) through Christ introduces the next major section of Romans (chapters 6–8), dealing with the power of the Spirit and the work of sanctification.

Summary Principles: The Contrast Between Adam and Christ

1. Adam is the head of the old creation, and he brought sin, suffering, and death to all mankind (vv. 12–14; Gen. 2:17). The presence of death, even before the law was given, shows that all those who lived during this time were sinners.
2. Where Adam brought death, the Lord Jesus Christ brought the free gift of eternal life (v. 15).
3. Adam brought judgment by one sin, but Jesus Christ brought justification before God by paying the debt of “*many offenses*”—the sins of the entire human race (v. 16).
4. Where Adam made all men slaves to the rulership of death, the Lord Jesus brought righteousness so that men could reign as kings in this life (v. 17).
5. Just as Adam brought judgment to all, even so, Christ made justification possible for all men (v. 18).
6. Adam made men sinners; Jesus Christ made men righteous (v. 19).
7. The grace of God is always greater than sin: It is greater in power, in provision, and in promise. All who receive the grace of God are empowered to reign as kings to the eternal glory of Jesus Christ (vv. 20–21).

ROMANS CHAPTER 6

Our union with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection provides power over the sin nature and victory over habitual sinning.

The Power of Our Union with Christ

Romans 6:1–11

6:1 “*Shall we continue in sin?*” The truth that God’s grace is greater than sin (Rom. 5:20) might lead an objector to suggest the question here. This is similar to the objection to his teaching mentioned in Romans 3:8, and the one recorded in Romans 6:15. All were likely attacks on Paul’s emphasis on the grace of God.

6:2 “*How shall we who died ... live any longer in it?*” Many believers simply do not understand what occurred when they believed in Christ. The new man (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:9–10) is free from the reign of the sin nature (Rom. 5:12–14, 17) because we share in the finished work of Christ’s victory over sin (John 19:30; Rom. 8:37; Col. 2:14).

6:3 “*Do you not know.*” Paul often uses this phrase to introduce a truth his readers should know but are ignorant of (Rom. 6:16; 7:1; 10:19; 11:2; 1 Cor. 3:16; 5:6; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24). “*Baptized into Christ.*” The baptism mentioned here is not water baptism, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places us into union with Christ (Acts 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:13). Water baptism is an outward, physical confession of this inward spiritual change.

6:4 “*Just as Christ was raised ... we also should walk in newness of life.*” In vv. 3–5, Paul declares that we share in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By His death we are delivered from the penalty of sin.

His burial implies separation from the world, and His resurrection guarantees the impartation of His resurrection life to us (Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:11–14; Titus 2:11–14; 3:4–7).

6:5 *“If we have been united together.”* The word *“united”* speaks of “the ingrafting of two plants together” (Rom. 11:16–18). We have been spiritually grafted into Jesus Christ. *“In the likeness of His resurrection.”* The purpose of God in the crucifixion was not only to deliver us from the power of sin, but also from the practice of sin. It was not just to save us from sin, but also to save us from sinning. This point is restated in vv. 6–8.

6:6 *“Knowing this.”* The emphasis is again on the importance of knowing the truth of what Christ has done. *“Our old man was crucified with Him.”* Union with Christ means that the old person we were in Adam—a slave to sin—has died (1 Cor. 15:22). *“Might be done away with.”* The word used here (*katargeo*) does not mean the sin nature is eradicated, but rather that it is rendered powerless against the new power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:21–22; Gal 2:20). *“That we should no longer be slaves of sin.”* Sin no longer has dominion over us (v. 14), but we are still able to choose to sin (v. 16).

6:8 *“If we died ... we believe ... we shall also live with Him.”* The goal of the Christian life is that we share in the resurrection life of Christ (Gal. 2:20; 1 Pet. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 2:11). Paul introduces the phrase *“we believe”* to show that not only knowledge of the truth, but also faith in God’s power, is essential to live in victory. Not only do we believe that we will share eternity living with Christ, but we are enabled to live with Him now in this life, by His indwelling Spirit (John 15:5; Rom. 7:6; 8:4–14).

6:9 *“Christ, having been raised ... dies no more.”* Once Christ was raised from the dead, death could never threaten Him again. He is victorious over sin, death, and the grave (1 Cor. 15:50–58; Col. 2:13–14).

6:10 *“He died to sin once for all.”* When Jesus cried out, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30), His victory over sin was secured forever (Heb. 10:12–14). *“He lives to God.”* The humanity of Christ, raised from the dead, lives forever to the glory of God (Heb. 9:27–28; Luke 20:37–38).

6:11 *“Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God.”* The word *“reckon”* here is the same word used in Romans 4 of God imputing or accounting righteousness to us (Rom. 4:3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24). Paul’s point is that we should learn to view ourselves as God sees us. Three steps have been given up to this point to lead us to victory over sin. We must:

1. **Know** the truth of what God had done in Christ (vv. 3, 6, 9),
2. **Believe** what God has done for us by our union with Christ (v. 8), and
3. Consider (**reckon**) ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (v. 11).

In other words, we must act on what we know and believe to be true (Luke 11:28; John 13:17).

Summary Principles: The Meaning of Union with Christ

1. By our union with Jesus Christ, both the penalty of sin and the power of the sin nature over us has been abolished (vv. 1–2; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 2:20).
2. There are three vital areas of our spiritual union with Jesus Christ: We are united with Him in His death, in His burial, and in His resurrection (vv. 3–4; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:3–4; Gal. 3:27).
3. By our union with Christ’s death, the **penalty** of sin is paid in full. By our union with His burial, the **power** of sin is forever broken, and in union with His resurrection, we will be forever removed from the **presence** of sin.

4. The “*baptism*” Paul speaks of here (vv. 3–4) is a reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), which occurs at the moment of salvation (Rom. 8:9–11). At the same time we are placed into union with Christ, God the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence within us, as the seal of our security in Christ (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30).
5. Our ability to “*walk in newness of life*” (v. 4) means to live in the power of His resurrection life (v. 5, Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). This is possible only as we are filled by His Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and walk (live) by faith in His power (Gal. 5:16; Col. 2:6). This goes back to Paul’s statement in Romans 1:17, “*The just shall live by faith.*”
6. The practice of holiness is the result of three decisive steps on the part of the believer:
 - a. We must **know** about our union with Christ (vv. 3, 6, 9). This requires sound teaching.
 - b. We must **reckon** or consider this to be true for us (v. 11). This is the personal application of the truth to our experience by faith.
 - c. We must **present** ourselves to God as “*a living sacrifice*” (v. 13, Rom. 12:1). Here, we have the daily/moment-by-moment decision to live for God and not for self (Luke 9:23).
7. Again, this goes back to what Paul said in his introduction in Romans 1:17, “*For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’*”

The Practice of Our Union with Christ

Romans 6:12–23

6:12 “*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body.*” Although this body will one day die because of indwelling sin, we are able to deny sin the right to rule in this body. The power to deny our sinful nature is in the indwelling Holy Spirit.

6:13 “*Do not present your members ... but present yourselves to God.*” The word “*present*” is a picture of offering a sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). Each day we are to “*present [ourselves] to God*” as a “*living sacrifice*” to do His will.

6:14 “*Sin shall not have dominion ... you are not under law but under grace.*” All the law has the power to do is condemn (Rom. 3: 19; 8:1–4; 1 Tim. 1:9–10). Knowing what the law condemns only excites the sin nature to disobey the law (Rom. 7:7–11).

6:15 “*Shall we sin because we are not under the law?*” Paul was often accused of teaching antinomianism or lawlessness (see note on v. 1). Freedom from the law is freedom from its condemnation, so that we are enabled to obey its righteous demands (Rom. 8:4). Paul always made it clear that freedom from the law did not mean freedom to sin, but rather freedom from sin to live in the power of the love of Christ (Rom. 13:8–10; 2 Cor. 5:14–15; Gal. 5:13–14). Although pastors who emphasize the grace of God are often accused or preaching “cheap grace” or “easy believism,” Paul declares that only the teaching of the grace of God has the power to overcome sin in our lives and embrace godliness (Titus 2:11–14).

6:16–17 “*You are that one’s slaves whom you obey.*” The believer can either be a slave of sin, or a slave of God. We must choose each day whom we will serve (Josh. 24:15). “*You obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine.*” The power to live the Christian way of life is found in two sources: the truth of God’s Word (“*doctrine*” = teaching), and the indwelling Spirit. It is one thing to believe right teaching, but the next step is to act upon it (vv. 8–13, “*believe*” + “*reckon*” + “*present*”). See Luke 11:28; John 13:17; James 2:20.

6:18 *“You became slaves of righteousness.”* Jesus Christ has purchased us through His sacrifice in our place. However, He desires that our service to Him be voluntary through love and gratitude (John 8:30–32; 14:15, 21; 15:9–10; 2 Cor. 5:14–15).

6:19 *“I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.”* Paul resorts to human analogies and illustrations in order to overcome the limitations of his readers. As we once lived as slaves to sin, we now are to use the members of our body for *“righteousness”* and *“holiness”* (1 Pet. 1:16). The Greek word for *“holiness”* is the word we get *“sanctification”* from. This is the main theme of Romans 6–8.

6:20–21 *“You were slaves of sin.”* As an unbeliever, you have no choice but to serve the sin nature. *“What fruit did you have ... of which you are now ashamed?”* We can all look back to thoughts, words, and actions in our unbelieving life that bring nothing but shame. The only fruit that sin brings forth is death (James 1:13–16; Gal. 6:7–8).

6:22 *“Having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.”* Where the end of sin is death (v. 21), the end of obedience to God is eternal life. Paul is not saying that our salvation is dependent on our good deeds. What He is suggesting is that obedience to God in this life will bring its own rewards in eternity (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Tim. 2:11–13; 4:6–8).

6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.”* Here, *“eternal life”* is not only what we receive when we believe in Jesus Christ, but it is also speaking of the gift of the life of Christ (vv. 4–8), by which we are enabled and empowered to live obedient lives, and for which we will be eternally rewarded (2 Pet. 1:5–11). This is what Jesus spoke of when He talked of laying up *“treasures in heaven”* (Matt. 6:20), and what Paul means when he says we should *“lay hold on eternal life”* (1 Tim. 6:12, 19). The gift of eternal life provides every believer with the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who gives us the gift of His power, to live lives that glorify God.

Summary Principles: The Practice of Holiness

1. It is critical for us to understand the biblical term *“holiness.”* It means so much more than simply the absence of sin.
 - a. First, holiness is simply the reflection of the character of God, who alone is truly holy (Exod. 15:11; Psalm 22:3; Isa. 6:3). When we speak of godliness, we are referring to the actions of holiness, which reflect the nature of God.
 - b. Holiness then speaks of the *“wholeness”* and the *“wholesome-ness”* of God. He is lacking in nothing that is good, without any defect in all that is pure.
2. When we, by faith, claim the resurrection power of Jesus Christ (vv. 11–12; Phil. 3:10), the Spirit of God enables us to live in the reality of His resurrection life (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:14–21).
3. Sin can have no dominion over those who choose to live by grace, through faith (vv. 14–15; Eph. 2:8–10; Col. 2:6; Titus 2:11–14).
4. As new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), we have the power to choose to serve God rather than serving our sinful nature (vv. 16–19; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:20–24; 1 Thess. 4:7).
5. When we choose to live under the dominion of our sinful nature, we put to death the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 20–21; Gal. 5:16–23).
6. In contrast, when we live in obedience to God by the power of His Spirit, we bear the fruits of holiness (John 15:5; 2 Cor. 9:10; Col. 1:10; James 3:17), which will last forever (vv. 22–23; Matt. 6:20; Heb. 10:35–36; 11:26; Rev. 22:12).

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

The law cannot give victory in the spiritual life. To attempt to live by the law dooms us to frustration and failure.

Free from Law—The Marriage Analogy

Romans 7:1–6

7:1 *“Do you not know.”* Again, Paul uses this phrase as a rebuke to believers for their ignorance of sound teaching (see Rom. 6:3 note). *“The law has dominion ... as long as he lives.”* Since the law was given to magnify sinfulness (Rom. 5:20) and to regulate one’s life on this earth, it has no power once one is dead.

7:2 *“The woman ... is bound ... to her husband as long as he lives.”* Paul uses marriage as an example of the power of the law. Once a husband dies, she is no longer bound to him, but is free to marry another. So it is with the law.

7:3 *“If her husband dies, she is free from that law.”* This is the main point Paul wants us to understand: Death annuls the power of the Law over a person.

7:4 *“You ... have become dead to the law through the body of Christ.”* Union with Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) has done two things for us:

1. It has set us free from the law and its condemnation (Rom. 8:1–4; Gal. 3:10–14).
2. It has made it possible for us to *“be married to another ... Him who was raised from the dead.”* The point is that one cannot live under the slavery of the law, and at the same time live in the freedom of Christ (Rom. 8:5; Gal. 5:1, 18).

Those who are joined to Christ by faith, and yet seek to live by Law, become estranged from Christ (Rom. 8:6–8; Gal. 5:1–4). *“That we should bear fruit to God.”* The fruit of the life of faith is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

7:5 *“In the flesh.”* This refers to our life as an unbeliever (Rom. 8:9–11). *“The passions of sins which were aroused by the law.”* The effect of the Law saying, *“Thou shalt not ...,”* only provokes the sinful nature to sin even more (vv. 7–8). The end result is that we *“bear fruit unto death.”* Both our conscience and our actions condemn us to death (John 16:8; Rom. 1:32; 2:14–15; Gal. 3:10; James 2:10–11).

7:6 *“We have been delivered from the law.”* Our union with Christ, bringing both forgiveness from all sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, renders the *“law”* powerless over us. *“Having died to that what we were held by.”* The word translated *“held”* here is the same word translated *“suppress”* in Romans 1:18. It means *“to work actively, to hold down or oppress.”* *“That we should serve in the newness of the Spirit.”* Paul uses the word *“newness”* here and in Romans 6:4, where he speaks of *“newness of life.”* His point is that our experience of the resurrection life (Gal. 2:20, Phil. 3:10) is dependent on our submission to and reliance on the indwelling Holy Spirit. The spiritual life is a life that is controlled and guided by the Spirit (John 16:8; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18).

The Law is Holy, But We Are Not

Romans 7:7–12

7:7 *“Is the law sin?”* Since the law gives power to sin (vv. 5, 8, 11; 1 Cor. 15:56), is the Law also sinful? *“I would not have known sin except through the law.”* The Law defines what is sinful (Rom. 3:10–18; 5:20). Since coveting what someone else has is hidden in the human heart, we would not think it sinful, except for the command, *“you shall not covet.”* (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21).

7:8 “Sin, taking opportunity by the commandment.” Our sinful nature naturally rebels against God’s prohibitions. This was the nature of Adam’s first sin (Gen. 2:17). *“Apart from the law sin was dead.”* If there is no absolute standard of right and wrong, then sin has nothing to rebel against. Who can be accused of sin if there is no standard defining sin?

7:9 “I was alive once without the law.” This perhaps refers to a time when Paul, as Saul, considered himself a true law-keeper. Like the rich young ruler, he could say, *“All these I have kept from my youth”* (Luke 18:21). It is most interesting that in the context here in Romans 7, Paul specifically identifies coveting (v. 7), which is precisely the issue Jesus used to break the pride of the young ruler (Luke 18:22). It is fascinating to consider whether that young ruler was, in fact, Saul of Tarsus. *“When the commandment came ... I died.”* Failure to keep this one command brought him under the curse of the law—death (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 3:10; James 1:15; 2:10).

Note: Beginning in v. 9, Paul begins to speak of his own personal struggles against sin, using the personal pronoun, *“I”* 28 times from v. 9 to v. 25. He shows that his own experiences match those of all believers in our struggle between indwelling sin and our desire to live righteously.

7:10 “Which was to bring life, I found to bring death.” The commands of God point to God and His holiness, which is life itself. However, as Paul will show us in Romans 8:3, the problem is in our inability to keep the law. As we read in Galatians 3:24–25, in revealing our sinfulness, the law points us to Jesus Christ—the embodiment of the law—who is also our Redeemer and Savior.

7:11 “For sin ... deceived me, and by it killed me.” The unbeliever, confronted by the law, is deceived into thinking they can keep it. We even think if we keep most of it, we will earn eternal life. However, the more one tries, the more one fails. Our deception by our sinful nature only leads us to condemnation and death (Rom. 8:1b; James 1:14–15).

7:12 “Therefore the law is holy ... and just and good.” The law is holy because it reflects the righteous nature of God. It is just, because it is perfectly fair, *“For there is no partiality with God”* (Rom. 2:11). And it is good, because by revealing our sinfulness, it can bring us to the grace of God (Psalm 19:7–9; Rom. 5:20–21; Gal. 3:24–25).

Summary Principles: The Believer’s Relationship to the Law

1. Paul explains our present relationship to the law using an analogy to marriage, **vv.1–3**. Marriage was designed by God to be the union of one man and one woman for life (Gen. 2:21–24; 1 Cor. 7:39).
 - a. When a man or a woman died, the other partner was no longer bound by the marriage vow and was free to marry another (**v. 2**).
 - b. The violation of the marriage vow, while the other partner lives, was an act of adultery (**v. 3**; Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Luke 16:18).
2. Our union with Christ, who died to fulfill the Law, has set us free from the Law (**v. 4**; Gal. 3:13, 23–25). It is not the law that died; rather, we died to the law. Since the law is made for sinners (Rom. 3:19; 1 Tim. 1:9), and we have been declared righteous (Rom. 4:3, 23–25; 2 Cor. 5:21), we have been set free from the law.
3. Having died to the law, we have become united/married to Christ (“in Him” concept), and the fruits of the Spirit in us (Rom. 8:1–4; Gal. 5:22–23) are the “children” of that union (**v. 4**).
4. In our unbelieving state, we could only produce the works of the flesh—our sinful nature (**v. 5**). But now we are free from the condemnation of the law and can choose to walk/live in the new life of the Spirit (**v. 6**; Rom. 6:4; Gal. 5:16).

5. The essence of sin is rebellion against God. When the Law says do not lie, steal, murder, or commit adultery, our sinful nature rebels and desires to do those very things (vv. 7–11; 1 Cor. 15:56).
6. The Law of God is “*holy*” and “*good*” (v. 12; Psalm 19:7–11). But it is impossible for the unsaved person to keep the Law (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 2:16; 3:10–14). As a child of God by faith in Christ, we are indwelt by His Spirit, who enables us to live righteously, by faith (Rom. 1:17; 8:4; 13:8–10; Gal. 5:1, 14, 16, 22–25).

The Law of God, the Law of Sin, and the Law of Grace

Romans 7:13–25

7:13 “*So that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.*” This simply expands on what Paul said in Romans 3:20 and 5:20. The Law exposes and magnifies the sinfulness of sin. It is not just the sinful action but, even more so, the evil intents of the heart behind the doing. The sinful heart/mind is actively at war with God and His law (John 16:8; Rom. 8:5–7). When the sin nature is confronted with “*what is good*” in the law, it sets its goal to violate it, making the sin even worse.

7:14 “*The law is spiritual ... I am carnal, sold under sin.*” In his own natural self, Paul is a slave to sin. All men are. By his own efforts, there is no way he can overcome his slavery to sin. A slave cannot free himself.

7:15–16 “*What I will to do ... what I hate, that I do.*” Every believer knows this experience. There is an inner warfare between the desire to do what is right, and the pull of the sin nature to do what is wrong (Gal. 5:17). “*I agree with the law that it is good.*” The very will to do God’s will (John 7:17) shows the presence of the new man—the regenerate nature (2 Cor. 5:17).

7:17 “*No longer I ... but sin that dwells in me.*” Although the power and dominion of the sin nature is broken at salvation (Rom. 6:6), the sinful nature lives on in our mortal bodies. Because of this, there is a conflict between the old man (unsaved nature) and the new man (the new creature in Christ).

7:18 “*In my flesh nothing good dwells.*” The physical body, indwelt by the sinful nature, has nothing in it to commend us to God or to overcome sin. “*To will is present ... but how to perform what is good I do not find.*” The re-born/regenerate individual desires to, but cannot accomplish the good revealed in God’s Law.

7:19 “*The good that I will to do.*” Paul uses the word “*will*” repeatedly (vv. 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21) to speak of the desire of his true, re-born, inner self. This very desire is a proof of the new birth and of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

7:20 “*It is no longer I ... but sin that dwells in me.*” This is a repetition of what he says in v. 17. If I desire to do good, and yet do what is evil, then “*I*,” the child of God, am not the source of the sin. That source is the sin nature that resides in my flesh.

7:21 “*I find then a law, that evil is present with me.*” This “*law*” is a fact of life, much like the laws of nature. The law of gravity is at work whether we desire it to be or not. The sin nature desires to sin, whether we want it to or not. This verse, and this entire passage, is contrary to those who teach sinless perfection in believers. Yet, the Spirit of God indwells us to express the life of Christ, even in these mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11).

7:22 “*I delight in the law of God.*” This is something only a child of God—a new creature in Christ—could say (Psalm 1:2). Our grief and shame when we sin is evidence of our new nature (Psalm 6:6–7; 32:3–5; 51:1–11).

7:23 *“I see another law ... warring against the law of my mind.”* The desire of the child of God to obey the Law of God will always be resisted by the sinful nature within. This struggle will continue until we receive our new/resurrection bodies (1 Cor. 15:20–23, 50–57; 1 Thess. 4:13–17).

7:24 *“O wretched man that I am!”* The frustration of the inner struggle makes the believer feel hopeless and miserable. *“Who will deliver me?”* It is only when we come to realize that we cannot deliver ourselves from this conflict that we find the solution. *“This body of death.”* This refers to the sin nature’s dominion over our flesh: *“the body of sin”* (Rom. 6:6), *“mortal body”* (Rom. 6:12), and the *“law in my members”* (v. 23).

7:25 *“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* Paul discovers, as we all must, that the same Savior who delivered us from the power of sin and death can also deliver us from the practice of sin. How? By simple faith and surrender to Him through His indwelling Spirit. This will be the theme of Romans 8.

Summary Principles: The Inner Struggle and the Failure of Self-discipline

1. Every believer faces the inner struggle spoken of by Paul (vv. 13–24). This is because while we have a new nature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), our sinful nature is still in our mortal/physical body. Because the Law magnifies the sinfulness of sin (v. 13; Rom. 5:20), we are now all the more aware of our sinfulness.
2. Because of our new nature, we desire to do good. But the sin nature is still drawn to temptation and sin (vv.14–16). This struggle is actually evidence that we have been born again (Gal. 5:17).
3. The new nature, created in the likeness of Jesus Christ (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:24; 1 John 3:1), desires to please God. The old sinful nature rebels against His will (vv. 17–22). But we must remember that the power of the sin nature over us has been broken (Rom. 6:6–10). By the power of His Spirit, we are now able to choose not to sin, but rather to serve God (Rom. 6:11–14, 18–23).
4. The key is in the mind (v. 23). We must learn to set our mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5–6). We must daily commit to the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:1–2; Eph. 4:23) through the study of God’s Word (John 14:26; 16:13–14) and, by faith, we must learn to walk by the power of His Spirit (Gal. 5:17; Col. 2:6). The great decision facing every believer after salvation is whether we will develop the mind of Christ—or not (1 Cor. 2:16; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:5–9).
5. Victory over the power and practice of sin comes through the same One who delivered us from sin’s penalty—the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 24–25). As we trusted in His work on the cross to save us from the penalty of sin, even so, we trust in the working of His indwelling Spirit to produce the life of Christ within us (2 Cor. 3:17–18; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 3:16–20).

ROMANS CHAPTER 8

The secret to living in the victorious life—the resurrection life of Christ—is explained. This chapter ends with a proclamation of victory for every believer in Jesus Christ.

The Liberating Power of the Spirit

Romans 8:1–17

8:1 *“No condemnation.”* This chapter begins with *“No condemnation”* and ends with *“No separation.”* The work of the Law is to condemn sinners (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:20; Gal. 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:9). In Christ, we are no longer under the Law, because all our sins have been paid and forgiven, and we are imputed with the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21–22; 4:3; 2 Cor. 5:21). *“Who do not walk.”* The potential for every believer, as shown by

Paul's own experience in Romans 7, is to walk either by the power of the flesh ("*carnal*," Rom. 7:14; 1 Cor. 3:1–3), or to walk by the power of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Since faith in Christ has delivered us from the **power** of sin, the believer is now to live by dependence on the Holy Spirit, who delivers us from the **practice** of sin.

8:2 "*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.*" The life-giving power of the Spirit belongs only to those who are "*in Christ*." Our position in Christ by faith avails us of the power of the indwelling Spirit. "*Has made me free.*" Liberation from the law also sets us free from the power of sin (1 Cor. 15:56–57). We are now able to choose to experience the life of Christ by the power of the indwelling Spirit (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3).

8:3 "*The law ... was weak through the flesh.*" The Law can condemn sin but has no power to deliver from sin. The Law cannot save us from sin's penalty; neither can it make us spiritual. "*God ... sending His own Son ... on account of sin.*" Jesus Christ came into this world in human flesh (John 1:14) so that, by His death on the cross, He could judge all sin and set sinners free (Rom. 4:24–25; Gal. 5:1; Phil. 2:5–9; Heb. 10:10–14).

8:4 "*The law might be fulfilled in us.*" God has made it possible for sinful men to fulfill His righteous demands, not by law-keeping, but by Spirit-filling (Eph. 5:18). When believers walk (live) in submission to the indwelling Spirit, they are not able to sin (Gal. 5:16). "*According to the flesh ... the Spirit.*" The choice between the two faces every believer every day. When Paul said in his introduction that God's righteousness was revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 1:17), he not only meant imputed righteousness at the moment of our salvation/justification, but also righteousness imparted to us in daily experience. This is why he added, "*The just shall live by faith.*"

8:5 "*For those who live ... set their minds.*" If in our minds we are focused on not sinning, we will surely sin (Rom. 7:15, 19, 24). Our focus is wrong! Instead, we should be focused on the Word of God and the power of His Spirit, in order to do His will. We cannot set our mind on the Spirit apart from renewing our minds in God's Word (Rom. 12:1–2; Phil. 2:1–2, 5–9; Heb. 4:11). Failure to feed daily on God's Word (Jer. 15:16) leads to apathy and indifference to spiritual realities (Heb. 3:7–8, 13, 15; 5:12–14).

8:6 "*To be carnally minded is death.*" This refers to the mind set on the flesh with all its selfish desires. This "*death*" is not physical death, but rather the death of our experience of the resurrection life of Christ (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:6; James 2:17). "*To be spiritually minded is life and peace.*" When we focus on the things of the Spirit, as revealed in the Word of God, we experience the resurrection life of Christ, and enjoy His peace (John 14:26–27; Rom. 5:1–5; 6:4; 2 Pet. 1:5–8).

8:7 "*The carnal mind is enmity against God.*" The essence of sinfulness is selfishness. When we live for self, we make ourselves an enemy of the plan and purpose of God for our lives (James 4:4). We cannot live for self and for God at the same time (Matt. 16:23–25). The first demand of discipleship is denial of self (Luke 9:23).

8:8 "*Those who are in the flesh.*" To be "*in the flesh*" refers to unsaved people (unbelievers). It is a different thing to be "*in the flesh*" (the sphere of existence), as opposed to "**walking** in the flesh" (vv. 4–5, "carnality," the disobedient experience of believers). It is impossible for any unbeliever to live a life that is pleasing to God; it is equally impossible for the carnal believer to please God (see 1 Cor. 3:1–15; Heb. 11:6).

8:9 "*You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.*" The "*you*" here refers to those who are believers, who are "*in Christ*." Every believer has the ability to walk according to the Spirit—something no unbeliever is able to do. "*If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*" Since the Spirit of God indwells us from the moment of saving faith (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30; 1 John 3:24; 4:12–13), anyone who does not have the Spirit does not belong to Jesus Christ.

8:10 "*If Christ is in you.*" The presence of Jesus Christ is with us through His Spirit (John 14:13–18). "*The body is dead ... but the Spirit is life.*" Our physical bodies are mortal (dying, subject to death), but the indwelling Spirit brings eternal life to indwell our bodies by the righteousness of Christ. Everything we do in the energy of the flesh

will pass away, but all that we do in the power of the Spirit will last forever (“carnality,” 1 Cor. 3:1–15 cf. “abiding,” John 15:1–16). The choice to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16) daily is how we lay up treasures in Heaven (Matt. 6:19–21; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Tim. 4:6–8).

8:11 “The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus.” We see that the Holy Spirit is spoken of as “*the Spirit of God*” (vv. 9, 14), “*the Spirit of Christ*” (v. 9), and “*the Spirit Himself*” (v. 16). Father, Son, and Spirit (the Trinity) are one and cannot be separated. Where one is, all are. “**Will also give life to your mortal bodies.**” While it is true that we will all be resurrected with Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:50–57; 1 Thess. 4:13–18), Paul is not talking about the future resurrection here. He is speaking of the power of the Spirit to infuse and impart the life of Christ into our mortal/dying bodies here and now (Rom. 6:4; 7:6).

8:12 “We are debtors.” Just like the Apostle Paul (Rom. 1:14), we are all debtors to Christ. The gift of our salvation/justification is free (Rom. 6:23), but once we receive it, we have a great debt of gratitude and thanksgiving for all that our Lord has done for us (Col. 1:12; 1 Thess. 5:18). We have no obligation to the flesh, but we owe our allegiance and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

8:13 “You will die ... you will live.” The decision that faces us each day is whether we will live in the power of the flesh, which is a “dead” experience, or whether we will live by the Spirit—the abundant life of Christ (John 10:10). To live by faith is to share the life of Christ (Rom. 1:17; 5:10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3–4).

8:14 “For as many as are led ... these are sons of God.” Here, Paul uses the word *huios*, which speaks of a mature, adult son. He is making a distinction between those who are “*children of God*” (v. 16) by faith in Christ, and those who become faithful mature sons by obedience to the Spirit. The Spirit of God will always lead to the Word of God first, in the learning of it, before He can lead us in life, to the doing of it. Paul makes a very similar argument in Galatians 4:1–7.

8:15 “The spirit of bondage again to fear.” Bondage to sin and death only produces fear (Heb. 2:14–15). “**The Spirit of adoption.**” At the moment of our faith in Christ, we are adopted into the family of God with all the rights and privileges of an adult son (Gal. 4:5–7; Eph. 1:3–7). “**We cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’**” Except here and in Galatians 4:6, these words are found only on the lips of our Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36).

8:16 “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit.” Paul explains this further in vv. 26–27, by saying that when we pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf before the throne of God (Heb. 4:14–16). This can also refer to the inner conviction and assurance we have that we are indeed children of God. “**Children of God.**” The focus here is on the new birth as opposed to the issue of spiritual maturity (v. 14, “*sons*”). Believers who fail to attain to spiritual maturity are still children of God, but they will miss many of the blessings and rewards of those who walk by faith, are led by the Spirit, and attain spiritual maturity.

8:17 “If children, then heirs.” Every child of God has a share in eternal inheritance (Acts 26:18; Gal. 3:26–29; 1 Pet. 1:4–5). “**Joint heirs of Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him.**” He is speaking here of those mature “*sons of God*” (v. 14) who share in Christ’s sufferings (Matt. 5:10–12; 2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Pet. 4:12–14). The point is that all children of God have an inheritance, but those who grow to maturity and serve God faithfully will share in the inheritance of the firstborn (the “*double-portion*,” Deut. 21:17). “**That we may also be glorified together.**” Our resurrection bodies will reflect the degree of our faithfulness while here on Earth (Dan. 12:3; 1 Cor. 15:41). All believers will shine like the stars, but some stars shine brighter than others!

Summary Principles: Living by the Power of the Spirit

1. There are four commands given to believers regarding life in the Spirit:
 - a. Do not grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30).
 - b. Do not quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19).

- c. Be filled by means of/with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
 - d. Walk by means of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).
2. The promise of additional eternal rewards and inheritance is given to all who live by the power of the Spirit.
 3. Those who “*walk by faith*” (2 Cor. 5:7) and live in the power of the Holy Spirit are promised the highest of eternal rewards, crowns:
 - a. The Imperishable Crown (1 Cor. 9:24–27),
 - b. The Crown of Joy (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19–20),
 - c. The Crown of Life (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10),
 - d. The Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim. 4:6–8), and
 - e. The Crown of Glory (1 Pet. 5:4).
 4. Romans 8:17 suggests that, while all who believe in Christ are heirs of God and share His inheritance (Gal. 3:26; 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:4–7), those who enter into Christ’s sufferings (spiritual growth and service) will share in the “double-portion” inheritance of Jesus Christ—the Firstborn. In other words, every believer is an “*heir of God,*” but only those who “*suffer with Him*” are “*joint heirs with Christ*” (see 2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Pet. 4:13–14).

The Role of Suffering Explained

Romans 8:18–30

8:18 “*The sufferings of the present ... the glory which shall be revealed.*” Paul begins to explain “*the sufferings*” and “*the glory*” mentioned in v. 17. As we saw in Romans 5:1–5, sufferings in this life, when met with faith, have a role to play in both our spiritual growth and our eternal reward. The eternal glory that we gain by facing our sufferings in faith far outweighs whatever we may suffer (2 Cor. 4:17–18). The greater our sufferings here and now, the greater will be our reflected glory of the character of Christ in eternity.

8:19 “*Creation ... waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*” All of creation, which shares in the curse of sin, will also share in our liberation from that curse. Because of this, in ways we cannot now understand, all of creation is waiting in expectation for “*the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (v. 18). It is the assurance of this reward that gives us courage and endurance in times of suffering (2 Cor. 4:16–18). The cross must come before the crown!

8:20 “*Creation was subjected ... not willingly.*” Adam chose to sin and brought the curse on the earth (Gen. 3:17–19). Nature suffers the effects of the curse, though it was not involved in the sin. Every creature, great and small, suffers innocently, for the sin of Adam. But God is fair because nature will also share in our future glory. In the earthly kingdom of Christ, all of nature will be restored to her former beauty, if not something even better (Isa. 11:6–9; 65:20–25; Hosea 2:18). The curse of sin on nature was that it would bring forth “*thorns and thistles*” (Gen. 3:18). The crown of thorns placed on Jesus’ head was symbolic that He was redeeming nature from the curse of sin (Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5).

8:21 “*Creation ... will be delivered ... into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*” This great future liberation is described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 50–57. All of natural creation, including the animals, will share in this renewed Earth.

8:22 “*The whole creation groans ... with birth pangs.*” Like the coming birth of a child, the agonies endured look toward a blessed outcome.

8:23 *“We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit.”* The presence of the Holy Spirit is a promise of a more full and greater harvest to come (1 Cor. 15:20). *“The adoption, the redemption of our body.”* Though we were adopted as sons at the moment of our justification/salvation, we do not yet enjoy all the riches and privileges that await us.

8:24 *“For we were saved in this hope.”* It was the promise of deliverance from sin and death through faith in Christ that led us to believe. The word *“hope,”* when used regarding things relating to salvation, never means uncertainty. Rather, it carries the idea of absolute certainty and assurance (Rom. 5:1–5; 12:12; Gal. 5:5; Col. 1:27; Titus 1:2). *“Hope that is seen is not hope.”* Hope looks forward to future fulfillment. Once what we hope for is realized, it is then a reality, and no longer a hope (Heb. 11:1).

8:25 *“We ... wait for it with perseverance.”* The assurance of future resurrection and life in God’s eternal kingdom has a sustaining power while we live through the sufferings of this present life. Hope is one of three great virtues of the Christian life: faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13; Col. 1:4–5; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:21–22).

8:26 *“The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses.”* The sufferings of this life tend to reveal our various weaknesses. These in turn drive us to prayer. It is precisely when we are crying out to God for help that the Holy Spirit joins us, interceding on our behalf before the throne of God’s grace (Heb. 4:14–16). The Spirit joins in our own groanings (v. 23), in ways that cannot be expressed in human words.

8:27 *“He who searches the hearts.”* *“He,”* God the Father, *“searches the heart”* (Jer. 17:10) and comprehends the Spirit’s intercession. *“According to the will of God.”* Praying *“according to the will of God,”* as revealed in His Word, is the key to prayer power (James 5:16b; 1 John 5:14–15). We do not always know His perfect will, but the Spirit does, and God hears the voice of the Spirit.

8:28 *“We know that all things work together for good.”* This is not saying that all that happens is *“good,”* rather, it is saying, in the full and final plan of God, everything is working toward His perfect end (Heb. 2:8–10). This *“good”* end will be realized by all *“who love God ... who are the called according to His purpose.”* The love of God calls us into His plan and purpose. We respond in love to that call (1 John 4:19), and it is our love for God that keeps us growing spiritually and serving by faith (2 Cor. 5:14–15; 1 John 4:8–11; 5:2–5).

8:29–30 *“For whom He foreknew.”* God knew every believer in eternity past (Psalm 139:16; Jer. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 13:8; 17:8b). *“Predestined.”* God ordained the destiny of all who believe *“to be conformed to the image of His Son.”* This does not say that God predestined who will believe, but that the eternal destiny of all who believe is pre-determined. Every believer will share the likeness of Christ. *“Firstborn”* speaks of Christ’s position of headship in the heavenly family. It is not speaking of Him as a created being. *“He called.”* The outworking of election is illustrated in the parable in Matthew 22:1–14. The invitation goes out to all, but only those who respond are *“the called.”* (v. 28) *“Justified.”* Those who respond in faith are *“justified”* (Rom. 4:3–5, 24–25). *“These he glorified.”* In the mind of God, our future glorification is just as certain as our past justification. These five words describe the plan of God in bringing us to share Christ’s glory: foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified.

Summary Principles: Blessing through Suffering

1. Suffering is an inevitable experience of living in a world fallen and broken by sin (Gen. 3:15–19; Job 5:7; 7:1–10; Eccl. 3:1–8).
2. However, for the child of God, suffering takes on a new and glorious meaning. It can be a path for growth, purification, and eternal reward (Rom. 5:1–5; 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12; James 1:12).

3. All our sufferings are designed to equip us to be more conformed to Christ and more effective in ministry to others (Psalm 119:67, 71; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 1:3–11; 6:4–10).
4. When we look at our sufferings from God’s perspective (Col. 3:1–4), we realize that they are temporary and light, when compared to the eternal reward and glory they can bring us, as we face them in faith (2 Cor. 4:16–18).
5. Every child of God who is undergoing affliction should read Romans 8:18–39 over and over again. It is a victory cry for every believer in the face of any sufferings we may face.

No Separation from the Love of God

Romans 8:31–39

8:31 *“What then shall we say?”* The truth of the perfect and timeless plan of God revealed in the previous verses (vv. 28–30) should lead every believer to a victorious mindset. *“If God is for us ...?”* The *“if”* here, based on these first eight chapters, is the certain conclusion that God is literally “working on our behalf.”

8:32 *“He ... delivered Him up for us.”* On the cross, the Father turned His own Son over to judgment on our behalf—in our place. *“Freely give us all things.”* We are now in possession of *“all spiritual blessings”* (Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3). Yet future, we will each play a role in sharing the reign of Christ over all things (Rev. 2:26–28; 3:21; 20:6). Our role in eternity will be determined by our faithfulness now (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12).

8:33–34 *“It is God who justifies.”* No one can bring an accusation against one who is justified by God. *“Christ ... makes intercession for us.”* Paul mentions here the death, burial, resurrection, and present *“intercession”* of Jesus Christ at the Father’s right hand (Psalm 110:1–2). The work of Christ on our behalf is not done; it is a continuing work of our High Priest (Heb. 5:1–6; 7:22–27; 8:1–2; 10:11–17). Jesus Christ Himself is our defense attorney against all charges (Rom. 8:31; 1 John 2:1–2).

8:35 *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”* This question is the dominant thought through the end of the chapter. Neither circumstances (vv. 35–36), nor hostile powers (vv. 38–39), can come between us and our loving Lord. In vv. 35–39, the love of God through Christ is mentioned three times to emphasize the infinite, unchanging love of God for us (Eph. 2:4–7; 3:17–19; 1 Cor. 2:9; 1 John 4:17–19).

8:36 *“For Your sake.”* This quote from Psalm 44:22 reminds us that all sufferings in this life are part of the perfect plan of God (v. 28). They strip us from self-reliance and increase our dependence upon our heavenly Father (2 Cor. 12:9–10).

8:37 *“We are more than conquerors.”* Because we are “in Christ”, every believer is born an overcomer (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4–5). Through our sufferings, we become “super-overcomers.” *“Through Him who loved us.”* It is the love of Christ imparted to us by His Spirit that is the key to victory (Rom. 5:1–5; 2 Cor. 5:14–15; Gal. 5:22–23).

8:38 *“I am persuaded.”* Both his learning of the Scriptures and his experiences in life had brought Paul to this firm conviction (2 Tim. 1:12). When Paul spoke of various trials and tribulations, he spoke from experience (2 Cor. 4:7–12; 6:3–10; 11:22–30).

8:39 There is absolutely nothing that is able *“to separate us from the love of God ... in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* If every believer were to learn, believe, and act upon what Paul says in vv. 28–39, the Body of Christ around the world would become an invincible army marching to victory and honor in time, and to glorious, reward in eternity (Eph. 1:15–23; Phil. 2:5–11; 4:11–13; Col. 1:9–18).

Summary Principles: Christian Invincibility

1. Because we are united with Christ, we share in His victory over sin, Satan, and the world (John 16:33; Col. 2:13–15).
2. His victory becomes ours through faith alone (1 John 4:4; 5:4–5).
3. Our heavenly Father works in and through all our circumstances to bring about the perfect good of His plan for us (Rom. 8:28).
4. Romans 8 begins with “*no condemnation*” (v. 1) and ends with “no separation” (vv. 35, 39).
5. The indwelling Spirit guides us (v. 14), and both the Spirit and the Lord Jesus intercede for us (vv. 26, 34).
6. Because of all this, “*We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (v. 37).
7. The key to living the life of an overcomer, is to first recognize our identity in Christ, and then to live according to that identity.

ROMANS CHAPTER 9

In chapters 9–11, Paul returns to questions he raised in Romans 3:1–7 about God’s faithfulness to Israel. In chapter 9, he deals with Israel’s past, in chapter 10, with Israel in the present, and in chapter 11, with Israel’s future.

Paul explains here that Israel’s rejection of her Messiah (Rom. 9:30–33) has resulted in her partial, spiritual blindness as a nation (Rom. 11:25). However, the door of faith and salvation is still open to any Jew who will recognize Jesus Christ as the God-Man—the Messiah and Savior (Rom. 10:8–13). In Israel, we see a grand drama playing out on the stage of human history: of election, of rejection, and of restoration—in effect, the stories of Hosea and Ruth in their prophetic and messianic significance.

It is not by accident that Paul quotes from Hosea, both regarding Israel’s rejection by God, and referring to the inclusion of the Gentiles (Rom. 9:25–26; Hosea 1:10; 2:23). These are the main themes of the books of Hosea and Ruth.

Paul’s Grief Over Israel’s Unbelief

Romans 9:1–5

9:1 “*I tell the truth in Christ ... bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.*” Paul is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He calls both Christ and the Spirit as witnesses of his great sorrow over Israel. It is inescapable that Paul here, as well as in Romans 10:1–4, expresses the very mind of God in regard to unbelieving Israel. This could not be the mind of God if, as Calvinism declares, God had ordained that the majority of Israel would reject their Messiah. However, the mind of God expressed here is in keeping with the fact that Christ died for all mankind, that all may be saved by faith, and that Israel alone was responsible for her unbelief (Matt. 23:37–39; John 3:16; 4:42; Acts 7:51; 2 Cor. 5:14–21; 1 Tim. 2:1–6; 2 Pet. 3:9).

9:2–3 “*I have great sorrow ... I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.*” So great was Paul’s love for Israel that, like Moses, he would be willing to be judged in their place (Exod. 32:32). This is

the ultimate expression of the love of Christ for those who are lost (John 15:13). Paul expresses the desire, though he knows that no such exchange is possible.

9:4–5 “Who are Israelites ... of whom ... Christ came.” Paul lists eight privileges that God gave to Israel. Each of these great blessings pointed to Jesus Christ—the fulfillment of all that the privileges foretold. By rejecting Jesus Christ as Messiah and Savior, Israel had lost all other privileges, until the time of restoration (Rom. 11:25–29).

1. **Israelites:** The name “Israel” spoke of one who was a prince of God and who prevailed through faith. This is the sacred name given to Jacob by the Angel of the Lord (Gen. 32:28), who was an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ—what we call a “Theophany,” or a “Christophany.”
2. **Adoption:** God spoke of the nation of Israel as His son (Exod. 4:22–23; Hosea 11:1). With this sonship came eternal inheritance (Gen. 12:7).
3. **The Glory:** This refers to the visible Shekinah Glory that led them in the wilderness and shone in the tabernacle (Exod. 14:19–20; 16:7, 10; 24:16–17; 40:34–35).
4. **The Covenants:** These are, specifically, the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:1–21; 17:9–14), the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12–14), and the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–32). As believing Gentiles, we have entered into these covenants (Eph. 2:11–13, 19–22).
5. **The Law:** The Law of Moses, beginning with the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1–17; 31:18).
6. **The Service of God:** The Temple, the Levitical priesthood and all its functions (Exod. 25–30).
7. **The Promises:** There are far too many to list, but all focused on the promise of the coming Redeemer (Gen. 12:1–3; 17:15–19; 22:9–18). These promises centered around the Promised Land, the Promised Seed, and the promised blessing of redemption.
8. **The Fathers:** This refers specifically to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 3:6; Deut. 10:15; Matt. 22:32).

“From whom, according to the flesh, Christ came.” That is, the humanity of Christ came through this chosen lineage, but in His deity, He always existed (John 1:1; Rom. 1:3–4; Phil. 2:6–7; Heb. 1:1–3). **“Who is over all, the eternally blessed God.”** This is an absolute declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ!

Children of Flesh vs. Children of Promise

Romans 9:6–33

9:6 “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.” Paul refers here to the questions he first brought up in Romans 3:1–6, and especially verse 3 of that chapter. So, early in the book, he was preparing us to face this question, “If men fail to accept the plan or Word of God, then has that plan or Word failed?” **“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”** The point is simple: physical birth/generation does not confer spiritual regeneration (John 3:3, 7; Rom. 2:28–9; Gal. 4:21–31). Remember that “Israel” means “one who struggles with God and prevails” (Gen. 32:28). And how did Jacob prevail? He began by wrestling against God, and he prevailed when he began to cling to Him. Victory is found when we surrender in the simplicity of faith (Rom. 9:30–10:4; 2 Cor. 11:3; Heb. 11:6).

9:7 *“In Isaac your seed shall be called.”* Ishmael was born of natural, physical effort. Isaac was born by the promised and miraculous power of God alone. The *“seed”* spoken of here refers to Jesus Christ (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16), who could only come into the world by miraculous, divine power—apart from human effort. This principle is true whether of the coming of Christ into the world, or for the salvation of the individual soul. The great error of the Jews of Jesus’ time was in this: they thought descent from Abraham was sufficient for their salvation (Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8; John 8:33).

9:8 *“Those who are the children of the flesh.”* Paul refers here to those who have only been born physically, by natural generation. *“But the children of promise are counted as the seed.”* Children of promise are those who receive the promise by faith apart from works (Eph. 2:8–9; Gal. 3:7–8, 24–29; 4:28). His point is not that Ishmael could not be saved; rather, it is that the promise of the coming Messiah required the miracle birth of Isaac, just as the entrance of a soul into eternal life requires the miracle of spiritual rebirth (John 3:3).

9:9 *“For this is the word of promise.”* What God promised Abraham, only God could perform (Gen. 18:10–14; Rom. 4:16–25). The point here is not who may be saved and who may not; rather, it is that none may be saved apart from the power of God’s promise and the miracle of His life-giving work.

9:10–11 *“And not only this.”* Since Isaac and Ishmael came from different mothers, Paul uses Jacob and Esau, both from the same father and mother, to demonstrate that God’s Word never fails. *“That the purpose of God according to election might stand.”* Jacob was not chosen as the lineage of the Messiah because of anything he had done (good works), but because of the perfect plan of God. The blessing of God on any man is due not to the man’s merit, but rather to the grace of God. However, God’s grace given to one man does not exclude any other man from receiving his portion of grace if he will receive it by faith alone. *“Not of works but of Him who calls.”* Paul’s point through Romans 9 and 10 is that God’s promises and provisions for man can never be earned or deserved; they can only be received by faith (Eph. 2:8–9).

9:12–13 *“The older shall serve the younger.”* Here, God declared Jacob to have the privilege of the firstborn, even though Esau was born first. Later, Jacob, under the guidance of the Spirit, did the same to Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:14–20). The issue in both cases was not the salvation of the individual, but their prominence in the plan of God. *“Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”* This quote from Malachi 1:1–3, is not a reference to the individual sons, but rather to the nations that came from them. The word *“hated”* is used in the sense of the rejection of the one in preference to the other (Luke 14:26).

Point: Neither Ishmael nor Esau were deprived of the ability to be saved and enter into eternal life. In fact, the Scriptures imply that both of them were believers (Gen. 16:10–14; 21:15–21; 25:8, 17; Heb. 12:14–17; see notes at end of this chapter). The point Paul is making is much greater than the issue of individual salvation. Rather, it is the perfect plan of God in bringing the Savior into the world (vv. 5, 33), that all who believe might be saved through Him.

9:14 *“Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!”* The question of the justice of God was first raised in Romans 3:5–6. The Jew would argue that for God to choose Israel to bring the Messiah into the world, and then to reject Israel due to their unbelief, was unjust of God. Paul has already argued that the gospel message and the way of faith is in perfect harmony with the justice of God (Rom. 3:23–28).

9:15 *“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”* This verse is misunderstood by many. In the context of the quote (Exod. 32:30–35; 33:15–23), Moses was pleading with God for a blanket atonement for Israel, and a full view of God’s glory to be given to Moses. Neither request was given to Moses for the simple reason that God gives His grace to those who receive it by faith, and only to their spiritual capacity for it. Like Moses, the Jews of Paul’s day were asking for a blanket forgiveness for the nation, but they were seeking it in the way of works and not by faith (Rom. 9:30–33; 10:1–4).

9:16 *“So then it is not of him who will, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”* God’s grace is not gained by human will or effort, but by faith alone (John 1:12–13). God is at liberty to bestow His grace freely on whom He will. And all the Scriptures declare to us that He bestows it on all who will believe in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:23–31; 4:22–25; 5:17–18; 10:11–13, 17; 11:5–6, 20, 23; 1 Pet. 5:5–7).

9:17 *“I have raised you up, that I might show My power ... that My name might be declared in all the earth.”* God worked even through the hardness and unbelief of Pharaoh to spread the message of His name and power to save throughout all the earth. Pharaoh repeatedly hardened himself against God (Exod. 5:2; 7:13–14, 22; 8:15, 32; 9:7). Paul has already shown the process of divine hardening in Romans 1:18–32. It is never arbitrary. God deals with each soul according to how it responds to Him (2 Sam. 22:26–28; Psalm 18:25–28).

9:18 *“He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.”* All of Scripture shows us that God has mercy on the humble and hardens the arrogant (1 Pet. 5:5–7; Psalm 147:6; 149:4; Prov. 3:34; Isa. 57:15; Luke 1:53). To separate these verses in Romans from the rest of God’s Word is poor workmanship in the task of interpretation.

9:19–20 *“You will say to me then ...”* Here, Paul anticipates an argument from an objector. If God hardens whom He will, how can we blame the man? This argument assumes two great impossibilities: First, that we can comprehend the working of God in all things (Job teaches us this is not true in Job 38–41) and, secondly, that we know the heart of any other man (1 Sam. 16:7). Rather, it is best for us to trust in God to work righteously and justly in all things we cannot understand (Rom. 3:3–4; 11:33–36). *“O man, who are you to reply against God?”* When we look on God’s dealings with others and we do not understand them, it is best for us to rest in the faithfulness, righteousness, and justice of God.

9:21 *“Does not the potter have power over the clay?”* This figure of the potter and the clay comes from Isaiah 29:16, 45:9–10, 64:8, and Jeremiah 18:1–12, passages that would have been familiar to the Jews Paul is writing to. If you study these passages, it will become clear that God is not arbitrarily saving some and damning others. God works with men as He finds them, and as they respond to Him. *“One vessel for honor and another for dishonor.”* Consider 2 Timothy 2:20 as to how this is done.

9:22–24 *“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and make His power known.”* Just as surely as God wants to reveal His grace and power to save (His mercy), so also, He desires to reveal His justice and power to judge. Both are expressions of His nature. *“Endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath.”* Paul has already explained what constitutes these vessels of wrath (Rom. 1:18–32), as well as His purpose in being longsuffering (Rom. 2:4–6). The very fact that God is longsuffering is designed to bring men to repentance. *“Prepared for destruction.”* Just how they are *“prepared for destruction”* is shown in Romans 1:18–32; 2:4–6, 2 Thessalonians 1:4b–10, and 1 Peter 2:6–8. It is never good interpretation to divorce any passage of Scripture from the rest of the Bible. *“That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy ... not of Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.”* This is the real issue Paul is confronting with his readers. The Jewish believers were struggling with both the failure of Israel to believe in Christ, and the fact that the Gentiles, who had not sought for God, were entering into the grace of God through faith (Rom. 9:30–33). Although the nation of Israel is being set aside for the time (Rom. 11:25), neither Jew nor Gentile individually were hindered from coming to Christ in faith.

9:25–26 *“I will call them My people, who were not My people.”* Here, Paul quotes from Hosea 1:10 and 2:23, to show that the plan of God was always to use Israel to bring the Gentiles to saving faith. *“You are not my people ... sons of the Living God.”* The Gentiles, who were considered by most Jews as accursed, have now—by faith—been grafted into Israel (Eph. 2:4–22; Rom. 11:17–25). The book of Ruth (which shows the Moabitess, Ruth, being brought into the lineage of the Messiah) reveals the same truth prophetically.

9:27–29 *“Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel.”* These prophecies in Isaiah 1:9 and 10:22–23 demand an answer to the question: “Does prophecy ordain what will happen? Or does it simply declare what will happen?”

If it declares what is predestined, then “Who can resist His will?” (v. 19). If instead it simply declares both what God and man will do, then it affirms the distinction between those who seek God through faith versus those who seek Him by works (vv. 30–33). “*The remnant will be saved.*” And this salvation will be by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8–9), not by works (Rom. 9:32; 10:2–3; Gal. 3:10–14, 24–26; 4:21–31). “*The Lord will make a short work on the earth.*” In the final judgment of the Day of the Lord, the work will be swift and sure (Matt. 24:21–22). “*We would have been as Sodom ... like Gomorrah.*” Had it not been for the longsuffering and mercy of God, Israel would have long ago been destroyed for their constant rebellion against God. God’s mercy is always offered long before His wrath falls!

9:30–32 “*What shall we say then?*” Paul uses this phrase to introduce his conclusions based on the arguments presented (v. 14, Rom. 6:1). Paul’s conclusion is simple: Those who come to faith attain to God’s righteousness (Rom. 4:3–5, 23–25), and those who seek to attain to righteousness by works will never enter into eternal life. This simple argument can be traced throughout the book (Rom. 1:16–17; 2:4–6, 28–29; 3:23–26, 28–31; 4:1–8, 24–25; 5:17–18, 20–21; 6:23; 8:1–4). Those who conclude from Romans 9 that God predestines some to salvation and others to damnation simply fail to study the chapter in the light of the whole book, or in the light of all Scripture.

9:33 “*Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone ... and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*” This quote from Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 is the conclusion of all of Romans 9. God has set Jesus Christ before all the world as the only way of entering into eternal life (John 14:6). All men are free to receive Him by faith, or to reject Him in unbelief. To those who believe in Him, He becomes the foundation stone and cornerstone of life (Psalm 118:22–23; Matt. 16:18; 21:42; 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:6–8).

Summary Principles: The Election of Israel

1. The very fact of Paul’s unceasing grief for Israel (vv. 1–3), so similar to the words of Christ as He wept over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37–39; Luke 13:34–35), is proof that God’s will for Israel was that they should believe in the Messiah and Savior that the nation was called to bring into the world (John 1:11–13).
2. All of the great spiritual advantages which were given to Israel (vv. 4–5) were pictures and object-lessons designed, if grasped and understood by faith, to point to and identify Jesus Christ as that promised Seed and Savior (Gen. 3:15; 12:1–3; 22:18; John 8:56; Gal. 3:16).
3. The simple truth is that too many in Israel trusted in being physical descendants of Abraham—children of the flesh—and failed to enter the lineage of faith by spiritual rebirth (vv. 6–13). Note carefully that while the whole nation was a part of the election to special service (Rom. 11:28), only a few went on to enter into the election of grace by faith (Rom. 9:30–33; 11:5–6).
4. The calling of Isaac and of Jacob (vv. 7–13) no more hindered Ishmael and Esau from believing than did the election of Israel as a nation hinder the other nations from entering into the faith. In fact, the implications of Scripture are that both of them were believers.
 - a. Of Ishmael, it is said: Hagar, his mother, knew and believed in the true God (Gen. 16:13–14), God heard the prayers of Ishmael, the Angel of the Lord (Jesus Christ, pre-incarnate) responded to them (Gen. 21:17), God promised to bless and be with him (Gen. 21:18–19), and like his father, Abraham, he was “*gathered to his people*” when he died—a phrase used for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but not for unbelievers (Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33).
 - b. Of Esau, we can say that he demonstrated a gracious and forgiving spirit (Gen. 33:4, 9–10), and that the author of Hebrews uses him as a warning to believers about despising our birthright (Heb. 12:14–17). It seems impossible that an apostle under inspiration of the Holy Spirit would warn

believers against following the path of someone who was not also a believer, and who had failed greatly.

5. The election of Israel, as a nation of necessity, excluded all other nations from being in the lineage of the Messiah/Savior but did not exclude anyone from believing in Him. In fact, God's purpose in electing Israel was inclusive, that they might be a light to the nations to believe in the true God and thus enter into the "*election of grace*" (Rom. 11:5–6; 4:16). Similarly, the election of Judah to be the tribe of the King (Gen. 49:8–12) did not exclude the other tribes from claiming Him as their own.
6. The fact that God shows mercy on whom He will and hardens whom He will (**vv. 14–18**), in no way suggests that this is arbitrary. The whole tenor of the book of Romans up to this point has documented that God hardens those who reject Him (Rom. 1:18–32; 2:1–11; 1 Pet. 5:5b), and that He gives grace to those who come to Him in faith (Rom. 1:5, 16–17; 2:28–29; 3:21–26; 4:1–5; 1 Pet. 5:5b–6).
7. Paul presents the figure of the potter and the clay (**vv. 19–23**), which his Jewish readers would have been well-familiar with from the Old Testament (Isa. 29:16; 45:9–10; 64:8; Jer. 18:1–10). Anyone who will read those passages in their context, which Paul would expect his Jewish readers to do, would see that God is pleading with Israel to turn to Him in faith so as to become a vessel of honor and not one of dishonor (2 Tim. 2:19–22).
8. Paul urges us to not only rest in the sovereignty of God (**vv. 22–24**), but also to be assured that His sovereignty is exercised in love and justice (Rom. 9:14, 16 with 3:23–26).
9. The purpose of God for Israel was that through them He might reach the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16). Since the majority in Israel turned away from Jesus Christ, God chose to fulfill His purpose through Israel's unbelief (**vv. 25–29**; 11:11–14). In His matchless wisdom and grace, God will now use the believing Gentiles to provoke Israel, yet future, to come to faith in Christ (Rom. 10:19; 11:11–14).
10. The main focus of Romans 9 is not Israel; it is Jesus Christ whom they brought forth (**vv. 5, 33** with Rom. 1:2–4). The election of Israel is Christ-centered, not man-centered. They were only an elect nation because, in the plan of God, they would bring forth Christ, the Elect One (Isa. 42:1). Those who are humble and come to Him by faith become the elect of God. Those who are arrogant reject the Gospel and thus become the non-elect (Rom. 9:30–33; 10:16–21). These are some of the major lessons of this chapter.

ROMANS CHAPTER 10

Romans 9 has dealt with Israel's past. In chapter 10, Paul now moves to the study of Israel's present. In this chapter, he first explains how their devotion to the Law blinded them to the way of faith, but that the door of faith remains open and available. Secondly, he shows that one of the great stumbling blocks to the Jew was their unwillingness to acknowledge the deity of Christ—that He was the God-Man, the only true Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). Finally, he reveals the plan of God to use the Gentile church to provoke Israel to ultimately return to Jesus Christ in faith. The following are the three great stumbling blocks Israel had erected between themselves and the faith.

The Stumbling Block of the Law vs. the Gospel

Romans 10:1–7

10:1 "*My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel.*" If the Calvinist view of election, which they base on Romans chapter 9, were correct, this would be a futile and frivolous prayer. Again, Paul echoes Jesus Christ (Matt. 23:37–39; Luke 13:34–35), not only in desiring their salvation (2 Pet. 3:9), but in declaring that that salvation is

still possible, if only they would believe in Jesus Christ. ***“That they may be saved.”*** The salvation Paul prays for includes not only justification by faith (Rom. 4:1–3), but also deliverance from the wrath of God that is closing in on Israel (Matt. 23:31–36; Rom. 2:1–6, 17–24; 9:30–33).

10:2 ***“They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”*** There are only two ways in which men can approach God—either in humility or arrogance (Prov. 3:34; 29:23; Isa. 57:15; 1 Pet. 5:5). Humility inevitably leads to faith, while arrogance always leads to wrath (Rom. 2:4–11). Israel chose the path of works, and thus the way of wrath.

10:3 ***“Being ignorant ... seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”*** The choice is always self-righteousness vs. God’s righteousness (Isa. 64:6; Phil. 3:9). Israel preferred their own form of works-righteousness instead of God’s faith-righteousness. The phrase *“have not submitted”* indicates the absence of humility and, therefore, of teachability.

10:4 ***“Christ is the end of the law.”*** The word *“end”* comes from *telos* and literally means “fulfillment” (Matt. 5:17). Jesus Christ alone fulfilled the Law of Moses, and He offers us that righteousness as a free gift to be received by faith (Rom. 6:23). The whole law was designed to reveal to us our sin, and then to point us to Jesus Christ as the Savior from that sin (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19–29). ***“To everyone who believes.”*** Faith makes eternal life available to all men, for Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5:14–15, 21). Jesus Christ took the initiative (Rom. 5:8) on the cross to take upon Himself the sins of all mankind (1 John 2:2). When we believe in Him, the transaction is completed, in that just as our sins were imputed to Him, so now His righteousness can be imputed to us (Rom. 4:3, 23–25).

10:5–7 ***“The righteousness which is of the law ... the righteousness of faith.”*** As stated in v. 3, there are two kinds of righteousness: that of God, which is perfect, and that of man, which can never save. ***“The man who does those things shall live.”*** In order to find life through the Law, one must keep the whole Law (James 2:10). This approach to righteousness is impossible. However, ***“the righteousness of faith”*** declares that righteousness is near, in the simplicity of faith (2 Cor. 11:3). Paul quotes Moses from Deuteronomy 30:11–14 to show that, from the very beginning, eternal salvation came not by extreme effort, but rather by faith and the love of God (Deut. 30:15–16, 20), from which obedience comes (John 14:15). ***“To bring Christ down from above ... to bring Christ up from the dead.”*** The coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and His victory over sin and death, took absolutely no effort on our part. In grace, God does all the work, and by faith, we receive the benefits and blessings of that work.

The Stumbling Block of the Deity of Christ, and the Simplicity of Salvation

Romans 10:8–17

10:8 ***“The word is near you ... the word of faith which we preach.”*** The emphasis here is on the Word of God—the message of the Gospel (Deut. 30:14; Rom. 10:17). Faith implies belief in a message. Paul is now going to zero in on the specific part of the Gospel that the Jews found most objectionable: the deity of Jesus Christ (John 10:30).

10:9 ***“If you confess ... the Lord Jesus.”*** Misunderstanding of Paul’s point here has given rise to what many refer to as “Lordship salvation.” This is the idea that if you do not claim Jesus as your Lord, as well as Savior, then you are not saved. Again, this position results from not taking the text in its context. Paul is speaking here to Jews and one part of the gospel message they could not, or would not, accept—the proclamation that Jesus was God in the flesh (John 5:17–18; 10:31–33). It was, in fact, Jesus’ claim of deity for which He was crucified (Matt. 26:63–65). Paul is saying here that Christ is able to save because He is God in the flesh, and this claim is verified by the quote in v. 13 from Joel 2:32, where ***“LORD”*** is *Jehovah* in the Hebrew, and refers to Jesus Christ. ***“Believe ... that God has raised Him from the dead.”*** From the beginning of Romans, Paul has stated that the resurrection

of Jesus is essential to the gospel message (Rom. 1:4; 4:23–25). Note that “*confess*” in this verse comes before “*believe*,” simply because until the truth of Christ’s deity is acknowledged, one has no foundation for faith.

10:10 “*With the heart one believes ... with the mouth confession is made.*” While v. 9 looks at the saving work from God’s perspective, this verse sees the work from man’s perspective. God sees the condition of the heart, but man can only hear the confession of the mouth. The natural consequence for those who have believed is to be a witness of that faith to others (Psalm 116:10; 2 Cor. 4:13). However, this outward confession is not so much directed to men as it is to God, when we call on Him for His deliverance (v. 13).

10:11 “*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*” This quote from Isaiah 28:16 speaks of the Messiah as the foundation and cornerstone of faith (1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:6–8). That it is addressed to “*whoever*,” makes it clear that none are excluded from the offer of eternal life, and that simple, childlike faith is the only requirement (Matt. 18:3–5; Luke 18:16–17; John 3:3).

10:12 “*For there is no distinction.*” The Jews have no advantage over the Gentiles when it comes to entering into eternal life, “*for there is no partiality with God*” (Rom. 2:11). “*For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.*” This makes two great truths clear: first, since Christ is Lord over all mankind, all may call upon Him. Second, that the “*confession*” spoken of in vv. 9–10, is directed first to the Lord, and only then to men.

10:13 “*Whoever calls on the name of the LORD.*” This quote from Joel 2:32 makes the issue of Christ’s deity clear. In the Hebrew, “*LORD*” is *Jehovah*. Yet, this whole passage is speaking of Jesus Christ (v. 9). Paul is urging the Jewish unbeliever to come to the truth of the deity of Christ, and to call upon Him for deliverance. “*Shall be saved.*” Throughout Romans, the idea of “*salvation*” is not exactly the same as “*justification.*” It is a much broader concept that includes not only deliverance from eternal condemnation, but also deliverance from the wrath of God in time (Rom. 5:8–10; 8:1). This is especially relevant to unbelieving Jews, since the coming wrath and judgment on the nation, which fell in 70 A.D., was drawing near.

10:14–16 “*How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?*” Go through the chapter and count how many times the word “*they*” occurs. With the exception of its use in v. 15, where it refers to the preachers, it is speaking about unbelieving Israel. In these verses (vv. 14–16), Paul uses the word “*they*” eight times. As long as they deny that Jesus is LORD (God in the flesh, John 1:14), they will never call upon Him to deliver them. Paul reveals here the process involved in evangelistic work. “*They*” will not call until they believe, and they will not believe until they hear, and they will not hear unless someone preaches, and they will not preach until they are sent. “*How beautiful are the feet.*” It is imperative that the preacher of the Gospel must “*go*” (Matt. 28:19), and his feet carry him (Isa. 52:7). “*The gospel of peace ... glad tidings.*” The Gospel is “*good news*” because it proclaims to men the way of peace with God, and the resulting joy of the Spirit (Rom. 5:1–5; Gal. 5:22). “*But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*” Here, Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1, “*LORD, who has believed our report?*” where the prophet laments the unbelief of Israel. The idea of faith being obedience to the gospel message is a major theme of Romans (Rom. 1:5; 16:19, 26).

10:17 “*So then faith comes by hearing.*” God has chosen to reach men through men. He has chosen “*the foolishness of preaching*” (1 Cor. 1:18, 21) and the weakness of the human tongue, to proclaim the message of God’s mighty work of redemption. “*Hearing by the word of God.*” It is never our ideas about God’s plan of salvation that count. It is what He Himself has revealed in His Word that contains the power of salvation (Rom. 1:16–17). The greatest Bible teachers down through the ages have been those who dwell on and expound what the Word of God says. Paul said to Timothy, “*Preach the word*” (2 Tim. 4:2).

The Stumbling Block of the Gentiles

Romans 10:18–21

10:18 “Have they not heard?” Once again, Paul uses “they” to refer to unbelieving Israel. They have indeed heard, for “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork*” (Psalm 19:1). “*Their words to the ends of the world.*” By quoting from Psalm 19:4, Paul recaptures the truth expressed in Romans 1:18–20, that creation so reveals the Creator that all mankind is without excuse if they do not honor and glorify Him. If such accountability exists simply from creation, then how great is Israel’s guilt, when they were given so much revelation from God as is revealed in vv. 4–5 (Luke 12:48, 2 Pet. 2:21)?

10:19 “Did Israel not know?” One of the obstacles to Jewish reception of the Gospel was its unlimited appeal to and response from the Gentiles. The gospel message placed all mankind on the same level and was thus a blow to the Jew’s sense of superiority. “*I will provoke you to jealousy*” (Deut. 32:21). God would use the foolish and uncultured Gentiles to incite Israel, first to hostile rejection of the Gospel then, in the end, to embrace it (Rom. 11:30–32). So important is this point that Paul repeats it in Romans 11:11 and 14.

10:20–21 “Isaiah is very bold.” The prophet proclaimed seven hundred years before Christ came that He would be received by the Gentiles and rejected by the nation of Israel. “*Those who did not seek Me ... those who did not ask for Me*” (Isa. 65:1). The Gentiles lacked the “*zeal for God*” (v. 2) that Israel possessed, just as they lacked all of Israel’s spiritual privileges (Rom. 9:4–5; Eph. 2:11–12). However, they received the simple, gospel message by faith, whereas Israel rejected it in favor of trying to earn their own righteousness (v. 3). “*All day long I have stretched out my hands*” (Isa. 65:2). This not only speaks of God’s longsuffering throughout Israel’s history, but is also a beautiful picture of Christ dying on the cross for their sinfulness. “*To a disobedient and contrary people*” (Isa. 65:2). These words from the prophet Isaiah, like the rebuke of Jesus Himself (Matt. 23:34–39), reveal the historical hard-heartedness of Israel. They “*despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance*” (Rom. 2:4). As a result, as a nation, they will now face the wrath of God, which they have treasured up in the “*revelation of the righteous judgment of God*” (Rom. 2:5). This judgment, which brought the destruction of the nation in 70 A.D., was drawing near even as Paul wrote the book of Romans.

Summary Principles: A Stumbling Block or a Cornerstone?

1. Paul ended Romans 9 with quotes from Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16, which presents Messiah as a stumbling stone to Israel. Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22, which referred to Himself as “*The stone which the builders rejected, has become the chief cornerstone.*”
2. In Romans 10, Paul reveals three reasons why Christ was a stumbling block to Israel:
 - a. the simplicity of the gospel of grace,
 - b. Jesus’ claim to be God, and
 - c. the elevation of the Gentiles to equal standing with Israel in regard to entering into eternal life.
3. Both chapters 9 and 10 end by demonstrating that Israel, although the “elect” or “chosen” people of God, became non-elect by rejecting their Messiah, and that the non-elect Gentiles became “elect” by trusting in Christ. This is the “*election of grace*” (Rom. 11:5–6).
4. Because Israel scorned the Gentiles, who eagerly received the gospel message, God foretold that He would use the Gentiles (the Church) to be a provocation to Israel, which would ultimately bring them back to God.

5. Romans 11 now looks at Israel's future, to show that God will fulfill all His promises to Israel when they return to Him in faith. Contrary to those who believe in what is called "replacement theology," the idea that the Church has replaced Israel, Paul will now show that God is not through with Israel.

ROMANS CHAPTER 11

In this chapter, Paul reveals God's future plans for Israel, as well as showing the true relationship between the predominantly Gentile church and Israel. From Pentecost (Acts 2) up until the time of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18), we are living in the Church Age. During this period of history, the Church is a constant provocation to Israel because we claim their God, their Messiah, and their Scriptures, but have also claimed the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:25–32; Matt. 26:26–29; 1 Cor. 11:23–26), which they rejected. Yet, the day will come when the eyes of the Jewish nation will be opened (Rev. 7:1–8) and they will see the fulfillment of all of God's kingdom promises to them. We who now believe in Christ should always pray for Israel and that glorious coming day!

Israel's Blindness and the Election of Grace

Romans 11:1–10

11:1–2 *"Has God cast away His people?"* Paul soundly refutes the current teaching known as "Replacement Theology," which says that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan. *"I also am an Israelite."* Paul is living proof that a remnant of believing Jews continues the plan of God. *"God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew."* In ancient times, God chose Israel to be the vehicle of bringing His Word into the world—both the written and the Living (John 1:14; 2 Tim. 3:16). The Messianic kingdom, which God promised to Israel, will yet be fulfilled.

11:3–5 *"I alone am left."* Paul quotes Elijah, who was ignorant of the remnant of faithful believers in Israel (1 Kings 19:10–18). *"I have reserved for Myself seven thousand ... a remnant ... the election of grace."* In the days of Elijah, the remnant refused to bow to Baal. In Paul's day, the remnant was composed of those who received the grace of God by faith (Rom. 4:3, 16). God will never forsake Israel (1 Sam. 12:22; Jer. 23:3–4; 46:28).

11:6 *"If by grace, then it is no longer of works."* God's grace can never be earned or deserved. It can only be received by faith (Eph. 2:8–9; Rom. 4:16). The majority in Israel rejected the way of faith in favor of works (Rom. 10:1–4). *"Otherwise grace is no longer grace."* Any attempt to mingle works with grace destroys the very nature of grace. Grace and works are incompatible, except as grace is first received by faith, and then produces "works" as the fruit of the marriage of grace and faith (Eph. 2:10; Col. 2:6–7).

11:7 *"Israel has not obtained what it seeks."* The works-righteousness they sought they could not obtain (Rom. 10:2–3). *"The elect have obtained it."* Paul, here, distinguishes between the general election of the nation of Israel (Rom. 9:4–5) and the personal election of those who believed (Rom. 9:30–33). The two are not the same. *"The rest were [hardened] blinded."* Those who resisted the Word of God, as Pharaoh did, were hardened (Exod. 5:2; 8:15, 32; 9:12, 34; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8; Rom. 9:17–18). This hardening, which was voluntary on Israel's part, God then enforced on them (Rom. 11:25; see also "gave them over," Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Paul makes it clear that the beginning of their hardening was their own willful unbelief (Rom. 9:30–33; 10:16–21; 11:20, 23).

11:8–10 *"Just as it is written."* Paul quotes Isaiah and David (Isa. 29:10; Psalm 69:22–23) to show that Israel's rejection of her Messiah was anticipated by the prophets. The process of this hardening has already been explained by Paul in relation to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:18–32). It is always the result of willful and repeated rejection of the light of God (John 3:19; 8:12). *"Let their table become a snare"* (Psalm 69:22). These quotes from the Old Testament picture men at a feast who, by overindulgence, have become drowsy and sluggish, and so

become enslaved to an enemy. Israel became so proud and complacent due to their privileges (Rom. 9:4–5), that when Messiah came, they blindly ignored Him.

The Relationship of Israel and the Church

Romans 11:11–25

11:11 *“Have they stumbled that they should fall?”* The idea here is, has Israel fallen, never to rise again? Paul absolutely rejects this. *“To provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.”* God in His infinite wisdom will use Israel’s rejection of Jesus Christ to bring Him to the Gentiles. This will, in the future, provoke Israel to return to God in faith (Deut. 32:21; Rom. 10:19).

11:12 *“If their fall is riches for the world.”* Because of the Jews rejection of the Gospel, the Gospel was spread to the nations (Acts 13:46–47; 18:5–6; 28:25–28). *“How much more their fullness.”* The future restoration of Israel in the tribulation period will bring in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is why the Church should never cease to pray for and love Israel for Christ’s sake.

11:13 *“I speak to you Gentiles ... I am an apostle to the Gentiles.”* Paul has been addressing Israel since the beginning of chapter 9. He now addresses the Gentile church, regarding our relationship to Israel. *“I magnify my ministry.”* Since God would use the Church to bring about Israel’s restoration, Paul’s love for Israel then (Rom. 9:1–3; 10:1) could be effective through his ministry to the Gentiles.

11:14 *“If by any means I may provoke to jealousy ... and save some of them.”* Paul knew he could not reach the nation as a whole because of their willful blindness. However, he could demonstrate the love and grace of God through the Church so that some of them would come to faith and be saved. Remember that the word “saved” simply means “delivered,” and contains not only the idea of eternal salvation, but also deliverance from the horrors of the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the nation in 70 A.D. (Matt. 24:1–2).

11:15 *“Reconciling of the world ... life from the dead.”* By the failure of Israel to receive her Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Gentile world received the message of reconciliation (Rom. 5:8–11; 2 Cor. 5:17–21). The return of Israel to God in faith would be a national resurrection, that would result in the return of Christ and the inauguration of His kingdom on Earth (Isa. 26:16–19).

11:16–18 *“If the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy.”* The offering of the firstfruits of the harvest sanctified and made holy all the harvest (Lev. 23:10; Num. 15:17–21). *“The root ... the branches.”* The call of Abraham, the “root” of the nation, had sanctified the whole nation to God (Gen. 12:1–3). God will bless those who bless Israel. *“Some of the branches were broken off.”* These refer to unbelieving Jews. *“A wild olive tree.”* Israel is pictured by the prophets as a cultivated olive tree (Jer. 11:16; Hosea 14:6). It is not a normal practice to graft the wild tree into the cultivated one, but rather to do the opposite. Yet here, God works contrary to nature. The Gentile church is grafted into Israel for the benefit of the Church now, and for the benefit of Israel yet future. *“Do not boast against the branches ... the root supports you.”* Rather than focus on the unbelieving “branches” in Israel, the Gentile church should focus on our Abrahamic roots (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6), and on Jesus Christ—the ultimate Root of all eternal life (Rom. 15:12; Rev. 5:5; 22:16).

11:19 *“You will say.”* Paul anticipates the pride of the Gentiles boasting over Israel’s fall. Again, he knew that 70 A.D. was coming. He dreaded it for the sufferings of Israel, as well as for the potential of Gentile boasting.

11:20 *“Because of unbelief ... you stand by faith.”* The whole argument of chapters 9–11 is summarized in these words. The nation of Israel fell due to unbelief, and the Gentile church stood firm *“by faith.”* Nothing about the act of divine election (Romans 9), nor of Israel’s hardening (Romans 11), was divorced from the issue of receiving or rejecting the gospel message.

11:21 *“He may not spare you either.”* Those Gentile believers who choose to become arrogant will suffer the just consequences of their pride (Prov. 16:18).

11:22 *“The goodness and severity of God.”* From the beginning of this book, Paul has shown us that both love and justice are part of God’s nature. Grace and judgment are both demonstrations of His perfect character. Those who fall through unbelief will surely suffer His severity. Those who receive His grace by faith will experience His “goodness” (Rom. 2:4). *“Otherwise you also will be cut off.”* The Laodicean church (Rev. 3:14–22) shows that the Church will ultimately end in failure. When the Rapture of the Church occurs (1 Thess. 4:13–18), the Church will be “cut off,” and Israel will then be restored (Rev. 7:1–8).

11:23 *“God is able to graft them in again.”* The key here is *“if they do not continue in unbelief.”* The ultimate choice before all mankind is always faith or unbelief. When Israel returns to faith in Jesus Christ, they will be “grafted into” the plan of God again.

11:24 *“How much more will these ... natural branches, be granted into their own olive tree?”* The restoration of Israel will be much more natural than the entrance of the Gentiles into their promises and blessings.

11:25 *“This mystery.”* The temporary dominance of the Gentiles in the plan of God was not revealed in the Old Testament. Not until God revealed it to the Apostle Paul was this “mystery” known (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:1–7). The term “mystery” is most often used for newly revealed truths that relate to the Church Age (Eph. 1:7–14; Col. 1:26–27). *“[Hardening] Blindness ... has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”* Here, he refers to the final harvest of the Gentile church at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:50–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

Israel’s Future Restoration a Tribute to God’s Wisdom

Romans 11:26–36

11:26 *“And so all Israel will be saved.”* By the end of the Tribulation period, only those Jews who believe will remain on the earth. Then the words of Christ will be fulfilled from Matthew 23:39, and Jesus Christ will return to deliver them. *“The Deliverer will come out of Zion”* (Isa. 59:20–21). The return of Christ is pictured in Revelation 19:11–21 and Isaiah 63:1–6.

11:27 *“This is My covenant ... when I take away their sins”* (Isa. 27:9; 59:21). At Christ’s Second Coming, Israel will finally enter into the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:24–29; Matt. 26:26–29).

11:28 *“Concerning the gospel ... concerning the election.”* Though unbelieving Jews were hostile to believing Gentiles, they should still be dealt with in love for the sake of our common father, Abraham (Rom. 4:11–12; Gal. 4:21–31), along with Isaac and Jacob (Rom. 9:7–13; Deut. 7:8; 10:15–16).

11:29 *“The gifts ... the calling of God are irrevocable.”* God is immutable; He never changes (Heb. 13:8; James 1:17). His promises are sure and certain, and He will fulfill them. However, He will not do it apart from the condition of faith. The “gifts” (Rom. 9:4–5) and the “calling” (Rom. 9:7–13) will ultimately fulfill the purpose of God.

11:30–31 *“You were once disobedient ... these also have now been disobedient.”* Obedience to God requires believing the gospel message (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). “Disobedience” refers to unbelief. The Jews’ “disobedience,” by rejecting the Gospel, resulted in mercy to the Gentiles that the Jews might ultimately believe and receive mercy as well. The Gentile church becomes the custodian or caretaker of the gospel message until Israel reclaims it by faith. *“Mercy.”* It should be noted that Paul speaks of “mercy” nine times in this section (Rom. 9:15–18, 23; 11:30–32). It is to these “mercies” that Paul will refer in Romans 12:1!

11:32 *“For God has committed them all ... that He might have mercy on all.”* All mankind is condemned as sinners (Rom. 3:10–18; 5:12–21), in order that all might have the chance to receive the gift of eternal life. Condemnation for sin must come before justification through the righteousness of Christ. By declaring all men to be sinners, God includes all men in the sacrifice of Christ for our sins (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2).

11:33 *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”* Paul breaks into a song of praise as he considers the infinite wisdom of God. As Job learned (Job 42:1–6), the ways of God are *“unsearchable,”* and His judgments are beyond our capacity to comprehend.

11:34–35 *“For who has known the mind of the Lord?”* Here, he loosely quotes Isaiah 40:13–14; Jeremiah 23:18; and Job 41:11 to show the unsearchable ways of God. While we cannot fathom all the workings of God, we can rest in knowing that He is wise, compassionate, and merciful in all His ways, as He is revealed in Christ (Isa. 61:1–3).

11:36 *“For of Him ... through Him ... to Him.”* This statement is so rich that it could take pages to record all the meaning. God is the source of all good things, and all good things come by His doing. Ultimately, all things that are good and holy (Phil. 4:8) will bring praise and glory to Him forever and ever!

Summary Principles: The Plan of God for Israel

1. God has not *“cast away”* Israel (v. 1)! Rather, by their unbelief, Israel has excluded themselves from the blessings of God’s plan (Rom. 10:18–21).
2. Just as in the time of Elijah, God continued to save the remnant in Israel who trusted in Him (vv. 2–5).
3. The election of Israel as the *“chosen nation”* did not guarantee the salvation of all Jews. That was determined by *“the election of grace”* (vv. 5–6), which was dependent on individual faith (Rom. 4:3, 16, 23–24; 10:11–13, 17).
4. Because of Israel’s rejection of faith in favor of a works-salvation (Rom. 10:3), the majority in the nation had been hardened and blinded in accordance with their own desires (vv. 7–10).
5. However, God in His infinite wisdom will use Israel’s rejection of Jesus Christ to spread the Gospel to the nations (vv. 11–13). This is in keeping with the words of the prophets (Deut. 32:21; Isa. 65:1–2; Hosea 1:10; 2:23).
6. God will then use the witness and ministry of the Gentile church to provoke Israel into returning to Him in faith (vv. 14–15).
7. As members of this Gentile church, we must never forget the debt that we owe to the nation of Israel, and to consider them the source of our spiritual blessings in Christ (vv. 16–22; Rom. 1:16).
8. Ultimately, God will restore Israel to Himself in faith, and all believers will proclaim His wisdom in showing mercy to them and to us (vv. 23–36; Rev. 5:9–14; 7:12; 15:3–4).

ROMANS CHAPTER 12

This chapter begins the final section of the book, which deals with our transformation into the likeness of Christ. Paul details how we should conduct ourselves in the Church of God/Body of Christ, in relationship to human government, and in society. Here, Paul presents service to God in terms of conduct and ministry among men. He defines what Jesus meant when He told His disciples, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself,*

and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). The cross represents a right, vertical relationship with God the Father, resulting in a right, horizontal conduct and relationship to those around us. It is the outliving of the two great commands cited by Jesus: *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matt. 22:37–39).

Become a Living Sacrifice to God

Romans 12:1–2

12:1 *“By the mercies of God.”* The word “mercy” only occurs in Romans 9:15–23, 11:30–32, 12:8, and 15:9. It is in light of the relationship of Israel and the Church in history that we ought to play our part on the stage of history. *“Present your bodies.”* This exhortation takes us back to Romans 6:11–14 and 19–23. The word “present” pictures a priest drawing near to the altar. *“A living sacrifice.”* The first example of this in Scripture, and the first occurrence of the word “worship,” is found in Genesis 22:5 with the offering up of Isaac by Abraham. *“Holy, acceptable.”* That which is dedicated and set apart unto the Lord is holy, and therefore “acceptable” by Him. *“Reasonable service.”* The word translated “service” refers to an act of worship. Our surrender to the plan and purpose of God is “reasonable” in light of His “mercies” demonstrated throughout history—first to Israel, and now to the Church, the Body of Christ.

12:2 *“Do not be conformed ... but be transformed.”* The choice facing every believer each day is conformity or transformation (1 John 2:15; James 4:4). To conform is to adopt outwardly the form and fashion of this world apart from Jesus Christ. The world seeks to conform us from the outside, changing our conduct, with the result that our attitude and thinking is subdued to that mold. The Spirit of God changes us from the inside out, first changing the thinking, which then brings the conduct into line. *“Renewing of your mind.”* God’s Word brings a new and higher quality of thinking, which results in a new outward expression of living (Eph. 4:20–24). *“That you may prove ... that ... perfect will of God.”* Every believer is to be a living example to the world of the perfection of the will of God. As we experience God’s plan, we find that, both to Him and to us, it is *“Good ... acceptable ... perfect.”*

Become a Loving Servant in the Church

Romans 12:3–13

12:3 *“Not to think ... more highly ... but ... soberly.”* One of the first effects of a renewed mind is a humble attitude regarding oneself (Phil. 2:3; 1 Pet. 5:5–6). *“A measure of faith.”* We all differ in regard to our level of spiritual growth and faith (v. 6; 1 John 2:15–17; Rom. 14:1–8; Phil. 3:12–15).

12:4 *“All the members do not have the same function.”* Unless we surrender to the will of God and grow in grace, we will never know His “perfect will” (v. 2) regarding what part we are to play in the Body (1 Cor. 12:4–31). He is speaking here of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1–7; Eph. 4:11–16).

12:5 *“Individually members of one another.”* God gives a spiritual gift to every believer, for them to contribute to the overall function of ministry within the Church.

12:6 *“Gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.”* Our exercise of the spiritual gift we have received depends on the measure of grace God has given us, and in the *“proportion [of] our faith.”* God may give grace to one for large public ministry and to another, a more silent and hidden gift (i.e., prayer). Each of us needs to learn and accept the role God intends us to play. Consider the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–29). Note especially Matthew 25:15, *“to each according to his own ability.”* God perfectly matches our calling with our spiritual capability through the enablement of His Spirit (Zec. 4:6).

12:6–8 *“Prophecy ... ministry ... exhortation ... he who gives ... leads ... shows mercy.”* Gifts fall into two main categories: speaking or serving (1 Pet. 4:10–11). *“Prophecy”* here means foretelling God’s Word, not

predicting the future. Ministry simply means to serve in some way. This is only a sampling of various kinds of gifts. The best way to identify one's gift is to surrender to God, consistently grow spiritually, and serve where you are able. In time, your gift will define itself as the Spirit of God guides and blesses your service.

12:9–10 *“Love ... without hypocrisy.”* The love of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22; 2 Pet. 1:7) leads us to reject evil and embrace all that is good. This is the outward evidence of the inward transformation (vv. 1–2). Three words for love occur in these two verses:

1. **“Love”** is used for the love of God (*agape*). It is unconditional and sacrificial.
2. **“Kindly affectionate”** is the word used for familial affection (*philostorge*).
3. **“Brotherly love”** is the word *philadelphia*, which is a strong love of brethren.

“Giving preference to one another.” This is the outward effect of a right attitude to self as seen in v. 3.

12:11–13 *“Not lagging in diligence.”* *“Diligence”* refers to strong spiritual motivation. This is critical to both growth and service in the Christian life (Prov. 4:23; 13:4; Rom. 12:8; 2 Pet. 3:14). **“Fervent ... serving the Lord.”** The word *“fervent”* means “to be boiling hot.” This is the opposite of the mentality of the *“lukewarm”* Laodicean church (Rev. 3:15–17). Eight qualities of faithful service are found in these verses, which help to define what *“living sacrifice”* in v. 1 means. **“Hospitality”** means a “love of strangers,” a willingness to use our resources to bless those outside the circle of our friends and family (Rom. 15:26; Heb. 13:1–2, 16; 1 Pet. 4:9).

Become a Lamp Stand to Society

Romans 12:14–21

12:14 *“Bless and do not curse.”* Persecution can come both from unbelievers and from other Christians. *“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger”* (Prov. 15:1). To bless God and then to curse those made in His image is not consistent with our witness (James 3:9–10). We should desire and pray for God's blessings on all men.

12:15 *“Rejoice ... and weep.”* We are to enter into the joys and sorrows of other members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:25–26; 2 Cor. 11:29).

12:16 *“Associate with the humble.”* The instructions in this verse echo the teachings of Jesus on humility (Luke 14:8–11). The example of Christ is to be our standard (Phil. 2:5–9).

12:17 *“Repay no one evil for evil.”* The victory over evil is found in vv. 20–21. We should strive to be peacemakers in the midst of the hatred and evil of this world (Matt. 5:9).

12:18 *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you.”* We are to seek peaceable relationships to the extent that we are able (Heb. 12:14). There are some who make peace impossible. We are told to avoid such men (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9–11).

12:19 *“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.”* Only God is in the place of judging or avenging because He alone has all the details in every case (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 32:35). This does not forbid the execution of justice by those entrusted to do it.

12:20 *“Feed him ... give him a drink.”* These actions show how believers are to leave vengeance in God's hands. By showing grace to those who persecute or do evil to us, we both seek to win them to Christ, and increase their own guilt if they reject Him, thus we **“Heap coals of fire on his head.”** Either shame will bring them to Christ, or their hatred will result in judgment (Prov. 25:21–22).

12:21 “Overcome evil with good.” This verse is a summary of all the instructions from v. 14 up to this point. It is also a summary of the life of Jesus Christ, which we are to imitate (1 Cor. 4:12; 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21–24).

Summary Principles: The Sacrificial Life

1. There are several biblical examples of what “*living sacrifice*” looks like in real life (v. 1). We have Abraham offering Isaac (Gen. 22:1–18), Ruth’s commitment to Naomi and to God (Ruth 1:16–17), Hannah’s dedication of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:24–2:11), and Mary’s expensive oil (Mark 14:3–9). Many others could be found, and careful consideration of each will provide wonderful illustrations of this truth.
2. The Christian life is one of growing non-conformity to this world, and greater transformation into the image of Jesus Christ (v. 2; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Phil. 3:12–14).
3. Everyone who is a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ has a spiritual gift, which defines the plan of God for our life and service (vv. 3–8; 1 Cor 12:4–31; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Pet. 4:10–11). Three major aspects of God’s will are:
 - a. His operational will. What does God want me to do? Spiritual gifts and ministry largely define this area.
 - b. His geographic will. Where does He want me to serve? This is defined by the leading of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16–18). Consider how the Spirit directed Paul in Acts 16:6–10.
 - c. His motivational will. Why does He want me to do this? The underlying motive is always love and obedience (John 14:15; 2 Cor. 5:14–21).
4. The love of God, produced by the Holy Spirit, is the key to all the exhortations from vv. 9–20. Love that is “*without hypocrisy*” (v. 9) can only dominate our lives as we are filled by the Spirit and producing His fruit (Rom. 5:5; Eph. 3:14–21; 5:18; Gal. 5:16, 22–23).
5. This chapter begins with the command to be “*transformed*” into the likeness of Christ and ends with the command to “*overcome evil with good*” (vv. 2, 21). We must fulfill the first command before we can ever hope to fulfill the second. We grow into the fulfillment of the plan of God as we surrender our life unconditionally to Him (Luke 9:23) and “*grow in grace and truth*” in a life of discipleship (2 Pet. 1:5–8; 3:18).

ROMANS CHAPTER 13

Paul now expands his instructions about the ideal Christian life by addressing our relationship to rulers. This chapter has been much abused through the ages by those who urge total compliance with evil rulers. But here, Paul is simply expanding on the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, and Luke 20:25, “*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.*” The apostles show us that there are things we do not surrender to any earthly ruler (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

The Christian and Delegated Authorities

Romans 13:1–7

13:1 “Let every soul.” This obligation applies to believer and unbeliever alike; there are no exceptions. “**Be subject.**” The same requirement is found in Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13. “**Governing authorities.**” This refers to those in higher authority. While governing authorities is implied in vv. 4–7, this includes the idea of submission to all authority delegated by God such as children to parents (Eph. 6:1–3), wives to husbands (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22–24), and church members to pastors (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17). “**Authorities ... are appointed by God.**” God has delegated authority to man at various levels to create order (1 Cor. 14:33–40). All authorities will answer to

God for how they use or abuse that authority (Eph. 6:4). The primary purpose in this delegation of authority is to punish evil and to reward good (1 Pet. 2:13–14). Our obedience is a vital part of our witness (John 13:17; 1 Pet. 2:15–17).

13:2 *“Whoever resists ... will bring judgment on themselves.”* This “*judgment*” may come from either earthly rulers, or in the form of God’s wrath (vv. 4–5). This principle does not rule out civil disobedience when rulers make laws contrary to the Word and will of God (Dan. 3:16–18; 6:6–10; Acts 4:19; 5:29).

13:3 *“Rulers are not a terror to good works.”* This is stated as a general rule (1 Pet. 2:13–14). In the case of tyrannical rulers, the believer need not fear, but rather trust in the faithfulness of God. *“Do what is good, and you will have praise.”* Even though earthly rulers may persecute believers, their praise will come—if not from men, then from God (Rom. 2:29b).

13:4 *“For he is God’s minister ... he does not bear the sword in vain ... to execute wrath.”* The “*sword*” refers to the power of civil authority to execute criminals (Acts 25:11). In the execution of criminals, civil authority is but an agent of the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18; 2:3–6).

13:5 *“Because of wrath...for conscience’ sake.”* Believers have a higher motive for obedience than fear. We ought to be motivated rather by the desire to maintain a good conscience before God (1 Pet. 3:21). This separates the obedience of the believer from that of the unbeliever.

13:6 *“Because of this you pay taxes.”* Taxes fall under the domain of that which belongs to Caesar (Matt. 22:17–21). Consider Jesus’ lesson to Peter in Matthew 17:24–27. A believer should pay taxes because he recognizes the civil government as *“God’s ministers,”* however imperfect they may be.

13:7 *“Render ... to all their due.”* Paul uses the same word as Jesus did in Matthew 22:21, which means “to pay back what is owed.” Some authorities are due only taxes, some certain customs, others fear, and others honor. There is no honor in showing honor to those who are dishonorable.

The Law of Love Romans 13:8–14

13:8 *“Owe no one ... love one another.”* We should incur no debt toward others, except the obligation to *“love one another.”* This is especially true regarding fellow believers (John 13:34–35; 15:12–13), however, it includes our neighbor (v. 9b; Matt. 22:39; Lev. 19:18). *“He who loves ... has fulfilled the law.”* Since all the “*law*” is contained in the two great commandments (Matt. 22:37–40), those who act in the love of God fulfill the “*royal law*” (James 2:8).

13:9 *“For the commandments ... are all summed up in this saying.”* Again, Paul is merely repeating the statement of Jesus Christ from Matthew 22:37–40. It must be pointed out that faith only works through love (Gal. 5:6b), and that love is produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22; 2 Cor. 5:14–15). The love spoken of here is not sentimental feeling, but the animating power of God working in the transformed believer (Rom. 12:1–2).

13:10 *“Love does no harm to a neighbor.”* The negative commands cited in v. 9 cannot be committed by one who is acting under the power of the love of God (Matt. 7:12).

13:11–12 *“Knowing the time ... to awake out of sleep.”* Because we live in the expectation of the “*blessed hope*” (Titus 2:13), we are to live vigilant lives (1 Cor. 15:34; Eph. 5:14–16; Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:4–10). *“Our salvation is nearer ... the day is at hand.”* Believers who live in the expectation of the return of Christ will be rewarded (Phil. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; James 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:7; 5:4). *“Let us put on the armor of light.”* The Christian life is a spiritual battle, which must be waged with spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10:3–6; Eph. 6:10–18).

13:13 *“Let us walk ... as in the day.”* The figure of walking in the light of day is common throughout the Bible (Psalm 56:13; 89:15; Isa. 2:5; 9:2; John 8:12; 12:35–36; 1 John 1:7) and indicates those who are living in obedience to the Word of God.

13:14 *“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Paul often uses the figure of taking off filthy garments and putting on that which is clean (Eph. 4:22–24). We “put off” sin in our lives by confession (Psalm 51:3–9; 1 John 1:9) and correction of wrong conduct. We “put on” Christ as we are led by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18) and walk in obedience to His Word (1 John 1:7). This idea links back to Romans 12:1–2 and the idea of being transformed into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

Summary Principles: Victorious Christian Living

1. Beginning in Chapter 12, Paul begins to develop the practical ways in which we can be *“more than conquerors through Him who loved us”* (Rom. 8:37). What we are spiritually by our position “in Christ,” we ought to become practically in our way of life (Gal. 2:20).
2. Our obedience to delegated authorities (vv. 1–7) is simply a demonstration of the love of Christ (vv. 8–14) in action (cf. 1 Pet. 2:13–24).
3. It is by the living demonstration of the love of Christ that we *“overcome evil with good.”* (Rom. 12:21).
4. The section on submission to delegated authority (vv. 1–7) is a further development by Paul of the words of Christ in Matthew 22:21, *“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”*
5. The only way we can maintain the balance in our relationship to divine and human authority is if we first are motivated by the love of Christ (Matt. 22:37–39; John 14:15, 21; 2 Cor. 5:14). Only when we love God above all else can we love our neighbor as we should. Only when we are obedient to God first are we then able to render the right obedience to human authorities.
6. The right and true love for God will often require that we disobey earthly authorities (Acts 4:19; 5:29). Biblical civil disobedience is always grounded in the love for God and for His Word above the desire for worldly popularity or personal safety (Daniel 3 and 6).
7. No Christian who desires to be a light shining in this world (Matt. 5:16) can accommodate or ignore political corruption, deception, or tyranny.

ROMANS CHAPTER 14

Paul now moves from the law of love to the law of liberty. Believers are to grant the same freedom to others, to act according to conscience, that we desire for ourselves. The law of liberty applies in all areas where there is no specific command given in Scripture regarding certain activities. There are many areas that fall under the title of *“doubtful things”* (vv. 1, 23); these things should not lead us to despise or judge one another over our differences (vv. 3–4).

The Law of Liberty

Romans 14:1–13

14:1 *“Receive one who is weak in the faith.”* Those who are “weak” lack understanding of the grace of God, our standing in Christ, and our freedom from the Law (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 2:11–21; 3:23–24; Col. 2:16–23; 1 Tim. 4:4–6).

Paul defines those who are “strong” in faith as those who understand Christian liberty and use it wisely (Gal. 5:1, 13; 1 Cor. 8:9; 9:19–23). The “strong” are commanded to “receive” those who are “weak,” with grace and compassion, into their fellowship (Rom. 15:1). **“Not to disputes over doubtful things.”** It is far better to stand on the certainties of God’s Word than to argue over questionable things.

14:2–3 “One believes he may eat all things.” The strong believer realizes that the various food prohibitions of the Law no longer apply (Mark 7:14–19; Col. 2:16; Titus 1:15). **“He who is weak eats only vegetables.”** Many feared to eat meat bought in the marketplace because it was often first sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8:1, 4–13). **“Let not him ... despise ... judge ... for God has received him.”** The tendency of the strong—who magnify God’s grace—is to despise, or hold in contempt, the weak. The weak, who are always more legalistic, tend to judge those who are strong. Both need to recognize that we are all received by God on the same basis through faith in Jesus Christ. We ought not reject those whom God has received.

14:4 “Who are you to judge another’s servant?” Every believer is a servant of God. He alone is able to pass righteous judgment (James 4:11–12). **“God is able to make him stand.”** The power of God is at work in every believer as they respond in faith to His Word and rely on the indwelling Spirit to strengthen and guide (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18; Eph. 3:14–21). God empowers those who trust in Him, whether they are weak or strong (Jer. 9:23–24).

14:5 “One person esteems one day above another.” The two main areas of conflict in the early Church were observance of the Sabbath and eating of meat (Col. 2:16). **“Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.”** Every believer must be free to act according to their own conscience and understanding of Scripture.

14:6 “To the Lord ... gives God thanks.” Both the strong and the weak do what they are doing in a desire to please God and give thanks to Him to the degree that they understand His Word and His will. Paul argues for unity rather than division, because:

1. God the Father receives both the weak and the strong by grace through faith, (vv. 1–3; Eph. 2:8–9);
2. The power of God to make us stand is available to each of us as we seek to serve Him—whatever our level of growth (vv. 4–6); and
3. We will all stand before the Lord to be judged by His perfect judgment (vv. 7–12).

14:7–8 “Whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.” Rather than trying to judge or evaluate one another, we should each be concerned to live lives pleasing to our Lord (Col. 3:23).

14:9 “For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again.” Jesus Christ has the only right to Lordship of our lives (Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:9–13; 2 Cor. 5:14–15). We ought to live to please Him, not men (2 Cor. 5:9; Gal. 1:10).

14:10 “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” The life of every believer will be evaluated by the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10). Therefore, we should leave all judgment and evaluation to Him (1 Cor. 4:5).

14:11 “Every knee shall bow to Me.” This quote from Isaiah 45:23 declares that all men will ultimately declare that He is God (Phil. 2:10–11; 1 Pet. 4:5). This final judgment has two distinct parts, however (John 5:25–29):

1. Believers are judged regarding their service, not their salvation. This is the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10), where faithfulness will be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:14; 9:24–25; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; James 1:12).

2. Unbelievers are then judged at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11–15). Their rejection of Christ is proven by the fact that their names are not written in the Book of Life (Exod. 32:32; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). They are therefore judged on the basis of their works (Rev. 20:12–13), which cannot save them (Gal. 2:16; 3:10–11).

14:12 *“Each of us shall give an account ... to God.”* We should therefore be far more concerned with evaluating our own lives, rather than judging one another (Matt.12:36; 1 Cor. 11:31).

14:13 *“Resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall.”* We should each be concerned that our life be a source of edification to other believers (Eph. 4:29), and not a cause of either hindrance to growth or of falling into sin for fellow believers (Rom. 15:2; 1 Cor. 8:9).

Liberty Limited by Love

Romans 14:14–23

14:14 *“I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself.”* Here, Paul speaks as a strong believer, declaring that all things are pure to those who use them wisely (Titus 1:15; Acts 10:13–15). Things become *“unclean”* because of their abuse, not their proper use. *“To him it is unclean.”* That is that his mind and conscience consider it unclean, and for him to use it is wrong (v. 23).

14:15 *“You are no longer walking in love.”* The law of love (Rom. 13:8–10) always limits the law of liberty (Rom. 14:1–13; 1 Cor. 8:1–13). *“Do not destroy.”* What a strong believer may engage in could cause the ruin of the weak believer. Things that may be harmless to the strong believer may lead the weak into ruin (vv. 20, 23; 1 Cor. 10:23).

14:16 *“Do not let your good be spoken of as evil.”* If the strong believer engages in what they know to be *“good”* in the company of the weaker believer, their freedom in Christ will become a cause of slander and accusation.

14:17 *“For the kingdom of God is ... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* The life that is lived in the consciousness of the kingdom of Christ is concerned with eternal, not with temporal things. When we live by the power of the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16), we seek His approval, not our own gratification.

14:18 *“He who serves Christ ... is acceptable to God.”* When our focus is to please God rather than ourselves, our lives will be pleasing to God and beneficial to men (Rom. 12:16–18; 2 Cor. 8:21).

14:19 *“Let us pursue ... peace and ... edify [one] another.”* When we are willing to limit our liberty out of love for weaker believers, we will maintain unity and peace, while at the same time, we will strengthen the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 14:12; Rom. 15:1; Eph. 4:3; 1 Pet. 3:10–12).

14:20 *“Do not destroy.”* The word *“destroy”* here, and in v. 15, speaks of insisting on our liberty to the spiritual detriment of weaker believers. It must also be pointed out that devotion to legalism can cause the same damage (Gal. 2:11–21). Peter first enjoyed liberty among the Gentile Galatians, but then reverted to Law-observance when the Jews came from Jerusalem. Paul severely rebuked him for his hypocrisy. *“All things indeed are pure.”* Everything has its proper use, but everything can also be abused (Titus 1:15).

14:21 *“It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine.”* Weak believers had scruples with both these activities in the early Church, as they do today. The strong believer is to restrain from these activities when in the presence of weak believers, or those whose spiritual maturity is not known.

14:22 *“Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God.”* The strong believer who is convinced of his liberty in Christ (v. 14; Gal. 5:1) is free to indulge in those things in private. He is free to enjoy that liberty in which there is no self-condemnation.

14:23 *“He who doubts is condemned if he eats.”* If the eating of meat or drinking of wine troubles one’s conscience, then it is an act of sin against one’s own conscience to do those things. *“Whatever is not from faith is sin.”* In order to *“walk by faith”* (2 Cor. 5:7), we must live by our understanding of God’s Word. If we violate our own conscience by doing things we believe to be wrong, we are not acting in faith, and anything not of faith can only be sin (James 4:17).

Summary Principles: Christian Liberty

1. When Paul speaks of Christian liberty, he is speaking of liberty from slavery to the law, as well as slavery to sin (Gal.5:1, 13).
2. The liberty of the individual believer should always be tempered by his love for weaker fellow believers (Rom.15:1; 1 Cor. 8:8–13; 9:19–23).
3. The Spirit of God is the author of our liberty, with the goal that we might be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (2Cor. 3:17–18; Rom. 12:1–2).
4. When we live in the true liberty of Christ, we reflect His life and His kingdom (Rom. 14:17–18; 2 Cor. 8:9).

ROMANS CHAPTER 15

In chapter 15, Paul gives instruction on how liberty is limited by love in practical ways. He expresses his confidence that the Roman church will be obedient to his instruction and explains his plans to visit Rome on his way to Spain. As we have seen in our study of Acts, God had different plans regarding how Paul would visit Rome.

The Duty of the Strong to the Weak

Romans 15:1–6

15:1 *“We then who are strong.”* Paul includes himself in this group. As an apostle, he surpassed them all in strength. As a brother, he is an example of humility and reconciliation. It is the duty of the *“strong”* to care for the weak. The ancient ideal of this was the care of the shepherd for the flock—an ideal realized in Jesus Christ (Psalm 23:1; 77:20; 78:52; Isa. 40:10–11; John 10:11). Our motive must be sacrificial service (Rom. 12:1–2), not self-gratification (Gal. 6:1–2). *“Bear with”* is the same word used of Jesus bearing His cross (John 19:17).

15:2 *“His neighbor for his good, leading to edification.”* Our conduct should be guided by a genuine desire for our neighbor’s spiritual well-being (1 Cor. 10:23–24, 31–33). The life and ministry of Paul is an example and reflects the ministry of Christ (1 Cor. 4:9–16; 9:19–23).

15:3 *“For even Christ did not please Himself.”* Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of selfless service to His fellow men (Phil. 2:5–9). The quote in this verse, from Psalm 69:9, is a reminder that all throughout His life, He endured scorn, contempt, and shame on our behalf; and at the cross He bore all our sins (Isa. 53:4–6; 2 Cor. 5:21).

15:4 *“Whatever things were written before.”* All of the Old Testament Scriptures are designed for our instruction and benefit. To us, this also includes all New Testament Scriptures (1 Cor. 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16–17). *“Patience ... comfort ... hope.”* By persistence in Bible study, we gain comfort in time and build hope for eternity. The word

“*hope*” speaks of the assurance that comes with spiritual growth and maturity that we will not be ashamed when we stand before the Lord (Rom. 14:10–11; 1 Cor. 3:11–15; 1 John 2:28–29).

15:5 “*Now may the God of patience ... grant you.*” This is Paul’s prayer for the saints in Rome. “*Be like-minded ... according to Christ Jesus.*” The humanity of the Lord Jesus, which is emphasized by putting “*Christ*” first in the sentence, should be the standard of our interaction (v. 7; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:32; Col. 1:18).

15:6 “*That you may ... glorify.*” The more we are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 3:18), the more the Father is glorified through Him (John 17:9–23).

The Duty of the Jew to the Gentile

Romans 15:7–13

15:7 “*Receive one another.*” This applies both to the strong and weak, as well as to Jew and Gentile, as the following verses show. The word “*receive*” goes back to the beginning of this section in Romans 14:1 and is the main thought throughout. “*As Christ also received us.*” Jesus Christ receives all those who will receive Him as Savior (John 1:11–12). He welcomes us into His fellowship, but the goal of this welcome is always that we might be “*sanctified*” through that fellowship (John 17:17–19; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 5:26; 1 Thess. 4:3).

15:8–12 “*Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision.*” The incarnation of Jesus Christ in human flesh came through the Jewish nation (Matt. 1:1–17; Rom. 9:4–5). The purpose of God in this was two-fold:

1. “*To confirm the promises made to the fathers.*” This includes all the Old Testament promises to Israel, and again proves that God is not finished with them (Romans 11).
2. “*That the Gentiles might glorify God.*” When Jesus “*came to His own*” (John 1:11), this refers to Israel. But He came to them that they might open the door of faith to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11–12, 29–31).

Paul quotes a string of Old Testament prophecies to show that this was all included in the plan of God (2 Sam. 22:50; Psalm 18:49; Deut. 32:43; Psalm 117:1; Isa. 11:1, 10). When the Rabbis used a series of passages to prove a point, it was called “a string of pearls.” These prophetic passages look forward to the universal rejoicing that will prevail during the millennial reign of Christ. “*A root of Jesse.*” This is His Messianic title, as both the source and the descendant of the Davidic line (Rev. 22:16).

15:13 “*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.*” Our God is the source of “*hope,*” “*joy, and peace,*” as long as we continue to trust in Him (Rom. 5:1–5; 12:12; 14:17). This is another prayer, like vv. 5–6.

Paul Exults in His Ministry

Romans 15:14–21

15:14 “*I ... am confident concerning you, my brethren.*” Through his contacts in Rome, Paul knows that these believers are well instructed and capable in ministry. His confidence is in three areas (1 Cor. 1:4–8; 8:1; 2 Pet. 1:12; 3:17–18):

1. Their motives are good;
2. they have full knowledge of the Word; and
3. they are capable of ministering to one another.

15:15 “*I have written more boldly ... because of the grace given to me by God.*” He is not trying to intrude into the ministry of others (vv. 20–21), but rather is fulfilling his apostolic ministry (2 Cor. 10:12–16).

15:16 *“That I might be a minister of Jesus Christ.”* This letter is an expression of Paul’s apostleship to the Gentiles. He summarizes his ministry as (Gal. 2:7–9):

1. Focus: to the Gentiles,
2. Content: concerning the gospel message, and
3. Purpose: with the goal that Gentile believers may be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

15:17–18 *“I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus.”* What God had accomplished through Paul in his missionary journeys was an evidence of divine power. *“To make the Gentiles obedient.”* This obedience consists initially in faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:5), and then in continued growth and service (Rom. 16:19; 26; 1 Thess. 1:5–8).

15:19 *“In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.”* One of the evidences of those who were true apostles was their ability to work mighty miracles (Acts 19:11; 2 Cor. 12:12). *“From Jerusalem ... to Illyricum.”* Ancient Illyricum is southern Europe today. At this point, Paul was planning to go to Spain (vv. 24, 28).

15:20–21 *“I have made it my aim.”* Paul saw his ministry as a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 52:15. He sought to go where others had not gone with the Gospel (2 Cor. 10:13–16). This may explain his great desire to reach Spain (ancient Tarshish), since it was considered to be the end of the Gentile world, and Isaiah spoke of believers coming from there to worship the Lord in the kingdom (Isa. 60:9; 66:19).

Paul’s Plans to Visit Rome

Romans 15:22–33

15:22 *“For this reason.”* Paul’s busy ministry had kept him from visiting Rome (Rom. 1:8–13).

15:23 *“No longer having a place in these parts.”* This was due either to his finished work, or the Jewish opposition to his work. *“Having a great desire ... to come to you.”* He had been planning his visit for some time (Acts 19:21) and God confirmed his plan (Acts 23:11), but not in the way he supposed it would be.

15:24 *“Whenever I journey to Spain.”* This was Paul’s ultimate goal. On that journey, he hoped to visit Rome, both to enjoy their fellowship (Rom. 1:9–14) and to receive support for his missionary journey.

15:25–27 *“Now I am going to Jerusalem.”* The purpose of this visit was to bring the offerings from churches like the Thessalonians, the Philippians, and the Corinthians to the poor in the Jerusalem church (1 Cor. 9:11; 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:1–5; 9:1–9). *“Partakers of their spiritual things.”* The Gentile churches were blessed by what began at the church in Jerusalem (Rom. 11:17).

15:28 *“When I ... have sealed to them this fruit.”* The word *“sealed”* is the same word used for the sealing of the Holy Spirit on the believer (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13–14; 2 Cor. 1:22). It suggests three things: 1) ownership, 2) security, and 3) safe delivery to the final destination. The *“fruit”* of the Gentile offerings was seen to belong to the saints in Jerusalem; it would be kept secure and ultimately delivered to them.

15:29 *“I know ... I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”* All this proved true, but little did Paul realize how that blessing would come to pass (read Acts 21–28)!

15:30–32 *“Now I beg you, brethren ... that you strive together with me in [your] prayers.”* Paul never forgot the intensity of the spiritual war in which he fought (2 Cor. 10:3–6; Eph. 6:10–20). He knew our greatest weapon is that of effective prayer. *“That I may be delivered from those in Judea.”* He knew the danger he was walking into, and perhaps sensed what eventually occurred. In his prayer requests he is specific:

1. for deliverance from his enemies,
2. that his service will be acceptable, and
3. that he might be blessed to visit them and be refreshed by them.

15:33 “*Now the God of peace be with you all.*” It is interesting, in all his epistles, how Paul mixes his instructions with prayer requests for them (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:9–14; 1 Thess. 2:13, etc.). In spite of all troubles and trials, God is able to give us inner peace and stability (Rom. 5:1–5).

Summary Principles: The Duties of the Strong

There are at least five duties of the strong believer given in this chapter:

1. “*To bear with the scruples of the weak*” (v. 1) means that we do not treat them with scorn, nor do we impose our liberties on them so as to cause them to stumble.
2. We are to seek the best way to help edify them and build their spiritual strength (vv. 2–3). If Jesus Christ was willing to bear our sins, we ought to be willing to bear with those who are weak.
3. We are to receive them into our fellowship as Jesus Christ has received us (vv. 5–7); we are not to exclude them from our company or avoid association with them.
4. We are to imitate Jesus Christ by becoming a servant to others, resulting in praise and glory to God (vv. 8–12).
5. We are to learn to use our knowledge of God’s Word to “*admonish*” and encourage those who are weaker in the faith (v. 14).

ROMANS CHAPTER 16

The Apostle Paul concludes this great epistle by sending greetings and giving credit to many who were a support and blessing in his ministry. It is the mark of truly great leaders that they recognize their influence and impact is due to many who are unknown and uncelebrated.

Greetings to Many Helpers

Romans 16:1–16

16:1–2 “*I commend to you Phoebe.*” Phoebe probably carried this epistle to Rome. What confidence Paul had in her, to commit to her care such a great treasure! She is described in three phrases: “*our sister*,” that is, a fellow believer, “*a servant*,” though the same word is translated “*deacon*,” here it simply refers to one who served in the church, and “*a helper*,” she supported Paul and many others in their ministries. She was apparently a wealthy businesswoman from Cencrea (the seaport seven miles from Corinth) who had business interests in Rome.

16:3–5 “*Greet Priscilla and Aquila.*” This amazing couple worked with Paul in Corinth and in Ephesus (Acts 18:1–3, 18, 26; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). “*Who risked their own necks.*” This was possibly in the great riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23–40). “*The church that is in their house.*” These greetings of Paul are addressed to various house-churches in Rome, and those members who were known to Paul. Twenty-four individuals are mentioned by name.

16:6 “*Mary ... labored much for us.*” The word used here speaks of “*labor to the point of exhaustion.*” She, along with others (v. 12), had worked hard for the Lord.

16:7 *“Greet Andronicus and Junia.”* This couple had been *“fellow prisoners”* with Paul and were *“of note among the apostles.”* Some have taken this to mean that they were apostles, however, the language simply means that they were held in high regard by the apostolic band. That they were *“in Christ”* before Paul suggests they were saved at Pentecost or under the ministry of Stephen.

16:8–10 *“Greet.”* The repetition of this term suggests Paul’s personal interest and honor to each of these believers. The names in these verses were common slave names in the Roman empire.

16:12 *“Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord.”* These were quite likely twin sisters; their names mean “dainty” and “delicate.”

16:13 *“Greet Rufus ... and his mother and mine.”* This is widely believed to be Rufus, the son of Simon, who carried the cross of Jesus (Mark 15:21). Why does Mark mention him by name? Remember that Mark wrote his Gospel for the Romans.

16:16 *“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”* It was common to greet others with a “kiss” on the cheek (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14). Remember that Judas used a kiss to identify Jesus for the authorities (Matt. 26:48; Mark 14:44; Luke 22:47–48).

A Call for Unity and Closing Benediction

Romans 16:17–27

16:17 *“Who cause divisions ... contrary to the doctrine which you learned.”* God’s Word always promotes unity among believers (John 17:20–23; Eph. 4:3–6). Those who create division (2 John 9–11) are to be shunned (1 Cor. 5:9–13; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 3:1–5; Titus 3:10).

16:18 *“For those ... do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Rather than serving the Lord, these people serve *“their own belly,”* meaning their own gratification and desires (Phil. 3:18–19; Col. 2:4; 2 Pet. 2:1–3).

16:19 *“Your obedience has become known to all.”* Like the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:5–10), the faith of the Roman believers had been reported far and wide (Rom. 1:8). The word *“obedience”* here carries the sense of faith in the Gospel introduced in Romans 1:5 (also see v. 26). It is always obedience in faith that results in the obedience of action (Col. 1:3–8). *“Be wise ... and simple.”* True wisdom seeks Truth and has no interest in the knowledge of evil (Matt. 10:16).

16:20 *“The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet.”* This figure is first introduced in Genesis 3:15. While all believers look forward to the ultimate fulfillment of this in Christ’s Second Coming, it is also true that our obedience defeats Satan on a daily basis (John 16:33; Rom. 8:37; 1 John 5:4–5).

16:21–24 *“Timothy”* was Paul’s beloved companion and co-worker; *“Tertius”* was the secretary who wrote the letter at Paul’s dictation. *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”* Paul’s final prayer for all the Roman believers is that they live in the security and power of God’s grace. The idea of the matchless grace of God suggests the benediction that follows.

16:25–27 *“Now to Him who is able to establish you.”* This idea of spiritual stability is found at the beginning of Romans (Rom. 1:11), and here at the end. It suggests spiritual growth and maturity. God uses three mediums to build us up into maturity:

1. the preaching of the Gospel,
2. the revelation of the mystery, that is, God’s plan for the Church Age (Eph. 1:9; 3:1–13; Col. 1:24–29), and
3. the commandment of God for obedience to the faith.

In other words, God has commanded all men to believe (Acts 17:30–31; 1 Tim. 2:3–6; 2 Pet. 3:9). “*Made known to all nations.*” Paul never lost sight of the universal need for the gospel message (Rom. 1:5; Col. 1:6)!

Summary Principles: The Unity of the Body

1. The spiritual unity of the Body of Christ is based on the perfect work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on our behalf (Rom. 1:1–4; 8:1–4; 15:15–17; Eph. 4:4–6).
2. This is a summary of Paul’s praise to the Father (Eph. 1:3–6), the Son (Eph. 1:7–12), and the Spirit (Eph. 1:13–14) in the book of Ephesians. Note the repeated phrase, “*To the praise of His glory.*”
3. The Body of Christ, made up of all who believe in Him, is a spiritual unity made up of many diverse members (Rom. 12:1–8; 1 Cor. 12:12–18). We each have a different gift and role to play, but all contribute to the health of the Body of Christ.
4. One of the chief signs of carnality or worldliness among believers is when we cause divisions and destroy our spiritual unity in Christ (Rom. 8:5–8; 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 1:10–12; 3:1–4).
5. The maintenance of this unity ought to be of utmost importance to every believer (Rom. 15:1–7, 13–14; Eph. 4:1–3). Only when we maintain spiritual unity are we walking worthy of our calling!

CONCLUSION

The book of Romans is the greatest of Paul’s epistles in its doctrinal and theological scope. However, the central theme—the righteousness of God provided through the gospel message (Rom. 1:16–17)—is foundational to every verse and doctrine expounded by Paul. This reminds us that the work of Jesus Christ on the cross is not only the central event in all of human history, but that it is also the foundation of all true revelation from God. Those who build their theological framework and their lives around the uniqueness of the Person of Jesus Christ, and the completeness of His work through crucifixion and resurrection, will certainly build their “*house*” on the solid Rock (Matt. 7:24–25). It is my deepest hope and prayer that these notes will contribute to that end, and that the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified through them.