

The Book of Romans

A Commentary

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The Book of Romans

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Introduction: Are you going to Heaven? This is a question I have often posed to my patients as I have attempted to witness to them over the years. Sadly, I rarely get the proper Christian response. Instead, typically, I hear: “Well, I hope so” or, “I believe so as I have tried to be a good person”.... or, “I don’t know”... and so on...”

Let me ask you... are you going to Heaven some day? What is the proper Christian response? Paul wrote the book of *Romans* primarily to detail the answer to that all-important question! He wanted to explain the gospel, the “good news”, to the Romans. Actually, Paul told them the *great news* that Jesus had provided for them and for all people of all times.

The book of *Romans* is considered by many, if not most, theologians as the *Magnum Opus* of Paul’s epistles. It is incredibly important to our understanding of **God’s plan of salvation**, from the time of Adam to the present day. *Romans* also describes many of the doctrines of the Bible, including: “justification by faith, sanctification, divine election, condemnation, perseverance of the saints, total depravity of man, the last judgment, the fall of man, the final restoration of the Jews, the revelation of God in nature”. [Liberty Bible Commentary]

So many of the giants of the faith have been moved to great heights by this book. Augustine, Luther, Wesley and Calvin all attribute the book of *Romans* as the springboard to their accomplishments for God while on this earth.

Augustine – In the summer of A.D. 386 a very learned man, a native of north Africa, and a professor of rhetoric at Milan, Italy, sat crying in the garden of a friend. He desperately wanted to begin a new life for and *in* Christ, but was having a very difficult time breaking from his old immoral habits. History tells us that he heard a child singing nearby. This child kept repeating the words... "Take up and read...take up and read." Intriguingly, the thirty-two year old man decided to follow the directions of the song and picked up a scroll lying next to him and simply began to read. The scroll was the book of *Romans* and the first verse he came to was, “**Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.**” (Romans 13:13-14) "No further would I read," he said, "nor had I any need, instantly at the end of this sentence a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away." God used this moment to transform the life of this troubled man. That man was the great Saint Augustine. From that moment on, he dedicated his life to Christ... he was changed forever.

Martin Luther – In November, 1515, Martin Luther (the German monk primarily responsible for the Protestant Reformation) began a year-long study of the book of Romans. At the time, he was teaching his students at the University of Wittenberg. As he studied and taught, Luther

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became more and more convinced of the truthfulness of a person's justification solely by faith... and faith alone (solo fide). He was troubled, however, by the concept of the "righteousness of God". He did not understand how anyone could become as righteous as a Holy God nor how God could not fail to punish a fallen man for his sins. However, all that changed during that year of study and teaching. Later, when writing about his epiphany that year, Luther wrote, "I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the righteousness of God.' Because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. Night and day I pondered until I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby through *grace* and sheer *mercy* he *justifies us by faith*. There upon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise, the whole of Scripture took on a new meaning and whereas before the righteousness of God had filled me with hate, it now began to fill me inexpressibly with a sweet love. The passage of Paul became to me the gateway to heaven."

When Luther grasped the significance of justification by faith, he, through God, changed the world! Luther said, "*Romans* is the chief part of the New Testament and the perfect gospel. If a man understands it, he has a sure road open to him to the understanding of the whole of Scripture."

John Wesley – On May 24, 1738, John Wesley, the great Christian theologian of the eighteenth century, reluctantly attended a Bible study that featured a lecture on Luther's preface to the book of Romans. As it turned out, he was forever grateful that he decided to go to that meeting. God spoke to him in a powerful way. In a journal that he kept, Wesley wrote about the change that occurred in his life that night. "I myself felt my heart strangely warmed." Wesley continued, "I felt I did trust in Christ and Christ alone for my salvation and an assurance was given me that He had taken my sins away, even mine and saved me from the law of sin and death." So, John Wesley had discovered the wonderful truth concerning faith and justification that Augustine and Luther had suddenly recognized centuries earlier... all three realized their epiphanies through the reading of the book of Romans.

John Calvin – The great reformer also had a reverent appreciation of this great book. He once stated, "If a man understands it [*Romans*], he has a sure road open to him to the understanding of the whole of Scripture."

William Tyndale – In 1534, he wrote in his introduction to the book of *Romans* in his English New Testament, "I think it meet that every Christian man not only know *Romans* by rote and without the book but also exercise himself therein ever more continually as with the daily bread of the soul."

Dr. Donald Barnhouse had an interesting comment on *Romans*. He said, "A scientist may say that mother's milk is the most perfect food known to man. And the scientist may give you an analysis showing all of the chemical components. He may give you a list of all the vitamins in

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the milk and an estimate of the calories in a given quantity. But a baby will take that milk without the remotest knowledge of its content and will grow day by day. So it is with the profoundest truths of the Word of God. Some of us may be able to analyze it, some of us may not, but all of us do well to drink and to grow."

As can be seen, this great book of *Romans* has been an inspiration to many wonderful Christians throughout history. Sixty-one times Paul quotes the Old Testament in *Romans* as he outlines the gospel for his readers; the Old Testament is quoted in this epistle more than in any other New Testament book. Remember, there were basically three basic ways for the apostles to demonstrate the truthfulness of Christianity. One of these was to show how Jesus and His gospel had already been attested to in the Jewish scriptures, the Old Testament. This was the method that Paul used in the majority of his epistles.

Of course, demonstrations of the power of God's Holy Spirit (i.e. miracles) also were used by all of the early apostles as well. Third, since there were hundreds of people who had seen the resurrected Jesus, their direct testimony was also very convincing proof of the identity of Jesus as Messiah and as God, the Son.

St. Paul – the author of Romans

The Church at Rome was probably begun by saints that had travelled there secondary to the Jerusalem persecutions and/or by those new Christians who migrated to this massively populated city after conversion at one of the smaller cities in the eastern Roman Empire. It was not started by Paul, nor likely Peter. Biblical evidence seems to suggest that there is some possibility that Peter planted the church while primarily serving as the pastor to the church in Jerusalem. It is difficult to see how he would have done this, however, although apparently our Catholic brothers believe this to be true.

Gentiles and Jews made up the Roman branch of the Christian church – this changed to mostly Gentiles as time passed.

Paul – a brief history:

As a youth in Tarsus, he received excellent scholastic training. Tarsus was well known as an intellectual center of that time. After he grew to the proper age, he was sent to Jerusalem to study to become a rabbi. He spent many years under the tutelage of the great rabbi, Gamaliel. Paul became a great student of the "Law" and a Pharisee. He also had a great love for the "Law".

A Pharisee, Saul was given the power by the Sanhedrin to persecute the new Christian sect that arose after the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit which soon followed. He believed that he was doing God's will to strike down these people who were following a "man" and a belief system that was foreign to what he had always believed. He carried out his task with a vengeance! Due to his and others' persecution, the new followers of Christ soon had

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been driven from Jerusalem. They scattered throughout Judea, Samaria and to other portions of the civilized world of that time... including Rome, the centerpiece of those times.

Stephen was the first recorded Christian martyr. He was stoned to death in 35-36 A.D. A Pharisee named Saul was an eye witness to this tragedy. Saul spent the next year or two tracking down Christians in a concerted effort to eliminate them from the world's scene.

In ~37 A.D. Paul (actually named Saul at that time) met Jesus in an incredible way as he travelled to Damascus. This conversion experience resulted in Saul being temporarily blinded and, more importantly, Saul's sudden realization of just who Jesus was... the Messiah and God the Son. Saul turned to Jesus as his Savior and Lord [see Acts Chapter 9]. Jesus planned to use Saul as His missionary to the Gentiles. Saul, later called Paul, became the greatest missionary who ever lived! After his salvation, Paul spent several years preparing for his main life's work. First, the Bible notes that he went off for three years to study for his future work as an evangelist and preacher. Apparently, God Himself was instrumental in Paul's training during this time. After gaining the necessary education, he went to Jerusalem to meet with the other apostles. This had to be an intriguing event given Paul's past history as chief persecutor of the Christians! However, with the endorsement of his friend Barnabas, that Jerusalem meeting evidently went well and Paul was ready to begin his life's work. After spending a few years in his home town of Tarsus preaching the gospel, he was called to Antioch by Barnabas. This was to result in the beginning of his most far-reaching work for Christ.

He spent some time with Barnabas in Antioch (43 A.D.) and then began his missionary journeys. He went on three of these critically important journeys: the first, 45-47 A.D.; the second, 51-54 A.D.; the third, 54-58 A.D. It was on this third mission trip that Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans during a three month stay in Corinth at his friend Gaius' house. He had planned to leave by ship for Jerusalem in the early spring in order to be there for the Passover. The discovery of a plot on his life caused him to reverse his course and return by another route, eventually arriving back in Jerusalem one last time before his trip to Rome and his imprisonment. Paul finally got to go to Rome, but not in the manner that he had wished... he was a religious/political prisoner. This did not stop him, however. He just preached and taught while on house arrest to all those who would listen in Rome.

Eventually his stand for Christ would lead to his death! His wish to eventually witness to Spain with the backing of his Roman brothers may never have been realized although some believe Paul did have the opportunity to go to Spain a few years before his death. In any event, Paul was most instrumental in spreading the gospel to Asia-Minor (present day Turkey), Greece and Rome during the mid-first century. He was a phenomenally gifted man who was totally "sold-out" to God.

In the opening portion of the book, Paul told his readers in Rome the purpose for the letter to them. He wanted to:

1. Enlist help for his subsequent planned mission trip to the West (ex. Spain)
2. Ask for prayer for his trip to Jerusalem

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3. To write a comprehensive treatise on Christian doctrine to this chief city of the day
4. To let his fellow saints know of his love for them and his plans to visit them soon

Before beginning the commentary on this great epistle, let us take a rather bold look at what apparently was **God's plan of salvation** (from the perspective of the Holy Trinity) as They looked forward, so to speak, from eternity past:

- First, recall that the triune God, consisting of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – always has existed and always will exist.
- God decided, at some point, to create the material universe and all that is in it. He created the dimensions that now exist, including the dimension of time. There may be another “spiritual universe” as there certainly is a “spirit world” – although this could just exist in other dimensions of the universe in which we reside. God also created angels that exist in the spirit world... but can, on occasion enter into our world.
- The triune God at some point created man. The reason(s) for this creation will probably never be totally known or understood, but the ability for God to engage in a love relationship with a portion of His creation must have played a role in His decision.
- Only an intelligent being with free will can express love. Certainly, robots cannot, nor can insects, fish or other “dumb animals”. Thus, God created Adam and Eve with intelligence, emotions and free will.
- Knowing full well that this free will would eventuate in sin and the subsequent separation from Himself (since God cannot allow sin to exist in Heaven), God had a plan that would allow sinful mankind to become justified in His sight and be reconciled to Him once again.
- The Law was given to detail to mankind how to live and to show the utter impossibility for mankind to remain righteous – sin was inevitable at some point. To break the Law was to sin.
- Nothing that man could do would pay the penalty for this sin – including the performance of any amount of “good works”.
- This final penalty was death followed by a tortuous separation from God in a place called Hell. However, graciously, God provided a way to escape the judgment.
- It still was true that in order to become justified in God's sight, the penalty for sin had to be paid ... only then could man be seen as righteous (legally) to God and enter Heaven.
- The triune God did provide for a mechanism to pay the price for mankind's sinful life and thus avoid the horrendous penalty. In God's legal system, a perfect, that is sinless, individual could substitute for the accused and the otherwise

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condemned man. Yes, this perfect individual must be put to death and suffer the penalty for all of the sins of man, but God would accept this incredibly loving and selfless act as payment in full. Jesus, God the Son, did die and suffer the punishment for us (all of us). He did so at Calvary almost two thousand years ago. This is His glorious gift to us.

- Mankind's only requirement is to recognize that this has been accomplished and accept, by faith, this free gift. Jesus is the Savior of all who turn to Him and believe. Nothing more is needed, nothing less. That is God's plan of salvation.

Romans 1: Paul Introduces Himself and the Gospel

Greetings from Paul:

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 1:1-7

Paul began this letter to the Roman Church with a long salutation in which he told them of his role in Christ and gave a very brief, yet important, identification of Jesus. Paul immediately pointed out that he was a servant (better translated as *bond-slave*) of Jesus Christ. Paul, a Roman citizen, is telling his Roman readers that he is completely dependent upon and obedient to His Master, Jesus Christ. Indeed, Paul is most willingly giving this service to His Master.

Paul also reminded them of his call to be an *apostle* – an individual that had to have seen the risen Christ and specifically be called to that position. Many theologians believe that there was a special apostleship for the original twelve disciples (with Matthias replacing Judas) plus Paul. Those thirteen are often looked at as having a special commission from Jesus. Certainly, their lives also demonstrated that they did receive tremendous Holy Spirit power as they served Christ gloriously throughout their lives... every one of these thirteen. All but one eventually died a martyr's death. As an aside, I would point out that all Christians are considered as Christ's apostles. All believers have been commissioned to spread the gospel message to the world. However, the disciples and Paul had a *special call* that they responded to wonderfully.

The third point made in the introductory sentence was that Paul was *separated* unto the gospel of Christ. This meant that he had completely turned away from the world after his conversion. He would no longer be involved in any activity that would have any tendency to keep him from his new life – the life of a Christian totally sold out to Jesus. It is very unusual,

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unfortunately, that a person is actually separated from the world and unto the gospel... how many people do you know that completely dedicate their life to Jesus? Wow, that is something for us all to think about... and try very hard to achieve. Paul certainly did!

Also note that Paul was careful to point out that this “gospel of God”, that he was about to discuss in great detail, had been promised in the Old Testament by the prophets. This was not any new concept. Paul would give much Old Testament proof of this as he continued this epistle. This evidence was very important for many in his audience; mainly the Jews, of course.

Note also that Paul clearly wrote that the royal *earthly* line (“was made of the seed of David”) from which Jesus was born. This is just a little of the evidence that Paul laid out to show that Jesus is truly the Messiah. The Greek word used for “made” has nothing in common with the concept of *creation*. Jesus was not created by God the Father or the Holy Spirit at the time of His birth on this earth. He has existed from time everlasting. No, Jesus allowed Himself to be incarnated, that is, to be born of the virgin Mary, so that He could accomplish many critically important tasks while living and dying on this earth. Of course, the very next verse declares Jesus to be the Son of God with *power* as evidenced by His resurrection from the dead. That was very good evidence, indeed!

Paul continued in his introduction by reminding them that they also had been called by Jesus to be *saints* and offered them “[grace and peace from God our Father](#)”. All Christians are saints according to the Bible. It is very unfortunate that the many Christians do not typically live in, what would be considered, a saintly manner. Paul always offers these two gifts from God in the same order... grace followed by peace, as we cannot experience peace without first receiving grace from God.

As Paul continued, he expressed thanks to God, that they had demonstrated such faith that he had heard of their dedication to Christ in many of the various cities throughout the Roman Empire during his three long missionary journeys.

Paul went on to tell them of his unceasing prayers for them. He was always praying for the saints. He pointed out that God would be his witness concerning this point... something that Paul would not say lightly. He also said that he served God “with my spirit”. By this, Paul meant that he was totally committed to God deep within his soul and spirit. God meant everything to Paul; he was consumed with the call to service for his Savior, Jesus Christ. Most Christians have this feeling at one time or another. Rarely do they keep it for the majority of their life. It would be great if we did. Paul apparently was so “sold out” to God, so committed, that he was able to keep his spirit trained on Jesus for, essentially, his entire life. Of course, that made him a phenomenal missionary and apostle for our Lord.

One example of Paul’s prayers for his brothers and sisters in Christ is found in the epistle to the Ephesians. Paul prayed to God ["that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may settle down and be at home in your hearts through faith and that you would be rooted and grounded in love and able to comprehend with all saints the breadth and length and depth and height and know the](#)

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love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you will be filled with all the fullness of God."

Eph 3:16-19 Paul was a man of constant prayer (as were the other apostles). Note the manner and substance of Paul's prayer. It is a very valuable exercise to study the many prayers of Paul throughout his epistles. It is certainly easy to see that his prayers seemingly always aligned with the will of God. This, of course, is the manner in which we all should pray.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For *God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit* in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established-- that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. Romans 1:8-15

Paul next tells them of his plans to visit, God willing, as he wants very much to help them out in their spiritual journey. At the time of this letter, the Church at Rome had apparently not yet been visited by any apostle of Jesus. Paul, of course, had yet to visit that city. It is most likely that Peter had not either. It is true that they both would be there within a few years. However, as of the mid-50's A.D., the Church in Rome had probably not yet had the opportunity to learn about the gospel from an apostle, nor had the Roman Church been blessed by the spiritual gifts that would accompany this type of a visit. Paul is obviously very impressed with how well these believers had done under the circumstances. Obviously, the leaders of the fledgling church in Rome had come back from their visits to Jerusalem and cities such as Ephesus and Corinth, where they had learned of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and began their own church in their own city. However, it is always difficult to start a new church without experienced leadership. For this and other reasons, Paul was anxious to visit. He knew he would be able to impart many valuable insights to help them grow in Christ.

Paul also let them know that he looked forward to the comfort that a visit would mean to him. He humbly pointed out to the reader of this epistle that he had much to gain from his visit to the folks in the church at Rome. He had often wanted to go to Rome in the past, but God had always led him elsewhere. Now, Paul hoped the time was very near that he would be able to travel west and see what Rome and their burgeoning congregation was like. He was anxious to preach the gospel to them and others in Rome. He would also have the opportunity to impart special spiritual gifts to the congregation. Remember, he had a very special anointing from the Lord Jesus that enabled him to do many extraordinary things as he travelled and evangelized to the many churches of the day... most of which he had started.

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The gospel message: Then Paul used his concluding remarks of his greeting to lead right into a brief yet profound statement of the Christian message. He told the Roman readers, “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.” He was indeed a debtor to all mankind. Just imagine how grateful Paul must have actually been to have received the incredible grace the God had shown him by totally forgiving Saul of all of the terrible things he had done to His Christian children... just prior to Saul’s conversion. As he owed everything to Jesus for giving him his life, and life eternal someday in Heaven, he also now felt a very deep debt to share this gift (the gospel message) to every living human, regardless of their position, gender, education, intelligence, color, etc.. The great apostle Paul was always ready to preach the gospel. The next two verses tell us why...

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the **power** of God to **salvation** for everyone who **believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the **righteousness** of [from] God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *"The just shall live by faith."*

Romans 1:16-17

John MacArthur believes that these two verses are the key verses in the entire epistle. Paul begins this power-packed couplet of verses with the declaration that he was not ashamed of the “good news” of Christ. What was the reason for saying this? Many people of that day, both Jews and Gentiles had great difficulty with the message of the gospel. There were many that thought that trusting in Jesus Christ, and His death on the cross, was just foolishness... or worse. *"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness. But unto them who are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God."* (1 Cor 1:23)

Of course, that is still true today, and apparently will be true until Jesus comes again. Paul knew full well of this as he had once led the persecution of the nascent Christian religion. Now he frequently was on the receiving end of physical and verbal abuse for his beliefs. Paul did not let that fact bother him one iota! He went out and preached and evangelized no matter the likely reception, no matter the danger. That surely cost him some significant physical pain. He had to sneak out of Damascus to escape death. He was imprisoned in Philippi. He was forced out of Thessalonica. He would soon be imprisoned in Jerusalem, then Caesarea, then later in Rome. He was ridiculed in Athens. He was stoned while in Galatia. Paul was constantly in danger for his strong stand for Jesus. He simply would not be silenced on the topic of his Savior. He knew that regardless of what others thought, said, or did, the gospel was critically important, its message had to be shouted to the world! It was the only hope for the salvation of mankind! He was certainly “**not ashamed of the gospel of Christ!**”

All Christians should remember these words and never be ashamed of our Savior. All too often, Christians keep quiet when in social situations where Jesus is disparaged... or Christianity is mocked. Christians should always be ready to stand up for their beliefs and *never* back down in any situation... especially when someone is denigrating Jesus. Rarely would a person allow

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others to ridicule his/her mother without strongly correcting the offender... a similar attitude should be used show one's love for Jesus. The next time you have the chance to stand up for your Savior and your belief and love for Him, do it... no matter the situation. Recall the words of Jesus, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." Matt 19:29 Rarely, will it be necessary to leave one's house or family, but it certainly is likely that a Christian will find opportunities to demonstrate their love and faith in Jesus in difficult social situations. Yet, that is when you should show everyone... Jesus, yourself, and those people in the situation at hand, that you are *separated* unto Jesus, a Christian that is not ashamed of Jesus... or His gospel.

The next point is that the gospel that Paul is going to be discussing during the remainder of his letter is actually the **power** that can and will provide a person with **salvation**! This gospel has power! Where, ultimately, does this great power come from? God, of course. God has and uses His power to enable a person to obtain eternal life in Heaven! God is omnipotent. He has the power to save a person from a life of sin. Power to give hope to the hopeless. Power to bring the Holy Spirit of God to live within a Christian and to help that Christian live their life to the glory of God. The question may be asked, "How can one receive this power?" Paul answers immediately.

He states, this power of God to salvation is for *everyone who believes*, everyone that has faith. Jesus brought His free gift first to His Jewish brethren, but Jesus also has given this wonderful gift to all mankind as well. Those that believe in the gospel of Christ will be saved... this is stated pure and simple. Some people seem to become confused about where they need to place this faith. Some have faith in their good works to save them. Others are convinced that the church will save them... that is, a lifelong devotion to attending church and following their church's edicts. Others are convinced that their faith in a benevolent God will result in the eternal salvation... they are convinced the God they believe in would naturally bring everyone to Heaven, eventually. There are other things that people put their faith in as well. But, what is Paul referring to here? In other words, what does the Word of God say?

Let me quote from John MacArthur on this topic. "Salvation comes because a man or a woman recognizes that he has no resources and he sees himself lost and undone and he sees the filthiness and deformity of his sin. And he perceives the rottenness of his heart and the pollution of his nature and he is drawn to Christ as a remedy. And he sees One who died for his sin and who conquered his sin and paid the price and wants to give him new life. And he says - I believe ... I believe". That is what we need to trust in for our salvation. Jesus is who we need to place our faith in for salvation.

Faith is the key to unleashing this power of God. Faith in Jesus and what He did for us on the cross. This faith will not only lead to our eternal reward, but it will also be the mechanism by which Christians should live their daily lives here on earth. Paul did add one more very important verse here to explain another important concept. How exactly did faith in Jesus allow

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a person to be saved from the wrath of God? Remember, all people have fallen short of God's required perfection. Therefore people certainly were not righteous. That is, no one can gain salvation on their own merit. Yet, righteousness is a prerequisite for Heaven. Doesn't this present a significant predicament? Paul answers by telling us God's solution... **Faith (in the gospel of Jesus) was how righteousness would be imputed to the sinful man.** Mankind could not merit salvation; however, God would grant us grace (i.e. unmerited favor) through faith in His only begotten Son. Once we place our faith in Jesus and His completed work on the cross, God no longer views us as sinners. Instead, God sees us through the *prism* of a perfect Jesus. *Jesus stands between us and God as our righteousness.* Therefore, we are seen as righteous to a righteous God. *"And be found in Him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."* (Philippians 3:9)

We are then welcomed into His home in Heaven when our time here on earth is finished. Heaven has become our home.

Faith in Jesus was the mechanism that God had chosen from the beginning to bring mankind back into harmony with Himself. Paul would expand on this much more in the chapters to come... as will I.

Another very important verse is *"The just shall live by faith"*. This verse is first found in the Old Testament book Habakkuk 2:4. It is also found in Hebrews and Galatians – obviously the Holy Spirit wants us to remember this point – and live as if we do. But, just who are the "just" anyway? That will be discussed in some detail by Paul in these next few chapters. Simply put, however, the "just" are Christians. Paul tells the reader that a person is not only saved by faith, but then must live by faith. Christians should live their entire lives by placing their utmost faith in their Savior, Jesus. That is the key to a successful life... faith in God in all things and at all times.

Keep in mind that without Jesus there is no good news... there is no gospel. Let us take a look at verses 16 & 17 from another perspective... the perspective of what Jesus means to it all: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"*

- Who is the power? Jesus! *"God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."* 1 Tim 3:16
- *Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.* Luke 2:30 (Simeon said these words of thanks to God after seeing the baby Jesus)
- It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, **our righteousness, holiness and redemption.** 1 Cor 1:30-31
- *Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.* Hebrews 12:2

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- Much more then, having now been **justified by His blood**, we shall be **saved from wrath through Him**. Romans 5:9-10

Paul is simply pointing out to all who will listen... Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

The wrath of God: Following this introduction to the gospel, Paul then takes a step back and writes about the terrible situation that man finds himself in when he is without Jesus. In other words, why is it so important for a person to listen as Paul explains the gospel? Is it that important anyway? The next verse tells of how God looks upon those who are unrighteous... that is, those who have sinned against Him...

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Romans 1:18

But is this fair for all mankind? Should man be held responsible for his actions? Maybe the person did not realize there even was a God... then why should man be blamed in any way? Maybe a person was not privy to the Sacred Scriptures. What about the Gentiles for example? Paul anticipates these questions and answers:

Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Romans 1:19-23

Paul tells the reader that man is without excuse because there is plenty of evidence to convince any open-minded person of God's existence and power. No one has an excuse (except those without the mental capacity to know better). Some have the Bible to read, some may hear the Word, others have the evidence in nature that God expects them to use to come to some limited knowledge of Him. At the least, God expects people to refrain from worshipping graven images, animals, idols and things of this ilk. An honest look at the glory and beauty of the natural universe should reveal, at the very least, the massive power and immense intellect and loving nature that the God of this universe must possess. All men and women have an innate, God-given sense of morality which should also strongly lead to the belief in a loving, just God.

God will judge people based on their situation; so it is indeed true that the classic “African Tribesman” will not be judged by the same standards as a typical American who has access to television, churches, and the Holy Bible. We Americans would typically be expected

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to understand the gospel message and to act upon it... what are we going to do about Jesus? Obviously, "lost" African Tribesman would not be expected to know about Jesus... but, he or she would be held accountable for their limited knowledge and their actions and beliefs based on this knowledge. Abraham did not know about Jesus while here on earth. He also did not even have the Law. So for what did God hold him accountable? His faith! Abraham passed the test as God saved him because of that faith.

And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness. Gen 15:6

It is interesting to see how the author of the book of Hebrews discusses the ultimate importance of faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which were visible.

Heb 11:1-3

He goes on to list a multitude of Old Testament saints who were stalwarts in their faith to God. This faith is what saved them... not the deeds. Their deeds were the result of their faith.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. Heb 11:13-16

I wanted to note this passage to show how God judged those Old Testament people who did not have the knowledge of Jesus that we have today. Note, also, how the verses in Hebrews 11:13-16 may very well apply equally well today to those people who have limited or no knowledge of Jesus as well! I think that with the proper faith, given their limited knowledge, God has 'a heavenly country' waiting for them and 'will not be ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared them a city'

The last several verses of the first chapter of *Romans* shows what will happen to those people who choose to ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit. What will happen to those folks who reject so great a salvation as has been offered by God through His Son, Jesus?

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against

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nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. Romans 1:24-27

Paul concludes the first chapter by noting that God would give up foolish men to their own uncleanness and lusts. They had changed the truth of God into a lie. They did not worship the God of the universe, but instead worshipped themselves! We see this so very much in today's world, possibly more than ever before. Sexual immorality is rampant in non-Christian society. Unfortunately, just as with the Corinthian church of the mid-first century, even Christians have serious problems with this type of sin as well. Paul certainly tries his best to straighten out the Church of that day on this topic... and his message is still, of course, valid today.

Today, we have so many people who worship man instead of God. This is found in secular humanism, for example. This situation is also seen in many pagan religions, such as the New Age religion. New Agers actually believe that someday mankind themselves will be able to pray in a New World Order... basically a Heaven on earth. We also have most scientists who actually *define out* God as a possibility in their search for answers to life's questions. Literally, secular science, which is really all that is paid any heed by most of the civilized world, actually does not allow the concept of a creative force, God, into their discussion. How on earth can they ever find out the answers to life's most important questions if they cannot even recognize God as a possibility?! That is the height of foolishness... and pride!!!

So where does all of this prideful folly lead? What are some of the results of the "Darwinian revolution"? Of secular humanism? Of atheism?

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Romans 1:28-31

The world of today... the America of today.

What does God say concerning those who practice any or all... or just one of the above? Remember, all are without excuse in God's eyes, and His viewpoint is all that matters when we finally face Him!

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Romans 1:32

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Romans 2: Judge Not, Lest Ye be Judged

Judgment of sin: It is certainly extremely common to hear people compare themselves to others as they reflect on how they ‘stack up’. This of course, relates to how they feel others look at them, how they view themselves and, the truth be told, how they feel they will fare when their life on earth is over. I know this for a fact as I have had a multitude of discussions with people over the past thirty years on this very topic... i.e. Why do you think you may make it to Heaven? The vast majority of people believe that their “better than the average good works” will get them there. What does Paul say about this?

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Romans 2:1-4

For one thing, Paul tells his readers not to judge others – not any other person. That is a difficult command to keep, isn’t it? However, the difficulty in carrying out this truthful command, makes it no less true. It is God’s job to judge, not mankind’s. Remember, God has told us that “**Judge not, lest ye be judged.**” Every person must concentrate upon themselves and their own relationship with God and Jesus. Of course, we must spread the gospel message... and leave the judging to God. Paul goes on to remind his Roman readers that they should not “despise” the amazing goodness, longsuffering and forbearance that God shows to his creation. God gave the Israelites centuries to repent, He gave Judah centuries to repent... yet, at some point God turns people over to their own “reprobate mind”. After this time, the end is sure and the end is destruction.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing [remember, from the **faith** to believe and accept the gospel message to **faith** as we live our lives and are sanctified] seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth [the gospel message], but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: **For there is no respect of persons with God.** Romans 2:6-11

Paul then elaborates on the issue of the difference between Jew and Gentile in God’s eyes as the Christian dispensation was in its infancy. There were a lot of questions about the proper role of Gentile and Jew in the Church. Should the Gentile be circumcised, or not? What role do certain practices play in Christianity. Is circumcision required for salvation ... at least for the Jewish Christian? Questions such as these were being asked. Even Peter and Paul had a big

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discussion concerning one of these issues. The bottom line answer is given as Paul continues in chapter 2.

Verse 11 notes simply but importantly that “there is no respect of persons with God.” Frankly, that is a pretty straightforward statement, but Paul continues:

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

God notes that although there are different amounts of knowledge of the ultimate truth, we are all responsible for the amount we are given.

for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel. Romans 2:14-16

Paul then turns his attention to the Jewish community for a moment. He notes how some of them are proud of their special place with God, the chosen people, the people who received the “Law”. Many of them fancied themselves experts at the “Law” and able to teach others how to live their lives. Then Paul lowers the boom:

You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For *"the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,"* as it is written. Romans 2:21-24

Paul concludes this thought with some final comments on the very important issue of circumcision... remember, this was a big ‘sticking point’ to many new Christians.

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God. Romans 2:28-29

Simply put, it was now time in the new dispensation of grace (through the gospel of Jesus Christ) to recognize that it was the inward things of the heart and soul that mattered ultimately to God. Yes, outward manifestations of inward beliefs, as we shall see, are important, but it is the actual belief... that is the faith that is what really matters to God and will determine whether we spend our eternity with Him... or not.

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Romans 3: God Provides Our Righteousness

The advantage of being a Jew: Paul begins the third chapter by asking the rhetorical question of what, if any, advantage it was to be born a Jew? He had just spent the previous chapter pointing out that God's grace was for both the Jew and Gentile, alike... and that the real "circumcision" needed to be of the heart not just the body. Then Paul quickly answers his own question:

What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. Romans 3:1-2

God had set up the Jews as His "chosen people" and spent thousands of years dealing with them in an exclusive way, giving them special oracles and favored treatment, all of this written about clearly in the Old Testament. This was certainly of significant value. Also, in the end times, God will continue to deal with the nation of Israel, hence the Jew, by delivering on his promises to them, first delivered to Abraham then expanded upon as the Old Testament progressed.

But, what if people, such as the typical Jew of that day and today, did not believe what Paul was telling them. That is, they did not believe the gospel. Did that make God's word of no effect? Paul gasps, figuratively speaking...

For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. Romans 3:3-4a

It makes absolutely no difference what man believes as to what is actually true. If God says it, it is true... period. Case closed! It has always amazed me that some (actually many) people today believe the totally illogical concept that it *doesn't matter* what one believes concerning God and salvation. As long as you believe sincerely, that is all that matters. They feel that there is more than one way to Heaven. For example, the famous author Taylor Caldwell in her book The Great Lion of God (an historical novel about Paul, coincidentally) has an amazing opening to one of the chapters half-way through the book. In this chapter, she mentions that a great prophet (i.e. Mohammed) would come along some day to give his people another way to Heaven. She had already written concerning Paul's outlining of the true gospel. However, Caldwell found it "necessary" to add this other, false gospel, message.

This inclusion by her has to be seen as completely illogical for anyone who ever studied the New Testament... especially those words spoken by Jesus and Paul. Both of these individuals make it perfectly clear that there is only one way to Heaven... through Jesus Christ, the one, and only, Savior of mankind. It is extremely odd that Ms. Caldwell wrote similar things concerning Mohammed.

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There are some who will still ask... is there more than one way? No there is not; not unless Jesus is a liar! As Jesus says, **“I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but through Me.”** John 14:6

Paul then continued on to discuss salvation through the grace of God, not by man’s merit. Some people were attempting to distort this beautiful doctrine by suggesting certain potential consequences of God’s grace...

For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"--as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just. Romans 3:7-8

Apparently, there were also some folks that had twisted the theology concerning the gospel in a ridiculous way. They “reasoned”, and I use that term loosely, that since the gospel notes that God saves sinners through His grace (which means unmerited favor) and that fact thereby also brings glory to God for this wonderful act of love, then what right does God have to punish mankind for these sins? They were saying that God should be grateful, so to speak, that mankind is so sinful as it gives Him (God) the opportunity to look good. Actually, this argument is so stupid, I don’t think it even needs to be argued against. Some things are simply so wrong it is obvious. However, I will mention an analogy to show my point. Just think about the same situation between a father and small child. How do you think that excuse from a naughty little child would go over if they used this on their dad? Not well, I would suggest.

One important point though, God does not forgive just any sinner... only those that repent of their sins and turn to His Son, Jesus, for salvation. Anyone can do this; not everyone does. God cannot and will not let sin go unpunished. His perfection requires this. Heaven is currently a place of perfection and will be always. No one will not be allowed into Heaven unless and until his/her sins are forgiven. This is only possible, once a person sins, if the penalty for the commission of those sins is paid. Either we pay this penalty... and spend eternity separated from God in a place named Hell... or we accept God’s grace and let Jesus pay the penalty for us. He suffered on the cross and in unbelievable, yet unknown ways, during and just after His death. He was paying the penalty His Father, God, required. God, in fact, exacted this payment from His only begotten Son, his beloved Jesus. What love God has for us to provide and allow His Son to do this. What love Jesus has for us to actually do this.

No one will be declared righteous under the Law: Paul summarizes much of the preceding by noting that all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, are sinners. Everyone has fallen terribly short of the required perfection and all are in desperate need of salvation. The Law had pointed this out over the previous two thousand years. Now God, through Paul, was going to explain, in detail, what He had just recently (about 25 years earlier) done about this horrible predicament. God provided the world with His perfect Son, Jesus. God knew full well that the day would come

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when He would have to turn His back on His beloved Son as Jesus died and suffered for all mankind on a Roman cross.

We have already charged that *both Jews and Greeks are all under sin*, as it is written, *there is none righteous, no not even one*; [Psalms 14:3 & 53:1] *there is not one that understands, there is none that seeks for God.* Romans 3:9b-11

From verse 12 through 17, Paul goes on to describe in very picturesque language the carnality of mankind. He ends with:

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Romans 3:18

By ‘fear’, he means an awesome reverence for God’s power and righteousness... and understanding of God’s loathing of sin. Paul says that men have no fear of God... isn’t that the truth! Think about everyone you know. Think about those you like and those that may not be your friends. Think about the conversations that they become involved in each day and night. How many, if any, of these people seem to show evidence of their reverence of a Holy God, an all-powerful, all-loving God of the universe? Does it seem that they understand that He sees and evaluates everything that they do and say? God wants all of His children to treat Him with the respect and reverence that He deserves... for *our* own good. The more we as Christians fear God and model Jesus, the closer we will come to God and the better our earthly lives will be... as well as our Heavenly lives. This striving toward perfection in our lives is what is called *sanctification*. How are you doing? I know I need to do much better!

OK, so we know that everyone, both the Jew and Gentile are sinners. We also realize that the ‘fear’ of a Holy God is missing in this world! So what is the result? Paul continues in his epistle as he writes...

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the Law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. Romans 3:19-20

Virtually all of the recipients of this letter understood what Paul was referring to when he spoke of the Law. The church there in Rome was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. The Old Testament was available to study... in fact, it was the only source of scripture at that time. It was certainly common knowledge that a person was supposed to live under the Law of Moses. God had given the Hebrews this great Law almost 1500 years earlier for several reasons. The most obvious, of course, was to outline the way to live a perfect, sinless life. Also, there were

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many important features in the Law that helped the people live a healthier life. More subtle, but certainly true and very important, was that God wanted men and women to realize that they could not live a sinless life... a life of perfection. Paul addressed this point in verse twenty.

God used the Law to convict man of their sinfulness and need for a Savior... not to give man a realistic method to be justified in His sight and one day arrive in Heaven. No man can keep the Law perfectly... only the God incarnate, Jesus. So now what?

The righteousness of God: Paul is now about to present the gospel to his readers. He is about to show them how God can and will allow a sinful man or woman into Heaven. Recall that he had already brought this to their attention in what have become very well-known verses in chapter one (Romans 1:16-17). Paul will continue to detail and explain the gospel throughout much of this letter. At the time he was writing, this “good news” was really a brand new concept to most everyone. Paul wanted to explain this critical concept in as much detail as possible and with examples that would help his readers understand and accept his message.

So Paul begins by telling them how the righteousness of God can be revealed in a man apart from the Law. Man cannot do this himself. In order to do this, *God must provide* a method that will allow Him to view that person as righteous. Paul writes...

*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for **all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.** He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.* Romans 3:21-26

Paul begins by stating that God is going to somehow provide mankind with *righteousness*. The question, of course, is... how? For one thing, it will be apart from the Law. Paul quickly added that the Old Testament prophets testified to what he was about to tell them. That is, the prophets of old were aware of this concept; that is, that there was a righteousness that would become available that would not come from following of the Law of Moses to perfection. It had become all too obvious that no one was going to be able to do that. However, few were aware of the method that God had provided to allow mankind the necessary righteousness to gain salvation. Most still believed that they must earn their righteousness by following the Law.

However, the idea of a *perfect sacrifice* had already been well laid down by God in their scriptures. The Jews had practiced the sacrifice of “perfect” animals for the atonement of their sins for over a thousand years. Now, the ultimate purpose of this *sacrificial system for salvation* had just recently come to fruition in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus provided our righteousness

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through His sacrificial death and the shedding of His blood on the cross... to those who believe on Him.

We cannot *earn* this righteousness. As Paul stated, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Yet, mankind has tried ever since God created him to earn salvation. This is even done by billions of people today. Muslims, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Hindus, Buddhists, etc. are all trying to earn their way to some form of Heaven. These religions tell their adherents that enough good works of the right kind may well land them in some form of Heaven upon their death. Buddhists are working their way toward Nirvana. Mormons hope to become gods someday themselves... through enough good works. Muslims hope that they can balance their scales adequately so that they have just enough good works to sway Allah to allow them entrance into Heaven. Some Muslims have chosen the only sure way to gain entrance to Heaven... they blow themselves up as suicide bombers while killing many innocent “infidels”. This guarantees them entrance into paradise with 72 awaiting virgins and great wine for their long and arduous honeymoon. Jews strive to keep the Law. Christianity is the only religion whose disciples cannot work their way to salvation. However, God did provide them a way to salvation.

It was through faith in Jesus and His finished work on the cross that men and women would receive their righteousness in the sight of God the Father. When God looks at a person who has placed their faith in His Son, Jesus, God only sees the righteousness of His Son... not the sins of that person. J. Vernon McGee states that the Greek word for ‘righteousness’ actually should be read as ‘a righteousness’ instead of ‘the righteousness’ of God. In other words, God is not sharing with us His glorious righteousness but is instead providing, through our faith in Jesus, the opportunity for us to be viewed as ‘righteous’ in God’s sight. Therefore, God can allow us entry into the Heaven when our time comes.

Paul reminds the Roman reader that just as God sees all mankind as the sinners we are, He also has provided all mankind the path to salvation, both Jew and Greek. How? Through faith that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus, as the perfect God-Man, was able to pay this penalty. Only a sinless sacrifice would be adequate to pay this penalty. [Remember how God was pointing this out in the Old Testament as he required a lamb without spot or blemish when sacrifices were made – a *Type* of Jesus]. Now, God had provided the required *perfect sacrifice*... His beloved Son.

Paul notes that Jesus is the ‘propitiation’ for our sins. The same word is used for the Mercy Seat (hilasterion) of the Ark of the Covenant. Jesus is the reason that God can pardon the believing sinner and bless him/her with eternal life. He is our Mercy Seat, so to speak. The Jewish high priest, on the great Day of Atonement, would carry the blood of the sacrifice within the veil of the Temple and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat to make propitiation for the sins of the people. The Law (i.e. the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments) was within the Ark, under the Mercy Seat, and God was above the Mercy Seat. This sacrifice of the “perfect” lamb and the sprinkling of its blood onto the Mercy seat symbolized a future Sacrifice and shedding of blood that would intervene between the broken Law of sinful man and the Holy God above who

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required justice. In other words, this was a beautiful ‘*Type*’ of what Jesus would one day do on the cross. In fact, in approximately 30-32 AD, Jesus did this once and for all on the Old Rugged Cross. It is also important to note that at the time of Jesus’ death, an incredible darkness came upon Jerusalem as an earthquake shook the entire area. The thick, expensive, beautiful Holy Veil which had always separated the Ark of the Covenant and Mercy Seat from the people was torn. That was no coincidence. Before that day, only the High Priest could come before God, and then only at certain times. Ordinary folk has no way to approach God. Now, because of Jesus, we no longer have a veil of any kind standing between us and God. We have direct access to Him at all times. In fact, once a person trusts in Jesus as Savior, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, comes to live within him. Then the hope and the challenge is to turn one’s life over to the *control* of the Holy Spirit.

Also Paul tells the reader that God had forgiven (passed over) the sins of the Old Testament saints as they demonstrated their faith in God with the knowledge that they were given. For example, they brought their sacrifices by faith. Look at Abel versus Cain. Abel did what God had asked (sacrificed from his flock – a *Type* of Jesus’ blood sacrifice). Cain did what Cain thought best. Abel was rewarded with acceptance by God for bringing this appropriate sacrifice. Cain did not offer the proper sacrifice and God ‘had no regard’ for his sacrifice (as noted in Genesis). The saints of old also knew that someday God would provide a Messiah that would bring them ultimate ‘salvation’ of some sort. Exactly how this would come to pass was not known to them. Yet, they had faith that God would provide and for those who followed God in faith, they were rewarded. When Jesus died and then rose from the dead, he was just the *first fruits* of all those saints who had followed God in Old Testament times. Remember, we are only responsible for the information that God allows us to have. Certainly, that is why God gave each person a moral compass and enough information in the world around us such that everyone should believe in Him. Today, we have more knowledge of God’s Word, of course, than they did in Old Testament times, but we surely don’t have all the information either. We, also, must use our faith that God provides.

Paul then wraps up the third chapter noting that since Jesus did it all and faith in the gospel is the total requirement for salvation, there is no place for anyone to boast of their good works helping them toward their individual salvation.

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Romans 3:27-30

That makes it all the more interesting just how many people respond when asked why they think that they are going to Heaven, “I think I have been a good person”... or something

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like that. Paul says that any and all things we may do on this earth in the form of good deeds (good works) have nothing whatsoever to do with our salvation... not one tiny bit! It is actually rather an insult to Jesus to even think that His sacrifice was not sufficient for the salvation of all mankind. If we believe that our good works are necessary, we are saying Jesus' sacrifice was just not enough. He did not have the power. But, in fact, He surely did and does!

So, Jesus is the way to salvation for the Jew and the Gentile... for all mankind.

[Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.](#) Romans 3:31

Do remember, Paul continues, all of the Old Testament was pointing to this Sacrifice. The Law showed man its need and the prophets demonstrated the purpose of faith. In fact, faith in God has always been what is required to please God and to gain salvation. The Old Testament scriptures also predicted the coming Savior. The New Covenant established the Old Covenant. It was its logical conclusion... God's wonderful provision for our ultimate reunion with Him! God gave His Son, Jesus gave His life, and then the Holy Spirit comes to live within us to guide us as we let Him.

Romans 4: Israel's Righteousness Through Faith

Faith of the Old Testament Fathers: In the first three chapters, Paul has discussed the terrible plight of sinful man and his need for justification before God. He has noted clearly that all men are sinners and a sinful man cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven via good works. Only perfection would allow this and certainly no human has ever attained perfection. Righteousness can only be imputed by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. He also dispelled some of the errors folks had at that time concerning the gospel message. Now Paul goes into some important examples, especially for his Jewish readers in Rome, to show the need for faith for justification... even in Old Testament times. He chooses two of the more important 'heroes' of the Jews – Abraham and David – as his examples.

So Paul relates that the father of the Jewish nation, Abraham, was justified before God by his great faith as noted in Genesis. Abraham had a lot of faults and sinned many a time just as all men. Yet, he also pleased God with his great faith which he demonstrated often. For example, by faith Abraham struck out from Ur at God's command: [“Go forth from your country to the land which I will show you.”](#) Genesis 12:1 Keep in mind that Abraham was leaving the comfort and safety of his home and family and striking out into a totally unknown part of the world.

God went on to explain how He would make a great nation from Abraham's seed.

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From your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." *And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.* Gen 15:4-6 (NKJV)

Later, amazingly enough, Abraham came within seconds of killing his own beloved son (the son God had promised as the heir of this great nation), Isaac, as God had commanded him:

"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."
Gen 22:2

Abraham did indeed journey for three days to the mountain and was just about to sacrifice Isaac... God stopped this sacrifice at the last second and provided His own sacrifice for Abraham... as He did two thousand years later for all people when He provided His own beloved Son, Jesus, the Lamb of God.

So you see here examples of the excellent faith that Abraham was blessed with from God. This is what resulted in his justification before God... not his deeds. Paul opened the fourth chapter of Romans writing concerning the justification of Abraham due to his faith in God. The third verse notes that God accounted to Abraham righteousness because he had this faith in God. The Greek word for *accounted* is used nine times in this chapter alone by Paul. It also is translated as *imputed*. This word means to take something that belongs to one person and credit it to someone account. In this case, God is crediting Abraham with righteousness due to his faith in God. In New Testament times, Christians – those people who trust in Jesus for their salvation - have righteousness imputed to their account due to the righteousness of Christ. Abraham did absolutely nothing to merit this gift from God, nor do Christians. Eternal salvation is a gift from God as is the faith to accept this gift. Obviously, there is no reason for a person to boast about themselves simply because they are offered and receive a gift.

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? *"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*(Gen. 15:6) Romans 4:1-3

The works of people are never used by God for any kind of justification before Him... only as what is due God. Paul once again points this out in the next verse. Instead, it is purely faith in the gospel of Jesus that imparts justification before the judge of the universe... this makes the believer righteous in the eyes of God.

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Now **to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness .** Romans 4:4-5 (NKJV)

King David was another of the great heroes of the Jewish people, especially in that time. Yet, David certainly was a man acquainted with sin. Paul uses David to serve as another example of God's method of salvation. David praised God in Psalm 32:1-2. Paul re-states these words in his letter to the Romans:

Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin. Romans 4:7-8

Now read this fantastic Psalm of David:

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. **Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions,** And my sin is always before me. **Against You, You only, have I sinned,** And done this evil in Your sight-- That You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and **in sin my mother conceived me.** Behold, **You desire truth in the inward parts,** and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; **Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.** Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And **blot out all my iniquities.** Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do **not take Your Holy Spirit from me.** Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, **The God of my salvation,** and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. **For You do not desire sacrifice,** or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart-- these, O God, You will not despise.** Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. **Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,** with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar. Psalms 51:1-19

David was saved and is now in Heaven with God and Abraham... yet, not by his works, but by his faith in God. That is Paul's point.

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Paul then points out that this salvation through faith does not require a person to be circumcised... nor to be a Jew. In fact, Abraham was justified by his faith many years before he was circumcised. So that cannot be an additional requirement. In fact, there are no other requirements... only a true faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. Romans 4:11-12

Here is the promise to the heir's of Abraham's promise... both the Jews and the adopted sons of God (Gentile believers) – that is, he would be the father of many nations:

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression. **Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations")** Romans 4:13-17

God told Abraham that it was Abraham's faith that was accounted to him for righteousness as pointed out above. God made His promise to Abraham because of his faith, not because of any good works that he may have performed in following any Law. Specifically, God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations after he demonstrated trust and faith in God. God would provide him with a son many decades after Sarah, his wife, could humanly be expected to be fertile. Abraham did believe God. By the way, did his faith ever waiver? Yes, it did at least on at least a couple occasions. Once, he slept with Sarah's maidservant, at Sarah's request, in order to have a son. Abraham was no longer willing to wait on God's promised son through Sarah. The result was the birth of Ishmael, the father of the Arab race. This certainly worked out well for the Jews! It certainly always pays to not only have faith in God's word but to do so without fail, if at all possible. Typically, problems result when people doubt God... read the Bible for scores of examples!

Years later, when God once again told Abraham that he would have a son by Sarah within a year, he laughed at the concept of his barren, 90 year old wife being able to conceive and the fact that he at 99 years old could father a child again. Whether this was a laugh of delight or a laugh of temporary disbelief at the idea of such old people having a child is a matter of debate. Regardless of the meaning of that momentary laugh, Abraham did once again demonstrate his deep faith in God as he did "sleep" with Sarah and she conceived a son, Isaac.

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Remember, it is God himself that gives us our faith. Isn't it interesting that Abraham had faith that a living son could come out of a 'dead womb' in a sense a 'human tomb'. J. Vernon McGee notes that, "God promises eternal life to those who believe He raised His own Son from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea."

Paul ends on the discussion of Abraham's faith and its significance and adds that this imputation of justification by faith was not only for Abraham (David and other Old Testament saints) but now meant for all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Romans 4:19-25

Although it is true that Abraham had moments of doubt on occasion, God says that he did have great faith. In fact, it is certainly true that he had enormous faith and demonstrated this many times during his lifetime. So we know that Abraham did indeed 'sleep' with Sarah as he followed God in faith, conceived Isaac and thus began God's wonderful plan for mankind in eternity. Now all of the Old Testament saints, plus his subsequent "blood" heirs who put their trust in Jesus, and all those others who are *adopted* into the family of God, will live forever in Heaven by just using our **God-given gift of faith**.

Romans 5: Adam Brought Sin into the World; Jesus Died for Our Sins

The Blessings of Righteousness:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1-2

Paul begins chapter 5 with the word, "Therefore". This reflects back to his just completed discussion of God's plan of salvation. Briefly, Paul has just outlined the sinful nature and actions of mankind and the enmity with God and sure judgment by God that this sin requires. This is followed in the 3rd and 4th chapters by his expounding on the concept of God's plan to save all those people who put their faith in the blood of Jesus. The Son of God has paid the penalty for all of our sins with His tortuous death on the cross. Paul also shows how even the

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Old Testament saints, using Abraham and David as his examples, were justified by their faith – all people need only to turn to Jesus and accept His free gift of eternal life. It is as simple as that. Unfortunately, for many, that beautifully simple and sublime truth is too “difficult” to accept.

This propitiation for our sins yields a *completely finalized peace* between the Christian (i.e. the believer in Christ) and God. No longer is there any enmity between God and the believer. It should be pointed out that this “peace” is with God, in a legal sense. The inner feeling of peace we all desire is something that all Christians should strive for through the sanctification process that follows salvation and continues throughout our lives on this earth. Sanctification can be looked at as our attempts, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to become more and more like Jesus. (“It is the work of the Holy Spirit bringing the whole nature more and more under the influences of the new gracious principles implanted in the soul in regeneration. In other words, sanctification is the carrying on to perfection the work begun in regeneration, and it extends to the whole man” —Easton's Illustrated Dictionary). Paul adds that this new found standing Christians have with God through Jesus allows us direct access to Him by faith plus the sure hope that one day we will experience the glory of God. The word “hope” as used in the Greek, does indeed mean a “sure hope” – the recognition that a future event, keenly looked forward to, will actually happen... with absolutely no doubt. Children have this “sure hope” when they await their summer vacation on a dreary school day in February.

[And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.](#) Romans 5:3-4

These next two verses certainly put a severe damper on the message that many a television preacher espouse these days. Just because a person has faith, even great faith, does NOT mean that he/she will skate through life without problems, be they health related, financial, etc. But, with this faith, God does point out clearly in these two verses that we can rest assured that when dealing with the problems that inevitably accompany life for all people, the Christian will experience God’s helping hand in dealing with (and learning from) them. For one thing, they will learn patience (as God’s timing is not our timing... in fact, His is usually more deliberate, in my experience, but absolutely sure). It should be our goal to allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives. The more we can do this, the more peace we will experience and the easier it will be for God to help us. We can and will grow through all of the trials and *tribulations* of life as we allow God control. This, of course, requires *patience* (perseverance) as we wait on God. As the years go by, we will experience the faithfulness of God as He leads us through the difficult times often in amazing ways. Finally, these *experiences will increase our faith, giving us a stronger Christian character*. This will inevitably lead to a *stronger hope (again, this means “sure hope”)* for the future. God’s love will be evident as we learn to trust Him in all things and at all times.

After explaining these wonderful benefits of faith in Jesus, Paul points out just how incredible it was for Jesus to give His life for all mankind. It is one thing for a man to give his

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life for a loving daughter, son or wife that he loves and needs dearly, but who would be flogged mercilessly, nailed on a cross and then suffer the damnable tortures of Hell for the same people responsible for his horrible death? The answer... Jesus Christ!

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Romans 5:8-11

Paul compares and contrasts the first man, Adam, with Jesus:

just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-- Romans 5:12

Here Paul tells the reader that sin entered the world through the original sin committed by Adam (and Eve). It was that first sin that caused all mankind to be born with a sin nature thereafter. From that time forward, man was born with this sinful nature, then proceeded to actually commit sin. Note that the word Paul uses is a Greek word that actually denotes the *spreading* of death from Adam to everyone that followed.

For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Romans 5:13-15

These verses point out the interesting fact that sin was not specifically imputed to man (at least from a technical/legalistic point of view) from the time period just after Adam to when the Law was given by God through Moses. It is true, however, that Adam had been given specific “laws” to live by, and he and Eve had broken these laws... hence they sinned. It is also true that death, the penalty for sin, reigned from Adam’s day onward. This strengthens the argument that mankind had somehow “inherited” the sin nature of and from Adam’s original sin.

After the Law was handed down by God, mankind had a measuring stick to show them just how sinful they were. The Law had the effect of driving many people to God for mercy and forgiveness. Appropriately, this Law placed the blame for man’s sin on the individual sinner. However, it offered no solution to the resultant separation this sin created between God and mankind.

The concluding verse here notes that there will be someone who would come after Adam that will have an analogous (although usually opposite) effect on mankind... this individual will be Jesus Christ, the “second Adam”.

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For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Romans 5:15-18

Here Paul explains the parallel. Through the sin of one man, Adam, all men were deemed to have a sinful nature, and bound to sin as their life progressed... they were not able to live a life of required perfection in order to enter Heaven upon death. Yet, Jesus had now come and lived a perfect life and became the sacrifice for all mankind... for those who believe on Him. Jesus is the King of the Kingdom of Life – mankind is offered this life through faith in Him. Through Him we all can inherit the “righteousness” needed to enter into Heaven one day. As the Bible says, Jesus is the “first fruit” of our salvation. (Adam was the “first fruit” of mankind’s death). Note also that *this gift is to those who receive it*... a person must accept this gift to make it their own.

Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift* came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:18-21

Paul reminds the Roman reader that the Law was given to show man just how impossible it was to live the life required to satisfy God’s requirement of a sinless life. With the Law mankind not only had the sin nature of Adam, but also actually *lived* a life of sin – of course, some sinned much more than others, yet “**all have sinned and come short of the glory of God**” - as even one sin is one too many. So Jesus came to save the lost, and through His sacrificial death on the cross, God has provided us with a pathway to eternal life in Heaven!

Contrasting Adam and Jesus

Adam		Jesus
Brought sin into this world	his deed	bought righteousness with His blood
The Garden of Eden	place	Calvary on the cross
Disobedience to God’s will	reason	Obedience to God’s will
Condemnation and death	Result	justification and eternal life in heaven

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Inability to keep Law	Law vs. Grace	Grace (unmerited favor) of God
To all mankind it abounded	Scope of Action	to believers it abounded much more

The above chart is a modification of one from Dean Wilmington's New Testament 'Guide to the Bible'

Romans 6: Sanctification of the Believer

A Believer Strives for Perfection: Paul begins to explain the concept and method of sanctification in this next chapter. As defined earlier, sanctification is the carrying on to perfection the work begun in regeneration. This is accomplished as we learn to yield our bodies and our lives to the Holy Spirit which takes up residence within each believer at the time of salvation.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. Romans 6:1-6

Paul quickly put down the notion that some people advanced in those early years of Christendom as well as some today... that is, if we are saved totally by the grace of God through Jesus (which we are), it should be no big deal if we continue in a life of sin. Paul says in the strongest of Greek terms, "Certainly not!" He tells us that we died to sin when we accepted Jesus as our Savior. Because we are now "in Christ", we in effect, died with Him as He died for us. In other words, our "self" died and was buried, figuratively speaking. He was buried just as our old sinful selves were "buried" with Him. The word 'baptize' here means to 'identify with Christ', not water baptism. Jesus rose from the dead and we are united with Him in His resurrection. Given these facts, it is absurd to even suggest that we should continue to act as we did before we were "born again". We now, literally, have a new nature. We also, literally, have the Holy Spirit living within our body. We cannot continue to live the same life as before our conversion... God forbid. We are no longer slaves of and to sin.

because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he

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cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. Romans 6:7-10

The Christian is now living through Christ and for Christ. As Christ has eternal life so does the believer. Death has indeed lost its sting... there will be no death for the Christian.

Now Paul gives us a lesson concerning sanctification.

reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:11-14

Now that our old “body” has died and been buried (as John McArthur says, “this body was worn out and useless”), we have been given a new “body” in Christ. The old “body” was ungodly, at enmity with God and powerless over sin. The new “body” has been freed from sin, shares the resurrection life with Jesus and co-exists with the Holy Spirit. It is our task to try to align our desires and actions with those of Christ Jesus. Note that Paul says that one must “reckon yourselves to be dead to sin”. It is an active pursuit that comes with some effort on our part. In fact, we will spend a lifetime attempting to become more like Him. However, and this is the big problem, we will still have *remnants* of our old sinful “*flesh*” that will interfere with our walk with Jesus. We must do everything in our power to allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives and not yield to temptations when they arise. Instead, as Paul states, we must learn to *yield* (also translated as *present*) our members (our tongue, desires, actions, eyes, etc.) to God – let Him help us use them for righteousness sake. Although sin no longer has dominion over a believer in Jesus, Christians still have to daily turn their lives over to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This is a good point to contrast the three different types of man (woman) that exist today and how each live their lives on a daily basis:

- The atheist – the atheist is a person who does not believe in God. I strongly believe that the main reason for this, in most cases, is pride. I say this as it is a rarity to come across an atheist that has truly pursued the veracity of the Bible. Apparently, they have far too much pride in their intellect and knowledge to consider that millions of Christians may actually be right! Even though the stakes of actually finding God, if He does actually exist, are enormous, they simply feel that their decision is correct and will not take the necessary time to pursue the truth of the Bible. On the other hand, the great writers in theology are filled with *former* atheists who finally had the courage to pursue this truth and have become fine Christian men and women, for example, C.S. Lewis, Josh

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McDowell, and Lee Stroebel, just to name a few. Many atheists will certainly suggest that belief in God is for those with a weak intellect – surely, the brightest minds would never deign to believe in such a “fairly tale”. This attitude points out a vast lack of knowledge on their part. Many of the greatest minds of history were strong Christians. One of the two greatest scientists ever, Sir Isaac Newton, was a very strong Christian. The other, Albert Einstein, came to believe in God after recognizing that his own scientific discoveries **required** the existence of God – literally! As Einstein noted, there is just too much evidence in nature to avoid the conclusion that God exists – if one looks at the evidence with an open mind, that is. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin, John Locke, Charles Dickens, Helen Keller, Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Scott and thousands of other great minds all believed in Jesus and the Bible. The argument that an intelligent person would not trust in Jesus for their salvation is just ludicrous. Anyone who really thinks that to be true is simply not recognizing the facts.

Whatever the reason for their disbelief, the atheist does go on to live his/her life as well as possible. Some deal with their conclusion, that there is no God, by living as such... anything goes. Frankly, if there really were no God, there cannot logically be any basis for morality – who is to say what is right or wrong? You? Me? What right do you have? What right does anyone have? We are not God, correct? He does not exist, the atheist can say, therefore any action that I may take is “ok”. Do you want to steal – no problem. Do you want to kill an enemy that is standing in your way – no big deal. How about those adulterous relationships – who says they’re wrong?! The only thing actually keeping an atheist from going hog wild into sin is the inherent moral compass God gives all mankind. Logically, as I have pointed out, if there really were no God, there would be no true morality – no one’s “moral” opinion would be any better than another’s. In conclusion, an atheist will either live a licentious life or use their God given moral compass to attempt to live by a set of Laws that society (using God’s Laws) has set up. In either event, they have no chance of succeeding in keeping these Laws. No one ever has, except Jesus. As far as they believe, they will die and turn into a pile of dirt – actually, it is worse than this, but either way, an atheist has a dismal future in store, whether they are correct or not!

- The religious man (woman) – examples here include the Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims (plus many more). All of these folk have a set of laws to guide them. They have a god or gods who command them to live by these laws. They believe that unless they succeed, they will not make it into Heaven. However, it is not possible for them to know if they have succeeded while they live... there is no assurance of salvation. Typically, when a truly “religious” person lives their life, there certainly is a tendency to look at their god as an angry father that needs to be appeased. Just maybe, if the life that one lives is good enough, one might make it into Heaven – but if not, watch out! It is tough to truly feel deep love and devotion to a god like this. It is analogous to the feelings that a child may develop towards a father that constantly threatens to punish the child unless he/she

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behaves just right – one mistake, and a terrible spanking, no questions asked! It is true, the child may well try very hard to behave, but the kind of love this father engenders, is not one the vast majority of fathers would be looking for from their child... if it is love at all. Plus, the child will certainly not have the will to really be the kind of child most fathers would be proud of... they would just be doing what they thought necessary to avoid punishment. Sometimes, religions cause people to do horrific things just to avoid the wrath of their god. Take a look at the radical Muslim terrorists... those suicide bombers perform these heinous acts with the thought that they will be ushered into Heaven and to an eternity with 72 virgins! By doing these terrorist acts, they believe that they can assure themselves of Heaven and avoid the possible eternal punishment of Allah... they certainly did not have any assurance otherwise.

- The Christian – here we have a truly different situation. First of all, every Christian has been delivered from the bondage of sin. Before becoming a Christian, every person is separated from God and, in fact, subject to the wrath of God upon death. A Christian, however, is a new creation and viewed as justified and righteous by God! Therefore, given our identity with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, we need to *live a life* that identifies with Him as well. Unfortunately, we still have remnants of our old sin nature that may get in the way. Yet, God has given the new Christian several things to help in living a holy life. First of all, given that we now have justification with God and the promise of Heaven, we are guaranteed life everlasting regardless of any works on our part – simply because of our trust in Jesus. This wonderful knowledge certainly allows the Christian to view His Heavenly Father as the totally loving Father that He is. I know from personal experience that when a child loves his father tremendously and knows that his father loves him ‘infinitely’ much, that child will try their utmost to please his father. This is the situation that the Christian finds himself. God has shown amazing and infinite love for His Christian children. He gave His only Son to die on the cross to provide for us eternal life with Him in Heaven. What good works does he require from the Christian for all of this..... None! However, due to this great gift and wonderful Father, it is only natural that the Christian will work to make his Father proud. The Christian does not do good due to his fear, he does good because he loves God very, very much and wants to please his Father in Heaven. Secondly, the Christian has another powerful ally in helping him with his sanctification – the Holy Spirit lives in every believer and is there at all times to help guide and comfort the believer. Our goal during our sojourn on earth needs to be to learn how to turn our lives and actions over to the direction of the Holy Spirit. The better we do this, the better we will live, and the more like Christ we will become.

Paul concludes chapter 6 with these words:

having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of

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uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Romans 6:18-23

Simply put, when we were slaves of sin, we used our mind and body to yield sinful, spoiled fruit. Now that we are no longer slaves of sin, but righteous ‘slaves’ of God, we must use our minds and body to produce the fruit of holiness. The last sentence is powerful. Never forget those words, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Romans 7: The Struggle Between the Two Natures in the Believer

The authority of the Law:

Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law--that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. Romans 7:1-3

Paul begins this chapter by using the example of marriage as an analogy to explain how the Jews of that day should look at the concept of a new Christian having a totally “legal” new standing in the eyes of God. He notes that after the death of one of the partners, it is perfectly legal and proper for the remaining individual to remarry. On the other hand, if both were still alive, this, of course, would be adultery and certainly against the law. When we put our faith in the saving work of Christ, we “die” to sin and are raised to a *new life* with our new “Groom”, Jesus. Why is this possible and just? Because our *old body has died* and no longer are we “married” to the Law. The other individual in this “marriage analogy” is God. He had a relationship, an agreement, with Israel through the Law. But now He also has died, on the cross, and He has been raised, literally, from the dead. Now, He (God) is free to enter into a new relationship (covenant) with others... the Christian. By the way, as we will see in later chapters in Romans, God does indeed honor His commitments to Israel (as we would expect), as they will honor their part of their covenant with God in the future. In the case of God’s covenant with Israel, it was conditional on them honoring and serving Him as the one and only true God. They failed to do this as the Old Testament shows time and time again. Yet, there always was and always will be a remnant that God does indeed save – for example, Paul himself.

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Therefore, my brethren, you also have become *dead to the law* through the body of Christ, that you may *be married to another--to Him who was raised from the dead*, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Romans 7:4-6

Paul also restates that we no longer serve the Law, but now we serve our new Master, Jesus Christ. When we were under the Law and purely in the flesh, our mind and body were subject to constant sinful passions. We only had our own power and sense of morality to aid us in leading a holy life. Upon giving our life to Jesus, we immediately are delivered from the Law, as we die to sin and our old lives. Most importantly, the Holy Spirit comes to live within the Christian giving us comfort and helping us as we strive for sanctification as we allow the Spirit control over our spirit, soul and body.

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. Romans 7:7-13

In the several verses above, Paul once again deals with the notion that maybe the Law itself was wrong. He always denies this suggestion in the strongest terms. He simply and correctly just notes that the Law is perfect and was used by God to convict us of our sins, to allow us to recognize that we were totally lost without a Savior, and make us ready for the entrance of Jesus into the world. The Law certainly accomplished these goals. For these reasons, Paul pronounces the Law as "**holy, righteous and good.**" Then Paul begins a very interesting discussion concerning the major struggle in his early Christian life:

The battle between the old self (the "flesh") and the new self:

we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

Romans 7:14-15

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Paul is saying that he, all too often, does things that he knows are sinful. He hates it when he gives in to these temptations, but he still does, unfortunately.

If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Romans 7:16-19

Paul reasons that he is now involved in a battle between his new self and his old self – Paul refers to that old part of him as the “flesh”. He now realizes that remnants of his old nature persist. He also knows that there is nothing good in his “flesh”. He wills now to do good and resist those frequent sinful temptations. Unfortunately, he cannot seem to find a way to keep his old sinful nature from taking control of his actions... even though he desperately wants to remain true to his new self and his new Master.

Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Romans 7:20-23

This argument given by Paul above requires a bit of concentration to follow. Basically, he is saying that he is perplexed by his too often sinful actions as he knows that at all times in his soul and spirit he is doing those things that he should and wants to avoid! There are other times he fails to do things that he knows he should do. The good he really wants to do now that he is a Christian, he frequently fails to do! He finally decides that it really is not his new “body” that is doing these acts, but, instead recognizes that it must be remnants of his old sinful nature – he calls this *the flesh*.

Remember, this whole thing (living the Christian life) was totally new to Paul and those times (the 1st century). We have two thousand years of history, the entire Bible and a great deal of experience in our knowledge of other Christians in our lives. It is not that surprising to most of us, I believe, to realize that we still have to “keep down” our old sinful nature even after we turn over our lives to Christ. Paul was learning these things and then he was writing them down for us soon after, as God used him to write large portions of the New Testament. Paul concludes with the recognition that he had a constant battle going on inside, his new Christian spirit and mind wanting desperately to please God vs. those remnants of his old sinful self (the flesh) that still wanted to engage in sinful pursuits. That caused him to cry out:

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. Romans 7:24-25

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Chapter 7 ends with Paul exclaiming in despair, that he can't live the life he wants and needs to live for Christ. He knows what he should be doing, but he cannot seem to do it! Help! He will find his answer in Jesus and he tells us this answer in the next chapter. If it worked for Paul, and it did, it will work for every Christian... the Bible says that God is no respecter of persons.

Chapter 8: Life in the Spirit and Eternal Security

Eternal Security: Paul now begins to pen one of the most important chapters in the Bible. In this chapter, he will, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, describe several different biblical doctrines including the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. Paul gives the Roman church a new understanding of the proper method of pursuing sanctification, tells them of their new position with God due to their faith in Jesus, and explains in picturesque detail their rock-solid eternal security.

He begins with a brief review of the first several chapters:

[There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2](#)

Here Paul reminds them that everyone and anyone that trusts in Jesus to save them from the penalty of their sins will be free from condemnation from God. No longer will God look upon them with wrath as He instead will only see the righteousness of Jesus when he looks at a Christian. No longer will the Christian be under the penalty of sin, no longer will they be under the Law of Moses. Now they are living under the grace of God. Why? Paul goes on to write:

[For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:3-4](#)

Paul notes that mankind certainly could not keep the Law. Man was simply too weak in the flesh to keep the Law perfectly... and that is what was required for eternal life with God in Heaven. God solved the problem by sending His Son to keep this Law while in the flesh of His human body. Jesus did lead a sinless, perfect life and therefore was able to claim victory over sin and the devil! Jesus deserved eternal life in Heaven even when considering only His life here on earth. He had victory over sin (i.e. He condemned sin) in the flesh. By doing this, Jesus fulfilled the requirement of the Law... He was righteous before God, His Heavenly Father. Of course, Jesus was also God incarnate, the third person of the Trinity. However, it was the fact that He lived a perfect, sinless life on earth as a human that allowed Him to become our Savior.

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He was worthy to take our penalty upon Himself. Jesus was willing and able to suffer and die for those men and women would trust in Him for their salvation.

As we have previously learned, God then allowed men and women to “put on” this righteousness (it was imputed to them by the grace of God) through faith in Jesus as their Savior. This requires that a man/woman repent of their sins (turn their back on their life in the flesh), accept Jesus as Savior, and walk in this new life provided by their new master, Jesus Christ. In this new life Christians should choose to walk by the Spirit... be led by the Holy Spirit... not by their old flesh.

How then shall the Christian live? Paul continues...

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Romans 8:5-9a

Yes, but does every Christian have the Holy Spirit in him and therefore the capability to live in the Spirit?

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Romans 8:9b-11

Yes, everyone receives the Holy Spirit upon accepting Jesus as their Savior! Now, it is up to us to allow the Holy Spirit to help us live for Christ each and every day. We need to pray “unceasingly” and communicate with God every day and night. We need to ask God to guide us in our every word and action. We need to tell God of our needs and wants. We need to thank God for all of the wonderful things He has done for us, in particular for saving us from our sins and granting us eternal life in Heaven! But also, the many daily answers to prayer that we receive and the many, many blessings God gives us. We need to meditate on God’s word and let Him communicate with us in this manner. We particularly need to study His Word, the Holy Bible and ask Him to speak to us as we read carefully each verse. We should ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for us in prayer as we know we do not know how or what to pray at times. We also need to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our daily actions and words so that what we do and say will be pleasing to God. In other words, we need to live in the Spirit... live and do those things we know are right because we have such a loving and wonderful God... do not just live in the

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flesh as we slavishly try to follow the Law using our own strength alone – we cannot do it alone. As Paul notes:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:12-13

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

What does this living by the Spirit result in? What then is our relationship with God?

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." [Mark 14:16] The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8: 14-17

The result is incredible! We are adopted into the family of God Himself! We now can address God as *Abba, Father*, [Mark 14:36] just as Jesus did! Abba is just another way of saying Daddy. God is certainly no longer a wrathful God that is at enmity with us. Instead, He is our Heavenly Father, our Dad (of course, we must always have proper reverence for Him). But just as a great earthly dad would always do, God, the greatest, the perfect Father, will take perfect care of us, His child. Everything that happens to us, once we become his children, will work out for good (as we will soon see)! Plus, we are joint heirs with Christ, His only begotten Son. This is too good to be true... but it is true! Yes, as Christians we will be persecuted, at times, for our beliefs and our allegiance to Christ. We will also suffer the pain and suffering that is inevitable in a fallen, sinful world. However, we will also be glorified together with Him when our life on earth is completed. By the way, if you are never, or rarely, "persecuted/made fun of" for your stand for Christ, I would recommend that you examine your life and make sure you are taking a stand for Christ. He died and was tortured for you, what are you doing for Him? Are you telling people about Him? Are you standing up for Him when others make fun of Him... or His brothers and sisters (that is, you and other Christians)? Or, do you just remain silent and hope no one will know you are a Christian in certain uncomfortable situations? If you do tend to remain silent, that is, you have a tendency to fail to stand up for Christ when you know you should, remember what Paul said next:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:18

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Remember, God is watching you at all times... and He appreciates all that you do for Him. These next few verses show how even the world awaits with eagerness the coming of Jesus when God's plan of redemption is completed. Not only will Christians be glorified as sons of God, but Creation itself will be delivered from the curse it has endured since the sins of Adam and Eve. No more weeds, death, pestilence, etc. The world will be as it was in the beginning - perfect. So, the Christian and Creation itself await eagerly the coming of the Lord.

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God [Christians are the sons of God]. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Romans 8:19-25

Earlier I mentioned that since God is now our Heavenly Father, an all-powerful, all-knowing and totally loving Father, He will take "perfect" care of us, as His children. Only He can do the following:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Romans 8:28-30

These three verses are filled with power! Only an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God can coordinate the events and people of this world to accomplish what these verses tell us God will indeed accomplish in the life of every Christian. God will take all of those things that happen to his children, and somehow, eventually, make them all work out for our good. Each thing that happens, of course, will not be good in and of itself. However, because of His power, omniscience, and love, God will make each event in our lives work together for our good as we pass through this imperfect world. We can count on this to be true... we will do good to believe it in those times of trouble.

Paul continues on to tell his readers that God knew, and even pre-destined from infinity past, just who He planned to conform to the image of His Son, Jesus. These people, of course, represent every Christian that ever lived or ever will live. God, of course, knows the entire course of world history. He foreknew, pre-destined, called, justified and will someday glorify

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every Christian soul. Obviously, this is wonderful news that Paul is writing to that early Roman church. Paul continues and adds even more to the good news he has already told them... In fact, Paul ends this chapter on an even higher note!

Paul tells us just how incredible our position is as sons and daughters of God. He is making each of us (and the Romans of that time) stop and think about just what our faith in Christ has brought. Here is what we now have...

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [this is basically a rhetorical question in that no one can frustrate the plans of an all-powerful God] He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:31-39

In the concluding verses of this famous eighth chapter of Romans, Paul asks the question, who could possibly separate a Christian from God... and an ultimate eternal resting place in Heaven? He answers by listing many external disasters that might cause a problem... then he says, no, “*in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*” Paul goes on next to list another ten major things, including life and death and *any* created thing (which would include the person himself), that one might conceive could separate a Christian from the love of God. His conclusion is that nothing can or will separate us from the love of God... ever. Once we give our lives to Jesus, He will never let us go... period!

Even more simply put, we are completely victorious in Jesus – we are winners now, and for eternity and this wonderful and absolute fact is sealed forever by God!

Romans 9: God’s Dealings with Israel and Divine Election

God’s Dealings with Israel: Chapter 9 begins Paul’s discourse on the nation of Israel. Of course, he has a lot to say about other issues as well, but these next three chapters are primarily addressed to the Jews that were having a very difficult time accepting this new concept that Paul was preaching. For one thing, most of the Jews of that time, and today, for that matter, did not understand how the “chosen people” could be put aside in favor of the Gentiles. Paul was facing

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a lot of persecution from some Jews for the gospel message he was spreading throughout the land. He felt quite badly about how most of his brother Jews were not accepting the “good news”. He begins his discourse:

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. Romans 9:1-4

As these verses indicate, Paul was very saddened by the lack of faith that the Israelites were now showing toward Jesus. Of course, he also was saddened at how they felt toward him. He surely wishes that he could make them see the truth of the gospel. Some did, but most did not. He goes on to say that he would, if he could, give his life for them and even be accursed by Christ – but that was impossible. He was a believer, and was in the family of God for evermore. That is why he used the words ‘*I could wish*’ as he knew that, in actual fact, it was an impossibility. But, it surely shows how terribly sad he was for their plight and how much he loved his brother Jews. He ends by pointing out that he realizes how their nation has such a special relationship with God. Yet, they were not recognizing his final point...

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

Jesus was the prophesied Messiah from the line of Abraham, Isaac and David (with respect to His earthly heritage). Jesus is the Blessed One of God. This was what most of the Jews were not recognizing and not accepting.

Paul then goes on to do a little Bible teaching to his readers. Of course, his Jewish audience had studied the Old Testament Scriptures but Paul wanted them to take note of some important points. For one thing, just because certain people were related to Abraham and Isaac did not make them the actual seed of the chosen people of God. Paul states:

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, at this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. Romans 9:6-9

Paul’s point is that only Abraham’s son Isaac (from Sarah) was in the line (seed) that would inherit the promises of God. Ishmael was not part of the “promise”, that is, his line of inheritance was not considered as part of the “chosen people”. Even more...

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And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (*For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to **election** might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;*) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.
Romans 9:10-13

God's Sovereign Election: Here Paul adds that God further separated out some descendants of Isaac (in particular, Jacob) to receive the promises and denied these promises to another in Isaac's line (Esau). Even though Esau was born first, God elected Jacob to receive the promises that God had originally given to Abraham and his "seed". Typically, in Jewish culture, these promises would have passed on to the firstborn son. These last few verses have a powerful message in them as they refer to the topic of God's *election*. Note that the fact that Jacob was chosen to be in the line of God's promise occurred before he was even born. Obviously, this points out the fact that God chose one person over another *not* based on any merit demonstrated by either individual. One was chosen and the other was not. The 13th verse even says God loved Jacob and *hated* Esau (the word used here for "hated" really has the sense of *decreased preference* for that person... the same word in the Greek was used when Jesus told us that a believer *should hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters* – He only meant to *prefer them less* than Jesus,... to give one's life to Him – to follow Him. Of course, we were still to love our family and God still loved Esau).

The Jews had no problem with the fact that God had *elected* the Jews over the Gentiles in the Old Testament times. Furthermore, they accepted without difficulty, the idea (fact) that God chose certain Jewish individuals over others even in the line of Abraham. Therefore, Paul is telling them, they really should not have any real difficulty with the entire subject of election – also referred to as pre-destination. Yet, some people did have "issues" with this concept at that time... and some certainly do today. Let's talk about it.

God's election of His saints has puzzled many a person throughout Bible history. There has been a great deal written about this issue in an attempt to explain how God is actually working to bring about His plan of salvation. It bothers many people to think that maybe God arbitrarily simply chooses one person for salvation (i.e. eternal life in Heaven with Him) and leaves others without any hope. Is this the way it really is? If so, is this fair? Before I go into more detail, let us see what Paul wants to tell us (hence, since this is the inspired word of God, we are hearing from God Himself) in the next few verses.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion [Exodus 33:19]. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Romans 9:14-16

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Paul continues with another example of God's *election* of certain people for certain tasks in this world. God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to demonstrate His power and might. He also could have shown many other examples of how God used non-believing (and believing) men throughout the Bible to accomplish His purposes. Then Paul anticipates the question that would tend to be asked given God had hardened Pharaoh's heart and therefore apparently had a role in Pharaoh's actions...

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

Romans 9:19 (KJV)

Is it anyone's fault when they sin if God has not chosen them to be His own? It is God that gives the faith to believe isn't it? Yes, it is. So what is the answer?

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder," Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

Romans 9:20-21

Here is the crux of the matter. God is sovereign. He is all-powerful and all-knowing. Whatever He says goes and whatever He says is right, proper, and good. Whether we understand the reasoning behind all of His actions is, in fact, irrelevant to whether they are true. It is great when we do understand, but not necessary. Sometimes, as I will try to point out soon, I believe it is better when we do not understand some things (I realize that this is a strange statement taken purely on its surface)! All that God wants us to know from these verses is that since He is God and He is the one creating and making everything according to His Divine Will and Plan, it is not for anyone of His creation to question or doubt His actions. He uses the potter and clay to help us understand how odd it is for us to seriously question Him. We need to TRUST HIM that HE will do what is best and right. God certainly has given us plenty of proof from the Bible and from history to believe Him in all areas... not just the things that sound particularly nice or proper to us.

Now for a little more discussion on the topic of *Divine Election*- a sub-topic of pre-destination. There are only two ways that I can see that make sense out of this concept. Let me explain:

First, let me outline certain facts that have to be considered for any reasonable explanation to be possible:

- a. **God is omniscient and omnipotent**
- b. God will save anyone who comes to Him and accepts the Gospel message – **we have *free will***
- c. **God elects those He wants to save from eternity past** – the truth of *election*

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- d. **Everyone, other than Adam and Eve, was born with a sin nature** that did not allow any possibility to live a life free of sin
- e. **God gives people the faith they need to be saved**
- f. **“God is Love”** (1 John 4:8b)

1. This first explanation is one I arrived at myself many years ago – yet, it certainly was not my original idea by any means. It was the only mechanism that I was able to come up with that would allow me to understand (*using my human logic*) how God could elect someone for salvation from eternity past and still allow for the opportunity for ‘anyone that willed’ to come to Jesus for salvation. So how is this possible? We can draw from fact number one above... God knows everything. Therefore, He certainly knows how every person that ever has been born or will be born will behave, think and feel. He understands completely the nature and inclinations, needs and wants of all people past, present and future. He knows, therefore, which people would want to give over their life to Christ if given the chance, information and *faith* needed to make this choice. I believe there is nothing strange about the fact that God therefore uses this knowledge to elect these people for future salvation and lay out plans for their life after conversion... as He did for Jacob, Samuel, King David, John the Baptist, Paul... and all Christians. Of course, once these future Christians are given the needed faith, they do choose Jesus as their Savior. Notice I am still saying that God elected them before their birth to be saved... He did not just realize that they would want to come to Him in faith and let them on their own. It was still necessary that God elect them from eternity past or they would not have received the necessary saving faith from Him. Is this what really happens. It may well not be, but it would work as a reasonable explanation as it is consistent with the facts we are given in the Bible concerning this topic.

Please do not ignore my parenthetical notation above that this is the explanation that I require for my *human logic* to grasp understanding – in fact, God’s logic is not our logic as He is infinitely more intelligent than any of us – and exists in dimensions that we cannot even fathom. Keeping this in mind, the next explanation absolutely is true and you may like it best.

2. Let us remember that God’s ways are not our ways. We still see through a glass darkly (“**For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known.**” 1 Cor 13:12) until we someday get our glorified bodies in Heaven. Also, God exists and acts on a totally different level than we do... a much higher level. Let us also remember that God is Love. He loves us all with an infinite Love. In fact, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.**” (John 3:16)

Keeping this in mind, the best explanation for *election* is taken right from God’s

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own potter and clay illustration. Does the clay have any right to question (or ability to understand) why it was made like it was? Of course not. Neither does the “clay” of God – people. God gave us brains, of course, but very limited. I will admit, modern man has so much pride that many people have the idea that they can attain to great understanding of the universe. As God’s special creation (after all, man is special to God when compared to other aspects of His creation), men (women) are able to do things that are fairly impressive *to one another*... but, compared to the mind and accomplishments of God, anything and everything that mankind can think or do is insignificant in its scope and we should remember and understand this. We can rest assured that God does not act capriciously – He certainly does what is right every time. Therefore, whatever His specific reasons for electing an individual to salvation (and not electing another) is done by God after His proper consideration. Just as the potter may chose a piece of clay over another for certain inherent characteristics of one vs. the other, God also chooses for His good reasons. It does not matter that we know what those are. It is also true, because the Bible says so, that everyone is offered the free gift of salvation if they will only accept it by belief in the gospel. Just how these two items (God’s election and mankind’s free will) can be properly understood and reconciled together may be difficult for our current mind and knowledge. But, for very much analogous reasons that God gave to Job when Job could not understand what was happening to him, we should trust in God. He not only knows what He is doing but what He is doing is best. When Job recognized this fact, he fell down in worship and asked God to forgive him for his doubts. Job said, “I know that thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of thine can be restrained. Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”. Job 42:2-6

Job’s point (and, by extension, God’s point) and my point here is that since we all know that God is unbelievably great and loving, perfectly just (can never do wrong), omniscient, and omnipotent, any seeming paradox in the Bible (including *election* vs. *free will*) is not actually one when seen from God’s perspective.

There is one other thing that I believe is worth sharing with you on this general topic. Through much prayer and study, God taught me many years ago, when I was questioning Him about a very difficult time in the life of my family, something that has been of great value to me for many years now. I strongly believe that God actually has a Divine Purpose for these conundrums (these difficult concepts to understand). What is that? God wants us to trust in Him! He wants us to learn to have faith in Him at all times. These times certainly include those difficult situations that seem to defy human logic. Consider, if anyone is always given a straightforward answer for every situation in life or every biblical principal, where is the faith in accepting these things? Since

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mankind has already have been given concrete evidence to support belief, logically, we should be able to believe everything the Bible says and act like we do at all times. However, sometimes our faith is not as strong as it should be.

I go into the massive evidences of the truthfulness of the Christian Bible in at least three other lecture series. However, believing in Heaven and one's ultimate resting place there, is sometimes much more easy for many to accept than their living by faith on this earth in our time here. Recall, we are to come to know Christ by faith... and then to live in and for Christ in faith as well! God wants to help us build our faith so when we need that extra amount required to get through some of the very difficult times in life, we can all on Him and believe that He will take care of the situation to even our satisfaction.

Let me use an example to make my point more clearly. When a son accepts a father's word for something without having any evidence that his word is true... other than the son knows that his father can be depended on to be truthful and protect his son... this is what faith is all about. For example, imagine the faith it takes for a five year old facing surgery for a ruptured appendix to head off into the operating room. The boy cannot understand why he is being asked to allow some stranger to cut open his belly! But, given a great father-son relationship, the comforting words of "you need this son, everything will be just fine, little fellow" given by the good, loving father is all that the little boy needs to hear. That is what God wants to cultivate in us... for our own good, now and in our life to come. So why then, in summary, do we accept both *election* and *free will*? Because, as I just noted above, God is wonderful, loving, perfect, and totally honest and He says that both are true!

Gentile Believers: Paul now continues in chapter 9 as he points out that God had, in fact, chosen from a rebellious group of sinners (the folks that he was now writing to in Rome) many to be saved. They needed to remember how the majority of Jews had forsaken God's Laws and edicts over the preceding centuries to go their own wicked way. Fewer still of the Gentiles had followed God prior to this New Testament time. Now God had used this *election* to demonstrate His mercy on those "vessels" (people) that He had prepared from infinity past to receive His glory. Paul then points out that those he is writing to in Rome, the Christian Jews and Gentiles, were indeed some of those *elect* people. Here is his argument...

What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so that He may make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but among Gentiles.
Romans 9:22-24

Then, Paul references several Old Testament passages to confirm his theory concerning Israel... that is, their current status:

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“I will call those who were not my people, ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved, ‘beloved’”.

Romans 9:25 (from Hosea 2:23 an Old Testament book)

Here is pointed out how even in the Old Testament it was written that some day in the future (and that day had come), people other than the Jews were going to become God’s chosen, that is, Christians. The original “chosen people”, the Jews would still have available to them all of God’s blessings, but they would need access these wonderful blessings in the same manner as all other men and women. That is through faith in Jesus. So what would this result in?

“And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, you are not My people, there they shall be called sons of the living God.” Romans 9:26 (from Hosea 1:10)

This was a prophecy concerning the coming time when Gentiles would be called (and many would accept) to God through Jesus.

Paul continues with this Old Testament “lecture” to the Jews in Rome...

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly.” Romans 9:27-28 (from Isaiah 10:22-23)

and

It is just as Isaiah foretold, “Except the Lord of the Sabbath had left us a posterity, we would have become as Sodom and would have resembled Gomorrah.” Romans 9:29 (from Isaiah 1:9)

Israel’s Unbelief: Though Israel was and is still the “chosen people”, God’s covenant with them was conditional on their following Him. The reading of the Old Testament is replete with episode after episode of God forgiving His people their sins as they would temporarily turn back to Him in times of desperate need. These times would invariably be followed by the people turning their backs on God and following their own evil hearts. In all cases, although God justly punished them, He also saved a remnant. This happened in the times of the *Judges*, the times of the *United Kingdom*, the times of the *Divided Kingdoms*..... at all times in the history of Israel. Paul had just pointed out that it was happening there in Rome, Jerusalem, Greece, Turkey, etc., right then in their day. In fact, it is happening today. Note the many Messianic Jews throughout the world. At some point in the not too distant future, the nation of Israel will be filled with Christians as they will have once again returned to their first love, God, through Jesus their Messiah! This will not happen, however, until the end times, when God has finished with the “time of the Gentiles” in which we now live. In the meantime, many a Jewish person will turn to Jesus as individuals, just not yet as an entire nation.

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The Jewish man and woman did have an ingrained mind-set that hindered them from seeing God's truth. Today this same mind-set is a problem. The fact is, the Jew still clung to the teachings of the Pharisee and the long standing teachings of the typical synagogue of the day (same teachings today, by the way). This required a Messiah that would basically come riding in on a white stallion and conquer all nations as he led his brothers (Israel) to glory. Most had not paid attention to the many teachings of the Old Testament scriptures that show the Messiah also coming as a "suffering servant". Yet, with all the amazing evidences of that day, the Jew of that time should have been able to do exactly what one of the most dogmatic of Pharisees (Paul) was able to do... study and learn that the gospel that was being taught was absolutely true. The evidence for its veracity was great and it was time to follow God through faith in His Son, Jesus. Later, Jesus, the Messiah, would indeed come to earth as they wished, but not that first time. On His first visit, He had even more important issues to resolve, like saving all of mankind from their sins!

Unfortunately for the average Jew of that day and today, they are still striving after God by way of the Law. This will not work, never did, never will. They have stumbled over the "stumbling stone", Jesus, their Messiah. At that time, more and more Gentiles were accepting Paul's message and recognizing Jesus for who he was, the Savior. As Paul put it...

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling; even as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: And he that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame." [Isaiah 28:16 & 8:14] Romans 9:30-33

Paul quoted from two of the several areas in the Old Testament to show his Jewish readers how this rejection of Jesus was foretold in their own Holy Scriptures. He was hoping that by using this teaching method, he would convince many to follow the Savior, Jesus. The entire sections in the 8th and 28th chapters of Isaiah that point out the coming difficulty that most of Israel will have in accepting the first coming of the Messiah are as follows:

The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured." Isaiah 8:13-15

So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; **the one who trusts will never be dismayed.** Isaiah 28:16

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As it turns out, Jesus was indeed their “stumbling block”. However, as the last phrase states, those who place their trust in Jesus, such as Paul, Peter, John, etc., etc., will never be disappointed!

Romans 10: The Gospel is for Everyone

Spreading the Gospel Message: Here in the first few verses of chapter 10, Paul recognizes the situation that the typical Jew finds himself and once again presents the gospel to the reader with the hope that he will be able to convert more of his brethren... the Jew.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Romans 10:1-3

So what is Paul saying here? He very much desires that his Jewish brothers and sisters would be saved. Remember, in the opening verse of the last chapter, he cries out that he would be accursed of God if it would only result in their salvation... but, each man (or woman) must decide his eternal fate for himself. He also realizes that the typical Jew had a zeal for the scriptures and God, but they were “stuck” on the Law. It is true that God gave the Law to detail the way individuals should live moral lives. However, His primary purpose in laying out the Law was to show them that salvation was not going to be possible via the perfect keeping of this Law - as no one but Jesus would ever be able to do so!

Jesus had come to set them (and all mankind) free from the Law and to give us the **free gift** of everlasting life through simple “childlike faith” in His completed work at Calvary. Jesus provided the necessary *righteousness* for those who place their trust in Him. This, to the Jew, was not intuitively obvious. As with so many people, they were convinced that they would and should have to work for their salvation. Most of them did not attempt to understand this wonderful gift (i.e. Jesus) of and from God to their everlasting regret.

Note that Paul points out that the Jews, as a whole, did not avail themselves to a proper understanding of their own scriptures (“**their zeal is not based on knowledge**”). Just as with so many non-Christians in this present day, there was a marked tendency to ignore the scriptures and the blatant evidence that God gives humanity concerning His method of salvation. They did not avail themselves of God’s righteousness which can only come through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Romans 10:4

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The end of the Law means that Jesus is the final answer. The Law had pointed everyone to their need for a Savior, and Jesus came to be that One.

Next, Paul details how anyone, the Jew in this case, can become saved. First he paraphrases from Leviticus 18:5 which says, “Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.” Paul uses this verse and writes...

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." Romans 10:5

His point is that if one wants to attempt to attain righteousness from the Law, then one must indeed keep the Law... over six hundred of them, and perfectly, every day of one's life! Good luck on that one.

Next, Paul comes to the only realistic solution, faith in Jesus Christ. This is the **righteousness based on faith**. This is possible for everyone who desires. He then tells his reader that they do not need to go up to Heaven (since Jesus had recently come down from there to show Himself to the world and then give His life for all mankind) nor down into the depths of the ocean to find this salvation (as Jesus, our salvation, had already risen from the dead). Instead, just look into your heart. As Paul said...

But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: Romans 10:6-8
(Romans 10:8 is taken from Deut. 30:14)

And then some blockbuster verses from Paul...

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed”. (from Isaiah 28:16) For there is no distinction between the Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him. For “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Joel 2:32) Romans 10:9-13

These verses summarize beautifully the gospel. This is how the Jew, that Paul was primarily addressing, needed to be saved back there in the 1st century A.D. This is how everyone needs be saved today in the 21st century as well... there never will be a new way, or another way

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(remember Jesus' words... **"I am the way, and the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but through Me."**) John 14:6

These verses also point out that everyone, Jew, Greek, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, etc., are all the same (in regards to salvation) to God. We all have the opportunity for salvation through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Paul also emphasizes that all those who trust in the Lord for their salvation will never be disappointed. That, of course, does not mean that Christians will never have difficult times in life. However, it does mean that our eternal salvation will never be in doubt. It is also true that the closer we get to Jesus in our lifetime efforts toward sanctification, the greater inner peace and joy we will experience in this life.

Paul concludes with a mention of the need for the Word of God to be preached around the world. It is our task as Christians, given to us by Jesus, Himself, to...

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matt 28:19-20

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? Romans 10:14-15a

In other words, it is imperative for him (Paul) and others to go and tell lost people, both Jew and Gentile, the message of the gospel. Some folks say, 'well if God has elected certain people for salvation, why the need for this evangelizing'? Actually, it is true that God's purposes are going to happen whether we resist them or not, but since God has specifically instructed us to take an active role in His salvation process, we are very wise to do what He says... for our benefit and the sake of those we tell of Jesus. Keep in mind that the Bible even says... **How beautiful are the feet that bring glad tidings of good things.** Romans 10:15b

Then Paul reiterates what he said at the end of the previous chapter, also quoting from the Old Testament scriptures. Remember, he is trying to convince his Jewish audience. Sadly, not everyone will recognize the truth of the gospel. A quote from Isaiah 53:1 notes, **"Lord, who has believed our message?"** Romans 10:16

The answer is certainly not everyone. Yes, there always would be a remnant of the "chosen people" of Israel that would follow God in faith. However, many of the Jewish people would continue "in the Law".

Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ [i.e. the message concerning Christ]. Romans 10:17

Some Jews had suggested that they had not heard the message that Paul had preached. Paul tells then what he thinks of this excuse... and it isn't much...

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But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:

"Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says,

"I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding." Romans 10:18-19

[Moses had written in Deuteronomy 32:21, "They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding."]

Paul continues...

And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." [Isaiah 65:1] Romans 10:20

Here, once again, Paul tells the Jewish Romans that God is going to use the Gentiles as they were the people who were now ready to accept the truth... from those first century days to our present age. The time from after Christ's resurrection until the current day is known as "the time of the Gentiles" as God is building and dealing with His church. There will once again come a time when large portions of the "chosen people", i.e. Israel, will reconcile with God – this will be in the end times. In fact, during the final few years before Christ comes to reign on earth for a thousand years, large numbers of Jews will become an incredibly effective and active force for the evangelism of the world. The time may be sooner than most people think.

In the meantime, however, the relationship between God and most Jews is described in the last verse of chapter 10. God continues to hold His arms out to his "chosen people"... even though this nation of people has mostly rejected Him (i.e. the Messiah, Jesus) for almost 2,000 years. They will come back to Him some day in the future.

But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." [Isaiah 65:2] Romans 10:21

Romans 11: Future Plans for Israel and Gentiles

God's Plan for Israel: Paul begins this chapter reiterating to his Jewish (and Gentile) readers in Rome the fact that all those who suggest that God had cast away the Jew were absolutely wrong. Many Jews, in particular, figured if God was now bringing a New Covenant to the world, that is the gospel, He must have finished with his first love, Israel. Paul says to this:

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people who He has foreknew. Romans 11:1-2a

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Then he goes on to remind them of their scriptures, as he certainly was wont to do. He tells them of Elijah, and how this great prophet had once pleaded with God that the people of Israel were killing His prophets and tearing down His altars. His implication was that Israel was totally lost. Yet, God replied to Elijah, “I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” 1Kings 19:18 & Romans 11:4

Paul continues by saying that in their present day, God was once again going to save a remnant of the Jews, as He always had and always will. Those that will be saved after Christ’s death, burial and resurrection would be saved based on the New Covenant, faith in Jesus Christ, not anything that they would or could do relating to keeping the Law. This new covenant was one of grace, not works.

...there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. But if it is by grace it is no longer by works, otherwise grace is no longer grace (*unmerited favor*) Romans 11:5-6

Paul notes just how hard many of the Jews tried to gain God’s favor- by their own merit... just as he had done before meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. It was not that so many of his fellow Jews were rejecting God as such, it was that they were still attempting to please Him via their good works in keeping the Law of Moses. This had never worked in the past - God had demonstrated this to them for centuries - and it was not going to work in the present or future. Still, there was at that time a remnant of God’s “chosen people” that did seek God through Jesus. Paul then quotes the Old Testament to show how God has given the others a “spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not.” Romans 11:8 & Deut. 29:4
Again, Paul is describing the concept of *election*, some people are chosen, others are not chosen. This is true of Jew and Gentile. This is true of all men and women.

To what avail is this turning away of most of the Jews? Well, Paul notes:

The Age of the Gentiles:

By their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them (the Jew) jealous. Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

Here Paul says that the Gentiles are now going to be on “center stage” as the majority of the Jews have temporarily turned away from God’s plan of salvation. He therefore states that the Jews terrible loss is the rest of the world’s incredible gain. He hopes that many of his Jewish brothers and sisters will become jealous of the Gentile Christians and the close relationship that they will now have with God, their Father. Maybe, somehow, that will help to bring them back to God some day. Well, some day the remnant of believing Jews will grow very large and these new Messianic Christians will be a very powerful force for Christ in the “end times”!

Next, Paul turns his attention to the Gentile Christians in Rome as he addresses them. He tells them:

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If the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too. But if some of the branches are broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. Romans 11:16-18

Paul does not want the Gentiles ever to forget (nor the Jew for that matter) that the “root of the dough” was certainly holy – that is, Abraham. The branches started out on the right track until their lack of faith resulted in some being broken off allowing for the grafting in of the Gentile Christians. He reminds them to remember the holiness of the original root, Abraham, and not to be arrogant as they could fall just as easily as that present day Jew had fallen. The next few verses elaborate on this message...

You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise, you will also be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. Romans 11:19-23

Future Plans for Israel: Paul concludes this discourse by telling of the future awaiting Israel. He notes that the partial hardening that currently existed in the hearts of so many Jews would give way after the “fullness of the Gentiles” had come. At that time, all Israel will be saved. Paul quotes from Isaiah:

And thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” “And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” Romans 11:26-27 (from Isaiah 59:20-21)

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD. "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the LORD. Isaiah 59:20-21

Jeremiah wrote on this same topic...

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Jer 31:33-34

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Paul continues to address the Gentile faction in Rome as he notes that although it is true that so many of the Jews are currently enemies of the gospel (which had already resulted in the salvation of so many Gentiles), they were still God's "chosen people". At some point in the future, the *elect* members of Israel will receive their due gifts and promises from God. Why?

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you (the Gentile) once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their (the Jew) disobedience, so these also have now been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may be shown mercy. Romans 11: 29-31

Then, Paul concludes this chapter with praise and worship of their inscrutable God. We will never be able to understand all that He does, and this should not frustrate us as we remember just who He is, what He has done for us and what He has promised to us.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, that it may be paid back to Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen
Romans 11:33-36

Romans 12: Living the Abundant Life

Sanctification of the Saints: After spending the last three chapters discussing the situation that Israel now found itself in, with respect to God's promises and the gospel, Paul turns his attention to the subject of living the Christian life. He will spend the next several chapters detailing on how this can and should be done. This is the practical portion of the book of Romans.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

Under the Old Covenant, God accepted the sacrifice of dead animals, for example, "spotless" lambs. This would no longer work under the New Covenant. Now, we all had received the one true and final sacrifice, Jesus through His shed blood. So, now what do we offer to God? Certainly not a dead animal! Jesus offered Himself for us, we must offer ourself to Him. Given everything that He has done for us and will do for us, it is certainly only our "*good and acceptable service*". How do we do this? Well, Paul talked about this at some length in chapter 8. He also will go into great detail in these next few chapters. The major point though is to *transform* our mind through our constant dependence on the Holy Spirit, through prayer and

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study and meditation, so that we will not be superficial Christians. God will change our entire inner being as we search out and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and become more and more like Christ. That is, we will advance in our Christian “walk” during the lifelong process of sanctification. We can push aside our remnant “sinful nature” as we bring to the forefront our “new bodies” through constant dedication to Christ. Remember, Christ says “**If you obey my commandments you will abide in My love.**” John 15:10 Also, “**If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth.**” John 14:15-17

Putting these three verses together, one sees that the Christian life is one of loving Jesus, therefore obeying Jesus, and then abiding in His love. He will give every Christian the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as our Comforter and Guide. It should be our goal to become closer to Jesus as we go through life and to cultivate the best methods possible to allow the Holy Spirit control over our thoughts and actions. This requires effort on our part. Keeping Christ’s commandments is the evidence of our true salvation and will help us live a Christ honoring life.

Using God’s Gifts of the Spirit: Let me list those things Paul tells us to do:

- Be humble – be glad that God saved you. He did it, not you. He chose you, you accepted His gift. You can do nothing without Him. Do not forget this. No one should “**think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.**” Romans 12:3
- As we all obviously have different aptitudes and gifts from God, we need remember that we are all part of the Christian body of believers, called the Church. “**For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individual members one of another.**” Romans 12:4 In other words, we need to behave and function as a finely tuned Christian “team” or “body”.
- How to do this? Each of us is given at least one gift for service by God. Work at finding your gift, and then use this gift (or these gifts) to advance the Kingdom of God. For example, you may be a good *teacher*, or may have been blessed with great *faith* that you can use to comfort other Christians, maybe you have the gift of *exhortation* and can lift up others to greater accomplishments, or maybe the gift of *service, giving, mercy* or the many others outlined elsewhere by Paul in his epistles. Whatever your gift, use it humbly to show your love for Christ and His Church.

Paul now writes about how Christians should behave in society in general as well as in our dealings with our Christian brothers and sisters.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Romans 12:9

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Living the victorious Christian life: I am very sorry to say that many Christian people live the life that Paul described in chapter 7 of Romans... that is the carnal Christian life. This tortured Paul, himself, until he realized that he needed to live under the direct daily, and hourly influence of the Holy Spirit. He realized that he could not defeat that remnant of his old sin nature by himself. But, as he describes in chapter 8, with the Holy Spirit directed life, living a victorious Christian life was indeed possible. While asking for daily help to lead this proper life in Christ, Paul asks us to remember:

- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor. Romans 12:10
- Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. Romans 12:11-12
- Contribute to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Romans 12:13
- Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Romans 12:14
Obviously, this is a tough one... but still it is a command of God.
- Paul continues and tells us to be kind to others, comfort them when this is needed, rejoice with them when it is proper, help those that are not as fortunate as you are, be at peace as much as possible with all men. Never pay back evil for evil (Romans 12:17a), in any event. Remember always, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Romans 12:19b As for us, God tells us to do the following when we are faced with persecution and evil from others: “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” (from Proverbs 25:2) And finally, Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:20-21

Romans 13: Honor Authority

Respect for Governmental Authority: Next Paul continues his discussion on how believers are to behave in society, by addressing how we should interact with secular government. He tells the Roman Church and us that God has given authority to governments and it is our responsibility to be in subjection to these institutions. In other words, anarchy is out. Of course, we still are to do this without sinning, so if our government asks from us something that goes against a commandment of God, God’s Law takes precedence over man’s law.

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God and those who exist are established by God. Romans 13:1

He goes on to say, Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. Romans 13:7

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A Christian's relationship to the "world": Paul then switches gears a little back to how Christians should behave in the world at large. A summary of what he says can be found neatly in the last phrase of verse 9:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Romans 13:9b

This, or a similar verse, is found often in the New Testament and for good reason as it summarizes neatly how we shall live. When you add one other important verse to this, "*Love God with all your heart*", you have all of the Old Testament Law condensed into two commands!

and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deut 6:5-7

Paul concludes with an exhortation to holy living by the saints (Christians). He tells them that the hour is approaching that Jesus will return for His Church (the entire body of Christians) and none of us should be lazy in our approach to our lives. We need to lay aside the "*deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light*" (Romans 13:12). Be very diligent to live a life that will make your Father proud. Do not get caught up in sexual sins, drunkenness, strife, jealousy nor any other vice or sin. Instead...

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Romans 13:14

Romans 14: Practical Advice for Living the Christian Life

Relationships with Christians: In the past couple of chapters, Paul goes into the proper conduct of Christians in society as a whole and with respect to the government. In this chapter, he is going to address certain matters in relation to fellow Christians, in particular, those Christians who may be somewhat weaker in their faith and/or knowledge of scripture.

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him.

Romans 14:1-3

He begins by giving some very good advice concerning how Christians should behave concerning those issues of relatively minor significance in the Church. Recalling that all Christians are saved by grace and not works, that none of us are still under the Law, Paul states that no Christian should get bogged down by passing judgment on the actions of other Christians

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on such issues as proper dietary practices, recognizing certain “holy days”, etc. In the Church today, we could list many more of these minor issues that tend to cause consternation among too many of the saints. For example, the issue of baptism (should it be by full emersion or sprinkling), the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, the actual number of 24 hour days God used in Creation, certain dress codes, dancing, having an occasional glass of wine, etc., etc. Paul says Christians should not judge others on these issues that have nothing to do with the gospel, but let God be the judge as He will be for all people anyway as Paul notes next...

[Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own Master he stands or falls, and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.](#) Romans 14:4

Live for Christ: Paul’s continues to make the point that whatever a person does need be done for Christ. People may honestly disagree at times on questionable matters (not clearly defined in the Bible). That is fine and Paul has just told every Christian to let these matters go. On the other hand, Paul wants to make sure that whatever a person does, he does with the object of honoring Christ. That is the key. We want to live and work for the Lord at all times. J. Vernon McGee puts it this way, “Questionable amusements are wrong for the believer if they are questionable to him. If he can participate in them and maintain a close relationship to Christ, they are not wrong for him.” Then McGee went on to give an example on the topic of dancing. In short, when an activity is not expressly dealt with in the Bible, a Christian should consult his/her conscience as to whether it is a pursuit in which they should participate. On the other hand, if the Bible has clear guidelines on a particular issue, the case is closed – do not become involved.

[For not one lives for himself; and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.](#) Romans 14:7-8

Every Christian must learn to live for Jesus Christ alone. Christ is our Master... for our own daily and ultimate good. We are to live and die for Christ, never doing anything that would be contrary to His wishes. Of course, we will fail at times, but this should be our goal.

[For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" \[Isaiah 45:23\]](#) Romans 14:9-11

Jesus came to earth primarily to sacrifice Himself for all mankind (of course there were other reasons as well). Then, He arose victorious over death and Satan. Jesus accomplished His purpose. He now sits at the right hand of His Father in Heaven where he is the Lord of those already in Heaven and those of us still on earth. He is God, He is the Lord, He is the Judge. Not

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anyone of us. We must not judge our Christian brothers and sisters. We are told in no uncertain terms to leave that job to God. We all have plenty enough to do in this life as we strive to sanctify ourselves for the day of our judgment!

Then Paul gives some more good advice that will help people live a better Christian life. He says, don't put stumbling blocks in front of your Christian brothers. If they have weak points in their walk with Christ, try to help them avoid falling into traps that may make them fall. Maybe you don't think that taking a drink of wine with a meal is a problem. Yet, if the Christian brother that you are having fellowship does believe this, or drinking may have even been a problem for him in the past, you should not drink on that occasion. Any issue that may tend to cause a problem among Christians or for another Christian should be avoided if possible.

Do not let what is good for you be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything which by which your brother stumbles.

Romans 14:16-17,19-21

So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Romans 14:22-23

The above two verses close out the chapter. Paul is emphasizing again the need for a person to consult their conscience before taking part in activities that may be questionable. If there is any doubt in one's mind, after referencing the Holy Bible, that an activity is wrong, simply avoid participating in it. If you do something that makes you concerned that you may well have sinned against God, ask for forgiveness, and don't do it again.

Romans 15: Helping Weaker Brothers and a Personal Testimony from Paul

Consideration of the weaker Christian brother: Paul begins to wrap up this incredible letter to the Romans in this chapter, the penultimate chapter of this epistle. The first several verses continue with a little more doctrine on the topic of the "weak" brother and the "strong" brother. Paul continues his conviction that the stronger in faith should do what they can to help make things easier for the Christian who may not yet have been able to break totally away from the need to do certain "things" for the Lord. For example, as we have already mentioned, eating certain foods, worshipping on particular days, not dancing, not drinking, etc., etc. His point is that there is no need to put stumbling blocks in front of another Christian on matters of really little importance. Since some of these items are, unfortunately, so important to some people, as

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long as these items are not involving a contradiction of the gospel or critical doctrines of the Bible, go along with other “weaker” Christians – that is, give of oneself for harmony in the Church. He reminds us that Jesus certainly gave of Himself to help others, to the point of His tortuous death. He also reminds the Roman Christians that the Scriptures, and the examples that are given therein, are given to help them to persevere through the difficult times and to experience the **sure hope of His promises**. And remember, this *hope* is always a *sure, realized hope at some point in the future*.

Now we that are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Romans 15:1

For even Christ did not please Himself, for as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached Thee, fell upon Me”. For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:3

The Body of Christ – Jew and Gentile: Paul next asks the Jewish and Gentile Christians to work together for Christ in one accord. Not only let the strong in faith be a very real help to the weaker brother or sister, but make sure that both Gentile and Jew become strong brothers in their new Savior and Master, Jesus Christ.

Accept one another just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God Romans 15:7

The next verse shows how Jesus came into our world as a little Jewish baby and underwent the ritual of circumcision as a sign to the Jews of His fulfillment of the prophesy God made to their fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...).

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs Romans 15:8

Jesus confined His ministry to the nation of Israel but He was sent to be a blessing to the whole world. Paul then points this out in the next several verses, all taken from the Jewish Scriptures to verify their truthfulness to the Jewish readers:

Christ has become a servant, as noted above, for the sake of the Jews, but also...

- for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy as it is written; Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles, and I will sing to Thy name. from Psalms 18:49
- And again He says, Rejoice O Gentiles with His people. from Deut. 32:43
- And again, Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the nations praise Him. from Psalms 117:1

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- And again Isaiah says, “There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope.” From Isaiah 11:10
Romans 15:9-12

The above four Old Testament verses are written by Paul for the benefit of both the Gentiles and Jews as he points out the Old Testament proclamation that the Gentiles will someday praise God as they come to accept Him through Jesus Christ. That day had just come and has continued for these last two thousand years. Paul then concluded his long discourse on these important doctrines of God’s plan of salvation with these words:

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

As we turn over our body and mind to the Holy Spirit, God will give us joy, peace and hope. The better we are able to live in the power of the Spirit of God, the closer we will feel to Him and the more peace, joy and hope will we experience. God, of course, is always living inside of us, but we must follow Paul’s advice (i.e. God’s advice) to feel His glorious presence and experience His peace, joy and power. That requires vigilance on our part, prayer, study and obeying His word and all of the other items we discussed in earlier chapters, especially chapters 8 and 12-14.

Paul’s personal testimony and plans: At this point in his letter, Paul begins to close with some personal messages to the folks in the Roman church. He notes that he is convinced that they are a group of brethren that are good people, with good knowledge and the ability to correct one another as needed. Yet, he tells them that he felt it was important to write them this letter including the doctrines that he discussed in his position that God had called him into – as missionary to the Gentiles. Of course, much of the book of Romans was also meant for the Jewish Christian.

Paul continues to write that he has preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum and points in between. Paul was guided and helped tremendously throughout his entire missionary career – over 25 years - by the Holy Spirit of God. Certainly, the ability to perform miracles was a great help in those early days of Christianity to show the power and veracity of the gospel of Jesus. He wanted his readers to be aware of this...

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done-- by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.
Romans 15:17-19

He went on to note that it was not his practice to go into towns that already have had the gospel preached and churches started... he was thankful to God for those that went to those towns first. His mission was to go where the Word had yet to be preached. In fact, all of his

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various trips had so far interfered with his long stated hope to see them in Rome. All of these mission journeys were given to him by God.

They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand. For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you. Romans 15:21-22

He planned to go to many more places as God gave him the health and time to do so. For one thing, he planned a missionary journey to Spain and had every intention to visit the Roman church on that trip. Although no one knows for sure, many people believe that sometime after his first imprisonment in Rome, in the early 60's B.C., he had the opportunity to witness for Christ in Spain. We won't know for sure until we ask Paul some day in Heaven. However, before he headed out to Spain and Rome, he planned the following trip:

but now, I say, I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain. And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Romans 15:25-29

In other words, the Gentile Christians are contributing offerings for their poorer Jewish brothers in Jerusalem. The Gentiles had certainly benefitted from the Jews spiritually; so now they could help some of the Jews out financially. When Paul finished his trip to Jerusalem, he was then planning on his much anticipated mission trip to Spain by way of Rome. Unfortunately, Paul was about to have this plan interrupted by his capture and imprisonment by the Roman government! He had significant concerns about the reception he would get when he arrived in Jerusalem, although he was sure that is where God wanted him to go. Paul wrote about that next:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judaea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. Romans 15:30-33

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Romans 16: Paul's Goodbye

Paul's personal "goodbye": The final chapter of Romans has many of the typical characteristics of the conclusion of any good letter. Paul asks that the church there in Rome welcome warmly a certain group of people as they are about to visit. Those folks include Phoebe, a fine Christian worker soon to visit Rome, two great friends of Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, both of whom had risked their lives to save Paul in one of his many dangerous predicaments. Paul continues to write of twenty more Christian friends, mentioning them by name, in the next dozen verses. He hopes the Christians there in Rome will take special note of these brothers and sisters in Christ when they arrive at some time in the not-too-distant future.

Paul then has a few final warnings. Primarily, he is imploring them to be very wary of smooth talking heretics which are sure to come around and twist and pervert the simple gospel message. This did indeed take place in those days, even more so soon after this letter was written. It is even worse, if possible, in our world today. That is why all Christians need to study the word carefully and not accept what some person says unless they back it up by *all* the word of God. Do not let someone take a verse out of context either. The only way that one can be sure that this is not happening is to study the Bible oneself – or with a strong group of Christian friends. There are far too many preachers in the United States and the world that preach a perverted gospel message, that typically comes from fragmentary pieces of the Word (the Bible), itself. One good way to avoid misinterpreting the Bible is to go through it verse by verse as we just did here in Romans. That way, no one or two verses will be taken out of context to mean something never intended. Of course, there are other ways to read the Bible properly as well.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I rejoice therefore over you: but I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Romans 16:17-20

Paul wraps things up by telling them that his good young minister friend, Timothy, says "hello" as do a few others with Paul. Tertius, himself, the actual scribe of the letter, greets the Romans next. The generous Gaius, who was letting Paul use his home, also gives them a "hello". After mentioning greetings from two other men, Paul concludes with the following...

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations

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might believe and obey him-- to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen
Romans 16:25-27

Paul concludes with one last mention of *his* wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ. This gospel was certainly very personal to him. Paul finishes by reminding them once again that this revelation was written about long ago by the prophets of old. Even to them, however, the full meaning of how the Messiah would manifest was a mystery (a hidden truth later revealed in New Testament times). Now, God had seen fit to bring it all to fruition. This mystery of the gospel of Christ was well explained in this letter to the Roman church and the fact that this wonderful gospel was for the Jew and Gentile alike.

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Conclusion to Commentary on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*:

Paul wrote in his epistle to the Roman church one of the greatest, if not the greatest treatises on God's plan for our salvation ever penned. Of course, we always must remember that this work was done via the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit of God. As we have just seen, God used the time before Christ's incarnation to teach the human race concerning its hopelessness due to sin. This lesson was provided in the two thousand (plus) years before Christ, chronicled in the Old Testament. Man would be unable to achieve salvation via their own merits. That is, they would be unable to gain salvation secondary to their own "good" works. Their only hope must come from God, Himself. Fortunately, God wanted to provide us with the gift of eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the gospel.

Paul began his letter to his Roman Christian brothers and sisters with a friendly salutation including a brief description of the Lord Jesus. He continued by noting the need for *righteousness* before God, only accessible through faith in Jesus as Savior. Every Jew and Gentile, that is, every person has no excuse before God... all are condemned to die in their sins unless they appropriate the free gift of salvation by accepting, through faith, Jesus Christ as Savior. This faith will free us from the penalty of sin. Not only is Jesus the answer for life everlasting, but faith and trust in Him are the keys to a full life on the earth. Remember, "[the just shall live by faith.](#)"

Paul continued on this topic by showing how Christians are to live. They must not continue our vain attempts to live by the Law... but, instead, allow the Holy Spirit to enable them to live the life God wants for us. We need to live under the constant control of the Holy Spirit... the Spirit filled life. This is the way toward sanctification.

In the middle of the epistle, Paul discussed God's *election* of His saints and the *everlasting security* of the believer. Once we are truly saved, nothing can separate us from God... nothing... not even our own stupid actions or thoughts. Don't forget, however, that a loving Father will properly discipline His child to "[train him up in the way he should go](#)".

Paul then took some time to address his Jewish brothers and sisters to explain to them the logic of God's New Covenant and how it pertained to them. He reminded them, by showing Old Testament examples, that God would always have a remnant of Jewish people as part of His "chosen people". In fact, Paul himself and some of the Roman Christians were examples of this at that time in history. Although the Gentile nations were about to become the prominent force behind the Christian movement of the next couple of millennia, there would come a time just before Jesus returned when the Jews would become a major Christian force once again.

The latter portion of this letter presented some excellent advice on how to live the Christian life followed by Paul giving some personal greetings from and to friends and fellow workers in the faith. He ended his epistle with another reminder of the gospel message and how it had always been God's plan from eternity past. Paul also, once again, noted that this wonderful gospel was for all men and women – all those who will accept His Son Jesus in faith. This gospel is for you!

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